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Nova et Vetera

The English Edition of the International Theological Journal

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THE NEW English edition of *Nova et Vetera* provides an international forum for theological and philosophical studies from a contemporary Thomistic perspective. *Nova et Vetera* was founded in 1926 by future Cardinal Charles Journet in association with Jacques Maritain and is now published in French, Italian, and most recently in English. By way of fostering an international conversation, the English edition of *Nova et Vetera* will include not only new English articles, but also translated articles from other editions of *Nova et Vetera*, particularly the French edition. *Nova et Vetera*, English edition, welcomes articles and book reviews in theology, philosophy, and biblical studies that address central contemporary debates and discussions. We seek to be "at the heart of the Church," faithful to the Magisterium and teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and devoted to the work of true dialogue, both ecumenically and across intellectual disciplines.

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Introducing the English Edition of *Nova et Vetera:* The Influence of Charles Cardinal Journet

THE EDITORS

AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-FIVE, Father Charles Journet (1891–1975), later to become a cardinal and already on the way to a brilliant theological career, founded *Nova et Vetera* as a Catholic periodical for his native Switzerland. Seventy-seven years later, we are privileged to introduce the new English edition of *Nova et Vetera* (now published in distinct French, Italian, and English editions). It is worth examining the purposes that the distinguished founder of *Nova et Vetera* had in mind—the purposes that inspire us to inaugurate an English edition of his journal (abbreviated *NV Eng*). For the first issue of *Nova et Vetera* in 1926, Charles Journet composed a brief "Definition of Principles and Aims."[1] Using this "Definition," we will explore Journet's vision for his journal and compare it to our own.

Journet was concerned about a widespread ignorance of the Catholic intellectual tradition, and he recognized in the culture of his day certain negative influences leading away from faith. His primary purpose, therefore, was evangelistic. For the sake of bringing the riches of the Gospel to a culture that no longer seemed either knowledgeable of or amenable to the Catholic faith—to a culture that was also sorely in need of dialogue between Catholic and Protestant believers—Journet founded *Nova et Vetera*. We share this evangelistic goal.

1 Our article is built around excerpts from Paul Gondreau's translation of Cardinal Journet's "Definition."

In his article, Journet argues that in order to be able to evangelize in this way, Catholics must come to know their tradition—must "deepen our appreciation of the riches of which we are too often the unconscious depositories." Moreover, even though the Holocaust and the Gulag were yet to come (the bloodiest century in the history of humanity had already begun with World War I), Journet is painfully aware of the impact that false ideas were having in his day. Given the unspeakable horror of infants being sacrificed in their mothers' wombs, and of people who are no longer "useful" being euthanized, we find ourselves in a similar position. As Journet writes, "We live in a decisive time, when the most extravagant and catastrophic of ideas become fixed in stone with rapid and prodigious violence." Journet is motivated, as we are, by a concern for truth, and a belief that theological work requires, as guided by the Holy Spirit, fidelity to the Magisterium through which we hear the fullness of the apostolic witness to the truth that is Christ Jesus. As a Catholic intellectual, Journet strives to be in sincere and respectful conversation with those who do not share his views. Yet, he does not minimize the difficulty of witnessing truthfully to the Catholic faith given "the spirit of our times."

In Thomistic thought, Journet finds resources for engaging Scripture and tradition in an open and contemporary manner:

> Our faith rests upon authenticated sources, namely, sacred Scripture as expounded and interpreted by the great Councils of Nicaea, Orange, Trent, Vatican I, and by papal documents. We seek to understand these sources by the guidance of that Doctor whose name we hold dear: St. Thomas Aquinas. Whatever the time period or culture through which these sources come to us, we believe that that which is truly Catholic will help us to live more fully and with greater integrity in our own respective cultures. Do not the rays of light which bathe our fields and which ripen our produce and do not the winds that whisper through our trees come from all directions?

As he goes on to remark with regard to the task of appropriating Scripture and tradition for contemporary theology: "To work from within consists principally not in destroying but in bringing to completion."

Journet is careful to note that Thomistic reflection upon the sources of revelation is not a return to the thirteenth century, but rather is a way of identifying a solid path for philosophical and theological development in the present. "Let us avoid potential misunderstanding. We do not seek a 'return to the past.' We do not wish to do away with electricity or speak old French; we believe not that art should coagulate and cease to develop but *change* to reflect the sensibilities of the times and cultures in which it is born. We insist that education and sociology, national and international politics, have more of a crucial role to play in today's world than simply in reproducing the appearances of bygone institutions." While encouraging development, he emphasizes that the past and future do not need to be set in opposition to each other, as if the past must be rejected in order for true development to emerge. He beautifully defends the project of seeking truth that, when it appears, is both old and new:

> We consider ourselves neither retrograde nor adventurers, since both types oppose the past and future, both new things and old. Such an enterprise offers us little pleasure, particularly since it implies the choice of one *over* the other. We reject this dilemma. We instead seek to discover in each moment in time those numerous threads that can connect the past, present and future. We must set our sights high enough to allow the delicate hierarchy of spiritual values to reveal themselves, values that are capable of ordering, under the sign of God and of his Christ, the most noble and humble of manifestations of the intellectual and affective life, of the artistic and moral life, of the individual and corporate life, of national and international affairs, whether they be of yesterday, today or tomorrow. When they become aligned unto these spiritual values, human endeavors, works and institutions appear to possess a parcel of divine peace, no matter if they serve the usefulness of the moment or satisfy a purely passing need. At such moments, they give the impression of order, continuity and stability. They are at the same time known and unexpected, familiar and surprising, *ancient AND new.* Through them shine the rays of the Beauty that is ever ancient and ever new, *tam antiqua et tam nova*, at which St. Augustine marveled (*Confessions*, Bk. X, ch. 27); and the scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who, to give joy to his family, pulls from his treasure

> expected yet always delightful jewels, what is old but always new, *Nova et Vetera* (Mt 13:52).

Yet, is not "truth" simply what today appears to be true, and thus will stand in need of revision tomorrow? Journet makes an important distinction: "The world of *sensible* reality is quite different from the world of *spiritual* reality. The first is fluid, the second is unchanging." Anticipating *Fides et Ratio*, Journet argues that the "measuring rod" of eternal truth is found in revelation and metaphysics; thus, the timeless (even if forgotten) truth of the *vetera* must be newly appropriated in order for true *nova* to emerge. Continually studying the *vetera*, or insights of the past, enables the philosopher or theologian to develop, in light of his or her contemporary context, the *nova*, or new insights that deepen and develop the Catholic tradition. Journet's position resonates with Alasdair MacIntyre's theory of traditions of inquiry.

If the Catholic tradition contains timeless truth, how should we expect this truth to be related to culture? In tune with the Second Vatican Council that would open its doors thirty-six years later, Journet is strongly opposed to those who would connect Catholic truth with reactionary modes of thought:

> [T]o seek to keep certain rules of art, of social and technical life, of political life from changing is the error of a narrow and fatal conservatism: we would subscribe to this *if* the artist were obliged to design Platonic definitions or essences, or if the sociologist and politician, once and for all and in certain institutions of time and place, could confine in a pure state the "golden mean" of all the moral virtues. Theology or philosophy (moral, social and political) can certainly help us understand the nature or the role and object of the virtues, of legal justice and of commutative or distributive justice, of capital and guiding definitions. But the approaches, organizations, laws, and forms of government that best realize, in a given place and time, these notions remain to be determined. Past institutions cannot simply, and lazily, be copied. Even in the best cases, they are merely variations on a lasting and inspiring theme, and they represent nothing other than useful paradigms. At the same time, a perennial element is undoubtedly found at the origin of art, whether it be gothic or modern; yet neither the 'living and eternal rules' that the artist holds in mind nor even the traditions,

> techniques and procedures bequeathed from his predecessors can prevent him, because he works in changing realities, from being a person of his present day, from being renewed.

Distinguishing between the practical arts *(praxis)* and metaphysics and theology *(theoria)*, Catholics should oppose any reactionary application of Catholic truth to the prudential realms of culture. Were Catholics to adopt the practical arts as a model for philosophy and theology, however, they could no longer do justice to the reality of timeless truth. Speaking to philosophers and theologians, Journet warns against understanding the philosophical and theological task to be a facile transposition of the insights of the past into the cultural forms of the present. Rather, the real work of the philosopher or theologian is to appropriate *truth* interiorly:

> Our task is not to mold physical and moveable realities in a purely *outward* manner. Rather, our task consists in an *interior* act, in molding our minds according to a spiritual and immovable reality. We do not seek to *update* or *remake* the truth. Truth is neither made nor updated. It is discovered, it is understood and believed, it spreads without deterioration, and it reaches out. Faith of an intellectual sort is not a *modernization* but an actuation and contemplation of the mind, and a *progress* towards doctrine, that is to say, an interior, homogenous and organic growth of a spiritual heritage. Intellectual progress is the manifestation, through new concepts, of that which already contains, though implicitly, a first concept. There is *progress* when one passes from the definition of a triangle to an understanding of its properties, from the definition of divine immutability to an understanding of eternity, from the spiritual nature of the soul to its incorruptibility. But there looms here no shadow of *modernization, transposition* or *adaptation*. Such a fundamental principle of the intellectual life, so familiar to the Church and so clearly present in the thought of St. Thomas, is still far from penetrating liberal Protestantism or modernism. One of the mysterious applications of this principle is how it allows us to understand the way in which we can benefit from the errors of our opponents—even if our opponents are of marked intelligence and good faith. Their errors, which usually stem from an ignorance of one or more Catholic truths and which we have been able to keep from calling to mind, prevent us from falling asleep, *oportet haereses esse.*

Nova et Vetera, then, invites philosophers, theologians, and biblical exegetes to practice more fully their calling to apprentice themselves to the Catholic tradition and thereby to appropriate the truths of revelation and metaphysics, though always in dialogue with those who do not share their views. In articulating and defending Catholic truths, the Catholic theologian frequently makes claims that appear strange to the non-believing world. The teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is an example today of such a truth. Recognizing this tendency, Journet emphasizes that the answer lies in discovering for ourselves the beauty of the Catholic faith:

> [W]e should also recognize the natural tendency in each one of us, when confronted by our opponents, to diminish or divide the truth which is entrusted to the Church, a truth that remains far above us because it is divine. 'In defining her principal doctrines, the Church seems not only to profess contradictory things but, what is more, to allow these things to break out into a kind of artistic violence that would otherwise be associated only with anarchists.' Here Chesterton converges with Pascal: 'There is thus a great number of truths of both faith and morals which appear to be repugnant but which exist in a most admirable order. The source of every heresy is the exclusion of one of these truths . . . This is why the best way to hinder heresies is to instruct in all the truths.' Created image of the uncreated Being who identifies in himself all apparently contradictory perfections, such as freedom and immutability, or justice and mercy, the Church reconciles in her heart all those seemingly antithetical actions. She speaks at the same time of rational evidence and the dark night of the soul, of reasonable faith and the folly of the cross. She claims to unite prudence and simplicity, hierarchy and the mystical life, freedom and authority, religion of the spirit and sacramental instruments, intransigence and condescension, strength and gentleness, fixity and mobility, unity and diversity. She wishes to govern the world without being of the world, to remain Roman yet also catholic, monarchical while at the same time receptive to the three classical forms of political rule: democracy, aristocracy, monarchy. She embraces art while also preaching mortification . . . It is indeed most difficult to enumerate all the aspects of our Catholic richness. We do an injustice to the Church and we divide her soul each time we separate her complementary aspects.

What topics belong especially to *Nova et Vetera*? Who is the audience of the journal? Journet, a friend of Jacques Maritain, emphasizes Maritain's interests: "Our concern is with problems of religion and philosophy, problems of morality and education, of law, sociology, and political science, which are found throughout the world. We reserve a special place for literature and the arts. They represent the Beauty that is—as St. Augustine, the Middle Ages and Bossuet recalled better than us—one of the names of our God. At the same time, they mark the way by which many people access the world of the spirit." The English edition, likewise, desires to promote this broad and fruitful engagement with contemporary culture. Like Journet in 1926, the English edition hopes to energize Thomistic engagement with contemporary intellectual movements. Such work will be both "contemporary" and lasting, since it will be able to deepen and develop the insights that the masters of the past have uncovered in the Bible, the liturgy, the creeds and councils, metaphysics, and the practices of profound spiritual life. Today one often finds Thomistic scholarship listed under the rubric of "the history of philosophy" or "the history of theology." As Journet recognizes, however, Thomistic philosophy and theology would die if they became purely historical rather than primarily and energetically speculative.

The audience of the journal is intended to be wide-ranging. Educated readers will find here the resources that contemporary Thomistic thought offers to the intellectual formation and evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church, in which the human person realizes his or her full calling. As Journet says, "It is in the Church that we can breathe. Perhaps those who yet do not know this experience will one day discover it. Without ever trying to 'popularize,' that is to say, reduce or cheapen Truth and Beauty, *Nova et Vetera*, which we shall strive to publish with the greatest care and clarity, should be able to be read and followed by any person interested in things of intelligence. We wish to keep it varied, as Catholicism is opposed to monotony."

Thus, being a broadly Thomistic journal does not mean that we intend to be "monotone," as if St. Thomas could not be friends with St. Bonaventure. For readers interested in exploring the insights of speculative philosophy and theology, along with the important

contributions of biblical studies, *Nova et Vetera* hopes to offer a variety of perspectives and styles: "If there is a multiplicity of tastes, sensibilities, and temperaments, it is in order to refract the eminent simplicity of the divine Light in a multiplicity of fashions. Shall we make one choose between the Spanish school and the Flemish school, or between the portal of St. Trophime and those of Chartres? Are there any more refined and intensely marked *personalities* and *individualities* than those of the saints, who are nonetheless united by their heroic love?" Authors will disagree with each other not only in style but also in substance, and we hope and believe that these disagreements will be fruitful; indeed, we intend to encourage debates that concern, in Journet's phrase, "essential and primary questions."

In such debates, truth is our object. Journet makes a nice distinction: "We do not confuse hatred for error with a narrowness of spirit. The latter is a shortcoming that we can all possess but which we must seek to rid ourselves of. The former is a quality that we must ask to grow in our hearts. Is this quality ever more needed than in our own day, when ideas are not distinguished from the persons who hold them, or when the gravest of errors are transmitted out of a sense of sympathy?" In the intellectual debates of philosophy, theology, and the other disciplines, the desire for truth must govern. The articles in *Nova et Vetera* will seek to expose and defend, rather than compromise or conceal, the truths revealed to us in Christ Jesus and taught by the Magisterium. Because we are Christian intellectuals committed to truth, we rejoice in the truth revealed in the Catholic Church, and we eagerly anticipate deepening our understanding of truth through dialogue with the contemporary world. As Journet remarks, "How can this Revelation, which has come to us through various means and for which countless martyrs have joyously given their blood, whose light, which shall never be extinguished, has illumined the Middle Ages, not be found in the secret and profound connivances of the world today?" We are thus seekers for truth even as we rejoice in the infinite light that is Truth.

The English edition of *Nova et Vetera* intends to be a Thomistic journal that renews and energizes profoundly Christian engagement with the contemporary world. We hope to inspire, through philosophical and theological work, the increase of Christian

contemplation of the highest mysteries of our faith, and we hope also to inspire Christian action on behalf of the unborn and the poor. We hope to serve the reunion of Christian churches. We hope to foster a new integration of medieval and contemporary theology, and we hope to assist in the reintegration of speculative theology and biblical studies. We hope to help promote a renaissance of Catholic thought within the academy. As Journet concluded in 1926, "Yet we serve a cause that can do without us, and if our ambitions appear somewhat exaggerated, we take solace in the hope that through our efforts we might lead one of our readers to see an error dissipated, or a prejudice destroyed, or a truth manifested, or enjoy a bit of consolation and true freedom." N&V

Nova et Vetera, English Edition, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2003): 11–25

Reflections on Marriage and the Family[1]

GEORGES COTTIER, OP
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THE APOSTOLIC LETTER *Novo Millennio Ineunte* published at the end of the great Jubilee year (January 6, 2001) touches on the problems of marriage and family several times either directly or indirectly. After noting the most significant passages, we will offer some reflections on the current situation.

A Widespread and Radical Crisis of the Family

In the first part, John Paul II recalls the different groups of pilgrims who had come to Rome. The first was that of children. These, "with their irrepressible sense of celebration," turned up again later at the Jubilee of Families, where they were identified "as the springtime of the family and society" (no.10). At this Jubilee, families originating from diverse regions of the world "came to draw fresh enthusiasm from the light that Christ sheds on God's original plan in their regard (cf. Mk 10:6–8)" (no.10) and undertook to manifest it to "a culture which, in an ever more disturbing way, is in danger of losing sight of the very meaning of marriage and the family as an institution" (no. 10).

What is briefly diagnosed here is the growing divorce between the dominant culture and God's original plan. The risk is of a

[1] Translation by Robert Williams of "Réflexions sur le mariage et la famille," *Nova et Vetera* 76 (2001): 9–22.

radical nature since it concerns meaning itself. The Church expects a clear witness from the family.

The fourth part is entitled "Witnesses of Love," in which we again find the theme of the family. The Church is the home and the school of communion (no. 43–45): "[T]he spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul" (no. 45).

The variety of vocations in the Church must be understood from this perspective, since "the Christian community's ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit" (no. 46) is tied to communion. This does not mean uniformity, but instead "an organic blending of legitimate diversities" (no. 46). It is therefore necessary that the Church stimulate all the baptized and confirmed to become aware of their active responsibility in ecclesial life. Following the Council, emphasis is laid upon the proper vocation of the laity.[2]

Number 47 focuses on the pastoral care of the family: "At a time in history like the present, special attention must also be given to *the pastoral care of the family*, particularly when this fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis."

In a few lines we are reminded of the Christian view of marriage by a double reference to its *origin* and *history:* "[T]he relationship between a man and a woman—a mutual and total bond, unique and indissoluble—is part of God's original plan, obscured throughout history by our 'hardness of heart,' but which Christ came to restore to its pristine splendor, disclosing what had been God's will 'from the beginning' (Mt 19:8). Raised to the dignity of a sacrament, marriage expresses the 'great mystery' of Christ's nuptial love for His Church (cf. Eph 5:32)" (no. 47).

We can understand that, on this point, the Church cannot yield to the pressures of a certain culture even if this latter is widespread and at times militant. The path to be taken should instead be one of witness: "[I]t is necessary to ensure that through an ever more complete Gospel formation, Christian families show convincingly that it is possible to live marriage fully in keeping with God's plan

[2] Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 31, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 2.

and with the true good of the human person: of the spouses, and above all of the children who are more fragile. Families themselves must become increasingly conscious of the care due to children, and play an active role in the Church and in society in safeguarding their rights" (no. 47).

In a compact synthesis this text contains the principal elements of the current question. It begins with an observation: the situation is that of a widespread and radical crisis. Next it reminds us of the essential characteristics of Christian marriage: the relationship is reciprocal, total, unique, and indissoluble. This expresses the original plan of God, the plan that holds for all. Following Scripture, it links the difficulties to "a hardness of heart" (no. 47). Finally, it affirms the sacramental nature of Christian marriage as an expression of the spousal love of Christ for the Church. The Pope is not unaware of the fact that this conception of marriage, which is certainly demanding but which alone is liberating and in line with the dignity of persons, is strongly gainsaid by the surrounding culture. Yet, since this conception of marriage and family comes from God, the Church knows that she does not have the right to yield to pressures.

To this challenge the Church offers a twofold response, each one positive: a deeper evangelical education; and the convincing example that this path is possible, that it is not beyond human strength. This alone allows us to meet the demands of the human person. Whether it is a question of the persons of the spouses or of the children, families must undertake the defense of their rights.

The Holy Father has given an authoritative commentary on paragraphs 10 and 47 in his *Address to the Roman Rota* (February 1, 2001).[3]

Major Challenges

Our age presents a series of challenges that the Christian conscience must meet (cf. no. 51). Indeed, we cannot hold ourselves aloof from the prospects of an *ecological disaster* that renders broad areas of the planet inhospitable and hostile to man. Neither can we shy away when confronted by the problems of a fragile peace, "threatened by

[3] John Paul II, "The Natural Dimension of Marriage: Address to the Roman Rota," *Origins* 30 (Feb. 22, 2001): 581–3.

the specter of catastrophic wars" (no. 51)? How do we remain passive in the face of the "*contempt for the fundamental human rights* of so many people, especially children" (no. 51)?

Here we have so many urgent matters to which the Christian spirit cannot remain indifferent. Certain urgent matters call for a "special commitment" that brings into play "certain aspects of the Gospel's radical message" (no. 51). These aspects are often the least understood, "to the point of making the Church's presence unpopular" (no. 51). We cannot shirk such a commitment. John Paul II writes: "I am speaking here of the duty to be committed to *respect for the life of every human being*, from conception to natural death" (no. 51).

From this first imperative one cannot separate the following: "Likewise, the service of humanity leads us to insist, in season and out of season, that those using *the latest advances of science*, especially in the field of biotechnology, must never disregard fundamental ethical requirements by invoking a questionable solidarity which eventually leads to discriminating between one life and another and ignoring the dignity which belongs to every human being" (no. 51).

To cry out means to proclaim with force and firmness. It does not mean to scream, to hurl thoughtless anathemas, or to give free rein to the language of passion. That is why what follows is of prime importance: "For Christian witness to be effective, especially in these delicate and controversial situations, it is important that special efforts be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church's position, stressing that it is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person" (no. 51).

He makes clear that this attitude is dictated by charity. "In this way charity will necessarily become service to culture, politics, the economy, and the family, so that the fundamental principles upon which depend the destiny of human beings and the future of civilization will be everywhere respected" (no. 51).

A commitment demanded by Gospel radicalism requires the courage to face unpopularity and lack of understanding. But this in no way means that one should take part in the misunderstandings. A great effort of explanation is needed in the name of charity, which in this case is intellectual charity. This demands

competence and rigorous thought which tries to grasp the problems at their root.

Finally, what is at stake is the defense of man. The Pope appeals to human reason. Confessional language, or appeals to the faith, would only add to the confusion.

The following paragraph (no. 52) offers several complements. It is laypeople especially, with their "lay vocation," who can meet these tasks. We must keep from falling prey to the temptation to reduce Christian communities to "social agencies." We must respect the autonomy and proper competence of civil society, in conformity with the *social teaching of the Church*. This corresponds to the efforts of the Magisterium, particularly throughout the twentieth century, "to interpret social realities in the light of the Gospel" (no. 52) and to offer solutions to what have become global problems. "The ethical and social aspect of the question is an essential element of Christian witness: we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the Incarnation and, in the last analysis, of Christianity's eschatological tension. While that tension makes us aware of the relative character of history, it in no way implies that we withdraw from 'building' history" (no. 52). The text here refers to *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 34.

Symptoms of the Crisis

Of the "widespread and radical crisis" of the fundamental institution of the family we can observe numerous symptoms. Think of the growth in unwed couples, of the high percentage of divorces, of homosexual "marriages" recognized by law, sometimes even, as in Holland, including the right to adoption. Add to that the case either of women who procure motherhood for themselves while refusing marriage (artificial insemination), or of the choice of a marriage that excludes children in principle with, as a consequence, the fall in the birth rate in certain countries of the West. The fact that the French parliament has adopted legislation like PACS[4] is indicative of the confusion that holds sway in many minds.

[4] *Pacte Civil de Solidarité:* a law that gives some similar advantages to both unwed heterosexual or homosexual and married couples alike.

What are the factors that have led to the present situation? An initial diagnosis will show factors of an economic, sociological, and demographic nature.

Our industrial societies have originated migratory movements toward economic poles that produce urban agglomerations where people often lose their cultural roots. The situation of women in the workforce, which is now a large-scale phenomenon, is often a response to economic necessity, at the same time that it represents a certain legitimate autonomy. The uncertainty of work, the threat of unemployment, the rhythms and schedules of work are factors as well. And the effect is cumulative, which presents an obstacle to a healthy family life when these factors are not prevented. The rupture between the generations (the old, the young) can be added to this enumeration.

Women's liberation requires an in-depth analysis. The excesses and deviations of a certain kind of feminism must not overshadow the legitimate demands that are aimed at the full recognition of the rights and the dignity of persons.[5] Still, one cannot ignore the strong tensions that exist between the vocation of motherhood and family life on the one hand and the demands of a profession and a career on the other. In these matters Christians should be pioneers and work for adequate legislation (part-time work, family aid, increased value of work at home, etc.).

Among the negative factors, mention must be made of the demand for an equality understood as the denial of the differences and specific traits of femininity. Here equality is conceived of as being identified with the male model, as mimicry. Awareness of the female and male identity is thereby obscured. This gives rise to a slew of serious problems that must be confronted. Failure to do so has contributed to the weakening of marriage, with negative consequences for the life of the family and of children.

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[5] Cf. Anne-Marie Pelletier, *Le christianisme et les femmes, Vingt siècles d'histoire* (Paris: Cerf, 2001); and Pia Francesca de Solenni, *A Hermeneutic of Aquinas's Mens through Differentiated Epistemology. Toward an Understanding of Woman as Imago Dei* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2000).

The Cultural Dimension

With the reference to feminism, our analysis becomes oriented toward cultural problems. Here sociological analysis runs up against basic problems whose meaning it cannot fully determine. The most profound cause of the crisis lies in a certain conception of man, namely the ideology of philosophical liberalism.[6] It is necessary to specify *philosophical* liberalism, for the word liberalism, which harkens back to liberty, is a polyvalent term. Among the different meanings there certainly exists a connection, but, according to the level of one's usage, the word does not always retain the root sense by which we understand it. Thus one will speak of economic liberalism to say that free initiative is the main catalyst of economic life. Economic liberalism may draw its inspiration from philosophical liberalism, but that is not always the case. A similar observation must be made regarding political liberalism, which commonly designates the recognition of political liberties.

If I allude to these derived meanings, it is because through the interpretation one gives them, they may also function as vehicles of philosophical liberalism. One consequence of this is that such an ideology—for we are dealing with an ideology—does not come across with the aggressiveness that characterized Marxist communism. The modern totalitarianisms were born in great part (this is especially true of communism) as a violent reaction against the nineteenth century's unbridled economic liberalism that had no social restraints or correctives. With the downfall of communism, liberty, which for many meant the recovery of the rights of the person, was interpreted as the victory of liberalism, as though the exercise of recovered freedoms afforded it an historical confirmation.

Noteworthy Characteristics of Philosophical Liberalism

How do we characterize the ideology of philosophical liberalism, which constitutes the great challenge that we must meet? It seems to me that one can describe it with the following traits.

Man is an autonomous and free individual: *individual* and *freedom* are the essential elements of this definition. The notion of

[6] Cf. my "Libéralisme philosophique et nihilisme éthique," in *Questions de la modernité* (Paris: FAC, 1985), 107–28.

individuality implies self-sufficiency ("man, this little god") according to Rousseau's formula. Relationship, openness to the other, does not enter into this definition. This individual naturally tends toward *happiness*, understood in the sense of eudaemonism and often of hedonism.

As for *freedom*, this is understood in the sense of transcendence. Rousseau, who is otherwise a deist and who speaks of the natural law, expressed the fundamental tendency of the ideology we are seeking to describe when he enunciated a principle of his political philosophy: The law that one gives oneself is freedom. Ideology broadens the scope of the assertion. The individual is sovereign. This sovereignty is even claimed in the face of the transcendent. Man is thus the source of law and right. One acknowledged attribute of this individual enters into the definition of man: *freedom*, that is, autonomous freedom. If we ask ourselves what is the relationship of the individual to society, the answer is that the individual is primary. Man can therefore be defined both prior to and independently of any interpersonal relationship.

Consequently, Aristotle's language of man as a social animal, man as social by nature, has been abandoned. Society is no longer considered necessary for man's good, and no more is it a question of the "common good" (which, in the present context, is a meaningless term). Rather, society represents a necessary evil, and is required for the protection of the individual's freedom, which extends until it runs up against the freedom of another. In this way, the freedom of another is seen as a kind of limit. Since society is not an original reality, it is the result of a *contract* of free individuals, the goal of which is protection against the inevitable abuses that arise in reciprocal relationships. No longer is it a question of nature but of the "state of nature." This idea is on the order of myth, inasmuch as it designates the situation before the social contract, such as we may imagine it.

This situation is logically conceived of as one of conflict. Think of the *homo homini lupus* of Hobbes. The function of the sovereign, or of government, is to defend freedom against itself and against the freedom of the other. In this view, the relationship between freedom (of the individual) and political power is itself one of conflict. Law opposes freedom; it is oppressive. We touch here, no doubt, on the

reason why, in conformity with the spirit of philosophical liberalism, people have the tendency to relegate to the private sector a string of problems that concern relations between persons.

In the Republican slogan of 1789, "liberty, equality, fraternity," the third term, by virtue of the logic of philosophical liberalism, has been just about forgotten.

The Conception of Marriage

The definition of man as an individual, which is at the basis of philosophical liberalism's ideology, has a direct impact on the conception of marriage. As we have seen, man is defined prior to the existence of his relationships and social ties. This holds for the interpersonal relationships between man and woman in the contract of marriage. Only one attribute—freedom—enters into the definition of the individual. The essence of man, his nature, is freedom.

Certainly one does not deny the existence of other properties—that would be absurd—but they come afterward, in second place. They are not so necessary as to deny the essence should they be missing; they are accidental. This holds true for the capacity either for dialogue or for the capacity for mutual giving. The individual's freedom is autonomous: It decides of itself. What we observe today are attitudes and stances inscribed, from the start, in the principles of philosophical liberalism.

We must ask questions, therefore, about the very content of freedom, since the debate centers on the nature of human freedom. Following the liberal conception, to say that freedom is autonomous is equivalent to saying that it is self-founding (at least such is the logical development of this conception). Here the concept of nature has changed; it loses its metaphysical meaning, such that the orientation of nature toward its connatural purposes, which indicate the design of the Creator, is ignored. One can speak of man's nature only if this designates freedom: Man, that is, the individual, *is* his autonomous freedom and nothing else. The exercise of freedom is no longer regulated by norms inscribed in man by the Creator (the natural law). To be sure, this idea of autonomous freedom is destroyed if one admits such norms. Freedom by itself is its own norm; it obeys only itself. According to this conception of freedom, *nature* becomes the *other*, the *other* that must be subdued,

and which no longer has anything ethically normative about it. In other words, the metaphysical meaning of nature is suppressed. With respect to nature, only technical domination remains. Freedom asserts itself *against* nature, gaining its ever-increasing space throughout the course of history.

At this point, a concept of culture arises with a growing force that is today greatly inflated. The less one attributes to nature, the realm of necessities and servitudes, the more one attributes to culture inasmuch as it is man's historical creation.

From these ideas a peculiar conception of marriage emerges. Sexuality is extrinsic to man's nature (in the metaphysical sense of essence); it belongs to nature as a kind of limitation, a conditioning of freedom. What is extrinsic to man's essence is, for freedom, either an obstacle or something to be used. Put another way, sexuality appears as an object that freedom uses. It does not carry a meaning that expresses the design of the Creator. And it is precisely culture that concerns the realm of using and of what freedom uses. The meaning of the reality that freedom uses is a creation of this same freedom. Freedom determines the significance of sexuality and its use; freedom bestows this significance. The idea of an objective moral law that would indicate the ethical meaning of the subject's free activity has no place here. Rather, such a law is thought of as an obstacle, a hindrance to the full exercise of freedom. One talks then about a *taboo* that must be rejected and about the body as a thing that one disposes of as one pleases. Frequently used expressions such as "straight or gay couples" faithfully reflect this very conception we are here describing.

This conception entails another consequence. Culture, a human creation, is historical. It cannot be fixed once and for all, as if it were rigid. Instead, it is subject to change and is therefore relative. Sexual activity—let us speak no more of a man and a woman, that is too restrictive—can take a multiplicity of forms, all legitimate, because it is the task of human freedom to determine their relevance. And thus the multiplicity of the models of sexual union are presented, all equally valid.

Another consequence: If the body, and consequently sexuality, is extrinsic to the person identified with freedom alone, sexuality finds itself trivialized. This trivialization goes hand-in-hand with a

widely spread eroticism, in which there is no contradiction, at least from the moment that sexuality is detached from responsibility. What is sought are pleasures whose quality is determined by freedom alone.

In short, anthropological dualism is behind the rupture between union and fecundity, diagnosed by *Humanae Vitae*, and which is certainly one of the factors of the present crisis.

An Ideology

Thus the body is extrinsic to the person, who is freedom, and freedom determines the use of the body in a sovereign manner. Of course, what I have described is the inner logic of a system that usually does not present itself so categorically. Human nature does not cease to make its voice heard, as there is still the sense that choices cannot be purely arbitrary: They depend on *conscience.* But a new conception of conscience ensues from this. Conscience is no longer the authority that determines and dictates, in a specific context, the application of the objective moral law to a deed to be done or forbidden, or the judgment of an act once it has been done. In this new conception, it is the individual conscience that decrees good and evil in a sovereign fashion. Thus conscience is absorbed by the individual's freedom, which is self-positing.

I have spoken of philosophical liberalism as an ideology. Such an identification is important. As we have noted, we do not find ourselves confronted by clear and rigorous philosophical systems. To speak of ideology is to say that the ideas in question exert their influence in a more or less underground fashion, without ever being fully elucidated. Imprecision belongs to ideology. This latter is like the air we breathe unawares. In this sense, its action is sly and shifty. This ideology signifies a set of active tendencies which oppose other tendencies, such as the fundamental reflexes of human nature or an authentic moral sense. These latter tendencies are more deeply rooted than ideological tendencies, even though the ideological tendencies are vigorously promoted by the mass media.

If philosophical liberalism, as ideology, does not come across with an aggressiveness comparable to that of Marxist ideology, this does not exclude a latent situation of conflict between tendencies, and the resulting concessions and compromises it never fails to produce.

The framework of liberal ideology is characterized by its focus on freedom and on freedom as an essential prerogative of the person. Thus the conflict is between two conceptions of freedom. Sartre, whom we may consider a philosopher of the liberal ideology in its libertarian form, rejects, when he speaks of the human condition, the idea of human nature in the metaphysical sense. For him, there exists a contradictory opposition between freedom and nature. In the final analysis, it is here that we find the crux of the debate.

We cannot overemphasize the dominant ideology of Western societies. Man is the individual; he is defined by his freedom, as freedom is the person. To speak of an objective moral law is to put a limitation on freedom. Individual freedom, through conscience, determines good and evil like a sovereign.

Legislation inspired by liberalism will tend to put the greatest number of problems in the sphere of private life. For example, is abortion a crime or not? It is for the individual to determine. That is why, in the defense of life, the first thing needed is to help people rediscover the existence of an objective moral law that holds normative value for human (civil) law. The first mistake is to make of the wickedness of abortion an exclusive question of individual conscience (of freedom).

We should note that the logic of liberalism rejects the idea of common moral standards and of the handing on of moral values by way of mores. The common sense, the mores, are looked upon as countless taboos and prejudices to be fought. Freedom alone, sheltered from all pressure, is entitled to judge validly. To have recourse to the moral sense of the people is to be immediately accused of anachronism, of obscurantism, of cultural retardation, of anti-democratic dogmatism. The paradox is that those who most often claim autonomy for the individual conscience do nothing but echo the dominant opinion.

The ideology of philosophical liberalism, with the instinctive reflexes it leads to, is an illustration of the divorce between freedom and truth spelled out in *Veritatis Splendor.*

A Cultural Question

If, as I hope, the analysis put forward is correct, it is clear that we cannot be satisfied with isolated remedies, although sometimes

emergencies make them necessary. We must go to the root, which is of a cultural nature; this is a matter of the conception of man, of the truth about man.

As regards new challenges that arise in the realm of biotechnologies, which also concern marriage and the family, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* no. 51, as we have seen, invites us to make every effort to explain the motives for the Church's position. It is not a question of imposing the vision of the faith on non-believers, but of interpreting and defending values that are rooted in the very nature of the human being. This observation must be received in the light of *Fides et Ratio.*

What is at stake is the conception of man as reason can naturally grasp it, even if Revelation confirms and broadens the horizon of such a conception. We should avoid presenting this conception as if it were of a sectarian nature, that is, as if it were inspired solely by a confessed faith. The broad outlines of a Christian anthropology—for this is what this is about—are found in *Gaudium et Spes.* The conciliar text itself gathers the fruits of a long tradition of thought and experience.

I would like to raise some points that seem to me to be of major importance. The work of culture that is required means that it is necessary to bring an inspiration to the basic orientations of culture. Thought is therefore needed, which requires thinkers who go to the root of the problems. This is indispensable if the great challenges of this age are to be confronted adequately. But the work of thinking demands a great pedagogical effort on various levels. Ideology seduces and takes control to the extent that it meets with a vacuum of ignorance or muddled and superficial ideas. This effort presupposes the courageous confidence in reason of which *Fides et Ratio* speaks.

Created Freedom

Two problems must be given particular consideration. The first one bears upon the meaning of *created freedom*. At the core of the liberal conception there is, implicitly or explicitly, the identification of human freedom with freedom alone, *überhaupt*. Thus human freedom becomes absolute freedom, which places us in the logic of immanence. In this perspective we understand the gravity of the

phenomenon of secularization. This signifies not only the fact of putting God in parentheses in order to busy oneself with worldly affairs alone, but, more radically, the fact of deciding by oneself in an autonomous manner without reference to Him and His moral law.

Man must see himself as he is, a creature. His existence is a response to a vocation, in the first meaning of the word. A vocation demands a response. It belongs to created freedom to be a responding freedom—responsible. To the call of God—or vocation—through the moral law and conscience, the person must answer of himself. Thus created freedom has the nature of a dialogue. Man is a person insofar as, by virtue of his spirituality, he is capable of consciousness and love, which also means openness and generosity.

The created person, inasmuch as he is created, naturally aspires to personal communion with Him who is his source—with God. Interpersonal dialogue, occurring in love as a gift, has its foundation in the original dialogue with God, the Source of created freedom. To take away this foundation is to sterilize the possibility of dialogue at its root, to open the way to behavior that treats the other as an object—an object of pleasure or of interest. Such is no doubt the most destructive consequence of secularization. It is not by chance that one speaks not so much of the person but of the individual. The individual is comparable to the monad of Leibniz, "without windows." The phrase that one reads in Maritain and Mounier, "personal and communal," has great depth.

It is possible that secularism, through indifferentism all the way to its most radical expressions in atheism, has, culturally speaking, arrived at its end in western civilization. Ethical atheism, however, remains very present in certain sectors of biotechnological research. But what is filtering through little by little is the consciousness of emptiness and nihilism as the final stage of secularism. Culture must rediscover the religious man *(homo religiosus)* in his truth (for religious deviations exist as well).

A second rediscovery is needed: that of *nature* in its metaphysical sense, and more directly of human nature with its corollary, the natural law. The awareness of creaturehood favors the rediscovery of nature in its goodness and beauty. If created freedom is revealed as the subject of a vocation, the first words of this calling are those

that nature itself suggests, inasmuch as nature expresses God's original plan. The natural law, inscribed in reason, is the immediate intimation of the demands of nature itself tending toward its ends or toward its fulfillment and perfection. This nature, which tends toward its perfection, bears the imprint of divine wisdom.

The human person is composed of a spiritual soul and body. The body is not foreign or exterior to the person, it is an integral part. It is a body endowed with sexuality with all the spiritual overtones this entails by virtue of the body's substantial union with the soul. This is why sexuality is itself a vocation and its responsible exercise is a response to this vocation. We are here at the level of the person's creaturehood, knowable by reason, and not yet at the knowledge of faith concerning the sacredness of marriage between the baptized.

When Christian thought therefore maintains that marriage, by its very nature, is a total, unique, and indissoluble relation between a man and a woman, it reminds the man and the woman of their origin according to God's first plan; it recalls the authentic nature of marriage understandable by reason. For, once thought gets to a certain depth, it rediscovers what is original. In this way, then, Christian thought performs the work of culture.

Faith also enlightens us on the existential condition of nature, fallen into sin, healed and raised up again by grace. This consideration allows us to grasp the connection between the law of the Gospel and the original design of the Creator. This connection is not a reduction; the law of the Gospel, or the New Law, introduces the newness of grace. It would be fitting today, in this perspective, to pursue the reflection, to which St. Thomas attaches great importance, on the different stages *(status)* of God's law in human history. As regards marriage, we should reflect deeply on Jesus' words about *hardness of heart* (cf. Mt 19:8). In this essay, however, I cannot develop this point. My purpose in this essay is simply to show that the crisis of marriage is the result and the reflection of an anthropological crisis whose solution must be of an anthropological nature. N&V

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Mary in the Dominican Tradition

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IN THE ROMAN liturgical calendar, the feasts of the Dominican saints Louis Grignion de Montfort, Catherine of Siena, and Pope Pius V fall on consecutive days in springtide: 28 April, Louis, 29 April, Catherine, and 30 April, Pius.[1] To present chronologically these Dominican saints requires transposing the order: Catherine (1347–80) lives in the fourteenth century, Pius V (1504–72) in the sixteenth, and Louis De Montfort (1673–1716) in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. If we add a Dominican not found on the official list of saints, John Capreolus (c.1380–1444), the grouping also would include a representative of the fifteenth century. These priests and lay sister illustrate four outstanding witnesses of the Marian devotion that flourishes in the Order of St. Dominic. They also span four important centuries of Western Catholic life.

Catherine, Capreolus, Pius, and Louis mark the passage from the late medieval age to the modern period. These four figures in a sense introduce our present moment in the Dominican Marian tradition. Louis de Montfort dies during the early reign of Louis XV

[1] This essay stems from a lecture delivered at the 25th Meeting of the New England Region of the Mariological Society of America on 19 October 2002. I wish to express my gratitude to Father Matthew Morry, OP, under whose auspices the New England Region has met since 1977, for the invitation to speak during the Silver Jubilee Program.

of France (1715–74). His successor would be guillotined in 1793. Within a decade Jean-Baptiste Henri Lacordaire (1802–61) is born, again in France. His retrieval of Dominican life and tradition in the first half of the nineteenth century sustains, it may be argued, the worldwide Order for more than a century. The Lacordaire renewal enjoys a complex history, especially in the United States.[2] But it is still true to say that Dominicans all depend on Lacordaire in significant ways. When I arrived in 1962 as an undergraduate at Providence College, the Dominicans were living more or less the form of Dominican life that Lacordaire had restored. Only they were doing this on the top floor of the present-day administration building, Harkins Hall, not in European convents that had been retrieved from theretofore expropriating government agencies.

The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) mandated all religious institutes to hold a special chapter to render themselves "apt" for renewal.[3] The Dominicans held theirs in Chicago in 1968. In the Eastern Dominican Province, to cite only one example, several friars made their first profession of vows on 4 August 1967. One may argue that these friars and Dominicans older in religion than they were formed in a Marian theology that enjoyed at least six hundred years of continuity.[4] Two obvious reference points are the year 1368, the date of Catherine's "mystical espousal" to Christ, and the year 1968, the date of the General Chapter held at River Forest outside of Chicago.[5]

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[2] See my "Lacordaire and the United States," *The Catholic Historical Review* 78 (1992): 197–206.

[3] *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, Perfectae caritatis* (28 October 1965), no. 3: ". . . documenta huius sacrae synodi aptentur."

[4] No judgment is rendered about developments after 1968, although there are concrete indications that Dominicans still take a special interest in the Blessed Virgin Mary, for example, the editorship of the monthly worship aid *Magnificat* is held by a Dominican priest.

[5] *Catherine of Siena. The Dialogue*, trans. and introduction by Suzanne Noffke, OP (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 4. This moment marks a transition in Catherine's spiritual development. She left her solitude, rejoined her father's home, and began to give herself to the service of the poor and the sick with her sisters of the *Mantellate.* She also met the learned Bartolomeo de' Dominici, her second confessor and lifelong friend.

In this brief essay, I can only support this claim by pointing out certain salient features of "Mary in the Dominican tradition" as Marian theology takes on a recognizable form at the end of the fourteenth century and continues to develop into the beginning of the eighteenth.[6] I think that we discover a pattern that one may safely assume does not contradict the Marian spirit that Saint Dominic himself bequeathed to his Order. There are family traits that should abide in a religious institute. If I were asked to identify a foremost characteristic of Mary in the Dominican tradition it would be that Dominicans first of all embrace Mary, then they talk about her. Thus, "contemplata et aliis tradere . . . ." To put it differently, Mary before Mariology.

I. Generation, Relationship, and Compassion

First, the young woman of Siena. The references to Mary in *The Dialogue* are incidental: a mention of Mary's day or altar, of her established intercession, in particular, the cure of Blessed Reginald of Orleans. On the other hand, Catherine's collected letters afford a clear glimpse into her peculiar love for Our Lady; in fact, she begins many letters by invoking her "sweet Jesus" and his "most sweet mother Mary."[7] "E di Maria dolce."[8] Above all, Mary represents the

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[6] It would make an interesting research project to identify those Dominicans who expounded the Order's Marian theology in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries.

[7] See *I, Catherine. Selected Writings of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. and ed. Kenelm Foster and Mary John Ronayne (London: Collins, 1980), 53, note 1 [Hereafter, Foster]. The earliest English edition is Catherine of Siena, *Saint Catherine of Siena as Seen in Her Letters*, trans. and ed. Vida D. Scudder (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1927) [Hereafter, Scudder]. Sister Suzanne Noffke is editing a new and complete edition of the letters: *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, Vol. 1, trans. with introduction and notes Suzanne Noffke, OP, (Birmingham, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaisance Texts & Studies, 1988) [Hereafter, Noffke, 1988]. New research resulted in a revision of the project: *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, Vols. 1,2, trans. with introduction and notes by Suzanne Noffke, OP (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000, 2001) [Hereafter, Noffke, 2000, Noffke, 2001].

[8] This is the Italian formula found in *Lettere di Santa Caterina*, ed. Centro Nazionale di Studi Cateriniani (Rome: Biblioteca Fides, 1973).

sweet mother of Catherine's beloved Jesus: "his sweet mother, Mary." Catherine refers to Christ as "this gentle son of Mary."[9] At the same time, Catherine's Christology is what some today may describe as "high": "The Eternal Son was wounded in his body and so," Catherine asserts, "his mother, for that bodily flesh was from her."[10] Catherine describes the Incarnation as a coming-to-be, "like [a] seed taking root in the field that is Mary . . . ."[11] Catherine rejoices in fecundity: "O happy and sweet Mary: you have given us the flower of sweet Jesus."[12] At another moment, she tells a correspondent: "Truly, truly, in this blessed and sweet field of Mary, the Word was inserted into his flesh. Like the grain of his Word in the field of Mary."[13] Generation remains essential to Catherine's instruction about Mary. "Consider, consider," she begs the Queen of Naples, "the ineffable love of God and the sweetness of the delicious fruit of an immaculate heart . . . that was in Mary."[14]

Catherine insists that the mother of her sweet Jesus becomes our most sweet mother. She makes this point again and again. To Lady Paula of Fiesole, Catherine says that Mary works only for the honor of God and the salvation of souls."[15] To Dona Lapa, her natural mother: "Stay close to the most sweet mother Mary, for she knows the sufferings of discipleship. If you would have asked the apostles, 'why are you suffering joyfully your taking leave of Mary?' They would have responded, 'Because we have denied ourselves and are now dedicated to the honor of God and to the salvation of souls.' "[16] The apostles, Catherine several times assures us, stay close to Mary for the development of faith and their own consolation. But they are willing to leave her company in order to

[9] Noffke, 1988, 176. The author is responsible for the translations. Since the various editions assign different numbers to Catherine's letters, reference is made to the page number of a volume where an English version of the citation may be found. When no reference is given, no English translation of the text is available.

[10] Noffke, 1988, 38.

[11] Ibid., 1988, 117–18.

[12] Noffke, 2001, 111.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Noffke, 1988, 135–6.

[15] Ibid., 118.

[16] Noffke, 2001, 442.

enact the command of charity.[17] Was Catherine of Siena also thinking about the new apostles of Saint Dominic? In any case, Catherine tells Pope Urban VI how happy she is that the most sweet mother Mary and sweet St. Peter (after all, he was the Pope!) will protect him.[18] Relationship figures prominently in Catherine's instruction about Mary.

Catherine in fact urges all sorts of people to establish a relationship with Mary. To a married woman of Lucca: "In great tribulations stay close to Mary, who loves without measure."[19] To the Prior and the Brothers of the Company of the Virgin Mary: "No one wants to be deprived of the affection of Mary."[20] To a prostitute, whom she wished to console: "Run to Mary for she is the mother of mercy and compassion." To her own dear mother while she remained stranded at a monastery in Montepulciano: "Live in the company of the most gracious mother Mary."[21]

Catherine finds special joy on Mary's feast days.[22] Her practical advice to a burger of Siena and his sons: "Keep Saturdays for Mary!" To a recently widowed woman, whom she wished to comfort: "Take communion on feasts of Mary." To the wife of a Florentine tailor: "Fast on the days of Holy Mary, if you can."[23]

Catherine tells soldiers who remain loyal to the Pope that Mary will strengthen and protect them in battle. She prayed "with Mary and St. Catherine [of Alexandria]" while awaiting the execution of a Sienese political prisoner, and then openly cried out "Maria" as a sign that she dearly wanted his conversion. And God granted the favor to Catherine. The dying man's last words, "Jesus, Catherine!"[24] After her own death, God also granted Catherine the grace of a Carthusian vocation for a brilliant young noble, Stefano Maconi, whom she had counseled "to hasten in your whole manhood, and respond to Mary who calls

[17] Ibid., 181; Noffke, 2001, 249 and 389.
[18] Foster, 245.
[19] Noffke, 2001, 30.
[20] Ibid., 313.
[21] Ibid., 442.
[22] Scudder, 349.
[23] Ibid., 71.
[24] Noffke, 1988, 110.

you with greatest love."[25] Compassion completes, indeed crowns, Catherine's instruction about Mary.

We again discover generation, relationship, and compassion displayed in the way Catherine addresses her counselor and guide, the Dominican friar Raymond of Capua. Raymond is the son given to her by the Virgin Mary.[26] Later, after he becomes Master of the Order, she declares that "as a father and son (Raymond) was given to her by the sweet mother Mary."[27] Generation. Catherine counsels Raymond: "Do not put the end, the *finis*, of your life in anything other than to delight and to repose in the cross with Christ crucified. When you act like this, you will be a son of Mary and a spouse of the Eternal Word."[28] Again, she insists in an identifiably Dominican way, "Remember the doctrine of Mary and of the sweet and First Truth."[29] "Maintain self-knowledge and the offering of humility and of continual prayer."[30] Relationship. Catherine encourages right relations, relations to the end of human existence, to first Truth, to one's own worth. When Raymond is troubled, she comforts him: "Have confidence that the Virgin Mary will fulfill my desire for you."[31] "In periods of spiritual turbulence," says Catherine, "keep to your cell, in the presence of Mary and of the most holy cross."[32] Then, she tells Raymond, he "with most devout and humble prayer, with a candid knowledge of self, with an alive faith and the will to suffer" will be able to communicate her counsels to Pope Gregory XI.[33] Lastly, Catherine encourages Raymond by evoking the pietà: "Mary," she says, "has been wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation." Compassion.[34]

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[25] Scudder, 302–03.

[26] Noffke, 1988, 220.

[27] Foster, 269.

[28] Noffke, 2001, 656.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Scudder, 241. Catherine employs the striking image of a ladder to explain Mary's conformity to the will of Christ: "[S]he would have made a ladder of her very self to put her Son on the cross if there had been no other way" (Noffke, 1988, 118).

[33] Scudder, 241.

[34] Noffke, 1988, 39.

II. "La spiritualité de combat"

In her book *Saint Pie V,* Nicole Lemaitre argues that the reform movement initiated under Catherine's "father" and "son," Raymond of Capua (whose mastership began in 1380 and lasted until the end of the fourteenth century, 1399), explains the flowering of Dominican intellectual life and other manifestations of Christian energies that took place in the following decades. Specifically, Lemaitre describes the Dominican spirituality of the fifteenth century as "une spiritualité de combat."[35] This ethos manifests itself in Dominican piety, but also in Dominican learning.

John Capreolus (1380–1444), called "the Prince of the Thomists," was born around the year that Catherine died and Raymond of Capua became Master of the Order. Capreolus illustrates in an extraordinary fashion the renewal of learning that can develop when Dominicans return with confidence to the texts of Saint Thomas Aquinas.[36] The death of Capreolus in 1444 occurs some thirty years before the establishment on 8 September 1475 of the first Rosary confraternity in Cologne, the same day on which the Breton Dominican Alain de la Roche died.[37] This ardent and apostolic priest lived during the middle years of the fifteenth century, and his enthusiasm and zeal launched one of the most successful enterprises that the Dominican Order has generated: the Rosary confraternities.[38] The Rosary confraternities afforded laity

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[35] Nicole Lemaitre, *Saint Pie V* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 42–47 [Hereafter, Lemaitre].

[36] See my *John Capreolus (1380–1444): Treatise on the Virtues*, ed. and introduction with Kevin White (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001). The claim about the perennial validity of Aquinas has been recently reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 43 and 44.

[37] Sister Mary Jean Dorcy's *Saint Dominic's Family* (Dubuque, IA: The Priory Press, 1964; reprint, Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1983) gives the year as 1479.

[38] Because the laity were joined in their daily labors to the spiritual suffrages of the Order, it is possible to recognize in the worldwide confederation of Rosary confraternities one expression of what has come to be known in our own day as the vocation of the laity. Any member of a sixteenth-century Rosary confraternity would have been surprised to hear that the laity occupied no real place in the Church.

the opportunity to sanctify their everyday labors. The practices encouraged by the confraternities helped Christians to meet the Lord in their daily lives. It is important to remember that the Rosary is a prayer that sanctifies the intelligence: ". . . grant that we who *meditate* on the mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may. . . ."[39] Venerable Alain de la Roche prepared Catholics for Montaigne's (1522–92) world as reflected in the *Essais* (II, 37): "I have made it my whole business to frame my life: this has been my trade and my life."[40] It remains of course another and open question to evaluate the extent to which Catholic culture on the whole was prepared to encounter this foreshadowing of "radical enlightenment."[41]

John Capreolus's *Defensiones* comprise a defense of Saint Thomas' realism against various expressions of conceptualism that began to flourish in the fourteenth century: the extreme expressions are included usually under the heading of nominalism. Some accounts of the late medieval and early modern periods assume that the flight from metaphysics and the rise of the *devotio moderna* are causally correlative moments in the history of Western spirituality.[42] Leave behind outworn and useless subtleties

[39] Pope John Paul II connects the sanctification of the intelligence with that of the whole person: ". . . it is worthwhile to note that the contemplation of the mysteries could better express their full spiritual fruitfulness if an effort were made to conclude each mystery with a prayer for the fruits specific to that particular mystery. In this way the Rosary would better express its connection with the Christian life. One fine liturgical prayer suggests as much, inviting us to pray that, by meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, we may come to 'imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise' " (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 35).

[40] Cited in Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity. An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 100 [Hereafter, Dupré].

[41] To borrow the title of Jonathan I. Israel's book *Radical Enlightenment Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[42] Heiko A. Oberman, "Headwaters of the Reformation," in *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 40–88, esp. 70, discovers only one person, the Dutch Brother of Common Life Wessel Gansfort, who clearly belonged to both camps—the humanist and the nominalist.

and discover fresh and productive experiences. Louis Dupré, however, cautions that the relation between nominalism and the humanist movement (of which *devotio moderna* is a religious expression) remains far from clear.[43] What should be observed and promoted is that the Dominican tradition keeps metaphysics and devotion together. In this alembic emerges a spirit that is at once dynamic, differentiated, and combative. John Capreolus (†1444) and Alain de la Roche (†1475) witness diversely to this spirit, which for Dominicans always evolves around a love for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Other Dominican saints exemplified the spirituality of combat, which is linked organically to the imitation of the suffering Christ, and thus to Mary.[44] If we jump ahead a century, the biography of Saint Catherine de Ricci evokes the image of a woman who at once bore the marks of the Passion, and at the same time involved herself in the Reform of the Church. Though she flourished in the mid-sixteenth century, Catherine de Ricci (1522–90) stands in continuity with a keenly metaphysical, fifteenth-century theologian like John Capreolus, whose distinctions, admittedly, even the most ardent admirer of the "gladium distinctionis" may find wearisome. Where do we find the common thread? Capreolus wrote about Mary. He defended her active role in preparing the matter of Christ's body. Generation.[45] He defended Mary's real relation to her Son without affirming a double "filiation." Christ remains the only-begotten of the Father, and still is a true son of Mary. Relationship. Capreolus also advanced the arguments of the Thomist school against the Immaculate Conception, which sought to emphasize 1 Tim 4: 10: "we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men . . . ." When these arguments are properly understood, the

43 Dupré, 267, n. 25.

44 Recall Cajetan's reaction to depictions of the Virgin Mary in a swoon at the crucifixion. These had become popular during the late medieval period, especially in Germany. Cajetan liked to distinguish between sorrow *(dolor)* and sadness *(tristia)*. Our Lady was eminently sorrowful, but never sad.

45 See Richard Schenk, "Capreolus" in *Marienlexikon*, ed. R. Bäumer and L. Scheffczyk, vol. 1 (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1988), 652.

honest theologian will recognize a theologically astute defense of Christian compassion.[46]

The young Dominican Michael Ghislieri undoubtedly studied Capreolus, whereas later as Pope Pius V, he corresponded with his contemporary Catherine de Ricci. What I want to emphasize is that authentic developments within the Dominican tradition prepared Saint Pius V to occupy his moment in that same tradition, but from a privileged venue, that of the papacy. His Marian devotion does not exhibit a reactionary spirit exacerbated by the experience of ecclesiastical divisions and political calamities: for instance, the Protestant Reform and the military expansion of Islam. Instead, Saint Pius V arrives on the world scene as a carrier of "la spiritualité de combat."

III. Mary, Help of Christians

It was during the night of the 21st to 22nd October when the news arrived in Rome that the largest naval battle of the sixteenth century had been won by the forces of the Holy League under the command of Don Juan of Austria (1545–78), the twenty-six year old, illegitimate son of the Emperor Charles V. Lepanto! "The victory was great, and we muchly thanked God, but our losses were not small . . . . We lost so many men of high standing and great value." Thus said Sebastian Venier, captain of the Christian fleet.[47] The day of the victory, 7 October, coincided with the customary processions organized by the Rosary confraternities in Rome. Pius V thus proposed to his cardinals that the universal Church should commemorate the Blessed Virgin on each first Sunday of October, and, additionally, that the Roman church dedicated to our Lady under the name Santa Maria sopra Minerva should receive the new title of Our Lady of Victory.

The actual implementation of the Rosary feast was left to his successor, Gregory XIII. The inclusion of the title "Our Lady Help of Christians" in the Litany of Loretto probably came

[46] Dominicans opposed the Immaculate Conception as it was argued for in the early modern period because the most ardent proponents of this doctrine seemed to place Mary outside of the divine compassion, and so made her seem to constitute an exception to the salvific work of Christ.

[47] Lemaitre, 314.

about as a result of the practice started by Christian sailors who, as they returned home from debarkation along the Adriatic Sea, stopped to pray at the famous shrine. But the legends, including the one commemorated in the mosaic at Saint Pius V Church in Providence, Rhode Island, represent a truth about the effect on sixteenth-century Europe of the Lepanto victory. It is said that while Pius V was working with his treasurer, Bartolomeo Bussoti, the Pope suddenly jumped up from the table, opened a window facing the East, and cried out: "Enough of business, let us thank the Lord, for our army at this moment has gained victory over the Turks." Today historians enjoy increased access to the archives of the Ottoman Turks, and there exists a certain agreement that Lepanto did mark an end of the secular struggle between Christians and Islam, one that has lasted until our own day, or so we pray.

Lepanto occurred in 1571, at the end of Pius V's life and reign. He died the next year on 1 May. Without a doubt, Pius transposed "la spiritualité de combat" to the level of international affairs. For this reason, it would be possible to draw a direct line from Pius V to John Paul II, who on 29 September 2002 said: "It is more necessary than ever that from every part of the earth *prayer for peace* be made to Him. In this perspective, the Rosary turns out to be the form of prayer most needed."[48] The work of reform that marked Pius V's service to the Church makes sense only in the context of his Dominican devotion to Mary. We again encounter the themes of generation, relationship, and compassion. For Michael Gishlieri, generation meant seriousness about begetting the truth—take, for example, his publication in 1566 of the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. Relationship meant strengthening right order—take, for instance, his Bull of 29 May 1566 that enforced the cloister for women religious. (Catherine de Ricci understood the implications of this reversal in the life of her nuns, and, as superior, undertook enforcement of the cloister as a kind of metaphysical perfectation.) And compassion for Pope Pius V meant encouraging people to believe in the "living God, who is the Savior of all men"—take, for example, his establishment in 1569 of a determined living space for the Roman courtesans,

[48] Sunday Angelus, 29 September 2002 reported in *L'Osservatore Romano* 2 October 2002.

wherein they could hear special sermons. This measure the Dominican Pope approbated only after his earlier attempt in the summer of 1566 to expel these ladies from the Eternal City had proven unsuccessful. Both strategies reveal aspects of compassion, especially given the moral climate of Renaissance Rome.

IV. Ad Jesum, per Mariam

Four years before the death of Pius V, Giacomo de Vignola (1507–73) and Giacomo della Porta (1537–1602) began construction of the Gesù, the mother church in Rome of the Jesuits. Art historians tell us that the facade of the Gesù "is important as the model for the facades of Roman Baroque churches for two centuries, and its basic scheme is echoed and reechoed throughout Catholic countries, especially in Latin America."[49] When Louis Marie Grignion was born into a French family of eighteen children at Montfort-la-Cane (today, Montfort-sur-Meu) in 1673, Charles II of England had already asked Christopher Wren to design a new Saint Paul's Cathedral for London. Wren thought of the Gesù. The Baroque had reached England.

Scholars, even those antecedently sympathetic to the doctrine of Louis Marie de Montfort, draw attention to the influence on him exercised by theologians of the Baroque era. These include the *Oeuvres Complètes* of Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle.[50] What is important, however, remains the historical fact that it was Mary and her Rosary that brought Louis de Montfort into contact with the Dominicans. In 1706, at the Dominican convent of Dinan, where his priest brother Joseph-Pierre was chaplain, Louis de Montfort asked to celebrate Mass at the altar dedicated to Alain de la Roche.[51] We find ourselves once again in Catholic Brittany.

Since their active promotion by Pope Pius V, the Rosary confraternities flourished under the auspices of the Dominicans. Through-

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[49] Helen Gardner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, rev. by Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey, 5th ed. (NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970) 556.

[50] For example, P. Gaffney, "Mary" in *Jesus Living in Mary: Handbook of the Spirituality of St. Louis Marie de Montfort* (Bay Shore, NY: Montfort Publications, 1994), 693 [Hereafter, *Jesus Living in Mary*].

[51] J.-C. Laurenceau, "Rosary" in ibid., 1056–57.

out the seventeenth century, the Dominicans fought to keep the confraternities under their aegis.[52] Louis Marie understandably came to the realization that his success as a preacher of the Rosary would require that he seek affiliation with the Dominicans. On 10 November 1710, he made his profession to follow the rule of what was then known as the Third Order to the Prior of the Convent of Nantes. Montfort now shared authoritatively in the apostolic spirit of Saint Dominic. Today, we would say that he became part of the Dominican Family. In May 1712, he wrote to the Master General to ask him "for permission to preach the Holy Rosary wherever the Lord calls me, and to enroll into the Rosary Confraternity with the usual indulgences as many people as I can." He went on to explain, "I have already been doing this with the permission of the local Priors and Provincials." Montfort received the permission that he sought from Father Antoninus Cloche, who served as Master of the Order for 34 years, from 1686–1720. The term of Master General Cloche brings us to the end of the Baroque period.

Cloche, himself a Frenchman, had been deeply involved in the Order's struggles with Jansenism, which we vigorously opposed, with Gallicanism, which infected deeply the French provinces, and with the Chinese Rites controversy, which put us once more in open conflict with the Jesuits.[53] No wonder that Father Cloche found something both familiar and sympathetic in the spirit of Louis Marie de Montfort: "It is by the Most Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ has come into the world and it is also by her that He must reign in the world." These introductory lines of De Montfort's *True Devotion*, recapitulate Dominican Rosary devotion. There exists general agreement, moreover, that *True Devotion* was composed in the autumn of 1712, just after De Montfort had written to Father Cloche requesting the highest permission to enroll new members into the Rosary confraternities. Against Jansenist rigorism, De Montfort preached Mary's compassion; in defiance of Gallican ecclesial self-absorption, De Montfort illustrated a right

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[52] For example, Master General Antonio de Monroy (1677–85) "encouraged the Rosary confraternities and worked to keep them under Dominican control." See Benedict Ashley, *The Dominicans* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 150–51 [Hereafter, Ashley].

[53] Ashley, 151.

ecclesial relationship: he wrote to Rome, to Santa Sabina, for permission to preach the Rosary in France. Antoninus Cloche undoubtedly recognized in this French diocesan priest a man who understood the Dominican tradition of Mary's compassion.

Mary in the Dominican tradition. Generation, relationship, compassion. Once commentators began to speculate on the Second Vatican Council's decision to append to the Constitution on the Church a final chapter devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mariologists began to emphasize Our Lady's place among the redeemed. Thomists of course were happy with this development insofar as their objection to a certain presentation of the Immaculate Conception had been recognized, as it were. At the same time, other Marian mysteries received less attention. For example, we hear uttered less frequently today than prior to 1962, "Ad Jesum, per Mariam." It would exceed the scope of this essay to analyze in detail Louis De Montfort's *True Devotion*. Still, even a cursory glance reveals the themes of generation, relationship, and compassion woven warp and woof into the texture of his Marian theology.

Generation comes by way of consecration, a consecration which effectively comprises "the perfect renewal of the vows and promises of holy baptism."[54] Relationship flows from generation: "We belong to Jesus and Mary as their slaves."[55] This metaphor strikes contemporary ears as odd sounding, but the reality is simple, as one author explains:

> Mary has dominion over us, exerts power over us, which is why we are dependent on her (*True Devotion* 37, 74–77), but we must realize that it is in the end a dominion or power that is based on

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54 *True Devotion*, no. 120. *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* no. 15 includes this excerpt from *True Devotion:* "Our entire perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Hence the most perfect of all devotions is undoubtedly that which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ."

55 *True Devotion*, nos. 68–77.

> her divine maternity extending into spiritual maternity. Therefore, our dependence, our "slavery" must be characterized by filial love.[56]

Filial love or filial fear suggests the theological virtue of hope.[57] Hope reveals the full dimensions of the divine compassion. We learn that God can save us and that He wants to save. In Thomist terms, the formal mediating object of theological hope points to the divine omnipotence and the divine *pietas*, the divine compassion for the human creature. It should come as no surprise to learn, then, that Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort first consecrated himself to Our Lady before an image of the pietà, at Saumur in the chapel of Our Lady of Ardilliers. First of all, this ardent apostle of Mary was drawn by beholding the preeminent symbol of her compassion.

Where did our saints learn about Mary? How did she emerge within the family tradition of Saint Dominic bearing the message of generation, relationship, and compassion? I suggest that Dominicans learned to do their Mariology by pondering the texts of Aquinas. It is well known that the *Summa Theologiae* enters into ordinary usage shortly after the period when John Capreolus flourished.[58] His *Defensiones* follow the *Scriptum on the Sentences*, not the *Summa*. But Saint Thomas's major systematic works both treat generation, relationship, and compassion. We find these themes arguably representative of the structure of the *Summa*. The *prima pars* discusses natures created and uncreated. We learn about the eternal generation of the Son, the Trinitarian processions, and the world of identifiable natures that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together create. We learn, in other words, about *de processione creaturarum a Deo*.[59] Next, in the *secunda pars*, we discover the relationship

56 A. Bossard, "True Devotion" in *Jesus Living in Mary*, 1223.

57 See my "The Theological Virtue of Hope (IIa IIae qq. 17–22)" in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 232–43. See also my *Virtues, or the Examined Life* (New York: Continuum, 2002).

58 See my *Le thomisme et les thomistes* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1999), 80ff.

59 *Summa Theologiae* Prologue to q. 44: "Post processionem divinarum Personarum, considerandum restat de processione creaturam a Deo."

which the human creature enjoys with those perfective ends that form part of the teleology of Christian life. These ends are multiple and the relationships they specify are suited to both shared human nature and personal vocation in the Church. All the telic relationships conduce to happiness for man: "*ex fine enim oportet accipere rationes eorum quae ordinantur ad finem*."[60] The supreme happiness, however, escapes all human efforts to embrace it. Beatific happiness or divine friendship had been lost by Adam's sin. The *tertia pars* explains the divine compassion in the most personal of terms. "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1: 26–27). "Quia salvator noster Dominus Jesus Christus, teste angelo, 'populum suum salvum faciens a peccatis eorum,' viam veritatis in seipse demonstravit, per quam ad beatitudinem immortalis . . . ."[61] The rest of the story is well known to both Dominicans and students of Aquinas. Theologians who want to compose Mariology must first imitate the angel, and say in faith, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Lk 1: 28b). They, in other words, must embrace Mary. At least that is what we do in the Dominican tradition. We do it each time that we say the Rosary. Pope John Paul II, in *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, applies this intuition to objectives beyond those of scientific theology: "At times when Christianity itself seemed under threat, its deliverance was attributed to the power of this prayer, and Our Lady of the Rosary was acclaimed as the one whose intercession brought salvation."[62] If we consider Mary in the Dominican tradition, we recognize that John Paul II invites us to take up once more "*la spiritualité de combat*." N&V

[60] *ST* Prologue to *pars prima-secundae.*

[61] *ST* Prologue to the *tertia pars.*

[62] *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 39.

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The Threeness and Oneness of God in Twelfth- to Fourteenth-Century Scholasticism[1]

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"THERE IS NO SUBJECT where error is more dangerous, research more laborious, and discovery more fruitful than the oneness of the Trinity *(unitas Trinitatis)* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." This warning of Augustine, which Peter Lombard puts at the beginning of his inquiry on the Trinity in his *Sentences*[2] and which commentators have often repeated, sets the tone for Trinitarian research during the golden age of scholasticism: The theological explanation of faith in the Trinitarian oneness of God, as Albert the Great makes explicit, is made with the conviction that here lies the goal of human existence, but that a mistake in this area would entail the destruction of the whole edifice of the faith.[3]

[1] Translation by Robert Williams of "Trinité et unité de Dieu dans la scolastique. XIIe–XIVe siècle," in *Le christianisme est-il un monothéisme?*, ed. P. Gisel and G. Emery (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001), 195–220.

[2] Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* I, d. 2, c. 1 (*Sententiae in IV Libris distinctae*, ed. I. Brady, tom. 1/2 [Grottaferrata/Rome: Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1971], 62); Augustine, *De Trinitate* Book 1, ch. 1, no. 5.

[3] In his commentary on the *Sentences*, Albert the Great devotes two articles to the discussion of Augustine's warning quoted by Lombard. See Albert the Great, I *Sent.* d. 2, aa. 6–7 (*Opera Omnia*, ed. Auguste Borgnet, vol. 25 [Paris: Louis Vivès, 1893], 60); see also Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum* Book I, d. 2 (ed. Pierre Mandonnet, vol. 1 [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929], 77).

There is more to these observations than mere convention. For the history of Trinitarian doctrine during the scholastic period demonstrates the often laborious search for balance, punctuated by ecclesiastical sanctions and giving rise to hardheaded divergences among theologians. Without writing a history of Trinitarian doctrine, this study will attempt to outline some of the salient aspects of the relationship between the Oneness and the Threeness of God in scholastic thought by pointing out the decisive stages in this thought from the twelfth century until the beginning of the fourteenth century in order to highlight the *loci* of the question and the main ways of answering it.

I. Threeness and Oneness in the Beginning of Scholasticism: Ecclesiastical Reactions and Interventions

The Trinitarian question constitutes the great theme of twelfth-century theology.[4] Two tensions may be cited as characteristic of this blossoming of Trinitarian theology. The first has to do with the method of investigation. The initiators of the scholastic method, considering the content of the faith by means of the rational resources of language and philosophy, ran into opposition from those who held to a traditional theology in the patristic and contemplative vein. The second tension concerns the stress put either upon the divine Oneness or upon the plurality of Persons in the difficult search for balance. These difficulties are illustrated in Abelard's writings and the reactions they aroused.

A. Roscellinus, Anselm, and Abelard

One of Abelard's first masters, Roscellinus of Compiègne (ca. 1050–ca. 1120), created a lively controversy by his refusal to agree that the three divine Persons were a single reality *(una res).* For Roscellinus, affirming the single reality of the three divine Persons would no longer allow us to safeguard the deposit of faith since of these Persons only the Son became flesh. Consequently, for fear of Patripassianism, Roscellinus holds that the three divine Persons are three realities *(tres res)* that have, however, one same will and one

[4] Antonio Terracciano, "Dibattito sulla Trinità e orientamenti teologici nel XII secolo," *Asprenas* 34 (1987): 284–303.

same power. He compares them to three angels or three souls, which are likewise *tres res.* Here we are at the beginnings of the scholastic problem to which the masters of the thirteenth century still bear witness: "Can the three Persons be called 'three realities' *(tres res)*?"[5] In his *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*, Anselm of Canterbury addresses a sharp reply to Roscellinus's thesis. Seeing Roscellinus as a nominalist dialectician, Anselm criticizes him for his tritheism: "Either he intends to profess three gods, or he does not understand what he is saying."[6] In Anselm's opinion, the reason for such an error lies in a poor grasp of the relationship between individuals and universals: "For in what way can those who do not yet understand how several specifically human beings are one human being understand in the most hidden and highest nature how several Persons, each of whom is complete God, are one God?"[7] According to Anselm, Roscellinus's thesis introduces a breach in the one substance of God.[8] Thus Anselm attacks "those contemporary dialecticians *(dialectici)* or, rather, the heretics of dialectics who consider universal essences to be merely vocal emanations."[9] The

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[5] Peter Lombard, who highlights the Augustinian sources, will bring the question into the twelfth century (Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* I, d. 25, c. 2, nos. 4–5); Lombard uses the expression *"tres res,"* and likewise affirms *"una summa res"* in the Trinity by distinguishing between the Essence *(una res)* and the Persons *(tres res)*; his commentators will echo this; see in particular Bonaventure, I *Sent.* d. 25, *dub.* 3 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 [Quaracchi: Editiones PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1882], 446); Thomas Aquinas, I *Sent.* d. 25, q. 1, a. 4.

[6] Anselm, *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*, ch. 2, in *Anselm of Canterbury, The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 238.

[7] Ibid., ch. 1, 237.

[8] Roscellinus will vigorously deny affirming a substantial plurality in God and distances himself from the tritheism charge in a letter he sent to Abelard on this subject (*PL* 178, 357–72). For an overview of Roscellinus's Trinitarian thought, see Johann Hofmeier, *Die Trinitätslehre des Hugo von St. Viktor* (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1963), 9–26.

[9] Anselm, *Epistola de incarnatione Verbi*, ch. 1, 237. This nominalism or "vocalism" of Roscellinus (only words or vocal sounds and individual things exist; nothing is made up of parts) is considered the historical starting point of the dispute over universals: cf. Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux de Platon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 142–46.

Abbot of Bec answers Roscellinus theologically with the distinction between what is common and one in God (the divine Essence) and what is distinct (the properties, the Persons). The three divine Persons are a single res (substance, essence); if we wish to speak of *tres res*, we must include under the word res the relations rather than the substance.[10] Anselm retraces the main elements of his answer in a letter addressed to Foulques, Bishop of Beauvais, to be read before the assembly of the Council of Soissons (in about 1092), which rejected Roscellinus's Trinitarian error.[11] Thus the eleventh century ends with a clear affirmation of the divine Oneness *(una res)*, with the intention of avoiding the danger of tritheism created by the new dialectics.

In the wake of Anselm, Abelard (1079–1142) likewise reacted against Roscellinus's thesis. In a letter that he addressed to the Bishop of Paris around 1120, the Master of Le Pallet explains that the main purpose of his writings on the Trinity was to refute Roscellinus's tritheistic heresy condemned at the Council of Soissons.[12] The aim of *Theologia Summi Boni* and its succeeding elaborations *(Theologia Christiana, Theologia Scholarium)* is to furnish a defense of the traditional Trinitarian doctrine against the new "dialecticians." However Abelard organizes this defense on the very grounds of dialectics.[13] For our purpose (which is not to consider the whole of Trinitarian theology but only the Threeness–Oneness relationship), Abelard's central thesis consists in focusing on the three divine Persons starting with the triad of divine attributes: power, wisdom, kindness *(potentia, sapientia, benignitas)*. The Father "is called Father by reason of this unique power of His majesty"; the Son is called Son "because we find in Him a particular wisdom"; as for the Holy Spirit, He is so called "in accordance with the grace of

10 Anselm, *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*, ch. 2, 239–40.

11 See M. Corbin, ed., *L'oeuvre de S. Anselme de Cantorbéry*, vol. 1 (Paris : Cerf, 1988), 262–65.

12 Constant J. Mews, "Introduction" to *Petri Abaelardi Theologia "Summi Boni"*, CCCM 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 39; cf. *PL* 178, 355–58.

13 We should understand by dialectics the logical method of language analysis and rational study applied to the pronouncements of faith and the maxims of the Fathers; cf. Franz Courth, *Trinität in der Scholastik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 30–50; Jean Jolivet, *La théologie d'Abélard* (Paris, Cerf, 1997).

His goodness." Thus "the name Father designates power; the name Son, wisdom; and the name Holy Spirit, the sentiment that is favorable to creatures." In a word: "To say then that God is three Persons is the same as saying that the divine substance is mighty, wise, and good." This is the way Abelard envisions the Trinity, from a rational perspective starting with the notion of the highest good *(summum bonum, tota boni perfectio)*, which consists in the three characteristics of power, wisdom, and goodness.[14]

Abelard has a clear-cut view of God's oneness (one single and singular substance) as well as of the properties that distinguish the Persons.[15] If he accurately grasps the Threeness in the Oneness by means of the relative properties and processions (generation and procession), nevertheless he does not give up explaining these properties in the threefold manner described above. The properties of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct "for the Father is called Father only by the fact that He is mighty *(potens)*, the Son by the fact that He can know *(discretus, potens discernere)*, and the Holy Spirit by the fact that He is good *(benignus)*."[16] The problem raised by such reasoning, which Abelard was well aware

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[14] Abelard, *Theologia Summi Boni*, Book 1, ch. 2 (CCCM 13 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1987], 86–88). This is the thesis that opens Abelard's Trinitarian reflection in his first *Theology*; the later *Theologies* develop and complete this starting point but they do not substantially modify this initial position.

[15] "What is proper to the Father is to exist through Himself, not through another, and to beget from all eternity a Son who is co-eternal with Him; what is proper to the Son is to be begotten, and to have been begotten by the Father only, to be neither created nor made nor proceeding but only begotten. As for the Holy Spirit, what is proper to Him is to proceed from the Father and the Son both, to be neither created nor made nor begotten but only to proceed" (ibid., Book 2, ch. 1, 124–25). We recognize here the doctrine of the "four properties" formalized by the subsequent tradition of the Schools.

[16] Ibid., Book 2, ch. 4, no. 103, 150–51. The end of the chapter takes up this thesis again: "For God the Father, who is a Person according to the very meaning of the name, must be defined in an exact way as divine Power, i.e., mighty God; God the Son, as divine Wisdom; the Spirit of God as divine Goodness. Thus the Father differs from the Son through His property or definition *(proprietate siue diffinitione)*, i.e., He is other than Him; in the same way, the one and the other differ from the Holy Spirit" (ibid., 152; also see 152–53).

of, is the following: How do we distinguish the Persons by attributes that also designate what is one in God (common power, wisdom, and goodness)?

Abelard's answer makes recourse to the language and grammatical structure of our statements: "Words taken in themselves have exactly the same value, or are equivalent as to what they signify, but even so they do not keep this value if they enter into a construction."[17] Thus, in the statements we form about God as Trinity, we must distinguish those that concern the identity of essence (power common to the three Persons) from those that concern the identity of the property (the Father is mighty, etc.; power, wisdom, kindness as personal properties). Elsewhere, Abelard will explain the threesome of wisdom-power-goodness by the famous "similitude" of the bronze seal: the bronze material, the seal made of this bronze, and this seal at the moment of actually sealing (identity of substance, diversity of properties).[18] This construct allows Abelard to shed light on the Trinitarian dimension of creation and salvation history: We attribute to the Father that which has to do with power (creation *ex nihilo*, sending his Son); to the Son we assign whatever has to do with wisdom (to judge, perceive); and to the Holy Spirit what pertains to the actions of divine grace.[19]

Clearly Abelard had no intention of attributing to the Father an essential power superior to the Son's, and we may well believe that he himself understood the usage of the power attribute in accordance with the connection that associates essential power with what would later be called notional power (power to beget, power to breathe forth).[20] Abelard recognizes that the reasons he puts forth are adaptations drawn from what we know from creatures, which in no way allow us to "understand," but he finds these reasons to be sufficient in disproving the sophisms of the dialecticians.[21] The fact

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[17] Ibid., Book 3, ch. 11 [38], 173.

[18] See for example Abelard, *Theologia Scholarium* (CCCM 13), II, 112 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 462–63; cf. Sergio Paolo Bonanni, *Palare della Trinità. Lettura della Theologia Scholarium di Abelardo* (Rome: Pontifica Università Gregoriana, 1996), 185–221.

[19] Abelard, *Theologia Summi Boni*, Book 3, ch. 1, nos. 48–50, 177–79.

[20] Bonanni, *Parlare della Trinità*, 86–102, 184.

[21] Abelard, *Theologia Summi Boni*, Book 2, ch. 3, 138–39.

remains that in his doctrine, Abelard, determined in particular by his polemic against the tritheism with which he reproaches Roscellinus, lays the stress clearly on the oneness of the divine substance. Thus, he does not accept without qualification the use of the words "three" or "several" *(multa)* in reference to God; God is "several Persons," but he is not "several," and there is not in God "three in and of itself" *(tria per se)*. Adding the word "three" to the word "persons" in the expression "three Persons" is only accidental *(accidentaliter)*. Here Abelard provides the historical source of the scholastic question on "numerical terms" in the discourse on God.[22] He is clear that we cannot properly apply number to God. Since he only considers number insofar as it comes under quantity, Abelard rejects numerical plurality in God, thereby also excluding the possibility that plurality of Persons is plurality per se; there is a multiplicity of properties but there is no numerical diversity or plurality in God.[23]

Furthermore, the use of the power-wisdom-goodness ternary leads Abelard to affirm that the philosophers, and above all Plato, "the greatest of philosophers," bore witness to the Trinity (the Platonic doctrine of God the Father of the world, of the *Nous*, and of the world soul); Plato even "taught what is essential concerning the Trinity."[24] This enthusiastic Christian Platonism, which will flower again in the "school" of Chartres, is expressed in flag-waving fashion at the end of the *Theologia Summi Boni:* All men (Christians, Jews, pagans) can have access to the Trinitarian faith through their natural reason, for "as we have said, the fact that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is equivalent to the fact that God is Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; since no man with common sense, be he Jew or gentile, doubts this, it seems that no one lacks this faith."[25] Such an affirmation, taken out of the proper context of Abelard's thought, could only reinforce the suspicion of modalism (the primacy of the divine One) that would be brought against him. The Master of Le Pallet provides the terms of the famous

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22 See for example Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 30, a. 3.

23 Abelard, *Theologia Summi Boni*, Book 3, ch. 1, nos. 5–6, 159–60.

24 "Plato . . . totius trinitatis summam post prophetas patenter edocuit," ibid., Book I, ch. 5, no. 36, 98–99.

25 Ibid., Book 3, ch. 5, 200–1.

scholastic question, repeated by so many bachelors and masters: Can the Trinity be known by natural reason?[26]

Very early on, Abelard became the object of a twofold criticism: rationalism (he wants to make the Trinity understood, Gautier of Mortagne will say of him) and modalism (disappearance of the Trinity in the divine Oneness).[27] Bernard of Clairvaux, less cognizant of Abelard's original theses, will add an accusation of Arianism or subordinationism.[28] Abelard underwent a first censure (condemnation of his *Theologia*) at the provincial Council of Soissons in 1121, most certainly under the heading of Sabellianism. Then, consequent to the intervention of William of Saint-Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux, his teaching suffered a second condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1140. The first error in the lists of "heretical chapters" imputed to him concerns about the Trinitarian use of the wisdom-power-goodness ternary, and targets the subordinationism that, in the judgment of the censors, this usage implies.[29] In spite of these *calamitates* (Abelard wrote an account of them), it is to his credit that in a sharp reaction to any tritheism he laid the foundations of the scholastic treatment of the problem: the use of logic in dealing with the Trinity; the connection between the essential attributes of God and the properties of the Persons; the reflection on the Trinity starting with the idea of the Good; the rough draft of a reflection on "number" in God; the question of the Trinity in the face of natural reason; and so on. We must note in particular that Abelard's theses will lead to the elaboration of the doctrine of "appropriations," that is, the assignment of a common attribute (power, wisdom, goodness) to a particular divine Person on account of a real affinity of this attribute with the property of the Person (for

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[26] See for example Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 32, a. 1.

[27] See the letter of Roscellinus, which criticizes Abelard for a certain Sabellianism (*PL* 178, 368–9).

[28] For these accusations of heresy directed at Abelard, see J. Hofmeier, *Die Trinitätslehre des Hugo von St. Viktor*, 9–26.

[29] "Quod Pater sit plena potentia, Filius quaedam potentia, Spiritus Sanctus nulla potentia" (Capitula haeresum XIX, n. 1); cf. C. J. Mews, "The Lists of Heresies Imputed to Peter Abelard," *Revue Bénédictine* 95 (1985): 73–110, at 108.

example, the affinity between the common attribute of power and the property of the Father who is without principle). This however does not reserve an essential attribute to a particular Person in an exclusive way.[30]

B. Gilbert de la Porrée

Gilbert de la Porrée (†1154) was Chancelor of Chartres, then professor at Paris before becoming Bishop of Poitiers in 1142. An eminent figure in twelfth-century theology and initiator of a movement in the Schools (the "Porretans"), he brings to the reflection on the Threeness and Oneness of God tools furnished by Boethius, on whose *opuscula sacra* he wrote a commentary. Like Abelard, he was attacked on several occasions for his teaching on the Trinity. Preoccupied with showing how the Trinity is reconcilable with the Oneness of God, he excited a huge debate on the divine simplicity.[31]

With Gilbert the problem shifts from the analysis of language to the theory of sciences and crystallizes around the doctrine of relation in God. To his inquiry on God, Gilbert applies the *rationes theologicae* (study of the principles of created reality, the realm of abstraction, centered on the oneness and simplicity of God) and the *rationes naturales* (study of physical realities, the realm of the concrete created reality, analogies to which theology appeals to show the distinction of Persons). In the realm of natural things, Gilbert

[30] For elaboration (12th–13th centuries), see Jean Châtillon, *"Unitas, aequalitas, concordia vel connexio.* Recherches sur les origines de la théorie thomiste des appropriations (*Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 39, art. 7–8)," in Armand A. Maurer, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274–1974, Commemorative Studies*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974), 337–379.

[31] Martin A. Schmidt, *Gottheit und Trinität nach dem Kommentar des Gilbert Porreta zu Boethius De Trinitate* (Basel: Verlag für Recht und Gesellschaft, 1956); Michael E. Williams, *The Teaching of Gilbert Porreta on the Trinity as Found in his Commentaries on Boethius* (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1951); Michael Stickelbroeck, *Mysterium Venerandum, Der trinitarische Gedanke im Werk des Bernhard von Clairvaux* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1994), 39–63; Marcia L. Colish, "Gilbert, The Early Porretans, and Peter Lombard: Semantics and Theology," in Jean Jolivet and Alain de Libera, eds., *Gilbert de Poitiers et ses contemporains aux origines de la "Logica modernorum"* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1987), 229–50.

highlights Boethius' distinction between abstract forms *(quo est)* and the concrete object *(quod est)*; so, on this basis, he affirms an analogous distinction in God. Without introducing a veritable real difference in God, Gilbert tends to attribute a certain objective value to our modes of knowledge (grasping of the object, then knowledge of the form), or, rather, he fails to distinguish the divine reality from what comes under our knowledge of God (starting from created realities).

Such a "realism of knowledge," as one could call it and which closely associated the logical and ontological orders, provoked a vigorous reaction from numerous theologians, particularly St. Bernard; he does not really do justice to Gilbert's thought when he accuses him of dividing God, that is, of placing a difference between *God* and *the divine essence (Deus et divinitas)*, and of introducing a similar difference between the divine Person and the property (for example: the Person of the Father and his relational property of Fatherhood). Such is the first error imputed to Gilbert and condemned by his adversaries at the Council of Reims (or at its end) in 1148; as a matter of fact, this censure concerns Gilbert's disciples more than the Master's own thought.[32] Without condemning Gilbert, Pope Eugenius III nevertheless made a doctrinal decision: "As regards the first [chapter] only, the Roman Pontiff defined that no reasoning should make a division between nature and person in theology, and that God *(Deus)* should be called divine essence *(divina essentia)* not only according to the sense of the ablative but also according to the sense of the nominative."[33] Hence-

[32] André Hayen, "Le concile de Reims et l'erreur théologique de Gilbert de la Porrée," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 10–11 (1936): 29–102; cf. the profession of faith opposed by St. Bernard (ibid., 44): "Credimus simplicem naturam diuinitatis esse Deum, nec aliquo sensu catholico posse negari, quin diuinitas sit Deus, et Deus diuinitas [. . .] Credimus solum Deum Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum eternum esse, nec aliquas omnino res siue relationes, siue proprietates, siue singularitates uel unitates dicantur, et huiusmodi alia, inesse Deo, et esse ab eterno, que non sint Deus." So Bernard affirms that whatever is in God is God himself. See also Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, no. 745.

[33] A. Hayen, "Le concile de Reims et l'erreur théologique de Gilbert de la Porrée," 40–41; H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, no. 746.

forth, the divine simplicity is imperative for all scholastic theologians: absolute identity of God and the divine essence; identity of the Person and the essence; identity of the Person (the Father) and the relational property of this Person (Fatherhood).

As regards relation, Gilbert continues the heritage of Boethius for whom in God "substance preserves the [unity], relation introduces a multiple element in the Trinity *(substantia continent unitatem, relatio multiplicat trinitatem)*. Hence only terms belonging to relation may be applied singly to Each."[34] In order to preserve the oneness of the divine essence, which is absolutely identical in each Person, Gilbert explains that relation is not attributed *secundum rem:* It does not modify the essence, it is not something *(aliquid)* but a rapport with something *(ad aliquid)*. We do not contrast the divine Persons by reason of their essence, rather they are distinguished by relation, which Gilbert declares is "extrinsic" or "affixed from the outside" *(extrinsecus affixa)*.[35] Here, the term "extrinsic" means that relation is not a matter of the essential nature, that is, oneness, but of the nature of the distinction among the Persons, which does not affect the essential oneness. This extrinsic character rests upon a comparison with the makeup of a natural individual *(rationes naturales)*. Here again Gilbert is reproached for introducing a division in God by making a distinction between the divine essence and the personal relations, to the detriment of the Person's simplicity. Whatever its historical relevance, this reproach sets up the scholastic form of "Porretanism" as the classic example of the Trinitarian theology that Peter Lombard characterizes as heretical in his *Sentences*.[36] It runs

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[34] Boethius, *De Trinitate*, chs. 5–6; English translation in *Boethius, The Theological Tractates*, trans. H.F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

[35] Gilbert de la Porrée, *Expositio in Boecii de Trinitate* I. 5, no. 43 (in Nikolaus M. Häring, *The Commentaries on Boethius by Gilbert of Poitiers* [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1966], 148); cf. ibid. II, 1, no. 37, 170–71; for a general survey and a commentary on the texts: M. E. Williams, *The Teaching of Gilbert Porreta on the Trinity as Found in his Commentaries on Boethius*, 64–72.

[36] Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* I, d. 33, c. 1, vol. I/2, 242–43. Peter Lombard seems to have taken part in a consistory that Eugenius III convoked at Paris in 1247 to examine Gilbert's teaching; in a harsh judgment, he took the side of St. Bernard; cf. the *Prolegomena*, in ibid., vol. I/1, 28*–30*.

through the whole of theological literature on the Trinity from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries and, consequently, determines almost without exception theological reflection on the relationship between essence and personal properties, that is, on Oneness and Threeness in God.

C. Peter Lombard and Joachim of Fiore

Another misunderstanding helped to clarify the relationship between the Threeness and the Oneness of God. It was the controversy surrounding Joachim of Fiore regarding the relationship of the three Persons with the substance of God, the divine *res.* The debate has to do with the accusations Joachim directs at Peter Lombard on this point. In his *Sententiae*, the definitive version of which dates from the years 1155–58, Peter Lombard adopts a position drastically different from Roscellinus's, which was explained above. Lombard affirms, no doubt against Gilbert de la Porrée, the absolute prerogatives of God's oneness: God the Trinity is "a single and unique supreme reality" *(una summa res)*.[37] Since the divine essence is this *una et summa res*, Lombard refuses to accept formulas like: "the Father begets the divine essence," "the divine essence begets the Son." Since the divine essence or substance is the very reality of God the Trinity, Peter Lombard thinks that we cannot speak of this essence as generating or being generated or proceeding: that would mean that the essence begets Itself, that is, that God the Trinity begets himself. It does not belong to the essence or substance but to the Person to be the object of generation or proceeding.[38]

This understanding of the three Persons as *una res* that does not beget and is not begotten aroused the profound incomprehension and opposition of Joachim of Fiore (†1202). Attached to other traditional formulas that use the word "substance" or "essence" to mean person or hypostasis, Joachim rejects the terminology that is the rule with Peter Lombard. Since Joachim does not grasp Lombard's analysis, which distinguishes the *modi loquendi* (generation is not attributed to the substance but to the Person of this substance), he cannot accept a "*summa res* that does not beget, is not begotten, and does not proceed"; in his eyes such a *summa res*

[37] *Sententiae* I, d. 25, c. 2, no. 5 (vol. I/2, 194, with the note on this no. 5).
[38] Ibid. d. 5, c. 1, 80–87.

would constitute a fourth reality next to the *res generans*, the *res genita*, and the *res procedens* (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). For Joachim, Lombard thus expounds a "quaternity" in God, in a synthesis of Sabellianism and Arianism together.[39] Witness to a monastic wisdom opposed to the new learning of the doctors, attached to traditional formulas, and not grasping the analysis of language that Peter Lombard made use of, Joachim did not understand Lombard. The Fourth Lateran Council vigorously challenged his interpretation of Peter Lombard: The Council condemned the opuscule in which Joachim formulated his accusation of heresy against Peter Lombard, and accuses Joachim—not without another misunderstanding—of conceiving the divine Oneness as a collective unity ("*unitatem . . . quasi collectivam*"), that is, in the way several men are a single people.[40]

As a consequence, the Council proclaims a profession of faith *cum Petro* (that is, with Peter Lombard) in the unique divine *res* that does not beget, is not begotten, and does not proceed since each of the Persons is this divine reality. The intervention of Lateran IV bears witness to the acceptance of a very vivid expression of the divine oneness in which the three Persons are seen as a unique *res* to which we cannot attribute any distinct notional act since this *res* is the Trinity. In the wake of Lateran IV, most thirteenth-century theologians would adopt this conception of the oneness of the

[39] Joachim's *libellus* or *tractatus (De unitate seu essentia trinitatis)*, which the Fourth Lateran Council called into question, is lost or, rather, has never been found. A text certainly by Joachim explicitly mentions this accusation of "quaternity" directed at Peter Lombard; this occurs in the work *De vita Sancti Benedicti et de officio divino secundum eius doctrinam*; see the edition of Cipriano Baraut, "Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia 24" (Barcelona: Biblioteca Balmes, 1951), 76–77: "Abolita primo impietate Sabelii, qui personas negavit, secundo pravitate Arii, qui unitatem scidit, tertio blasphemia Petri, qui unitatem a Trinitate dividens, quaternitatem inducit." We find the whole case history, with numerous texts and the aim of clarifying Joachim's thought through use of the opuscule *Confessio trinitatis*, in Axel Mehlmann, *De unitate trinitatis. Forschungen und Dokumente zur Trinitätstheologie Joachims von Fiore im Zusammenhang mit senem verschollenen Traktat gegen Petrus Lombardus*, Diss. Freiburg im Br., 1991.

[40] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols., ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), vol. 1, 231–33.

divine *res*,[41] firmly putting aside the attempt to conceive of Trinitarian oneness through a social or collective representation.

D. The Rejection of Trinitarian Monotheism by the Cathars

We know of medieval Christianity's missionary debate with Islam, starting with Peter the Venerable. Faced with the accusation of "tritheism," Christian theologians in this debate were led to present the Trinitarian faith in the framework of a strict monotheism (the three Persons are not three gods but a single God), as, for example, Thomas Aquinas bears witness.[42] The affirmation of the Trinitarian oneness is also at work within Christendom, with the Cathars' rejection of this doctrine in the background. As a rule, twelfth- and thirteenth-century Catharism diluted monotheism with dualism and rejected the consubstantiality or equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian thought of the Catharist movement was complicated and diverse. The Dominican Moneta of Cremona distinguishes in his monumental *Summa against the Cathars and Waldensians*, written around 1241, two main doctrinal groups among the Cathars: the radical dualists, who thought of the Son and Holy Spirit as creatures; and the mitigated dualists, who held to the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but in a subordinating manner (the Son being inferior to the Father, and the Holy Spirit inferior to the Son).[43] The Catharist

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[41] As an exception, we find some authors who reject the position of Lateran IV: see F. Robb, "A Late Thirteenth Century Attack on the Fourth Lateran Council: The *Liber contra Lombardum* and Contemporary Debates on the Trinity," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 62 (1995): 110–44. For thirteenth-century scholastic reactions regarding Joachim, see Giovanni Di Napoli, "Gioachino da Fiore e Pietro Lombardo," *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-scolastica* 71 (1979): 621–85; cf. 661–74.

[42] Thomas wrote a treatise addressed to a missionary confronted with Islam in Syria, who asked him for arguments for preaching: *Les raisons de la foi*. Introduction, translation and notes by Gilles Emery (Paris: Cerf, 1999). See also Joseph Kenny, "Saint Thomas Aquinas: Reasons for the Faith Against Muslim Objections (and one objection of the Greeks and Armenians) to the Cantor of Antioch," *Islamochristiana* 22 (1996): 31–52.

[43] Moneta Cremonensis, *Adversus Catharos et Valdenses libri quinque*, ed. Thomas Augustinus Ricchinius (Rome: Ex typographia Palladis, 1743 [Reprint: Ridgewood, Greg Riss, 1966]), Book 1, c. 1, 4, 6; Book 3, c. 3, pars I,

texts seem to reveal still other currents: denial of the Trinity and modalism (the Trinity begins with the birth of Jesus; the Son and the Holy Spirit will be reabsorbed into the divine oneness at the end of time). In any case, the oneness of essence of the three persons appears unthinkable for Catharism.[44]

In this context, Catholic authors strive in particular to showcase the consubstantiality of the Father and of the Son, as well as the full divinity of the Person of the Holy Spirit. If we take into account the impact of the Catharist question on the mission of the Church and on the theology related to it, reflection in light of dualism and the denial of the Trinity (neo-Arianism or subordinationism) will lead to putting divine oneness at the forefront of Catholic doctrine, that is, the perfect consubstantiality of the three Persons who are a single God, *bona Trinitas.* We have a good example of this in the profession of faith, *Firmiter credimus*, of Lateran IV, which, reacting to Catharism, puts the accent clearly on the oneness of God the Creator ("the one principle of all things"), as well as on the oneness and consubstantiality of the Trinity ("three Persons but one absolutely simple essence, substance or nature").[45]

II. Threeness and Oneness: Paths of Knowledge

In twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholastic thinking, the relationship between Threeness and Oneness crystallizes around two main questions: first, our knowledge of the Trinity; and, second, the articulation of person and of divine essence around the notion of relation. Concerning the first question, we can distinguish three kinds of responses in scholastic theology.

234, 237–38; Book 3, c. 5, 265, 268. For the worth of Moneta's oral and written documentation, see Gerhard Rottenwöhrer, *Der Katharismus*, vol. I/1 (Bad Honnef: Bock und Herchen, 1982), 59–63. See also the *Summa de Catharis* of the convert, Rainier Sacconi, who, around 1250, recounts the history of the Cathars: Francis Sanjek, "Raynerius Sacconi, O. P., *Summa de Catharis,*" *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 44 (1974): 31–60, cf. 51.

[44] Georg Schmitz-Valckenberg, *Grundlehren katharischer Sekten des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Schöningh, 1971), 136–43 and 152–57.

[45] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 230.

A. From Oneness to the Trinity: The "Necessary Reasons"

An important theological current that ran through twelfth- and thirteenth-century thinking sought to demonstrate the faith in the Trinity by means of arguments imposed by reason, starting from the divine oneness or from the attributes connected to the oneness of God. In his *Monologion* (1076), St. Anselm inaugurates the way of such "necessary reasons." As we know, Anselm first establishes the necessary existence of God the Creator. However, his reflection does not stop at this theistic perspective. Beginning with chapters 9 through 12 of the *Monologion*, Anselm perceives an exemplary form *(forma)* of the things to be created, an archetypical form existing in the mind of the Creator: a word *(locutio)* in God's mind. In this way, Anselm is led to detect the Person of the Word in a dialectical discovery within the *unum aliquid* of chapters 1 through 4. Reflection on the unique Creator thus leads to the elucidation of a *locutio rerum*, the eternal Word, in which God the Creator speaks himself and knows himself, and through which he speaks creatures (chapters 32 through 35). At a later stage, Anselm extends his reflection to include the Holy Spirit: in the supreme Spirit, where he notes the mutual relationship of Father and Son, he detects the love of self that, as reason rightly holds, this Spirit must have for himself and which appears as the mutual love of the Father and the Son (chapters 49 through 58).

Starting with a monotheistic affirmation in this fashion, Anselm elaborates an explanation of the Trinity on the basis of the properties of God-Spirit (Word and Love). This reflection, in conformity with the request that Anselm had received and which he recalls in his *Prologue*, intends "nothing whatsoever to be argued on the basis of the authority of Scripture, but the constraints of reason concisely to prove, and the clarity of truth clearly to show, in the plain style, with everyday arguments, and down-to-earth dialectic, the conclusions of distinct investigations."[46] Anselm's thinking works from within the faith, a thinking he views as a "meditation on the mean-

[46] Saint Anselm, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

ing of the faith"[47] rather than as a philosophical elaboration on the Trinity. Nevertheless, he gives an explanation of Trinitarian faith starting with a consideration of the divine oneness with reasons that "reach their conclusion necessarily, as it were *(quasi necessarium)*."[48] Thus Anselm transmits to the scholastics a theological plan of rational reflection that discovers the Threeness in the Oneness.

Above were mentioned Abelard's theses, which, in another kind of reflection, attributes a discovery of the Trinity to philosophers, more precisely to the Platonists; Abelard recognizes in natural reason a capacity to raise itself toward the Trinitarian mystery. Before getting to the grand syntheses of the thirteenth century, we must highlight an important step in the history of doctrine: Richard of Saint Victor. In his *De Trinitate* (about 1170), whose major theme is the Trinity-Oneness relationship, the Master of Saint Victor takes a methodological approach that is comparable to Anselm's. Within a knowledge derived from faith, Richard aims to present "not only plausible but necessary reasons *(necessarias rationes)*" in order to show the truth of the faith. His plan, which proceeds from faith to knowledge *(de fide ad cognitionem)*, is summed up in the *Prologue:* "Let us try . . . to understand by reason what we believe *(comprehendere ratione quod tenemus ex fide)*."[49] The reasons brought forth are not detached from the mystery of faith (Richard escapes the accusation of rationalism); these reasons, however, do not merely constitute motives of "convenience": They are rationally necessary because the truth they deal with is itself necessary.

In a search that joins the learning of the Schools with the contemplative wisdom of the cloister, Richard of Saint Victor is convinced of the validity of this theological approach concerning

[47] In the *Prooemium* of the *Proslogion*, Anselm describes the plan of the *Monologion* in this way: "Exemplum meditandi de ratione fidei;" correlatively, the Proslogion follows the proposition of "faith seeking understanding *(fides quaerens intellectum)*," ibid., 82–83.

[48] *Monologion* 1; ibid., 11. See Renato Perino, *La dottrina di S. Anselmo nel quadro nel suo metodo teologico e del suo concetto di Dio* (Rome: Herder, 1952); Olegario González, *Misterio trinitario y existencia humana* (Madrid: Rialp, 1966), 260–94; Paul Vignaux, "Nécessité des raisons dans le Monologion," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 64 (1980): 3–25.

[49] Richard of Saint Victor, *De Trinitate*, ed. Gaston Salet, "Sources chrétiennes 63" (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 55.

the Trinity: "Since we are dealing with the exposition of necessary realities, I am absolutely persuaded that there exist not only plausible but also necessary arguments *(necessaria argumenta)*."[50] The starting point of Richard's thinking lies in the concept of God as perfect sovereign Good: eternal Being who is the unique primordial substance. The movement from Oneness to the Trinity is made by means of the notion of the good and, more precisely, by that of charity. Such are the grand theses of Book III of the *De Trinitate*: The fullness of bliss and the fullness of the divine glory likewise postulate a plurality of Persons, just as does the fullness of charity. It is in this construct that Richard lays out his conception of *condignus* and *condilectus*. With the same rigor, he strives to establish the necessary equality of the three Persons in oneness, and so shows that there can be but three Persons in the one divine nature (Book V). This plan of articulating the Oneness and the Threeness in a logical, metaphysical, contemplative, and aesthetic exercise of reason informed by faith will constitute a lasting fascination in scholastic thought, as St. Bonaventure magnificently illustrates.

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (†1274) offers the first great synthesis of the elucidation of the Oneness–Threeness relationship in the tradition of Augustine, Anselm, and Richard, to which from now on the Dionysian heritage will be joined. Bonaventure's Franciscan masters had already put forward the notion of the Good to account for Threeness in Oneness. In the *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, which Bonaventure draws on, sovereign goodness provides the reason for "number" in God: God's goodness is the motive for the plurality of Persons insofar as it belongs to goodness to communicate itself (following the axiom developed in the *Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius). Since God's goodness is perfect, its communication will be perfect, and this perfection consists in transmitting

[50] Ibid., Book 1, ch. 4, 70–71. For the exposition of the Trinitarian faith by means of the resources of reason in Richard (necessary reasons), see O. González, *Misterio trinitario y existencia humana*, 263–95; Nico Den Bok, *Communicating the Most High. A Systematic Study of Person and Trinity in the Theology of Richard of St. Victor (†1173)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 151–201. On the central place of charity in this Trinitarian elaboration, see Pierluigi Cacciapuoti, *"Deus existentia amoris." Teologia della carità e teologia della Trinità negli scritti di Riccardo di San Vittore (†1173)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998).

the whole of the divine Substance by way of nature (the generation of the Son) and will (the spiration of the Holy Spirit).[51] In his commentary on the *Sentences* (about 1250), Bonaventure combines the Dionysian medieval tradition with the legacy of Anselm and Richard by developing "necessary reasons" around the following themes.[52]

First, there is the motif of beatitude, goodness, charity, and joy (themes stemming from Richard of Saint Victor). Each of these divine attributes leads us to suppose a plurality of Persons since their perfection or fullness cannot be realized in a solitary mode; the perfection of beatitude, etc. entails a communication and a plurality in God. The theme of goodness in particular runs through this work of Bonaventure, who explains in his homilies on the *Hexaemeron*, for example, that if the Father did not pour himself out fully by begetting a Son equal to himself, he would not be perfect for his goodness would not communicate itself in the highest mode of intrinsic diffusion (we could then conceive of something better and greater than the Father, which is an Anselmian argument).[53] If there were no Trinity of Persons, "God would not be the highest Good because He would not pour Himself out completely."[54]

Second, there is the theme of perfection. The highest perfection consists in producing a being of the same nature; this "multiplication" cannot take place through an otherness of essence in God since the divine essence is necessarily unique. Therefore it takes place through an otherness of consubstantial Persons.

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[51] *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, Book 1, 1, inq. 2, tract. 1, q. 3, c. 5 (Alexander of Hales, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1 [Quaracchi: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924], no. 317).

[52] Bonaventure, I *Sent*. d. 2, a. 1, q. 2, fund. 1–4 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, 53); for these necessary reasons in Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology, see O. González, *Misterio trinitario y existencia humana*, 99–505; for the Trinitarian theme of goodness and primacy, see Gilles Emery, *La Trinité créatrice* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 173–84.

[53] Bonaventure, *Hexaemeron* XI, 11 (*Opera Omnia*, t. 5, 1891, 381–82).

[54] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, c. VI, 1–2 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 5, 310–11); English translation: *St. Bonaventure's* Itinerarium mentis in Deum. *With an Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, "Works of St. Bonaventure 2" (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1956, reprinted 1998), 89–91.

The third theme is that of simplicity. It comes down to simplicity, observes Bonaventure, that one nature exists in several supposits (the case with the universal); but it is through a fault in simplicity that nature multiplies these supposits; therefore the perfection of the divine simplicity leads us to recognize in it a plurality of consubstantial supposits.

Finally, there is the theme of primacy. For Bonaventure, who develops here a central insight of his metaphysics, primacy *(primitas)* designates the fullness of the source; if a reality is primary, it is because of this primacy that it is the source of other realities *(quia primum, ideo principium)*.[55] Primacy designates the fecundity and the "wellspringness" *(fontalitas)* of primordial reality. For the Franciscan Master, it is in virtue of this principle that the unbegetability of the Father (the Father is "without principle") designates in positive fashion his "fullness as source" *(plenitudo fontalis)*. In the background of this principle, we recognize the Platonic theme of the universal exemplarity of the One, as well as Aristotle's reflection on the cause of truth.[56] Bonaventure's axiom of primacy gives rise to a two-stage reflection. First of all, this axiom concerns the essential oneness of God (being absolutely first, God is the Creator); Bonaventure then applies it to the Personal plurality around the Person of the Father: "[T]he divine essence, which is primary, is the principle of the other essences; thus, in the same way, the Person of the Father, since it is primary—the Father does not come forth from any other—is the principle and possesses fecundity towards the Persons." Here Bonaventure's thought introduces the idea of God's supreme actuality *(summa actualitas)*. In God there is nothing in a state of potency; what there is in God exists in a perfect state of act; there is no potentiality in God but a supereminent actualization of every perfection.[57] This allows him to conclude: "In God, this

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[55] Bonaventure, I *Sent.* d. 7, a. 1, q. 2, concl.; d. 27, 1, a. 1, q. 2, ad 3 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, 139, 470).

[56] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A [II] I, 993b24–994a1; cf. Bonaventure, II *Sent.* d. 3, 1, a. 1, q. 2, fund. 2 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 2, 94).

[57] On this theme: Klaus Obenauer, *Summa Actualitas, Zum Verhältnis von Einheit und Verschiedenheit in der Dreieinigkeitslehre des heiligen Bonaventura* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996).

fecundity relative to God can only exist in act; it is therefore necessary *(necesse est)* to posit a plurality of Persons."[58]

The primacy theme, whose importance cannot be underestimated, runs through Bonaventure's whole work. Together with goodness, primacy constitutes in Bonaventure the pivot of the Oneness–Threeness articulation. This characteristic trait of Bonaventuran metaphysics shows goodness, in the words of Théodore de Régnon, as the expansibility by virtue of which the supreme Oneness is a primacy. He likewise grounds God's actions (creation and salvation) in the transcendent communication of the divine life: The intra-Trinitarian well-springness *(fontalitas)* is the source of God's *fontalitas* toward His creatures.[59]

So, for Bonaventure, the primacy of the supreme Principle (God) includes the Trinity *(primitas . . . includit trinitatem):* God is Threeness from the very fact that He is first. Bonaventure's theological plan is not limited to establishing the non-contradiction or the harmony between Oneness and Threeness, but it aims at showing that a right consideration of the divine oneness necessarily entails the Trinitarian affirmation: The affirmation of the Trinity is "included" in the affirmation of the oneness, and it is theology's task to do a kind of "disenvelopment" to bring out the richness of this Trinitarian oneness using the resources of reason. Such is the fundamental aim of his eight *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity.* Thus, Bonaventure can explain: "We have to posit in God a plurality of Persons, as the Faith teaches and *as the reasons put forth show."* Having evoked the simplicity and primacy of God, he concludes: "With these conditions in mind, it is necessary to posit a plurality of Persons."[60] To be sure, Bonaventure excludes the possibility that philosophers could have known the Trinity through the resources of natural reason alone. He also acknowledges that for non-Christians the affirmation of a Trinitarian

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58 Bonaventure, I *Sent.* d. 2, a. 1., q. 2, fund. 4 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, 53).

59 Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, q. 8, ad 7 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 5, 115); this q. 8 is entirely devoted to the Primacy-Trinity articulation. For the notion of *primitas*, see O. González, *Misterio trinitario y existencia humana*, 143–62; Luc Mathieu, *La Trinité créatrice d'après S. Bonaventure* (Paris: Ed. Franciscaines, 1992), 41–56 and 125–28.

60 Bonaventure, I *Sent.* d. 2, a. 1, q. 2, sol. (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, 54).

oneness presents a contradiction.[61] An understanding that discovers and posits the Trinity on the basis of unity is "an understanding elevated by faith."[62] It is therefore not a question of a philosophical demonstration of the Trinity, but rather of what we might call "reasons for the faith." We should add that Bonaventure does not make the clear distinction between the order of faith and that of reason such as we see, for example, in Thomas Aquinas. Doubtless, we can characterize this approach, which initiated a whole school of thought, as a kind of rational knowledge at the heart of a mystical experience. Bonaventure bears witness to the persistence of a theology that puts forward a contemplative elevation of the mind, with its rational resources (necessity), toward the object of faith.

This search for necessary reasons postulating the Trinity in the name of a certain understanding of the divine oneness does not end with Bonaventure; other authors will pursue it at the end of the thirteenth century and into the fourteenth century. Here we can take by way of example the thought of Henry of Ghent (†1293). His Trinitarian theology, founded on the Thomistic doctrine of the Word and of Love, follows in the footsteps of Thomas Aquinas rather than in those of Bonaventure. Nonetheless, he succeeds in adapting Bonventure's thesis. For Henry, it is through faith that we affirm the generation of the Word and the procession of Love in God. Nevertheless, after faith has made the Trinity known to us, we can *prove its necessity* by rational arguments.[63] Indeed, Henry holds that the perfection of intellectual activity in God necessarily demands the fruitful "production" of a Word; likewise, the perfection of the willing and loving activity in God demands the spiration of the Holy Spirit. The perfection of

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[61] Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, q. 2, a. 2, sol. (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 5, 65).

[62] Bonaventure, *Hexaemeron* XI, 5 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 5, 381); cf. *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, q. 2, a. 2, sol.: "anima aliquatenus per fidem purgata et elevata" (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 5, 65).

[63] Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* VI, q. 2 (*Opera Omnia*, "Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Series 2, 10," vol. 10 [Louvain-Leiden: Leuven University Press-Brill, 1987], 36): "Postquam tamen ex fide tenemus istas emanationes in Deo, ipsarum necessitatem in se manuductione rationis possumus probare."

God's spiritual activity necessarily entails the personal distinction of the Father, his Word, and his Love; this reason can establish.[64]

Quite logically, Henry draws the following extraordinary conclusion: If there had only been the essential intelligence and will of the one God (i.e., Oneness without Threeness), God could not have created the world with wisdom and freedom. The Person of the Word, conceived as the manifestation and expression of the Father's knowledge, is required in order to grasp the creative act. In the same way, the Person of the Spirit, conceived as the fruit of a surge of fruitful love, is required in order to perceive the creative activity of the divine will. The procession of the Son and the Spirit must necessarily be presupposed before creative activity.[65] This argument is not new, but the concrete form of its elaboration is original: It combines the Trinitarian doctrine of Thomas (doctrine of the Word and Love, creative causality of the Trinitarian processions) with Bonaventure's articulation of the Oneness and Threeness (necessity). Here we perceive that necessity affects just as much the Oneness–Threeness relationship as the Trinity-creation relationship.

B. Threeness and Oneness: Two Distinct Orders of Knowledge

Faced with this flow of "necessary reasons," other theologians make a clearer distinction between what is of faith and what constitutes the realm of rational research. It is to their credit that they devised the thesis that most often won acceptance in subsequent theology. The most characteristic example is without a doubt Thomas Aquinas (†1274). For Aquinas, as for Bonaventure, philosophical reason ("natural reason") is incapable of arriving at a knowledge of the Trinity. Philosophical (metaphysical) reasoning succeeds in knowing God as the first cause of creatures; now, the creative action is common to the three Persons who act here in virtue of their common essence; consequently, philosophical reason can only attain to the attributes that belong to God by reason of his oneness of essence.[66] Correlatively, it is only through faith that the believer can

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[64] Ibid., VI, q. 1, 2–31; cf. ibid., VI, q. 2, 36.

[65] Ibid., VI, q. 2, 33–40. In conclusion, Henry states: "Dicimus quod productio divinarum personarum necessario praecedit productionem creaturarum tamquam causa eorum," 37.

[66] Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, 1, q. 32, a. 1 (Rome: Ed. Paulinae, 1988).

perceive the way in which the divine Persons, in virtue of their properties, are distinctly involved in creative and salvific action.[67] Pursuing his reflection, Thomas Aquinas does away with the "necessary reasons" that Bonaventure invoked to go from oneness to the affirmation of the Trinity: "We must state without ambiguity that there is in God a plurality of supposits or Persons in the oneness of the essence, *not because of reasons put forward that do not reach a conclusion with necessity*, but because of the truth of the faith."[68] Bonaventure's reasoning seems to him to be a pious rationalism that endangers the faith by wanting to prove too much, for it takes away from the dignity of the faith. For Thomas, it is only on the basis of revelation in salvation history that we can recognize a Trinity in oneness.[69] Theological arguments (the famous Trinitarian analogies) only constitute probable arguments, indications or adaptations that allow us to show believing minds what we hold on faith but without any validity from necessity.[70] These analogies, however, make manifest that what is proposed to our faith is not impossible, and they show that arguments against the faith can be refuted (such arguments against the Trinity are not compelling). For this reason, Aquinas makes a fundamental methodological distinction in the consideration of Oneness and Threeness. Effectively, Trinitarian epistemology involves two distinct orders of knowledge: that which concerns the divine essence (oneness), which natural reason can reach to a certain extent, and that which concerns the distinction of Persons (Trinity), to which only faith gives access.[71] The articulation of the two orders is assured by analogies in a reflection of which faith is the principle (Word, Love, Relation, Person).

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[67] This, according to Thomas Aquinas, is the "motive" of the revelation of the Trinity: to understand that creation is a Trinitarian work and that the action and gift of the divine Persons accomplish our salvation (*ST* 1, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3).

[68] Thomas Aquinas, I *Sent.* d. 2, q. 1, a. 4, sol., 74.

[69] *ST* 1, q. 32, a. 1.

[70] Thomas Aquinas, I *Sent.* d. 3, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3 *(adaptationes quaedam)*; *ST* 2–2, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2 *(persuasiones quaedam)*.

[71] Hence the *Summa Theologiae's* treatise *De Deo* has three parts: first, what concerns the oneness of essence; second, what concerns the distinction of Persons; and, third, what concerns the procession of creatures *a Deo* (1, q. 2, *Prol.*).

C. Threeness and Oneness: Two Separate Orders of Knowledge

Directly opposed to Bonaventure's theses, a third current breaks the connection between Threeness and Oneness in the order of knowledge. This extreme position is well illustrated by Durandus of Saint-Pourçain (†1334), the "Modern Doctor" who was Lector of the Papal Court in Avignon. Durandus bears witness to a new stage of thinking that dissociates two ways of knowing: on the one hand, science, and on the other, authority. Faith and theology fall under authority and not science. For Durandus, an article of faith is defined precisely by its non-demonstrability and its unscientific nature. Reacting against the epistemology of Thomas Aquinas, he brushes aside the validity of analogies to illustrate the Trinitarian mystery (Word and Love). For Thomas, Christian theology cannot prove the faith, but it can show that the rational arguments put forward against the faith are not strictly imperative. For Durandus, there is no way to establish rationally that belief in the Trinity does not contain anything impossible. Reason is incapable of strictly disproving that the doctrine of the Trinity does not contain contradictions. Also, when he confronts objections against the existence of a Trinity in Oneness, Durandus simply offers no response: Such a project would be useless by definition. Durandus of Saint-Pourçain thus bears witness to the shift in perspective that is at work in the fourteenth century: A gulf opens between the theological order and the philosophical order, bringing with it an isolation of faith and theology (authority) when confronted with the prerogatives of reason (science).[72]

Thus we are in the presence of three kinds of epistemology concerning the Oneness–Threeness relationship. They correspond to three different attitudes of discussion on the matter, either on the philosophical level or on the missionary level. First, there is the reasoning that aims at establishing rationally *(rationes necessariae)* the Christian belief in the Trinity (the missionary aspect could be illustrated by Raymond Martin or Raymond Lull). Second, there is a "defensive" apologetic reasoning that does not appeal to necessary reasons to affirm the Trinitarian faith, but which thinks itself

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[72] Gilles Emery, "Dieu, la foi et la théologie chez Durand de Saint-Pourçain," *Revue Thomiste* 99 (1999): 659–99.

capable, on the rational level, of disproving arguments advanced against belief in the Trinity (Thomas Aquinas).[73] Third, we find an attitude that abandons this apologetic intellectual project by separating the order of the divine Oneness from the order of the Trinity (Durandus of Saint-Pourçain).

III. The Divine Essence (Oneness) and the Persons (Threeness)

With the scholastics, the articulation of the divine oneness and of the Trinity takes place in the discussion, at the speculative level, on the relationship between the divine essence and the Persons. The common position, whose precision resulted from the debate on the theses of Gilbert de la Porrée, is well illustrated by Peter Lombard in the middle of the twelfth century: Each Person, taken by Himself, is absolutely and really identical with the divine essence, and the three Persons are one and the same divine essence or substance *(una summa res)*.[74] The threeness of Persons is affirmed within a very strict understanding of the divine oneness (monotheism). Afterward, theologians will try to establish a difference between the reality of God Himself and our way of knowing, which entails a diversity of concepts. Person and essence are identical in the order of God's reality, but the concepts of person and essence are different. We affirm, then, a "real identity" and a "distinction of reason" between the person and the essence.[75] Against "Porretanism" the scholastic masters of the thirteenth century did not fail, in general, to make clear that the relational property is not added to the essence *(extrinsecus affixa)*; the relational property is "nothing other" than the essence.[76]

The problematic Augustinian and anti-Porretan issues lead to the seeking of the ultimate articulation of the Trinity and Oneness in the theory of relation. Thomas Aquinas's thought plays a decisive role

73 Vincent Serverat, "*L'irrisio fidei.* Encore sur Raymond Lulle et Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 90 (1990): 436–48.

74 Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* I, d. 34, c. 1–2, 246–51.

75 See for example Albert the Great, I *Sent.* d. 34, aa. 1–3 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 26, 162–68).

76 See for example Bonaventure, I *Sent.* d. 33, a. 1, q. 2 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, 574–76). Duns Scotus's formal distinction does not alter this oneness.

here and will determine the subsequent discussion (it will provoke either agreement or critical reservation). Aquinas understands the divine Person as a subsisting relation. More precisely, the concept of "divine Person" signifies relation insofar as this relation is endowed with the consistency of a reality that subsists (that is, relation as hypostasis).[77] If the Dominican Master can conceive of the person as a relation, it is because of his analysis of relation. Thomas's thought starts with the categorial conception of relation as an accident existing not "between" things but "in" things. Developing Aristotle's line of thought (*Categories* 7 and *Metaphysics* D, 15), Thomas Aquinas distinguishes two aspects of relation, as in each of the nine genera of Aristotelian accidents: first, the existence of the accident *(esse)*; and, second, the definition or proper nature of this accident *(ratio)*. As far as its *ratio* is concerned, relation presents a unique character among the accidents: It does not directly affect its subject, it is not an intrinsic determination of its subject, but it is a pure relationship to another *(ad aliud)*. Relation has here an "ecstatic" character, a sort of metaphysical simplicity that allows its direct attribution to God. Yet as to its existence *(esse)*, relation, as one of the categories, possesses the mode of existence proper to accidents, that is, inherence in a subject (existence in and through another).

The application of this analysis to God is clear: As regards existence, the *esse* of the divine relation is the very being of the unique divine essence; under the aspect of its existence, relation is purely and simply identified with the unique being of God. As regards its definition or proper nature, relation is transposed in God as a pure relationship of "opposition" according to origin (fatherhood, filiation, procession); under this second aspect, relation does not consist in a determination of the divine essence, but only in an interpersonal reference according to origin.[78]

Thus it is within the theme of relation that Thomas Aquinas arranges the question of the relationship between Oneness and Threeness. For Aquinas, the unique essence is not on one side and relation on the other. Everything comes together in relation, which comprises the element of personal distinction *(ratio)* and the element of the divine hypostatic subsistence *(esse)*. Here we see

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[77] Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 29, a. 4.

[78] *ST* 1, q. 28, a. 2.

quite well that, contrary to what will become the common teaching of the Thomistic school, Thomas Aquinas does not make a division between a treatise "*De Deo uno*" and "*De Deo trino.*" Rather, in the analysis of relation he brings together the aspect of the common essence of the three Persons (subsistence of the divine *esse*) and the aspect of the distinction of Persons (relationship of origin). These two aspects together constitute the notion of the divine Person. That is why priority is given neither to the essence nor to the mutual relationship, but instead to the *person* that unites these two dimensions.[79] For the same reason, the study of God's creative and salvific action in the world will have to take into account a twofold aspect: that of the divine essence (the three Persons act in virtue of their one essence), but also of the personal property (each Person intervenes according to His distinct property).[80]

Theological schools will diverge on the place we should give to relation in respect to origin (procession). In the analysis of the Oneness–Threeness relationship within the notion of "person," the theological movement stemming from Bonaventure will tend to stress the action of generation and procession, while the movement stemming from Thomas Aquinas stresses relation.[81] In like manner, the school of thought linked to Aquinas attributes the constitution of the divine Person to relation, understood in its full sense according to the two aspects mentioned above; the followers of Bonaventure will retain the possibility of looking upon the divine Person as constituted by an absolute rather than relational element (Duns Scotus).[82] Where the mystical tradition coming from Dionysius is emphasized in pronounced fashion (Eckhart), the One appears to present itself to experience as the core of the mystery, beyond the

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79 For this analysis, see Gilles Emery, "Essentialism or Personalism in the Treatise on God in Saint Thomas Aquinas?" *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 521–63; Hans Christian Schmidbaur, *Personarum Trinitas. Die trinitarische Gotteslehre des heiligen Thomas von Aquin* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1995).

80 See for example Thomas Aquinas, I *Sent.* d. 32, q. 1, a. 3.

81 For a general survey: Michael Schmaus, *Der Liber propugnatorius des Thomas Anglicus und die Lehrunterschiede zwischen Thomas von Aquin und Duns Scotus.* 2. Teil. Bd. 1: *Die trinitarischen Lehrdifferenzen. Systematische Darstellung und historisch Würdigung* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1930), 385–589.

82 Friedrich Wetter, *Die Trinitätslehre des Johannes Duns Scotus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1967), 283–342.

Trinity of Persons; still we must qualify this judgment with Eckhart's own perspective, which looks at the relationship between God's oneness and man's union with God.[83] But the great majority of authors agree in finding in the notion of person the synthesis or convergence of the aspect of oneness and plurality in God.

IV. Unity and Plurality: The Transcendentals

The elucidation of plurality within unity requires a final clarification. Roscellinus and Abelard faced the problem of "number" in God without succeeding in solving it satisfactorily. The solution will not be forthcoming except by recourse to the doctrine of the transcendentals. For the scholastic authors, who are generally quite attached to the divine oneness, there could be no question of a plurality that would prejudice the oneness of God. By this very fact, quantitative plurality has to be excluded (which Abelard had achieved by omitting numerical plurality). In the twelfth century, Peter Lombard attributes a purely negative significance to numbers (*one, two, three* persons): The expression "*one* God" excludes a plurality of gods; the expression "three Persons" excludes the solitude of one Person (modalism), and so on.[84] On this score, Lombard will be opposed by other masters maintaining, in a more common fashion, the positive function of these "numbers" and not merely their negative significance. But how can we speak of "number" in God without destroying the Oneness? In spite of the differences of schools (affirmation-negation relationship, formal distinction), the scholastic solution that will dominate for a long time resides in the recourse to transcendental oneness,[85] which we can explain here with the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

Using the concepts inherited from Aristotle, Aquinas excludes a material plurality from God to keep a formal plurality in the order of the transcendentals and not in the quantitative order. The transcendental one is the one "convertible with being." The transcendental one signifies being in its undividedness: It adds nothing

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[83] Cf. Alain de Libera, "L'Un ou la Trinité? Sur un aspect trop connu de la théologie eckhartienne," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 70 (1996): 31–47.

[84] Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* I, d. 24, 187–89.

[85] See for example Albert the Great, I *Sent.* d. 24, a. 3 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 25, 610–14).

positive to being; rather it consists in the denial of a division (being is one insofar as it is undivided). The affirmation of the divine oneness thus consists in the denial of a division and in the affirmation of the very reality to which we attribute oneness: "The one that is convertible with being posits affirmatively being itself, but it adds nothing to being unless the denial of a division." "When we say, 'The [divine] essence is one,' the term 'one' signifies the essence in its undividedness; when we say, 'The person is one,' this attribute signifies the person in its undividedness."[86] Correlatively, Aquinas puts forward the new concept of "transcendental multitude" *(multitudo secundum quod est transcendens)* to account for the plurality of Persons who are only one God. This transcendental multitude consists in the affirmation of the oneness of each thing within the multiplicity (oneness of each Person), while adding that each Person is really distinct from the other Persons (one Person is not the other).[87] The wholly original concept of *transcendental multitude* (a concept that is truly nonsensical for a strict neo-Platonist) expresses, through Aquinas's pen, a radical Christian novelty in understanding the relations between the One and the Multiple. The introduction of the multitude *(multitudo)* among the transcendentals clearly comes as the expression of the eminent status of the *plurality* that the Christian faith recognizes in God. In the sweep of this thesis, Aquinas can express the eminently positive status of created plurality: Intra-Trinitarian relation (distinction) is the cause, the reason, and the exemplar of distinction in creatures. The Trinitarian distinction is, for Aquinas, the cause not only of the distinction of creation (distinction between God and the world), but also of the plurality of creatures: "Relation in God surpasses in causality what in creatures is the principle of distinction; for it is through the procession of distinct divine Persons that the whole process of creatures as well as the multiplication of crea-

[86] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia*, q. 9, a. 7 (*Quaestiones Disputatae*, ed. Paul M. Pession, vol. 2 [Turin, Marietti, 1965], 243) and *ST* 1, q. 30, a. 3. On this question, see in particular Giovanni Ventimiglia, *Differenza e contraddizione* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1997), 191–245.

[87] Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q. 9, a. 7. Thus the transcendental multitude consists in the affirmation of each reality as one and in a twofold negation (undividedness of each Person and mutual distinction of the Persons).

tures is caused."[88] With Thomas Aquinas, medieval thought bears witness to an astounding effort to promote plurality on the metaphysical plain, to wed Trinitarian theology to creation theology: Plurality receives the eminent status of a transcendental, while Trinitarian relation exercises a creative causality that establishes created plurality and confers on it the value of an expression of the Trinitarian mystery.

V. Conclusions

1. If we consider its general sweep, Latin scholasticism fundamentally constitutes a theology of Trinitarian oneness. The plurality of Persons in God falls within a very strict monotheism, which the doctrinal debates and the ecclesiastical context reinforce. This strict grasp of the divine oneness, much to the fore in the consideration of the immanent Trinity, is not forsaken when the scholastics showcase the distinct role of the Persons in creation and salvation.

2. The Threeness–Oneness articulation is marked constantly by the apologetic project of "necessary reasons" and by discussion of it in debates. Even at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when a certain breach in the faith-reason harmony arose, epistemological questions remained at the core of scholastic reflection.

3. From its beginnings, scholasticism is characterized by remarkable progress in analyzing language, and by the use of important metaphysical resources to account for the oneness of the Trinity. The presence of biblical reflection remains important for the great twelfth- and thirteenth-century masters of theology (whose primary task was to expound Sacred Scripture). But already the danger of a break between biblical reflection and speculative theology is felt when this latter would lose its contact with the reading of the Bible.

4. With Thomas Aquinas in particular, the Threeness–Oneness articulation is made through an analysis of relation and within

[88] Thomas Aquinas, I *Sent.* d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2; cf. G. Emery, *La Trinité créatrice*, 445–54.

the notion of *person*, which represents the height of theological thinking about God. Correlatively, plurality in the Trinity allows us to consider created plurality in a new way (transcendental multitude, creative causality of the Trinitarian distinction). This reflection on person, in Thomas Aquinas and in other authors, certainly represents the greatest contribution of scholastic theology to the Oneness–Threeness relationship. N&V

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On the Natural Knowledge of the Real Distinction of Essence and Existence

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Introduction

IN THE FOURTH CHAPTER of his work *On Being and Essence* or *De Ente et Essentia*, St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes essence and existence in physical things in an argument known as the *intellectus essentiae*, or knowledge of essence, argument. In recent literature this argument and the character of its conclusion often is depicted as merely conceptual in nature. Whereas earlier commentators[1] held that the argument demonstrates (at least indirectly) or intuitively manifests real distinction of essence and existence in physical things, from the 1960s onward medievalists and

[1] For example, earlier in the 20th century, R. Garrigou-LaGrange, in (among many other places) *God: His Existence and His Nature*, trans. Dom Bede Rose O.S.B. (New York: Herder, 1936), 555 in the Epilogue; also Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald Phelan, ed. Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 131, note 117. Many of the great commentators held this view, e.g., John of St. Thomas (cited to this effect by J. Maritain in his passage cited above), *Curs. Phil., Log.,* part 2, q. 3, a. 1; and there is more than a shade of this understanding in Domingo Bañez, who seems to interpret it even more widely, *Scholastica Commentaria in Primam Partem Summa Theologicae St. Thomae Aquinatis* (Valencia: Editorial F. C. V. A., 1934), 141, commentary on q. 3, a. 4: "Caeterum quidditas aliarum rerum praeter Deum, abstrahit ab esse actu,

Thomist scholars of note,[2] as well as non-Thomists,[3] have insisted that the argument achieves only a conceptual distinction between essence and existence. This sea-change in the appreciation of the *intellectus essentiae* argument reflects deeper metaphysical and epistemic shifts. Accordingly, it merits further consideration.

Within the brief compass of one essay it is not possible to respond in detail to all the arguments brought by critics of the

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ven non esse actu. Unde perfecte potest diffiniri secundum hanc abstractionem."—"As to the rest, the quiddity of things other than God abstracts from existing or not existing. Thus the quiddity can be perfectly defined as an abstraction." This point seems to be taken by Bañez as a necessary sign of the truth—for which he argues in the paragraphs preceding this passage—that *esse* is the first act of every form and being. The most renowned commentators on Aquinas—setting aside Suarez, who clearly differs with St. Thomas—seem to show a marked aversion to treating arguments for real distinction that are rooted in our knowledge of essence as merely conceptual. For a more recent assessment within this tradition, see Lawrence Dewan, OP, "St. Thomas, Joseph Owens, and the Real Distinction Between Being and Essence," *The Modern Schoolman* 61 (1984): 145–56.

2 Among several other authors, the following are conspicuous: Leo Sweeney in his *A Metaphysics of Authentic Existentialism* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1965); idem, "Existence/Essence in Thomas Aquinas's Early Writings," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 37 (1963): 97–131; Joseph Owens, "Quiddity and Real Distinction in St. Thomas Aquinas," *Medieval Studies* 28 (1965): 1–22; idem, "A Note on the Approach to Thomistic Metaphysics," *The New Scholasticism* 28 (1954): 454–76; Armand Maurer's introductory essay to St. Thomas Aquinas's *On Being and Essence*, trans. and ed. by Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 7–27; John Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), chapter five.

3 Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). Of course, unlike the Thomistically-inclined medievalist critics, Kenny considers the real distinction between essence and existence itself to constitute a conceptual confusion—largely because his nominalist presuppositions do not permit him to entertain the possibility that essence may—as St. Thomas affirms—exist in two radically distinct ways, in one way in the thing, and in another in the intellect. This appears similar to the Russellian insistence that the mind properly knows not being and essence, but propositions.

validity of the *intellectus essentiae* proof. Instead this essay attempts to do four things:

1. It urges considerations that militate against a merely conceptual or logical reading of St. Thomas's argument;
2. it responds to the most strategic criticisms of the validity of the argument;
3. it attempts to explain and properly emphasize the superior natural accessibility and intuitive force of the *intellectus essentiae* argument while also briefly suggesting the importance of its implications; and finally
4. it highlights the antirealist and fideist implications that ensue upon the denial of the validity of the *intellectus essentiae* argument.

Arguably these last implications are not unrelated to consequent distortions in theological and philosophic method that meld with postmodern themes.

As to the order of exposition: first I will analyze the *intellectus essentiae* argument and address what seem to be the most strategic objections to it; secondly, I will address the importance of this argument and the radical implications cast by its denial.

I. Summary and Analysis of Argument

As articulated in *De Ente* the argument is extremely succinct. It occurs in the context of attempting to explain why it is that separate substances are not—as beings lacking matter—effectually pure acts or so many gods. For were matter to be the only potential principle, then insofar as separate substances lack matter clearly such substances would not be limited by any potential principle. To make things more difficult, it is the consistent teaching of Aquinas that we have no quidditative knowledge whatsoever either of God or of separate substance.[4]

The first step in St. Thomas's argument addressing this issue begins by making a distinction between essence and existence in physical things. This distinction is based upon the truth that within

[4] Cf. chapters 41–44 of *Summa contra Gentiles* Book 3.

the act whereby we know material quiddity we do not—in that selfsame act—know existence. It goes as follows:

> For whatever is not in the concept of an essence or quiddity comes to it from outside and makes a composition with the essence, because no essence is able to be understood without its parts. But every essence or quiddity can be understood without knowing anything about its being: I can understand, for instance, what a man or a phoenix is and still not know whether it has being in actual nature. Therefore it is clear that being is other than essence or quiddity. Unless perhaps there is something whose quiddity is its very being, and this is not possible unless the thing be one and primary. . . .[5]

It is noteworthy that it is the essence of which Thomas speaks, and not merely the concept of the essence. That is, his language here is first-intentional language—his conclusion is that "being is other than essence or quiddity," not simply that "being is other than the concept of essence or quiddity" although this too is true. Moreover, his choice of example is conspicuous, namely a real physical being (man) and an imaginary one (the phoenix). It is true that the phoenix example is distracting, inasmuch as essence as referring to a possible that God might create is distinct from essence as referring to a real principle of being in this given created order. But the character of the argument may be sustained quite apart from this element.

There is reason for Thomas to advert to the phoenix example. Because without *esse* no essence will be, and inasmuch as anything that God may possibly cause—which is to say, anything which is not intrinsically contradictory—is such that God knows what its

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[5] Translation of passages from *De Ente et Essentia* are from the Leonine Edition of St. Thomas's works, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 43 (Rome: Editori di San Tommaso, 1976), 376–77: "Quicquid enim non est de intellectu essentie uel quiditatis, hoc est adueniens extra et faciens compositionem cum essentia, quia nulla esentia sine hiis que sunt partes essentie intelligi potest. Omnis autem essentia uel quiditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo: possum enim intelligere quid est homo uel fenix et tamen ignorare an esse habeat in rerum natura; ergo patet quod esse est aliud ab essentia uel quiditate. Nisi forte sit aliqua res cuius quiditas sit ipsum suum esse, et hec res non potest esse nisi una et prima . . . ."

essential principle *would be*, there is some sense in speaking of substances that God could create and of their essences as possibles. Any non-selfcontradictory finite quiddity taken apart from esse is in relation to God a possible. The phoenix example highlights this truth that quiddity is not simply of itself actual, as it includes existence neither as an essential note of an essence nor as one of the formal parts of the essence, nor as identical with essence.

Nonetheless, clearly essence as a real principle of being in the actually existing universe is a better metaphysical and epistemic starting point for us than is an imaginary being. For while God can create anything that is not intrinsically contradictory, we only know what God causes or even might cause in relation either to real evidence of actual nature or to supernatural revelation. This is to say that even our knowledge of the possible presupposes prior contact with actual being, and that we abstract essences from actually existing things. Hence what is naturally possible on the supposition of a given order of nature is distinct from what is absolutely possible to the power of God, and our reasoning regarding the real must proceed on the basis of the first, i.e., our reasoning most fruitfully begins with what is naturally possible on the supposition of the given order of nature: on the basis of essence as a real principle of actual being, or actualized essence. For we do not know all the ways in which God is imitable, do not know all that is possible to God, and know whatever we do know in relation to the order of being and nature actually caused by God. For these epistemic reasons, the abstraction of essence from actual being must take methodological precedence over essence identified as a possible in relation to God, although the second is implied and required by the first. If we read the phoenix example aright, we read it as a reference to the datum that essence as such is not, save through existential act, such that there are determinate essences creatable by God that are not created. But we know this to be true only because, first, we abstractively cognize essence derived from real being in the actual created order established by God, and so realize that essence is a potential principle in relation to supervening existential act.

Yet for the purpose of the *intellectus essentiae* argument any instance of essence as a real principle of being—man, for example—is sufficient. Even the essence of a once-but-no-longer real being,

such as the T-Rex, will suffice for the adequacy of the argument as pertaining to essence as a real principle. For in the selfsame act wherein we know such essence we do not formally regard existence, although it is doubtless true that the starting point for such abstraction is an actual being and hence an actualized essence.

Ergo, the seemingly anomalous aspect of the consideration of the phoenix or of an imaginary being—"seeming" because this consideration is imposed upon Thomas by the need to indicate the ontological status of finite quiddity in itself *vis-à-vis* God as a mere possible—does not imply that for St. Thomas the original foundation of our knowledge of essence is other than our abstractive cognition of it from *ens in rerum naturam.* For if nothing is, there is nothing to abstract. Rather, because there is an actual order of nature, essence as a real principle can be abstractively cognized, and when it is, it is realized that the object of this cognition does not include nor is it equivalent with existence. As we have seen, however, "Everything that does not belong to the concept of an essence or quiddity comes to it from outside and enters into composition with the essence, because no essence can be understood without its parts." Since we know essence without thereby in the same act knowing existence, in physical things essence must really be distinct from existence.

This raises the question what St. Thomas means by the "parts" of essence. It is quite clear throughout Thomas's work that he does not think that we easily or often gain comprehensive knowledge of the essences of material things. Because we do not possess such comprehensive knowledge, one might wonder what is to prevent existence itself from being an occult or hidden note of some physical being? If by "parts of essence" St. Thomas were to mean the "notes of the definition of an essence," then—because we do not know material quiddities sufficiently even to know their essential differences—the *intellectus essentiae* argument would appear unfounded because it would be predicated upon *ignorance.*

The critic might put it this way: "No essence can be understood without its parts"—but if "parts of essence" means the notes of a thing's definition we do not according to St. Thomas himself know all the "parts" of essence in most physical beings. Therefore, we cannot determine whether existence is really distinct from essence or quiddity in material things.

If "parts of essence" meant "notes of the definition" then this argument might hold. But this does not appear to be what St. Thomas means by the "parts" of essence. This is clear from the fifth chapter of *De Ente et Essentia* in which Thomas acknowledges that we do not know the essential differences of material natures. As he puts it:

> For in sensible things their very essential differences are unknown to us; and thus they are signified through accidental differences that arise from essential differences, just as a cause is signified through its effect: thus 'biped' is posited as the difference of man.[6]

Now clearly he cannot have intended in the immediately preceeding chapter to claim that we possess sufficient knowledge of the "parts" of essence to conclude to a distinction of existence and essence in physical things, and *then* continued to argue *in the very next chapter* that *we do not know the parts of most physical things* taken in *exactly that meaning.* It is not impossible for an author unwittingly to contradict himself. But to say that Thomas does so within the compass of two brief chapters when another plausible reading is available seems unreasonable. Accordingly, since in the *intellectus essentiae* proof Thomas does not use second-intentional language—he speaks of essence and not merely of the concept of essence as being really distinct from existence ("being is other than essence or quiddity")—we ought not to interpret "parts" in a manner that clearly will require us to hold a conclusion that contradicts that of St. Thomas *unless* either (a) no other meaning is reasonably available, or (b) we have some other pressing reason to suppose that Thomas has fallen into self-contradiction.

For this reason Joseph Bobik seems to be correct that the "parts" of the essences of physical things in question are not the *notes* of the definition of an essence, but the generic or most formal parts of essence in physical being: namely form and matter.[7] After all,

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[6] Leonine: "In rebus enim sensibilibusetiam ipse differentie essentiales ignote sunt; unde significantur per differentias accidentales que ex essentialibus oriuntur, sicut causa significatur per suum effectum; sicut bipes ponitur differentia hominis."

[7] See Joseph Bobik, *Aquinas on Being and Essence, A Translation and Interpretation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 163–70.

where else *can* we begin in considering separate substances than with our knowledge of physical things? We have no quidditative knowledge of separate substances whatsoever, a position that Thomas holds throughout his life. If we are then to reach essence and existence as real principles we can only garner them from physical things, because we have no direct access to them in either separate substances or God. For precisely the same reason that the phoenix example, while necessary, is nonetheless not reflective of the necessary starting point of human cognition of essence, the knowledge of the real distinction of essence and existence must be founded upon the knowledge of physical beings. This reason is that actuality is absolutely prior to possibility. Hence we must ground our knowledge of the real distinction of essence and existence in the only actual evidence available to us, which is the knowledge of essence and existence in physical beings. Human beings by nature lack quidditative knowledge of God and of separate substances, whereas we do have natural knowledge of essence in physical things.

Once we have established real distinction of essence and existence in physical things, it will then be reasonable to inquire further—as does St. Thomas when at the end of the *intellectus essentiae* argument he raises the *hypothesis* of the reality of a being in which essence and existence are identical. *If* we know essence and existence as real principles, *then* it will be meaningful to ask whether these principles may in any other case whatseover be identical. But in order for this question to refer to *real principles* it is necessary that these principles be grasped as such at the initial stage of inquiry.

No argument can transmit to its conclusion what is not antecedently present in the premises. If there is knowledge of essence and existence as real and distinct principles in physical things, then we can meaningfully inquire as to the hypothetical case wherein they might be really identified, and conclude as does St. Thomas. That is, *if* there were indeed such a being in which essence and existence were identical, *then* there *could only be one* such being, because all the ways in which manyness accrue to being require potency and such a being *ex hypothesi* would lack any potential principle. But if we fail to know essence and existence as real principles in physical beings at the start, *then we will have no warrant for concluding anything about these as real principles at the end.*

To put the matter differently, *if we do not know these principles as real principles in the beings that are proportionate to our knowing powers, any conclusion we draw about them may be merely logical, and these principles themselves may then be chimeric rather than real.* Only if we are content with a purely conceptual conclusion does it make sense to begin with a purely conceptual distinction. But St. Thomas's conclusion is real—he does not use second-intentional language. Accordingly, to read the distinction at this phase as conceptual is either to distort the argument or to claim that Thomas unwittingly and confusedly drew real conclusions from purely conceptual premises.

But even if it be ceded that the argument must begin with our knowledge of material being, and that the parts of essence referred to by the argument are those of form and matter, it may be asked how we certainly know that form and matter *are* the generic parts of essence. And there may nonetheless still be lingering doubts as to whether existence may somehow be an occult or hidden note of essence. To address these concerns, it is helpful to remember that according to St. Thomas the proper object of the intellect is *quiddity in corporeal matter.* In *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 84, a. 7, St. Thomas writes that "the proper object of the human intellect, which is united to a body, is a quiddity or nature existing in corporeal matter; and through such natures of visible things it rises to a certain knowledge of things invisible."[8] The latter point is as conspicuous as the former—we rise to a certain knowledge of separate substances—the subject matter of the fourth chapter of *De Ente et Essentia*—from the knowledge of material quiddity.

In q. 85, a. 6 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas argues that:

> . . . every faculty, as such, is per se directed to its proper object; and things of this kind are always the same. Hence, as long as the faculty exists, its judgment concerning its own proper object does not fail.—But the proper object of the intellect is the "quiddity" of a thing; and hence, properly speaking, the intellect is not at fault concerning this quiddity; whereas it may go astray

[8] "Intellectus autem humani, qui est coniunctus corpori, proprium obiectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per huiusmodi naturas visibilium rerum etiam in invisibilium rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit."

> as regards the surroundings of the thing in its essence or quiddity, in referring one thing to another, as regards composition or division, or also in the process of reasoning.[9]

He goes on to write in his response to the first objection that "in the absolute consideration of the quiddity of a thing, and of those things which are known thereby, the intellect is never deceived."[10] But clearly if existence were part of material essence, and yet when we knew material essence we did not know existence, we would be deceived.

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[9] "Quia ad proprium obiectum unaquaeque potentia per se ordinatur, secundum quod ipsa. Quae autem sunt huiusmodi, semper eodem modo se habent. Unde manente potentia, non deficit eius iudicium circa proprium obiectum.—Obiectum autem proprium intellectus est quidditas rei. Unde circa quidditatem rei, per se loquendo, intellectus non fallitur. Sed circa ea quae circumstant rei essentiam vel quidditatem, intellectus potest falli, dum unum ordinat ad aliud, vel componendo vel dividendo vel etiam ratiocinando."

[10] See also *ScG* 3, ch. 108: "Nulla virtus cognoscitivacirca proprium obiectum decipitur, sed solum circa extraneum: visus enim non decipitur in iudicio colorum; sed, dum homo per visum iudicat de sapore vel de specie rei, in hoc deceptio accidit. Proprium autem obiectum intellectus est quidditas rei. In cognitione igitur intellectus deceptio accidere non potest, si puras rerum quidditates apprehendat, sed omnis deceptio intellectus accidere videtur ex hoc quod apprehendit formas rerum permixtas phantasmatibus, ut in nobis accidit."—"No cognitive faculty is deceived about its proper object, but only about one that is outside its purview: thus the sight is not deceived in its judgement about colours; whereas deception may occur if a man judge by sight of taste, or of the species of a thing. Now, the proper object of the intellect is the quiddity of a thing. Consequently there can be no deception in the knowledge of the intellect, if it were to apprehend the mere quiddities of things, and all deception of the intellect would seem to occur through its apprehending forms mingled with phantasms, as is the case with us." The whole of this article continues to the same effect, making the point that falsity enters into our judgment through composition and division but only by accident pertains to our apprehension of quiddity—"In operatione autem intellectus qua apprehendit *quod quid est*, non accidit falsum nisi per accidens, secundum quod in hac etiam operatione permiscetur aliquid de operatione intellectus componentis et dividentis." See also the *Disputed Questions on Truth*, q.1 a. 12: "Quiditas autem rei est proprium obiectum intellectus: unde sicut

Thomas's teaching about the proper object of the intellect clarifies the conditions for meaningful error about material quiddity. We have noted his remark in the fifth chapter of *De Ente* that we are ignorant of the essential differences of physical things. According to Thomas we can also be mistaken about the essential natures of things. St. Thomas does not suppose that we see into and intuit whole and entire the essential nature of every being in a quasi-angelic *ecstasis* of objectivity. Rather he holds that error about essential nature may occur either because there is error in the composition affecting the definition—whereby we predicate of a nature what does not properly belong to it—or by virtue of simple ignorance. He repeats this account elsewhere, for example in his *Disputed Questions on Truth*. While this teaching identifies the preconditions for meaningful error about essence in physical things it also affirms the generic inerrancy of our knowledge of material quiddity.

To illustrate the latter point: The first man ever to see a whale in all likelihood did not know what it was. I once heard it said that Aristotle had three rather than two questions: not only "is it?" and "what is it?" but "what the hell is it?" Probably the first person to see it thought that the whale was a big fish. That isn't true. More-

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sensus sensibilium proprium semper verus est ita et intellectus in cognoscendo quod quid est, ut dicitur in III *De anima.* Sed tamen per accidens potest ibi falsitas accidere, in quantum videlicet intellectus falso componit et dividit, quod dupliciter contingit, vel in quantum diffinitionem unius attribuit alteri, ut si animal rationale mortale conciperet quasi diffinitionem asini, vel in quantum coniungit partes diffinitionis ad invicem quae coniungi non possunt, ut si conciperet quasi diffinitionem asini animal irrationale immortale: haec enim est falsa 'aliquod animal irrationale est immortale'."—"The proper object of the intellect, however, is the quiddity of a thing. Hence, just as the sensing of proper sensibles is always true, so the intellect is always true in knowing what a thing is, as is said in *On the Soul*, Book III. By accident, however, falsity can occur in this knowing of quiddities, if the intellect falsely joins and separates. This happens in two ways: when it attributes the definition of one thing to another, as would happen were it to conceive that 'mortal rational animal' were the definition of an ass; or when it joins together parts of definitions that cannot be joined, as would happen were it to conceive that 'irrational, immortal animal' were the definition of an ass."

over, with Thomas we may doubt that even now we know what the essential difference of the whale is. But we do know that there is a nature to be known, and we know that it is a material nature. We know that the whale is not merely an accident of the sea, nor an angel, nor God. While this is embarassingly little to know about whales, it is a great deal to know about material quiddity—and the condition of possibility for our knowing this is the general adequation of the human mind to essence or quiddity in material things. The tripartite variant of the Aristotelian questions is more than merely facetious. The second question reflects the reality of the mind's general adequation to material essence poised at the beginning of its trajectory of discovery regarding some particular essence; while the third reflects the truth that this adequation—far from being a comprehensive immediate intuition of all the notes of any particular essence—is the condition not only for partial success but for intermittent and more or less constant frustration and failure as well. If the proper object of the human intellect is quiddity in corporeal matter, this generic *adequatio* is both the precondition for particular success and for the intelligibility of failure.

To use a phrase I am happy to steal from the currency of Fr. Lawrence Dewan, this means that we know the "quiddity of quiddities."[11] If it means anything to say that the proper object of the intellect is quiddity in corporeal matter, then we *must minimally know what it means in general to be a quiddity in corporeal matter*—elsewise this proposition is *meaningless.* Absent generic knowledge of material quiddity, St. Thomas's teaching that material quiddity is the proper object of the intellect becomes tantamount to "we

[11] Given the immense scope of his publishing, I confess that I cannot recall precisely where I heard this phrase pass his lips. But I refuse to deny the world the use of a fine phrase merely because of the limits of my memory. See also Fr. Dewan's "St. Thomas, Joseph Owens, and the Real Distinction between Being and Essence," especially 149: "I suggest that this argument should be read as 'quidditatively' as possible, that is, as a universal demonstration based on the 'natures' of essence and *esse.* Saint Thomas means quite formally the 'every essence.' He is speaking in the light of *what essence is.* Sensible experience yields a knowledge of essence, both that there is such a thing as essence, and what essence is. It is something that cannot be understood witihout all its parts, that is, every essence is recognized as

know not what" is the proper object of the intellect. While this may be a common postmodern motif, there seems no reason to attribute it to St. Thomas Aquinas.

It is the general knowledge of material quiddity that makes possible our discovery both of matter as a potential principle and of form in physical things. For if the human intellect is not generically adequated to material essence, clearly our knowledge of the generic *parts* of essence becomes impossible. It is this native contact of the human intellect with the evidence of material nature which founds our perception that what makes a thing liable to undergo *substantial change*—what makes a thing susceptible to *become what it is not*—*cannot* be identically the same principle which makes a thing *actually to be what it is.* That which is the principle of determinacy is not simultaneously that which is the principle of indeterminacy within physical things: a principle is not and cannot be simultaneously and in the same respect a principle of act and of potency.

The evidence for hylemorphism is strongly related to the distinct question of the proper locus of determinacy (that is, the issue whether there are substantially unified "higher" natures or whether to the contrary pluriformism provides a correct account). But the issue of the proper locus of determinacy in physical things already presupposes the discovery of form. It also presupposes the discovery of the distinction of form from matter as from:

1. the capacity of a formed thing *for* such form;
2. the capacity for the accidental form of quantity whereby individuals may be plurified within a species; and
3. the capacity to receive a substantially different form.

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some sort of *complete* reality: to grasp essence is to grasp a completeness. In that sense, it is *indivisible.* Moreover, every essence can be grasped without considering actual existence. That is why abstractive knowledge is genuine knowledge of the real, though it is imperfect knowledge." I am wholly in concurrence with this insistence that the argument be read as " 'quidditatively' as possible" and that St. Thomas "is speaking in the light of *what essence is"* and means quite formally the "every essence". I should add only that this first and proportionately concerns "every material quiddity" and is founded upon the general adequation of the mind to its proper object, quiddity in corporeal matter.

Even the elements, anything whatsoever that has determinate structure, must just so far be affirmed to possess form. Insofar as some determinate structure follows upon or ceases after causal action, clearly the reality of a principle of indeterminacy or matter is inseparable but nonetheless distinct from form. In passing it is worthwhile to note that the tendency to conceive matter as a real subject like an ocean which takes various shapes is not adequate to the evidence. For matter is a principle of being, but what exists is the physical subject itself which has these principles. Apart from some being characterizable by these principles, there is no physical being. In any case, the very discovery of form and matter as principles is rooted in the generic adequation of the intellect to quiddity in material things.

From a philosophic point of view, supervening on both the knowledge of common sense and knowledge in positive science is an actually *affirmative* basis for all the falsifications which enable us to weed out bad accounts of physical things. As St. Thomas suggests in *De Potentia* V, 7, "the understanding of negatives is always based on affirmatives" or, as I like to put it, *every negation presupposes a prior affirmation*. The affirmative basis presupposed to meaningful error about essence in material things is the generic adequation of intellect to material quiddity. The very existence of essence in material things as a *target for inquiry* that so often eludes and frustrates our efforts to know the natures of particular beings is evidence of this generic adequacy of mind to material quiddity. One may consider the same point more fundamentally: when St. Thomas states that we lack knowledge of the differences of physical things, how is it possible for him to know that we lack such knowledge? Consider what must be known for this to be a pertinent utterance: it must be known that difference is *pertinent* to material essence; that essence is found in physical things; and that we know enough about such essence to be aware of that which we lack in our knowledge.

This suggests that the argument for real distinction of essence and existence that is founded upon our knowledge of material quiddity is built upon the firmest possible foundation we might provide, for this foundation is the very proper object of the intellect itself. No superior place to repose one's metaphysical structure might be found in all the varied domains of knowledge. But if,

counterfactually, we were habitually and continually to mutate essence by considering it to be complete without one of its essential parts—namely, existence—then material essence could not be the proper object of the intellect, because the intellect would not be generically adequated to it. Accordingly it could neither make sense to be aware of failing to understand some particular physical essence, nor make sense to be aware that we lack knowledge of difference in physical essence generally. But both of these propositions are contrary to fact.

The "parts" of essence spoken of in *De Ente et Essentia* are form and matter. Now it is very clear that existence is not matter, as matter is potency and existence is clearly act, the actual being of a thing. Likewise it is clear that in material things existence is not form, because in material things form is known as really distinct from being. It is affirmed to be or not to be—form is not, simply as form, sufficient to constitute a being in the absence of the *actus essendi*. Moreover, were a form identical with existence, then Parmenidean implications would beset us, for such a form would be self-existent (unlike the forms of physical things) and infinite.

Yet what of the claim that existence might after all be a hidden or occult note of essence? This is a claim which is so clearly contrary to the evidence that St. Thomas does not permit it to delay his approach to the central question of the fourth chapter of *De Ente* regarding separate substances. Yet the answer is clear. *If* existence is an occult or hidden note of a material essence, *then* we shall need to argue that one and the same essence contains *both* a principle whereby it may be *substantially transmuted* so that *the same being* will no longer *be*—namely, a principle of *matter*—while simultaneously containing a principle whereby matter *can never be substantially transmuted but must ever be within the same essence—namely* esse *or actual existence.* This is to posit an intrinsic impossibility, namely an internally self-contradictory essence that at one and the same time potentially may be essentially altered while nonetheless *it also must immutably and actually be* just as it *is.* Such an internal self-contradiction is simply impossible. It is not to be confused with a substance possessing an intrinsic potential for corruption which is emended through an *extrinsic* principle, for clearly the latter would not involve a self-contradictory

essence. But for actual existence to pertain to a given essence as such—which means that this essence immutably and essentially *is*—while at the same time this given essence as such is potentially transmutable and so is essentially changeable, is a simple self-contradiction no more possible than is a round square or a conclusion that is simultaneously and in the same respect true and false.

Further, essence in material things is not a principle that necessitates the actual being of a thing—physical things are not self-existent. But if existence is an essential note of some physical nature, then this physical nature will necessarily exist, just as the triangle is by its essence necessarily three-sided. This does not correspond to the physical evidence. Moreover, if essence is held to be identical with existence in a creature, then the creature is alleged to lack any principle of potency whatsoever, to be *a se*, and must then be held to have only conceptual relations with other creatures—but this is manifestly contrary to the evidence. It also seems that if existence were to be construed as "part" of the essence then the other parts would (to be distinguishable therefrom) need to be characterized formally as non-existence: but how can "nonexistence" be part of an essence?[12]

There remains to oppose the *intellectus essentiae* argument only the radical philosophic counterargument that *existence or act is itself self-limiting* rather than limited only by a distinct potential principle. If this were true it would permit existence to comprise either part or all of an essence without the implication that the essence were self-existent and immutable in being: for then act would not be limited by the capacity for act but by itself. But this is contrary to what is intended by *act* as such, for insofar as we say a thing is we do not by that fact simultaneously denote or imply *that it is not.* When we trace the intention of the judgment of act, we see that act is limited by something distinguishable therefrom, which is a potential principle—not a subsistent *thing* but a *principle of being.* And with this realization we return once more to the intuitive

12 Cf. Bobik, *Aquinas on Being and Essence*, 167. That the essence of every actual thing has "part" which is existence, and another "part" that is nonexistence, is unintelligible; whereas, to say that essence as such only *is* through the supervening of an act of a higher order, namely *esse*, is quite intelligible.

foundations of the real distinction in our native knowledge of material quiddity.

Of course, it is also true that *if* we argue that act as such is self-limiting, *then* we must hold either that God is not actual or that God is finite—a wake-up call for Suarezian theists about the probity of such an account. If act is held to be self-limiting on an *ad hoc* basis—that is, if the argument is that some acts (creaturely ones) are self-limiting whereas at least one act (the divine act of being) is not self-limiting but infinite and transcendent—*then it follows that whatever the ratio is for limitation of act is distinct from act.* If there is affirmed a case in which act is not self-limiting then it must be affirmed in principle that act qua act is not self-limiting (for if act *as* act were self-limiting there could be no such case in which act were not self-limiting). And this both requires of the mind and lures it to the discovery and idenfication of that principle whereby the actuality of being is limited. It is simply ineluctable that the given datum of being speaks itself to the mind as implying principles rather than merely *ad hoc* and unrelated and unrelatable judgments. These principles are not beings, but rather co-principles of being explicative of it as an intrinsically analogous object.[13] It is in relation to our generically

[13] This is a conspicuous point regarding *esse*: it is not a being, but a superformal or superessential principle of being. The creature's *esse* does not in its own right exist, but rather what exists is a subject having an essential nature. *Esse* is in a sense both most formal/superformal and final. The initial full perfection of a thing's being is the termination of its causation and hence the full perfection of a thing's act of being is in this sense final *vis à vis* an extrinsic secondary cause. But it seems even more the case that *esse* is superformal or in other words most formal and actual, since the act of being is that whereby the subject of being and its essence *is*, and in cases of temporal coming-to-be each stage of a thing's genesis is *pari passu* with its coming into being. And in this sense *esse* is the first act of every form or nature. The lines of St. Thomas from the *ST* 1, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3 seem to affirm that for him *esse* "consideratur ut formale et receptum," that is, is considered as formal and received. To quote the whole: "Dicendum quod ipsum esse est perfectissimum omnium; comparatur enim ad omnia ut actus. Nihil enim habet actualitatem, nisi inquantum est; unde ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum, et etiam ipsarum formarum. Unde non comparatur ad alia sicut recipiens ad receptum, sed magis sicut receptum ad recipiens. Cum enim dico esse hominis, vel equi, vel cuiuscumque altereius, ipsum

adequated knowledge of essence that it is discovered that there is that *(esse)* whose relation to essence is as form is related to matter, and that what is most formal in the intrinsically analogous *ratio* of being is *esse.*

Often the textual argument is made that if St. Thomas held the *intellectus essentiae* argument to be valid in *De Ente et Essentia*, he could after all stop the progress of the fourth chapter at this point. Such criticism implies that since he does not stop at this point the

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esse consideratur ut formale et receptum, non autem ut illud cui competit esse."—"It should be said that existence is the most perfect of all things, for it is compared to all things as act. For nothing has actuality save insofar as it exists; wherefore existence is the actuality of all things, even of forms themselves. Thus it is not compared to other things as the receiver is to the received, but rather as the received to the receiver. When therefore I speak of the existence of man, or horse, or anything else, existence is considered as a formal principle and received, but not as that which exists." One notes that the use of "things" in this translation clearly is a figure of speech ("Dicendum quod ipsum esse est perfectissimum omnium"), and obviously not the teaching of Giles of Rome. Likewise, Bañez persistently speaks of essence and existence as of two different things, but contrary to the claims of some medievalists this may merely be a figure of speech intended to emphasize their real distinction. For there is no reason to suppose that Bañez thought essence and existence to be distinct *subsistents*, while there is pronounced reason to think the contrary. Bañez speaks of *esse* as the act of essence, such that there is no essence apart from *esse* (and clearly a *nonexistent* essence is not a subsistent), and held that essence is only intelligible in its ordering to *esse* either potentially or actually. Bañez also considers that *esse* is not only the last but the first act, since it perfects every other act and forms are to *esse* as potency to act. So, quite apart from possible errors of Bañez with respect to the authenticity of texts, and even given his use of this misleading expression of existence and essence as two different "things", his doctrine of the real distinction appears to indicate that *esse* and essence are not in themselves subsistents. That is, with or without reference to error on the part of Bañez in judging the authenticity of manuscripts, one can quite otherwise account for his use of this linguistically seductive but misleading phraseology without implying the error that essence and existence are literally "things" or subsistents—especially given the author's clarity in teaching that *esse* is the act of every form or nature. See his Commentary on *ST* 1, q. 3, a. 4, in his sixth conclusion about existence, *Scholastica Commentaria in Primam Partem Summa Theologicae St. Thomae Aquinatis* (Valencia: Editorial F. C.V. A., 1934).

real distinction has yet to be established. But this analysis founders on one critical point. Establishing the real distinction in physical things is a *necessary* but *not a sufficient* condition for arguing that if there were a being in which essence and existence were identical there could only be one, so that *a fortiori* in all other cases essence and existence are really distinct. But because the distinction of essence and existence in physical things is not yet a universal distinction throughout all finite being, this further argument is required if Thomas is to address the very subject of the fourth chapter—which is not essence in physical things, but rather the difficult case of separate substance. Thomas is aiming to address how it is that one may know in the absence of quidditative knowledge of such substances that they possess a potential principle, and he attends to this question by an argument that universalizes the real distinction of essence and existence throughout finite being. In other words, since the fourth chapter expressly and specifically concerns separate substance and not merely physical being, the *intellectus essentiae* proof regarding essence and existence in physical beings is but a starting and not an ending point in this consideration. So the suggestion that were the *intellectus essentiae* proof sufficient to establish real distinction of essence and existence in physical things that the chapter could end forthwith, is nullified by the very nature of the remote purpose for which Thomas deploys the *intellectus essentiae* argument.

The *intellectus essentiae* argument cannot terminate Thomas's consideration in this chapter because its role is to provide the initial foundation for the ensuing argument that there is only one even *hypothetical* case in which essence and existence *could be* identical (because all the ways in which being may be plurified imply potency, but the nature of the hypothesis of identity of essence and existential act excludes all such potency).[14] This conclusion

[14] Wippel argues that after St. Thomas poses the *intellectus essentiae* argument, if he thought it established real distinction, "it would seem that he could immediately conclude that existence comes to essence from without and enters into composition with it. Interestingly enough, however, he will appeal to the point that existence comes from without only when introducing what I shall regard as the third phase of his argumentation . . ." See 112–13 in his *Metaphysical Themes in St. Thomas Aquinas*, cited above. The

achieved, Thomas can then conclude *a fortiori* that *in all other cases* (apart from one, only hypothetically possible instance) existence and essence are necessarily really distinct. This at one stroke addresses the case of separate substances, for if there is only one even plausible and hypothetical case in which essence and existence might be one, it follows in every other case—including that of separate substances—that they are distinct. Only after having universalized the real distinction between essence and existence

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first point to note about this is that it while it is true that he appeals to this point only later, it is logically derivable from his given conclusion. For if *esse* is not essence, and if essence cannot be without *esse*, then *esse* must derive from an extrinsic source. But of course, until it has been shown that the separate substances are not so many absolutely pure acts lacking any potential principle or limit—until we are in possession of the argument why it is that there cannot be multiple absolutely perfect beings—we are not yet philosophically escaped from polytheism. So while at this stage in the argument it *is* clear that the real distinction in physical things indicates that *esse* comes to the finite physical thing from outside, this does not yet establish that the extrinsic source is one unique Creator who is *ipsum esse.* First it must be shown that the separate substances are not unbounded pure acts each of which might create. Thomas cannot yet conclude that both physical beings and separate substances depend for their being upon one Supreme Being Who is the Creator. So, while St. Thomas clearly *could* draw the conclusion that existence comes to physical things from without at this stage—a conclusion which appears obvious—his strategic purposes are not served by doing so at this point. For this in itself will not yet lead to an answer either to the problem of separate substances or to an existential proof for one unique Creator unless *first* St. Thomas demonstrates the universality of the real distinction of essence and existence throughout finite being, showing that it pertains to all being with *but one possible unique exception.* And this is precisely what St. Thomas does. As he is developing a coherent argument about the separate substances, he draws the implications he needs much as a general moves forward troops to the line—when and as they forward the strategic purpose of the endeavour. For the point is not to draw every implication that may be drawn as soon as it may be drawn, but to advance the argument by drawing inferences in an ordered way from the evidence. This is simply to note that St. Thomas's strategic purpose regards the separate substances and their relation to God, in relation to which real distinction of essence and existence in physical things is but a preamble.

does Thomas offer his properly existential proof for the existence of God:

> Everything that pertains to a thing is either caused by the principles of its nature, as risibility in man, or comes to it from an extrinsic principle, as light in the air from the influence of the sun. Now it cannot be that being itself is caused by the form or quiddity of a thing—I mean as by an efficient cause—because that thing would then be its own cause and it would bring itself into being, which is impossible. Therefore it follows that everything whose being is other than its nature has its being from another. And because everything that exists through another is reduced to that which exists through itself as to its first cause, there must be something that is the cause of being for all other things, inasmuch as it is pure being. Otherwise we would go on to infinity in causes, for everything that is not pure being has a cause of its being, as has been said. It is evident, then, that an intelligence is form and being, and that it holds its being from the first being, which is pure being; and this is the first cause, or God.[15]

Of course, it might be argued that because this proof for the existence of God is not elsewhere clearly set forth in Thomas's work, that the quoted passage lacks the form of a proof. But this is clearly vain. With similar reason one might say that because New York does not exist elsewhere (say, in Idaho) it lacks the form of a city, or because the mayor of New York does not exist elsewhere (say, on Mars) he lacks the form of man. The passage cited is clearly

[15] "Omne autem quod conuenit alicui uel est causatum ex principiis nature sue, sicut risibile in homine; uel aduenit ab aliquo principio extrinseco, sicut lumen in aere ex influentia solis. Non autem potest esse quod ipsum esse sit causatum ab ipsa forma uel quiditate rei, dico sicut a causa efficiente, quia sic aliqua res esset sui ipsius causa et aliqua res se ipsam in esse produceret: quod est impossibile. Ergo oportet quod omnis talis res cuius esse est aliud quam natura sua habeat esse ab alio. Et quia omne quod est per aliud reducitur ad id quod est per se sicut ad causam primam, oportet quod sit aliqua res que sit causa essendi omnibus rebus eo quod ipsa est esse tantum; alias iretur in infinitum in causis, cum omnis res que non est esse tantum habeat causam sui esse, ut dictum est. Patet ergo quod intelligentia est forma et esse, et quod esse habet a primo ente quod est esse tantum, et hoc est causa prima que Deus est."

an argument. As the premises yield a valid conclusion, and Thomas nowhere renounces this argument but seems everywhere to reason in ways consistent with it, we are better advised seriously to appropriate it than to avert our gaze as though the significance of a text were merely an index of the number of times it appears.[16]

If critics could find an express renunciation of this reasoning, the case might be different. But there is nothing in the further elaboration of the metaphysics of *esse* which suggests that Thomas rejects the validity of this proof for God as unique cause of being for all finite things. One might also point out that whereas this theistic proof is well and intuitively buttressed by the evidence that supports the *intellectus essentiae* argument, nonetheless developing this proof for the existence of God philosophically requires a metaphysical and epistemic sophistication that is less requisite to proofs that begin straightforwardly simply from sensible data. By contrast with a sensible starting point, to begin with the analogically common metaphysical objects of being and essence—and specifically to start with quiddity in corporeal matter—is to reason from a starting point simultaneously intuitive and omni-accessible while also comparatively more rarified because more removed from sensation. This latter datum alone can help to explain why this version of the existential proof for God as unique cause of the being of all finite things is not more frequently and expressly employed in Thomas's writings.

The intuitivity and incisiveness of this account is matched by a greater remotion or distance from sensation which renders it simultaneously excellent for an introduction to metaphysics, and less excellent for the instruction of those whose minds do not rise to the metaphysical level. Accordingly its implicit presence in the metaphysical background of many of St. Thomas's more general works, and its express presence in the only introduction to metaphysics ever written in his own name rather than veiled in the object of commentary on the work of another (albeit a diaphanous veil in

[16] It is true that the passage is not preceded by the title: "Existential demonstration of God as Creator." But given that the premises are sound and lead to this conclusion by valid inference, it appears to be a demonstration. Likewise, "2 + 2 = 4" should in the absence of any pressing reasons to think otherwise be taken as an arithmetic expression, even if not so labelled.

cases such as the *Scriptum on the Sentences*) more than justify refusal to ignore it merely because it is where it is and is not where it is not.[17]

It is conspicuous that Etienne Gilson's renowned refusal to acknowledge the formal character of this existential proof of God as unique cause of all finite being, proceeds *pari passu* with his denial of any even indirect philosophic demonstration for the real distinction as such.[18] This move, much embraced by some contemporary theorists in the *Communio* circle,[19] plunges the metaphysical foundations

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[17] The argument here and of the prior two paragraphs is of course directed to the objection of Etienne Gilson ("La preuve du De ente et essentia," *Acta III Congressus Thomistici Internationalis: Doctor Communis* 3 [1950], 257–60). Or, as he puts it in his "Trois leçons sur le probleme de l'existence de Dieu," *Divinitas* 1 (1961): 27, "Bien plus, la ou saint Thomas propose explicitement des preuves de l'existence de Dieu, il ne fait pas usage de ce raisonnement. Ce n'est pas l'une des *quinque viae*, et il n'est pas inclus dans la synthese si complete du *Contra gentiles.* D'ou cette simple question: est-ce ou n'est-ce pas une preuve de l'existence de Dieu?" But perhaps the Angelic Doctor did not suppose that introductory theological works and apologetic works necessarily needed to articulate the summit of metaphysical insight when articulating arguments for the existence of God. More to the point than Thomas's decision not to bring this forth in his listing of proofs elsewhere is the question: are not the proofs he does bring forth such as to be consistent with, and to receive their ultimate rationale in relation to, this proof? The answer is: yes, and most especially with reference to the fourth and third ways from the *Summa Theologiae.*

[18] Cf. Gilson's *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 128: "No one has ever been able to demonstrate the conclusion that, in a caused substance, existence is a distinct element, other than essence, and its act." This raises questions whether Gilson identifies *esse* properly at the start. This point is made with exquisite clarity and force by Lawrence Dewan, OP, "Étienne Gilson and the Actus essendi," Maritain Studies/Études Maritainnienes 15 (1999): 70–96. Gilson's comment also leaves the mind puzzled by its blithe dismissal of the demonstrative force of arguments that Thomas clearly holds demonstrate real distinction of essence and existence in physical things such as the *intellectus essentiae* argument, where Thomas's conclusion is that "from this it is clear that being is other than essence or quiddity."

[19] One notes the work of David Schindler, for whom a being is not even definable in precision from grace—a view which clearly denies the intelligibility of essence. See "Christology, Public Theology, and Thomism: de Lubac, Balthasar, and Murray," in *The Future of Thomism*, ed. Deal W. Hudson

of St. Thomas's thought into a fideist abyss. Surely it is worthy of note that in *De Ente et Essentia* St. Thomas provides us with philosophic analysis, and not merely with a scriptural gloss (howsoever profound) upon Exodus—and this is without prejudice to the judgment that the metaphysics of Exodus is the metaphysics of *esse.* Rather, what is naturally conspicuous to the philosopher is that the argument is set forth as knowably true even in precision from its theological fruitfulness. This of course implies the oft-controverted thesis that philosophic truth has implications for theology which ought not to be ignored.

Thomas's teaching in *De Ente et Essentia* is cognate with his work from the *Scriptum on the Sentences* written in roughly the same time period as was *De Ente et Essentia.* In this commentary the decisive points appear in language that is unmistakeable:

> The nature of being is found in all things, in some more nobly, in others less nobly, such that the natures of the things themselves are not the very being which they have. Otherwise, being would belong to the concept of the quiddity of any thing, which is false, since the quiddity of any thing can be understood without understanding whether the thing exists.[20]

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and Dennis W. Moran (Notre Dame: American Maritain Association, 1992), 253–54, note 9. Of course, not all members of this school adopt this stance.

[20] *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* II, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, resp., taken from *Aquinas on Creation,* trans. Steven Baldner and Willliam E. Carroll (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1997). The English translation of one critical section of Thomas's commentary here cited should be used by every philosophic program and seminary in the country. The Latin text reads: "Invenitur enim in omnibus rebusnatura entitatis, in quibusdam magis nobilis, et in quibusdam minus; ita tamen quod ipsarum rerum naturae non sunt hoc ipsum esse quod habent: alias esse esset de intellectu cujuslibet quidditatis, quod falsum est, cum quidditas cujuslibet rei possit intelligi etiam non intelligendo de ea an sit." This is of course precisely the same argument as is given in *De Ente et Essentia.* Armand Maurer and Joseph Owens argue that elsewhere in St. Thomas's commentary (I *Sent.* d. 8) he develops the *intellectus essentiae* argument in a way that cannot reasonably be thought to imply a real distinction of essence and existence. Their argument focuses upon Thomas's comparison of the "accidentality" of existence in relation to essence, *vis à vis* the accidentality of the relation of rational to animal. They argue that inasmuch as species and genus are not

Or, as Thomas states even more clearly, "I answer that not only does faith hold that there is creation but reason also demonstrates it."[21] This is rather a large proposition to overlook. Inasmuch as for Thomas the philosophic conception of creation entails (1) no antecedent matter whatsoever, and (2) that nonbeing precedes being in finite things not temporally but by nature (such that apart from real dependence upon the extrinsic causality of God a finite thing will not be),[22] it is clear that there is an existential proof for the reality of God. For the demonstration of creation of which

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really but only conceptually distinct, the point of Thomas's intellectus essentiae argument must likewise be to conclude only to a conceptual distinction. But there is an answer to this criticism: Thomas is 1) comparing species to genus as act to potency, just as existence is to essence as is act to potency, while 2) simultaneously illustrating one type of accidentality—the "accidentality" of being to essence—with the quite different accidentality of species to genus. Why do we say this? Firstly, because if he wanted to draw a second-intentional or merely conceptual conclusion, then he would not use terms of first intention but instead use second intentional or purely conceptual terms. To the contrary, his conclusion clearly pertains to essence and not merely to the concept of essence. Secondly, any comparison will fail in some respect, and this is all the more true given the uniqueness of the real distinction between essence and existence in finite things. If the point is to use comparison in order to highlight accidentality, then—especially since any other case will necessarily be quite different from that of the unique essence/existence relation in finite things—the type of "accidentality" involved is beside the point. Seen in this way, the available frame of comparison between the species/genus relation and the existence/essence relation is both that of act and potency, and of one type of accidentality in comparison with another. This interpretation of the text does not contradict St. Thomas's conclusions. It is unclear whether the scholars who prefer a merely conceptual reading are wary of defending St. Thomas's actual realism about the knowledge of essence from sceptical criticism, or whether, contrastingly, preoccupation with historical considerations suffice to divert them from this aspect of Thomas's teaching. See Joseph Owens, "Quiddity and Real Distinction in St. Thomas Aquinas," *Medieval Studies* 28 (1965): 1–22, as well as his fascinating work, *An Interpretation of Existence* (Houston: Bruce Publishing, 1968). See also Armand Maurer's translator's introduction to *On Being and Essence*, 2nd Ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 7–27.

21 II *Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, resp.

22 Cf. II *Sent.* d. 1, q. 1, a. 2.

Thomas speaks is nothing other than the causal inference from existential act limited by potency in finite things, to God as *Ipsum Esse subsistens per se.*

II. The Import of the *Intellectus Essentiae* Argument

In the context of *De Ente et Essentia*, the *intellectus essentiae* proof of real distinction of essence and existence in material things is the starting point for three sets of important conclusions. First, the real distinction of these principles in physical things (the conclusion of the *intellectus essentiae* argument) is the basis of further argument to the effect that this distinction is universal throughout finite being. Secondly, since the conclusion that even separate substances are not their own being follows upon the universalization of the real distinction, the *intellectus essentiae* argument is the remote foundation for this conclusion too. Thirdly, as the existential proof for the reality of God depends upon the universalization of the real distinction throughout finite being—and inasmuch as this universalization itself presupposes the discovery of essence and existence as really distinct principles in physical things—the *intellectus essentiae* argument stands at the font of this existential proof.

Its brevity belies its import. The *intellectus essentiae* argument is briefly stated because the point in any journey is not to tarry at the starting point, but to move to the appointed destination. Further, given what Thomas earlier argued in *De Ente et Essentia*, he might rightly have thought that the *intellectus essentiae* argument should already be sufficiently clear from his prior argumentation. In the third chapter of *De Ente et Essentia*, St. Thomas argues that essence exists in two distinct ways—in one way in the physical thing with all the accidents that ensue upon this mode of its being, and in another way in the soul, with the accidents that follow thereupon (such as species and genus). But this point is of itself sufficient to indicate that material essence is distinct from *existence*, for the same essence *is* in two radically distinct ways and hence it follows that essence is as such identical with neither. Material essence is identical neither with existence in quantified, signate matter nor with its existence in the mind, although it may be in (and hence *be identified* with) each. Of course, if essence in no way whatsoever is in intellectual intention, then objectivity in knowledge of essential

nature becomes impossible. Hence if one affirms objectivity regarding essential nature in physical things, one already implicitly affirms that essence and existence are really distinct. This epistemic grounding of the *intellectus essentiae* demonstration in the objectivity of human knowledge is extremely critical.[23]

The datum that the selfsame essence that is in the thing is in the mind is the foundation for intellectual objectivity concerning essence in physical things. Were essence as a whole and in its proper meaning to be identical with existence or to include existence as a part, and were we to fail to know this in knowing essence, this would imply that material essence is generically unknowable. For on this supposition, the knowledge of essence would be mutative, that is, such knowledge would necessarily alter and distort essence by considering it without something necessary to the essence as such. It would then follow that the very affirmation of *De Ente et Essentia*—that the mind is generically adequated to essence as a whole—would be false, and conclusion to the unknowability of essence would be ratified.

Yet this claim that we generically deform essence in knowing it—a claim that calls to mind the claims of postmoderns such as Derrida to the effect that the word, and the word definitorily considered, is never the same[24]—is or is not a real negation. If it is

[23] It is the loss of this epistemic grounding that on the one hand foreshadows the loss of the proportionate evidence that grounds the real distinction, and the swallowing up of this doctrine within theology as though it were merely a scriptural gloss or intra-theological *gestalt* rather than a naturally accessible truth; and, on the other hand, presages the failure to identify the anthropological import of the rational constitution of the human person. Many speculative paths cross here.

[24] Of course, the word definitorily considered is always in one sense different and even less than the word spoken. For the word spoken is in a different way than the word as *conceived*. The existential singularity of what we do always goes beyond the conceived universal "whatness" of our conception, just as the *actus essendi* goes beyond the essence actualized. This is a function of the ontological imperfection of creaturely intention and applies even to our thoughts (suppose we intend to think: but then we must wait to see *what* we actually will think). This manifests again that *the same* essence of the intention is in two ways, in one way conceived universally in the mind, and in another way in the very existential singularity of the act intended (even when this is a conceptual act—for the accidental being of

a real negation, then we must know upon what real evidence it is based. That is, we must know *how it is or can be known* that the mind generically deforms essence as a condition of knowing it. The affirmative precondition of the putative truth that our knowledge of essence is deformative and mutative seems to be a prior adequate knowledge of essence, but the very point of the negation under consideration is to deny the existence of such knowledge.

It is a commonplace of logic that proving the negative is the most difficult proof, and it is incumbent upon the one who claims that essence in physical things is as such not knowable to show that just as by the nature of "square" and "circle" a "square circle" is impossible, so by the nature of "essential nature" and "human knowledge" the "human knowledge of essential nature" is impossible. Further, any real reference to actual evidence by the one who denies all general knowledge of essence can be shown to entail affirmation of essence (formal defining features of *what* is actually being affirmed). In addition, such denial simply lacks any proportionate reason. For, were there no essential nature, then nothing could be known of anything (even accidents presuppose and are defined in relation to essence). Thus the claim that there is no essence amounts to a bad cognitive check which cannot be cashed or resolved into any appropriate evidentiary account.

The generic intelligibility of material essence is the precondition for particular real negations about essence. But the claim that the entire ontological category of essence is empty is equivalent to the claim that no real principle exists to correspond to our abstractive apprehension. This is for the denier to affirm his own actual ignorance of the nature of anything whatsoever, but from ignorance no real conclusion is implied save perhaps that to equate wisdom with ignorance is vain. At best, if one truly knows nothing, one cannot rationally draw any warranted conclusion—and this does not license the inference that knowledge is impossible. In point of fact, and notwithstanding the persistence of voluble

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a thought or act of knowledge is *existentially* singular even though its nature qua abstracted object is universal rather than naturally limited and immersed in quantified matter). I am indebted for this profound and fecund insight to Dr. Thomas Sullivan of the University of St. Thomas, although the formulation in terms of the real distinction is my own.

deniers of essence, skeptics about the knowledge of essence do not fail to know that trees are not automobiles and that supernovas are not alligators. The cultivators of doubt about the generic knowability of essential nature do not lack all knowledge of the natures of things. Rather they merely indulge in an unwarranted negation which their own determinate affirmations suffice to contradict.

Abandoning the notion of essence as a real principle might make sense if real evidence could be brought that things lack a principle of intelligible structure which is also a principle of being. But the real evidence is that we natively seek—and persistently find—beings whose existence is specified and whose intelligibility is defined by essence. The generic intelligibility of material essence is presupposed to our detailed and oft-frustrated efforts to understand particular essential natures. Clearly essence determines and limits both the being of things and our inquiries concerning them.

The denial of essential nature is convertible with the claim that determinations pertain to nothing (for accidental determinations are defined in relation to essential ones). Thus the one who denies essential nature will have no reason to affirm either causal entailments or scientific explanations of any type.[25] It is the clearest indication of bad faith that those who deny the generic knowledge of essence exhibit by their actions a disbelief in their own denials: for clearly they act as though some judgments regarding essential nature are true, and some false (e.g., few such skeptics will act on the supposition that there is no essential distinction between mice and lions).

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[25] Inasmuch as scientific reasoning implies inferences, the foundation of these inferences must be either intrinsic or extrinsic to what the inferences concern. But, if extrinsic, then the reason is found in relation to something else, and if this too is intrinsically indeterminate, and so on indefinitely, then no determinate ground of judgment can be founded. It will not help to claim that such determination is only accidental since this type of relation is defined by reference to the essential and the term is otherwise bereft of meaning. Hence the idea that all things might be "accidental" amounts to a denial of causal entailment as such, and by a short and swift route leads to the denial of scientific explanation. Just as efficient causality presupposes final causality—because if one thing is not ordered to a determinate end then what reason could there be either for the initiation or cessation of action?—similarly, efficient causality manifestly presupposes formal causality, for else there is nothing determinate to cause or to be caused.

Perhaps the most significant disputes regard *the manner in which* determinations are found in nature—what above is described as the question of the locus of determination—but such disputes presuppose that essential determinations do indeed exist in nature. One of the largest of such disputes lies between atomists—who limit essential nature to lowest common denominator objects—and more classical realists. In particular, Aristotelian and Thomistic realists refuse to reject the evidence of higher-level unities that comprise a greater synthesis in being and act, and which give evidence of a greater actual unity—evidence that more comprehensive forms by their nature possess the powers of lower forms in a more eminent manner.

But even reductionist, atomist, or pluriformist arguments presuppose that at some level the affirmation of essential determination is intelligible. Even should essence wrongly be thought only to pertain to lowest common denominator unities or micro-entities such as particles; or should the reality of higher and more comprehensive forms possessing the powers of lower forms in a higher manner be denied; even so, there is retained some (truncated) affirmation of essential nature. I make this point not to aver sympathy for either atomism or pluriformism, but rather to intimate the ineluctability of essence.

Anyone who is willing to affirm that there are determinations in nature and that not all of these are accidents has affirmed some real principle of essence. From this point forward, it remains only to determine how realistic the account of essence shall be. While it is on this point that atomists and pluriformists founder in comparison with the realism of St. Thomas's analysis, all must concur in rejecting the chimeric thesis of the generic unknowability of essence.[26]

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[26] Even the periodic table of the elements presupposes form, since one element is distinguished from another. Thus even were one to suffer the sad fate of being a reductionist it is not at all clear that one would win free of the implications of the *intellectus essentiae* argument, since one is still confronting the generic parts of essence—form and matter—and just as obviously these parts are not identical with existence. As for pluriformism, it fails not in failing to affirm form or essence, but in denying the real evidence that there are comprehensive essences that contain certain powers of lower beings in a higher and formally unified way.

If we do not embrace a pathologically unintelligible negation of the knowability of material essence as such but still wish to deny Thomas's teaching that the proper object of the intellect is quiddity in corporeal matter, we are left with some species of Platonism. That is, the remaining option would appear to be the simple denial that the proper object of the intellect is material essence as opposed to subsistent Forms or separated universals. While Thomas's analysis of the doctrine of Forms lies beyond the reach of this essay, it must be noted that those who seek knowledge of what some physical thing is are aware that they are seeking not a separate substance but rather to understand the essence or nature of the physical thing in question. And this already contains, in germinus, the arguments with which Aristotle and St. Thomas vindicate the possibility of genuinely terrestrial knowledge.

Thomas's doctrine does not suggest that we are comprehensors who intuitively read off the essences of things whole and entire with instantaneous knowledge of all essential notes. Rather, for Thomas, the generic adequation of mind to material quiddity enables us to grasp the formal parts of essence, the ontological limits of material being, and to inquire about particular material natures. But this last inquiry is prosecuted with only gradual success, and with many limitations and imperfections. The history of science appears to substantiate this realization of the limits and imperfections of our knowledge of physical things.

The very condition for the effort to know some particular nature thus is precisely the generic intelligibility of material quiddity. It is this generic intelligibility that delineates the target zone in relation to which the ebb and flow of hypothesis, falsification, and diverse types of confirmation may occur. This is a judgment of importance for natural philosophy and for philosophy of science. For the ontological categories which positive science empirically instantiates *illumine* the instantiations, in a way similar to the manner in which substance is the principle of accidents. This is another way of saying that the four causes—including the final cause—are illustrated in the actual achievements and conduct of positive science, often even contrary to the intentions of the scientists themselves.[27] In any case,

[27] See here Etienne Gilson's fine work, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*, trans. John Lyon (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press,

if we do not know what a target is, or deny the general intelligibility of there being a target, then neither the idea of hitting nor the idea of missing the target can make sense. This is the postmodern delusive muddle in which many thinkers—and perhaps even some medievalists—seem to be trapped, but for which no excuse is to be found in St. Thomas's analysis.

St. Thomas's argument that essence exists in two ways—in one way in the thing, and in another, in the mind—is not only the epistemic foundation for the *intellectus essentiae* argument, but a critical account of the nature of rational objectivity. This in turn implies an anthropological judgment that the human person has a power whose exercise is only extrinsically conditioned by any physical nature. For the power of objective cognition is one whereby an essential nature may be received in its totality in the *intentional* and not physical order. One does not become an elephant by knowing elephant nature: the power to know a nature universally is not a particular physical power.

The power to conform one's mind to whatsoever the evidence of nature is—which is required for objectivity—is defined in a way that excludes merely subjective material or physical determination. For physical or subjective material determination would preclude the possibility of measuring one's judgment by the evidence. If what determines my judgment of "X" is some particular subjective function or physical determination that serves as or causes a subtle cognitive material "copy" of "X"—and if "X" cannot elsewise be known—then there is no way to go to the object to check our judgments and objectivity disappears. Objectivity requires that the essence in the thing be the same essence which is known, and this formulation of essence existing in two ways demarcates an important theme for epistemology and philosophic anthropology.[28]

1984), wherein he shows that the more systematically biological scientists have striven to abandon the teleological ordering of nature, the more thoroughly they end by presupposing and implicitly affirming this very notion.

[28] It might be thought that *ST* 1, q. 50, a. 2 somehow contradicts this emphasis. In this article St. Thomas argues that the intellect apprehends things in their own mode rather than in the mode of the things themselves, such that material things exist more simply in intellectual intention. But this is simply an inference from the principle that whatever is received is received

Of course, the importance of the *intellectus essentia* argument for the existential proof for God as *tantum esse* is manifest. The proposition that essence is in two ways (in the physical thing and in the mind), together with the *intellectus essentiae* argument for the real distinction to which it leads, engages the most central epistemic, anthropological and metaphysical issues of philosophy.

III. Conclusion

Karl Popper is famed for his view that the best theories are the most comprehensive in implications and hence both the most protean and the most easily "falsifiable." Athough he initially considered this to pertain only to positive science, he later came to admit that theoretical falsification could pertain to metaphysical theses (although he never wholly escaped the positivist legacy of placing certain unwarranted limits on the nature of metaphysics[29]). Placing this Popperian consideration in its richest theoretical context, by its light St. Thomas Aquinas's *intellectus essentiae* argument may be seen as an exceedingly rich theoretic analysis. Its myriad epistemic and ontological implications—

according to the mode of the receiver. As the receiver here is an immaterial principle, it receives its objects immaterially. The argument made by St. Thomas in *De Ente et Essentia* that essence *is* in two ways—in one way in the mind and in another in the thing—is entirely consistent with this point. One does not physically become an elephant in knowing elephant nature, and yet the elephant nature does exist in intellectual intention with all the accidents ensuing therefrom (such as species and genus) in a diverse mode from the way this *same nature* exists in individual elephants with all the accidents (quantification of matter, qualities, relations) ensuing from this mode of being.

[29] See Karl Popper, *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography* (London: Fontana, 1976). He seems to have restricted the realm of metaphysical knowledge to regulative theories governing the trajectory of research in, and conclusions from, positive science. Thus on this point he arguably was a casualty of the positivist temptation he otherwise so steadfastly avoided as there is no reason to concur in this unfounded restriction of the scope or adequacy of metaphysical knowledge. The intelligibity of being is implicitly presupposed by the intelligiblity of being *propter quid* or in a certain respect, the intelligibility of *ens mobile* implicitly but really presupposes the intelligibility of *ens commune.*

which reach from philosophy of nature, philosophic anthropology, theory of knowledge, and philosophy of science to metaphysics and theology—merit great attention, detailed analysis, and high regard.

Thus, in conclusion, whereas the intuitivity of the *intellectus essentiae* argument often is frowned upon as demonstratively weak and inferior in profundity and rigor by comparison with other routes to the real distinction, *sed contra:* this argument clearly is presupposed by all the rest. Accordingly it befits it that it is of all such arguments for the real distinction the most intuitively accessible; that it occurs with prominence in the only introduction to metaphysics Thomas ever wrote in his own name; and finally that it provides the foundation for the demonstration of the universality of the real distinction of essence and existence throughout finite being, and thus provides the remote foundation for the demonstration of the dependence of all finite reality upon the unique and primary cause of being, the Creator God Who is *tantum esse, ipsum esse subsistens per se.* N&V

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Creation, Human Dignity, and the Virtues of Acknowledged Dependence

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I. Introduction

WHAT ROLE do relations of dependence have in determining how we should think about ourselves and our flourishing as human beings and creatures of God? In *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*,[1] Alasdair MacIntyre argues that moral and political philosophy have failed to recognize what he calls the "virtues of acknowledged dependence," a failure that results in a distorted account of human flourishing. A more adequate conception of human flourishing requires greater reflection upon human life as the embodied life of an animal, immersed in relations of interdependence among fellow members of the human species. MacIntyre suggests that his earlier work in *After Virtue* suffered from the inadequacies in moral and political philosophy that he would now criticize, as he attempted a renewal of Aristotelian conceptions of virtue without Aristotle's "metaphysical biology." In this essay I begin with MacIntyre's reflections in order to consider the resources in St. Thomas Aquinas for a more adequate conception of the "virtues of acknowledged dependence" among human beings, particularly themes in St. Thomas that

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[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).

concern our embodied rational, social, and political nature. I clarify an ambiguity in what appears to be MacIntyre's concession to "metaphysical biology," and argue that he is not calling for a revival of metaphysics as an aid to moral and political reflection upon human flourishing. But having made that clarification, I then raise the question of metaphysics that MacIntyre does not. I suggest that MacIntyre's new reflections still stop short of a full-blown philosophical discussion of human dependence and its importance for human flourishing. With that limitation in mind, I turn to Josef Pieper's reflections upon St. Thomas's metaphysics of creation, and ask what such a metaphysics might contribute toward a better understanding of human dignity, freedom, and the virtues of acknowledged dependence.

II. The Virtues of Acknowledged Dependence

In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre argues that moral theory must recognize what he calls the "virtues of acknowledged dependence." Too often moral theory is engaged in from the perspective of "those who take themselves to be self-sufficiently superior" and autonomous agents. The autonomous moral theorizer stands in splendid isolation, speculating about his obligations to "others." These faceless "others" stand in various natural relations of dependence upon him, yet he wonders whether that fact has any value, and how it may give rise to any obligations he may have toward them. But MacIntyre's "virtues of acknowledged dependence" are not to be found in the objects of the autonomous and self-sufficient moral philosopher's possible beneficence. He is not suggesting that those who depend upon the moral philosopher should virtuously acknowledge their dependence upon him. On the contrary, he is suggesting that the moral philosopher himself has failed to acknowledge, and thus virtuously develop toward perfection his dependence upon other human beings.

MacIntyre is trying to overcome the asymmetrical moral black hole engendered by the notions of autonomy and heteronomy, by focusing upon our intrinsic interdependence. Of particular importance are the virtues that he identifies as the virtues of giving and receiving, which are not adequately captured in traditional Aristotelian discussions of the virtues of justice and generosity. "Since

according to most understandings of the virtues one can be generous without being just and just without being generous, while the central virtue required to sustain this kind of receiving and giving has aspects of both generosity and justice."[2] He mentions by contrast the Lakota virtue of "Wancantognaka" which "names a generosity that I owe to all those others who also owe it to me. Because I owe it, to fail to exhibit it is to fail in respect of justice; because what I owe is uncalculating giving, to fail to exhibit it is also to fail in respect of generosity."[3] And yet MacIntyre finds a parallel for the Lakota discussion in St. Thomas's discussion of liberality, where in one and the same act, one may exhibit the virtues of justice, *misericordia, beneficentia, decentia*, and charity. "What the virtues require from us are characteristically types of action that are at once just, generous, beneficent, and done from pity. The education of dispositions to perform just this type of act is what is needed to sustain relationships of uncalculated giving and graceful receiving."[4]

These virtues find their most striking application in the care we extend toward those among us who suffer from some disability, particularly the most extreme disabilities associated with "human beings who do not or no longer achieve the status of Lockean persons, human beings whose potentialities for rationality or affective response have been permanently frustrated."[5] According to MacIntyre our flourishing develops and we receive a good from these persons in our care. But he anticipates the objections. How can we be dependent upon them for our good, if they are no longer capable of voluntary action? How can they teach us, when our "relationship to them must be one-sided?" They must be little more than passive recipients of our benevolence, and the crucial question is when has the burden and cost of such care gone beyond what is reasonable for the exercise of our one-sided benevolence. But MacIntyre responds to the objections, "what they give us is the possibility of learning something essential, what it is for someone else to be wholly entrusted to our care, so that we are answerable

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2 *Dependent Rational Animals*, 120.
3 Ibid., 118–19.
4 Ibid., 121.
5 Ibid., 138.

for their well being." And lest he be accused of trading in a generality, MacIntyre proceeds to specify a number of very particular and sometimes "messy" ways in which this general response is carried out particularly by those among us who have the responsibility of caring for these persons.[6]

The failure to recognize the virtues of acknowledged dependence is rooted in our tendency to conceive of rationality as what *sets us off from*, and *elevates us above* our animal nature, and the bodily dependence that accompanies it. We presume that *rationality* makes us individual autonomous agents with no common good, while our *animality* makes us dependent vulnerable members of a species with a common biological good, but no better than other species of animals in that vulnerability. Since agency is associated with rationality, this bodily dependence can be little more than a biological fact hardly relevant for determining the conditions necessary for being a moral agent—the antinomy of reason and nature. On the contrary, MacIntyre argues that our life of reason is not exempt from this embodied dependence. Since the life of reason is the form of our animality—the *way* we are animals—we cannot understand our rational agency apart from a reflection upon how that rationality is conditioned by the dependencies and vulnerabilities of the living bodies that we are. He writes, "no account of the goods, rules and virtues that are definitive of our moral life can be adequate that does not explain—or at least point us towards an explanation—how that form of life is possible for beings who are biologically constituted as we are, by providing us with an account of our development towards and into that form of life."[7] Thus there can be no adequate moral or political theory that fails to acknowledge and incorporate the virtues of acknowledged dependence.

MacIntyre points out that this insight marks a departure from his claim in *After Virtue* that one could provide a revised Aristotelian account of the virtues while at the same time disregarding Aristotle's outmoded "metaphysical biology." But I think it is important not to misunderstand this departure from *After Virtue*. MacIntyre's point is not to graft metaphysics on top of the physical dependence

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[6] Ibid., 139–40.

[7] Ibid., "Preface," x.

he thinks we need to reflect upon. That would just be another form of the antinomy he wants to avoid between nature and reason. As he goes on to characterize it, he is not suggesting a move toward metaphysics. He writes, "I was in error in judging an Ethics independent of biology to be possible."[8] Ethics must take account of biology in its philosophical reflection. Presumably such reflection will need to be mediated by a better philosophical reflection in general upon the scientific results of biology; we cannot simply read off ethical claims from scientific, and I do not think that MacIntyre is suggesting that we try. Rather, in Aristotelian terms, he is pushing us toward a better understanding of the physical as it is displayed in the life of rational *animals* in pursuit of a common good. This is not a call for metaphysics, but rather a better philosophy of nature that would point us toward a more adequate conception of the physical in which we can recognize how rationality is the form of the animal life we share in common in pursuit of our good.

MacIntyre's move toward this philosophy of nature finds strong support in St. Thomas's reflections upon the place of rationality and the social in our lives as animals. In the first place his emphasis upon the embodied form of rationality finds support in the analysis of rationality in the *Summa.* A large burden of St. Thomas's discussion of human nature in the first part of the *Summa* is to show that rationality is the form that understanding takes in an animal. It is the act of an animal conditioned by the embodied way in which the animal cognitively interacts with its environment. It is because it is an act of an animal that intellect in human beings is discursive and thus rational, from which it follows that neither angels nor a god are rational.[9]

It might be objected that according to St. Thomas reason "distinguishes us from animals" because he argues that it is not the act of any bodily organ. But this misunderstands the argument. It is certainly true that he argues that the act of reason is not the actuality of any particular bodily organ. But for him it does not follow that it is not the act of an animal. On the contrary, the whole point of the discussion is to conclude that it *is* the act of an animal, which

8 Ibid.

9 *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 85, a. 3; q. 85., a. 4; and particularly q. 85, a. 5.

is why in the Aristotelian classificatory scheme it can function as the specific difference that determines the genus animal to the species human. It distinguishes human beings *as* animals, not *from* animals.[10]

In the second place, there are a number of themes in St. Thomas that provide a social and political, as well as a physical setting for MacIntyre's insight. The first has to do with the necessity for spoken language. St. Thomas writes in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* that counterfactually if a man were a naturally solitary animal, his own cognitive engagement with the world would suffice for him, and there would be no need of language. But "since a man is naturally a political and social animal, it was necessary that the conceptions of one man should be made known to another, which is accomplished through spoken language; and so it was necessary that there should be spoken language in order that men might live among one another."[11] The key is the recognition of man's animality, the form it takes, that it is not solitary but intrinsically social and political. We must make known to one another what each of us has come to understand. St. Thomas adds that writing as a form of language makes it easier for this social necessity to proceed on through history, clearly partially constitutive of a tradition.

Suppose we turn then to what St. Thomas writes about language in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, where one might think that rationality is conceived along individualist lines because of the concentration upon the powers of the individual soul. St. Thomas, however, writes that in human beings "nature uses air that has been breathed in for the formation of articulated sounds, which is for the sake of a more perfect existence."[12] Earlier in this discussion he mentioned eating with the tongue and the dissipation of body heat through respiration as necessary activities for the mere conservation of the being of animals. These bodily

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[10] Cf. *ST* 1, q. 75 *passim*. See my discussion of this theme in "Aquinas's Rejection of Mind, contra Kenny," *Thomist* 66 (2002): 15–59.

[11] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio Libri Peryermenias* (Roma: Commissio Leonina, 1989): Book 1, lect. 2, no. 12. I have discussed this theme in Aquinas at length in my *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, forthcoming from the University of Notre Dame Press.

[12] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia Libri De Anima* (Roma: Commisio Leonina, 1984): Book 2, lect. 18, no. 473.

acts of the human animal clearly underscore the central point of the later passage, namely, the use of the same tongue and respiration by *rational* animals in order to speak a "more perfect existence." Even though it is not the act of any particular bodily organ, the distinctively human form of life, *rationality*, finds expression in bodily acts as much as do more basic animal acts like respiration and digestion. The "more perfect existence" referred to here is just the social and political existence made possible by language that is natural to rational animals.

Both of these discussions find their proper context in Aristotle's *Politics* and St. Thomas's commentary on it: speech proves that man is more of a political animal than "bees or any other gregarious animal," "since communication about [the useful and the hurtful, the just and the unjust, good and evil] makes a home and a city. Therefore, a man is by nature a domestic and civil animal,"[13] and "the city comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life."[14] We recognize here in the juxtaposition of "bare needs of life" and "continuing in existence for the sake of a good life" that interweaving of animal life and rational life in human beings that MacIntyre analyzes, and that we saw in the *De Anima* discussion of eating, respiration, and speech. The city is as necessary for the bare needs of life as it is for the rational life that determines the distinctive character of the human good. But insofar as the city itself is determined by the exercise of moral and political reason within it, the activity of providing for the "bare needs of life" will take on a distinctively human, that is, rational and social form. When we recognize this we recognize our dependence upon one another, and our need to acknowledge it in order to pursue the useful, the just, and the good, and avoid the hurtful, the unjust, and the evil.

The point of this discussion of language in the life of rational animals is not that we can talk about what we all already know, but

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13 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opera Omnia cum hypertextibus in CD-ROM*, ed. Roberto Busa, S.J. (Milan: Editoria Elettronica Editel, 1992): *Expositionem in VIII Lib. Politicorum*, Book 1, lect. 1.

14 Aristotle's Politics, 1252b28–29, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941). Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositionem in VIII Lib. Politicorum*, Book 1, lect. 1.

rather that we do not yet know what we need to flourish apart from our engagement with one another as social, political *animals.* Our reason is misunderstood apart from its embodiment in the social and political life of the animals we are.

There is a sense in which any animal that engages in sexual reproduction or seeks food in concert with other animals is by nature a social animal. In fact St. Thomas grants that there are other "gregarious animals." Now in order to stress our commonality with other animals, MacIntyre provides a discussion and argument about the pre-linguistic conceptual capacities of other animals, particularly dolphins, as well as dolphins' linguistic capacities in the social pursuit of prey and at play, attributing to them "a purposeful pursuit of characteristic goals."[15] He concludes that it is plausible to attribute to them agency, and the reasons for action that are a necessary condition for agency. However, following St. Thomas, MacIntyre suggests that such attributions are "by analogy"[16] to the human, not strictly speaking the same as the human. Further, the linguistic capacities of other animals are not nearly complex enough to support the kind of reflective activity distinctively characteristic of human life.[17] Still we share with other animals pre-linguistic "reasons for action" that form the basis for the properly human reflective life. So in common with other animals we have reasons to "pursue the useful . . . and avoid the hurtful," but as *human* animals in our own particular way we can and should recognize, reflect upon, and affirm their relations to "the just, and the good . . . the unjust, and the evil."

What St. Thomas would stress is that the social character of the human animal goes all the way to the specific difference of human beings from other animals, namely to the specific way in which

[15] *Dependent Rational Animals*, 23. MacIntyre's discussion is involved, and takes place over a number of chapters. For my purposes here it is not necessary to determine the ultimate success of MacIntyre's argument about dolphins and other animals. It is only necessary to see on the one hand just how much we share in common with these animals, and how close is the connection we have to other animals in the manner in which our rational lives are played out, and on the other hand how that animal life is specified differently in humans.

[16] Ibid., 55.

[17] Ibid., 54–55.

reason expressed in language gives communicative expression to the form of our animal activities. Once the pack of wolves kills the game, it is dog-eat-dog with respect to who will get the most. Even in species where there is a more common sharing of food, it does not rise to the elaborate forms of preparation involved in human modes of cooking. Such species do not typically have elaborate feasts and ceremonies the purpose of which is not simply to nourish the body, but to play a larger role in a social life informed by reason and reasoned reflection upon what is "useful and hurtful, just and unjust, good and evil." Thus we can understand the central significance of marriage feasts in human cultures that involve a public rite of union solidified by a public feast woven together by complex relations, both implicit and explicit, of reason, sociability, and custom ordered toward a common good.

However, lest we get carried away in "spiritualizing" the distinctiveness of our rationality in these activities, St. Thomas is emphatic in drawing our attention back to the bodily form that our social life takes, particularly in his discussion of the virtues of truthfulness and friendship. In the discussion of friendship, he is faced with the objection that to treat a stranger as a friend would involve deception and thus act against the virtue of truthfulness. The point of the label "stranger" is that he or she is defined as one outside of one's social circle. How can one stand in the moral and social position of friend to another so defined without deception, that is, without treating this stranger as other than he or she is? St. Thomas responds on the contrary, "by *nature* every man stands as friend to every other man with a kind of universal love; as *Ecclesiasticus* says, 'Every animal loves its kind.' The marks of friendship shown outwardly in word and deed towards strangers or people unknown express this sort of love; thus there is no deceit involved."[18] Notice that St. Thomas finishes his point in the *Summa Theologiae* by grounding it in a biblical allusion. And yet he need not have done so. Commenting on the discussion of friendship in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, St. Thomas almost repeats verbatim Aristotle's claim that there is a natural friendship among all human beings, based upon species membership. Aristotle writes, "that is why we praise

[18] *ST* 2–2, q. 114, a. 1, ad 2.

those who love all human beings [*philanthropos*]. Certainly in one's wanderings one will see that every man is as an acquaintance and friend of every other man."[19] And yet St. Thomas adds a telling personal comment to Aristotle, if we bear in mind that as a mendicant Dominican friar he was required by the rule of his order to walk, not ride, wherever he went, including his trips throughout Europe from Naples to Paris, Cologne, Rome, and so on. Playing on an ambiguity in the term "erroribus" of the Latin text of Aristotle, St. Thomas adds to what Aristotle had said that "this is most clear when the path is uncertain, for everyone calls back even an unknown and foreign stranger from going the wrong way, as if every man is naturally an acquaintance and a friend of every other man."[20] And of course the point here can and should be taken metaphorically for every course of human action.

We have already seen that rationality is determined by its embodiment in the life of the human animal. But notice that according to St. Thomas the universal love we owe to all human beings, and which needs to be expressed in "words and deeds," is not grounded in a reflection upon our rationality as such or considered in isolation, but rather in a reflection upon our common animality. And so contrary to the assumption of the objection, and paradoxically, to treat a stranger as a stranger and not a friend is the offense against truthfulness. However much our mutual love is distinguished from other animals by the way it is expressed rationally in "word and deed," it remains grounded in our animal mode of life.

Thus while reason gives determination to the particular social form that our friendships take person by person, the ground of those friendships is not to be found in reason itself, but in our embodied animal existence: Every animal loves its kind. When we seek understanding through discourse, it does not establish our friendship but develops it. This recognition of embodied animal

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[19] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics.* My translation of the Latin text to be found in the Marietti edition of St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics:* see *In Decem Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Expositio* (Turin: Marietti, 1949): 1155a21–23.

[20] St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Decem Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Expositio*, Book 8, lect. 1, no. 1541.

dependence as the ground of friendship gives weight to what MacIntyre had to say about one of the most pressing difficulties for moral philosophy—what moral relations do we bear to the cognitively immature and the severely cognitively disabled? From the perspective of "rational" intercourse alone, there can be no question of mutuality and dependence here. Are such beings even persons, or mere human animals?

From the perspective of a friendship grounded in reason as such, the cognitively immature or severely disabled are or have become "strangers to us." Consider here Aristotle's poignant reflection upon how distance affects a friendship. "Distance does not dissolve the friendship unconditionally, but only its activity. But if the absence is long, it also seems to cause the friendship to be forgotten; hence the saying, 'Lack of conversation has dissolved many a friendship.' "[21] Now of course Aristotle was talking about spatial distance and its effects upon friendship. But consider how the conception of "Lockean persons, human beings whose potentialities for rationality or affective response [are immature] or have been permanently frustrated" can transform Aristotle's point about spatial distance into one about cognitive distance. Then consider John McDowell's description of "human infants [who] are mere animals, distinctive only in their potential"[22] for developing a capacity to reason, and extend that characterization to the severely cognitively disabled who can no longer exercise that potential. How is it that care for such human beings can be anything other than an act of benevolence toward a purely passive recipient who appears to be no longer the locus of a good appropriate to a rational being, the care of whom, as well as the appropriateness of one's "benevolence," has to be evaluated ultimately in terms of a cost-benefit analysis for society?

We saw earlier that in such a situation MacIntyre believes that we learn from these human beings what it is to have entrusted to one the entire good of another. This of course presupposes that in such situations these human beings have a good appropriate to them that is not dependent as such upon a developed or healthy capacity to reason. An account that would ground that good in

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21 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1157b10–13.

22 John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 123.

reason as such, apart from its embodiment in an animal, cannot, it seems, attribute any good to these human beings in their present immaturity or affliction. If, however, St. Thomas is right about the ground of friendship, friendship even toward the stranger, we can see how these "strangers" continue to have a good that is appropriate to them as human beings. Reason is the capacity of an animal, whether it is in an immature state or suffers from some affliction in its exercise. Contrary to McDowell, there is no such thing as a "mere animal"; a "mere animal" is a vicious abstraction. We can say to this living human animal that as your friend we will help you to develop your capacity to reason. We can say to this other, that as your friends we will do what we can to help you rid yourself of this affliction or pathology, and failing that, as your friends, we will suffer this affliction with you.

We approach the stranger as one sharing with us an embodied animal form of life, before we ever open our mouths to speak with him or her. Except for the recognition of that common embodied form of life, we would never open our mouths; this is one to whom I can and will speak. Nor would we be able to recognize this other one's immaturity, or pathology, except as the immaturity or pathology of this specific kind of animal. So the *other* here and now is a *rational animal*, whether or not this "stranger" fails to exercise the distinctive act of that species through some immaturity or affliction. Failure to see this point is little more than the persistent residue of the antinomy that sees *reason* as what "elevates us above" the nature of a "mere animal." To be sure, a major theme of McDowell's work is to overcome this very antinomy. Yet he will fail to do so, as long as he approaches human infants as "mere animals." Indeed, for McDowell the life of reason has little more than a "foothold" in nature.[23] But in light of St. Thomas's response to the objection about the stranger, to treat immature and severely cognitively afflicted human beings as strangers and not friends is an offense against the truth.

Later, discussing friendship as a part of justice, St. Thomas remarks "because man by nature is a social *animal*, in common

[23] See McDowell, 85 and 95. See McDowell's comparisons throughout the book of the "experiences" of animals and the experiences properly so called of those endowed with reason.

decency he owes plain truth to others, since without this human society could not survive."[24] Human society, which is a society of animals, is distinguished from that of other kinds of social animals by the way in which its rational form calls forth the "common decency of plain truth" necessary for this particular society of animals to survive and promote a certain universal love and friendship among its members. Finally, discussing truthfulness versus lying in his commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, St. Thomas comments that truthfulness is to be found in both words and one's general manner of life, insofar as one's exterior conduct *in addition* to one's speech is in conformity with one's condition or nature.[25] Perhaps negatively we can see here one difference between other animals and human friendship, truthfulness, and social life—however much other animals may possess some facets of linguistic capacity, they do not rise to the complexity and interrelationship with social and political life that makes lying possible for them. In that case they cannot possess the virtue of truthfulness. This discussion also confirms the observation that it is just as possible to lie with one's body generally as it is with those special bodily acts we call the utterance of one's words. Indeed, to the extent that we cognitively separate our rationality from the embodied form it takes in our animal life, it is to be expected that we will lose sight of this insight; we will begin to conceive of the body as the instrument of human action, rather than the mode of its expression.

These reflections upon St. Thomas provide evidence and support for MacIntyre's claim that many of the resources necessary for an adequate account of the virtues of acknowledged dependence are to be found in St. Thomas, particularly his extended discussion of the "social virtues" in the second part of the second part of the *Summa Theologiae.*

III. The Metaphysics of Creation

With St. Thomas now in mind, I want push the reflection further and suggest that there is a more fundamental dependence the recognition of which is a necessary condition for a better understanding

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24 *ST* 2–2, q. 114, a. 2, ad 1.

25 St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Decem Libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Expositio* (Turin: Marietti, 1949): Book 4, lect. 15, no. 835.

of human flourishing, a metaphysical dependence that goes beyond and is prior to the natural dependence MacIntyre analyzes. What follows is nothing more than a first step in raising the issue. Following the lead of Josef Pieper's analysis of creation as the "silent element in St. Thomas,"[26] what does a recognition of God as Creator suggest for our understanding of the virtues of acknowledged dependence?

Pieper shows that in St. Thomas's metaphysics there can be no greater recognition of dependence than what we recognize when we understand ourselves to be creatures of a god. This is not a question of how to properly conceive of the physical so that we can adequately recognize our relations of natural dependence upon one another. It is in the strictest sense a recognition of a metaphysical dependence upon a being with whom we have no *natural* relation. Whether the recognition is rudimentary within our day-to-day lives or highly developed within a metaphysical discourse, if we cannot recognize that we are creatures of a god, we have no hope for pursuing the moral and political implications of such a recognition for our lives. Here it is to the point that Aristotle argues that if we cannot recognize that there is anything other than the physical, then there can be no metaphysics, and first philosophy is simply physics in Aristotle's sense, a philosophy of nature.[27] So at the very least, if it is important for our moral and political reflection to recognize our fundamental dependence upon a god as creator, some form of metaphysics beyond the philosophy of nature is necessary for moral and political philosophy, a point that the Holy Father reminded us of in *Fides et Ratio.*

Assuming then that such a metaphysics is possible, notice that St. Thomas's accounts of friendship, trustworthiness, and love, to the extent that they are centered in the natural community we share as animals with other human beings, beg one on to ask what friendship, trust, and love we can bear toward a God who creates us from nothing, and sustains us in our existence, a Creator who rather than being a rational animal causes rational animals to be. From him all is gift, and so we are related to him only by his gift, not ours.

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[26] Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957).

[27] Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1026a23–33, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

Socrates asked Euthyphro what possible gifts, honor, praise, service, and so on can we give to a god in our efforts to be pious? I confess that I was surprised when I looked at St. Thomas's discussion of piety and found that he argues that piety is only improperly applied and directed to God.[28] Instead, St. Thomas tells us that the virtue of "religion pertains to the display of reverence toward the one God for one single reason, namely, because He is the first principle of creation and the providential care of things."[29] Because of the difference between one's relations of dependence upon one's human parents and one's Creator, it is necessary to distinguish the natural virtue of piety which is properly owed to one's parents from the natural virtue of religion which is properly directed to those acts by which we worship, praise, honor, serve, and give what is due to God. Why did Euthyphro leave the conversation in disgust to prosecute his father, and Socrates in sadness to face the Athenians and their charge that he did not believe in the gods of Athens? Was it because they had no metaphysics of creation, and could not adequately distinguish between what is owed to one's father and what is owed to one's god?

Creation is a relation that all beings bear to God, and the distinction in St. Thomas between piety and religion as natural virtues makes it evident that we must ask what particular form the relation of creation takes for human beings, and what virtues of acknowledged dependence are appropriate for created rational animals toward their creator. In a remarkable passage from the *De Veritate*, St. Thomas provides a metaphysical analysis of the interplay of created perfections that animates his thought.[30] Despite the

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[28] *ST* 2–2, q. 101, a. 1.

[29] *ST* 2–2, q. 81, a. 3.

[30] Contemplating the "fittingness" of the creation of rational animals, St. Thomas writes that "the total perfection of the universe . . . ascends from the mutual coming together of the perfections of the singular things" within it. Yet that perfection of the created world is incomplete, unless there is some being within it that can unite within itself in some fashion the diverse created perfections of the universe. St. Thomas writes, "this is the perfection of one who knows; and so it is said in *De Anima* that the soul is in a manner all things, because it is born to know all things." And he adds that "according to the philosophers this is the ultimate perfection to which the soul is able to attain, for the whole order of the universe and

manifold yet finite perfections found in creation, creation itself remains imperfect unless it contains an image of the ultimate unity of all perfections in God, namely, a perfection found in the created image and likeness of God, a human being knowing creation. He concludes the analysis by writing that "according to the philosophers this is the ultimate perfection to which the soul is able to attain, for the whole order of the universe and of its causes to be expressed within it, which they held to be the ultimate end of a man, and which according to us will be in the vision of God, since as Gregory says, 'what is it that they may not see who see The One Seeing All Things?' " A root meaning of "nature" (in St. Thomas's Latin *"natura"*) is *to be destined by birth toward a goal*.[31] Thus in the passage it is paired with his construction *"nata est omnia cognoscere,"* born or destined to cognize all things; it is this destiny "to which we are born." Notice that St. Thomas grants this insight to the "philosophers," namely, the knowledge of God as first cause and governor of the created universe.[32] As a Christian theologian, what St. Thomas will not grant to them, short of the gift of grace, is a recognition of the ultimate supernatural character of that union

of its causes to be expressed within it, which they held to be the ultimate end of man, and which according to us will be in the vision of God, since as Gregory says, 'what is it that they may not see who see The One Seeing All Things?' " (*Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate* II. 2). This is metaphysical speculation indeed, and of the sort unwelcome in philosophy for quite a while now. Even St. Thomas recognizes this in a way by calling it an argument from "fittingness." But is it any more unwelcome than MacIntyre's challenge to the autonomous modern moral philosopher?

31 Cf. Roy J. Deferrari, *A Latin English Dictionary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1986), 678. Also, C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), chapter 2 on "nature", 25.

32 There can be little question that St. Thomas the interpreter grants to Aristotle the recognition that God is the first cause and providential governor of the created universe. Among other places, perhaps the most striking is the final passage of his commentary on the Aristotle's *Metaphysics:* "And so this is what Aristotle concludes, that there is one principle of the whole universe, namely the first mover, and first intelligible, and first good, which above he named God, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen (. . . *in saecula saeculorum. Amen*)." It is more controversial that he grants to Aristotle, indeed even Plato, a recognition of God as creative cause of the universe.

with God, that it will be a graced participation in the inner Trinitarian Life of God.[33]

Pieper calls this natural movement within us a "hunger" for reality—"so furious is this hunger that it would have to be called desperate if there were no hope of satiation." And yet, he identifies within us another opposed desire, a desire to deny any such natural movement, or the possibility of its satisfaction, as "the desire not to admit that man as a spiritual being can be 'needy' at all,"[34] that is, a desire not to acknowledge our dependence upon anyone or anything.

The passage in St. Thomas might tempt us toward the objection that for St. Thomas beatitude is fundamentally individualistic, a one-on-one rational encounter with one's God, again regardless of our common humanity. On the contrary, reflection once again upon the embodied form of our rationality leads to the opposite claim. There are two initial points to recognize in response. The first point is the importance of St. Thomas's argument that reason is an immaterial act of an animal. Earlier we considered briefly the objection that the act of reason is immaterial, and therefore it cannot be the act of an animal. In response, we saw that St. Thomas simply rejects the conclusion. The act of reason is immaterial because it is not the actuality of a bodily organ, but it is nonetheless the specific defining act of an animal, the human animal. But for St. Thomas it is because the act of reason is immaterial, that he goes on to argue that the human soul has an immaterial mode of existence that transcends the limits of physical existence, a subsistent mode of existence in which the human body participates through its existential unity with the soul as its substantial form.[35]

For a discussion of the controversy, as well as a resolution with which I agree wholeheartedly see Mark F. Johnson, "Did St. Thomas Attribute a Doctrine of Creation to Aristotle?" *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989): 129–55. See also Mark Johnson, "Aquinas' Changing Evaluation of Plato on Creation," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 66 (1992): 81–88.

33 See the discussion of the so-called *praeambula fidei* in the first thirteen chapters of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the first two questions of the *Summa Theologiae*, and the second question of his *Commentary on Boethius'* De Trintitate.

34 Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), 64.

35 *ST* 1, q. 75, a. 2; 1, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5.

But that transcendence of the physical is sufficient to meet Aristotle's challenge concerning First Philosophy and the philosophy of nature. No matter how well developed and adequate in itself, no philosophy of nature will be adequate to the task of investigating, much less comprehending, the fullness of human life and flourishing. Metaphysics, that is, a philosophy beyond *(meta)* the philosophy of nature *(physis)* is required. It is important not to misunderstand this point in a dualist fashion.[36] The claim is not that the animal life of the human being will be adequately considered in the philosophy of nature, while its rational life can only be considered within metaphysics. On the contrary, I have already argued that the rational life of the human animal will not be adequately considered apart from a more adequate philosophy of nature. Rather, the point is that the whole embodied life of the human animal, while being embedded in the physical, nonetheless transcends it because of the existential unity of the human soul and the human body. Consequently, while an adequate philosophy of nature is necessary for the understanding of human life, so also is an adequate metaphysics indispensable to the understanding of the human animal, not simply the human soul.

The second point to be recognized is that it is this transcending of the limits of the physical by the human animal that St. Thomas is pointing to when he argues that it is necessary for the perfection of the universe that there be within it creatures knowing it and its causes. But this recognition does not go far enough toward adequately understanding human life. A metaphysics of creation is necessary once we recognize that even in this transcendence we are finite and contingent in our being; we are creatures. Adequate metaphysical reflection upon the physical world and upon our transcendence raises the question, asked by both Aristotle and Augustine, whether any finite and contingent being, that is, any creature can constitute the ultimate and final happiness of human life or whether only an infinite and necessary being, that is, a creator can ultimately and perfectly satisfy the longings of the human heart? Placed together with St. Thomas's commitment to man's social and political nature discussed earlier, this metaphysics suggests that our mutual

[36] See my "Aquinas's Rejection of Mind, contra Kenny," for an analysis of how reason, the soul, and the body are one in the life of the human animal.

interdependence among ourselves, but also within creation as a whole, is according to the mind and will of our creator; indeed it constitutes our dignity as persons, as St. Thomas writes, "for it is a tremendous dignity to subsist in a rational nature,"[37] a nature shared in common with others. God has willed for us what we are, and what we are to become as we await our consummation in the beatific vision of the creator to which we are born.

But Pieper raises the precise question we have for St. Thomas—how are we to conceive of the relation between our destiny in beatitude and the love we are to bear toward our neighbor as it is expressed in our acts of service toward him or her? Are these just arbitrary earthly tasks that God has set us so that we can each achieve our own individual reward in beatitude? Relying upon St. Thomas throughout, Pieper considers the love we bear one another that prompts us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and visit the dying. Is love and friendship simply directed upon meeting these needs of our fellow human beings who are suffering deprivation, and nothing more? No, Pieper responds. "If one is normal, one must wish . . . that there were no reason for one to offer such sustenance. The purpose of these acts lies not within themselves, but in the alleviation of suffering. But what about the concern for the fate of one's fellows out of which such acts sprang? What about the inner affirmation of the existence of others, which is the essence of love? Are these not meaningful in themselves? Yes and no. No, because love must necessarily aim at something other than itself. But what do I want if I love someone else?" Pieper answers his own question, "I want him to be happy," and quoting St. Thomas he adds, "in charity, we love others as 'companions in the sharing of beatitude.'"[38] No divinely imposed arbitrary task, but rather mutual assistance in our common life ordered toward *our* destiny toward which we are all by nature born.

Recall what we saw earlier, namely, that it is its embodied form in human life that leads understanding to be distinctively rational in the human species. But it is also this embodied form of reason that leads it to be the understanding of social and political animals. Consequently, reason and sociability are not incidentally or *per*

[37] *ST* 1, q. 29, a. 3, ad 2.

[38] *Happiness and Contemplation*, 92–93.

accidens related to one another in human life. They are intrinsically or per se related. The act of reason is indeed the act of an individual human being; but that does not imply that it is extrinsically related to the social life of the community within which it takes place. Since this intrinsic relation of reason to social life is natural to human beings, a solitary "beatific vision" is as unnatural to human life as the counterfactual condition that we saw St. Thomas consider earlier.[39] The beatific vision is, God willing, our vision, not yours or mine. And so we love one another as lifelong companions along the way. "This is most clear when the path is uncertain, for everyone calls back even an unknown and foreign stranger from going the wrong way, as if every man is naturally an acquaintance and a friend of every other man." The point of this discussion, now embedded in St. Thomas's metaphysical reflection in the *De Veritate*, is that we cannot separate our common life and love from its ultimate destiny in the love of God. Insofar as human animal life is by nature social and political, our love for one another as "companions in beatitude" shows that on the one hand service to one another, and on the other the vision and adoration of God our creator are per se related as a natural activity and its *telos.* Not two lives, but one. Thus, the virtues of acknowledged dependence appropriate to each, God and neighbor, must be recognized as interwoven in a complex fabric of human flourishing.

More generally Pieper, informed by St. Thomas's metaphysics, raises for us the question of whether we can adequately conceive of the virtues of acknowledged dependence if we do not recognize that they are God's will for our good that consists in a social life of friendship, trustworthiness, and love as "companions in beatitude." The

[39] It goes beyond the scope of this article to consider the properly theological discussion of the gift of grace necessary for the achievement of the beatific vision. But it is important to point out that, however supernatural a state that is, it is not, according to St. Thomas, unnatural. The point I have been making here is that it does not exclude the supernatural; it excludes the unnatural. This is the point behind the oft-quoted Thomistic phrase, "grace does not destroy nature, it perfects it." Solitary existence being unnatural to human life, we should not expect that the grace that will perfect human nature in beatitude will bring about that very unnatural existence. Indeed, we expect that it will bring about that graced and perfected social life that traditionally has been called the Church triumphant.

unity of these themes becomes explicit in St. Thomas's transformation of the pagan Aristotelian virtue of magnanimity into a Christian virtue that walks hand-in-hand with humility. Aristotle's great-souled independent individual is troubling to the humility of a Christian, his magnanimous man who "disdains other men," "does not remember kindnesses," and who "cannot associate with others."[40] To the objection that Aristotle's "magnanimous man *should need nobody*, for dependence is weakness," St. Thomas responds, "this must be understood in a *human* context, which is why [Aristotle] adds *or scarcely anyone.* For it is beyond man to be wholly independent. Every man needs *in the first place* God's help, and in the second place human help, because man is by nature a social animal."[41] The possibility of the independence characteristic of magnanimity only takes place within the more fundamental setting of the social, that is, dependent nature of a human being, in which he is *primarily* dependent upon God, and secondarily other men. So, transforming the characteristics mentioned by Aristotle, St. Thomas writes, "magnanimity makes a man esteem himself worthy of great things through contemplating the gifts which he has received from God."[42] "Magnanimity thinks little of others in so far as they fall short of God's gifts; for the magnanimous man does not esteem others so greatly as to do any ignoble act on their account," and yet "humility gives honors to others, and reckons them superior in so far as it sees in them some of God's gifts."[43] Other human beings *are not* to be esteemed insofar as they draw us away from God, and yet they are to be esteemed insofar as one sees in them God's gifts to us.

Returning to MacIntyre's analysis of the virtues of acknowledged dependence that find their greatest expression in serving those who are in such desperate need that they can return nothing material to one, think of Mother Theresa comforting the dying, because in them she claimed to see the face of Christ. Modern secular analysis may well object that she is selfish and self-absorbed because she does not

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[40] Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 4. Translations from Aristotle as found in *ST* 2–2, q. 129, a. 3 (trans. Anthony Ross, OP and P. G. Walsh [Oxford: Blackfriars, 1966]).

[41] *ST* 2–2, q. 129, a. 6.

[42] Ibid., q. 129, a. 3, ad 4.

[43] Ibid.

see others as autonomous individuals existing for their own sake, but claims to see her Savior in them. By contrast, a metaphysics of creation can understand her claim and see in her the face of magnanimous humility; the dignity of human beings consists in their particular mode of participation in the divine. Think of her when St. Thomas continues, "[the magnanimous man] gets no pleasure out of kindnesses from others *unless he makes still greater return to them.*" "He cannot associate with others intimately, *except with his friends* .... And yet he associates with everyone, great and small, in the degree necessary."[44] Thus "his friends" are not simply a small circle of intimates, but "everyone, great and small." The "degree necessary" is determined by the rational form of life taken by the social animal that man has been created to be. So the good of mature independence within human social and political life can only find its appropriate place within our more fundamental dependence first as creatures upon God, and then as human beings upon one another.

Thus, it is also here that a metaphysics of creation gives specific content and determination to MacIntyre's analysis of the care we extend toward infants and the severely disabled. MacIntyre had said that in the most extreme cases we learn from caring for the severely disabled what it is to have entrusted to one the entire good of another. But what is that good? The current argument over the status of the unborn, infants, and the severely disabled or those near death concerns precisely that question—in the one case have they yet acquired, and in the other have they lost what according to some ought to be identified as the human good? Here the difference between Performance criteria and Endowment criteria of human identity and dignity is crucial.[45] A performance criterion

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[44] *ST* 2–2, q. 129, a. 3, ad 5.

[45] For the contrast between Performance and Endowment accounts of human dignity, see John Kavanaugh, S.J., *Who Counts as Persons: Human Identity and the Ethics of Killing* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 67–70. The difference does not rest solely upon a presumed distinction between Aristotelianism and Lockeanism. Compare Kavanaugh's neo-Aristotelian and Thomistic account with the neo-Aristotelian and Lockean account of Kathleen Wilkes's *Real People: Personal Identity without Thought Experiments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). Both recognize the distinction between the endowment and its exercise. But while Kavanaugh judges the exercise to be healthy or pathological by the first-order potentiality of the

will tend to be more restrictive and conservative in attributing the good to those whose present activities meet or approximate some ideal of performance and achievement, and judgments about the good will often times be a difference of degree. An endowment criterion will tend to be more expansive and liberal in attributing

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endowment, Wilkes tends to judge the endowment to be healthy or pathological by the second-order potentiality of its exercise. To be fair, in many cases Kavanaugh and Wilkes will agree on what our moral stance should be toward other human beings, particularly as the human beings are more or less close to healthy human beings. The differences show in the extremes. But of course socially it is precisely at the extremes that the debate is presently taking place. While for Kavanaugh it makes no sense to say that being a person may come in degrees, it makes perfect sense to Wilkes. Consequently, for her, calling someone a person really comes down to a semantic and social question (see Wilkes, 56–57). A striking example of the difference at the extremes shows when Wilkes recognizes that we may well have moral responsibilities toward a fetus or embryo "requir[ing] the full application of the stance that we take to persons," unless the embryo has first been frozen in an IVF procedure, in which case it "has no claim on us at all; there is no stance or attitude that it is proper to take to it" (Wilkes, 72). To thaw or not to thaw, that is the question. The difference also shows up at the other extreme when Wilkes proposes that it might well be appropriate to withhold life saving measures from the "irreversibly senile." Wilkes imagines a case in which the senile individual may now prefer to continue living, having earlier, while mentally healthy, expressed a desire to die if he ever became irreversibly senile. She opts for the earlier wish of the healthy over the later wish of the sick. The reason given for the appropriateness of withholding such measures is not that they are "heroic" or extraordinary as such for any human being whatsoever. The reason given is Lockean, the "irreversible senility" of the human being. "One could describe this as preferring the wishes of a genuine person to those of a human being who is no longer such. The tragedy, that is, would be seen as the tragedy that has affected a person who has become something less, a tragedy which the person that he was would have wanted us to cut short" (Wilkes, 96). Given the move to the active sense of "cutting short," and the reasoning behind the position, it is fair to inquire of Wilkes's position why it began with the passive sense of "withholding treatment." Might there not be other ways of "cutting short," consistent with the patient's healthy wishes, much more efficient and "humane" than simply withholding treatment? Thus, it is materially important that MacIntyre is proposing a Thomistic Aristotelian account, and explicitly distances himself from Neo-Aristotelian accounts like McDowell's that can appropriately be labeled "Lockean."

the human good to those who are set upon a course of development by what they are, that is, by what their natural endowments are, and the judgment will be a difference of kind. But a performance criterion presupposes the endowment criterion as more fundamental. Except on an account of human nature and its natural endowments, it is difficult to see how the activities of the young or infirm can be recognized by the performance criterion as either immature or pathological. Immaturity of what? Pathology of what? As MacIntyre emphasizes, such judgments cannot take place against an abstract ideal of rational performance, but must recognize its embodiment in human nature. No doubt judgments of immaturity or pathology take place against the background of some recognition of normal performance. But normal performance of what? And that recognition of normality is itself not static according to some ideal of mature performance not yet attained or already lost, but rather dynamic as it presupposes a deeper recognition of developmental stages in what the being is and ought to become.

Now, I pointed out that on the one hand MacIntyre, with his desire for a more adequate philosophy of nature, stops short of metaphysics. On the other hand, in the context of his general discussion of the social virtues in St. Thomas he mentions the crucial role of the infused theological virtue of charity, the divine love of God and of neighbor. But is there something to be said about the human good in between these two poles of a more adequate philosophy of nature and what we understand about charity in *sacra doctrina*? Yes. St. Thomas's metaphysics of creation provides a richness and determination to the account of the human good unknown and inaccessible to a mere philosophy of nature, particularly when considering the good of the immature and severely disabled. The good of the immature and the severely disabled that has been entrusted to us consists in the fact that we and they are companions in beatitude. They remain so even when through immaturity or affliction, they are not able to perform or act in the ways characteristic of mature human beings. They are our friends.

Endowed by nature with the capacities for human life, these human beings do not fail to have, or lose their human dignity and its destiny in the absence of the exercise of these capacities. Here and now the paradox of the existence of such human beings among

us, from the earliest stages of our animal life and through the severest of afflictions, consists in the recognition that being a companion in beatitude is also often being a companion in suffering. What the Christian infused with charity knows, beyond and above the metaphysics of creation, is that this is the lesson of Good Friday.

Here I want to register a pastoral qualification to what I have been arguing. It is exceedingly insensitive to suggest that what those among us who have the direct responsibility for caring for the immature and the severely disabled simply need to sustain them is a better philosophy of nature and a more adequate metaphysics of creation. But neither MacIntyre nor I suggest philosophy as substitute pastoral care. Philosophy is a reflective enterprise that helps us as a community to understand the world around us and its Source. And it should be of aid in communal reflection upon how we should structure our lives, our customs, and our laws to promote the care of the immature and disabled against those social, political, legal, and philosophical forces that increasingly marginalize and seek to "compassionately" exterminate the weak among us. But we would do well here to remind ourselves of St. Thomas's humility before the task, namely, that such knowledge is exceedingly difficult, takes most of a lifetime, and is filled with many errors.[46] To that extent, in the pastoral setting it may well prove useless, and in its insensitivity harmful. And yet, as St. Thomas reminds us, it is for this reason that we have been given by God the gift of faith and revelation. In the pastoral setting, what those among us charged with this extraordinary responsibility need is strong and sustaining communities of faith.

IV. Creatures of God: Freedom, Autonomy, and Human Dignity

Though rooted in an ancient problem, St. Thomas's solution to the problem of the magnanimous man is a far cry from the modern autonomous moral theorizer, whose great-souled independence Pierre Manent has called a flight from nature and from nature's

[46] St. Thomas's point here, drawn from *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 1, should not be confined simply to the question about the demonstration of the existence of God and what immediately follows concerning God, but to everything that it is necessary to know for salvation.

God.[47] With that flight in mind, consider briefly the vexed problems of liberty, autonomy, free will, and the natural law, certainly of pressing importance for adequate moral and political reflection upon human flourishing. In his short but important essay "What is Enlightenment," Immanuel Kant opens the first line by explaining that "enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere Aude!* 'Have courage to use your reason!'—that is the motto of enlightenment."[48] This majestic vision has to be read against the background of Kant's general denial of the possibility of a metaphysics in which one could know the existence of a creator god. It follows that one cannot *know* a natural law conceived of as a providential participation in the eternal law of such a creator god. One is left with one's critical reason to recognize the necessities of the moral law, and with one's will in an act of autonomous self-legislation to affirm that moral law as one's own.

But notice that the act of the autonomous will affirming the moral law is subsequent to enlightenment. Reason must first be in a condition where it can recognize the law for itself, before it can be affirmed by the will. "It is so easy not to be of age. If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay."[49] Given the illusion of metaphysics, it can only be an illusion that one is under the tutelage of a god; in practice it is simply various social forces that enslave one. So, with a backhanded reference to Plato's theory of the state in the *Republic*, Kant describes the condition of the greater part of mankind, "after the guardians have first made their domestic cattle dumb and have made sure that these placid crea-

[47] See Pierre Manent, *The City of Man*, trans. Marc A. Lepain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[48] Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment," in *On History*, trans. Lewis White Beck, Robert E. Anchor, and Emil L. Fackenheim (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 3.

[49] Ibid.

tures will not dare take a single step without the harness of the cart to which they are tethered, the guardians then show them the danger which threatens if they try to go alone."[50]

For reason to receive the moral law from another is for it to be heteronymous, under the yoke of tutelage. The only hope for an enlightened community is that there be some "among the established guardians of the great masses, who, after throwing off the yoke of tutelage from their own shoulders, will disseminate the spirit of the rational appreciation of both their own worth and every man's vocation for thinking for himself."[51] Still, Kant remains fearful of social anarchy as a prelude to enlightenment. It is not revolution that is called for, but rather a gradual process of reform brought about by free thought and restricted action, under a prince who can say "argue as much as you will, and about what you will, but obey." Even so, amidst the need for social conformity and obedience on the road to enlightenment, the individual will is supreme. The primeval act of enlightenment is not the willed act that affirms the moral law following the process of social reform, nor is it the willed act that obeys the enlightened prince up until the moment of affirmation. It is the act of will itself, the "courageous" will that prior to obedience to the prince and prior to the enlightened use of reason must first "throw off the yoke of tutelage."

Still, nothing could be further from Kant's mind than that human beings fashion the moral law from nothing. They recognize what they have not made, and in a free act of will affirm it. In denying the possibility of a metaphysics in which one could know a transcendent being responsible for creation and the natural law, his solution was not to provide an alternative metaphysics in which we human beings take the place of God. There are signs, however, that in our own day we have forgotten Kant's lesson, as we pursue just such a "humane" and "enlightened" metaphysics of self-creation. Suppose we begin with the metaphysics of the Supreme Court reflecting upon autonomy and liberty. "[The] choices central to personal dignity and autonomy are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. At the heart of [that] liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of

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50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 4.

meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."[52] Kant would tremble at such a claim.

But suppose for critique of this metaphysics of liberty we turn not to Kant, but to Nietzsche, the Inverted Thomist. In a passage marvelous even by the high standards he normally set, Nietzsche calls the modern philosophers of the free and autonomous will to account for their cowardice. He encourages us to "see through the boorish simplicity of this celebrated (and 'monstrous') concept of 'free will.' " He writes of it, "the desire for 'freedom of the will' in the superlative metaphysical sense, which still holds sway, unfortunately, in the minds of the half-educated; the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to *absolve God* . . . [it] involves nothing less than to be this *causa sui* . . . to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness."[53] Nietzsche saw clearly that in modern thought there is no greater challenge to an autonomous free will and the liberty it craves than the existence of a creator God. Consider Napoleon, of whom Nietzsche writes "like a . . . signpost to the *other* path, Napoleon appeared . . . and in him the problem of the *noble ideal as such* made flesh—one might well ponder *what* kind of problem it is: Napoleon, this synthesis of the sub-human and the superhuman."[54] Notice Nietzsche's positing of Napoleon as the antithesis of Christ, as the "noble ideal as such made flesh," the Napoleon who captures the pope only to grab the crown from his hands and place it upon his own head. Like Napoleon it is we who by our autonomy will give absolution *to* God—we will not be absolved.

But Nietzsche sees through Napoleon to the paradox. Once we have rid ourselves of God, the answer is not the glory of a free and autonomous will defining for itself its "own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." Nietzsche "begs [us] to carry our 'enlightenment' a step further." Once we have gotten rid of the eternal lawgiver, we must also "put

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[52] Frank D. Wagner, ed., *United States Reports Volume 505: Cases Adjudged in the Supreme Court at October Term, 1991* (Washington: 1996), 851.

[53] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 28.

[54] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 54. Emphasis in original.

out of [our] heads the contrary of this monstrous conception of 'free will': I mean 'unfree will.' "[55] The death of God is also the death of the antinomy between free and unfree will, autonomy and heteronomy, Holy Roman Emperor and Pope. The enlightened consciousness that Nietzsche is pushing will give up the obsession with freedom and autonomy once it has given up the obsession with God. Thus Nietzsche sees clearly the paradox; freedom and autonomy are inconceivable without God.

If we must do away with God, we must also do away with freedom and autonomy. What, after all, is the concept of freedom falsely trying to capture according to Nietzsche? Power—"The 'unfree will' is mythology; in real life it is only a question of strong and weak wills."[56] "I am free, 'he' must obey."[57] Indeed, here Kant falters as well, as by the light of Nietzsche we see the internal tension in his account of enlightenment. First, we have already noted that the primeval act of enlightenment is an individual act of will prior to reason, a will that must have the power to throw off its "yoke." But what ultimately legitimates the social order brought about by the enlightened ruler, the social order in which the citizens are to become enlightened? Kant's fear of revolution and anarchy is premised upon a still unenlightened populace. Until they have come to be of one mind with their enlightened prince, what is their lot? Just pages after Kant had praised the enlightened ruler who can say, "argue as much as you will, and about what you will, but obey!," he finishes his essay with the chilling qualification, "only one who . . . has *a numerous and well-disciplined army* to assure public peace, can say: "Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, only obey!"[58] Nietzsche's penetrating vision rephrases it, "I (the prince) am free, he (the citizen) must obey." In the end, for the unenlightened herd enlightenment does not come under a yoke but at the point of a gun.

Now what could be more of a challenge to that power that Nietzsche sees at the heart of "I am free, he must obey," than that it exists as a creature participating in the power of a creator god.

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[55] *Beyond Good and Evil*, 29.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 25.

[58] "What is Enlightenment," 10.

This Nietzschean paradox should not startle us. It is simply the inversion of the metaphysical paradox in St. Thomas's discussions of how God acts in nature by creation, and in particular in human agency in such a way that He gives to human beings the natural law as their participation in eternal law, and yet as St. Thomas constantly repeats "without prejudice to free will." According to St. Thomas God creates our free will and actions to be precisely that—free. He writes, "God is the first moving cause of both natural causes and voluntary agents. And just as his moving natural causes does not prevent their acts from being natural, so also his moving voluntary agents does not prevent them from acting voluntarily, but rather makes it to be just that, for he works in each according to its nature."[59] Of free choice he writes, "because the very act of free choice has its origin in God as a cause, it is necessary that whatever happens by free choice falls under divine providence."[60] We are free and autonomous precisely because of how our natures participate as creatures in the eternal law of God.

The problem is that most of us experience power as an external limit that impedes or disables the impetus we feel toward our conception of the good and happiness. A task of a metaphysics of creation is to help us apprehend a creative power that internally enables us to follow our natural impetus toward our good and happiness, a good and happiness that is itself conceived differently than it otherwise would be without that apprehension. God is at once the lawgiver acting externally to create our voluntary and free natures, and the creator acting internally through those voluntary and free natures. His yoke is easy, and his burden light. It is by our created rational freedom that we respond to our existence as creatures, social and political animals providentially destined together for the glory to which we are born. It is this freedom that Servais Pinckaers calls "freedom for excellence" as contrasted with the modern concept of "freedom of indifference."[61] A task of a metaphysics of creation is in the first place to affirm that truth, in

[59] *ST* 1, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3.

[60] *ST* 1, q. 22, a. 2, ad 4.

[61] Servais Pinckaers, OP, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, OP (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 327–78.

the second place to try to understand it better, and in the third place to show how it may inform our moral and political thought.

What could be more foreign to our modes of thought than to suggest that the condition for our freedom and autonomy is our being creatures of God, caused by God to be free in all our acts. Nietzsche was right to point out the failure of vision in those enlightened figures who thought they could have freedom and autonomy apart from God. If Nietzsche's vision failed, perhaps it was in his inability to see that freedom and autonomy need not be in eternal conflict with the eternal law of God, but might well be our participation in it, our participation, that is, in the freedom and autonomy of God. Like Euthyphro prosecuting his father, what Nietzsche lacked was an adequate metaphysics of creation.

Can there be an "account of the goods, rules and virtues that are definitive of our moral life" that does not address our condition as *creatures* of God? No. The recognition that we are creatures of God does not simply situate us with respect to God, but also with respect to one another. When we recognize that by creation our rational, social, political nature is our participation in the eternal law of God, we also recognize that the virtues of acknowledged dependence that MacIntyre discusses are the will of God for us; they are the way we approach the "more perfect existence" to which we are born as "companions in beatitude." And so when we acknowledge and freely cherish our status as creatures of God, we reconceive both the virtues themselves, and human flourishing in general insofar as they are partially constitutive of it.

V. Conclusion

These all-too-brief reflections upon the virtues of acknowledged dependence and the metaphysics of creation call for much further work. All I have provided so far are preliminary suggestions. But insofar as our status as creatures is fundamental and primary, I would like to end by asking how, as rational, social, and political animals, we give expression to the virtues when we acknowledge our dependence as creatures. Are they perhaps the virtues we give voice to in the liturgy? Do they inform in a particular way those virtues we exercise when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the dying? St. Thomas claims that it is a deliverance of

the natural law that we should worship God, even if the specification of the form that worship takes is a matter of human or divine law in particular settings. This claim poses a distinct challenge for our life together in pursuit of happiness. It suggests that the heart of flourishing as rational, social, political animals is to be found in the worship of God, the form of which worship has taken on for us the determination of the divine liturgy, the Eucharist. And here again our life as animals comes back to us. A striking feature of St. Thomas's discussion is that he constantly raises the issue about particular acts of religion whether they need to take place by bodily signs. While always asserting the necessity of interiority in acts of religion, he also always answers yes to that question. It is nearly self-evident that communal prayer should be vocal. But even in individual prayer St. Thomas gives as a reason that "vocal prayer is used [in individual prayer] so as to pay a debt, so that a man may serve God according to the whole of that which he has received from God, that is, not only with the mind, but also the body."[62] And specifically in acts of adoration, "certain bodily signs of humility [display reverence to God], as when we genuflect we signify our weakness with respect to God; and when we prostrate ourselves we signify that of ourselves we are nothing."[63] Notice the plural. What I am trying to suggest is that philosophical reflection upon the virtues of acknowledged dependence points us toward human flourishing that starts on our knees with the acknowledgement "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed." N&V

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62 *ST* 2–2, q. 83, a. 12.

63 *ST* 2–2, q. 84, a. 2, ad 2.

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Languages of Ascent: Gregory of Nyssa's and Augustine of Hippo's Exegeses of the Beatitudes

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CONTEMPORARY READERS, accustomed to associating the beatitudes with the field of ethics, may be startled when they pick up Gregory of Nyssa's or Augustine of Hippo's writings on the beatitudes. Gregory and Augustine both interpret the beatitudes as a mystical ascent.[1] Gregory of Nyssa thus begins his first homily on the beatitudes as follows: "Who then among those gathered here is such as to be a disciple of the Word and to go up with him from the low ground and away from the hollows of lowly thoughts to the spiritual mountain of sublime contemplation?"[2] Gregory seems to miss the ethical challenge of the beatitudes. In his homily, he presents the beatitudes as an invitation to ascend to "the spiritual mountain of sublime contemplation." Gregory even makes an allusion to Plato's cave:

1 For an insightful theological discussion of Augustine's treatment of the beatitudes see Servais Pinckaers, OP, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble, OP (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

2 Homily 1, no. 77, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes: An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Paderborn, 14–18 September 1998), ed. Hubertus R. Drobner and Albert Viciano (Boston: Brill, 2000). The numbers refer to the numbering from the critical edition preserved in the present English translation. The *Homilies on the Beatitudes* were translated by Stuart George Hall.

"[This mountain] rises above every shadow cast by the upstart hillocks of evil, and, illuminated on every side by the radiance of the true light, allows us in the clear air of truth to view from a place of vantage all that is invisible to those labouring in the hollow."[3] According to Gregory, the Sermon on the Mount invites the audience to make what appears to be a platonic ascent. What is going on here?

Turning to Augustine, the reader is at first put more at ease. Augustine does not focus on the beatitudes exclusively, but discusses them at the beginning of a larger commentary entitled, *On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount.* Perhaps this larger scope allows him to emphasize more the ethical dimension. Augustine begins his commentary, "If anyone piously and soberly considers the sermon which our Lord Jesus Christ preached on the mount, as we read it in the Gospel according to Matthew, I think he will find in it, as regards the highest morals, the perfect measure of the Christian life."[4] When Augustine, however, moves to speak of the beatitudes he eschews emphasizing the ethical and interprets them instead as the seven stages to attain wisdom itself, or as he also puts it, "the contemplation of truth."[5] To make matters more awkward for even the sympathetic interpreter, Augustine then illustrates a comparison among the seven stages of the beatitudes and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as listed in Isaiah 11:2–3 and the seven petitions of the Our Father. It would seem that we have here merely arbitrary and spiritualized biblical interpretation. Are Augustine and Gregory blind to the ethical significance of the beatitudes? On the other hand, is it possible that Augustine and Gregory offer a view of the beatitudes and contemplation—"in which the moral life is subsumed with the contemplation of truth"—that needs retrieval in contemporary theology?

I. Reading Patristic Biblical Exegesis: Pierre Hadot as Guide

Before we attempt to retrieve some of Augustine's and Gregory's insights into the beatitudes, we require a more concrete idea of

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[3] Homily 1, nos. 77–78.

[4] *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Book 1, ch. 1. English translations are taken from *The Preaching of Augustine: "Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount,"* ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Francine Cardman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973).

[5] *De Serm.* Book 1, ch. 3, no. 10.

what it is they are doing and why they do it in the way that they do. Pierre Hadot, who is Professor Emeritus of the History of Hellenistic and Roman Thought at the Collège de France, has a collection of essays entitled in the English translation, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, or simply *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, in the French original.[6] Hadot writes largely about the nature of philosophy in antiquity, but his observations suggest a cultural and intellectual context for the reading of Gregory and Augustine.

From Hadot, we can discern two great overarching themes necessary to understand philosophy in antiquity: first, the priority of the oral context even in written discourses; second, the character of philosophy in antiquity as a set of spiritual exercises or, in other words, a way of life.

Let us first examine the way Hadot emphasizes the oral character of ancient philosophy. He writes, "I do want to stress the fact that written works in the period we study are never completely free of the constraints imposed by oral transmission."[7] Hadot suggests that many modern interpreters of ancient texts both non-Christian and Christian misinterpret them because they expect a straightforward systematic argument. When modern interpreters fail to find this, they often judge the ancient works defective. Hadot responds, however, that the defect may not lie in the ancient works, but rather in the modern interpreters' assumptions: "This relationship between the written and the spoken word thus explains certain aspects of the works of antiquity. Quite often, the work proceeds by the association of ideas, without systematic rigor. The work retains the starts and stops, the hesitations, and the repetitions of spoken discourse. Or else, after re-reading what he has written, the author introduces a somewhat forced systematization by adding transitions, introductions, or conclusions to different parts of the work."[8] Thus in confronting ancient texts, the interpreter must keep in mind the effects of the priority of the oral over the written.

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[6] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995). French original, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 2nd Ed. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987).

[7] Ibid., 61.

[8] Ibid., 62.

In addition to the oral context, Hadot also emphasizes that philosophy in antiquity was a way of life. Rather than a set of doctrines or principles, philosophy sought to change its practitioners by means of a set of spiritual exercises. Although Hadot notes that the different philosophical schools, such as the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Platonists, each had particular methods of the spiritual exercises, he argues that they all agreed that such exercises were necessary to cure humanity of its ailments. Hadot, in fact, describes St. Ignatius of Loyola's sixteenth-centry spiritual exercises as "nothing but a Christian version of a Greco-Roman tradition . . . ."[9] When writers in antiquity spoke of training, or *askesis*, they meant not "only" what we now call asceticism, but more broadly, as Hadot puts it, "the practice of spiritual exercises."[10] The philosophical schools likewise shared a common conception of the problems of the human condition. Hadot writes, "In the view of all philosophical schools, mankind's principal cause of suffering, disorder, and unconsciousness were the passions: that is, unregulated desires and exaggerated fears."[11] The passions debilitate human beings; the spiritual exercises of the philosophers cure the sickness. Philosophy in antiquity shared a common conception of the end of philosophy as the healing of human passions and of spiritual exercises as the means to attain that end.

Beyond this general conception of the disease of the passions and the cure through spiritual exercises, Hadot shows that some schools clearly delineated these exercises in specific steps or stages. Neo-Platonism in particular expressed stages of spiritual progress. Hadot observes that, "The hierarchy of these stages is described in many Neoplatonic texts, serving in particular as the framework for Marinus' *Life of Proclus.* Porphyry, editor of Plotinus' *Enneads*, systematically arranged his master's work according to the stages of this spiritual progress. First, the soul was purified by its gradual detachment from the body; then came the knowledge of, and subsequent passing beyond, the sensible world; finally, the soul achieved conversion toward the Intellect and the One."[12] In this context, the neo-Platonic philosopher led his followers through

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[9] Ibid., 82.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 83.

[12] Ibid., 99–100.

specific stages in order to lead them to wisdom. To be a neo-Platonist thus meant more than merely holding neo-Platonic teachings; instead, to be a neo-Platonist meant that one submitted to a set of progressive spiritual exercises moving one away from the disturbance of the passions toward union with the One.

This view of philosophy as an ascent by stages also shapes the philosophical writings of antiquity. Hadot describes the philosophical author as foremost a spiritual director: "Above all, the work, even if it is apparently theoretical and systematic, is written not so much to inform the reader of a doctrinal content but to form him, to make him traverse a certain itinerary in the course of which he will make spiritual progress. This procedure is clear in the works of Plotinus and Augustine, in which all the detours, starts and stops, and digressions of the work are formative elements. One must always approach a philosophical work of antiquity with this idea of spiritual progress in mind."[13] It is hardly surprising that this should be so. If philosophy was conceived in terms of making spiritual progress, then the writings of philosophy naturally would be aimed at aiding their readers in this endeavor.

Following Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, Gregory and Augustine do not distinguish philosophy from theology in the way that became common later during scholastic theology. They instead view Christianity as the true philosophy. Gregory and Augustine thus develop their exegeses of the beatitudes from within this intellectual context in which there is a common understanding of the ends and means of philosophy. Moreover, we can say that the view of philosophy as spiritual exercises influenced Augustine and Gregory in two specific ways. First, it led them to view the beatitudes as ordered stages of spiritual exercises. The beatitudes differed from other philosophies because they had a better teacher, namely, the Word Incarnate. Nevertheless, the beatitudes shared with other philosophies the fact that they proffered stages of ascent. Second, the view of philosophy as spiritual exercises influenced the way in which Augustine and Gregory present their writings on the beatitudes. In line with the general conception of philosophical writing in antiquity, Augustine and Gregory offer their writings not as merely analytical endeavors, but as spiritual exercises designed to

[13] Ibid., 64.

lead their readers through a path of spiritual progress. Augustine and Gregory act as only secondary philosophers to the true philosopher who is Christ.

We have thus found a significant clue to Augustine's and Gregory's exegeses of the beatitudes. For what is the one element that both authors take for granted and yet seems so strange to the modern biblical interpreter? It is precisely that both Augustine and Gregory assume that the beatitudes constitute an ordered progression of stages in contemplation. Yet, if neo-Platonic philosophy employed several stages in the attainment of perfection, then Augustine and Gregory could not but interpret the beatitudes as the stages by which Jesus leads his followers so that they might ascend to perfection. Once Augustine's and Gregory's intellectual context is depicted, then it is no surprise that this is exactly what each of them finds in the beatitudes. The fact that neither Augustine nor Gregory offer any defense for viewing the beatitudes as stages of an ascent shows how much they each take this view for granted. Gregory and Augustine share a certain formal commonality with respect to the ends and means of philosophy. Nevertheless, both Gregory and Augustine shift the character of the end in question as well as the means to attain that end. Gregory and Augustine thus take themes characteristic of philosophy in antiquity, but they recast these themes within the horizon offered by Christ's proclamation of the beatitudes. In this, they provide a different yet complementary reading of the beatitudes from that of modern commentators

Once we see the oral character of written works in antiquity, we are prepared to interpret one oddity of Augustine's commentary. The very comparisons among the seven beatitudes and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and, later, the seven petitions of the Our Father, that strike the modern reader as forced come easily in an oral context. The parallels of sevens present listeners to the oral discourse with exactly the association of ideas for which they would be looking. What is most significant about Hadot's argument is that it frees interpretation from the historical question of whether Augustine actually preached his commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. The oral background echoes throughout the written discourses of antiquity. The echo, moreover, resounds doubly in the works of Augustine.

II. The End of the Ascent

As we have seen, philosophy in antiquity shared a consensus regarding the ends and means of philosophy. This consensus was the context in which the Church fathers worked. Gregory and Augustine have much in common with pagan notion of the ends of philosophy. The philosophers in antiquity frequently identified perfection in terms of absence from passions.[14] If philosophy in antiquity conceived of the end of philosophy as curing human beings of their illness from the passions, Augustine and Gregory clearly share this conception of the end when they interpret the beatitudes. Yet, Augustine and Gregory also depict the end in a uniquely Christian way.[15] Through their reading of the beatitudes

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[14] For instance, Pierre Hadot argues that "spiritual perfection is also depicted as *apatheia*—the complete absence of passions—a Stoic concept taken up by Neoplatonism" (136).

[15] Alden Mosshammer argues that Gregory's *Homilies on the Beatitudes* are much more Platonic—and less Christian—than his later (perhaps 15 years) *Homilies on the Song of Songs.* Mosshammer argues for a significant intellectual development in Gregory which moved from an individualistic and ahistorical account of salvation to a view of salvation as building up the Body of Christ to achieve the unity of all mankind. See Alden A. Mosshammer, "Gregory's Intellectual Development: A Comparison of the *Homilies on the Beatitudes* with the *Homilies on the Song of Songs*," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes*, 359–88. Although Mosshammer may be correct that the later *Homilies on the Song of Songs* present a more corporate and more Christological view of salvation, in order to argue his case he risks overstating the limitations of the earlier *Homilies on the Beatitudes.* Several of the articles in the same collection show the uniquely Christian elements of the *Homilies on the Beatitudes.* Cf. Monique Alexandre's argument that the spatial representations undergo a spiritualization in light of the language of Scripture, "Perspectives eschatologiques dans les *Homelies sur les beatitudes* de Gregoire de Nysse," 257–92. Anthony Meredith, in commenting on the first homily, argues that Gregory's presentation of the ascent is more Christian than Hellenic, more moral than ontological. See "Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, Oratio I: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 5,3)," 93–110. Robert L. Wilken shows how Gregory takes the *eudaimonistic* Aristotelian background of the notion of beatitude/happiness and transforms it by placing the end in Christ. See "Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, Oratio VIII: 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 5,10)," 243–56.

within the web of Christian belief and practice, Gregory and Augustine hold that the identity of the soul remains in the end—perfection no longer dissolves the individual into the One. Moreover, perfection now includes the elevation of human nature to become children of God. The uniquely Christian character of Augustine's and Gregory's exegeses again appears when they discuss the means of philosophical ascent. Furthermore, Augustine and Gregory differ from each other in the way they express the end of that ascent. Gregory sees the beatitudes as stages in the process of our deification; Augustine depicts the beatitudes as steps to the attainment of true wisdom.

Gregory defines beatitude, or blessedness, as "something which includes every concept of goodness, and from which nothing answering to good desire is missing."[16] Although Gregory insists on the ineffable and incomprehensible nature of the divinity, he argues that we nonetheless agree that whatever the divinity is, it surely possesses beatitude. If beatitude belongs to God alone, then how can the Word speak of human beings attaining beatitude? Gregory recalls the teaching of the *imago Dei* to suggest we can call human beings blessed "in a secondary way" insofar as they participate "in the real blessedness."[17] From its creation in the image of God, human nature is marked with the beauty of goodness. Sin has disfigured the image, but Gregory points out that "[the Word] who washes us came with his own water, living water 'welling up to eternal life' (Jn 4:10)."[18] Gregory employs the image of a painter who uses certain physical features to compose physical beauty. He extends the image to the divine artist: "In just the same way the one who redraws our soul to make it resemble the only Blessed One will in his discourse outline each one of the things which draw us towards blessedness . . . ."[19] Through each of the beatitudes, the Word Incarnate portrays another feature necessary to restore the beauty of the human soul. These features of human beatitude are simply the virtues. Drawing on a line from Plato's *Theaetetus*, Gregory considers "that the goal of the virtuous life is likeness to

[16] Homily 1, nos. 79–80.
[17] Ibid., no. 80.
[18] Ibid., no. 81.
[19] Ibid., no. 81.

the Divinity."[20] Following this initial trajectory, Gregory presents the beatitudes as ordered steps in the ascent to deification or *theosis.*

Perfection, for Gregory, describes a divinized state free from passions. The Lord, however, does not demand complete absence of passion as the rule for human life. Gregory asks, "Who could get as far as that while still bound to flesh and blood?"[21] Although we cannot yet be free from passion in this life, we should resist the downward movements of the passions. This resistance, according to Gregory, arises from the virtue of meekness, as in "blessed are the meek." Imperfection here arises from the "flesh and blood" character of human existence. Here we come upon Gregory's ambiguous view of the body, a view that requires addressing in this consideration of the end of the ascent according to Gregory. Peter Bouteneff argues that Gregory distinguishes between the *soma*—part of the true created human nature—and the *sarx*—the human body changed by sin. Once this distinction is recognized, Bouteneff concludes that according to Gregory "the human person, whom God conceived and created as good and in His own image, is essentially and naturally a psychosomatic unity."[22] That "flesh and blood" lead the soul downward only results from the experience of the body under sin.

Nonetheless, it remains that Gregory oftentimes expresses an ambiguity regarding bodily existence without explicitly referring to the *sarx/soma* distinction drawn by Bouteneff. This is a characteristic aspect of Gregory's anthropology. In other writings, Gregory shows a profound ambiguity regarding the division of the humanity into different sexes. The present human condition is alien to the image of God as originally intended by the Creator.

To understand this alienation of the present human condition it is helpful to look outside the *Homilies on the Beatitudes* to Gregory's work, *De Hominis Opificio.* In this work, which is the conclusion to St. Basil's *Hexaemeron*, Gregory narrates the creation of humanity on the sixth day. He characterizes the human creature as the coincidence

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[20] Ibid., no. 82, cf. *Theaetetus* 176b.

[21] Homily 2, no. 96.

[22] Cf. Peter C. Bouteneff, "Essential or Existential: The Problem of the Body in the Anthropology of St. Gregory of Nyssa," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes*, 409–19. Bouteneff addresses the question of the *Homilies on the Beatitudes* in the context of Gregory's larger literary corpus.

of two extremes. Humans share a divine likeness characterized by the image of God; humans also share a likeness to beasts. This dual likeness is the lens through which the human creature is to be viewed. According to Gregory, this dual likeness was not part of the Creator's original plan. (This does not entail a temporal succession of thoughts to the Deity.) God created humans with a secondary likeness to beasts because He foreknew that humans would fall by turning away from the beautiful and the good.[23] The image of God includes the *nous* and *phronesis*; the image of beasts includes sexual differentiation and reproduction subject to the passions. The latter likeness was given to humans as a chastisement for their turning to material creatures. Yet, this same likeness to beasts is simultaneously the cause of the human tendency to turn toward the material. Roger Leys describes this as a destructive paradox since the present human condition is both the cause and the punishment for human sin.[24] Hans Urs von Balthasar, however, presents it as a fruitful paradox by drawing a comparison between this motif in Gregory and the kingship of Israel.[25] The kingship was at once a blessing and a punishment for Israel. The human likeness to beasts, which includes the passions, is likewise a blessing and a punishment. In support of von Balthasar's more positive interpretation of this feature as a non-destructive paradox, Gregory says that when the passions are guided by reason they can become forms of virtue.[26] If the soul is the mirror of the divine, the bodily nature of humans can become a mirror of the mirror and so share in the goodness. There is an undeniable ambiguity in Gregory's account of the human creature, but this ambiguity is consonant with the earthly experience of the passions as something often burdensome as in Romans 7:23, "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind," or Wisdom of Solomon 9:15, "for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind."

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[23] *De Hominis Opificio* 17.4.

[24] Roger Leys, S.J., *L'image de Dieu chez saint Gregoire de Nysse; esquisse d'une doctrine* (Brussels: Edition universelle, 1951).

[25] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Marc Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

[26] *De Hominis Opificio* 18.5.

Returning to our consideration of the end of the ascent in the *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, the question of imperfection also arises when Gregory discusses "blessed are they that mourn." He suggests that its deeper meaning is that human beings should have pity on themselves when they think of what they possessed in paradise compared to the state into which they have fallen.[27] He writes, "Instead of that sublime region and a life among the angels we have been condemned to share a home with the beasts of the earth, exchanging the angelic and painless for the way of life of cattle."[28] This could appear as confirming Gregory's profound ambiguity with respect to the embodied character of human existence. If we follow Gregory's comments, however, it would appear that he is simply offering a standard interpretation of the vices. By leaving behind angelic freedom, we become enslaved to our passions. Gregory thus exhorts his audience: "Wrath is a harsh master, malice another like him, and hatred; the passion of pride is a mad and savage tyrant; and like one who takes his pleasure on brought-in slaves is the licentious fantasy which captivates our whole being to his passionate and sordid service. What excess of harshness does the tyranny of greed omit?"[29] In this passage, the prime analogate for passion is not a neutral desire, but a vicious desire. Passion comes to signify unruly passion; desire comes to signify tyrannical desire. If Gregory uses passions equivalently with vices, then it is hardly surprising that perfection requires that we set aside passions.

This passionless perfection is manifested in the beatitude "blessed are the peacemakers." Gregory writes that the exemplary peacemaker is one "who brings to a peaceful concord the strife within himself of flesh and spirit, the civil war in his nature, when the law of the body which campaigns against the law of the mind is no longer effective, but is subjugated to the higher kingdom and becomes a servant of the divine commandments."[30] Once passions come under the authority of the law of the mind, then they no longer act as passions—namely, those things that exercise tyranny over us. Gregory depicts the end of the way of the beatitudes as

[27] Homily 5, nos. 131–33.
[28] Ibid., no. 132.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., no. 160.

attaining this divine-like passionless state. This does not mean, however, that perfection lacks desire. As seen above, Gregory says that beatitude means that "nothing answering to good desire is missing."[31] Perfection merely lacks any unfulfilled good desires or good passions. Good desires remain—now perfected insofar as they now possess the good. The end of the Christian ascent excludes the human experience of the tyranny of the passions.

Despite sharing much in common with the ancient philosophers' view of the end, Gregory casts the end in a distinctively Christian hue by emphasizing that the end of the beatitudes is to become a child of God. We can thus ask, is this end something that is natural to the human creature? Does Gregory present a uniquely Christian view of the end that preserves the gratuitous character of graced perfection? Vladimir Lossky criticizes Gregory's location of the image of God in the *nous* on these very grounds. Lossky claims that the *nous* as image of God suggests a natural kinship *(sungeneia)* to the divine.[32] For example, Plotinus, in the *Enneads*, described the *nous* as the icon, or image, of the One.[33] Lossky claims that the image of God should not be limited to the *nous*, but should include the human person.[34] The image as person, according to Lossky, moves away from suggesting there is something in human nature, in this case the *nous*, that is quasi-divine. Nevertheless, one may respond to Lossky that the natural kinship of the *nous* to the divine does not need to be rejected because of filial adoption, but rather must be transformed from its Greek philosophical context to a Christian one. Anthony Meredith argues that this is precisely what Gregory does in the homily on the first beatitude. In the Hellenic tradition, the notion of a kinship *(sungeneia)* to the divine "is the primal and indestructible condition of human life." According to Gregory, however, "it is an ideal to be aimed at and at the same time a gift of God,

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31 Homily 1, no. 80.

32 Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 125–40.

33 *Enneads*, Book 5, tract. 1, no. 7.

34 Yet, one may point out that even the notion of person indicates something peculiar to the human creature that makes possible reception into the divine life.

conceived of as a reward."[35] Contra Lossky's criticism, the gratuity of grace can be preserved whether one locates the image of God in the *nous* or the person. Gregory, for instance, depicts perfection in greater terms than merely the perfection of the image of God. When he comments on the sixth beatitude, Gregory writes that the pure of heart will see God since they will have cleansed the image of God within themselves. Gregory, however, does not stop there. Following the order of the beatitudes, he then considers the seventh beatitude which declares blessed the peacemakers for they will be called children of God. Gregory says that with the seventh beatitude we have now moved into the Holy of Holies: "If seeing God had nothing to surpass it in goodness, then surely to become a son of God is beyond all felicity."[36] When Gregory describes our filial adoption, he in no way indicates a natural kinship of our *nous* with the divine nature. Instead, Gregory insists on the utter dissimilarity between the divine and human natures: "Man, reckoned as of no worth among beings, mere dust, grass, and vanity, is deemed to belong, adopted into the status of son by the God of the universe."[37] Moreover, Gregory emphasizes the fully gratuitous character of this divine filiation: "If you make peace, [the Word] says, you will be crowned with the reward of adoption as a son. In my opinion the very work for which he promises such a great reward is itself another gift."[38] Here we have a cycle of God's gifts—or a cycle of grace—in which to be a peacemaker is itself a gift which then receives as a reward the gift of divine adoption. This shows that Gregory does not conceive of the perfection of life in simply neo-Platonic terms. Although human beings lack any natural kinship with the divine, they do receive a kinship by grace when they are adopted as children of God.

How then does Augustine describe the end of the ascent of the beatitudes? He also focuses on becoming free from the harmful effects of the passions. We noted earlier that the ancient philosophical schools agreed that disordered passions were the main problem plaguing human beings. Augustine clearly follows this dominant line of thought when he interprets the seventh beatitude

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35 Anthony Meredith, "Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, Oratio I," 99.

36 Homily 7, no. 149.

37 Ibid., no. 151.

38 Ibid., nos. 151–52.

regarding the peacemakers. He describes the peacemakers as those "in whom everything is now in order and no emotion is in rebellion against reason, but everything obeys the spirit of man."[39] The peacemakers typify a return to original justice in which reason orders the passions and emotions. The peace here is primarily internal peace. When the disciples reach this internal peace from the passions, then they have achieved the perfection of human life.

Augustine shows his view of the end of the ascent when he depicts the kingdom of heaven. He describes the kingdom of heaven in terms quite different from modern interpreters of the beatitudes. According to Augustine, "The kingdom of heaven . . . is the perfect and highest wisdom of the rational soul."[40] Later he writes that the peacemakers "become a kingdom of God in which everything is so ordered that what is distinctive and superior in man rules without resistance those other elements which are common to us and the beasts."[41] This strongly echoes Plato's *Republic* in which the *polis* is an image of the individual soul and vice versa. For Augustine, the individual Christian soul rightly ordered is the *polis* of the kingdom of God.[42]

In contrast to Gregory, Augustine does not distinguish between the renewal of the image of God and divine filiation. Augustine writes, "to the peacemakers the likeness of God is given, as to those perfectly wise and formed to the image of God through the regeneration of the renewed man: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' "[43] In this early work on the Sermon on the Mount, Augustine thinks such perfection is possible in this life: "And these things can be fulfilled in this life, just as we believe

[39] *De Serm.* Book 1, ch. 4, no. 11.

[40] Ibid., Book 1, ch. 4, no. 12.

[41] Ibid., Book 1, ch. 2, no. 9.

[42] It would be interesting to see whether this view is revised or refined in the *City of God*. This interpretation of the kingdom of God in philosophical terms continues after Augustine. As Hadot writes, "It is with Evagrius, however, that we can see most clearly just how closely Christian *apatheia* can be linked to philosophical concepts. In Evagrius' *Praktikos*, we find the following definition: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is *apatheia* of the soul along with true knowledge of existing things' " (Hadot, 136). Evagrius lived during the sixth century.

[43] *De Serm.* Book 1, ch. 4, no. 12.

them to have been fulfilled in the apostles . . . ."[44] Later in his life, in his *Retractions*, Augustine clarifies how this statement should be interpreted: "not that we suppose that there was in the apostles while they were still living here [on earth] no desire of the flesh in opposition to the spirit, but that this can be achieved here to the extent that the apostles achieved it."[45] Limiting ourselves to Augustine's *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* and his later *Retractions*, we can say that the end for Augustine shows much in common with the general conception of the end in philosophy of antiquity. The ancient philosophers generally agreed as well that the perfection of wisdom was incapable in this life. As Hadot observes, "Philosophy thus took on the form of an exercise of thought, will, and the totality of one's being, the goal of which was to achieve a state practically inaccessible to mankind: wisdom."[46] If anything, in the early work of Augustine's *Commentary*, Augustine exhibits more confidence than the philosophers that perfection of wisdom was possible in this life.

Gregory and Augustine share much in common with the ancient conception of the end of philosophy. Augustine clearly depicts the perfection of human life in terms of the subjection of the passions to reason and to the attainment of true wisdom. Wisdom is attained through the renewal of our likeness to God when we become children of God. Gregory shares these conceptions. Gregory, however, articulates more clearly the uniquely Christian character of the end by distinguishing the image of God which allows us to see God and the even greater gift of sharing in the divine nature through our adoption as children of God.

III. The Ordered Means of Perfection

We observed above that philosophy in antiquity was not so much a collection of doctrines, but instead a way of life. The various philosophical schools shared the conception that the way of life

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[44] Ibid.

[45] *Retractions* Book 1, ch. 19, no. 3.

[46] Hadot, 265. "Real wisdom does not merely cause us to know: it makes us 'be' in a different way. Both the grandeur and the paradox of ancient philosophy are that it was, at one and the same time, conscious of the fact that wisdom is inaccessible, and convinced of the necessity of pursuing spiritual progress" (265).

proper to philosophy was engaging in spiritual exercises. Particularly in neo-Platonism, these exercises took the form of specific stages of ascent. This conception of the means of philosophy as stages of spiritual exercises form the milieu out of which Gregory and Augustine work.

Both Augustine and Gregory present the beatitudes as specific steps in an ordered ascent. Gregory writes in the beginning of his sermon on the second beatitude, "I think that the arrangement of the beatitudes is like a series of rungs, and it makes it possible for the mind to ascend by climbing from one to another."[47] For example, those who have learned poverty of spirit from the first beatitude will move easily to obtain the meekness of the second beatitude. When Gregory turns to the third beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn," he reminds his audience that the journey through humility and meekness has not completed the ascent. He writes, "We have not yet climbed the high part of the mountain, but are still down in the foothills of ideas, even though we have already journeyed past two ridges, as we were led up the beatitudes to blessed poverty and to that gentleness [or meekness] which is above it. After these the Word leads us towards higher places and points us by the beatitudes to a third successive high point."[48] When he comes to the fourth beatitude, Gregory writes that the Word leads us by the hand up "toward the upper parts of the ladder of the beatitudes."[49] The Word acts as the spiritual director *par excellence.* Gregory simply leads his audience along the ascent outlined by Jesus Christ.[50]

Following standard neo-Platonic belief and practice and the witness of Sacred Scripture, Gregory begins by agreeing that no human being can truly become like God. As Gregory expresses it, "that which is passionless and undefiled totally eludes imitation by

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[47] Homily 2, no. 90.

[48] Homily 3, nos. 98, 99.

[49] Homily 4, no. 110.

[50] Cf. Pope John Paul II, "In the end, Jesus does not merely speak the beatitudes. He lives the beatitudes. He is the beatitudes. Looking at him you will see what it means to be poor in spirit, gentle and merciful, to mourn, to care for what is right, to be pure in heart, to make peace, to be persecuted. This is why he has the right to say, 'Come, follow me!' He does not say simply, 'Do what I say.' He says, 'Come, follow me!' " Papal Homily to Youth on Mount of Beatitudes, March 24, 2000.

human beings. It is quite impossible for the existence which is subject to passion to be assimilated to the nature which admits no passions."[51] Yet, as we have observed, the goal of the virtuous life is the likeness of God. The way out of this dilemma, according to Gregory, is to follow the Word's guidance in the blessing associated with the "poor in spirit." The poverty of spirit indicates the voluntary humility expressed above all in the Incarnation of the Word. Gregory quotes Philippians 2, "Have this mind in you which is in Christ Jesus, who though he existed in the form of God reckoned it not a prize to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave." Gregory leads his audience through a spiritual exercise to attain humility: "You see the standard of his willing poverty: Life tastes death, the Judge is brought to trial, the King of all the supernatural host does not fend off the hands of his executioners. 'Let the standard of your humility,' he says, 'observe this model.' "[52] Although Gregory believes that the passionless perfection of God exceeds human ability, he thinks we can imitate God by imitating the humility of the Word. In this instance, Gregory takes a thoroughly Platonic theme and recasts it in a thoroughly Christian light. The means of the ascent becomes meditation on the descent of the Word of God.[53]

Having found a way forward in the Incarnation, Gregory presents the eight beatitudes as steps in becoming like God. As already

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[51] Homily 1, no. 82.

[52] Ibid., no. 84.

[53] Gregory frequently employs the example of the image covered with rust and dirt so that it is unable to reflect the divine. Gregory speaks of this in terms of the deformation of the image. Humans in sin do maintain the image of God insofar as they still have an intellect and free will. In the state of sin, however, the free will only becomes the occasion for the destruction of the image. Humans exercise their freedom by turning away from the good and the beautiful and so make themselves less of an image. Human free will was given as a divine likeness but now it is the means for the corruption of that likeness. There are clearly in Gregory echoes of Plotinus who also employed the imagery of cleansing the rust off the image of the soul. As Danielou argues, however, there is also a fundamental shift between the two thinkers. For Plotinus, the cleansing of the soul is the work of the soul itself. For Gregory, the cleansing is the work of God. Living in the Eastern tradition, as well as before the Pelagian controversy, Gregory does not always carefully articulate the priority of grace in the healing of the image.

shown, poverty of spirit imitates the poverty of the Word Incarnate. The second beatitude declares blessed the meek. Gregory describes meekness as "a slow and reluctant attitude towards such natural [downward] inclinations."[54] Since impulses and disordered passions are unavoidable while we live in the body, meekness tempers their ill effects. Next is "Blessed are they who mourn." This is the sense of loss that comes from the realization that human beings once possessed paradise, but have since lost that happiness. If people did not suffer hunger pangs, then they would have no desire to eat. This leads naturally to the fourth beatitude, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice." Gregory sees this beatitude as a reminder first that only virtue will satisfy and second that the Lord himself is the true justice proposed to his hearers. The next four beatitudes speak directly of the different stages of deification. "Blessed are the merciful" calls us to be divinized, as it were, since Scripture clearly associates mercy with God. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" raises the question of how can we see God. Gregory answers that we can only see God through the image of God in our souls. A pure heart thus constitutes an adequate mirror through which to see God. As we have already seen, the seventh beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," goes even further. Gregory says that to become sons of God is to enter the Holy of Holies. In the eighth beatitude, the Christian then reaches perfection in persecution, "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake." Gregory here states that the human creature cannot attain this perfection on its own. It would be perhaps quite impossible to prefer the invisible

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Nevertheless, such priority is never challenged. Danielou argues that although Gregory uses the Plotinian image of cleansing the rust off the image of God, Gregory Christianizes the image because we are now passive recipients of God's cleansing activity. See Jean Danielou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), 227. Alden Mosshammer, arguing the opposite case, says that in the homily on the sixth beatitude, the human being is the agent of the cleansing of the image, God being quite passive. This argument seems merely to be based on some of Gregory's exhortations to climb up Jacob's ladder of virtue. But exhortations to virtue need not entail the exclusion of divine agency. See Mosshammer, "Gregory's Intellectual Development," 374–75.

[54] Homily 2, no. 94.

Good to the visible pleasant things of this life "unless his Lord worked with him who has been 'called on purpose.' "[55] The living Word "gets inside the one who has genuinely accepted the faith, and splits the things which have become wrongly bonded, and cuts through the chains of habit."[56] Gregory states clearly and explicitly the necessity and the priority of grace.

The means of the ascent through the beatitudes, as outlined by Gregory, comes largely in two stages. The first four beatitudes lead the disciple through a contemplation of truth about the human condition and a progressive detachment from things of this world until one reaches the hunger and thirst for the perfection available in the Word. The next four beatitudes describe the way that the Word leads the disciple to perfection through progressive steps of becoming like God. This deification bears its ultimate fruit in the total preference for divine things shown by the disciple willingly suffering persecution for the sake of Christ.[57]

As does Gregory, Augustine also presents the beatitudes as ordered stages in an ascent. After commenting on each of the eight beatitudes, Augustine writes, "the very number of the statements ought to be carefully considered."[58] "Number" here possesses two meanings: first, how many statements there are and, second, the order of the statements. Although Augustine recognizes eight beatitudes, he views the eighth beatitude as a summary of the perfection of all the beatitudes.[59] This strategy allows Augustine to take the eight beatitudes minus one in order to obtain the desired number seven. The seven beatitudes thus depict seven stages in the ascent to perfection. More than simply offering a way to connect

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55 Homily 8, no. 166.

56 Homily 8, no. 167.

57 Gregory actually rewords the eighth beatitude. The superscription at the beginning reads, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." When Gregory first quotes the beatitude in the homily itself he changes "for the sake of justice" to "for my sake". Gregory inserts "Christ" for "justice." As Robert Wilken shows, Gregory can do this easily since in his homily on the fourth beatitude he has already identified justice with the person of Christ. Wilken, "Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, Oratio VIII," 250.

58 *De Serm*. Book 1, ch. 3, no. 10.

59 Ibid., Book 1, ch. 4, no. 10.

the perfection of the number seven and the perfection available through the beatitudes, the phrase "the number of the statements" refers to the specific order of the beatitudes. Even in our contemporary usage, "to number" items in a set means to recognize their specific order. The seven beatitudes, according to Augustine, are carefully ordered beginning with the humility of the poor in spirit and ending with interior rest of the peacemakers.

Augustine discerns in the seven beatitudes a carefully ordered ascent to wisdom. Augustine, as did Gregory, sees "poor in spirit" as a recommendation of humility. He writes, "Blessedness would begin from nothing else than this if it is to attain to the highest wisdom."[60] Then follows both meekness in submitting to the authority of the Scriptures and sorrow in mourning the loss of the highest good. The mind next requires the thirst for justice in order "to tear itself away from those things to which it is bound by harmful delight."[61] The commendation of mercy in order to receive mercy reveals the need to receive instruction from others who are stronger. Augustine then describes the sixth stage, which is the purity of heart, where "the soul is now (as a result of the right conscience of good deeds) in a condition to contemplate that highest good which can be discerned only by the pure and tranquil intellect."[62] The next beatitude concerns the peacemakers. Here Augustine shows that the beatitudes together aim at attaining wisdom. He writes, "The seventh and last stage is wisdom itself, that is, the contemplation of truth, which makes the whole man peaceful and which causes him to take on the likeness of God."[63] Augustine leads his audience up the seven stages of the beatitudes in order to achieve wisdom itself.

The seven beatitudes then are compared to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as listed in Isaiah 11:2–3. Once Augustine makes this connection we see the seven gifts have been informing his exegesis of the beatitudes all along. Once the order of the seven gifts is reversed, the exact same seven steps of the ascent appear: fear of God, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, understanding, and wisdom.

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[60] Ibid., Book 1, ch. 1, no. 3.
[61] Ibid., Book 1, ch. 3, no. 10.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

As was the case with Gregory, Augustine describes God as the agent of the human ascent of the beatitudes. As we saw previously, ancient writings often reflect the priority of oral discourse by making associations between ideas and numbers that strike the modern reader as whimsical at best. Augustine thus linked the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit to the seven beatitudes, an apt association in an oral culture. In a subsequent instance, Augustine associates the eight beatitudes to the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost fifty days after Christ's resurrection. The eighth beatitude comes after the prior seven beatitudes. Once Augustine observes that seven times seven plus one equals fifty, he has established an association between the beatitudes and Pentecost. This association, however, does more than manifest Augustine's gift with employing numbers in oral discourses. It shows that the Christian can only ascend the beatitudes with the help of God. Augustine thus writes of the beatitudes in the passive voice in order to show that the Holy Spirit acts as the agent in the ascent. He connects the action of the Holy Spirit to each beatitude: "On that day the Holy Spirit was sent, by whom we are led into the kingdom of heaven and in whom we accept our inheritance and are comforted and fed; we follow him to mercy, and we are purified and made peaceful by him. Thus perfected, we endure all the troubles brought on us for the sake of justice and truth."[64] This connection of the beatitudes with Pentecost emphasizes the uniquely Christian character of the ascent. Although neo-Platonists depicted and practiced a similar ascent through stages of contemplation, they viewed the human mind or soul as the agent of the ascent. Augustine decisively shifts the focus of the ascent to the active role of the Holy Spirit. As the language of the previous citation shows, it is not, strictly speaking, the Christian who achieves peace, but the Christian who is made peaceful by the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is not the Christian who achieves wisdom, but the Christian who is made wise by the Holy Spirit.

We have seen how Gregory and Augustine share much in common with the view of the end and the means of philosophy in antiquity. To quote Hadot once more, "During [the Roman and Hellenistic eras], philosophy was a *way of life.*" When Hadot says that philosophy was a way of life, he does not mean that it was only

[64] Ibid., Book 1, ch. 4, no. 12.

ethical. "Rather, it means that philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life."[65] This total transformation of the individual includes contemporary understanding of ethics, but goes beyond it. Once this goal of ancient philosophy is articulated, then it is obvious why many fathers saw Christianity as a philosophy since the Gospel also sought to transform the whole of the individual's life. Life now would be lived "in Christ" as St. Paul teaches. Conversely, there was little to fear in importing the web of beliefs and practices from other philosophies since they also aimed at a similar end of the total transformation of the person. The beatitudes pronounced by Christ provided a modified means of ascent and a modified end. The elements shared, however, allowed Augustine and Gregory to see in the beatitudes a plan for the total transformation of disciples into children of God. This transformative aspect can complement well the current emphases of exegesis of the beatitudes.

IV. Conclusion

What can we learn from Augustine's and Gregory's exegeses? Augustine and Gregory's exegeses offer a complementary approach to the current trends to interpret the beatitudes (and much else of Jesus' teaching) in exclusively political and moral terms. Biblical exegetes have recovered the political and eschatological emphasis of the beatitudes. This emphasis, however, need not be viewed in opposition to the mystical aspect of the beatitudes. The beatitudes as spiritual ascent and the beatitudes as political, eschatological challenge are not mutually exclusive interpretations. What is the basis of the apparent opposition between a personal, mystical transformation on the one hand, and a political, eschatological transformation on the other? It would appear that the fact that we see the political in contrast to the mystical stems at least in part from the dominance of Max Weber's opposition between an ethic of responsibility and an ethic of ultimate ends.[66] Such an opposition, however, is not inherent in the beatitudes. Moreover, we can ask

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[65] Hadot, 265.

[66] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 118–28.

whether the political thrust of the beatitudes already offsets the privatization of religion articulated by Weber. If so, then a fissure has appeared in the distinction between the personal and the social, between the mystical and the political. As long as we recognize that the contemplative does not exclude the moral and vice versa, then Augustine's and Gregory's reading of the beatitudes as an ascent restores the full power of the beatitudes.

The moral life here depicted is not the life of the autonomous individual, but instead the moral life of a creature of God. The moral life demands the contemplative assent since reflection on the moral life leads the person to see that nothing in this life will truly satisfy the God-given desire for happiness. Man therefore seeks union with God beyond what is capable through the veil of this present creation. Christ's announcement of the beatitudes declares that this kingdom is an everlasting kingdom in which the most unlikely suspects—indeed all human beings—have blessing, or beatitude, pronounced upon them as the community of His kingdom. Happiness is not compulsory, but the Divine Teacher sets forth an invitation to happiness as the true form of the moral life, one that ends with the enjoyment of God as his children.

Familiar with the neo-Platonic stages of spiritual progress, Augustine and Gregory could not but interpret the beatitudes as stages of spiritual progress. Hadot has helped to illustrate the what and how of the ascent in philosophy in antiquity. It was not simply intellectual in terms of reaching higher theorems or greater speculative powers, but it was above all the transformation of the soul in order to be able to see greater things. If moral transformation forms the basis of the neo-Platonic ascent, then it appears much more natural to interpret the beatitudes as steps in an ascent. Contemporary concerns about a merely intellectual ascent can be set aside since it would have been unimaginable in antiquity that the philosophical ascent could be merely intellectual. By recovering Gregory's and Augustine's exegeses of the beatitudes, we can offer contemporary theology a vision for integrating moral and political transformation and spiritual ascent. N&V

Conceptions of Dialogue: Philosophy of Science (Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend) and Ecumenical Dialogue[1]

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WE WILL BEGIN by presenting the epistemology of three important philosophers of science: Karl Popper (1902–94), Thomas Kuhn (1922–96), and Paul Feyerabend (1924–94). We shall attempt to make clear their views on the relationship between various scientific theories.

Whatever the differences among these three authors, we will try to find out if from their work there does not emerge a certain common view on the relationship between the various scientific systems. If such is the case, we shall try to see if there exists a similar relationship among religious systems (in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue). It is probable that a view which is widespread in the scientific field has an impact on culture that is broader than on the natural sciences themselves, given the prestige of these latter.

Why study this question from the starting point of three philosophers? Philosophers of science reflect, and to some extent influence, the thinking of scientists and the general mindset of their time.

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1 Translation by Robert Williams of "Conceptions du dialogue: Philosophie des sciences (Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend) et dialogue oecuménique," *Nova et Vetera* 76 (2001): 23–53.

I. Karl Popper[2]

Born in Vienna, Karl Popper spent World War II in New Zealand and from 1946 was in London (London School of Economics), which explains the title of Sir Karl Popper that he bore from 1972 on. He had a major influence on the philosophy of science in the twentieth century, and numerous scientists, political analysts, and economists (George Soros in particular) claim to be members of his school.

A. Accept the Partial and Provisional Character of Theories

For Popper, the evolution of science shows the failure of holistic systems, that is, of systems that intend to set forth a definitive and global interpretation of the world. The succession of scientific theories, especially physical, has shown that theories can only be provisional and even in the phase of its provisional acceptance the theory is partial: "[W]hatever we accept we should trust only tentatively, always remembering that we are in possession, at best, of partial truth (or rightness), and that we are bound to make at least some mistake or misjudgment somewhere—not only with respect to facts but also with respect to the adopted standards."[3]

We must always keep in mind that a theory that has been corroborated on many accounts by experience may nevertheless be false. Thus the theories of Kepler or Newton, one after the other, contained much exact information, yet they were false.[4] A clear example would be that of the earth's position in relation to the sun: The cultural impact of the theories that Galileo came up against comes from the fact that such theories fit in with common

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[2] We will base our study on the following works: *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1: *The Ascendancy of Plato* and Vol. 2: *Hegel and Marx* (London: Routledge, 1945); *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959); *In Search of a Better World* (London: Routledge, 1992); *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1976); *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); *The Lesson of this Century* (London: Routledge, 1996); *All Life Is Problem Solving: Questions about the Knowledge of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[3] *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, Addendum, "Facts, Standards, and Truth: A Further Criticism of Relativism," 391.

[4] Ibid., 376–77.

experience. Generally, it is only when a theory has become outmoded that we realize that it was only a provisional approximation. Moreover, changes in physics have a philosophical impact: Einstein's theory of relativity has overthrown the presuppositions of philosophers like Kant and Hegel.

B. Every Theory Depends on the Question It Answers

The reason why a theory, more or less corroborated by experience, can be false is that every theory aims to answer a specific question. Since the question is more limited than what would have to be observed, the experiment that must corroborate the theory only focuses on a part of what could be experimented on and only proceeds using one possible method among several (for example, one may observe the same human body according to physical criteria, chemical criteria, psychological criteria, and so forth, and get a different view with each approach). To sum up,

> [A] scientific description will depend, largely, upon our point of view, our interests, which are as a rule connected with the theory or hypothesis we wish to test; although it will also depend upon the facts described. Indeed, the theory or hypothesis could be described as the crystallization of a point of view. For if we attempt to formulate our point of view, then this formulation will, as a rule, be what one sometimes calls a working hypothesis; that is to say, a provisional assumption whose function is to help us to select, and to order, the facts. But we shoud be clear that there is no theory or hypothesis which is not, in this sense, a working hypothesis, and does not remain one. For no theory is final, and every theory helps us to select and order facts.[5]

The repetition of a phenomenon in an experiment is not enough to establish a proof, for a different approach could give a different result. Indeed, "anything can be said to be a 'repetition' of anything, if only we adopt the appropriate point of view."[6]

Put more drastically, it is impossible to verify theories wholly and definitively—"[t]heories are . . . never empirically verifiable"[7]—

5 *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, 260–61.

6 *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Appendix x, "Universals, Dispositions, and Natural or Physical Necessity," 422.

7 *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 40.

for absolute proof is beyond the possibilities of experience: "We cannot search the whole world in order to establish that something does not exist, has never existed, and will never exist. It is for precisely the same reason that strictly universal statements are not verifiable."[8] Since it is impossible to look at every swan, we cannot say with absolute certainty that they are all white.[9]

That being the case, we must not chase after the impossible goal of proving the truth of a theory but instead may only prove its likelihood, that is, prove that one theory offers more advantages and fewer inconveniences than another. Popper expresses this goal as follows: "we say that T_2 is nearer to the truth, or more similar to the truth, than T_1, if and only if more true statements follow from it, but not more false statements, or at least equally many true statements but fewer false statements."[10] This viewpoint implies that every theory contains not only true statements but also false ones, at least in the sense that it implies some false consequences.

C. Science Marches on Nonetheless

Under these conditions how can science proceed? We would think that the scientist must choose the most probable theory while he waits for a better one. Popper rejects this viewpoint, which he sees as a disguise for "dogmatism." Instead, he wants us to choose the most improbable theory: "I do not think that we can ever seriously reduce, by elimination, the number of the competing theories, since this number remains always infinite. What we do—or should do—is to *hold on to the most improbable of the surviving theories* which is the one that can be most severely tested. We tentatively *'accept'* this theory—but only in the sense that we select it as worthy to be subjected to further criticism, and to the severest tests we can design."[11]

The choice of the most improbable fits in with the core theory of Popperian epistemology, namely falsifiability. We cannot verify the exactitude of a system but we can "verify" its inexactitude: "not

[8] Ibid., 70.

[9] Cf. ibid., 27: "no matter how many instances of white swans we may have observed, this does not justify the conclusion that *all* swans are white."

[10] *Objective Knowledge*, 52.

[11] *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Appendix ix, 419.

the *verifiability* but the *falsifiability* of a system is to be taken as a criterion of demarcation."[12] We can play with words by saying that to prove a theory false empirically is still to verify it. Certainly. But it is easier to find a shortcoming than to prove the truth of all its elements, which would require exhaustive experimentation.[13] In fact, according to Popper's final point of view, for its falsification to have any meaning a theory must be presented as solid.[14]

A scientific theory must be open to the demonstration of its falsity; hence it must have a certain inherent modesty. For this reason the most unlikely theory is considered the best. A theory that is hard to prove false is often a theory that says little because its scope is quite limited.[15]

D. Epistemology and the Evolution of Living Things

In his approach to science, Popper sees a mark of reality itself: *"In so far as a scientific statement speaks about reality, it must be falsifiable: and in so far as it is not falsifiable, it does not speak about reality."*[16] This affirmation is absolute. Indeed, the only absolute that Popper accepts is the effect of errors on theories.[17]

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[12] *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 40.

[13] Popper recognizes that the criterion of falsifiability is not free from difficulties: cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 1, "The Logic and Evolution of Scientific Theory," 3–22.

[14] Cf. *Objective Knowledge*, 266: "[L]et it be your ambition to refute and replace your own theories: this is better than defending them, and leaving it to others to refute them. But remember also that a good defence of a theory against criticism is a necessary part of any fruitful discussion since only by defending it can we find out its strength, and the strength of the criticism directed against it. There is no point in discussing or criticizing a theory unless we try all the time to put it in its strongest form, and to argue against it only in that form."

[15] Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 1.

[16] *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Appendix i, "Two Notes on Induction and Demarcation," 314.

[17] Cf. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, Addendum, "Facts, Standards, and Truth: A Further Criticism of Relativism," 377: "The idea of a philosophical absolutism is rightly repugnant to many people since it is, as a rule, combined with a dogmatic and authoritarian claim to possess the truth, or a criterion of truth. But there is another form of absolutism—a fallibilistic absolutism—which indeed rejects all this: it merely asserts that

In Popper's opinion, the epistemological framework is based upon an analysis of living things. An animal (and even to a certain extent a plant) confronts its environment according to the following scenario. First, it realizes there is a problem (for example, the intrusion of another animal). Second, it tries to solve this problem and when it occurs again, it relies upon the previous attempts, supposing all the while that there is a regularity in the solving of a given problem. Third, the solution (or the animal) is eliminated if it is ineffective and is replaced, if possible, by a more effective solution.[18] Science proceeds in the same manner:[19] A problem arises (perhaps the scientist induces it for research purposes), and then we look for the best means of solving it. Thus understood, scientific development is like Darwinian evolution,[20] which implies that every theory, like every species, runs a great risk of disappearing as soon as it no longer adapts; there is no question of setting up definitive theories.

This framework proposes an aprioristic epistemology that Popper deems revolutionary:[21] strictly speaking, the starting point is not the observation of the whole of the surrounding world, but the realization that there is an immediate problem to be solved. We then formulate an a priori hypothesis and we do experiments. It just so happens that this is the way living things behave.[22]

Our knowledge is therefore at once real and fundamentally limited because the range of the knowable makes a complete verifi-

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our mistakes, at least, are absolute mistakes, in the sense that if a theory deviates from the truth, it is simply false, even if the mistake made was less glaring than that in another theory."

[18] Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 1.

[19] Despite certain differences between the scientist and the animal: cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 1 and especially ch. 5, "Towards an Evolutionary Theory of Knowledge," 57–73.

[20] Popper's father owned the works and a portrait of Darwin: cf. *Unended Quest*, 11.

[21] Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 4, "The Epistemological Position of Evolutionary Epistemology," 45–56.

[22] Without being deterred by it, Popper is aware of the fact that we could rework his scenario by making the circle "problem–hypothesis–experiment–provisional solution" start at a point other than the problem: cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 1.

cation impossible and because our hypotheses—like human situations—can be developed indefinitely. A final argument in support of this general thesis is the "mathematical proof" that Gödel's theorem of incompleteness provides. This theorem, formulated by the mathematician Kurt Gödel in 1931, proves that a mathematical system can never be finalized. From this Popper concludes that all the physical sciences, since they make use of arithmetic, must necessarily be unfinalized by virtue of Gödel's theorem of incompleteness.[23]

E. From the Limits of Scientific Knowledge to the Limits of All Knowledge

For Popper, the fact that scientific knowledge—our best knowledge—is limited implies the limitation of knowledge in general.[24] There is no such thing as certain knowledge: the only thing that exists is conjectural knowledge; we human beings are animals and animals cannot have certain knowledge.[25]

Science lands with a thud. In order to measure the impact of this reappraisal of its ability to know, we must measure the impact of the hopes it has aroused. A good example is the appearance of Newton's physics: "Thus Newton's theory created a new intellectual situation; it was an unparalleled intellectual triumph. The predictions of Newtonian theory were corroborated with unbelievable accuracy . . . .It seemed that here indeed was knowledge; true, certain and sufficiently justified knowledge. There could surely be no further doubt about it."[26] The depth of the doubt is measured by the height of the disappointed hope: "This classical notion of science as true, secure and sufficiently justified knowledge still flourishes even today. But it was overtaken sixty years ago by the Einsteinian Revolution; by Einstein's gravitational theory. The outcome of this revolution is that Einstein's theory, whether

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23 Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 2, "Notes of a Realist on the Body-Mind Problem," 23–35. Popper discussed this question with Gödel: cf. *Unended Quest*, 132.

24 Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 4.

25 Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 5. However we must say that Popper does differentiate human from animal knowledge; cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, chs. 1–5.

26 *In Search of a Better World*, 35–36.

true or false, demonstrates that knowledge in the classical sense, secure knowledge, certainty is impossible."[27]

Henceforth, the very meaning of the word "science" must be redefined: "Our science is not knowledge *(epistémé)*: it can never claim to have attained truth, or even a substitute for it, such as probability."[28] We have to change the way we think: "I think that we shall have to get accustomed to the idea that we must not look upon science as a 'body of knowledge', but rather as a system of hypotheses."[29]

Popper wants to show the limits of science without being a skeptic: "[T]he belief in scientific certainty and in the authority of science is just wishful thinking: *science is fallible, because science is human*. But the fallibility of our knowledge . . . must not be cited in support of scepticism of relativism. From the fact that we can err, and that a criterion of truth which might save us from error does not exist, it does not follow that the choice between theories is arbitrary, or non-rational: that we cannot learn, or get nearer to the truth: that our knowledge cannot grow."[30] On the contrary, criticism of illusions in regard to knowledge aims at the service of truth because the idea of error already implies truth.[31]

Although the usual theoretical justification of realism seems to him "disproved," Popper still considers himself a metaphysical realist who admits the theory of evolution.[32] He even sees in it the condition outside of which human life is not taken seriously.[33] If with Kant he admits that theories are human constructs, he adds that these theories must afterward be confronted with the facts.[34] With his epistemology of approximation, of likelihood, Popper means to propose a "realistic realism" for the experimental sciences,

[27] Ibid., 37.

[28] *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 278.

[29] *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Appendix i, "Two Notes on Induction and Demarcation," 317.

[30] *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, Addendum, "Facts, Standards, and Truth: A Further Criticism of Relativism," 375.

[31] Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 5.

[32] Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 3, "Epistemology and the Problem of Peace," 36–44.

[33] Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 1.

[34] Cf. *Objective Knowledge.*

that is, a realism that takes into account the limits of our experimental knowledge and does not look to it for mathematical certitude. This allows him to say that "[b]y incorporating into logic the idea of verisimilitude or approximation to truth, we make logic even more 'realistic'. For it can now be used to speak about the way in which one theory corresponds better than another to the facts—the facts of the real world."[35]

F. The Philosophical Sources of Totalitarianism: The Epistemology of Plato and Hegel

Popper links his critique of certain conceptions of science to a political critique. He sees a kinship between a science very sure of itself and totalitarianism. Philosophy must be careful to avoid lending itself to such deviations. The starting point of his work as a philosopher of science is the contemporary experience of totalitarianism, in its Marxist or Fascist-Nazi forms,[36] which was responsible for the disappearance of a great part of his family.[37]

Popper rejects an epistemology that quite forcefully claims to know the true nature of the perfect state, and thinks that since many people cannot arrive at this knowledge by themselves, they have to be "stimulated." This position implies that a true knowledge is possible but not for everyone.

Popper re-reads history in the light of his epistemological-political hypothesis. He enumerates those past philosophers whose epistemology, in different ways, favored an open society. In the

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[35] *Objective Knowledge*, 318.

[36] Cf. the Preface of the French translation of *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, (*La société ouverte et ses ennemis*, Tome 1, Paris, Seuil, 1979, 8): "The ideas put forth in this work go back to the year 1919. The First World War had just ended and I had already rejected Marxism because to me it seemed to create the illusion that violence was justified . . . . In the interval between the First World War and Hitler's invasion of Austria, I had kept silent about my criticisms of Marx, only opening myself up to very close friends. At that time, the only alternative to Marxism in Austria was Fascism, the worst of all. But the day that Austria was invaded, I took the decision to write this book. It is an attack on totalitarianism and tyranny in all their forms, whether of the right or the left." Cf. *Unended Quest*, 33; and *The Lesson of This Century.*

[37] Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 3.

place of honor we find Socrates, Xenophanes, Descartes, and Bacon. With this positive philosophical line, he associates a certain type of "reasonable" Christianity,[38] in which God seems scarcely to find a place.

On the other hand, thinkers such as Heraclitus, Plato, Hegel, and Marx developed an epistemology with a totalitarian bent by asserting an inevitability that applies inexorably to history. Plato went astray above all with his claim that the philosopher has to possess the truth rather than to seek it: "his [Plato's] philosopher is not the devoted seeker for wisdom, but its proud possessor."[39] This unshakable possession of the truth winds up in the project of a perfect state where the individual will be submitted to the service of a design that surpasses him. Hegel walks in the footsteps of Plato. With his totalitarian conception of philosophy and history, he is in some way the missing link in the chain that joins Plato to modern totalitarianism. Beyond Plato and Hegel, and in their wake, Popper takes aim at Marx, who inherits from Hegel an absolute view of history and the knowledge of its meaning. Having been disappointed by Marxism, Popper sees Marx as a false prophet; reality has undertaken the task of showing the falsity of his hypotheses. More profoundly, not only did Marx believe he knew the meaning of history, and failed in this project, he was mistaken in wanting to set up a system that took in the whole of reality, a holistic system: "Marx was the last of the great holistic system builders. We should take care to leave it at that, and not to replace this by another Great System. What we need is not holism. It is piecemeal social engineering."[40] Such a project upsets Popper on both the epistemological and the political levels. Unrealistic as far as knowledge is concerned, the desire for an encompassing political system leads us to decide what another's happiness must consist in and afterward bring it about through authority, to force the facts to bow to the system.

In any case, Popper connects a certain view of science with political deviancies. Thus, to the stability of a Platonic type of science he opposes his attitude of challenging certitudes. To suppress the "idol of certitude" is to slay obscurantism, both scientific and political:

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[38] Several times in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2.

[39] *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 1, 144.

[40] *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, 134; cf. on Hegel, Vol. 1, 17.

"With the idol of certainty (including that of degrees of imperfect certainty or probability) there falls one of the defences of obscurantism which bars the way of scientific advance."[41] To say no to ideologies—and to new religions—is a condition of peace.[42]

If Popper's "approximation" epistemology belies the claim to know the meaning of the state clearly, we must not deduce from this that relativism is the solution to political problems, particularly since systems like Platonism or Hegelianism have a too-elevated theory of knowledge in general—according to Popper—but too weak when it comes to the concrete capability of individuals, who for this reason must be subjected to a plan that they do not choose.[43] For him, relativism[44] is one of the causes of Germany's political woes, and the faculty of knowing is a condition of freedom.[45] It is a question of finding an equilibrium between two evils, which he thinks is an approximate realism on the political level.[46]

We should ask ourselves if Popper himself does not give in to a hasty generalization when he is led to asserting that no ideology means no war. He seems to overlook the fact that if ideological factors have played a major role in contemporary wars, so too have wars arisen from personal ambition or weakness, from a desire for enrichment, from hunger (these factors are sometimes mixed with ideology). Original sin is a much more profound answer to this question, even though it is a general response to it.

II. Thomas Kuhn[47]

After studying Physics at Harvard, Thomas Kuhn taught the History and Philosophy of Science at Harvard, then at Berkeley, and finally at MIT.

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41 *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 280–81.

42 Cf. *All Life Is Problem Solving*, ch. 3.

43 Cf. *Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance*, III.

44 Cf. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 2, *Addendum*, 393–95.

45 Cf. *Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance*, III.

46 Cf. *Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance*, XV. It is the principle of falsification applied in a certain fashion to politics.

47 We shall be using two works: his most important work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); and *The Essential Tension: Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

Kuhn reproaches Popper for ignoring everyday science in order to build a system based on exceptional circumstances. For his part, he intends to present the evolution of science in the daily labor of researchers, where in fact revolutions take place.

A. Why Was Aristotle Mistaken?

Kuhn's starting point seems to lie in a personal experience. Before beginning the study of the history of physics in 1947, he pours over Aristotle's physics in the light of his knowledge of later physics. At first he finds there hardly anything beyond a collection of errors. Asking himself how anyone could take such an erroneous system seriously for very long, he tries to deepen his understanding. It then occurred to him that Aristotelian physics should be situated in a whole context aimed at understanding certain definite points (questions to solve), in particular change in quality, and from there all motion. Seen in this light, Aristotle's physics appears much less false to Kuhn. He deduces from it that while reading the works of an important thinker, one must look first for the apparent absurdities in the text, wonder how a sensible person could have written them, and only then will these passages begin to make sense.[48] Aristotle was therefore not stupid, Kuhn thinks from then on, but his basic hypotheses oriented the results of his research.

B. Paradigms

Unlike Popper, Kuhn concentrates his attention on the ordinary conditions of scientific work. The scientist normally thinks that in his science we can know how the world functions and the rules and instruments by which we can observe this functioning. The series of angles used by a group of scientists to approach reality are paradigms: "[I]n much of the book the term 'paradigm' is used in two different senses. On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed ad models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science. The first sense of the term, call it the sociological . . . . Philosophically, at

[48] Cf. *The Essential Tension*, Preface.

least, this second sense of 'paradigm' is the deeper of the two".[49] Paradigms and the scientific community that accepts them mutually define each other: "A paradigm is what the members of a scientific community share, *and,* conversely, a scientific community consists of men who share a paradigm."[50]

Certainly, the simple fact that sciences which have the same subject have different names proves Kuhn right at least in part. The question is whether these different approaches can be combined; for Kuhn the union is far from established. In large measure, the members of a given community have absorbed the same literature and from it have drawn the same lessons. On the other hand, since the different communities focus their attention on different subjects, there is a great chance that professional communication among various groups may give rise to misunderstandings and even to important disagreements.[51] Experts in different paradigms live, in some ways, in different worlds: "[T]wo groups, the members of which have systematically different sensations on receipt of the same stimuli, do *in some sense* live in different worlds."[52] This holds true above all in a given science (among different physics theories, for example) but also by reason of the impact that a discovery that went unnoticed in one science can have on another.

C. Normal Science Brings Observation into its Paradigms

Conflicts among paradigms arise from the fact that the scientist usually fits every new fact into his predefined box: "Closely examined, whether historically or in the contemporary laboratories, that enterprise [normal science] seems an attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies. No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all."[53] In other words, a given group focuses on a type

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[49] *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Postscript, 175. This Postscript explains the contents of the book, taking into account certain misunderstandings that showed up regarding the first edition.

[50] Ibid., 176.

[51] Cf. *The Essential Tension*, "Second Thoughts on Paradigms," 293–319.

[52] *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Postscript, 193.

[53] *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 24.

of phenomenon that it approaches from a definite angle. Anything on the margin of this phenomenon is considered outside the subject of the study, whereas the consideration of it as part of the subject would perhaps change the whole theory.

By reason of its paradigms, therefore, a theory may be blind to certain phenomena that, in another theory, are taken into account and may even be key. For example, in the eighteenth century electrical attraction was known but it was considered a marginal phenomenon because it could not be well integrated.[54] Every observed phenomenon must a priori conform to laws that we know already and which run the risk of limiting our understanding of it.

D. Changing Theories

It happens of course—and we are talking about those revolutions that lend their name to Kuhn's major work—that we give up a theory when it shows itself truly incapable of explaining one or more phenomena henceforth clearly recognized. For example, when Ptolemy's astronomy, which afforded an explanation for almost all the phenomena, became too obviously incapable of explaining certain others, it was abandoned and a new theory replaced it.[55] This process is not necessarily swift because at first we do not doubt the theory but rather the manner in which it is applied, and because we do not give up a paradigm until another is at hand to replace it.[56]

Changing a theory does not bring only advantages, for every paradigm allows us to answer certain questions. Hence, changing a theory may entail the loss of certain useful answers: "[E]ach paradigm will be shown to satisfy more or less the criteria that it dictates for itself and to fall short of a few of those dictated by its opponent . . . since no paradigm ever solves all the problems it defines and since no two paradigms leave all the same problems unsolved, paradigm debates always involve the question: Which problem is it more significant to have solved? Like the issue of competing standards, this question of values can be answered only in terms of criteria that

[54] Cf. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 35.

[55] Cf. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 66–76.

[56] Cf. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 77–91.

lie outside of normal science altogether . . . ."[57] It sometimes happens that changing the paradigm brings about no change in certain important applications: Copernicus' cosmology does not directly help us fix the calendar any better than Ptolemy's.[58] And it may be that both paradigms are false, as when certain people consider light to be a wave, others a particle, while wave mechanics will say it is neither the one nor the other.[59]

III. Paul Feyerabend[60]

During the Second World War, Paul Feyerabend, who was born in Vienna in 1924, served as an officer in the German army. He studied Physics and Philosophy at Vienna and then went to Cambridge in hopes of studying under Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's death led him to turn to Popper, whom he later rejected. Feyerabend began his teaching at Bristol in 1955; in 1959, he accepted a chair at Berkeley and subsequently became an American citizen. He would teach at several American universities and, at the end of his life, at Zurich's Federal Polytechnic School (after leaving California because of an earthquake and to live in Italy with his last wife).

What sets Feyerabend apart is his open contempt for conventions. Here there are two related aspects: on the one hand, a certain relational incapability. According to his autobiography, events, striking in themselves, left him cold when they happened: seeing the dead in the streets of Vienna at the age of ten, learning of his mother's suicide and taking part in her burial at the start of the war. He sums up this attitude and gives a certain explanation a posteriori when speaking of his reaction to the arrival of Nazism in Austria: "[T]he events I did notice either made no impression

57 *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 109–10.

58 *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 154.

59 Cf. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 114.

60 Bibliography of Paul Feyerabend: *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1988); *Farewell to Reason* (London: Verso, 1987); *Dialogues sur la connaissance* (Paris: Seuil, 1996); *Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *Three Dialogues on Knowledge* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); *Killing Time: The Autobiography of Paul Feyerabend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

at all or affected me in a random way. I remember them and I can describe them, but there was no context to give them meaning and no aim to judge them by."[61] His last marriage, in 1989, allowed him to discover, at the same time, love and compassion. The other unconventional aspect—probably partly connected to the first—is his attitude *vis à vis* a certain academic decorum. Not only did he distinguish himself by regularly making fun, in public, of other philosophers and scientists, by saying that scientists do not always have better arguments than astrologers,[62] and by leaving a chair at Yale because they wanted to keep him from holding his classes on the lawn, but he did not take himself too seriously either: "[M]y contrariness extended even to ideas that resembled my own."[63] Sometimes, forgetting what he himself had written, he could end up defending himself when confronted with a bad review by criticizing his own—forgotten—text: "[W]hen a reviewer wrote 'Feyerabend says X' and then attacked X, I assumed that I had indeed said X and tried to defend it. Yet in many cases I had not said X but its opposite. Didn't I care about what I had written? Yes and no. I certainly didn't feel the religious fervor some writers apply to their products; as far as I was concerned, *AM [Against Method]* was just a book, not holy writ. Moreover, I could be easily convinced of the merits of almost any view. Written texts, my own text included, often seemed ambiguous to me—they meant one thing, they meant another; they seemed plausible, they seemed absurd. Small wonder my defenses of *AM* confused many readers."[64]

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61 *Killing Time*, 38.

62 Cf. *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, 66: "Wherever you look you find theories beset by major difficulties—and yet they are retained because scientists have the pious faith that the difficulties may be solved one fine day. So why call this pious faith a 'plausible scientific assumption' when we are dealing with the quantum theory of fields and a 'silly and irresponsible superstition' in the case of astrology? Let us admit that research is often guided by hunches for which we have only little support and let us apply this admission equally to all subjects and not only to those scientists happen to favour for some religious reason!" Feyerabend explains later on that he does not believe in astrology: his point is to compare it to science.

63 *Killing Time*, 141.

64 *Killing Time*, 145.

Like Popper and Kuhn, Feyerabend rejects a system that would claim to be complete. The reasons for this rejection are in part similar to those of the other two philosophers and partly different.

A. The Impossibility of an Exhaustive Scientific Knowledge

Scientific knowledge cannot be complete, for an exhaustive knowledge of the world is impossible: we would have to know the world's story before the world came to an end.[65] We see here an argument very much like Popper's against the verifiability of theories; "no single theory ever agrees with all the known facts in its domain."[66] Like Popper, Feyerabend attributes to the theories of ancient philosophy (Parmenides[67] and Plato[68]) the ambition that modern science has of being exhaustive.

B. Presuppositions (Scientific, Artistic, Linguistic, Ethnic) Limit Empirical Knowledge

The impossibility of an exhaustive scientific knowledge flows not only from the extensive limitations of our observation, but also from its presuppositions. We come back to Kuhn's general idea of paradigms, which Feyerabend repeats in other terms and to which he acknowledges his closeness.[69] Like Kuhn, he refers to an ancient philosopher to note that presuppositions might in fact guide the way in which we see the world: "I was puzzled by Anaximander's idea that the sun and the moon were holes in dark structures containing fire. Did Anaximander see the moon as a hole or was he just speculating? . . . Often when wandering around in the countryside I stared at the silver disk, trying hard to make it appear as a hole, or a glare; I didn't succeed."[70]

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[65] Cf. *Dialogues sur la connaissance*, Fourth Dialogue.

[66] *Against Method*, 39.

[67] Cf. *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, 163: "The whole history of physics was tied to the assumption, first formulated by Parmenides, that some things remain unaffected by change."

[68] Cf. *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, 142: "I am not against theories, I am against a Platonistic interpretation of theories that views them as descriptions of permanent features of the universe."

[69] Cf. for example, *Farewell to Reason*, 156.

[70] *Killing Time*, 140–41.

Feyerabend goes beyond the realm of the natural sciences to affirm the paradigm theory. Art furnishes him with an interesting example. Feyerabend quotes an expert in ancient Greek art who asserts, "No matter how animated and agile archaic [Greek] heroes may be, they do not appear to move by their own will."[71] If cultural (philosophical or religious) presuppositions influence the way we represent the world, perhaps this means they influence the way we see the world. Egyptian art illustrates the same fact. Indeed, the short monotheistic period of Akhenaton turned Egyptian art toward a realistic style: "During the reign of Amenophis IV (1364–47 BC) the mode of representation was changed twice; the first change, towards a more realistic style, occurred merely four years after his ascension to the throne which shows that the technical ability for realism existed, was ready to use, but was intentionally left undeveloped."[72] Of course this last example in fact suggests that the presupposition influenced the representation and not the knowledge.

Anthropological observation goes in the same direction. Witness the example of the Nuers, a Nile tribe, among whom Evans-Pritchard noticed unusual space-time concepts: "the Nuer . . . cannot . . . speak of time as though it was something actual, which passes, can be waited for, can be saved, and so forth. I do not think that they ever experience the same feeling of fighting against time or of having to co-ordinate activities with an abstract passage of time, because their points of reference are mainly the activities themselves, which are generally of a leisurely character."[73] The "discovery of America" caused paradigm shock among European anthropologists who at first could not fit the American Indians into their system.[74]

Language gathers these different presuppositions:

> Whorff speaks of 'Ideas', not of 'events' or of 'facts', and it is not always clear whether he would approve of my extension of his views. On the one hand he says that 'time, velocity and matter are not essential to the construction of a consistent picture of the

[71] G. M. S. Hanfmann, quoted in *Against Method*, 183.

[72] *Against Method*, 184.

[73] *Against Method*, 198, quoting E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), 103.

[74] Cf. *Dialogues sur la connaissance*, Fourth Dialogue.

> universe', and he asserts that 'we cut up nature, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are partial to an agreement to organize it in this way' (p. 213), which would seem to imply that widely different languages posit not just different ideas for the ordering of the same facts, but that they posit also different facts. The 'linguistic relativity principle' seems to point in the same direction. It says, 'in informal terms, that users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars towards different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observations, and hence are not equivalent observers, but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world.'[75]

C. An Exhaustive Science Is Anti-Humanitarian

Taking up one of Popper's concerns in a slightly different key, Feyerabend fears that a science that aims to be exhaustive may be a bearer of totalitarianism: "[A] scientific education as described above (and as practiced in our schools) cannot be reconciled with a humanitarian attitude."[76]

Scientists themselves, whose formation is a 'brain-washing,' run this danger first of all: "[T]he history of science will be as complex, chaotic, full of mistakes, and entertaining as the ideas it contains, and these ideas in turn will be as complex, chaotic, full of mistakes, and entertaining as are the minds of those who invented them. Conversely, a little brainwashing will go a long way in making the history of science duller, simpler, more uniform, more 'objective' and more easily accessible to treament by strict and unchangeable rules."[77]

Every society that is founded on absolute rules threatens the individual. Moreover, the danger of a cultural imperialism of the triumphant natural sciences endangers other civilizations, for the replacement of one paradigm by another threatens the equilibrium of a whole system:

> Ever since people were discovered who did not belong to the circle of Western culture and civilization it was assumed, almost

[75] *Against Method*, 227.
[76] *Against Method*, 12.
[77] *Against Method*, 11.

> as a moral duty, that they had to be told the truth—which means, the leading ideology of their conquerors. First this was Christianity, then came the treasures of science and technology. Now the peoples whose lives were disrupted in this manner had already found a way of not merely surviving but of giving meaning to their existence. And this way, by and large, was much more beneficial than the technological wonders which were imposed upon them and created so much suffering. 'Development' in the Western sense may have done some good here and there, for example in the restriction of infectious diseases—but the blind assumption that Western ideas and technology are intrinsically good and can therefore be imposed without any consultation of local conditions was a disaster.[78]

D. Can We Get Past Relativism?

Feyerabend's view, as presented up to now, seems to suggest that it is impossible to go beyond the level of the juxtaposition of viewpoints whether collective or individual, and that it is dangerous to try to convince another person. The title and contents of works such as *Farewell to Reason* or *Against Method* seem to justify such fears. The common image of Feyerabend seems not to go beyond this sentence. But if we look more closely, it is not reason as such that our author attacks but a partial use of reason among its other uses.

Actually, Feyerabend dismisses some relativisms: "I have great difficulties with some forms of relativism."[79] He rejects side-by-side relativism and objectivism. For him, the incommensurability of systems is not absolute. We can get beyond it by the discovery of inner contradictions in a theory[80] or because a whole set of factors leads to the total abandonment of a theory.[81] This is possible, albeit difficult, at the scientific level. Is it the same with personal or indi-

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[78] *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, 74.

[79] *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, 151.

[80] Cf. *Against Method*, 226.

[81] Cf. *Farewell to Reason*, 156: "[T]he transition from one theory to another occasionally (but not always) involves a change of all the facts, so that it is no longer possible to compare the facts of one theory with those of the other. The transition from classical mechanics to the special theory of relativity is an example . . . . Entire disciplines (such as the classical theory of the kinematics and the dynamics of solid objects) disappear as the result of

vidual rules of conduct? On this level, the possibility of a "revolution," of a radical change, seems difficult. Feyerabend prefers pragmatic changes through light strokes, one after the other, according to the circumstances: "All we can do is to describe the difficulties we have found in the past and under very specific historical conditions, to live with the world as with a friend and to change our habits when life gets bad."[82]

To sum up: towards the end, Feyerabend partly rejects the relativism that had been his previously,[83] and is groping for a solution: "B. [this is a dialogue where Feyerabend is B] . . . I was a relativist, at least in one of the many meanings of this term, but I now regard relativism as a very useful and, above all, human approximation to a better view . . . A. Which view? B. I haven't found it yet."[84]

IV. Tendencies Common to the Three Systems and Application of Their Principles to Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue

Certain common tendencies emerge from the three philosophies of science we have examined, despite the differences among them. Given the fact that we have approached them as "cultural barometers," we will limit ourselves to pointing out these common tendencies. The most obvious point is that scientific knowledge—and from this we extrapolate a characteristic of knowledge in general—is limited by the fundamental questions that each theory aims at answering. Theories are not directly comparable precisely because they answer different questions. Despite certain incompatibilities, however, they may be helpful depending on how they are put to various uses. This does not stop a theory from being proven wrong and from having to be abandoned. A second point to underscore is the fear they have of a theory which strongly asserts

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the transition (they remain as calculating devices). Professor Kuhn and I have used the term 'incommensurability' to characterize this situation. Moving from classical mechanics to relativity we do not count old facts and add new facts to them, we start counting all over again and therefore cannot talk of quantitative *progress*."

82 *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, 153.

83 Cf. *Dialogues sur la connaissance*, Fourth Dialogue.

84 *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, 156–57.

that it is true may lead to a form of totalitarianism and may therefore be dangerous.

We shall now try to show how the principles of the three philosophers explained above are found in the theories of ecumenical or interreligious dialogue. This does not mean that the theological positions we shall be discussing have been explicitly influenced by theories of the philosophy of science, for that is generally not the case. Rather, in my view, they have been unconsciously influenced by a cultural mentality in which the natural sciences set the tone. This mentality has also influenced the philosophers of science, who in turn have helped to shape it.

A. Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue as a Comparison of Paradigms

Whatever the truth about mutual influences, the theories we have presented about the relationships among scientific theories will easily be discernable in a good number of assertions concerning ecumenical or interreligious dialogue.

The first example comes from a compilation of opinions on interreligious dialogue provided by Jean-Claude Basset:

> [W]e can distinguish five fundamental attitudes in regard to religious truth, all stamped with relativism; far from being mutually exclusive, they occur to some extent in a context favorable to dialogue. The first and most radical option consists in subtracting the religious domain from the criteria for truth and error . . . . The second very common option reduces religious truths to countless hypotheses that require validation or invalidation by practical experience . . . . [T]his shifts the focus from the alternative true/false towards the alternative good/bad, a sort of moralization of the faith. The third option is cultural or ethnic relativism, which holds that every religious truth is adapted to a given context: the Bhagavad-Gita for Indians and the Koran for Arabs; everyone finds the truth he needs in order to live and nothing is more arbitrary than to transplant a religious tradition into a culture foreign to it. Fourthly, there is an existential relativism for which a religious tradition is not true in itself, abstractly, but only for him who lives by it; this does not prevent another tradition from being true for another believer, or for the same person at another moment of his life . . . . Finally, there is a fifth position that rests upon a distinc-

> tion between the ultimate reality from which religious life draws its essence and towards which it tends, and the expression of this reality in the human response . . . .[85]

In the views presented by Basset, we can recognize certain presuppositions: No system can be asserted to be true in the strict sense; an assertion depends upon its personal and cultural context (like paradigms), every theory is only an imperfect formulation of experience. Basset himself sums up his starting point: "All ecumenical dialogue rests upon an ecclesiological pluralism and a certain relativism as regards the expression of the truth."[86]

B. A Religious Theory Cannot Be Totally Verified

Keeping in mind Karl Popper's remarks about the non-verifiability of scientific theories (which can never be 100% verified), we find almost the same idea in the theory of interreligious dialogue put forth by Rabbi Irving Greenberg:

> There is a variety of possibilities. It may be that the pluralists realize that they do not have 100% of the truth—or that faith cannot exhaust 100% of the experience of the divine. Or, pluralism may lead to a more modest admission. The system one adheres to may incorporate 100% of the divine encounter, but the pluralists recognize that this encounter does not cover 100% of the time that the encounter is available or 100% of the human situations to which it speaks. This leaves room for other experiences to take place. There may even be a more modest limitation (soft pluralism, if you will). One may claim that [in] one's system knowledge of the truth is absolute and that the ability of this truth to cover all situations is also absolute, but still it cannot reach 100% of the people, whether it be for cultural or other reasons.[87]

C. Religious Traditions as Partial Adaptations to Their Environment

Popper—but also Kuhn and Feyerabend in distinct ways—sees science as a search for adaptation to the present environment, and

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[85] Jean-Claude Basset, *Le dialogue interreligieux* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 266–68.

[86] Jean-Claude Basset, *Le dialogue interreligieux*, 273.

[87] Rabbi Irving Greenberg, "Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism: In the Image of God and Covenant," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34 (1997): 389.

hence its assertions are partly limited in time and space. A similar idea shows up in a document of dialogue between Lutherans and Methodists: "Our churches, as historical institutions, have brought to the questions posed by their social environment answers that are at the same time adequate and inadequate."[88]

Popper's evolutionary framework clearly turns up again in John Hick—about whom I have already spoken of in *Nova et Vetera:*[89] "There is indeed a fixed basis or, better, a fixed starting point, for christian belief and worship: but proceeding from that starting point there is a still unfinished history of change as the christian way has been followed through the centuries, meeting new human circumstances and new intellectual climates."[90]

In its official view of ecumenism, the Federation of Protestant Churches of Switzerland (FEPS) starts from the principle of the relativity of positions: "The ecumenical engagement is born out of a critical regard for ourselves that makes us aware of our relativity . . . .No Church wholly possesses knowledge of the Truth, nor the fullness of the Church, nor that of her ministry."[91] This relativity results from a dependency on what the current context holds: "[T]he same declaration or . . . the same action may correspond to the Truth in a given situation and contradict it in another context."[92]

D. Totalitarianism

The idea of a link between doctrinal unity and the inherent danger of authoritarianism is present among certain theologians, although

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88 Commission of Dialogue between the World Lutheran Federation and the World Methodist Council, "The Church Community of Grace" (1984), in *Accords et dialogues oecuméniques*, Bilatéraux, Multilatéraux, Français, Européens, Internationaux, ed. André Birmele and Jacques Terme (Paris: Les Bergers et les Mages, 1995), III–9 [here translated from French].

89 Cf. "La relation entre les religions selon John Hick," *Nova et Vetera* 75 (2000): 35–62.

90 John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 111.

91 FEPS, *Lignes directrices de l'action oecuménique*, 1994 (manual published and distributed by the FEPS), I.4.

92 Ibid., I.5.

they do not in general refer to Popper's theory.[93] On the theoretical plane of ecumenical dialogue, Fr. Christian Duquoc states explicitly that ecumenism cannot aim for the unity of the churches, as this would be totalitarian: "[E]cumenism has indeed created an irreversible current, a current of theological thinking that henceforth cannot restrict itself to the limits of a single confession or of a single historical Church. This thinking, coming from a practical experience that is very often a step ahead of the apparatus, saps the unitary ideology that fits hand in glove with violence and has produced so many misdeeds and crimes in the history of Christianity."[94] The very idea of a definite ecclesiological model—in this instance the model of sacrament—is perceived as a violence: "Despite the acknowledgement that the separated Churches are Churches, despite the acceptance of the right to a public opinion within Catholicism, they suffer a violence since the model of unity is already given in a sacramental fashion; the structuring between the visible and the invisible is accomplished in the Catholic institution as it is realized in the Eucharist . . . .Behind this issue sits the violence inherent in the introduction of an institution incarnating the transcendent Truth. The transcendental qualities of the Church professed in the Creed suppress neither the divisions among the Churches nor the internal tensions."[95]

[93] However, we do find this link in Elmar Klinger, "Macht und Dialog, Die grundlegende Bedeutung des Pluralismus in der Kirche," in *Dialog als Selbsvollzug der Kirche?* ed. Gebhard Fürst (Freiburg: Herder, 1997), 151.

[94] Christian Duquoc, *Des Eglises provisoires. Essai d'ecclesiologie oecuménique* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 9. Cf. ibid., 7–8: "The multiplicity of churches, far from having to be marginalized as an unfortunate accident of our history, forms on the contrary the starting point of theological thinking in ecclesiology. Forgetting the empirical multiplicity orients us towards idealistic thinking; then the Church we are talking about is no longer our historical Church, easy to spot, but its ideality. There is but a little distance from ideality to the imposing of norms on concrete reality, and from the imposing of norms to repressive practices. If the ideal Church is one and holy and if this perfection is projected onto an empirical Church, this Church has no choice but to excommunicate the churches that have no right to this privileged relationship with ideality. Our history has illustrated the practical and violent excesses of this kind of thinking."

[95] Christian Duquoc, *Je crois en l'Eglise. Precarité institutionnelle et Règne de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 134.

V. The Future of Dialogue on the Basis of These Premises

On the basis of the above premises, what is the future of ecumenical dialogue (and, *mutatis mutandis*, of interreligious dialogue)?

For FEPS, ecumenism cannot go beyond the plurality of confessions: "The goal is not a standardization, but a confessional plurality that is trans-confessional and sensitive to the context of expressions of the Church that are mutually questioned."[96] Of course this view of ecumenism is not unanimous among Reformed theologians,[97] but the fact that it was clearly affirmed as the official position of Swiss Protestants shows at least that it exists. Along the same lines, David Tracy thinks that we must give up dreams of universalism and that "the particularity of each tradition will gain in intensity."[98] For Jean-Claude Basset, the current shape of Western civilization "is conveyed," in the end, "by the abandonment of all metaphysical discourse and the giving up by the social sciences of any global view of reality and of humanity for the sake of a sectional analysis of which the main criterion is internal coherence. . . . In religious life, pluralism entails the disappearance of a recognized scale of values for the sake of more or less autonomous institutions, making relative, thereby, every system of thought and all practical experience, religious or not. This reducing to relative is twofold: every system is but one among others, and it has only a relative value in the individual's life; indeed, it has become rare that one is ready to die for his faith . . . ."[99]

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[96] FEPS, *Lignes directrices*, I.6.

[97] In 1984, when the international commission on dialogue between Anglicans and those of the Reformed tradition envisioned such a view of ecumenism, it was rejected. Cf. Anglican-Reformed International Commission, *God's Reign and Our Unity: The Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission 1984* (London and Edinburgh: SPCK and The Saint Andrew Press, 1984), nos. 106 and 110, 67–69.

[98] Cf. David Tracy, Th*e Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 459: "At least for those who hold to the ideal of an analogical imagination, the dreams—the all too universal dreams—of Arnold Toynbee and other abstract universalists will not prove the route to follow. Rather the particularity of each tradition will gain in intensity as its own focal meaning becomes clearer to itself and others, as its ordered relationships for the whole come more clearly into analogical view."

[99] Jean-Claude Basset, *Le dialogue inter-religieux*, 264.

A. Parallels between Scientific Dialogue and Religious Dialogue

We have seen some parallels between certain conceptions of scientific dialogue and dialogue among religious systems. The use of paradigms (as basic questions that determine the worth and limits of a system) and the idea that no system is complete are the dominant elements.

Before treating the difference between the kinds of knowledge—scientific and that of faith—we should comment on the specifically theological view of dialogue. Some questions have to be asked. For example, it is true that every religion approaches certain questions in a privileged fashion: For the person who above all wishes to escape the bodily condition, the answer of the body's resurrection might seem inappropriate. But it remains to be seen if every fundamental question is equivalent, especially in the case of a revelation where it is not only man who asks the questions but God first of all.

Moreover, when one says that no system possesses the whole truth, he often means by this that no system can deny all truth to the others. It is true that the Catholic Church, for example, does not deny that there are found in other Christian denominations or in other religions elements of truth or sanctification, but that does not mean that the Catholic Church must cease affirming that the whole of the means of salvation is found in her:

> [S]ome and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and visible elements too. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, belong by right to the one Church of Christ . . . .It follows that the separated churches and communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church . . . .For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is 'the all-embracing means of salvation' that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation.[100]

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[100] Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism *(Unitatis Redintegratio)*, no. 3.

In talking in this context of the fullness of truth in the Catholic Church, it is not a question of denying all truth to non-Catholics (nor of denying the possibility of the beatific vision), for in this instance it is not a question of systems or communities totally exterior to each other but of a more or less complete integration in the same work of the salvation offered to all human beings in Christ.

B. Comparison of Scientific Knowledge and Knowledge from Faith

To grasp the limits of what the theories of the philosophy of science can bring to theology, we must define the different kinds of knowledge. This is all the more worthwhile since the philosophy of science, as presented here, is not the whole of philosophy (it asks few properly metaphysical questions).

The theories of scientific knowledge draw their force first of all from the widespread idea that scientific knowledge is *the* knowledge that is sure and trustworthy, the one that gets concrete results and provides real help—unlike religion or philosophy. This widespread prejudice combines with a growing awareness of the limits of scientific progress to arrive at the following conclusion: The most powerful knowledge is limited; therefore all our knowledge is limited.

It is important to grasp the difference between scientific knowledge and knowledge from faith. Both appeal to reason in order to organize the elements of knowledge whose first source is not reason itself, but either the senses (in the case of science) or divine revelation (in the case of faith). In both cases, the given is elaborated by reason: Science reflects on the basis of sense knowledge as generally relayed by instruments, and perceived with the help of theories; knowledge from faith reflects on what God has transmitted through created means (Church, Scripture).

St. Thomas Aquinas compares the kind of certitude that is proper to science and that proper to faith (he understands by "science" the rational knowledge that is based on certain sense knowledge, which remains at the root of the more elaborate definitions in use today): "[O]n the part of its cause . . . a thing which has a more certain cause, is itself more certain. In this way faith is more certain than those three virtues [among them science], because it is founded on the Divine truth, whereas the aforesaid three virtues are based on human reason. Secondly, certitude may be considered on the part of the

subject, and thus the more a man's intellect lays hold of a thing, the more certain it is. In this way, faith is less certain, because matters of faith are above the human intellect, whereas the objects of the aforesaid three virtues are not. Since, however, a thing is judged simply with regard to its cause, but relatively, with respect to a disposition on the part of the subject, it follows that faith is more certain simply, while the others are more certain relatively, i.e., for us."[101] The principles are clear: science has greater evidence because it is more immediate; faith is not evident (which belongs to its very definition because its object is in itself not seen[102]), but it is sure from the viewpoint of its cause, which is the revelation God makes of Himself.

This difference between science and faith is in fact the general difference between knowledge from faith and knowledge through reason, including when we speak of knowledge of God. Faith is distinguished from knowledge through natural reason alone precisely by the fact that it is sure knowledge.[103]

Up to this point, we can say that the current uncertainties in regard to the certitude of scientific knowledge do not directly concern faith. Still, another question arises in regard to faith, which is the relationship between divine revelation and contemporary believers. In other words, if God reveals something, will a believer adhere to it with certainty? But how do we know that it is God revealing it? This is the question that comes up in ecumenical dialogue. This is what stands out most clearly in the text published in 1963 by the World Conference on Faith and Order at Montreal (which at that time included the main Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican Churches; the Catholic Church would join in 1968). Among other things, this conference dealt with tradition[104] and rehabilitated it in Protestant theology. However, this text came up

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[101] *Summa Theologiae* 2–2, q. 4, a. 8.

[102] Cf. *ST* 2–2, q. 4, a. 1.

[103] This is what the First Vatican Council underscores when it quotes St. Thomas on this point. Cf. Vatican I, Constitution *Dei Filius*, Denz. 3004–3005.

[104] The text concerning tradition—the second section of the Montreal document—is found, e.g., in Günther Gassmann, ed., *Documentary History of Faith and Order* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993). Henceforth this document will be cited as "Montreal," with references to the numbered paragraphs.

against a problem: since Tradition is found in various (denominational) traditions, how do we know to what extent each of these traditions is or is not faithful to Tradition?[105] The solutions put forward, which are actually the enumeration of the solutions implemented historically in the different churches, do not solve the problem, as the same Commission on Faith and Order recognized in 1998: "Montreal helped to overcome the old contrast between 'sola Scriptura' and 'Scripture and tradition' and to show that the different hermeneutical criteria in the different traditions belong together. . . . But Montreal did not fully explain what it means that the one Tradition is embodied in concrete traditions and cultures."[106] The question that arises then is one of knowing how the believer can know, among the various propositions of faith, if, when, and how God reveals Himself. It is a matter of comparing different systems and uncovering the truth in them.

A question like this cannot be sidestepped, for God has chosen to reveal Himself to human beings thanks to human beings, and consequently, faith must have as a condition that it be proposed to human beings not only by God, but—usually—by other human beings[107] also, with the risk of error that this implies.

What is the Catholic answer to this question? Put briefly, whoever believes that God reveals Himself will also willingly believe that God takes care that His revelation is not lost. Otherwise, it would be more or less useless from the start. The Second Vatican Council puts it in these terms: "In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations."[108] The reason God reveals Himself and the reason He takes care that His revelation is not lost are identical. The text continues by specifying how this preservation

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[105] Cf. Montreal, no. 48: "Is it possible to determine more precisely what the content of the one Tradition is, and by what means? Do all traditions which claim to be Christian contain the Tradition?"

[106] Faith and Order, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, An instrument for an ecumenical reflection on hermeneutics (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), nos. 16–17.

[107] Cf. *ST* 2–2, q. 6, a. 1.

[108] Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Dei Verbum*, no. 7.

was assured: "Therefore Christ the Lord . . . commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men . . . . This Gospel had been promised in former times through the prophets, and Christ Himself had fulfilled it and promulgated it with His lips . . . . In order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, 'handing over' to them 'the authority to teach in their own place.' "[109] The text specifies further that maintaining revelation and deepening the understanding of it include all the members of the Church according to their various charisms.[110]

The current state of ecumenical dialogue highlights the question of authority, but does it in renewed fashion compared to what might have been seen in the past. There is certainly no question of reducing the theologian's work to a repetition of what the Magisterium says (depending on the denomination). Nor is it a question of a test of strength among the authorities of the different Christian denominations to see who will wind up giving in to whom. What is at stake is knowing who can say at a given moment what is the common faith. Without this, ecumenical dialogue cannot arrive at unity.

Ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Anglicans—whatever the status of other serious difficulties that have to be taken into account might be—has, better than any other, shed light on the questions we are dealing with here, and has put forward some answers: "In some situations, there will be an urgent need to test new formulations of faith. In specific circumstances, those with this ministry of oversight *(episcope)*, assisted by the Holy Spirit, may together come to a judgment which, being faithful to Scripture and consistent with apostolic Tradition, is preserved from error . . . . Such infallible teaching is at the service of the Church's indefectibility."[111] The text then takes up—and the fact is an event in itself—the possibility of an infallible declaration by the Bishop of Rome.[112]

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Cf. *Dei Verbum*, no. 8.

[111] "The Gift of Authority. Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission," *Origins* (1998): 120–32, no. 42.

[112] Cf. "The Gift of Authority," no. 47: "Within his wider ministry, the Bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth, as an expression of universal primacy . . . . Such authoritative teaching is a

To sum up, the diversity of systems or traditions in matters of faith is an obstacle to the certitude proposed by faith. God Himself, knowing the inconstancy of human beings, has equipped His revelation with the means to preserve it throughout the centuries.

VI. Conclusion

Despite their notable differences, Popper, Kuhn, and Feyerabend are united in illustrating the growing awareness of the limits of scientific knowledge, though certainly without denying its entire value. The chief determining factor in this awareness seems to be the division of the sciences into different systems that are not totally compatible. Moreover, two partly incompatible systems may both rest upon a certain experimental basis, which makes the choices between them extremely complicated. Different systems may have a value commensurate with the goal they are pursuing: to answer a precise question. Two different questions lead to different perceptions of the same object.

From this situation—and from other factors—there arises in contemporary culture a doubt whether it is possible to affirm that one system is truer than another (even if one of the systems is false). This also proves true in the field of religion, and with somewhat similar arguments: Each system answers a question asked at a well-determined moment and place, and cannot be directly compared to another system whose questioning is different from the start. Total relativism may result: What is true for one may not be for another, and we cannot go beyond that. If such is the case, ecumenical (and interreligious) dialogue no longer consists in seeking eventual unity, but only in amiably finding out what the others are thinking.

There is of course an element of truth in the fact that every religious system is tied to certain initial questions arising from history (think of the link between the Christian Easter event and the slavery of the Hebrews in Egypt). Yet, if this link is a total dependency,

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particular exercise of the calling and responsibility of the body of bishops to teach and affirm the faith . . . . This form of authoritative teaching has no stronger guarantee from the Spirit than have the solemn definitions of ecumenical councils. The reception of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome entails the recognition of this specific ministry of the universal primate. We believe that this is a gift to be received by all the churches."

it becomes impossible for God to reveal Himself to human beings in such a way that they can subsequently know Him and be in communion with Him in different times, places, and cultures. The same goes for the very specificity of revelation and of faith in relation to the purely human forms of knowledge; this question is more profound than even theories of ecumenical dialogue.

We should give the last word to St. Irenaeus of Lyons. He is answering the Gnostics of the second century who held that the faith of the Church depended on what Christ and the Apostles had been able to say to the great masses according to their ability to understand. In his day, then, the idea is already present that the faith is limited by the questions asked and the answers that the hearers are capable of receiving.[113] Irenaeus clearly sees that if such is the case, revelation can add nothing to the opinions already present in the world:

> [W]e say to them, that if the Apostles used to speak to people in accordance with the opinion instilled in them of old, no one learned the truth from them, nor, at a much earlier date, from the Lord; for they say that He Himself did speak after the same fashion. Wherefore, neither do these men themselves know the truth; but since such was their opinion regarding God, they had just received doctrine as they were able to hear it. According to this manner of speaking, therefore, the rule of truth can be with nobody; but all learners will ascribe this practice to all [teachers], that just as every person thought, and as far as his capability extended, so was also the language addressed to him. But the advent of the Lord will appear superfluous and useless, if He did indeed come intending to tolerate and to preserve each man's idea regarding God rooted in him from of old.[114]

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[113] Cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, Book 3, ch. 5, no. 1.
[114] Ibid., Book 3, ch. 12, no. 6.

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On Milbank and Pickstock's *Truth in Aquinas*

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JOHN MILBANK and Catherine Pickstock have written a short book, but one which addresses many very deep questions.[1] The authors are attempting to provide a remedy for the contemporary crisis regarding truth, a crisis which in some quarters involves a complete rejection of the human ability to know truth. Milbank and Pickstock see what they call their "new reading" (xiii) of St. Thomas on truth as helpful in restoring confidence in the human participation in knowledge of truth. In this short review essay, I will indicate how the general theme is followed out, and call attention to a few problems which are symptomatic overall. I will limit myself for the most part to the first two (of the four) chapters.

The four chapters speak of "Truth and X"—the four "X"s being "correspondence," "vision," "touch," and "language." The first concerns the general ontology regarding truth, stressing "the truth of things" themselves and the relation to the divine mind which this implies; the second bears on our knowledge in its continuity from natural reason through faith to the beatific vision; the third, focusing on the Incarnation of the Word of God, involves us in the submission of intellect to the sense of touch, in an "ontological reversal" which characterizes the economy of salvation of fallen

[1] John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001).

humanity; the fourth turns to the sacrament of the Eucharist and the words "This is my body": we consider how our sacramental, ecclesial life establishes our relation to the truth.

While I admire the authors' ambition to eliminate any intellectual or spiritual "schizophrenia," any failure to appreciate the unity of integral Christian mind, I am in general unhappy with the detailed effort. It is not only that the authors write in a way I often find less than lucid, but that I am frequently far from agreement with their interpretation of St. Thomas.

Pickstock, who writes the first chapter, asking where truth is to be found, begins with things themselves. In so doing, she sees herself as speaking in harmony with Thomas in *De Veritate* 1.1. There, Thomas is answering the question: what is truth, and he presents it as having a place among the transcendentals, thus as identical with being and adding to the concept of being only an additional notion (a relation of reason).[2] Pickstock thus sees us as knowing the truth inasmuch as we see in things their fidelity to their own existence in the divine mind. This actually encourages Pickstock into making some rather unsuitable assertions. For example:

> [D]istinct things simply would not *be* without the Soul's knowing of them. Therefore Soul, as a further refraction of Being, does not primarily mirror phenomena, but is itself a primordial mode of Being. So, assimilation or adequation here, though obviously including crucial elements of a realist concept of truth, has an idealist dimension as well, which suggests that this is by no means an ordinary kind of correspondence. Being is not prior to knowing, so if Being measures knowledge, knowledge equally measures Being. One might call this "ideal realism". For indeed, because Truth and Being are convertible, one with another, there is a continuity between the way things are in the external material world and the way things are in our mind.[3]

[2] Indeed, he even therein presents truth as the cause of our knowledge, evidently referring to the truth of things. I will use *"DV"* for *De Veritate, "CM"* for Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, "CP"* for his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics.*

[3] *Truth in Aquinas*, 8 (all upper case usage is in the text).

"Soul" here refers, it would seem, to the divine mind. It is, indeed, the origin of the being of things.[4] What is the "idealist dimension"? It evidently refers to the divine simplicity, where the act of being and the act of understanding are identical. Notice how easily we slip from the pair "knowledge and being" to the pair "truth and being" (though knowledge, for Thomas, is hardly a transcendental). However, is it true that though being measures knowledge, knowledge equally measures being?

We see how the distinction between creator and creature has been simply glossed over. Obviously, it is the *divine* mind which measures created being, and it is created being which is the measure of the human mind.[5] In fact, the meanings of terms such as "being" and "knowledge" and "truth" are obtained by us as experiencing the things of creation, where, certainly, being and knowledge are not identical. When we apply the words to God, we know that they do not have altogether the same meaning, since when said of creatures, they signify definitionally distinct items, whereas when we say them of God, we do not intend so to use them.[6] Moreover, while we do not know the full meaning of any of these names as said of God, we do know enough to discern an order of appropriateness. Thus, "being" is the maximally proper thing to say about God, and so "knowing" is less suitable.[7] It is such considerations which eliminate any "idealist dimension" in Thomas's doctrine.

However, I would add this. St. Thomas, during his writing career, moved from a position concerning truth influenced by St. Anselm to one more fully in accord with Aristotle. The position of Anselm is well expressed in the following statement from him:

> [T]he truth which is in the existence of things is the effect of the highest truth, and it in turn is the cause of the truth which

4 However, it is crucial that the divine knowledge, merely as knowledge, is *not* the cause of things; only that knowledge as conjoined with will causes things: *ST* 1, q. 14, a. 8. That is part of the anti-idealism of Thomas.

5 *ST* 1, q. 14, a. 8, ad 3.

6 *ST* 1, q. 13, a. 5.

7 *ST* 1, q. 13, a. 11.

> belongs to knowledge and of that which is in the proposition; these [latter] two truths are cause of truth for nothing further.[8]

In *DV* 1.1, there is still very much the idea that the *truth* of things is the cause of our cognition, but Thomas could well be said to have designed certain texts in *ST* 1, q. 16 to correct what he himself had previously been too ready to say. Thus, in *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 1, ad 3, we have the forthright statement: "[T]he *being* of the thing, not its truth, is the cause of the truth of the intellect."

The body of that first article in q. 16, stressing that truth is primarily in the intellect, and only derivatively in things, insists that it is only through derivation from an intellect on which it depends that a thing can be called "true". Thomas explicitly eliminates as inappropriate the consideration of the relation of natural things to our intellect in a presentation of truth. Indeed, all three replies to objections in the article turn on the need to eliminate this consideration from the discussion.[9]

Furthermore, in *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 6, where it is asked whether all are true by virtue of the one divine truth, it is carefully taught that *"verum,"* as said of things, is not so said on the basis of an intrinsic form of "truth." We read:

> But if we speak of truth *[de veritate]* according as it is found in things, thus all are true *[verae]* through one first truth *[una prima veritate]*, to which each is assimilated in function of its entity

[8] Cf. Anselm, *De Veritate*, cap. X; *PL* 158: 479A: "Vides etiam quomodo ista rectitudo causa est omnium aliarum veritatum et rectitudinum, et nihil sit causa illius?—Video et animadverto in aliis quasdam esse tantum effecta; quasdam vero esse causas et effecta: ut, cum *veritas, quae est in rerum existentia*, sit effectum summae veritatis, *ipsa quoque causa* est veritatis quae cogitationis est, et ejus quae est in propositione: et istae duae veritates nullius sunt causa veritatis . . . ." (my italics).

[9] Thomas also completely revises his views on which definitions of truth are more formal, as he moves from *DV* 1.1 to *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 1: cf. my essay, "St. Thomas's Successive Discussions of the Nature of Truth," in Daniel Ols, OP (ed.), *Sanctus Thomas De Aquino: Doctor Hodiernae Humanitatis* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 153–68. See also my "A Note on Metaphysics and Truth," Proceedings of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas for 2001, *Doctor Communis, Atti della II Sessione Plenaria* [2002]: 143–53.

> *[entitatem].* And thus, though the essences or forms of things are many, nevertheless there is [only] the one truth of the divine intellect in function of which all things are denominated "true."

The point is made in contrast to the many created truths in our intellects. The whole article is designed to make the point that, just as there is no *health* in, for example, the exercise which is called "healthy," so there is no *truth* in the thing that is called "true" relative to the divine mind. What relates the thing to the divine mind is not its own truth, but its *entity.* In this, the case of "truth" is quite unlike that of goodness: not only are things called "good" by virtue of the divine goodness, but each is called "good" by virtue of its own intrinsic formality: "goodness."[10] We read:

> Thus, therefore, each thing is called "good" in function of the divine goodness, as by the first exemplary, efficient, and final principle of goodness entire. Nevertheless, each thing is called "good" in function of the likeness of the divine goodness inhering within it, which is formally its own goodness denominating it.[11]

The reason for such a different treatment is that the good is in things, while the true and the false are in the intellect.[12]

This move on Thomas's part to correct the *DV* 1.1 presentation pertains precisely to the elimination of any "idealist dimension" in what he had previously said. I say all this because of what we get from Pickstock:

> One might begin by saying that truth is a *property of things*, that a thing is true if it fulfils itself and holds itself together according to its character and goal. Thus, one can say "This is true rain" if it is raining very hard . . . . for Aquinas, this would be an entirely proper use . . . .[13]

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10 *ST* 1, q. 6, a. 4.

11 Ibid.

12 Cf. 1, q. 16, a. 1. Indeed, in the mind itself, truth is not something pertaining to the real entity of the mind or of knowledge, but to *what* the intellect says and knows. Cf. *Summa contra Gentiles* Book 1, ch. 59.

13 *Truth in Aquinas*, 9 (my italics). However, this is not so. Thomas, even in *DV* 1.4, calls the use of "truth" said of all things "truth, improperly said."

The whole exercise in this first chapter could be taken as a commentary on such a text as *ST* 1, q. 105, a. 3, on whether God moves immediately the created intellect (which he does, as conferring both the power of intellection and the intelligible forms of things). Nevertheless, one finds this statement:

> [R]ather than correspondence being guaranteed in its measuring of the given, as for modern notions of correspondence, it is guaranteed by its conformation to the divine source of the given. While to advance to this source is of course to advance in unknowing, *it is only in terms of this unknowing, increased through faith, that we confirm even our ordinary knowing of finite things.*[14]

Now, here, we do not seem to be with Thomas in *ST* 1, q. 105, a. 3 or anywhere else. Knowledge of truth does not necessarily involve any relating to its divine origin. And it is guaranteed by its derivation from things themselves and by the nature of our knowing powers.[15] Obviously, for Thomas, presenting God as the origin of our knowledge of truth itself depends first of all on our attaining to the truth about many created things. At the least, Pickstock is playing on the word "guarantee."

But consider *ST* 1–2, q. 109, a. 1. It famously asks whether the human intellect can without grace know something true. The answer is, in general, that it can. Thomas explains that "grace" can refer to the altogether gratuitous moving of all things by God, and without this "grace" nothing happens, including our knowing the truth. He goes on to present the intrinsic formal power by which we know, and this has a variety of grades. The natural grade suffices for our knowledge which can be derived from sensibles. We read:

> [T]he human intellect has a certain form, viz., the intelligible light itself, which is of itself sufficient for the knowing of some intelligibles, i.e., for knowing those to the knowledge of which we can

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[14] Ibid., 18 (my italics). In the Preface, xiii, they had said that Thomas's position is that "all truth is a matter of faith as well as reason, and vice versa," though they also said that "truth is immediately accessible to the simplest apprehension." It is hardly Thomas's position that all truth is a matter of faith.

[15] *ST* 1, q. 84, aa. 6–8; 1, q. 17, a. 3, ad 2.

> come through sensible things. But the human intellect cannot know higher intelligibles unless it be perfected by a stronger light, such as the light of faith or of prophecy: which is called "the light of grace" inasmuch as it is added over and above nature.[16]

If we keep in mind Thomas's description of our knowing the truth, as given in *ST* 1, q. 16, a. 2, we can see that there is no need for any divine guarantee. Pickstock is certainly not true to Thomas in this essential respect.[17]

In the last paragraph of her fifth section, Pickstock criticizes "modern" correspondence as laying claim to grasping "phenomena as they are in themselves, and not as they are insofar as they imitate God."[18] Now, why not simply say that one can grasp one dimension of the situation, the self of things, and not grasp (yet) their relation to God? Thomas very carefully distinguishes between the *self* of things which are beings by participation, and the *relation to a cause* which *follows* upon their having that participational mode of being.[19] One indeed notices Pickstock's strange conception of participational being. We are told:

> Just as we only exist for Aquinas by participating in Being—which is also "accidental" to our essence, since we do not "have" to be, and yet superessential, since Being alone gives us our determinate essence—so also we only exist humanly . . . .[20]

Besides the fact that Thomas in general rejected the Avicennian conception of *essence/esse* composition, judging "accidentality" to

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[16] *ST* 1–2, q. 109, a. 1.

[17] On p. 94, Pickstock, discussing the presence of Christ in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine, calls our denial of the presence of the substance of bread and wine a "benign, doxological" skepticism, and says: "[I]t really is *only* this benign skepticism upheld by a faith in a hidden presence of God which could ever fully defeat the more threatening skepticism of philosophy." [her italics] Now, there doubtless are people who need faith to protect them from philosophical skepticism, but faith is not the only adequate safeguard against it. In general, nature is really enough.

[18] *Truth in Aquinas*, 18.

[19] Cf. *ST* 1, q.44, a.1, ad 1.

[20] *Truth in Aquinas*, 12.

be incorrect, and saving it only for the sake of a saying of Hilary,[21] there is also Thomas's constant mode of presenting the subsisting thing as such, namely that it properly "has" *esse*: see, for example, *ST* 1, q. 90, a. 2:

> That is properly said to "be" which *itself HAS being [illud . . . proprie dicitur esse quod ipsum habet esse]*, as subsisting in its very own being *[ut subsistens in SUO esse]*; hence, only substances are properly and truly called "beings." Whereas an accident does not have being . . . *[Accidens vero non HABET esse . . .]*.[22]

What is crystal clear is that the entire doctrine of knowledge of truth in Thomas has its foundations in our knowledge of *being* as considered in material, sensible things. Everything said about God, as to natural knowledge, flows from our certainty of the truth of our first principles, known from the start. That this is the effect of the divine operation is discovered in that way, and, for the metaphysician, is quite certain.

Chapter 2 by John Milbank, and entitled "Truth and Vision," is about the unity of faith and reason in Thomas. He presents Thomas as an author who needs "interpretation." There is no doubt that there is sometimes need to check one text against others, but I would say that the esoterism is grossly exaggerated by Milbank.

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21 Cf. e.g. *Quaestiones de quolibet* 12.4.1 [6], in the Leonine edition, vol. 25/2 (Rome/Paris: Commissio Leonina/Cerf, 1996), 403–4. Thomas had been asked whether the *esse* of the angel is an accident. His reply is a strong rejection of such an idea (though he does save the wider use of the word "accident" regarding *esse*, in connection with the saying of Hilary of Poitiers that *esse* is not an accident in God). (For the date, Easter 1272, see the Introduction by R.-A. Gauthier, OP, in vol. 25/1, 160*; Easter in 1272 was April 24, and Thomas had to be in Florence for the Chapter of his province in June. It is the fruit of Thomas's last academic activity in Paris, before returning to Naples. *The Twelfth Quodlibet* is a set of notes from St. Thomas himself, not themselves intended for publication, but for the eventual preparation of a publication never actually produced.) I argue against the accidentality of *esse* as conceived by Joseph Owens in my essay, "Saint Thomas, Metaphysical Procedure, and the Formal Cause", *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989), 173–82.

22 Cf. 1, q. 45, a. 4.

Since he makes a very sweeping set of pronouncements, I will fix on a few passages with which I simply cannot agree. Take first his view concerning the unity of faith and reason as "successive phases of a single extension *always qualitatively the same.*"[23] While it is true that Thomas presents reason and revelation as both involving phantasms and intellectual light, I would say that Milbank obscures the significant difference.

First of all, I note his contention that "[i]t is only in post-Baroque conceptions of revelation that faith appears to answer to something 'more'—to new disclosures of information about God and about what God has done."[24] Thomas Aquinas, hardly post-Baroque, assures us that faith does involve disclosures of information of a sort which reason could never provide:

> [I]t is to be said that though admittedly through the revelation of grace in this life we do not know concerning God what he is, and thus we are united to him as to someone unknown, nevertheless we more fully know him . . . inasmuch as we attribute to him on the basis of revelation some things at which natural reason does not arrive, such as that God is trinity and unity *[trinum et unum]*.[25]

Thomas is speaking of "new disclosures of information about God."

Secondly, the "qualitative" sameness contention seems to me to eliminate the difference between human nature and divine nature. It is quite true that it is the one divine nature whence come all intellectual light and all intelligibility. Thus, all created intellects are moved by God.[26] Nevertheless, there is such a thing as human nature and there are such things as the angelic natures. The human agent intellect is indeed a participation in divine light, but it is a specific qualitative form, distinct from angelic intellectual light as well as from the divine light. That is why it is true that the agent intellect is a power of the human soul.[27] That is why it is properly understood as *flowing from the essence of the human soul*, i.e., that the

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23 *Truth in Aquinas*, 24 (my italics).

24 Ibid., 24.

25 *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1.

26 *ST* 1, q. 105, a. 3.

27 See *ST* 1, q. 79, a. 4.

human soul is the productive or active cause of the agent intellect.[28] Similarly, the grace which perfects the soul supernaturally must be an inner quality,[29] whereby we come to do things proper to a *higher* nature. It is significant that we had, in chapter 1 (page 12), the strange idea that the specific difference of the human being was somewhat "accidental." No wonder, with this sort of extrinsicism, that one can take faith and reason in the sort of continuity that Milbank does. Of course, both faith and reason are perfections of our intellect. However, as Thomas carefully explains in *ST* 2–2, q. 2, a. 3, the human intellect through faith is under the movement proper to the divine nature; that it is appropriately positioned ontologically to come under such immediate movement by the divine nature is seen from its natural access to the universal notions of being and goodness, the proper effects of the universal principle of being. It is a matter of an ordered hierarchy of natures.[30] Milbank's "phase" conception for distinguishing faith and reason is quite inadequate, I would say.

Next, in part III, Milbank speaks of the distinction between philosophy (including philosophical theology) and theology or *sacra doctrina*. We get immediately what I would call a depreciation of the nature of metaphysics, since it is said that it treats of God, the first cause, "only . . . insofar as it is obliged, like any science, as part of its procedure, to inquire into the causes of its subject-matter."[31] Now, in reading this, a person might not suspect that, according to Thomas:

> [F]irst philosophy itself in its entirety is ordered to the knowledge of God as to an ultimate goal, and hence is called "divine science" . . . .[32]

Moreover, Milbank says that it knows about God *an est*. This is not the whole truth, as the very texts to which he sends us make clear. Thus, *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 12 says:

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28 *ST* 1, q. 77, a. 6 and 1, q. 79, a. 4, ad 5.

29 *ST* 1–2, q. 110, a. 2.

30 Cf. similarly *ST* 1–2, q. 62, a. 1 and 3, on the sort of addition to human nature provided by the theological virtues.

31 *Truth in Aquinas*, 25.

32 *ScG* Book 3, ch. 25.

> [Through sensible things] we can be led to this, that we know concerning God whether he is *[an est]*; and that we know concerning him those things which necessarily belong to him inasmuch as he is the first cause, exceeding all his effects. Hence, we know about him how he stands with respect to creatures, viz. that he is the cause of all; and the difference of creatures from him, that he is not something of those things which are caused by him; and that these are not denied of him because of his deficiency, but because he super-exceeds.

Also, Milbank suggests that *sacra doctrina* has reserved to it "the exposition of the *quid est*," though he immediately qualifies this as limited to remote intimations revealed. However, *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1 tells us flatly that revelation does not yield knowledge of the divine *quid est*. It does, as I noted earlier, say that we have information about God which we otherwise would not have, such as his being trine and one.

In presenting the presence of metaphysics within *sacra doctrina*, Milbank speaks of metaphysics as offering "illusory relative certainty."[33] This, again, is not Thomas's conception of what he is doing. Milbank fails to appreciate the role of nature, and human nature in particular.[34]

Milbank, not merely content to override the texts, also attempts to rewrite the logic of metaphysical demonstration. He says:

> . . . [Thomas's] 'demonstrations' of God's existence can only be meant to offer weakly probable modes of argument and very attentuated 'showings'.[35]

How different is the teaching of Thomas Aquinas! Anyone at all familiar with his work knows the strength of the word "demonstration" used of an argument. In *ST* 1, q. 2, a. 2, Thomas recalls the distinction between the demonstration "why it is so" and the demonstration "that it is so". He tells us quite unqualifiedly that "God exists" is demonstrable in the latter mode. He goes so far as to say that "nothing prevents" someone who does not grasp the

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33 *Truth in Aquinas*, 28.

34 Cf. *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2; 1, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1.

35 *Truth in Aquinas*, 28 (the "scare-quotes" are Milbank's).

demonstration from accepting it on the basis of faith *(ut credibile)!*[36] Obviously, he does not consider that there is anything intrinsically weak about the result of the demonstration.

Milbank might be deceived because of *ST* 2–2, q. 4, a. 8, which compares faith to the intellectual virtues as regards certitude. However, faith is being considered there relative to its proper objects, which are beyond human intellection. This has not to do with a faith-grasp of metaphysical truths by someone who does not understand the metaphysical demonstration.

On Thomas's view of philosophical wisdom, that is, metaphysics, one should consult *ST* 1–2, q. 66, a. 5. Metaphysical wisdom considers the highest object, God, and it thus judges all the rest of our intellectual life. As we read in *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*,[37]metaphysics is most certain, that is, more certain than any other science, inasmuch as it attains to the primary principles of beings. In commenting on Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.3 (1005b8 and ff.), where Aristotle asks whether it pertains to metaphysics to consider the first principle of demonstration, and argues that it belongs to metaphysics to be most certain, and this can only be so if it pertains to it to consider the most certain principles of all, Thomas agrees completely.[38] Obviously, as divine science, it more properly belongs to God than to us, and is possessed by us only imperfectly in this life. However, within this life it is closest in nature to beatitude.[39]

Milbank claims:

> Thomas asserts the tentative character of all philosophical deliverance about God in the face of revelation, and claims that even philosophic "certainties" are either confirmed more strongly, or can even be overruled by *sacra doctrina*.[40]

At this point he gives references to *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 1 and 1, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2. These texts certainly do not make his point. In article 1

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36 *ST* 1, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1.

37 *Sententia Libri Ethicorum Aristotelis* Book 6, lect. 5 (Leonine edition, vol. 47/2, Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1969: lines 102–6 (concerning Aristotle at 1141a12–17).

38 *CM* Book 4, lect. 6 (no. 596); and also *CM* Book 1, lect. 2 (no. 47).

39 *ST* 1–2, q. 66, a. 5, ad 3.

40 *Truth in Aquinas*, 30.

Thomas says that there is need of revelation even concerning those truths about God which human reason can investigate. The reason is that such truth would come to light only for a few, and after a long time, and with an admixture of error; whereas the entire salvation of man depends on knowledge of such truth. The weakness envisaged is strictly on the side of the particular knowing subject, not as regards the nature of the human mind and its available natural objects. The article itself rather confirms the existence of thoroughgoing certainty for anyone who really sees what is being said in the philosophical argument.

Philosophic certainties are not "confirmed more strongly" by *sacra doctrina*, unless one is speaking about some particular person who has failed to grasp the philosophical truth.

In *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2 it is said that whatever in other sciences is found repugnant to the truth of *sacra doctrina* stands condemned as false. Of course. But that simply cannot apply to a demonstrated philosophical truth. That is why St. Thomas, in *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 8, can confidently say that arguments made against the truths of faith cannot be demonstrations. As he says: "It is impossible for the contrary of what is true to be demonstrated."[41] Thomas does not assert the tentative character of all philosophic deliverance about God in the face of revelation. He asserts the existence of philosophical demonstrations, truths that are necessarily compatible with the truths of faith.

Every step of the way in this book, one finds oneself in disagreement. Thus, for example, we are told that Hume's criticism of the metaphysics and physics of causality was "correct." However, the Dionysian view circumvents the criticism, since in this view a cause does not really precede its effect, since it only becomes cause in realizing itself as the event of the giving of the effect.[42] Now, this is something one finds in Aristotle. Thus, at *Physics* 2.3 (195b4–6 and 17–21), we are told that all the four types of cause can be either actual or potential, and that the difference is that while the potential cause can exist when the effect does not, the actually causing cause and the actually being effected effect must be simultaneous.[43]

41 *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 8.

42 *Truth in Aquinas*, 31.

43 Cf. *CP* Book 2, lect. 6.

In general, this book masks Thomas's practice of showing "the way up" from effects to causes, on which philosophical argument in matters divine depends, even as he presents the "from the top down" ultimate sapiential vision. N&V

Book Reviews

Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture by Christopher R. Seitz *(Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001)* xii + 228 pp.

ROMAN CATHOLICS eager for a genuinely theological and spiritual revitalization of biblical exegesis may be surprised to discover that they owe a significant debt of gratitude to their "separated brethren." Indeed, there is a touch of irony in the fact that Protestant scholars stand in the vanguard of a movement to reacquaint the Church with patristic exegesis and to tap into its riches. While he draws only minimally on the work of the Fathers as such, Christopher R. Seitz, an Anglican Old Testament scholar, is intent on developing a mode of biblical interpretation akin to theirs in important respects. Seitz identifies himself as part of a circle of Yale colleagues, "all of whom are trying to understand and perhaps even reinstate something that has gone missing" in biblical exegesis and the Church's life (x).

Figured Out is a collection of essays on various topics, each of which contributes in some manner to the author's critique of "historicism" in contemporary biblical scholarship and his promotion of "figural" exegesis. A preface situates Seitz's efforts *vis à vis* a series of vital issues and questions, including the relationship between the Old and New Testaments and the relationship between exegesis and theology. His goal, a laudable one, is to reconnect "the two testaments of Christian scripture . . . without harm to their literal or plain sense" (vii). Between an introduction (chapter 1) and a conclusion (chapter 14), five essays (chapters 2 through 6) are devoted primarily to Seitz's critique of contemporary exegesis and

its ramifications, and seven essays (chapters 7 through 13) attempt to model a more satisfactory approach.

In chapters 2 and 3, Seitz critiques the "tradition-history" approach to Old Testament interpretation and argues for the adoption of a "canonical" approach, pointing out certain blind spots inherent in the former. For example, why does a scholar of the caliber of Gerhard von Rad not see that the canonical combination of sources that constitutes Genesis possesses its own "theological integrity" and warrants a serious theological interpretation at least as much as does any one of the hypothetically reconstructed sources taken in isolation (25)? According to Seitz, a tradition-historical attempt to unite the two testaments fails because it severs historical Israel from "the final form of its [own] scriptures as theologically relevant." Von Rad "built a bridge of tradition from Old to New Testament that could then not account for the New Testament's own specific hearing of the Old in its final form" (26).

Chapters 4 through 6 deal, ostensibly, with inner-Anglican controversies. But in fact, the issues treated here transcend Anglicanism and, more importantly, illustrate well one of Seitz's central theses. To wit, a mode of exegesis that relegates biblical meaning to a bygone age, reducing Scripture in effect to a repository of artifacts of Israel's religious development, serves only to prop up a new version of "Christianity"—one in which revelation is no longer an operative category. In such a case, neither Leviticus nor St. Paul can tell us anything about modern homosexual behavior since the latter is a radically new phenomenon, completely unknown to the biblical authors. Thus it devolves on "the Spirit" to show us, through reflection on our "experience," that our inclination to embrace such behavior is quite justified. Seitz rightly scoffs at this hermeneutic, which "cut[s] the Bible free from its own genre of sacred word in order to speak of religions of the past, of which we are the most enlightened, recent incarnation" (64).

Seitz is certainly correct to point out that a developmental view of Israel's religion *as adopted by many biblical scholars* (which he labels "gradualism") tends toward a reductionism and "minimizes the ongoing role of the Old Testament as first-order theological talk"

and as Christian Scripture (8). But he seems to imply throughout the volume that no developmental view of Old Testament faith is appropriate. Is this necessarily so? The Roman Catholic reader is left to wonder how Seitz might assess the Magisterium's use of the expression "divine pedagogy" (*Dei Verbum* no. 15), especially when it is defined in terms of a gradual revelation that culminates in the Incarnation (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 53).

Chapter 7 is one of Seitz's forays into New Testament scholarship and a major disappointment. Seitz promises great things: "an alternative way of reading the fourfold Gospel" based on the category of "testimony" or "witness" (91). What he delivers is an improbable and often muddled interpretation of the final verse of John's Gospel (21:25). By referring to "many other things that Jesus did," the author of this passage (alternatively identified as "John" or as "the editor") "wishes us to see his account" as "but one of many" and "as without any sort of priority." Indeed, he composed the verse "to tell the reader not to focus on his [account] alone, or his especially" (94).

In his zeal to find evidence of "canonical shaping" in the biblical text itself, Seitz supposes that John 21 was "composed with an awareness . . . that John's Gospel is appropriately in the fourth position" (92). Even more anachronistic is his claim that "John is . . . aware of the potential for a quest of the historical Jesus as a quest for some distillate below the record that exists in its present fourfold form" (99).

In chapter 8, Seitz returns to more familiar territory—the Book of Isaiah—and provides a clear and compelling treatment of the famous "Servant" question. Following the lead of Hugh Williamson and other recent scholars, Seitz does not deal with four hypothetically isolated "Servant Songs." Rather, he does justice to the use of the term "servant" throughout Isaiah 40–66, demonstrating nicely the fluid and yet organic manner by which this word designates: the post-exilic remnant of Israel as commissioned by Yahweh to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 40–48), an individual prophet who through his ministry and death takes up this vocation and realizes something of its efficacy (Isaiah 49–53), and the disciples of that prophet (Isaiah 54–66). Most importantly, Seitz shows how an interpretation that takes seriously the

question of what the Book of Isaiah meant to its first readers is quite compatible with, and indeed elucidates, the New Testament's typological reading of the same book.

Ironically, even where he is most clearly indebted to the tools and concrete results of modern historical-critical scholarship, Seitz continues to speak of this approach in highly generalized and pejorative terms, biting as it were the hand that feeds him. Worse yet, he is sometimes irresponsible in his critique of individual scholars. N. T. Wright's work on the historical Jesus, for example, may be open to criticism on several fronts, but to suggest that it "sever[s] earthly Jesus from the testimony of Israel's scriptures" (106) is simply unfair. Few contemporary scholars have done more to reconnect Jesus to the Old Testament than Wright.

In chapter 9, Seitz returns to the issue of homosexuality and biblical authority. He unmasks the specious exegesis and tendentious hermeneutic by which Acts 15 (Luke's account of the "Jerusalem Council") is purported to validate the "Spirit endorsement" of same-sex unions. The real problem here is that "scripture is not consulted for divine guidance but for correlation with what has bubbled up in the realm of experience in the community" (121). Seitz then offers a far more satisfying explication of Acts 15 and what this text in fact teaches us about the Holy Spirit. Aside from an occasional faux pas (e.g., Seitz seems unaware of the technical sense that the Greek word *porneia* possesses in Acts 15), this is a fine essay.

Next, Seitz takes up a topic that he rightly judges to be critical to developing a genuinely theological mode of exegesis and to illuminating the relationship between Old Testament and New (chapter 10). That is, he explains how the God of Israel has "handed over" his Name to Jesus (cf. Phil 2:9–11, with its allusion to Isaiah 45:22–25). This valuable essay is somewhat marred by Seitz's strenuous but one-sided argument against any attempt to vocalize the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). To his mind, "Yahweh" and "Jehovah" are equally invalid (cf. 142), and the convention of replacing YHWH with "the LORD" in Old Testament translation must be respected. This highly complex and delicate issue deserves to be treated with a scalpel, but here Seitz wields an axe (which he grinds in other essays as well; cf. 161 and 189).

The thesis of chapter 11 is that the Old Testament provides important background for understanding the major New Testament theme of "mission." Israel's election "is the means by which sinful creation receives the blessing originally intended for it, for all nations and people. Mission understood in Old Testament terms, then, is the address of blessing to the deficit and forfeit brought about by rebellion" (148).

In attempting to "sketch out . . . in broad brush . . . a comprehensive picture of prayer in the Old Testament" (160), Seitz, once again, takes up an eminently worthwhile topic but unfortunately bites off more than he can chew in a short essay (chapter 12). His treatment suffers from a careless or superficial interpretation of several biblical passages. For example, Enosh's invocation of "the name of the LORD" in Gen 4:26 (the text which Seitz takes as his point of departure) is said to represent prayer "outside God's covenant relationship with his people" (163–64). A more fruitful exegesis might have resulted from careful attention to the context, where two distinct genealogical lines descend from Adam, and Enosh belongs precisely to that line which will bear the covenant—a feature of the text noted by Augustine (*Civitas Dei*, Book 15) and modern commentators alike.

In his final essay, Seitz deals with the relationship between Scripture and Creed, contrasting the approach of John Pearson (a turn-of-the-century Anglican) with that of the speakers at the "God at 2000" conference a century later. The quotations taken from the latter source would be laughable if they were not so pathetic (e.g., "Surely there is no one participating at this conference who really believes that this conference is about God at 2000. This conference is about us at 2000" [179]).

In sum, it is refreshing to see a biblical scholar unabashedly treat the Old Testament as "Christian scripture" and as a serious theological witness to divine realities. Seitz is no slave to fashion! But it must be said that his critique of contemporary biblical scholarship would be far more effective if it relied less on inflated rhetoric about "higher-critical acids" (146 *et passim*) and more on substantive and cogent argumentation. For example, without citing a shred of corroborative evidence and without specifying the sort of causality he has in mind, Seitz goes so far as to blame

the Holocaust on modern biblical scholarship's faulty way of construing the relationship between the testaments (146).

Finally, some readers may find the title of this book misleading since for Seitz "typology" and "figural" exegesis involve above all a demonstration of how "the literal sense of the New Testament derives from the *literal sense* of the Old" (194; emphasis added). Indeed, about the only Old Testament texts that Seitz expounds in a manner that would normally be called "typological" are Genesis 22 and Isaiah 53. This can hardly be said to be breaking new ground! But in the opinion of this reviewer Seitz's instinct in this regard is on target and his cautious approach warranted. The organic relationship between the two testaments at the level of *sensus literalis* must be more clearly explicated before we moderns are quite ready to practice anything like the exegesis of the Fathers. Seitz does well not to let the cart get ahead of the horse. N&V

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Le désir de Dieu: Sur les traces de S. Thomas by Georges Cottier, OP *(Paris: Parole et Silence, 2002)* 285 pp.

GEORGES COTTIER, a Swiss Dominican, has been for many years the theologian to the Papal Household and general secretary to the International Theological Commission. He serves in addition as editor and regular writer for the quarterly *Nova et Vetera*—a journal founded by the eminent Charles Journet. As a former professor of philosophy at the universities of Fribourg and Geneva, Cottier is the author of many previous works.

The present book consists of a collection of articles on the selected aspects of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. They are arranged in a sequence beginning with philosophical anthropology (the human soul and the human intellect) and passing through metaphysical principles into natural theology. The volume concludes with chapters on natural law and on the theology of history. Except for the final chapter, which deals with salvation history, the book is philosophical rather than theological in method and content. It does not deal with revealed mysteries or argue from the data of revelation.

As anyone familiar with Cottier's work would expect, his scholarship is impeccable and his exposition luminously clear. He writes, as one might hope, from a definite point of view. Rejecting every hint of Platonism and ontologism, he emphasizes what I would call the Aristotelian side of St. Thomas: a reliance on sense data and abstract conceptualization, a teleological understanding of nature, a trust in deductive argument, and an insistence on the priority of the intellect as the defining characteristic of human existence.

Cottier gives no indication that St. Thomas incorporated Platonic elements in his synthesis. He does not speak of the divine ideas, of the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius, or the metaphysics of participation. Although he alludes briefly to participation, he does so only to show that it can be reduced to a combination of efficient, formal, and final causality rather than to a kind of quasi-formal causality, as the Platonists held. A considerable number of distinguished Thomistic scholars, however, maintain that St. Thomas, while giving due attention to the Aristotelian causal principles, borrows elements from the Platonic tradition to account better for the similarity of many individuals to one another and to a source that possesses their shared perfection in an eminent degree.

In many respects, Cottier stands close to Jacques Maritain, from whom he picks up the idea that our initial insight into reality depends on an intuition of being which precedes any formal judgment based on concepts. Also from Maritain he takes over the idea that our awareness of the natural law is in the first instance given preconceptually, through connaturality. But because he is not here writing as a theologian, Cottier does not speak of the higher connaturality given through divine grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

If there is a central theme to the volume, it would seem to consist in the natural desire of any created intelligence for the vision of God. Only that vision could appease the intellect's capacity for knowledge. This natural desire, according to Cottier, does not amount to a genuine need or exigency that God would be obligated to fulfill. Cottier accordingly parts company with Henri de Lubac, whom he understands as rejecting the concepts both of pure nature and of a natural beatitude that would correspond to it. He repudiates de Lubac's assertion that there can be

a "natural desire for the supernatural," even though his own concept of the natural desire for the vision of God is very similar to this.

De Lubac reappears in the final chapter of the book, dealing with the Holy Spirit and history. Drawing abundantly on de Lubac's two-volume work on the spiritual posterity of Joachim of Fiore, Cottier shows how the theology of Abbot Joachim was progressively secularized until it arrived at Hegel's doctrine of the self-genesis of Absolute Spirit through the immanent dialectic of history.

As a secondary theme running through the book, the author insists on the superiority of Thomist intellectualism over the rationalism typified by Hegel and the anti-intellectualism of Schopenhouer and Nietzsche. Enlightenment rationalism and Hegelianism, he holds, make reason the measure of reality, rather than the reverse. But Cottier gives salutary warnings against the post-metaphysical philosophy represented by Martin Heidegger, which easily sinks, as he notes, into historical relativism and post-modern subjectivism.

Cottier's engagement with modern philosophy in this book is, however, sporadic. He is generally content to present the merits of the Thomistic system, which is marked, in his opinion, by confidence in reason, by courage in adhering to the truth, and by submission to reality, which imposes itself on the mind by its own truth. Like John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio,* Cottier pleads for a revival of metaphysics in the style of the grand tradition stemming from the ancient Greeks.

The ethical principles that emerge in this volume are teleological and, one may say, eudaemonistic. Cottier holds that the human person is oriented toward happiness, which consists in a gratification of the natural tendency to achieve union with God through the beatific vision. This ethics of self-realization seems to leave little place for obedience to the stern voice of duty and for a pure desire to serve. Here, as on other points, I would have liked to see Cottier enter into debate with positions opposed to his own. But the dominant tone of this book is expository rather than argumentative. The author is primarily concerned with showing what Thomas Aquinas held, especially in his more Aristotelian moments.

Several chapters in this book, the reader should be warned, are highly abstract. They deal, for instance, with technical questions such as the doctrine of opposition, the concept of nothingness, and the order that obtains among the transcendental properties of being. Exhibiting the author's exceptional capacity to work comfortably with razor-thin Scholastic distinctions, these chapters help to expose the very roots of the differences between Aristotelian Thomism and modern philosophers such as Leibniz, Hegel, and Bergson.

Reading this book from my own perspective as a theologian, I regret that this and so many other expositions of St. Thomas concentrate almost exclusively on his philosophy, even though he undoubtedly thought himself to be first of all a theologian. As a theologian, St. Thomas thinks of the human person as oriented toward a supernatural beatitude through communion with Jesus Christ. Although the light of reason is surely fundamental to any Thomistic epistemology, believers enjoy a light of faith, and in some cases a prophetic light, both of which elevate the light of reason to a higher plane and prepare it for the light of glory in the life to come. As a theologian of the first rank, Cottier is not unfamiliar with the theology of the Angelic Doctor, as readers of the French edition of *Nova et Vetera* are well aware.

Although I would have liked to hear more about Aquinas the theologian, I recognize the importance of the philosophical foundations that are so solidly set forth in the present volume. A firm grasp of these principles can greatly help for the right understanding and defense of the faith in the face of modern rationalism, individualism, and cultural relativism. Because Cottier arms the reader against these threats, his volume deserves close attention on the part of scholars who believe, as I do, that the study of St. Thomas can help to restore a philosophical realism that transcends the limitations of particular eras and cultures. N&V

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Introduction to Moral Theology by Romanus Cessario, OP *(Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001)* xxiii + 268 pp.

T. S. ELIOT famously wrote that the greatest treason is "to do the right thing for the wrong reason." The interplay of doing "the right thing" for the right reason could be said to be the overall marching orders of Fr. Cessario's splendid book on moral theology. *Recta ratio*, rather than oughtness, constitutes the rule of morality. This book depicts in a grand style and well-argued fashion what shape reflection on moral theology must take when one embraces moral realism. Cessario does not reduce the moral life to will and obligation, but embraces the totality of the human person made in the *imago Dei* who seeks beatitude as part of a created world.

I should first comment on Cessario's overall project as the general editor of the Catholic Moral Thought Series of which this book forms the initial volume. The introduction of this book limns a grand portrait of what will characterize succeeding volumes. They share a common vision of fidelity to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and of heeding Vatican II's call for renewing moral theology along more biblical roots, thus setting aside the earlier manualist tradition's predilection for forms of casuistry. Inspired by the scholarship of the Dominican Servais Pinckaers, and the direction of *Veritatis Splendor* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the series hopes to provide an authentic retrieval of the breadth and depth of the millennia-old tradition of moral inquiry inspired by the God of Israel revealed in Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, as this first book aptly demonstrates, any such authentic retrieval shines in its contemporaneity as it allows for, as well as demands, thorough engagement with current issues in culture and scholarship.

Now to the book itself. How to characterize the moral realism to which the author so frequently avers? Moral realism begins with the conviction that human nature exists and that it has certain inherent structures proper to it. Moreover, human nature and the world in general are intelligible to human beings. Underlying this is the deeper conviction that the world has been created by an intelligent Creator who has infused the world with patterns of intelligibility. The moral realist thus not only begins from a sound

philosophy of human nature, but also accepts that human action is guided by the intellect's appropriation of the world surrounding us. Neither intention nor circumstances can describe human action. Evaluations and descriptions of human actions must include the moral object—namely the structure of the performed act as grasped by the agent. This is how Cessario distinguished moral realism from the voluntarist tradition. For the latter, agency follows the choice of the will confronted with goods or obligations. For the moral realist, moral acts are acts in accord with right reason so that reasoned appetition—not a naked free will—determines human activity.

The book contains five chapters. A quick overview of the structure of the book reveals much about its content. The first chapter, "The Starting Point for Christian Moral Theology," indicates that moral theology must begin where all theology begins, in the revelation of God through Jesus Christ passed down through the Church's living tradition and sacred Scripture. Moral theology is not an autonomous discipline, but is placed within the whole of *sacra doctrina* and thus includes the revelation of man as the *imago Dei* and his vocation to beatitude. The second chapter, "Moral Realism and the Natural Law," gives due attention to the importance of natural law placed within the context of God's wise creation and providence over the universe. This ordering of man to God through the very structure of his nature provides grounds for the prohibition of certain actions. The third chapter, "The Origin and Structure of Virtuous Behavior," analyzes human action focusing on the primacy of prudence—that virtue both intellectual and moral—in virtuous action. The fourth chapter, "The Form of a Good Moral Action," provides an excellent analysis of the traditional manner of analyzing moral action in terms of its object, end and circumstances. Here is where one sees the tremendous value of the moral realist approach as the author provides an excellent criticism of many revisionist moral theorist simply by showing how the moral object cannot be set aside from the evaluation of the action. The final chapter, "The Life of Christian Virtue and Freedom," brings moral theology to its completion in the life of the Christian led by the Holy Spirit as a member of the Body of Christ. This is a robust and attractive of the Christian moral life. One wonders what would have happened to Nietzchse's famous criticism of Christianity as a

slave morality if he had encountered this morality centered around the perfection and true beatitude of the human person.

Although—or perhaps one should say because—Cessario presents moral theology from the commitment to moral realism, he continually provides accurate descriptions of and insightful engagements with alternative ways of construing the moral life. A constant companion is the voluntarist approach arising from strands of Bonaventure's thought and from nominalist influence, and finding its home in much post-Tridentine forms of causitry. The author recognizes that the voluntarist approach is compatible with the doctrines of the Catholic faith and that it has formed the warp and woof of great spiritual traditions within the Catholic Church. One example he gives is the much beloved *Imitation of Christ* that emphasizes—almost to the point of reduction—the life of holiness as the renunciation of self.

Readers will enjoy Cessario's brief, but elegant, discussions of significant debates such as the natural desire for God, the character of the goods sought by practical reason (in dialogue with the Grisez-Finnis approach), and the defense of the Church's teaching on intrinsically evil acts. Advanced undergraduates, seminarians, and graduate students will benefit greatly from the fact that Cessario always notifies the reader of areas of significant disagreement and nonetheless provides a reasoned argument for navigating these areas in favor of moral realism. The book includes thorough footnotes and an extensive bibliography that provide an excellent starting point for students and scholars alike to deepen their acquaintance with the voluminous secondary literature on St. Thomas Aquinas and moral theology. An appendix contains a useful analysis of the flight from virtue by the casuists and subsequent post-Vatican II flight from casuistry.

Some readers may be disappointed that the book rarely considers concrete moral issues except as asides. One expects that the future volumes in this series will show the fruitfulness of the more general approach to moral theology provided in this book as it shapes the extended consideration of issues in moral theology. N&V

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Recherches thomasiennes. Études revues et augmentées by Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP *(Paris: Vrin, 2000)* 386 pp.

THE SIGNIFICANCE of Jean-Pierre Torrell's contribution to Thomist research requires little comment. His advances have helped recover Aquinas's standing as first and foremost a theologian. To this end, the appearance of *Recherches thomasiennes* is especially valuable, since it combines in one work numerous articles Torrell has published over the past twenty-five years in a wide range of journals and collections. Here one finds all the signature traits by which Torrell has made his mark in the field (traits that figured prominently, to which I can personally attest, in his classroom teaching in Fribourg as well): his textual critical and historical critical accomplishments, his studies on Aquinas's Christology, and his efforts to bring to light a lesser known Thomas Aquinas, viz., Aquinas the lover of Scripture and the devoted Christian and Dominican friar ("St. Thomas was not only a high-soaring thinker, he was also a friar preacher and a man of prayer," is how the back cover puts it).

Torrell's skills as a textual critic, which result from his years of service on the Leonine Commission, are on display in the opening pages of this work. Published for the first time in a critical edition, along with an introduction and notes, is Aquinas's sermon on the Decalogue, the *Collationes de Decem Preceptis* (47–117). Torrell has prepared this text for volume 44 of the Leonine edition of *Opera Omnia.* Happily, while this volume awaits completion of the other texts to be included in it, permission was granted for the advance publication of the *De Decem Preceptis* in *Recherches thomasiennes.*

As for his historical erudition, Torrell shows at nearly every turn of the page that his knowledge of trends in high- and late-medieval thought is second to none. By identifying precisely what Thomas does and does not inherit from his predecessors and contemporaries, Torrell gains a more accurate grasp of the originality of Aquinas's thought and of the ways in which the Master from Aquino distances himself from other scholastics.

Another area of Thomist thought pioneered by Torrell is in Christology, to which his recent two-volume publication on the mysteries of Christ's life from *tertia pars*, qq. 27–59 of the *Summa Theologiae* attests. (Torrell has also recently completed a new French edition of the Christological part of the *tertia pars.*) In *Recherches*

thomasiennes, Torrell puts forward a "reexamination" ("une relecture") of Aquinas's doctrine on Christ's human knowledge (Study VI). In a controversial move, Torrell performs a critical reading of Thomas's position on Christ's earthly possession of the beatific vision and follows with an alternative position. In another study (Study VII), Torrell investigates the evolution of Aquinas's thought regarding the causal role of Christ's humanity in our salvation. Here we learn in detail the reasons for which St. Thomas could affirm only late in his career that Christ's humanity acts as the instrument (in the sense of instrumental efficient causality) of his divinity.

When it comes to Aquinas's use of and reliance upon Scripture, we find ourselves at the heart of Torrell's endeavor to underscore the fact that St. Thomas at all times thinks, writes, and reflects theologically (Study III). One of Torrell's recurring themes is that Thomas's thought is much more biblically based and oriented than has been traditionally acknowledged. Evidence for this is found in the circular *exitus-reditus* structure of the *Summa Theologiae* whereby all things begin and end with God, the inspiration of which has been largely attributed to neo-Platonic thought. Torrell amends this view, noting that the structure of the *Summa* is more biblical than neo-Platonic in inspiration, since it follows particularly upon the testimony of the Book of Revelation that "God is the Alpha and the Omega of the universe and of history" (126).

Reminding us as well that Aquinas's actual teaching title was *Magister in sacra pagina* rather than *Doctor in sacra theologia*, Torrell makes the important observation that Thomas's teaching "consisted in commenting on Scripture" (299–300). At Paris this teaching began with two years of lecturing on the Bible in which a rapid and basic commentary that avoided digressions was pursued (these two years were followed by another two years of teaching on Lombard's *Sentences*, after which point one lectured more extensively on Scripture as a *Magister in sacra pagina*). Aquinas's very first work, the *Super Isaiam*, is the text written by Thomas for a course he taught precisely during his first two years in Paris. Practically ignored by modern scholarship, the *Super Isaiam* receives a much-needed analysis in this work (Study VIII). Here we discover that this text offers important themes that remain present in Aquinas's writings throughout his entire career.

Finally, Torrell includes several articles aimed at sharpening our understanding of Thomas Aquinas, the concrete man of flesh and blood (rarely does the title "Angelic Doctor" come from Torrell's pen). To do this, he examines Aquinas's little known yet readily accessible collection of sermons (Studies IX and XII–XIII), and unearths a side to St. Thomas that few know, e.g., that through his evocative manner of preaching, the Dominican Master was able to move a congregation to tears (286). We learn as well that in his sermons Aquinas delivers "a teaching that is much more concrete than one would expect to find, a mode of expression that is quite experiential and which is rooted in a social context that comes through loud and clear in a whole quantity of details. His preaching is furthermore guided entirely by the movement of the Word of God" (301; cf. as well 15).

Torrell also focuses on Aquinas's spirituality to help the cause of shedding the image of a man who was nothing more than an abstract thinker suspended in time and space (Studies X–XI). Emphasis is placed on Thomas's appreciation of the Christo-conforming element of the Christian life; as Aquinas writes in his commentary on Matthew's Gospel: "No one attains perfection in this world if he does not walk in the footsteps of Christ (*nisi qui sequitur vestigia Christi*)" (331). Torrell observes that the indispensable role of Christ as model to imitate "is certainly one of Aquinas's great spiritual themes" (333). Torrell then closes his work with a meditation on the *Adoro Te*, "the most beautiful prayer of St. Thomas" (Study XIV). Here Torrell notes that the one who "prayed this [Eucharistic] poem that is so rich is very much the same learned theologian of the doctrine of transubstantiation" (16).

Though Torrell's method of beginning his articles with a technical historical and/or textual analysis followed by a more speculative study may not be for everyone, this work offers a mine of important yet little known features of St. Thomas's thought. It is therefore a must read for those interested in deepening their understanding of Aquinas. N&V

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Le christianisme est-il un monothéisme? ed. Gilles Emery, OP and Pierre Gisel *(Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001)* 396 pp.

THIS VOLUME emanates from an interconfessional and interdisciplinary program involving the theology faculties of Fribourg, Lausanne and Neuchâtel, and so offers a fare richer than one might otherwise have expected, judiciously combining perspectives from religious studies as well as historical theology. Which means, of course, that most readers will not read everything, but will at the same time be tempted into regions new and perhaps unfamiliar, like Cristoph Theobald's (Centre Sèvres, Paris) bold foray into "God and postmodernism," which limns current cultural crises as a way of probing "holiness as the mystery of the world." Indeed, contributions of this sort display admirably the potential of our Christian confession of divine triunity for interdisciplinary conversation. Other contributors, like Fritz Stolz (Zurich) and Thomas Römore (Lausanne), offer conceptual and historical elaborations of "monotheism" respectively, the first treating it as a system, the second as a development within Israelite religion. Together with Klauspeter Blaser (Lausanne), who focuses on missionary endeavors, these initial essays set the stage for what one might mean by "monotheism." Not an easy task, actually, since the term as well as the idea are in fact constructs, by way of contrast with polytheism (which Olivier Abel [Protestant faculty, Paris] eloquently praises) or development from a religious tradition. So one cannot find a "First Monotheistic Church" at which to worship—even in America!

Thus we are directed to the second section, where Joseph Wolinski (l'Institut Catholique, Paris), Gilles Emery (Fribourg), and Bernard Rordorf (Genève) help us to retrieve the Christian tradition from early church to medieval to Reformed traditions. These essays are magisterial, offering in each case a precious précis of their more extensive works displaying the cogency of the continuing struggle to articulate a triune God, and in the case of Rordorf, a trenchant tracing of Calvin's problematic "double predestination" to a deficiency in his treatment of divine triunity, together with Karl Barth's prescient correction of reformed thought in this regard.

Dominic O'Meara (Fribourg) shows clearly the cogency of Plotinus' seminal argument to divine ineffability as a backdrop for

the difficulties involved in affirming any kind of plurality in the One. And "struggle" remains the watchword as the essays broach modern and postmodern treatments of this issue. Dietrich Korsch (Marburg) and Marc Boss (Montpellier) each provide scenarios of Protestant labors in the wake of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Schleiermacher, assessing the task of probing divine triunity in that philosophical climate. Roland Jaquenoud (Abbey of Saint-Maurice) offers a welcome summation of the fascinating thought of Sergij Boulgakov, whom Rowan Williams has introduced into the anglophone theological world. His reflections parallel those of Gilles Emery, though from an independent Orthodox perspective, to show how the ineffable relation of creation to creator reflects the procession of Word from God, in this case, via the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit as orderer of the created universe. Indeed, the theme of creation from God mirroring procession in God permeates these contributions, offering yet another testimony to the fruitfulness of the struggles to affirm divine triunity.

Martin Leiner (Neuchâtel) sets the stage for Theobald's postmodern explorations by offering a *tour d'horizon* of contemporary treatments of divine triunity, beginning with Nicholas Lash's observation that "the doctrine of the Trinity simply is the Christian doctrine of God," which he can assert in the face of modernist objections to its "abstract" character by reminding us that this doctrine affords "the summary grammar of the Christian account of the mystery of salvation and creation" (Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*). Again, the theme of struggle returns, reminiscent of Newman's dictum that theology proceeds by continually revisiting our uncertainties. Pierre Gisel's valedictory essay reminds us forcibly of this potential in theological inquiry today by noting how recurrent efforts to explicate the triunity affirmed in Christian tradition return us to God's transcendence in the midst of a dramatic revelation, in the face of the ineffable relation of creation to creator. What this volume displays so effectively is the cogency of theological reflection at this juncture of human thought and sensibility, notably by anchoring it in traditions which continue to show their fruitfulness. N&V

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The God of the Gospel of John by Marianne Meye Thompson *(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001)* x + 269.

HARD ON THE HEELS of her other recent study, *The Promise of the Father*, comes now a full and learned monograph on what is said to be a neglected topic—namely how God is viewed and presented in the Gospel of John. There are clearly a variety of concerns which have led Thompson to such a study, not the least of which is a concern that Christocentric readings of the Fourth Gospel have led to a neglect or even a distortion of other aspects of Johannine theology. Indeed on the last page of her monograph she says explicitly, "It is the failure to make the theological correlates of Christology explicit which has led to the neglect of the figure of God in NT theology" (240). By "God," here and elsewhere in this study Thompson means the one called some 120 times in the Gospel of John, "Father." She is not suggesting that the study of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel has been neglected, but she is suggesting that such Christological study has led to distorted understandings of the Fourth Evangelist's concept of God, as we shall see.

The book, which is framed with brief introductory and concluding remarks, consists of five chapters—1) The Meaning of God; 2) The Living Father; 3) The Knowledge of God; 4) The Spirit of God; and 5) The Worship of God. It needs to be borne in mind that Thompson has long been a tiller of the Johannine soil, and she brings this long and profound time of reflection on this material to bear in this book. She clearly has concerns that later Christological and dogmatic issues in early church use and interpretation of John have led to distortions in understanding what this Gospel itself originally intended to say. Thompson is not addressing the issues of the pre-history of the text of the Fourth Gospel, nor is she concerned about the theologies that may lie behind it. Her concern is with the concept of God that lies within the present form of the text.

In the first chapter of the book she states up front perhaps the most crucial question—What does the New Testament mean when it calls Jesus God? It seems clearly to be her position that the term *theos* when predicated of Jesus does not mean exactly the same things as when it is predicated of the Father. As she says, "God" is not a proper name, but rather a term which makes a predication about a particular being or reality. Thompson works

through various ways the term *theos* was used in early Judaism, presumably on the assumption that the Fourth Evangelist might use it in more than one way as well. She shows that sometimes the term refers to those endowed with divine power or life or functions, who are not in themselves properly called "God" with a capital "G." For example, Philo's use of the term "god" to refer to the logos of God comes to mind. Thompson seeks to build a case that something or someone which is a manifestation of God in some way, could be called god. This is of course true, but it begs the question as to whether the Fourth Evangelist is using the term in this way. As with her book *The Promise of the Father*, Thompson tends to assume and then emphasize that it is the continuity with early Jewish ideas, not the discontinuity, which most shapes the way the Christian author speaks about God. In other words, she is not entirely comfortable with large assertions about the Christological reformulation of monotheism in John and elsewhere in the New Testament.

Thompson is of course right that normally the term God in the New Testament refers to the Father, with only about seven or eight possible exceptions. And she is also right that one should not simply assume that the same thing is meant when the term is applied to Jesus as when it is applied to the Father. But in fact at the end of the day her case breaks down not least because the Johannine literature itself—including the Gospel, epistles, and the Revelation—inculcate a worship of Jesus, not merely because he is a manifestation of God on earth, or the temple in which God is made present to us, but because the Son of God existed before all worlds, was the only begotten of the Father, and so was not properly speaking a created being like angels or humans or animals, but rather was co-creator with God, and shares in the divine identity. To call the Son of God the logos or Wisdom incarnate, means far more than "to say that he is God's self expression, God's thought or mind, or God's interior word spoken aloud" (135). How very differently John speaks about the Son in comparison to what Philo or Josephus were prepared to say about another historical figure, Moses, to whom they readily ascribe divine power, and even a reflection of divine glory. Moses was not to be worshipped; Jesus, as John insists, is.

The second chapter is something of a capsule summary of some of Thompson's *The Promise of the Father*, and since Laura Ice and I have given a detailed critique of this work in our *The Shadow of the Almighty*, I will not pause to offer that critique again here. Basically, Thompson is wrong to suggest that the use of the term Father in the New Testament owes more to its Jewish background than to its Christological foreground. To the contrary, Father and Abba are both terms now viewed chiefly through the eyes of Christ and his relationship with the Father in the New Testament, a point made especially emphatically in the Fourth Gospel which stresses the unique and distinctive relationship between the Son and the Father.

Thompson next offers a lengthy discussion of the knowledge of God. What comes of this discussion is a willingness to admit that Jesus is the embodiment of God's presence, but not a willingness to assert that he is the incarnation of God in person. This becomes evident when she asserts "John does not collapse Jesus into God, or vice versa, but there is no separate and distinct knowledge of one without knowledge of the other" (141). But while there is truth in this remark (no one is contending that John thought the Son was the Father), she quite fails to grasp the point that John is indeed saying in a whole variety of ways that there is more than one person in the Godhead, and Jesus is the manfestation of one of those persons. A statement like "before Abraham was, I am" is certainly a claim of personal pre-existence before the time of the incarnation. It is not a claim that the Son was merely a thought in the mind of God before all creation.

Disconcertingly, Thompson also seeks to denude the Spirit of the Spirit's personal identity, by downplaying the Paraclete passages, and playing up the more generic discussions of the Spirit in John 3 and elsewhere. She concludes, "By definition, Spirit refers to the mode of God's presence, power, action. Hence the Spirit in John is the Spirit of God, who comes from the Father (15.26)" (187). It is precisely that "who" part that Thompson neglects or avoids in her discussion. It is not just that "Spirit is a distinct way of envisioning God's activity and presence in the world . . ." (187). The Holy Spirit is no mere personified function or divine attribute in this Gospel, any more than Jesus is. The fact that Jesus and the Spirit are both called Advocate and personal attributes are

credited to both needs to carry far more weight than Thompson will allow. The Spirit is seen as the personal emissary of Jesus who is able to convict, convince, convert, as well as illuminate or bring to mind the truth. The Spirit in John is far more than "the life-giving force or power of God" (229).

Perhaps one of the most disturbing aspects of Thompson's study is the way she tries to minimize the importance of the Prologue and the climactic narrative in John 20 where Jesus is worshipped as Lord and God. Most scholars see the prologue as setting up the terms of discussion for the rest of the narrative, so that the reader will go through this Gospel recognizing that the Word that became flesh was indeed part of the divine identity, while not exhausting that identity, and therefore is worthy of being called God with a capital G. Thompson also fails to take into account that we have a crescendo of confessions in the Gospel of John climaxing with the one that reiterates the high Christology of the Prologue when Jesus is proclaimed Lord and God. It is not because Jesus should not be confessed to be God during his earthly ministry (see 233–34) that it does not happen before the resurrection. It is because the Spirit had not yet been given to confessors of Jesus prior to Easter. As C. K. Barrett once said, the Word became flesh without ceasing to be the divine Word. But without the Spirit, no one could confess Jesus is Lord from the heart.

At the end of the day Thompson's argument does not really make a new or unfamiliar case. What is perhaps surprising and distinctive about it is that an evangelical scholar would want to make such a case, and one has to ask why. "Methinks she protesteth too much" when it comes to the issue of how many persons the Fourth Evangelist may have believed to be part of the Godhead. The problem of anachronistically reading later Trinitarian ideas into the Gospel of John is of course a potential danger. But it is equally dangerous to underestimate, for example, the argument of someone like Richard Bauckham about what it actually means to say Jesus or the Son of God is part of the divine identity. It means far more than just Jesus embodies the divine power and presence in a unique or supreme way. It means that there really was an Incarnation, which presupposes the pre-existence of the Son of God as a person within the Godhead. It is no accident that

centuries of exegetes of the Fourth Gospel prior to the twentieth century understood that Incarnation was part of John's argument. It is wrong to sell that birthright for a mess of pottage. N&V

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Retracing Reality: A Philosophical Itinerary by Marie-Dominique Philippe, OP, trans. Dominique F. Peridans *(Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999)* 178 pp.

CAN ONE ATTAIN a knowledge of things that is universally verifiable in human experience? Such a question would seem naive for many contemporary intellectuals, who would be inclined to answer in the negative. Whereas a certain rationalism in modernity boasted of purely objective knowledge, a concomitant idealism and the skepticism of post-modernity reduce claims about truth to revelations of one's subjectivity. Thoughts are held to be merely opinions or preferential viewpoints. In the philosophical realm, the love of wisdom finds itself without a guide to navigate serious disagreements. Too often, the Socratic confession of ignorance degenerates resignedly into intellectual license for self-assertion—for viewpoints are rooted in choice and not in recognition, as the story goes—whether openly avowed or masked in confessional piety. Widely accepted as the justification for this state of affairs is the assumption that no philosophy can free itself from a priori biases. These biases are held to be a thinker's impositions upon reality, sometimes freely chosen and sometimes unwittingly espoused.

The French philosopher Marie-Dominique Philippe, OP asks whether this assumption is itself not an a priori bias. He contends that this premise denies the possibility that any philosophy can operate from "the most radical starting point, which imposes itself on our knowledge and excludes any possible choice" (7). According to Philippe, the refusal to accept this most radical starting point entails the rejection of any realistic philosophy. Instead, there can be only ideologies (fideism, etc.) with which one may or may not "agree."

Interestingly, the prevalence of idealistic and skeptical philosophies provides a breeding ground for their apparent opposite, materialism.

With no hope of attaining the real, modern man limits his horizons to progress and pleasure. Pragmatism reigns or rather *pragmatisms* war amongst each other as competing arbiters of value (socialism, extreme capitalism, and so forth.). Fr. Philippe takes issue with these idealistically and materialistically reductive approaches, arguing that man has the capacity for genuine contact with the real. *Retracing Reality* presents an overview of philosophy anchored in a starting point that is not reducible to wish, fancy, or pragmatic concerns.

Contemporary philosophers, Philippe argues, too frequently dismiss the possibility of a realistic philosophy and reflexively accept the inevitably "biased" nature of their enterprise. He discerns four fundamental starting points upon which contemporary philosophers base their work—interior spiritual experience, rational consciousness, poetic inspiration, and historical or comparative surveys. These starting points, though valid in themselves for certain purposes, do not provide an "a priori-free" philosophy. Philippe offers an alternative to these a priori. In the spirit of Aristotle, he grounds philosophy in an analysis of sensory human experience ennobled by a judgment of existence. The key moment of realism is this judgment of existence, by which the human knower recognizes that a given reality exists apart from (or as distinct from) his own thought and existence. Philippe offers much by way of experiential verification of this intellectual capacity, which is commonly critiqued as being illusory. Moments of realism impose themselves through experiences of suffering, of matter's resistance to transformation, of a friend's death, and so forth.

Once imbued with a realistic approach, the philosopher recognizes that what confronts him is greater than what first appears. Seeking knowledge, he asks questions about what he perceives: what is this, of what is it made, whence does it come, why does it exist, upon what model is it based. These questions initiate journeys towards the discovery of the proper principles underlying experienced reality. These efforts to discover fundamental and indemonstrable principles culminate with inductions. Philippe emphasizes induction because the veracity of demonstration depends upon the principles into which one's argument is resolved. When induction is ignored, the "starting principles" of demonstration are but reflexively or willfully chosen a priori,

elements of a creed or whim. Philippe's inductive approach and attention to the judgment of existence breathe life into the perennial philosophy. This vitality, however, involves realistic philosophy's difficult but rewarding task: the student must undertake his own journey, for inductions can be neither communicated nor imposed. Rather, the thinker must experience and encounter some reality, with the guidance of a thinker like Aristotle but with the personal conviction rooted in an analysis of and judgment about this reality.

Retracing Reality is carefully structured, comprehensive, and profound. It consists in roughly four sections, although they are not delineated as such. The first two chapters lay out the starting point and the method of inquiry. The next five chapters take up various human experiences: work, friendship, community, physical being, and life. In each of these five chapters, a certain realm of human experience instigates questions that lead to inductions of principles, which in turn can be pondered anew in experience. Each stage of inquiry unveils some aspect of man. But within each of these aspects there lies something more fundamental, the experience of existence: "I am." To ignore this experience "would be an a priori, the most terrible of all, for it concerns what is most fundamental and primary" (92). The next two chapters discuss the judgment of existence, metaphysics and the Creator. Philosophy reaches its height in its effort to discover the First Cause of all existence; upon this lofty peak contemplative wisdom is born. Philippe concludes his work with a presentation of the rightful place of critical reflection and logic.

As its subtitle suggests, *Retracing Reality* is not an exhaustive treatment but an "itinerary." It is an invitation for a friend to seek wisdom (the French title translates literally as *Letter to a Friend*). The book's vast breadth and relatively brief length, acknowledged in a prescript, do not undermine this intention. Philippe does not work out arguments in detail but simply traces the stages and approaches of philosophy that promise of fecundity. Consequently, the book demands engagement and rumination. Aristotelian and Thomistic students will be the best equipped to read it. Personalist philosophers may be pleasantly surprised to find the human person at the heart of metaphysical inquiry. Anyone with a philosophic spirit and the willingness to ponder, rather than merely ingest, will bene-

fit from walking with Philippe and examining life's fundamental experiences, especially the mystery that opens up within each of these experiences: existence itself.

The chief drawback of the book is a lack of additional annotation to assist those without any philosophical background. In this regard, the spread of the Brothers and Sisters of St. John, founded by Fr. Philippe, should provide laborers to help guide those who would seek wisdom. Located in Laredo, Texas and Peoria, Illinois, the Brothers offer several retreats each year on philosophical and religious themes. Hopefully, the publication of *Retracing Reality*, Philippe's philosophical debut in the English-speaking world, will awaken a spirit of realistic inquiry. N&V

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The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas by Paul Gondreau *(Münster: Aschendorff, 2002)* 516 pp.

ONE RARELY ENCOUNTERS the topic of Christ's passions in theological literature. Though St. Thomas gives a central place to it in his Christology, Thomist studies have for the most part neglected this topic. It would take a work of historical theology, in which this question is placed within the entirety of St. Thomas Aquinas's theology and within the theological developments of the 13th century, to show its interest and value. To this end, Paul Gondreau devotes his work to an historical and speculative study of Question 15 of the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae.* There we find Aquinas's treatment of the *defectus* assumed by Christ in his human nature: the weaknesses of the body and, especially, the weaknesses of the soul. This theological work thus concerns the *passibility* of Christ, in the fullest sense of the term as given it by St. Thomas. In underscoring the anthropological and soteriological significance of Christ's passions, this study brings to light a completely original element of St. Thomas's Christology.

This work includes six chapters. The first two are consecrated to Aquinas's sources on the matter (35–135). There we learn of the predominant influence of St. Augustine and St. John Damascene, as

well as the importance of other patristic authors (Nemesius of Emesa especially) and medieval thinkers (Alexander of Hales and Albert the Great in particular). The third chapter (136–189) offers a fundamental Christological reflection concerning the passions. Here we enter the domain of speculative theology. In this chapter, Paul Gondreau enumerates five theological principles that guide St. Thomas's reflection on Christ's passions: the divine dignity of the person of Christ, the full integrity of Christ's human nature, the sinlessness of Christ, the economical finality of the Incarnation (the "principle of economy," or that which has our salvation in view) as well as Christ's perfections (the "principle of perfection," which follows upon the hypostatic union), and, finally, the "fittingness" of the weaknesses assumed by the Son of God. This chapter provides a whole set of criteria that would be extremely valuable to any examination of Aquinas's Christology. The author then offers an analysis of St. Thomas's teaching on Christ's passible soul first from the perspective of the realism of the Incarnation and, second, as it concerns the moral quality of Christ's passions (191–374). A final chapter details Aquinas's treatment of certain particular passions in Christ: sensible pain, sorrow, fear, wonder or amazement, and anger (375–455).

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas considers the passions as a necessary element in the life of virtue and in the pursuit of human happiness, without depreciating them in any way: in this sense, Aquinas looks upon the passions as good by nature, even if in his moral theology he gives considerable attention to the evil that the passions can take on. It is for this reason that St. Thomas constantly insists that "the passions were in Christ otherwise than in us," since Christ experienced movements of passion in a state of perfect holiness (ch. 5). Here we see in a most striking manner the repercussions of anthropology in Christology: in contradistinction to other theologians for whom the role of virtue requires the "submission of the passions," St. Thomas emphasizes the profound synergy of reason and sensibility in the virtuous activity of Christ.

It is of historical note, as Paul Gondreau observes, that Aquinas's interest in Christ's passions has no comparable parallel among his contemporaries (26 and 375). Furthermore, an examination of St. Thomas's works shows that he always gave a greater place to Christ's passions, and that his thought on the matter underwent a

notable evolution: whereas in his earlier works St. Thomas attributes a passion to Christ's soul only on account of his body, in his mature works he affirms without hesitation movements of passion and suffering in Christ's soul on account of its proper operation *(passio animalis)*, that is, a passion which arises from the proper movements of Christ's soul (ch. 4 and ch. 6). Against all forms of Stoicism and docetism, St. Thomas has enriched Christian theology by shedding light on the psychical truth of Christ's passions and on their salvific value. The reader will notice in several places that, after having pointed out the value and coherence of Aquinas's thought, the author reproaches St. Thomas discreetly for placing too great an emphasis on the glory of Christ's soul before his resurrection, particularly in the area of the perfections of Christ's knowledge. These remarks arise less from an exegesis than from an interpretation of St. Thomas, and they undoubtedly demand another study. Yet they rightfully draw our attention to the close bond that unites Christ's cognitive activity with his virtuous activity as it involves his sensibility: these two aspects of Christ's "psychology" cannot be separated. In conclusion, Paul Gondreau does not limit himself to simply repeating St. Thomas, but instead presents a historically documented and theologically reflective reading. From this point of view, as Fr. Jean-Pierre Torrell notes in his Preface (16), this work is exemplary. N&V

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Virtue's Splendor: Wisdom, Prudence, and the Human Good by Thomas S. Hibbs *(New York: Fordham University Press, 2001)* x + 246 pp.

IN A STRING of earlier articles, Thomas Hibbs has attempted to exorcise the Cartesian ghosts that continue to haunt contemporary philosophy. In *Virtue's Splendor*, Hibbs draws together the insights of these articles. Yet, his study is far more than just a restatement of his earlier views. With Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle as his guides, Hibbs applies his earlier insights to an extended analysis of the cognitive components of human action.

The work is divided into four chapters. In the first and longest chapter, Hibbs addresses the "anthropological foundations" of Aquinas' moral thought. Guiding the reader away from the most common misinterpretations of this aspect of Thomistic thought, Hibbs brings us to the heart of Aquinas's anthropology: rationality lived in and through animality. Indeed, this chapter is fundamentally an extended effort to return animality to the definition of the human, to move from the Cartesian "thinking substance" to the Thomistic "rational animal." As such, it also attempts to study the human person within the context of nature and the finality of natural things toward their completion. In other words, it is a plea to place anthropology once again within a coherent philosophy of nature.

In chapter two, the focus turns to practical reasoning and the moral good. Here again, Hibbs guides the reader away from common misreadings of Aquinas. From the Cartesian perspective, practical reason is basically a form of speculative reasoning, providing the agent with almost mathematical certainty, in isolation from his character or emotions. Hibbs shows how profoundly this perspective differs from that of Aquinas. For Aquinas, practical reasoning is the product of our inclinations (of our emotions and loves) as well as of our intellect. As such, it requires both knowledge and virtue. It requires the virtue of prudence and the other (moral) virtues that make prudence possible. In explaining the centrality of prudence, Hibbs avoids the error of some recent commentators who separate prudence from law. Instead, Hibbs notes the pedagogical role of the natural law in Aquinas's theory of practical reasoning. For Hibbs, Aquinas's position cuts across modern dichotomies between deontology and teleology, autonomy and heteronomy, or between the categorical and the hypothetical. From the Thomistic perspective, prudence is grounded on divinely instilled natural principles, the primary precepts of the natural law. These precepts, however, are general, while human action is particular. In order to live from these principles—to apply them to particular actions—we must develop prudence and its related virtues. It is here that Hibbs underlines the social component of Thomistic virtue. The development of virtue requires experience and training, both of which only occur within a social

context: within local communities of friendship and larger communities of law and public order for the common good. The natural law both reveals the general goods constitutive of the good life (through the negative precepts) and functions pedagogically by inculcating the virtues that enable us to embody these goods in a particular life. In short, if the first chapter attempts to return animality to the definition of the human, the second chapter seeks to recover the social (and thus virtue-based) character of this animality. For Aristotle and Aquinas, humans are social animals. We develop the virtues within communities of a certain sort: communities that promote the true common good and respect the pedagogical role of law. Consequently, the study of ethics is inseparable from the study of politics.

In chapters three and four, Hibbs considers the question of happiness and human fulfillment. Retracing arguments he advanced in his earlier book, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas*, Hibbs underlines the disparity in the *Nicomachean Ethics* between Aristotle's initial description of the requirements for happiness (book one), and his subsequent portrayal of the happiness attainable by humans (book ten). This disparity reveals a natural gap *(aporia)* between desire and attainment. From the Thomistic perspective, this gap provides an opening to the gospel and the action of grace. It opens the way for a "dialogical engagement of nature by grace" and also for a "dialogue between philosophy and theology." The gospel message reveals that God's grace heals and elevates human nature to enjoy a happiness that was unknowable and unattainable for the philosophers. Hibbs develops here his understanding of Thomistic pedagogy and the place of narrative in Christian moral development. For Hibbs, the healing grace accessible to us through the revelation of Christ draws the philosophical life into a narrative of redemption. In Hibbs's view, the Christian narrative has a comedic structure that overcomes the tragic elements of human existence, elements revealed by philosophy itself in the *aporia* between desire and attainment. This narrative also enables us to understand the place of beauty and of the divine artistry in St. Thomas's theology of creation and redemption.

In analyzing St. Thomas's theology of happiness, Hibbs gives special attention to the role of contemplation. Once again, Hibbs

guides the reader away from common misreadings. Contemplation is not something lifeless or inert. Nor is it a covert form of power and exploitation. For Aquinas, the primacy of contemplation rests on the centrality of wonder and the desire to know. The contemplative life is the best life because it most fully corresponds to our natural desire to know and love the truth. At the same time, however, Hibbs rejects the notion that from the mere recognition of the contemplative life as the best life, we could then deduce how to live here and now. The judgment concerning contemplation's primacy is a theoretical judgment. It must be "enacted" in a particular life through the practical judgment of prudence. Contemplation cannot constitute a human life simply and in its entirety—which alone is the true gauge of complete virtue—because it is only sporadically possible in this life. Hence, contemplation, although it is superior to prudence and the moral virtues, is nonetheless governed by them. Prudence alone can judge whether contemplation is the appropriate action in a given situation.

Central to Hibbs's attempt to recover the priority of contemplation is his awareness of its profoundly limited character on the natural level. For Aquinas, metaphysical contemplation is the highest of the speculative sciences. It is the study of the ultimate causes that underlie these sciences. Yet, the results of its inquiry are sparse. The "darkness of metaphysics" and its "restless incompleteness" prepare the philosopher to encounter a different type of contemplative wisdom. It prepares the philosopher for the Thomistic insight that the primacy of contemplation becomes fully intelligible only within the context of our graced vocation to attain the beatific vision in heaven. Moreover, from the Thomistic perspective, the highest form of Christian living in this life is a mixture between contemplation and action. It is the life of charity lived in the imitation of Christ.

Hibbs's recognition of the central role of grace and of Christ in the Thomistic account of the moral life is a welcome corrective. St. Thomas has too often been portrayed as almost exclusively a philosopher, when in fact he was primarily a theologian. Recognizing this, Hibbs outlines the key role played by the theological virtues and the gifts Holy Spirit in Aquinas's theology. This account, however, contains one unfortunate feature. It does not explicitly acknowledge Thomas's teaching concerning the infused

cardinal virtues. In fact, when Hibbs refers to "infused virtue," he seems to employ the term as a synonym for "theological virtue." For example, when treating Thomas's distinction between the acquired and infused virtues, he leaves the reader with the impression that, in his view, Thomas is distinguishing between the acquired cardinal virtues and charity (188). In fact, the distinction is between two different types of cardinal virtue: infused and acquired. St. Thomas states clearly that the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) function in a way analogous to the natural principles underlying the intellect and will (*ST* 1–2, q. 63, a. 3). The natural principles rightly order us to our natural end, but must be specified by the acquired cardinal virtues concerning the means to this end. Similarly, the theological virtues rightly order us to our supernatural end, but must be specified by the infused cardinal virtues concerning the means to this supernatural end (*ST* 1–2, q. 63, a. 3, ad 2). Hibbs nowhere explicitly recognizes this core feature of Aquinas's thought. The slip is unfortunate. The recognition of infused prudence and of its importance for the life of charity would have strengthened Hibbs's overall account of the role of prudence in the moral life.

There are perhaps other features of Hibbs's account about which specialists might wish to quibble. This, however, should not distract us from recognizing the overall excellence of Hibbs's study. Hibbs has laid the groundwork for a threefold recovery: the recovery of human nature, the recovery of prudence, and the recovery of contemplation. Hibbs proposes to recover human nature by reasserting its animality and natural teleology; to recover prudence by explaining its relationship to natural law and the life of a community; to recover the priority of contemplation by portraying its natural limitations as well as its dialectical openness to fulfillment in Christ. This threefold recovery offers us a renewed understanding of St. Thomas's moral pedagogy. It provides us with a powerful instrument for exorcising the Cartesian ghosts that continue to haunt us. For anyone wishing to understand the Thomistic perspective on human action, this book is well worth a careful reading. N&V

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