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Toward a Spirituality of Poverty

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A SPIRITUAL approach to poverty? Is this not just a sorry attempt of an "elitist" Church to dismiss the terrible injustice suffered by the poor? In pointing to the spiritual or redemptive meaning of their suffering are we not simply burying our heads in the sand and awaiting the eschatological kingdom that "evidently" has nothing to do with this valley of tears? In opting for a "gentleman's conversation" focusing, for example, upon "Lady Poverty," the queen of St. Francis, the *nada* of St. John of the Cross, or the terrible trials of faith endured by St. Therese of Lisieux, might we not be guilty of ignoring our own responsibility toward the poor? Is not our own guilt and our need to act more obviously apparent in the dirty faces of barefoot and ragged children searching through garbage cans in the tourist districts of Latin America? If, on the other hand, we were to remove from this painful picture the shadow of the Cross of Christ, what remains is—pardon the expression—just plain "hell"!

The theological challenge of poverty—the challenge that poverty presents to theology—is, it seems to me, that of bringing a certain unity between the terrible sufferings, often of injustice, which form an integral part of this "valley of tears" and the immolated Lamb of God who is forever victorious over sin and death and whose open wounds constantly give new life to the Church, his body-bride. This is not simply a question of making sense of unjust human suffering, especially those caused by the unequal distribution of the earth's resources, and still less of justifying or excusing the often decadent living that characterizes contemporary western (and dare I say "Christian"?) society. It is, however, an authentic attempt to promote true and lasting justice through the practice of Christian charity.

Christian, or spiritual, poverty is, I will argue, a share in the poverty of Christ that is at the service of redemption: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). The *admirabile commercium*, the wonderful exchange of sin and grace proclaimed by the fathers of the Church, is a communication of divine gifts that simultaneously break down the barriers of our resistance: grace (healing, redemptive) preparing the way for grace (edifying, sanctifying). Hence spiritual poverty will be presented in parallel with spiritual wealth, as that which allows the spiritual enrichment of the human person by Christ. This enrichment is, however, preceded by its absence, by a lacking of the spiritual treasure of grace, and more properly by the need of redemption, whereby spiritual poverty may be considered in terms of sin (Section I). It is, however, more properly understood—especially within the context of redemption—as a sort of dispossession, a liberation, a yielding, or a letting-go (II). This act of self-emptying *(kenosis)* in view of the divine possession, this act of making place for the Lord within our hearts, invites an analysis of spiritual poverty also in terms receptivity (III). In the final analysis, spiritual poverty is, we will see, a share in Christ's own poverty, his receptive obedience vis-à-vis the Father and his generous outpouring upon the world (IV). For this reason, I will argue that sanctity cannot be separated from generosity nor spirituality from social justice (V).

I. Two Contrasting States of Spiritual Poverty: Sin and Redemption

Viewed theologically, the terrible cycle of poverty that scars the lives of so many of the earth's inhabitants can only be understood against the backdrop of the still more vicious cycle of sin that requires the gift of redemption.

> "When I pick up a person from the street, hungry, I give him a plate of rice, a piece of bread," explains Mother Teresa of Calcutta who perceived her mission as a service to Christ in the poorest of the poor. "But a person who is shut out, who feels unwanted, unloved, terrified, the person who has been thrown out of society—that spiritual poverty is much harder to overcome. And abortion, which often follows from contraception, brings a people to be spiritually poor, and that is the worst poverty and the most difficult to overcome."[1]

[1] Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "Spiritual Poverty and the Breakdown of Peace," speech at the National Prayer Beakfast (February 3, 1994), *Origins* 23.35 (February 17, 1994): no. 23, 617.

Giving a very different, even contrasting, definition to spiritual poverty than that which I will present in what follows, the holy woman of Calcutta thus presents two categories of persons who qualify as being spiritually poor: Those who, even with adequate material resources, are shunned by family, friends, and society—those whom John Paul II includes within the category of the "newer patterns" of poverty[2]—and those who, for lack of charity or just plain selfishness, are guilty of bringing others to this horrible state. In both cases, the spiritual poverty in question is, humanly speaking, almost impossible to overcome. At best, there is temporary relief but no long-term solution; for the suffering that stems from injustice cannot be obliterated by the best of human intentions and material resources. No amount of food, clothing, shelter, and health care—not even excellent education and career opportunities—can purify memories hardened by pain, root out bitterness from hearts broken by sorrow, and bring forgiveness from the agonizing soul of one whose self, family, and nation have been betrayed for the glory of another's ego. Worse still is the impact that this first form of spiritual poverty (the privation of love) has upon the second (the poverty of sin) and vice versa. History has proven time and again that today's victim is tomorrow's persecutor. As a negative counterpart to the communion of saints, we can thus speak of a *communion of sin* whereby, in the words of John Paul II, "a soul that lowers itself through sin drags down with itself the Church and, in some way, the whole world."[3]

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[2] These "newer patterns" are often encountered, he explains, in "financially affluent sectors and groups which are nevertheless threatened by despair at the lack of meaning in their lives, by drug addiction, by fear of abandonment in old age or sickness, by marginalisation or social discrimination." (Apostolic letter, At the Beginning of the New Millennium, *Novo millennio ineunte* [January 6, 2001], The Catholic Truth Society, trans., no. 50). Similarly, the U.S. bishops in their 1986 pastoral letter on the economy wrote: "For poverty is not merely the lack of adequate financial resources. It entails a more profound kind of deprivation, a denial of full participation in the economic, social and political life of society and an inability to influence decisions that affect one's life." *Economic Justice for All* (November 1986), no. 188.

[3] John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *On Penance and Reconciliation,* no. 16. Similarly, Walter Kasper in *Jesus, the Christ*, argues: "[E]very sin produces consequences which the sinner cannot estimate or arrest and thus becomes the cause of further sin, since it conditions the action of others negatively from the outset. . . . Thus there is an almost 'natural' momentum belonging to the history of sin: it becomes increasingly enclosed within a vicious circle. If nevertheless there is to be any salvation, it will require a new beginning, someone who will enter into this situation and break through it." Walter Kasper, *Jesus, the Christ,* V. Green, trans. (London/New York: Burns & Oates/Paulist Press, 1976), 204–5.

When flame meets flame, all is ablaze. He alone, however, who is most deeply affected by sin—the Lamb of God without blemish whose whole life is an unconditional gift made manifest in vulnerability (from the vulnerability of the holy infant of Bethlehem and to that of the helpless victim of Calvary)—can experience the whole destructive force of sin and death: "He who knew no sin became sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21). This perfectly innocent One, and he alone, can extinguish the flames of our hateful passions, destroying them within the infinite depths of his own heart, passionate with love for all humanity.

From this perspective, sin is, so to speak, absorbed into Christ's human body, which is to say that all that this body suffers—every blow, every fall, every thorn, and nail mark—remains without retaliation. Far from the popular search for justice in precisely those terms (the retaliation of sin)—hatred building upon hatred and blood upon blood—Christ's plea for pardon marks a new beginning to human history: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). The "mediator of a new covenant" sealed with "the sprinkling of blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel" (cf. Heb 12:24)—Christ gives new meaning to innocent blood: "For this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:27). Vengeance is replaced with pardon, hatred with love.[4] When sin meets love—authentic love, not just feigned acceptance or benevolent good wishes that come without the cost of real self-sacrifice—the result is forgiveness: "not seven times but seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22). The whole flood of pain and sorrow occasioned by sin, which, throughout the many centuries of human existence had become a roaring river, is reversed by the forgiving plea of Christ. Drawing into his own flood of grace all who acknowledge their need for this gift of pardon, he definitively reverses the tide of sin and death, installing a new order: that of redemption.

The desire for profit, the thirst for power, and even the "structures of sin" themselves are, the pope teaches in his encyclical on social concern, "only conquered—presupposing the help of divine grace—by a *diametrically opposed attitude*: a commitment to the good of one's neighbor with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to 'lose oneself' for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to 'serve him' instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt 10:40–42; 20:25; Mk 10:42–45; Lk 22:25–27)."[5] Vice

[4] See Gn 4:9–11; 37:26; Ez 24:6–8; Is 26:21; Jb 15;18–19; 2 Chr 24:22; cf. Dominique Barthélemy, *God and His Image* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 177, 162.

[5] John Paul II, encyclical, On Social Concern, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* no. 83. "And so it is very important for us to realize," argues Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "that love, to be true, has to hurt. I must be willing to give whatever it takes not to harm

must give way to virtue, which is to say that the spiritual poverty of sin must yield to still another form of spiritual poverty: that interior disposition (that we will treat in what follows), which permits the entry of grace. In contrast to the spiritually poor or blind—those who are slaves to sin—are thus the *spiritually rich*: those who, by the power of Christ's grace, are rich in virtue.[6]

II. Spiritual Poverty as Dispossession: Making Room for God

Nearly all anthropologies, notes the orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov, are in agreement with the presentation of the human person as " 'a being who aspires to self-transcendence,' a being tending toward that which is greater, toward the 'totally other.' Since man is both a child of wealth and of poverty, what is 'poor' in man can reach out to what is 'rich.' "[7] In Augustinian terms, we are made for God and "our hearts are restless until they rest in him."[8] Not only is man in search of God. God, in Christ Jesus, is also in search of the sinful man who has hidden himself from God (Gn 3:10). Born in the "likeness of man" (Phil 2:7), who is himself the image of God, the Creator is impoverished so as to enrich his creation. The generous, even total, outpouring of divine life in the Person of the Son *(kenosis)* takes on such horrendous proportions, those of suffering and death (cf. v. 8), precisely because those to whom it was destined "received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (Jn 1:11–12).

Salvation, then, is about God making place for himself in our hearts. This means that objective redemption is not easily distinguished from subjective redemption whereby the merits of Christ's life and passion are appropriated by the human person, with the result that everything is "grace," as St. Thérèse of Lisieux was fond of saying. Indeed, riches and poverty are one and the same in God's Kingdom, and a pure heart—a heart that is "poor"—is more fundamentally God's gift to the human person than that of the human being to God. This is not to deny one's freedom with respect to his own salvation. When, for example, St. Augustine

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other people and, in fact, to do good to them. This requires that I be willing to give until it hurts. Otherwise, there is no true love in me and I bring injustice, not peace, to those around me." Mother Teresa, "Spiritual Poverty," no. 6, 615.

[6] "These poor people maybe have nothing to eat, maybe they have not a home to live in, but they can still be great people when they are spiritually rich." Mother Teresa, "Spiritual Poverty," no. 22, 617.

[7] *Woman and the Salvation of the World: A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women,* Anthony P. Gythiel, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminiary Press, 1994), 55.

[8] Cf. The Confessions, I, 1.

argues that "He who created you without you will not justify you without you," this may be understood as "not without you disposing yourself to receive grace."[9] This introduces the theological significance of spiritual poverty in its most proper sense: the absence of all that hinders our communion with God and neighbor. "[I]nto an impure soul God's grace does not steal," exclaims St. Clement of Alexandria. "An impure soul is that which is rich in lusts and in travail with many worldly affections."[10] Hence the renunciation and selling of all possessions recommended by the Lord to the rich young is, he comments, to be understood as spoken of the passions of the soul.[11] Indeed, "it has proved no great gain then for him to be poor in possessions when he is rich in passions . . . while depriving himself of what is serviceable he has set on fire the innate material of evil by the lack of outward things."[12] He, on the other hand, "is truly and nobly rich . . . who is rich in virtues."[13]

Corresponding to these two types of poverty are two sorts of riches that help to bring out the proper sense of spiritual poverty. Liberating the mind and heart from attachment to material goods, bodily pleasures, terrestrial glory, and even other persons—which *in se* are all very good and desirable objects—spiritual poverty facilitates our attachment to the Lord whom we are commanded to love "with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind" so as also (consequently) to love "our neighbor as ourselves" (cf. Lk 10:27; Dt 6:5; Lv 19:18). For this reason, Christian self-denial is only secondarily negative. "[T]o be Christian it must," insists Giorgio Buccellati, "affirm in the first place the relation with Christ rather than the relation with the self (as with Paul: 'if I gave my body up and had no charity . . .')."[14] "I yield to affirm."[15] If the

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9 See Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate,* q. 28, a. 8, ad. 6.

10 Clement of Alexandria, "The Rich Man's Salvation," no. 19, in *Clement of Alexandria*, G. W. Butterworth, trans., Loeb Classical Library, vol. 92 (London/Cambridge, MA: Heinemann/Harvard, 1919, 1979), 309.

11 "So let a man do away, not with his possessions, but rather with the passions of his soul." Ibid., no. 14, 299.

12 Ibid., no. 15, 301.

13 Ibid., no. 19, 309.

14 Georgio Buccellati, "Religious Vows and the Structure of Love," *Communio* 23 (1996): 562. See 1 Cor 13:3. "Concretely, asceticism is not stoicism (which takes pride in its self-generated detachment), not victimism (which wallows in the feeling that others ought to pity us); not masochism (which savors some aspects of self-inflicted wounds), even less suicide (which is the climax of despair). In other words, it is the positive splendor of personal interaction with the risen Jesus that entails, by default, as it were, the letting go of certain attachments."

15 Ibid., 577.

religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience tend to quiet the mind from outward solicitude, this, then, is in view of perfect charity to which all are called: the love of God above all the goods at our disposal (material, corporal and spiritual, including the memory, the intelligence and the will).[16] While poverty as an evangelical counsel (religious poverty) aims at detachment, and thus interior freedom with respect to material goods, spiritual poverty aims at the actual dispossession of the self so as to belong entirely to God.[17] "To be poor in spirit means," explains Meister Eckhart, "that as the eye is poor and deprived of color, and is able to apprehend every color, so he is poor in spirit who is able to apprehend every spirit, and the Spirit of all spirits is God."[18]

Simply speaking, spiritual poverty is not just a detaching of oneself from riches, a sort of voluntary impoverishment; it is also and especially a liberation of the heart and spirit which permits and even promotes a universal love, and this love is necessarily expressed as concern for the poor, the sharing of one's resources and charitable giving. This—the act of giving to the poor—is, in turn, a means of facilitating the actual dispossession that makes room for grace such that giving disposes one to receive. The very act of letting go out of love—voluntary impoverishment or simple solidarity with the poor—is by its very nature an opening to grace: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Lk 12:34). "What splendid trading!" proclaims St. Clement of Alexandra, "What divine business! You buy incorruption with money. You give the perishing things of the world and receive in exchange for them an eternal abode in heaven. Set sail, rich man, for this market, if you are wise."[19]

Spiritual poverty is thus a gift of self to God: the gift of availability in virtue of which one stands in service of love; the spiritually poor man or woman is given to love, filled with love and thus "equipped" to love.

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[16] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 186, a. 7.

[17] Although St. Thomas argues that the vow of obedience includes the other vows (poverty and chastity) but not vice versa (ibid., a. 8), it would be worth considering chastity and obedience within the context of spiritual poverty whereby the human person offers to God not only all the worldly goods at his disposal, but also all of his corporal and spiritual goods as well.

[18] "The Book of "Benedictus," *The Book of Divine Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense,* Edmund Colledge, OSA, and Bernard McGinn, trans. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 220.

[19] Clement of Alexandria, "The Rich Man's Salvation," no. 32, 339. See the *First Letter of Saint Clare of Assisi to Agnes of Praque* (no. 15): "O blessed poverty, who bestows eternal riches on those who love and embrace her!" (*Clare of Assisi: Early Documents,* Regis J. Armstrong, OFM.Cap, ed. and trans. [New York: Paulist Press, 1988], 36.)

III. Spiritual Poverty as Receptivity: Welcoming the Divine Guest

In this sense, spiritual poverty is not primarily an *absence* (whether of constraint or of material goods), but an opening to a *presence*: to that, most especially, of God himself. "For it is no great or enviable thing to be simply without riches," claims St. Clement of Alexandria, "apart from the purpose of obtaining life."[20]

Spiritual poverty is, as it were, a "letting go" to "let God": not in the sense of simple resignation *(laissez faire)*, but as a preparation for his divine and "divinizing" visit, for his sanctifying presence within one's own soul, a presence which quickly employs all the resources at our disposal, including our very persons, for the important work (or mission) of charity.

The term *receptivity* might be evoked here, but with an important precision. To receive someone, a guest for example, is popularly understood as offering him or her hospitality, welcoming him into one's home, sharing what one *has*; but there is also a deeper, more intimate meaning that aims at an authentic communion of persons. In this second sense, one may be said to communicate who one *is*, to give one's very self, but in such a way as to simultaneously welcome the other's self-gift, as when a woman is said to "receive" in the sexual embrace the man who loves her in giving himself. When this "other" is the Lord, the receptive act implies both *surrender* and *devotion* as are simultaneously evoked by the German term *Hingabe*. In Scripture, the two forms of receptivity are perhaps best modeled by Martha, the busy hostess, and Mary, the quiet contemplative who has chosen "the one thing needful," "the better part" (Lk 10:42).[21] Like that other Mary, most "blessed among women," she receives Christ, not merely as visitor but as Lord; not just in her home, but in her heart.

Conceiving Christ in her mind before conceiving him in her womb, as St. Augustine teaches,[22] the Virgin-Mother simultaneously realizes

[20] Clement of Alexandria, "The Rich Man's Salvation," no. 11, 293.

[21] For the sake of precision, the two forms can, according to a certain exegesis, certainly be attributed to both women, even if the emphasis is different for each.

[22] Christum prius mente quam ventre concipiens. (*Sermo* 215, 4: "In redditione symboli," PL 38, 1074.) Angelus nuntiat, virgo audit, credit, et concipit. Fides in mente. Christus in ventre. Virgo concepti miramini: virgo peperit, plus miramini: post partum, virgo permansit. (*Sermo* 25. *In Natali Domini,* XIII, PL 38: 1019.) Plus est Mariae, discipulam fuisse Christi, quam matrem fuisse Christi. Plus est felicius discipulam fuisse Christi, quam matrem fuisse Christi. . . . Plus mente custodivit veritatem, quam utero carnem. Veritas Christus, caro Christus. Veritas Christus in mente Mariae, caro Christus in ventre Mariae." *Sermo* 25, 7: PL 46: 937–38.

herself and her mission: "By faith she believes, by faith she conceives."[23] She is the "poor Virgin," proclaimed by St. Claire of Assisi, who "embrace[s] the poor Christ."[24] In "complete harmony" with his fiat of obedient love—"Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7)—is her own fiat of loving obedience: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Hence, "*in Mary's faith*, first at the Annunciation and then fully at the foot of the Cross, an *interior space* was reopened within humanity which the eternal Father can fill 'with every spiritual blessing.' It is the space 'of the new and eternal Covenant,' and it continues to exist in the Church, which is Christ is 'a kind of sacrament of sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind.' "[25]

IV. Spiritual Poverty as a Share in Christ's Salvific Poverty

Marian poverty in the form of receptive obedience—complete availability for God—is, of course, consequent upon the Son's own poverty of *kenosis*, his generous bestowal of divine gifts upon human nature in the Incarnation and the Paschal Mysteries. This, in turn, is consequent upon his own receptive availability vis-à-vis the Father: openness to receive his being from the Father and availability for his mission from the Father. To be sure, the New Adam does not merely receive the gift of life that the first Adam refused by his disobedience. He actually gives this life (Jn 5:21, 6:33; 17:2) and even identifies himself with it (14:6; cf. 5:26; 6:35, 48; 1 Jn 1:2). His mission in the world, his gift of self for the salvation of humankind, is however the Father's own gift (cf. Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 5:11). It is a gift that is first *received* before it is communicated further. "Thou (Father) hast given him (the Son) power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom though hast given him" (17:2). The Father is glorified in the Son (Jn 17:4; cf. 14:31) in the very act whereby that glory—the glory of the eternal Son in the Father's presence (cf. 17:5; 1:14)—is communicated to the world: "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them" (Jn 17:22). "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and

[23] Fide credidit, fide concepit. Idem., *Sermo* 25, 7: PL 46:937.

[24] Second letter of St. Claire to St. Agnes of Prague, no. 18, in *Claire of Assisi: Early Documents*, 41. Cf. her third letter, nn. 24–26: "As the glorious Virgin of virgins carried [Him] materially, so you, too, *by following in* her *footprints* (cf. 1 Pt 2:21), especially [those] of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body, holding Him by whom you and *all things are held together* (Wis 1:7), possessing that which, in comparison with all other transitory possessions of this world, you will possess more securely." Ibid., 45.

[25] John Paul II, encyclical, Mother of the Redeemer, *Redemptoris mater* (March 25, 1987), no. 28.

this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day" (Jn 6:38). Christ's mission and obedience are so perfectly coordinated that what comes from the Father as a "command" (Jn 10:18; 12:49) returns to him as the Son's entreaty: "May they all be one; even as though, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (Jn 17:21). There is thus a perfect parallelism in John's Gospel between the objective and paternal perspective of redemption (Jn 3:16–19), on the one hand, and the subjective and filial one (Jn 12:46–49), on the other. Ultimately this means that Christ's gift of himself for the world is the temporal form of his eternal love for the Father, which is to say that the *pro nobis* of salvation is, in fact, a revelation of his *pro patre*. Hence, while the creed explains the meaning of his death as being "for us and our salvation;" the synoptics, "for you" (Lk 22:19–20) or "for many" (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24); and Paul, "for us" (Rom 5:8); John recognizes Christ's final surrender as a gift of love for the Father: "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (Jn 14:31).

Granted, this verse is often cited as demonstrating the obedient nature of Christian love. More profoundly, however, it manifests that love, by its very nature, is communicative; it simply cannot be contained. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (15:9–10). By the same disposition of loving availability, Christ is given without reserve to the Father and to the world alike, thereby setting a precedent for his disciples whom he commands to love the brethren as an expression of their love for God (cf. 1 Jn 4:21). By refusing to hold onto the glory that was his from all eternity in the presence of the Father (cf. Phil 2:6; Jn 1:14), by giving his Spirit without measure (Jn 3:34) and by offering his own body as bread "for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51), Christ brings to perfection the new commandment of love through the communication of his own sonship that is the Father's gift. The inseparable unity of the love of God and the love of neighbor is thus attested to by Christ in the culmination of his mission on the "cross of our redemption (cf. Jn 3:14–15), the sign of his *indivisible love* for the Father and for humanity (cf. Jn 13:1)."[26]

V. Sanctity and Generosity: Spirituality and Social Justice

Spiritual poverty, then, is fundamentally and ultimately a share in the Son's own receptive availability, an availability that is revealed as an absolute gift of self to the Father for the salvation of the world. "The

[26] John Paul II, encyclical, The Splendor of Truth, *Veritatis Splendor* (August 6, 1993), no. 14.

Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (Jn 3:35), and the Son's hands, like his arms, are ever open, outstretched on the Cross from whence he gathers all humanity to himself (12:32) so as to present us to the Father. Breathing his Spirit into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5), which are "dispossessed" out of love for him, he draws us into his communion with the Father, into his own sonship. As bearers of his Spirit, we are not only integrated into the Trinitarian embrace, however; we are also drawn into the Son's mission of introducing others into the same. The man or woman who has really allowed him- or herself to be penetrated by the love of God—who has (slowly) let fall the obstacles of resistance (the fear of rejection, of disappointment, of further abuse and pain, of all that is commonly known as vulnerability), who, by faith, has permitted an entry for the divine love—is unable to contain it.

Faith that is openness to receive is also faith that, viewed from still another angle, is willingness to give: It is availability for others. Hence those who in the early Church, "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" had, we are told in Acts, "all things in common; they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (2:42, 44–45; cf. 4:32). The connection between the communion of believers—the mystical body of Christ—and the sacramental communion, or participation, of the same in the historical body of Christ that is "given up for you" (Lk 22:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:24)—the Eucharist—is so intimate that to sin against the one is to sin against the other. When, for example, Paul tells the Corinthians that they are eating and drinking judgment on themselves by not "discerning the body" (1 Cor 11:27–32), he is, of course, referring to the body and blood of the Lord in the Eucharist. Commentators are careful to note, however, that the sins to which he makes reference are sins against the community: divisions (even factions), self-indulgences, and a lack of consideration for the poor (vs. 17–22). Hence the body that is not discerned is also interpreted as being the body of the community.[27] It is thus no surprise that St. John Chrysostom chides those who dishonor this union:

> You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother, . . . You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal. . . .

[27] See Francis Martin, *The Feminist Question: Feminist Theology in the Light of Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 346. "To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must," as the Catechism teaches, "recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren." Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1397.

> God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful.[28]

In Catholic terms, justification renders the human person "just": Through his participation in God's own justice, revealed by Christ as mercy, he has the capacity to act justly, even mercifully.[29] "Be gods for the poor, in imitating the mercy of God," proclaims Gregory the Nazianze, for "man has nothing more in common with God than the faculty of doing good."[30]

> "Jesus died on the Cross," says Mother Teresa, "because that is what it took for him to do good to us—to save us from our selfishness in sin. He gave up everything to do the Father's will—to show us that we too must be willing to give up everything to do God's will—to love one another as he loves each of us. If we are not willing to give whatever it takes to do good to one another, sin is still in us. That is why we too must give to each other until it hurts."[31]

Simply stated, generosity cannot be separated from sanctity, nor the communion of goods from the communion of saints. Concretely this means transposing the material to the spiritual. Obviously members of the body ought to share their material possessions with one another (as the first Christians who "had everything in common," Acts 4:32) and even with those outside the confines of the Church; beyond this is the willingness to lovingly dispose even of one's spiritual treasure (cf. Mt 19:21). In popular Theresian terms, this is expressed as "empty hands":[32] hands which have disposed of their "own" merits for the sake of those arriving empty-handed at heaven's door.

> If I had been rich, I would have found it impossible to see a poor person going hungry without giving him my possessions. And in the same way, when I gain any spiritual treasures, feeling that at this very moment there are souls in danger of being lost and falling into hell, I

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[28] St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. In 1 Cor.,* 27, 4: PG 61, 229–30; cited in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1397.

[29] See Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I–II, q. 100, a. 12.

[30] 14th discours, PG 35, 857–909, "De l'amour des pauvres," in *Riches et pauvres dans l'Eglise ancienne,* ed. France Quéré-Jaulmes (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1982), 123–24 (nn. 26–27).

[31] Mother Teresa, "Spiritual Poverty," no. 6, 615. See *Mother Teresa: A Simple Path*, compiled by Lucinda Vardey (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 99.

[32] See Thérèse of Lisieux to Brother Simeon, January 27, 1897, in *St. Thérèse of Lisieux General Correspondence* II, John Clarke, trans. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1054.

> give them what I possess, and I have not yet found a moment when I can say: Now I'm going to work for myself.[33]

Without merits of their own, these "poor" souls depend upon the generosity of those who have surrendered all things for Christ and who, in turn, trust in his generosity for their own salvation: "For having nothing, I shall receive everything from God," concludes St. Therese.[34] At the extreme are those who, like St. Paul, are willing to forfeit not only their merits for others, but their salvation as well: "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race" (Rom 9:3).

This overabundant generosity can, of course, only be understood as an act of love for him who thirsts for souls and who communicates this same thirst to those who are already given to him.

> "Jesus," Mother Teresa explains, "is thirsting for our love, and this is the thirst of everyone, poor and rich alike. We all thirst for the love of others, that they go out of their way to avoid harming us and to do good to us. This is the meaning of true love, to give until it hurts."[35]

VI. Conclusion

Giving until it hurts is hardly an easy response to the theological challenge of poverty: material poverty, of course, but also the new forms of poverty that characterize affluent western society such as the neglect of the elderly and children, the rejection of the mentally and physically handicapped, and even the refusal of life itself by abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. Sacrificial giving is, however, the only adequate response for one who, in spiritual poverty, is so intimately joined to the poor Christ as to share in his redemptive mission of enriching others (by way of the *admiribile commercium*). The gift of self to Christ in the form of receptive readiness, which permits, so to speak, his generous impoverishment to enrich us, is necessarily a gift of self to neighbor. Our incorporation into the body of Christ sets us in relation to all to whom he has given his life. The communion of life, of desire, and of suffering is, for the philosopher Jacques Maritan, a more fundamental order than that of social and political activity. Thus he recommends as superior to the category of *acting for (agir pour)* or *acting with (agir avec)* that

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[33] Idem., "The 'Yellow Notebook' of Mother Agnes" (July 14, 1897), in *St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations,* John Clarke, trans. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1977), 96.

[34] Ibid., June 23, 1897, 67.

[35] Mother Teresa, "Spiritual Poverty," no. 9, 615.

of *existing with (exister avec)* and *suffering with (souffrir avec)*.[36] Theologically, the formula can be pushed even further to *existing for* and *suffering for*, such that sacrificial love takes the place of simple solidarity. The effort to promote social justice is thus transposed within the context of an authentic Christian spirituality to the level of charity whereby Christ is loved in one's neighbor and the neighbor is loved in Christ, that is, by the power of his love. N&V

[36] "Exister avec le Peuple," in *Raison et Raisons: Essais détachés*, vol IX of *Oeuvres complètes* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1990), 379.

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The Physical Status of the Spiritual Soul in Thomas Aquinas*

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Introduction: Form of the Body, or Subject of Truth?

THERE ARE probably several factors contributing to make Thomas Aquinas's conception of the human soul difficult for the contemporary mind to assimilate. But one of them is surely the profound change in the approach to the study of man initiated in the seventeenth century by René Descartes. This is the so-called "turn to the subject."

In relation to Thomas, a particularly interesting figure in the transition to the modern approach is that of Nicolas Malebranche. As is well known, Malebranche received Descartes' *L'Homme* with great enthusiasm. On the other hand, Malebranche remains in some ways closer to Thomas than Descartes. Like Thomas, he is first and foremost a priest and a theologian; and the spirit of his philosophical thought is still very much in the tradition of *fides quaerens intellectum*. What he does not share with Thomas is the aristotelianism of the scholastics (against which, of course, Descartes also strove).

This difference is nowhere more significant than on the question of the soul. And no one thinks this question more important than does Malebranche. A passage from the very beginning of his major work, *The Search for Truth,* shows how grave the issue is for him.

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> I do not wonder that the common run of men, or the Pagan Philosophers, only consider the soul in its relation and union with the body, without recognizing the relation and union that it has with God; but I am surprised that Christian philosophers, who ought to prefer the mind of God to the mind of man, Moses to Aristotle, St. Augustine to some wretched Commentator on a Pagan Philosopher, look upon the soul rather as the form of the body than as made in the image, and for the image, of God; that is, according to St. Augustine, for the truth, to which alone it is immediately united.[1]

The soul's true nature is spirit, a subject of truth. Its union with the body is quite secondary.

> Since it is the will of God that rules everything, it is more in the nature of the soul to be united to God by the knowledge of the truth, and by the love of the good, than to be united to a body; for it is certain . . . that God has made the spirits for the sake of knowing and loving, rather than for informing bodies.[2]

Elsewhere Malebranche confesses to finding the union of soul and body philosophically inscrutable (just as Descartes did). He can offer only a theological conjecture for it.

> Do not ask me . . . why God wants to unite spirits to bodies. It is a constant fact, but the chief reasons for it have remained hitherto unknown to philosophy. But here is one fit to propose to you. It seems that God wanted to give to us, as to his Son, a victim that we might offer to him.[3]

Now, there can be no doubt that for St. Thomas, what is of special interest about man is his soul. And its interest lies in its being spiritual—

[1] Je ne m'étonne pas que le commun des hommes, ou que les Philosophes Payens ne considérent dans l'ame que son rapport et son union avec le corps, sans y reconnoître le rapport et l'union qu'elle a avec Dieu; mais je suis surpris que des philosophes chrétiens, qui doivent préférer l'esprit de Dieu à l'esprit humain, Moyse à Aristote, S. Augustin à quelque misérable Commentateur d'un Philosophe Payen, regardent plutôst l'ame comme la forme du corps que comme faite à l'image et pour l'image de Dieu, c'est à dire, selon S. Augustin, pour la vérité à laquelle seule elle est immédiatement unie. Nicolas Malebranche, *De la Recherche de la Vérité,* I, Préface, in *Œuvres de Malebranche*, vol. I, Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1972), 9–10, my translation. The "wretched Commentator" is surely Averroes.

[2] [L]a volonté de Dieu réglant la nature de chaque chose, il est plus de la nature de l'ame d'être unie à Dieu par la connoissance de la verité, et par l'amour du bien, que d'être unie à un corps, puisqu'il est certain . . . que Dieu a fait les esprits pour le connoître et pour l'aimer, plûtost que pour informer des corps. Malebranche, *De la Recherche*, I, préface, 11.

an incorporeal subject of existence and activity. Theology studies the body, Thomas says, only as it relates to the soul.[4]

At the same time, Thomas fully embraces the Aristotelian conception of the soul as essentially the form of a body. Indeed, unlike many of his contemporaries, Thomas insists that the soul is united to physical matter in an immediate way.[5] In a sense its union with matter is for him even more immediate than its union with truth. For it is united to matter from the very beginning of its existence. It exists as the "term of human generation."[6] But at that moment it is a sheer *tabula rasa*.[7] It does not begin to know any truth until some later moment in its career.

We might very well wonder whether Thomas does not, in effect, subordinate the soul's spiritual nature to its being the form of a body. One rather striking source of this suspicion is his understanding of the difference between the human soul and those spiritual creatures that are not united to bodies, the angels. Souls and angels, Thomas insists, are not the same kind of thing.[8] In fact, they should not even be grouped together in the same genus. He explains why in his reply to an objection against the thesis that the soul does not exist prior to the body.

> *Objection:* The rational soul agrees more with the angels than with the beasts. But the angels were created before bodies, or else right at the beginning, with bodily matter; whereas the body of man was created on the sixth day, when the beasts were produced. Therefore the soul of man was created before the body.[9]

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[3] Ne demandez pas . . . pourquoi Dieu veut unir des esprits à des corps. C'est un fait constant, mais dont les principales raisons on été jusqu'ici inconnuës à la Philosophie. En voici une néanmoins qu'il est bon que je vous propose. C'est apparemment que Dieu a voulu nous donner, comme à son Fils, une victime que nous puissions lui offrir. Nicolas Malebranche, *Entretiens sur la métaphysique,* in *Œuvres de Malebranche*, vol. XII, André Robinet, ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1984), IV, §12, 96–97.

[4] *Summa theologiae* I, q. 75, proem. Since this paper is not intended only for medievalists or specialists in Thomas's thought, I have for the most part confined my quotations and references to the *Summa theologiae*, it being the most generally accessible of his works. Happily, it contains sufficient treatments of all the pertinent issues, in many cases his most complete and mature ones. The translations are mine.

[5] See *ST* I, q. 76, aa. 3, 4, 6, 7.

[6] *ST* I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 1.

[7] *ST* I, q. 79, a. 2.

[8] *ST* I, q. 75, a. 7.

[9] Anima rationalis magis convenit cum angelis quam cum animalibus brutis. Sed angeli creati fuerunt ante corpora, vel statim a principio cum corporali materia; corpus autem hominis formatum est sexto die, quando et bruta animalia sunt producta. Ergo anima hominis fuit creata ante corpus. *ST* I, q. 90, a. 4, obj. 2.

> *Reply:* If the soul had a species of its own, it would agree more with the angels. But inasmuch as it is the form of the body, it pertains to the genus of animals, as a formal principle.[10]

The soul does not have a "species of its own." It is not a complete, fully distinct entity, or what we might call an autonomous unit of signification. It is only part of a complete entity—a human being. A human being is a kind of animal, a physical being. Man's "formal principle" is something spiritual; but nevertheless it is a principle of something physical, and essentially so. Its nature is proportioned to that of which it is the principle. Even if it is "on the border" of spiritual and bodily creatures,[11] its natural home is squarely in the physical world.[12]

How should we judge such a view? Are we seeing just what Malebranche laments—the vestige of a pagan outlook not yet fully purged, a still imperfect consciousness of man's uniqueness as "subject"? The verdict is not so easily drawn. Consider these passages.

> The intellectual soul . . . , according to the order of nature, is not naturally endowed with the knowledge of truth, as the angels are; rather it needs to gather it from divisible things by way of the senses, as Dionysius says in the seventh chapter of *On the Divine Names*.[13]
>
> The inferior spiritual substances, namely souls, have a being akin to the body, insofar as they are forms of bodies; and therefore, from their very mode of being it belongs to them to attain their intelligible perfection from bodies and through bodies. Otherwise they would be united to bodies pointlessly.[14]

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10 Anima si per se speciem haberet, magis conveniret cum angelis; sed inquantum est forma corporis, pertinet ad genus animalium, ut formale principium. *ST* I, q. 90, a. 4, ad 2. See *ST* I, q. 76, a. 3, obj. 2 and ad 2.

11 *ST* I, q. 77, a. 2.

12 On this point see the excellent study of B. Carlos Bazán, "The Human Soul: Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas's Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 64 (1997): 95–126, esp. 117–23. "It is only as the most perfect of substantial forms that the soul is at the borderline between bodily and separate substances, not as the lowest of spiritual substances (except if we use the term substance in a derivative way, *per reductionem*)." Ibid., 123.

13 Anima autem intellectiva . . . , secundum naturae ordinem, infimum gradum in substantiis intellectualibus tenet; intantum quod non habet naturaliter sibi inditam notitiam veritatis, sicut angeli, sed oportet quod eam colligat ex rebus divisibilibus per viam sensus, ut Dionysius dicit, VII cap. *De div. nom.* *ST* I, q. 76, a. 5. On the "divisible things," see p. 321.

14 Substantiae enim spirituales inferiores, scilicet animae, habent *esse* affine corpori, inquantum sunt corporum formae, et ideo ex ipso modo essendi competit eis ut

Malebranche finds the soul's union with the body philosophically inexplicable. He considers it incidental to the soul's end, the knowledge of truth. Thomas sees the need for truth as the very reason for the union. And the nature of the union is just what "the Philosopher" said it was.

My aim in this paper is to understand Thomas's view that the human soul exists as the form of a body for the very sake of knowing truth. It is a surprisingly subtle doctrine. The most delicate point concerns the status of the soul separated from the body. In order to appreciate it, however, we must first survey various elements of Thomas's conception of man and his soul.

Soul, Mind, and Subject

Soul and Mind

In Thomas's vocabulary, "mind" is synonymous with "intellect." Not infrequently, he also uses these words to refer to the human soul. However, he does not actually identify soul and intellect. Rather, intellect is a particular power or faculty of the human soul. It is a principle of a certain type of vital activity. It is rooted in the soul, but not quite the same thing.

One general reason for this distinction is simply that the soul carries other vital powers as well, for instance sensitive and generative powers. The soul is one, its powers many. No single power can be identical with it. However, even if intellect were the soul's only operative power, they would still have to be distinguished. This will require some explanation.

Earlier we saw that Thomas describes the human soul as man's "formal principle." This means it is a principle, and the dominant one, of man's very nature or "essence." The essence of a thing is what the thing is just in itself, absolutely, in its own identity with itself and distinction from everything else. And in a way, for Thomas, the essence of a thing does constitute a sort of capacity or power. It is the thing's power to be itself, to exercise its own being.

"Intellect," on the other hand, signifies the power for the activity of understanding. Like any activity, understanding has an object, something that it bears upon or is about. In general, understanding is about the intelligible. If this is an obscure notion, perhaps we can make do with the signifiable—that which can be named or targeted for consideration. The point to notice is that this is extremely broad. Indeed it covers everything. It is as wide as being itself. Through intellect, a subject can exercise activity about all things—whether identical with or distinct from itself.

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a corporibus, et per corpora suam perfectionem intelligibilem consequantur, alioquin frustra corporibus unirentur. *ST* I, q. 55, a. 2.

In a way what has intellect is even able to *be* all things.[15] For although understanding bears upon many things outside its subject, it is an activity that stays within the subject, "immanent" activity.[16] This means that the things upon which it bears must somehow be united to the subject and exist in it. Of course, if the thing known has its own being outside the knower, then it does not exist in the knower in the same way as it exists in itself. It is only "in a way" that a knower "is" whatever he knows. What is in the knower is only a kind of likeness of what he knows, a cognitive "species" or form.[17] The knower is "informed" about what he knows and knowingly signifies.

In a sense, then, mind or intellect is something infinite. As is obvious, however, a human being is something finite, one particular kind of thing among many. Human nature, and especially its formal principle, the soul, is the power to be a human being. But the power of mind extends far beyond man's own being. The human form does not, by itself, make someone be all things. It does not do so even in the qualified way in which a knower "is" what he knows. Having the human form cannot suffice to inform someone about all the things he can know. Other things have their own distinctive forms and perfections, features that human nature does not display. This is true even of things inferior to man, things whose perfection is less than his.[18] Understanding human nature does not, for example, provide a sufficient basis for understanding the nature of the sun. This is why the human form, the soul, cannot be simply identical with the human mind.

In fact, for Thomas, this is true of any created mind, even an angel's.[19] Only in God can intellect and essence—his power to understand and his power to exist or to be himself—be perfectly identical. This is because the divine essence is itself infinite.[20] Being the very source of all other things, its own perfection does somehow contains all the perfections found in other things. And so it "contains in itself, in a supereminent way, whatever can be signified or understood by a created intellect."[21]

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[15] Thomas never tires of citing Aristotle's description of the intellectual soul as *quodammodo omnia* (*De anima* III.8, 431b20).

[16] See *ST* I, q. 14, a. 2; also I, q. 54, a. 2; I, q. 87, a. 3; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IX.8, 1050a35–1050b1.

[17] This species is not *what* the knower knows, in knowing the thing. It is a principle by which the knower knows the thing itself. Knowing the species itself requires a distinct act of reflection. See *ST* I, q. 85, a. 2.

[18] *ST* I, q. 84, a. 2, c. and ad 3.

[19] *ST* I, q. 55, a. 1.

[20] See *ST* I, q. 7, a. 2.

[21] *ST* I, q. 12, a. 2. See I, q. 14, a. 6.

Even in an intellectual creature, of course, its nature or form is some sort of principle of its intellectual activity. Understanding does not just "happen" to its subject, as though by chance. It is rooted in what the subject is, and so is the power for it.[22] But the immediate result of the subject's form is only his own existence, his being himself. The acts by which he is "all things" must be mediated by a kind of companion principle. In order to be qualified for understanding, he needs additional power, a connatural quality that further perfects his form. This is his mind.

The Soul and the Self

Human nature is not something added on to some more fundamental kind of entity. That is, a human being is a "substance." As the "formal principle" of a human being, the human soul is also something quite fundamental, something substantial. In a certain sense, it is even the "subject" of intellect. This is because, as we shall consider further on, Thomas thinks that intellect must be an immaterial power, not seated in any bodily organ. Nevertheless, the soul is not, for Thomas, the whole substance of a human person. It is not by itself a complete subject.[23] The essence of a human person is not soul alone, but soul and body together.

Thomas does not simply take it for granted that human beings are essentially corporeal. Perhaps he would do so if he thought that our knowledge of their existence must always rest upon observation of their bodies. But Thomas is quite conscious of the fact that the individual subject, the particular human being, also has "inward" awareness of himself, that is, awareness of himself as performing immanent acts such as understanding or sensation. In fact Thomas follows Aristotle in judging that this is how a person *first* knows of his own existence.[24] Thomas also

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[22] On the powers as "flowing" from the soul, see *ST* I, q. 77, a. 6. Even though intellect is in a way more perfect than the essence of the soul, with respect to its infinity, in another way it is less perfect. For it is only an "accident," an "addition" to the soul, not something that subsists on its own. Hence the substantial actuality of the soul can be a cause of it, even though the soul is also perfected by it. On intellect as an accident and a quality, see *ST* I, q. 54, a. 3, ad 2; I, q. 78, a. 1, ad 5. More generally on the ontology of substance and accident in relation to the intellect, see Lawrence Dewan, OP, "St. Thomas and the Integration of Knowledge into Being," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984): 383–93.

[23] Thomas's notion of "subject" is very close to Aristotle's. On Aristotle's notion in comparison with the modern one, see Enrico Berti, "Soggetto, anima e identità personale in Aristotele," in *Peri Psyche, De homine, Antropologia. Nuovi Approcci,* M. Sánchez Sorondo, ed. (Roma: Herder, 1994), 1–14.

[24] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* IX.9, 1170a29–34.

judges that the human subject's original awareness of himself is extremely confused. It does not immediately display his nature in a clear and distinct way at all, whether as something spiritual, something corporeal, or a composite of spiritual and corporeal elements. Ascertaining his nature requires careful analysis of what is targeted in that original self-awareness.

I shall present Thomas's explanation of this situation in a moment. But first I wish to stress the fact that for him, even if we do start from the point of view of the "self," the "thinking subject" who has inward awareness of himself *qua* "thinking," we must still eventually conclude that the object of this awareness is not the soul alone. It includes both soul and body. The content of a human person's inward awareness of himself does *imply* his being corporeal. This is because human "thinking" always includes sensation. (I am using "thinking" as Descartes does, to cover all types of immanent activity: understanding, sensing, willing, etc.)

Thus, a key premise in Thomas's effort to prove that the soul is the substantial form of the human body is that "it is the very man himself who perceives himself both to understand and to sense; but sensing is not without the body, and so the body must be some sort of part of the man."[25] A little earlier he offers an argument for this premise. The soul of an individual man could be identified with the man, Thomas says,

> if it were held that the operation of the sensitive soul were proper to it, without the body. For all the operations attributed to the man would belong to the soul alone; and each thing is that which performs the operations of that thing. Hence that which performs the man's operations is the man. But it has been shown that sensing is not an operation of the soul alone. So, since sensing is a certain operation of man, albeit not his proper one, it is clear that the man is not soul alone, but something composed of soul and body.[26]

For Thomas, then, the "self" is not something "inside" a person's body. It includes the body. If we took "mind" in the sense of the whole "thinking subject," then on Thomas's view matter would be a part of the human

[25] Ipse idem homo est qui percipit se et intelligere et sentire, sentire autem non est sine corpore, unde oportet corpus aliquam esse hominis partem. *ST* I, q. 76, a. 1.

[26] Hoc quidem sustineri posset, si poneretur quod animae sensitivae operatio esset eius propria sine corpore, quia omnes operationes quae attribuuntur homini, convenirent soli animae; illud autem est unaquaeque res, quod operatur operationes illius rei. Unde illud est homo, quod operatur operationes hominis. Ostensum est autem quod sentire non est operatio animae tantum. Cum igitur sentire sit quaedam operatio hominis, licet non propria, manifestum est quod homo non est anima tantum, sed est aliquid compositum ex anima et corpore. *ST* I, q. 75, a. 4.

mind (although for him this would be an improper use of "mind," since he restricts this term to intellect).[27] The identification of the self with something incorporeal might be possible if we experienced ourselves engaging solely in intellectual acts. But for Thomas no human person can have such experience. This is because a human person's exercise of intellect must be accompanied by his exercise of some sense-activity, at least that of imagination. The identification of the self with something incorporeal might also be possible if the sensations that one immediately experiences were not necessarily one's own. But sensations are immanent acts, remaining in the subject that exercises them. The only one who can have immediate experience of them is their own subject.[28]

Self-Knowledge

Now, if Thomas does not simply take it for granted that the human subject includes the body, neither does he take it for granted that sensation is an operation involving the body. He sees the need to reason to this.[29] We shall consider his argument in the next section. But first let us glance at his explanation for the "confused" character of the interior perception of oneself as a subject of immanent acts. As we shall see further on, his explanation is closely connected with his understanding of the human soul's appropriate starting point for getting at truth.

Thomas judges that the interior perception gives a very high degree of certainty about one's own existence. It also gives great certainty about the existence in oneself of some sort of principle or source of one's cognitive acts—the principle that goes by the name "soul." Nevertheless, by itself, this perception yields only a very vague and confused apprehension of one's own nature and of the nature of this "soul." Speaking of how the intellect knows itself through knowing its acts, Thomas says that it does so two ways.

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[27] St. Paul speaks of the "interior man." Thomas takes this to refer, not properly to the whole man, nor even to the whole soul, but only to the intellectual part. See *ST* I, q. 75, a. 4, obj. 1 and ad 1.

[28] See *ST* I, q. 57, a. 1, ad 2; also *ST* I, q. 87, a. 4. By "immediate experience" I mean an apprehension that consists in union with the object itself, in its real being, not just with a likeness of it.

[29] Compare: C'est par l'instinct du sentiment que je suis persuadé que mon ame est unie à mon corps, ou que mon corps fait partie de mon être: je n'en ai point d'evidence. Ce n'est point par la lumiére de la raison que je le connois: c'est par la douleur ou par le plaisir que je sens, lorsque les objects me frappent. Nicolas Malebranche, *De la Recherche de la Vérité,* V. v, in *Œuvres de Malebranche*, vol. II, Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1974), 172.

> In one way, in the particular, according as Socrates or Plato perceives himself to have an intellectual soul from the fact that he perceives himself to understand. In another way, universally, according as we consider the nature of the human mind from the act of the intellect. . . . But there is a difference between these two apprehensions. In order to have the first apprehension of the mind, the mind's very presence suffices, this being the principle of the act from which the mind perceives itself. And therefore it is said to know itself through its presence. But for the second apprehension, its presence does not suffice; but rather a diligent and subtle inquiry is required. Hence many are ignorant of the nature of the soul, and many have also erred about the soul's nature.[30]

Thomas goes on to indicate that these two sorts of cognition go together.

> For this reason, in the tenth book of *On the Trinity*, Augustine says of such inquiry about the mind that "the mind is not seeking to perceive itself, as though it were absent; but being present, it is seeking to discern itself," that is, to know its difference from other things, which is to know its quiddity and its nature.[31]

Why does it take so much work to get at what is truly proper and distinctive of the human mind, and thereby of man? The reason lies in the fact that the intellectual acts through which the mind first knows itself are not themselves acts of knowing oneself, or one's soul, or even one's mind. Rather they are acts of knowing the natures of things presented by the senses. The human mind

> is not its own act of understanding, nor is its own essence the first object of its understanding; this rather is something extrinsic, viz., the

[30] Uno quidem modo, particulariter, secundum quod Socrates vel Plato percipit se habere animam intellectivam, ex hoc quod percipit se intelligere. Alio modo, in universali, secundum quod naturam humanae mentis ex actu intellectus consideramus. . . . Est autem differentia inter has duas cognitiones. Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam, sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus ex quo mens percipit seipsam. Et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam. Sed ad secundam cognitionem de mente habendam, non sufficit eius praesentia, sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio. Unde et multi naturam animae ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam animae erraverunt. *ST* I, q. 87, a. 1.

[31] Propter quod Augustinus dicit, X de Trin., de tali inquisitione mentis, non velut absentem se quaerat mens cernere; sed praesentem quaerat discernere, idest cognoscere differentiam suam ab aliis rebus, quod est cognoscere quidditatem et naturam suam. (*ST* I, q. 87, a. 1.) In his own study of the soul's nature Thomas often appeals to inner experience; see, e.g., *ST* I, q. 76, a. 1; I, q. 79, a. 4; I, q. 84, a. 7; I, q. 88, a. 1.

> nature of a material reality. And therefore that which is first grasped by the human intellect is an object of this sort; and secondly is grasped the very act by which the object is grasped; and through this act is grasped the intellect itself, of which the act of understanding is a perfection.[32]

The mind's immediate perception of itself engaging in understanding is not something intrinsic to its primary act of understanding. It is a distinct act, a reflection upon the primary one.[33] And the primary act displays the mind, not in an absolute way or just by itself, but together with the corporeal reality that is known in that act.[34]

The result of this situation is that the mind must inquire into its own nature, reason to it, as to a cause—the cause of the acts that it perceives in itself. And it must do so by comparison and contrast with bodily things. For since these are its first objects, they constitute an indispensable reference point for its knowledge of anything whatsoever, including itself.[35]

Still, Thomas is remarkably optimistic about the possibility of reaching a true and complete understanding of the nature of the soul. It is precisely the phenomenon of understanding that makes the soul fully accessible to itself. "The human soul understands itself through its act of understanding, which is its proper act, perfectly displaying its power and nature."[36]

However, before examining the soul in light of its activity of understanding, Thomas first examines sensation. This is because, in a number of ways, sensation stands midway between purely corporeal reality and the mind. Understanding it is a step toward understanding mind. In order to determine the mind's own relation to the body, it is a crucial step.

Materiality and Immateriality in Sense and Intellect

The Materiality of Sense

Thomas does not treat it as self-evident that sensation is a corporeal operation. Obviously sensation is somehow *associated* with the body—and

[32] [Intellectus humanus] nec est suum intelligere, nec sui intelligere est obiectum primum ipsa eius essentia, sed aliquid extrinsecum, scilicet natura materialis rei. Et ideo id quod primo cognoscitur ab intellectu humano, est huiusmodi obiectum; et secundario cognoscitur ipse actus quo cognoscitur obiectum; et per actum cognoscitur ipse intellectus, cuius est perfectio ipsum intelligere. *ST* I, q. 87, a. 3.

[33] *ST* I, q. 87, a. 3, ad 2.

[34] At the same time, the mind's reflection on itself does put what it first knows in a new light. For example, it is through such reflection that it knows things as matters of truth, and as good: *ST* I, q. 16, a. 4, ad 2.

[35] *ST* I, q. 84, a. 7.

[36] [A]nima humana intelligit seipsam per suum intelligere, quod est actus proprius eius, perfecte demonstrans virtutem eius et naturam. *ST* I, q. 88, a. 2, ad 3.

each particular sense with some particular part of the body. But the "association" of a sensitive operation with the body or some part of it may or may not mean that it is itself a bodily operation, that is, one exercised by the body or the part. Perhaps the body is only some kind of extrinsic condition for it. Is the body that I call mine really a part of me, or is it only somehow attached to me? Is it really intrinsic to my capacity to sense? According to Thomas's sources, Plato held that sensation was an activity of the soul alone. This is why Plato could identify a man with his soul.[37] Thomas treats it as a serious position, even if ultimately mistaken. For indeed, it does have some initial plausibility.

We first know bodily natures according to their sensible qualities. But although a power of sense, like intellect, is a certain quality in the sensitive subject, it is not itself a *sensible* quality. Or at least it is not any of the qualities that are sensed by it. If it were, then it would be very difficult to explain why not everything having that quality has sensation of it, or why the one sensing is not constantly sensing his own quality. Nor does the exercise of the sensitive power even consist in the subject's taking on the same sensible quality as what he senses. Someone seeing green does not thereby look green. Moreover, every sense is a power for sensing things in a whole range of qualities. If it were any one of those qualities, or included any of them, it would in effect "filter out" all of the others.[38]

Hence, even if the subject that exercises sensation, as such, is corporeal, it is clearly of a different nature from the corporeal subjects that are only sensible and cannot sense. At least to some extent, sensation stands opposed to sensible matter.[39] It "rises above" what we first grasp about bodily natures.[40] So it is not too surprising to find thinkers who draw the conclusion that the sensitive nature is not bodily at all. Why does Thomas think it must be?

Sensation does not rest upon having the same sensible quality as the thing sensed. It does however rest upon having a likeness of that quality. Each sense is a kind of natural capacity for having such likenesses. At the same time, the likenesses of things are not in the sensitive subject simply by virtue of its own nature or natural capacity. If they were, it would always be sensing them. In itself it is only in potency to sensing. In order

[37] See *ST* I, q. 75, aa. 3 and 4; I, q. 84, a. 6. His sources on this point seem to be Nemesius and Augustine.

[38] See the passage from *ST* I, q. 75, a. 2 quoted below, note 44.

[39] See *ST* I, q. 84, a. 2: ratio cognitionis ex opposito se habet ad rationem materialitatis.

[40] Thomas even ascribes a qualified sort of infinity to sensation: *ST* I, q. 54, a. 2. See *ST* I, q. 80, a. 1.

to sense anything, it must undergo a change. It must receive the thing's likeness. What produces the likeness in it, the mover or agent of the change, is the very thing that the likeness is a likeness of: the object, the thing sensed. This follows the general principle that what is produced is like what produces it.

For Thomas, in order to see the essential corporeity of the subject of sensation, we must focus on how it is moved by its object. What we find is that its reception of the object's likeness always involves a corresponding change in the body. "Sensation, and the subsequent operations of the sensitive soul, clearly occur along with some change of the body; as in seeing, the pupil is altered by the impression of color; and the same holds in the other cases."[41]

This seems undeniable. Still, does it really show that the body is intrinsic to the very subject of sensation? After all, when the sensible object moves the sense, the medium of sensation also undergoes a corresponding change. For instance, the transmission of sound involves the propagation of waves in the air. Yet the medium is not part of the subject of sensation.

What seems to be decisive for Thomas is the way in which sensible objects can affect the subject's very ability to sense. "The sensitive subject is acted upon by the sensible object together with an alteration of the body; and for this reason, an excessive intensity of sensible objects impairs the sense."[42] A very bright light dazzles. It hinders subsequent vision in a dimmer light, at least for a while. What this shows is that sight is not a totally "pure" potential. It exists in proportion to a determinate set of conditions. Its own actualization involves a modification of the conditions. When the actualization is too intense, some kind of balance is lost. And readjustment takes time. This shows that the conditions are physical or corporeal.

The seat of the conditions is also the seat of the power of sight, and it is something corporeal. Since it is only a part of a whole animal, the part that the animal uses to see with, it is called an "organ," that is, an instrument. The organ of a given sense may or may not be absolutely essential

[41] Sentire vero, et consequentes operationes animae sensitivae, manifeste accidunt cum aliqua corporis immutatione; sicut in videndo immutatur pupilla per speciem coloris; et idem apparet in aliis. (*ST* I, q. 75, a. 3.) We might obeserve that this alteration is not itself sensed, at least not in the very act of sensation that it is part of. It is the physical accompaniment of the sense's reception of the species of the object sensed, and like the species, it is only a means or a principle by which the object is sensed. (See above, note 17.)

[42] Sensitivum patitur a sensibili cum corporis immutatione; unde excellentia sensibilium corrumpit sensum. (*ST* I, q. 75, a. 3, ad 2.) See *De anima* III.4, 429b1–3.

to the animal. But it is certainly essential to the sense, as the sense is essential to it. Neither exists without the other.

The Immateriality of Intellect

In Thomas's judgment, it is impossible that the human intellect be either a body or a power seated in a body. His preferred way of showing this comes directly from Aristotle's *De anima*.[43] It runs as follows.

> It is clear that man, through intellect, can apprehend the natures of all bodies. But what can apprehend some things must have none of them in its own nature, because that which is naturally within it would impede the apprehension of the others; thus, we observe that the tongue of someone ill, being is infected with a bilious and bitter humor, cannot perceive something sweet, but everything seems bitter to it. And so if the intellectual principle had in itself the nature of some body, it would be unable to apprehend all bodies. But every body has a determinate nature. So it is impossible that the intellectual principle be a body. And it is likewise impossible that it understand through a bodily organ, because even the determinate nature of that bodily organ would impede the apprehension of all bodies. Thus, not only if some determinate color is in the pupil, but also if it is in a glass vessel, the liquid poured into the vessel seems to be of that same color. Hence the intellectual principle itself, which is called mind or intellect, has an operation of its own, in which the body does not share.[44]

The reasoning here is quite straightforward. However, at the least the first sentence surely raises a question. Is it really so "clear" that man can know the natures of all bodies? As far as I know, Thomas never offers any proof for this claim. Like Aristotle (who in fact says simply "all things"),

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[43] *De anima* III.4, 429a13–429b6.

[44] Manifestum est enim quod homo per intellectum cognoscere potest naturas omnium corporum. Quod autem potest cognoscere aliqua, oportet ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura, quia illud quod inesset ei naturaliter impediret cognitionem aliorum; sicut videmus quod lingua infirmi quae infecta est cholerico et amaro humore, non potest percipere aliquid dulce, sed omnia videntur ei amara. Si igitur principium intellectuale haberet in se naturam alicuius corporis, non posset omnia corpora cognoscere. Omne autem corpus habet aliquam naturam determinatam. Impossibile est igitur quod principium intellectuale sit corpus. Et similiter impossibile est quod intelligat per organum corporeum, quia etiam natura determinata illius organi corporei prohiberet cognitionem omnium corporum; sicut si aliquis determinatus color sit non solum in pupilla, sed etiam in vase vitreo, liquor infusus eiusdem coloris videtur. Ipsum igitur intellectuale principium, quod dicitur mens vel intellectus, habet operationem per se, cui non communicat corpus. *ST* I, q. 75, a. 2.

he takes it for granted. How does he know it? Does he think he has actually understood each and every kind of bodily nature?

Perhaps he is not presuming quite so much. The argument does not really seem to depend upon the assumption that no bodily nature has remained hidden from us. It only assumes that the intellect is, in itself, open to the knowledge of all bodily natures. To appreciate this, it seems sufficient to consider that the intellect can know the general nature common to all bodies; that is, the very nature of "body," in abstraction from any specific kind. Knowing generally what a body is, the intellect already ranges over the entire field. No specific kind falls outside its scope. The argument then is that if it were itself some specific kind of body, or if it knew by means of some such kind, it would not have this universal scope. Its own nature would block the apprehension of alien or contrary kinds.

Still following Aristotle, whose subtlety on this point he frankly admires,[45] Thomas confirms the incorporeity of mind by way of the very sort of consideration that establishes the corporeity of sensation.[46] Intellect and sense have it in common that they pass from potency to act, from not knowing to knowing. Hence, as with sense, the mind's object is something distinct from it, something that moves it and actualizes it. In this respect mind is passive. Yet it is not passive to the same degree as sense is. For it is never impaired by the action of its own objects. A bright light hinders vision; but highly intelligible things do not make lesser intelligibles harder to understand, even for a while. If anything, Thomas says, they make it easier.

What does this mean? In general, something is intrinsically more knowable, more apt to present or display itself, the more it is "in act." The more intelligible things are those that are more in act, more perfect. But a more perfect thing may be the very point of reference for the understanding of a less perfect thing. For instance, of a pair of contraries, one is more perfect than the other; and the less perfect one is understood by comparison with the more perfect one. It is defined according to its privation of the other's perfection. Dimness is lack of brightness. Thomas is arguing that the mind can never be acted upon in a way contrary to its own nature.[47]

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[45] See his opusculum *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, cap. 1, §24 (ed. Keeler).

[46] See *ST* I, q. 75, a. 3, ad 2.

[47] Non enim invenitur corruptio nisi ubi invenitur contrarietas, generationes enim et corruptiones ex contrariis et in contraria sunt. . . . In anima autem intellectiva non potest esse aliqua contrarietas. Recipit enim secundum modum sui esse, ea vero quae in ipsa recipiuntur, sunt absque contrarietate; quia etiam rationes contrariorum in intellectu non sunt contrariae, sed est una scientia contrariorum. *ST* I, q. 75, a. 6.

Mind, then, is indeed a totally "pure" potential. It is not a function of a determinate set of bodily conditions. And there is no such thing as a body that has no determinate conditions. So the mind can neither be, nor reside immediately in, a bodily subject, an "organ of understanding." If the intellectual subject as a whole is corporeal, then his mind must reside immediately in some incorporeal part of him, and belong to the whole by way of that part.[48] The incorporeal part of the human substance is the soul. It is in this sense that the soul is the subject of the mind and its acts.

The Bond between Mind and Matter

In arguing for the incorporeity of the human mind, Thomas focuses upon what he considers to be its first and proportionate objects, the natures of bodily things.[49] This approach underscores the fact that he does not at all mean to claim that the human mind works in complete independence from the body. The mind's first objects are bodily natures, precisely because it only gains access to its objects through the senses. Its primary objects are "founded" in sensibles.[50] As Thomas puts it, "the body is needed for the action of the mind, not as an organ by which such action is excercised, but by reason of the object; for the [sensible] image is related to the intellect as color to sight."[51]

Thus, although the mind's power cannot be blunted by the action of any of its objects, it can still be hindered in its operation, indirectly. It can be deprived of the conditions needed for bearing upon its objects. In particular, Thomas judges that without the exercise of imagination, the mind can neither acquire knowledge of things, nor even use knowledge already acquired. It must gather the likeness of its primary objects from sensible images, and it must turn back to such images in order to consider the objects in their proper mode of being.[52] If the mind did not depend

[48] *ST* I, q. 76, a. 1; see Aristotle, *Physics* V.1, 224a31.

[49] *ST* I, q. 84, aa. 7 and 8. This is not inconsistent with the fact that what we first understand is something more universal than any specific bodily kind, and indeed more universal even than corporeal nature in general: the common nature of being. For we first understand this in corporeal instances of it. Obiectum intellectus est commune quoddam, scilicet ens et verum, sub quo comprehenditur etiam ipse actus intelligendi. Unde intellectus potest suum actum intelligere. Sed non primo, quia nec primum obiectum intellectus nostri, secundum praesentem statum, est quodlibet ens et verum; sed ens et verum consideratum in rebus materialibus, ut dictum est; ex quibus in cognitionem omnium aliorum devenit. *ST* I, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1.

[50] *ST* I, q. 84, a. 8, ad 1.

[51] Corpus requiritur ad actionem intellectus, non sicut organum quo talis actio exerceatur, sed ratione obiecti, phantasma enim comparatur ad intellectum sicut color ad visum. *ST* I, q. 75, a. 2, ad 3.

[52] *ST* I, q. 84, a. 7.

on the senses for the presentation of its object, it would be unaccountable how a failure of the senses or the injury of an organ could obstruct its operation, as they obviously can. It could always be exercising understanding, as Thomas believes the angels and God are.

In one place Thomas says that the human intellect, joined to the body by way of the soul, is at the maximum grade of "concreteness."[53] By this he seems to mean that it is the most "conditioned" of all intellects. Its own activity is tied to a bodily activity. They are distinct activities, but they form an operative unity. This fits with the fact that the intellect's spiritual subject, the soul, is joined to bodily matter in a single act of being, that is, the being of a single substance.

As Thomas sees it, the thesis that the human mind depends upon the senses for the presentation of its object explains many features of human understanding. For instance, it explains why the human mind's first objects are also the most "concrete," that is, composite or divisible, of intelligible objects. It takes work for the mind to reach a grasp of absolutely indivisible natures, even those which exist in bodies and are within its power to understand properly. This is because such natures are at a kind of opposite extreme from the divisible manifolds presented by the senses.[54] Thus, for example, the pre-Socratic "physicists" thought that everything, even soul, was some kind of body. They did not see that what first differentiates one kind of body from another, as soul differentiates a living from a non-living body, cannot be yet another body, but must be something indivisible and incorporeal, a "form."[55]

The mind's dependence upon the senses also explains why, even though it is a spiritual power, its way of operating has much in common with that of bodily or physical things, that is, mobile things. Thomas even compares the human mind to prime matter: In itself it is merely in potency and needs to be moved into act.[56] The comparison is not perfect; among other things, the mind's potency is not only passive but also, in part, active. It possesses a kind of "light," the so-called "agent intellect," which acts upon a thing's sensible image so as to manifest the thing's nature or to make it intelligible "in act." However, the agent intellect does not cause any act of understanding immediately or by itself, without material furnished by the senses. It merely frees the corporeal nature from the material conditions of the senses, "abstracts" it. This enables the nature to produce a likeness of itself that has the mind's own immaterial mode

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[53] *Sentencia libri De sensu et sensato,* lect. 1 (Marietti §4).

[54] See *ST* I, q. 85, a. 8.

[55] See *ST* I, q. 75, a. 1.

[56] *ST* I, q. 87, a. 1; see *ST* I, q. 56, a. 1.

of being, a likeness that the mind can receive.[57] To some extent we could compare the agent intellect to the nutritive power, which makes the organism grow, but not without food.

Moreover, the human mind's "assimilation" of the intelligible, or its work of attaining a full and proper grasp of the truth of the object, is a gradual and successive process—again similar to the way in which physical things reach their perfection.[58] By contrast, what the angels and God first know are the natures of simple and absolutely immaterial entities, separate forms;[59] and their grasp of these natures is complete right from the start, without movement.[60] For Thomas, in fact, the mobility of the human mind serves to sum up the difference between it and other minds. The human mind is the discursive, *rational* mind.[61] And its mobility, rooted in its proper subject's conjunction with bodily matter, is a clear sign of its lesser perfection.[62]

Yet Thomas believes that the human soul *can* exist separately from matter, as God and the angels do. He also holds that the separate soul can engage in understanding. As we shall see, this raises some serious doubts about his view that its union with the body is natural for it.

The Need for the Body

The Knowledge of the Separate Soul

As is well known, St. Thomas holds it to be philosophically demonstrable that the human soul is incorruptible, lacking any inner potential to cease to exist. His argument rests on the fact that the soul is both subsistent, or a subject of existence, and a form, a pure determination to the existence that it has.[63] It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine this argument in detail. Our interest is in the intellectual activity of the soul once it is separated from the body.

Thomas's own conception of the nature of man's intellectual operation poses a difficulty for the thesis that the soul outlives the body. He was well aware of the difficulty.

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[57] See *ST* I, q. 79, a. 3; I, q. 84, a. 6.

[58] See *ST* I, q. 85, aa. 3, 5.

[59] See *ST* I, q. 12, a. 4; I, q. 14, aa. 2, 5; I, q. 84, a. 7.

[60] See *ST* I, q. 14, aa. 7, 15; I, q. 58, aa. 1, 3, 4.

[61] Homines autem ad intelligibilem veritatem cognoscendam perveniunt, procedendo de uno ad aliud, . . . et ideo rationales dicuntur. *ST* I, q. 79, a. 8.

[62] See *ST* I, q. 79, a. 4.

[63] See *ST* I, q. 75, aa. 2, 6.

> No thing exists without its proper operation. But the proper operation of the soul, which is to understand with an image, cannot be without the body; for the soul understands nothing without an image, and an image does not exist without the body, as it says in the *De anima*. So upon the destruction of the body, the soul cannot remain.[64]

Nothing exists without its own operation. Things exist for the very sake of their operations; these are their proper perfections.[65] Perhaps the corruption of the body does not entail the disappearance of the human soul in the way that it entails the disappearance of non-intellectual or non-subsistent forms. But it seems to entail the complete suspension of the soul's operation. The separate soul would be utterly inert, and so pointless. Nature does not behave pointlessly.

Thomas answers the objection very briefly. "Understanding with an image is the proper operation of the soul, insofar as it is united to the body. But once separated from the body, it will have another way of understanding, similar to that of other substances that are separate from the body."[66] The soul can both exist and understand without the body. It will understand, not by abstraction from sensibles, but in a way similar to that of the substances that are never joined to bodies, the angels. The crucial question will be, would this not be positively better for it? First though, let us look more closely at this "other way of understanding."

The death of the body does not change the human soul's essential nature.[67] Nevertheless it does involve the soul's taking on a different mode of being. It no longer exists in matter. As regards its intellectual operation, this is an extremely significant difference. Once again following Aristotle, Thomas holds that a nature existing separately from matter is by that very fact actually intelligible. There is no need to abstract an immaterial likeness of it from anything. It is immediately apt not only for understanding, but also for being understood. For this reason, Thomas teaches, an angel understands its own nature immediately, and from the very beginning of its existence. The form or "species" through which it

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[64] Nulla res est sine propria operatione. Sed propria operatio animae, quae est intelligere cum phantasmate, non potest esse sine corpore; nihil enim sine phantasmate intelligit anima; phantasma autem non est sine corpore, ut dicitur in libro *De anima*. Ergo anima non potest remanere, destructo corpore. (*ST* I, q. 75, a. 6, obj. 3.) The reference seems to be to *De anima* I.1, 403a9.

[65] See *ST* I, q. 105, a. 5; cf. *ST* I, q. 87, a. 3.

[66] Dicendum quod intelligere cum phantasmate est propria operatio animae secundum quod corpori est unita. Separata autem a corpore habebit alium modum intelligendi similem aliis substantiis a corpore separatis. *ST* I, q. 75, a. 6, ad 3.

[67] *ST* I, q. 89, a. 1.

understands its own nature is its own nature, to which of course it is naturally united.[68]

This however does not mean that through understanding itself, the angel understands everything that it naturally can; for it can also understand other things. As we considered before, an angel is only a finite entity. Its understanding of itself provides only a kind of general and confused understanding of other things. This is true as regards not only things above it but also things beneath it.

> The things that are beneath an angel, and those that are above it, are in a way contained in its substance, yet not perfectly, nor according to their proper definitions, but only according to some common feature; for the essence of an angel, being finite, is distinguished from others according to its proper definition.[69]

Hence, in order to understand all that it naturally can, the angel needs additional intelligible forms or likenesses of things. It has these by nature, being endowed with them by the intellectual author of nature, whose own "intelligible species" is a perfect representation of all things.[70] Here of course Thomas is going beyond anything explicit in Aristotle's works.[71]

The angel needs additions to its own nature, additional likenesses of things, in order to reach its natural intellectual perfection. On the other hand, Thomas teaches, it does not need a *distinct* likeness for each of the natures that it understands, even as regards what is proper and distinctive of them. It can receive from God a more perfect intelligible species, in which many natures are all properly and distinctly represented. The more

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[68] Angelus autem, cum sit immaterialis, est quaedam forma subsistens, et per hoc intelligibilis actu. (*ST* I, q. 56, a. 1.) See *ST* I, q. 55, a. 2; I, q. 87, a. 1, ad 2. For the Aristotelian basis, see *De anima*, III.4, 430a3–5, and III.6, 430b24–26; *Metaphysics* XII.9, 1074b35–1075a11.

[69] Ea quae sunt infra angelum, et ea quae sunt supra ipsum, sunt quodammodo in substantia eius, non quidem perfecte, neque secundum propriam rationem, cum angeli essentia, finita existens, secundum propriam rationem ab aliis distinguatur; sed secundum quandam rationem communem. *ST* I, q. 55, a. 1, ad 3.

[70] On God's "intelligible species," see *ST* I, q. 14, a. 5, ad 3. Thomas argues that angels are simply incapable of abstracting intelligible objects from corporeal things, since they lack imagination (*ST* I, q. 55, a. 2, ad 2).

[71] He cites Augustine and ps.-Dionysius. In any case, I see nothing in the reasoning that Thomas would consider essentially dependent upon revelation. Bazán, "The Human Soul," 125, claims that Thomas's argument for the separate soul's intellectual activity is not philosophical. But he does not enter at all into its details, and neither does his sole reference: Joseph Owens, CSR, "Aquinas on the Inseparability of Soul from Existence," *New Scholasticism* 61 (1987): 268–69.

perfect the angel, the more it approaches God's absolute simplicity, and the fewer species it needs.[72]

It is in a way similar to the angels that a soul separated from the body can engage in understanding.[73] So it can know its own nature immediately, and it can know other things through species infused by God.[74] Just as in the case of the angels, this discussion applies independently of any consideration of grace or the supernatural order. And it applies to souls that do not conserve any knowledge previously received by way of abstraction from sensible things.[75]

The Weakness of the Human Mind

Thomas believes that his aristotelianism carries even so far as to making a positive contribution to the account of the knowledge of the separated soul. But the very success of his use of it also raises another doubt about it. Thomas dedicates a long discussion to its resolution.[76]

The doubt is this. If the soul separated from the body can understand in a way similar to that of separate substances, why is it natural for the soul to be in the body and to know by conversion to sensible images? Would it not be better for the soul to have the "angelic" way of knowing right from the start? Nature is always ordered toward what is best. Must God not have instituted the nature of the soul according to the angelic mode of being, viz. separate from the body, so that it could understand by conversion to the things that are intelligible per se? In other words, if the human soul can understand without the body, can its union with the body be deemed truly natural for it? It is a question that challenges Thomas's entire anthropology.

The core of his answer is a distinction. It is true, he says, that absolutely speaking, the angelic mode of understanding, through conversion to the higher intelligible things, is better than the mode of understanding through conversion to sensible images. But with respect to the human soul's capacity for it, the angelic mode is less perfect.

To explain this, Thomas has us consider the fact that the power to manifest the truth, intellectual "light," exists in many grades of perfection.[77] The most perfect is the light of the divine mind, which is absolutely

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[72] *ST* I, q. 55, a. 3; see *ST* I, q. 14, a. 6.

[73] *ST* I, q. 89, a. 1.

[74] *ST* I, q. 89, aa. 2 and 3.

[75] *ST* I, q. 89, a. 1, obj. 1 and ad 1.

[76] *ST* I, q. 89, a. 1; see *Quaestio disputata de anima*, a. 15.

[77] "Light, as pertaining to intellect, is nothing other than a certain manifestation of truth." *ST* I, q. 106, a. 1.

one and simple. Created minds are like concentric rings, revolving around the simple common center at various distances; and their lights derive from the divine light like lines emerging from the center. As the lines move outward, toward rings farther from the center, the more divided and diversified they are. Thus, God understands all things by virtue of his single essence. The higher intellectual creatures, boasting powerful lights, need only a few additional intelligible forms, each containing a great wealth of information about many things. But the lower intellects, endowed with weaker lights, need many forms, each of which represents fewer things and contains less information about them.

Consequently, Thomas says, if a lower mind receives intelligible forms of the sort that suits the higher minds, it will not have sufficient light to exploit them fully. They will be, as it were, too dense for it to unpack. Through them, it will only know things imperfectly, in a kind of general and confused way. Thomas notes that the same thing happens among different men: Some are able to understand many things, and well, by means of just a few abstract and synthetic formulations; for others such formulations mainly produce confusion, and clear comprehension requires longer, more detailed explanations, accompanied by concrete examples.[78] This is how it stands with the human mind in relation to "angelic" intelligible forms. Through them it could indeed understand something, but not well. To understand well, it needs the more particular forms that are gathered from the experience of sensible things.

The human mind is the weakest of all. Yet it too deserves to exist. "The perfection of the universe required that there be various grades in things." And so, Thomas concludes, it is better after all for there to be spiritual substances that are joined to bodies. The human soul's natural mode of being is the one best suited to it. Complete separation from matter would not, by itself, improve the condition of the human mind; quite the contrary. The human mind's inferiority to that of the angels is not the effect of its union with matter. The inferiority is intrinsic to it, and is the very reason for the union.

For Thomas, then, the soul's union with the body is directly in the service of its knowledge of truth. This is certainly an explanation for the union that someone like Malebranche could take seriously. But could it satisfy him? It seems to me that yet another doubt might be raised.

Thomas does acknowledge that separation from matter would have its advantages for the soul. He concedes that although the body is a necessary vehicle for the soul's proper knowledge of corporeal things, it is also

[78] On varying grades of strength in human intellects, see *ST* I, q. 85, a. 7.

a kind of weight and distraction.[79] What the separate soul knows, it knows immediately, effortlessly, without any inquiry or study. Moreover, Thomas seems to judge that the separate soul's knowledge of incorporeal substances, though not perfect, is better than the knowledge that it can have of them while it is in the body.[80] And at least its knowledge of itself, and of other human souls, is perfect and proper.[81]

What it cannot have is complete or proper knowledge of the things below it, corporeal things. It does know something about these things, through the "angelic information" that it is given about them; but its light is not strong enough to discern all of the implications of this information.[82] It needs to have the natures of corporeal things "spelled out," presented singly, according to their own mode of existing in sensible matter. God conveys the knowledge of corporeal natures to the human soul by creating things that have such natures, and by uniting the soul to a body through which they can be presented to it.[83]

Clearly Thomas is setting a very high value on "proper"—we might almost say "clear and distinct"—knowledge of things; and precisely of bodily things. Is it too high? The union with the body entails a lesser knowledge of the angels. And although it does not simply exclude the soul's proper knowledge of itself (since the soul too pertains to the nature of a bodily entity), it does make this more difficult, a matter of diligent and careful inquiry rather than of immediate intuition. Moreover, even the separate soul can know other bodily natures, albeit in a general and confused way. Yet for Thomas this is not enough. "The effort of study is not in vain," he insists, because "the knowledge got through it is proper and complete."[84] He is talking about getting the proper and complete knowledge of bodily natures.

Thomas seems to think that this is a sufficient reason for the soul's union with the body, despite all the disadvantages thereof. To be sure, it is a reason pertaining to the knowledge of truth; but only truth about bodily things.

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79 *ST* I, q. 89, a. 2, ad 1; see *ST* I, q. 65, a. 1, obj. 2 and ad 2.

80 Compare *ST* I, q. 89, a. 2 with *ST* I, q. 88, aa. 1 and 2. See *Quaestio disputata de anima*, a. 15.

81 *ST* I, q. 89, a. 2.

82 *ST* I, q. 89, a. 3; see *Quaestio disputata de anima*, a. 18. Obviously, in rendering these judgments about the separate soul's knowledge, Thomas is not drawing upon his own personal experience, or for that matter anyone else's. He is offering a reasoned conclusion. His chief assumptions are that the soul is naturally united to the body, that its natural end is to know truth, and that the author of the natural order has done well in giving it this mode of being.

83 See *ST* I, q. 84, a. 4, ad 1.

84 *ST* I, q. 89, a. 3, ad 4.

Could Malebranche possibly be satisfied with this? Surely he would find such a high regard for merely physical knowledge rather too "pagan."

However, we should not forget Thomas's metaphor of lines emerging from a common center. For him, the truth about bodily things is not "only" truth about bodily things. It is also a derivation from the First Truth. What we need to consider is his appreciation of the role of the truth of bodily things in the human soul's overall "search for truth."

To Represent God

First let us go back for a moment to the way in which Thomas defends the existence of low-grade intellectual substances like us. "The perfection of the universe," he says, "required that there be various grades in things." This is a point that he explains earlier in the *Summa theologiae*.[85] God produced the universe of creatures for the sake of the communication and representation of his own goodness. But no one creature can represent it sufficiently, and what is lacking in one is supplied by another. This is why he made many things, and especially many *forms* of things. But "formal distinction always requires inequality."[86]

This doctrine is connected with what we saw earlier about God's knowledge of things. Only He can know all things properly and perfectly just by knowing himself, because he alone contains in himself all the perfections of things. This means that he contains not only the perfections common to all things, for instance being or goodness, but also their proper perfections. Their distinctive forms and differences are perfections too.

> Not only that which creatures have in common, namely being, pertains to perfection; but also those features by which creatures are distinguished from one another, such as life, and understanding, and so forth, by which living things are distinguished from non-living, and intelligent things from non-intelligent. And every form, by which each thing is constituted in its proper species, is a certain perfection. And thus all things pre-exist in God, not only as regards what is common to them all, but also as regards the features according to which the things are distinguished.[87]

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[85] *ST* I, q. 47, a. 1.

[86] *ST* I, q. 47, a. 2. He explains this in *ST* I, q. 75, a. 7. Formal distinction is the sort of distinction found among species of a genus. The differences dividing a genus into its species are contraries, and these are are related as perfect to imperfect. This is because the root of contrariety is possession and privation.

[87] Non solum autem id in quo creaturae communicant, scilicet ipsum esse, ad perfectionem pertinet; sed etiam ea per quae creaturae ad invicem distinguuntur, sicut vivere, et intelligere, et huiusmodi, quibus viventia a non viventibus, et intelligentia a non intelligentibus distinguuntur. Et omnis forma, per quam quaelibet *res* in propria specie constituitur, perfectio quaedam est. Et sic omnia in Deo praeexitunt,

The perfections of all things preexist in God. They exist in the things themselves for the sake of representing him. Each makes its own partial, but special, contribution. What this means is that the lower kinds of things in the world are not just good; they also contain perfections that the higher do not. They even represent God's goodness in ways that the higher do not. This is true not only of the lowest spiritual things, but also of the lowest things simply, the bodies.[88]

Man's natural end is not to know the truth about corporeal things. But then, neither is it to know the truth about himself.[89] It is to know the truth about God, and thereby to love him. Man reaches the knowledge of God through his created representations—through man himself, of course, and in a special way through the knowledge of his own mind;[90] but not solely. The lower creatures also represent God to man, and in ways that man himself does not. This is why the knowledge of them perfects him, promotes the achievement of his end.[91]

"The form of a stone, or of any sensible thing," Thomas says, "is inferior to man. Hence through the form of a stone the intellect is not perfected insofar as it is 'such' a form." And nevertheless the intellect is perfected by it, "insofar as in it is participated some likeness of something that is above the human intellect, namely an intelligible light, or something of that sort."[92] It is in order to gain access to such participated light that the soul is united to the body.

We should notice that it is by reason of its *form* that the sensible thing shares in this light. The Cartesians rejected the very notion of "substantial form," not only as a description of the human soul, but also quite generally as a principle of corporeal reality.[93] From Thomas's standpoint,

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non solum quantum ad id quod commune est omnibus, sed etiam quantum ad ea secundum quae *res* distinguuntur. (*ST* I, q. 14, a. 6.) On the presence of the very differences of things in God, see I, q. 4, a. 2, ad 1.

[88] *ST* I, q. 65, a. 2. Here he argues against Origen's view that bodies were created only to bind sinful spirits.

[89] Even this judgment has aristotelian credentials: see *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7, 1177b27–1178a7.

[90] See *ST* I, q. 88, a. 1, ad 1.

[91] We might also consider the fact that the goodness of the universe, considered as a whole, represents the goodness of God in an especially excellent way (*ST* I, q. 47, a. 1). The unity of the universe consists in the order of its parts (*ST* I, q. 47, a. 3), including the lowest ones (*ST* I, q. 65, a. 2); and the understanding of this order depends on a distinct and proper understanding of the parts (*ST* I, q. 15, a. 2).

[92] *ST* I–II, q. 3, a. 6.

[93] See Malebranche, *De la Recherche de la Vérité,* VI.ii.iii, in *Œuvres*, vol. II, 309–20.

this amounts to severing the natural "line of communication" between the human mind and the divine light. For it is a line that passes through sensible things, by way of their forms.

Finally, although man is the lowest of the intellectual substances, he too must resemble and represent God in some way or ways that the higher do not. Thomas draws our attention to at least two such features. They are directly tied to the spiritual soul's being the form of the body and existing as the term of human generation.

All creatures, Thomas teaches, are in some way like God. But only the intellectual creatures have that special degree of likeness which goes by the name of "image."[94] Now, absolutely speaking, the angels are more in the image of God than are men, because their intellectual nature is more perfect. Nevertheless, in certain respects, man is more in the image of God than angels; namely, insofar as man is from man, as God (the Son) is from God (the Father); and insofar as the soul of man exists whole in his whole body, and whole in every part, as God is in the world. Thomas notes that these traits constitute an image of God only on the supposition of an intellectual nature. Otherwise, he says, even the beasts would be in the image of God.[95]

"Man is from man": This is easy enough to understand. That the whole soul is in the whole body, and also in every part, is difficult. But what it chiefly means is that the soul's whole essence, its whole substantial perfection, is in the whole and in every part.[96] This one perfection embraces a whole range of grades. The soul, "being one and the same, perfects matter according to diverse grades of perfection. For it is by a form that is essentially one and the same that a man is a being in act, and

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[94] *ST* I, q. 93, a. 2.

[95] De imagine Dei loqui dupliciter possumus. Uno modo, quantum ad id in quo primo consideratur ratio imaginis, quod est intellectualis natura. Et sic imago Dei est magis in angelis quam sit in hominibus, quia intellectualis natura perfectior est in eis, ut ex supra dictis patet. Secundo potest considerari imago Dei in homine, quantum ad id in quo secundario consideratur, prout scilicet in homine invenitur quaedam Dei imitatio, inquantum scilicet homo est de homine, sicut Deus de Deo; et inquantum anima hominis est tota in toto corpore eius, et iterum tota in qualibet parte ipsius, sicut Deus se habet ad mundum. Sed quantum ad hoc non attenditur per se ratio divinae imaginis in homine, nisi praesupposita prima imitatione, quae est secundum intellectualem naturam, alioquin etiam animalia bruta essent ad imaginem Dei. Et ideo, cum quantum ad intellectualem naturam angelus sit magis ad imaginem Dei quam homo, simpliciter concedendum est angelum magis esse ad imaginem Dei; hominem autem secundum quid. *ST* I, q. 93, a. 3.

[96] *ST* I, q. 76, a. 8.

a body, and alive, and an animal, and a man."[97] Every part of the body is distinctively human, which is to say, rational.[98] Diversified according to their operative powers, all of the parts are naturally ordered toward contributing to the work of "gathering truth from divisible things."

To conclude: The spiritual soul's natural mode of existence puts it in a physical genus, making it "belong more with the beasts than with the angels." Yet the perfection naturally due to it, which is not its mere existence, is something spiritual, more like that of the angels: the knowledge of truth. Nevertheless, to exist in their mode would degrade the soul's share in this perfection. Man needs the help of the perfection that he shares with the beasts, the life of the senses. From what we have seen, it seems hardly a coincidence that the Cartesians denied that beasts have sensation.[99] In any case, it should be clear that the "turn to the subject" raises theoretical issues that go well beyond the "philosophy of man." N&V

[97] Una et eadem existens, perficit materiam secundum diversos perfectionis gradus. Una enim et eadem forma est per essentiam, per quam homo est ens actu, et per quam est corpus, et per quam est vivum, et per quam est animal, et per quam est homo. *ST* I, q. 76, a. 6, ad 1.

[98] See *ST* I, q. 76, a. 3, ad 4. When used to express man's differentia, "rational" does not signify a faculty or power (*ST* I, q. 77, a. 1, ad 7). It signifies the grade of substantial perfection that the power's operation discloses (see *ST* I, q. 110, a. 4, ad 4). Although it is an adjective, it does not refer to accident added to a subject that is essentially just an "animal." On the contrary, the differentia constitutes the subject's *chief* essential trait, its determination to true unity of existence and signification.

[99] See Malebranche, *De la Recherche de la Vérité,* VI.ii.vii, in *Œuvres*, vol. II, 389–94.

The Circumcision of the Lord: Saving Mystery after Modern Oblivion

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"WHAT DO WE HEAR," asked Karl Rahner, "of Christ's Circumcision, Baptism, his prayer, the Transfiguration, the Presentation in the Temple, the Mount of Olives, the abandonment by God on the Cross, the descent into the underworld, the Ascension into heaven and so on?" He then answered his question starkly: "Nothing or pretty well nothing."[1] Since Rahner's influential essay, theologians have enjoyed lively discussions on such mysteries of Christ's life as the abandonment on the cross and the descent unto the dead. Yet, no comparable debate in the various schools of theology exists for the first mystery Rahner mentions, the circumcision of Christ.[2]

[1] Karl Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, Cornelius Ernst, trans. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 149–200, esp. 190.

[2] Two important attempts that have appeared recently are Graham Ward, "Uncovering the Corona: A Theology of Circumcision," in *The Birth of Jesus: Biblical and Theological Reflections*, ed. George J. Brooke (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 35–44; and Robert Trent Pomplun, "Israel and the Eucharist: A Scotist Perspective," *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002): 272–94. Ward seeks to develop a theology of circumcision through an emphasis on cultural politics. Inspired by Duns Scotus, Pomplun argues that Christ's circumcision is the wellspring of grace for the Jewish sacraments and that the Church is forever bound to Israel in one divine sacramental economy. Also, see the less recent work of Raphael Schulte in *Mysterium Salutis: Dogmatique de l'Histoire du Salut*, vol. 11, *Christologie et Vie du Christ* (Paris: Cerf, 1975), 378–86. The present essay is an argument taken from a book in preparation. I am grateful to Lawrence J. Donohoo, OP, Jody Vaccaro Lewis, Matthew Levering, Bernard Mulcahy, OP, and Austin Murphy, OSB, for comments on various stages of my research.

Rahner himself pointed to St. Thomas Aquinas as one who had a great theological interest in the mysteries of the life of Christ.[3] Indeed, Aquinas pioneered the systematic meditation on Christ's mysteries for scholastic theology in his *Summa theologiae* III, qq. 27–59. In this, he features the circumcision among the mysteries of the Incarnate Word that seems quite foreign to modern sensibilities. Jean-Pierre Torrell observes, "The question on the circumcision and the legal observances undoubtedly seems not far from being folkloric to a Christian today." Yet, as Torrell continues, "This was not at all the opinion of Master Thomas."[4]

This essay argues that by recovering a Thomistic appreciation for the circumcision of the Lord, theologians can seek a richer understanding of the things that the Lord Jesus did and suffered for our salvation. It begins by sketching the historical treatments of the Lord's circumcision from revelation through ambivalence to modern oblivion.[5] Next, it "re-searches" the mystery within Aquinas's systematic appreciation for salvation in Christ.[6] Finally, it offers a new way of exploring the mystery by placing it within the nexus of the mysteries of Christ's life. Given the limits of space, this essay explores the circumcision in relation to only one other mystery of the Savior's life: baptism.

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[3] Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," 190.

[4] Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Le Christ en Ses Mystères: La vie et l'oeuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Desclée, 1999), 179. "La question de la circoncision et des observances légales n'est sans doute pas loin de sembler folklorique à un chrétien d'aujourd'hui. Ce n'était pas du tout l'avis de Maître Thomas."

[5] I am indebted to Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion,* 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). While Steinberg notes approvingly of the importance that Aquinas placed on Jesus' circumcision, he argues that Renaissance artists developed an incarnational theology in the nakedness of Christ—that was painted over, sometimes literally, in the modern era.

[6] For my use of "re-search," see David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Novak writes, "It would seem, then, if Jewish-Christian dialogue is to be authentic dialogue, and a true expression of Judaism and Christianity, it must be constituted so as to carefully steer a course clear between the Scylla of triumphalism and the Charybdis of relativism. Thinkers in each community must *re-search* their own respective traditions to constitute the integrity of the other community and not lose the integrity of their own. The task is formidable because this re-search must be quite radical, working its way back to the roots of the tradition and back out into the present and toward the future" (19).

From Revelation through Ambivalence to Modern Oblivion

Christians have long honored this event in the Savior's life—an event from which they deepened their understanding of the dispensations of the Old Law and New Law, of the mystery of the Son of God as "complete in all the parts of a man,"[7] and of their own new creation in Christ. Beyond its inclusion in the Gospel in Luke 2:21, the entrance of the circumcision into the liturgical calendars of Churches around the world singularly guaranteed that Christians would read, preach, pray, sing, teach, write poems and stories, and argue about this mystery in innumerable times and places.[8] The Basilica of St. John Lateran even boasted the most holy foreskin of Christ among its relics.[9]

Still, it must be admitted that this mystery has had quite an ambivalent reputation in the Church's history—an ambivalence at times betrayed even when this mystery was closely studied and joyfully celebrated. By its very nature, the circumcision of the Lord can frankly be disturbing to the sensitive and seem irrelevant to those who ignore the Lord's revelation to Abraham: "So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant" (Gn 17:13).[10] Four curious examples from Christian traditions are here adduced. First, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* is the first text after Luke's Gospel to mention explicitly the circumcision of Jesus, but it does so as something that had already been discussed by him (yet not present in the extant text).[11] Indeed, Justin thinks that circumcision was given to Abraham as a punishment because of God's foreknowledge that the Jews

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[7] Steinberg discusses this euphemism in *The Sexuality of Christ*, 133–35.

[8] One might be surprised today by the abundance of evidence in the tradition. A detailed study of the feast from one western use is in Wulf Arlt, "The Office for the Feast of the Circumcision from Le Puy," in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 324–43. This feast influenced medieval literature, perhaps most famously the English tale of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. I am thankful to Elise Maglio for introducing me to this medieval story and its circumcision motif.

[9] Cf. Pope Innocent III, *De Missae Mysteriis,* bk. 4, ch. 30, Acta Sanctorum (January), vol. 1, 4.

[10] All scriptural quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994).

[11] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho,* 67. See translation with note on the lacunae of the text in *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho*, Thomas B. Falls, trans., revised by Thomas P. Halton, Michael Slusser, ed. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 103.

would kill Christ.[12] Second, although Renaissance artists depicted the nude Christ child countless times, including the preparatory scene of the knife approaching Jesus on the eighth day, no Renaissance painting depicts the Christ child, when clearly older than eight days, as circumcised.[13] Third, the birth of "modern theology" in the writings of Kant and Schleiermacher removed Christianity from the Jewish flesh of Jesus of Nazareth.[14] Fourth, having entered the liturgical calendar by the sixth century in the West,[15] this feast of the Octave of Christmas/Circumcision of the Lord was renamed "Mary, the Mother of God" after Vatican

[12] *Dialogue with Trypho,* 16. It can also be noted that some second and third-century heretics who claimed to be Christians altogether denied the Jewishness of Christ and his real flesh—two principal characteristics of Jesus at stake in the circumcision. See esp. Tertullian's response in arguing from the Lord's circumcision in *Against Marcion*, bk. 4, ch. 7, and *On the Flesh of Christ*, chs. 2 and 5.

[13] Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ,* 165–67.

[14] See R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology,* ch. 3: "Christian Divinity without Jewish Flesh: Kant and Schleiermacher" (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 57–80. As to my own reading of Kant and Schleiermacher, I have found a few passages particularly frightful. Kant believed that Judaism has "no unity of concepts" with the ecclesiastical faith of Christianity. For him, Judaism "is not a religious faith at all" and was completely forsaken by Christianity, which was grounded upon "a wholly new principle." See Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone,* Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 116–18. Schleiermacher claimed that we who have "actual experience" do not need the premonitions of the Old Testament and so the Old Testament should be viewed as an appendix to the New Testament—and that only for historical reasons. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* trans. from the second German edition, H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Stewart, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 611.

[15] The early sixth-century Caesarius of Arles preached that Christ "wanted to fulfill all of the precepts of the Law, and on the eighth day, *which we commemorate today*, He willed to be circumcised in His body." See his sermon 191, "On the Circumcision of Our Lord," in *Saint Caesarius of Arles: Sermons*, vol. 3 (187–238), Mary Magdalene Mueller, trans., The Fathers of the Church, vol. 66 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1973), 25–26. Earlier, Augustine preached a homily on the circumcision of the Lord on a day of *sollemnitas*. See his Sermon 196A in *Sermons* III/6 (184–229Z) on the Liturgical Seasons, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century,* Edmund Hill, trans., John E. Rotelle, ed. (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1993), 64–67, and 75, no. 1. The feast was established by the early fifth century in Alexandria. Cyril preaches: "*And today* too we have seen Him obedient to the laws of Moses, or rather we have seen him Who as God is the Legislator, subject to His own decrees." See his Homily 3 on Luke, the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord, in *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, R. Payne Smith, trans. (Astoria, NY: Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983), 55–58.

II. The liturgical concilium expressly intended that the circumcision observance be "completely eliminated."[16]

Given this uneasiness, it may not be so surprising that little theological work has been done on the circumcision of the Lord in recent years. Many modern writers on the life of Christ quickly passed over it or completely ignored it. Consider this nineteenth-century representative of dismissing Christ's circumcision. "It was a strange, separate, unaccountable Bloodshedding," comments F. W. Faber, "standing, as it seems, in a peculiar relation to the other Bloodsheddings, as it was not only no part of the redemption of the world, but was utterly detached from the Passion."[17] Finally, some critical biblical scholarship has not served the mystery of Christ's circumcision well. For example, Raymond Brown's magisterial study of the infancy narratives dismisses the theological importance of the circumcision in Luke 2:21 as foreign to the evangelist and even posits that it has "no legal context" in Luke's Gospel.[18]

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[16] Before the Tridentine reforms, Roman sacramentaries and lectionaries have the January 1 heading *In octavas Domini*, while Gallican books have *In circumcisione Domini*. This latter title appeared in the Tridentine Missal until 1960 when it was replaced with the Octave of Christmas. Recovering a Marian emphasis in early Roman antiphonals, Rome changed the feast to "Mary, Mother of God" in 1969. See Pierre Jounel's essay "The Year" in *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, vol. 4, *The Liturgy and Time,* new ed., Aimé Georges Martimort, ed., Matthew J. O'Connell, trans. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 84, no. 18. Annibale Bugnini records in the first concilium report from 1965: "It was agreed that the Gallican theme of the Circumcision should be completely eliminated." *The Reform of the Liturgy,* Matthew J. O'Connell, trans. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 306–7, no. 5. Given that one finds this revealed event as a feast in various ancient (and doctrinally divided) Churches in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, the classification of the circumcision of the Lord as "the Gallican theme" seems belittling. Also, see the January 1 preface for the early Roman Rite in Jean Deshusses, *Le Sacramentaire Grégorien: Ses Principales Formes d'Après les Plus Anciens Manuscrits,* Spicilegium Friburgense 16, vol. 1 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg, 1971), 498, no. 1527. It begins, *"Cuius hodie circumcisionis diem et nativitatis octauum celebrantes."*

[17] Frederick William Faber, *Bethlehem,* new ed. (Philadelphia: The Peter Reilly Co., 1957), 336. This book has on the same page: "He needed not the rite. He required no ceremonial covenant with God, who was God himself. That Flesh needed no consecration, which was already united to a Divine Person. . . . [T]he drops that were shed were not shed to the saving of souls."

[18] Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke,* new updated ed., The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 432. Brown's opinion seems strange given Luke's concern for legal observances in the infancy narrative, and Lk 2:21 alludes to the circumcision law given in Gn 17:12 and Lv 12:3.

The modern oblivion toward the Lord's circumcision requires that a renewed attention itself be a soteriological work. Accordingly, the subtitle of this essay, "Saving Mystery," connotes two aspects of the essay's purpose. By "Saving Mystery," it explores the soteriological implications of this mystery of Christ receiving in his flesh the sign of "the everlasting covenant" given to Abraham (Gn 17:7, 13, 19). Moreover, in pondering the circumcision of the Lord, we "save" its mystery from oblivion and perform the Marian task in theology of keeping these things in our heart (cf. Lk 2:19, 52). In both aspects, we can take St. Thomas Aquinas as our guide.

St. Thomas Aquinas and the Lord's Circumcision

St. Thomas quotes a favorite Aristotelian dictum when discussing the ceremonial precepts in the Old Law: "It belongs to the wise to order."[19] In doing any study of the *Summa theologiae*, one would do well to step back first and see how the topic to be studied fits within Aquinas's ordered plan, a sapiential theology reflecting the Blessed Trinity's own work. Such a survey not only gives us something of Thomas's methodology, but can also inform us as to the theological significance that Thomas accorded a subject.[20]

In the *tertia pars*, where Thomas treats our way back to God, he innovatively arranged his material on the Savior himself (1–59) into two categories: the mystery of the incarnation, according to which God became man for our salvation (1–26), and the things that our Savior, God incarnate, did and suffered (27–59).[21] Distinguished by their formalities, these categories should not be seen as a sharp dichotomy between doctrinal Christology and soteriological scriptural narrative.[22] Rather, knowing who the Lord Jesus is, one can see more clearly the significance of what the Savior did or underwent.[23]

[19] *ST* I–II, q. 102, a. 1: *cum sapientis sit ordinare,* taken from *Metaphysics* I, 2. Cf. St. Thomas's use of it to begin his *Summa contra Gentiles.*

[20] For an accessible overview of the *Summa theologiae*, see Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais, *Knowing the Love of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

[21] See the prologue to the *tertia pars*. Vital to my interpretation is St. Thomas's phrase: *de his quae per ipsum Salvatorem nostrum, idest Deum incarnatum, sunt acta et passa*. We can see this pairing of action and passion in key moments of the *Summa*'s soteriology.

[22] See John F. Boyle, "The Twofold Division of St. Thomas's Christology in the *Tertia Pars*," *Thomist* 60 (1996): 439–47.

[23] In expounding the mystery of the incarnation in questions 1–26, Thomas did of course borrow from other sources besides the conciliar teachings. Of special note, Thomas gives the *sed contra* of *ST* III, q. 2, a. 5 from the office of the Feast

The emphasis on Christ's deeds and sufferings underscores the special meaning that the traditional axiom *Omnis Christi actio nostra est instructio* in St. Thomas's soteriology.[24] In St. Thomas's understanding of the Incarnate Word, "all Christ's actions and passions work instrumentally by the power of his divinity for human salvation."[25] The context for Aquinas's encompassing statement is *Summa theologiae* III, q. 48, a. 6's "whether the passion of Christ worked our salvation through the mode of efficiency?" Reflecting the *tertia pars*'s plan to treat the things that the Savior did and suffered, Thomas expands the horizon in the article, moving from the passion to all of Christ's life. Thus, in considering the passion of Christ, Thomas steps back to redescribe in terms of instrumental efficient causality all of Christ's acts and sufferings. This of course would include his circumcision. He repeats this expansion of looking back to all of Christ's life from the perspective of the cross when asking, "Whether we are liberated from sin through the passion of Christ?" In *Summa theologiae* III, q. 49, a. 1, Thomas writes that the passion of Christ liberated us from sin through efficient causality because his flesh was the instrument of divinity, "from which his passions and actions worked by divine power to expel sin."[26] This is another reason why *all* of the life of Christ, as recorded in the Gospel, has such importance in St. Thomas' soteriology.[27] As Aquinas knows, "the least suffering of Christ

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of the Circumcision. Here Thomas writes that the Church sings, *"Animatum corpus assumens, de Virgine nasci dignatus est."* I am grateful to Michael Dosch, OP, for this reference.

[24] Thomas quotes this phrase at least seventeen times. See Richard Schenk, *"Omnis Christi Actio Nostra est Instructio,"* in *La Doctrine de la Révélation Divine de Saint Thomas d'Aquin, Studi Tomistici,* no. 37, Leo Elders, ed. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 104–31, esp. 111. Most pertinent to this study, Thomas quotes it in treating objections to the circumcision of the Lord in *In IV Sent.* 1, 2, 5, 3 and *ST* III, q. 37, a. 1.

[25] *ST* III, q. 48, a. 6. Quia vero humanitas Christi est divinitatis instrumentum, ut supra dictum est, ideo ex consequenti omnes actiones et passiones Christi instrumentaliter operantur in virtute divinitatis ad salutem humanam. For understanding this, see Schenk, "Omnis Christi Actio," esp. 127–28.

[26] Tertio, per modum efficientiae, in quantum caro secundum quam Christus passionem sustinuit est instrumentum divinitatis, ex quo ejus passiones et actiones operantur in virtute divina ad epellendum peccatum.

[27] Aquinas also speaks of this in terms of merit. *ST* III, q. 8, a. 1, ad 1: Et ita actiones ipsius ex virtute divinitatis fuerunt nobis salutiferae, utpote gratiam in nobis causantes et per meritum et per efficientiam quondam. St. Thomas believes that Christ merited our salvation from the moment of his conception. Having dealt with this in *ST* III, q. 34, a. 3, Thomas repeats this important point in the context of how the merit of the passion removes obstacles from us. See *ST* III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2.

would have sufficed for redeeming the human race from all sins."[28] Yet, as Aquinas makes clear elsewhere, only with the Spirit's work in our hearts can we be made capable to receive the doctrine of the Incarnate Word.[29]

When beginning his treatment of the things that Christ did or suffered, St. Thomas distinguishes four considerations: things pertaining to Christ's coming into the world, things pertaining to the course of his life in this world, things pertaining to his departing from this world, and things pertaining to his exaltation after this life.[30] Thomas then subdivides the first consideration into four areas: the conception of Christ, his nativity, his circumcision, and his baptism.[31] Significantly, he ranks the circumcision alongside the three other mysteries of the greatest prominence in Christ's life before his public ministry. In his article on the circumcision, he lists seven reasons—which astounds various commentators.[32] These reasons that he systematized from his patristic research in the *Catena aurea* offer a fascinating beginning in re-searching the bodily reality of salvation in Israel's Messiah. Moreover, Thomas's attention to this bodily reality should not be overlooked from his rather complex development on circumcision in the Old Law.[33]

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[28] *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad. 3. *[U]na minima passio Christi suffecisset ad redimendum genus humanum ab omnibus peccatis.* Yet, Thomas never mentions the blood that was drawn from the circumcision, a reason popular in the thirteenth century. Cf. the *Pie Pellicane* verse from the *Adoro te: cuius una stilla salvum facere/totum mundum quit ab omni scelere.*

[29] See Aquinas's insight on the Spirit in his *In Ioannem* 14, lect. 6, and his Athanasian reading of Christ's circumcision for our circumcision in the Spirit in *ST* III, q. 37, a. 3, ad. 2. Cf. his *In Romanos* 2, lect. 4.

[30] Prologue to *ST* III, q. 27.

[31] Ibid. Note how Torrell, *Le Christ en Ses Mystères,* 41, recognizes Thomas's positioning of circumcision—but Torrell does not follow that fourfold structure. Instead, his outline has the title for the first part's fourth section: *"La manifestation du Christ à la naissance et au baptême."*

[32] For example, see Gilbert Narcisse, "Les enjeux épistémologiques de l'argument convenance selon saint Thomas d'Aquin," in *Ordo Sapientiae et Amoris: Image et Message de Saint Thomas d'Aquin,* Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira, ed. (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1993), 143–67, esp. 148–49. Narcisse suggests that Aquinas gathered all the possible interpretations for these seven reasons. However, besides consulting Aquinas's *Catena aurea* on Lk 2:21, see the exposition of Lk 2:21 by the team of Hugh of St. Cher in the *Postilla* and the January 1 entry of the *Golden Legend* by Bl. James of Voragine.

[33] In *In IV Sent.* 1, 2, 4, 2, Aquinas believes that the sacrament of circumcision worked *ex opere operato* by the power of Christ's passion. He later denies this unique status of circumcision in the Old Law, but also changes his mind as to the power of circumcision before Christ. In his mature position of *ST* III, q. 70, a. 4, Aquinas subscribes to the sacrament of circumcision the grace that removes all

From this basis in Aquinas, the next section relates the circumcision to Jesus' baptism. To be sure, the circumcision can be related to other mysteries in the Messiah's life, especially to the nativity through nuptial aspects of divine love, to the passion through aspects of sacrificial blood, and to the resurrection through aspects of renewal of the body on the eighth day.[34] Of course, the crucifixion and rising from the dead indisputably have prominence in the New Testament witness and in Aquinas's soteriological account.[35] Nevertheless, only the baptism will be discussed here so as to demonstrate one part of a broader appreciation for Jesus' body in his saving deeds and sufferings as Israel's Messiah. Moreover, the circumcision and the baptism are here studied only under the aspect of obedience.[36] This approach is inspired by St. Thomas's understanding of Jesus' perfect obedience for our salvation. Aquinas takes St. Paul's statement and applies it to Jesus: "I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law" (Gal 5:3).[37] Jesus is the Son of God sent by the Father to be born under the Law, that is, to be circumcised and bound to the whole Law, in order to give the freedom of adoption in the Spirit (cf. Gal 4:4). By his circumcision, therefore, Jesus wanted to be perfectly obedient to the Father through the whole Law—an obedience that indeed would fulfill all righteousness promised to Israel and given in mercy to the nations. As St. Paul says, "For I tell you that Christ became a minister of circumcision to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm

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sin and enables one to resist all sin. See Richard Schenk, "Covenant Initiation: Thomas Aquinas and Robert Kilwardby on the Sacrament of Circumcision," in *Ordo Sapientiae et Amoris*, 555–93. See Aquinas's pivotal treatment from his commentary on Romans with analysis in Steven Boguslawski, *Aquinas's Commentary on Romans* 9–11 (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1999), esp. 142–50. Also, in contrast to many scholastics, including Duns Scotus, Aquinas does not label Judaism a heresy. Aquinas furthermore accords the Jews of his time the right to practice the Mosaic Law (*ST* II–II, q. 10, a. 11). For the supersessionism of Duns Scotus not taken into account by Pomplun, "Israel and the Eucharist," see Scotus, *In IV Sent.* 3, 4, "Whether the Institution of Baptism Annuls *(evacuet)* Circumcision?"

[34] The five mysteries of the nativity, the circumcision, the baptism, the crucifixion, and the resurrection can be meditated as the mysteries of the New Adam's nakedness, as suggested to me by Lawrence J. Donohoo, OP, in his discussion of connecting Pope John Paul II's catechesis on Genesis with the life of Christ.

[35] Matthew Levering gives a lucid explanation of Aquinas's account of Christ's passion as fulfilling Israel's Torah. See his ch. 3, "The Cross of Jesus Christ," in *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 51–79.

[36] Obedience proceeds from the use of the will, and Aquinas holds that Jesus willed in his human nature from his conception. See *ST* III, q. 34, a. 2.

[37] See the use of Gal 5:3 in the preface to *ST* III, q. 37, and in *ST* III, q. 40, a. 4.

the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Rom 15:8–9).[38]

The Circumcision and the Baptism: The Obedience for Fulfillment

When John the Baptist protests Christ's request for baptism, Christ replies, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15). Both in his circumcision and in his baptism, Christ demonstrates the perfection of obedience.[39] This was the perfect obedience of the New Adam who did not grasp at his equality with God, but emptied himself by the Father's will in the incarnation and remained faithful to that will even to death on the cross.[40] This obedience in both the circumcision and the baptism can be considered under four common characteristics: It initiates a new kind of kenotic life for the God-made-man that lasts until his death; it makes Christ's immediate subjection to his Father "mediated"; it makes him appear as a sinner in need of ablution; and it is undertaken not only in solidarity with sinners, but also in redemption for sinners. After discussing these four characteristics, this section will conclude by showing the relevance of the Thomistic account of Christ's circumcision as obedience to the Law for the contemporary debate on Jesus' faithfulness to the Law.

Kenotic Obedience of the Son of God until the Cross

Both the circumcision and the baptism of our Lord are kenotic acts of obedience, each inaugurating Christ into a new way of life that culminates in his death. In the circumcision, Christ was made obedient under the Law. He who as Lord spoke to Abraham, according to his divinity, and who was the promised descendant of Abraham, according to his humanity, received Abraham's circumcision in following and fulfilling Abraham's life-long obedience.[41] He who spoke to Moses from the burning bush

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[38] I have altered the RSV in order to give a more literal reading of the Greek for "minister of circumcision."

[39] Ambrose writes that Christ "had received circumcision to fulfill the Law, and had come to baptism to fulfill justice." See his letter to Justus 20/7 (written before 381) in *Saint Ambrose: Letters*, Boniface Ramsey, trans., Carol Harrison, ed. (London: Routledge, 1997), 105–14.

[40] Cf. Phil 2:8.

[41] The Venerable Bede preaches, "For the one who now cries out in a terrible but saving way through the evangelist, 'Unless a man shall be reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,' is the one who previously cried out through his law, 'A male, the flesh of whose foreskin is uncircumcised, that soul

and was himself the end of the Law began to observe the Law.[42] He, the Circumciser of all, who commanded his namesake Joshua to circumcise, was himself circumcised in the flesh.[43] A revelation in the Gospel especially serves to emphasize this divine kenosis in obedience. At the circumcision, "he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Lk 2:21). As St. Bernard preaches, his divinity was proclaimed in this name of Jesus, the name of salvation revealed by heaven before his incarnation.[44] Thus his entire life of human obedience would give us the divine name of our salvation.

This account of the circumcision prepares for a theological understanding of the baptism. In the baptism, Christ was obedient in undertaking his public ministry. The four Gospel accounts agree that Christ's encounter with John the Baptist at the Jordan marked the public beginning of a mission that culminated in his death. Looking back from the faith of the Church, it is indeed an astounding act of kenosis. He who was the Lord of sea and sky submitted himself to be washed in the Jordan. The Fathers loved to speak of this baptism as an epiphany of God's Triune power.[45] Like heaven giving the name of Jesus in the infancy narrative,

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shall vanish from his people because he has made my pact null and void.' " *Homilies on the Gospels*, bk. 1: *Advent to Lent,* Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, trans. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 105.

[42] Catherine of Siena prays, "You who framed our law submit yourself as one obedient to the law to give us an example of humility. Let us who are your creation, then, be ashamed for being hard of heart, for not being obedient to this law while you, our God, obey it." See Prayer 25 in *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena*, 2nd ed., Suzanne Noffke, trans. and ed. (San Jose: Authors Choice Press, 1983), 225–26.

[43] St. Ephrem sings,

> "Let the eighth day that circumcised the Hebrews
> confess Him Who commanded His namesake Joshua
> to circumcise with flint the people whose body [was] circumcised
> but whose heart was unbelieving from within.
> Behold on the eighth day as a babe
> the Circumciser of all came to circumcision.
> Although the sign of Abraham was on His flesh,
> the blind daughter of Sion has disfigured it."

See his Hymn on the Nativity, 26 in *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, Kathleen E. McVey, trans. (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 208–9.

[44] Especially see his "First Sermon for the Circumcision," *Sermons for the Seasons & Principal Festivals of the Year*, vol. 1, priest of Mount Melleray, trans. (Wesminster, MD: The Carroll Press, 1950), 423–29.

[45] See Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), esp. 45–49, 118–19.

the heavens open at the baptism, sending forth a dove to rest upon him as Christ's Sonship is heard in proclamation. Thus his entire public ministry of human obedience would reveal the Trinity for our salvation.

The Immediate Subjection of Christ to His Father is "Mediated"

Jesus' circumcision and his baptism, as it is recorded in the synoptics, reveal that his obedience to the Father is "mediated."[46] That is, the Son's perfect obedience in his human will to the Father is expressed in obeying persons other than the Father. In the circumcision, we see Christ obedient to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph—just as he would be when he returns from the Temple at the age of twelve.[47] Moreover, Christ's circumcision professed his obedience to the Father through his observance of the Law. He who was always in union with the Father chose to have the relationship "mediated" by the Law, even in ceremonial laws. Accordingly, Christ was first circumcised, and then was presented in the Temple, observed the true meaning of the Law's Sabbath, went up to Jerusalem for the feasts, paid the Temple tax, etc. A homily from the Venerable John Henry Newman on the feast of the Circumcision of the Lord supports this interpretation. Evoking the words of Christ at this baptism, Newman offers a paraphrase from the perspective of Jesus: "It is becoming in Me, the expected Christ, to conform in all respects to all the rites and ceremonies of Judaism, to everything hitherto accounted sacred and binding."[48]

The conforming of Christ's human will to another's appears again at the baptism when Christ submits himself to John the Baptist. The radical nature of this act appears in some critical scholarship that does not hesitate to speak of a "master-disciple relationship of John the Baptist and Jesus."[49] Moreover, the baptism ushers in the public ministry, the time of service to all. Christ shows himself to be the obedient Son of the Father by being the servant of all—in preaching, healing, and even dying as a slave. He expresses his obedience to the Father most fully by obediently becoming the victim of the unrighteous in order "to fulfill all righteousness."

[46] The fourth evangelist so stresses the direct relationship between the Son and the Father that this account has the Baptist's witness of the Spirit's descent without any mention of the baptism of Jesus.

[47] Lk 2:51.

[48] John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons,* vol. 2, sermon 7, "Ceremonies of the Church," on the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 69–78.

[49] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses," *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990): 359–74, esp. 371.

Looking Like a Sinner in Need of Ablution

Christ's obedience at the circumcision and baptism made him look like something that he was not: a sinner. Coming in the "likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3), Jesus appeared to need an ablution from something imperfect about him in his birth. From a Jewish point of view, all newborn males are imperfect until their foreskins are removed and are marked with the sign of the covenant.[50] From a Christian stance, all children inherit Adam's original sin, but Jewish boys had that original sin removed by circumcision.[51] By being submitted to circumcision, Jesus looked like any other Jewish boy—his foreskin being a sign that he needed physical and spiritual healing.

His appearance as a sinner recurs on the banks of the Jordan River where John offers a baptism for repentance. Sinners came to John, confessing their sinfulness, but Jesus comes as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). He submits as if the river would cleanse his soul from various sins that he had committed. The sinless one thus receives not only the remedy for original sin at the circumcision, but also the baptism for actual sins at the Jordan. On both occasions, he commits himself totally to solidarity with sinners "yet without sinning" (Heb 4:15).

Redemption for the Children of Adam

Christ not only came to be with sinners, he came to redeem the children of Adam from their sins.[52] As Paul says, "For our sake he made him to be

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[50] Rabbinic Judaism bases this lack of completion in part on Gn 17:1: "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless." By obeying God in the covenant of circumcision, Abraham can then be blameless. See *Genesis Rabbah* 46, 1. Also, the rabbis noted how God made creation in a way that needed further preparation from the part of human beings. As wheat needs grinding, so likewise does man need to be finished off. See *Genesis Rabbah* 11, 6. So serious is the covenant of circumcision that Gn 17:14 gives the punishment of being "cut off from his people" for a boy not to be circumcised.

[51] See the excerpt of Pope Innocent III's letter *"Maiores Ecclesiae causas,"* in DS 410. This follows the Venerable Bede: "For you of the brotherhood ought to be aware that, under the law, circumcision offered the same help of a health-giving treatment against the wound of original sin that now, in the time of revealed grace, baptism is wont to do, except that they [who were under the law] could not yet enter the gate of the heavenly kingdom, until by his coming he who gave the law could give his blessing." Homily 1.11 on the Gospels, 104–5.

[52] In his Homily 3 on Luke, St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "in order that He might expiate the guilt of Adam's transgression, He showed Himself obedient and submissive in every respect to God the Father in our stead, for it is written, *That as through the disobedience* . . . (Rom 5:19)." *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke,* 55–58.

sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). Both the circumcision and the baptism show Christ's redemptive obedience at work. In his circumcision, Christ gave an example of obedience for sinners to imitate. This can be explained both in terms of obeying precepts at the proper time and in terms of obeying the precept to be circumcised in one's heart.[53] Yet the Lord's circumcision is not only an example for our spiritual circumcision. It also exercises efficient instrumental causality. That is, the divinity works through the obedience exercised in Christ's humanity when he submitted to circumcision and it thereby causes within us the interior seal of the new covenant, the Holy Spirit within our hearts. Therefore, the one who was born under the Law redeems those under the Law, and indeed all people, by his perfect fulfillment of the Law.[54]

Likewise, his baptism is an example of obedience for us to imitate by being baptized. But, as St. Ignatius of Antioch writes, Christ was baptized so that by his suffering the waters would be cleansed.[55] More than simply giving an example, Christ at his baptism instituted the sacrament of Christian baptism to forgive all sins and punishment due to sin. This sacrament works by the power of the Blessed Trinity so that others can receive the Spirit of adoption, have the heavens opened, and know God as their Father. St. Thomas explains that this causality instituted at Christ's own baptism was operative immediately, but it became necessary for salvation only after the passion and resurrection of Christ.[56]

Christ's Obedience to the Law: Aquinas and Historical Jesus Scholarship

The obedience of Jesus has always been of great concern in Christian thinking about salvation. Nevertheless, Christians have had varying atti-

[53] For St. Thomas's teaching on obedience to precepts at the proper time, see *ST* III, q. 37, a. 1, ad. 2. Illustrating the link between circumcision of the foreskin and circumcision of the heart, Blessed Fra Angelico paired the command from Jer 4:4 with Lk 2:21 in his depiction of this mystery. See panel 4, "The Circumcision," from Fra Angelico's "The Scenes from the Life of Christ," in Jacqueline and Maurice Guillaud, *Fra Angelico: The Light of the Soul* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1986), fig. 166.

[54] Cf. St. Bonaventure, *The Tree of Life,* in *The Works of Bonaventure, Mystical Opuscula*, José de Vinck, trans. (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960), 107. "For this reason, also, He received the mark of circumcision: that, coming *in the likeness of sinful flesh,* he might *condemn sin in the flesh*, and become our Salvation, and our eternal Justification, by beginning his life with an act of humility, the root and guardian of all virtues." Also, cf. Gal 3:10–18; 4:1–7.

[55] Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians* 18.

[56] *ST* III, q. 66, a. 2.

tudes toward Jesus' obedience to the Law, symbolized by the circumcision. For much of historical scholarship on Jesus in the nineteenth century, the abandonment of Christian dogmatic readings did not yield portraits of a Jewish Jesus obedient to the Law—but a man who sought to overturn Judaism. The Jewish scholar David Novak summarizes:

> [T]he new, more secular emphasis on Jesus's ethical teaching often led to a new denigration of Judaism as "legalism," as opposed to the Christian ethics of love. . . . In this move, the influence of Kant's subordination of religious doctrine to practical (ethical) reason is apparent and was often explicitly acknowledged. In following this line, liberal Protestant thinkers had a double-pointed prong with which to put down Judaism and Roman Catholicism on the grounds that they were both essentially legalistic ("heteronomous" in the pejorative Kantian sense).[57]

Countering this modern rejection of Jewish particularity, a recent trend in historical Jesus scholarship places him more firmly as a Jew within the complexity of Israel's movements and peoples of two millennia ago. Exegetes such as Geza Vermes, Paula Fredriksen, and E. P. Sanders are some of the most influential writers in English to focus on Jesus as an obedient Jew—albeit with different emphases and understandings.[58] Here, the exegetical work of Sanders can be fruitfully compared with the theological perspective of Aquinas on Jesus' obedience to the Law.

In the influential study *Jesus and Judaism*, Sanders devotes a chapter to the Law.[59] Sanders notes that "many New Testament scholars . . . have concluded that Jesus explicitly and consciously opposed the law."[60] Having reviewed the evidence concerning the temple, burial of father, relations with sinners, divorce, Sabbath, handwashing, and food, Sanders concludes, "We have found one instance in which Jesus, in effect, demanded transgression of the law: the demand to the man whose father had died. Otherwise the material in the Gospels reveals no transgression by Jesus."[61] Sanders thinks that Jesus accepted obedience to the Law as the norm, and

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[57] Novak, Jewish-Christian Dialogue, 75.

[58] Geza Vermes has done considerable work in many books to show Jesus' Jewishness. Fredriksen pokes fun at the various exegetes that show Jesus as disobedient to Jewish Law for their concerns of feminism, radical egalitarianism, politics of compassion, or antinationalism. See her *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 197–214. For E. P. Sanders, see esp. his *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

[59] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism,* ch. 9, 245–69.

[60] Ibid., 246. Sanders discusses the positions of G. Bornkamm and W. G. Kümmel, in ibid., 30f and 36f.

[61] Ibid., 267.

he posits the fact that Jesus' followers did not know Jesus to have directly opposed the law.[62] In fact, within Sanders's various categories of historical probability, he places the statement that Jesus "did not explicitly oppose the law" to be in the highest category, certain or virtually certain.[63] However, Sanders situates Jesus within Jewish restoration eschatology so that Jesus did not see the Law as the definitive and final act of God. Jesus' own prophecy concerning the destruction and rebuilding of the temple especially shows that.[64] Therefore, Sanders is sympathetic to those who say that Jesus exercised a sovereign freedom over the law.[65] Nevertheless, this freedom over the Law did not mean that Jesus advocated a disobedience to the Law.

What is striking is the affinity between Sanders's historical research and Aquinas's theology about Jesus' observance of the Law. Aquinas holds that Christ was conformed to all the precepts of the Law, for he was circumcised to express the intent of keeping the whole Law.[66] According to Thomas, precisely *by observing the Law* Jesus showed that its consummation and end come in himself.[67] Some frequently cite Jesus' controversial acts on the Sabbath to show that he revolted from the Law. Aquinas sees it otherwise. In relation to the Sabbath, Thomas gives three reasons to support how Jesus did not disobey the Law: The prohibition to work does not forbid divine work, but human work; the prohibition does not exclude works necessary for health; and the prohibition does not pertain to the worship of God. For Aquinas, Jesus is completely obedient—as the Savior who ushers in the new covenant of grace to fulfill the Law. While Sanders and Aquinas certainly approach the question differently, they come to a substantial agreement—in opposition to the nineteenth-century historical Jesus scholarship mentioned above by Novak.

In the one case that Sanders finds Jesus transgressing the Law, that of not letting the disciple bury his father, Aquinas has another perspective. In a sense, Aquinas uses the methods of the rabbis known by Sanders.[68] Like them, he interprets the different levels and meanings of scriptural passages without saying that the Law is wrong or that it was disobeyed.

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62 Ibid., 325 and 336.

63 Ibid., 326.

64 Sanders thinks that the saying of Mt 26:61 and Mk 14:58 is probably authentic; see Sanders, ibid., 251 and 61–76.

65 Ibid., 249 and 267. Sanders mentions James D. G. Dunn.

66 *ST* III, q. 40, a. 4. Aquinas developed his understanding of this after writing *In IV Sent*. 1, 2, 2, 1. In his earlier position, Aquinas thought that Jesus showed himself *supra legem* in such things as the observance of the Sabbath and touching the leper.

67 This is the second reason in the corpus of *ST* III, q. 40, a. 4.

68 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism,* 248.

In fact, he shows the true meaning of the fullness of the Law through a citation of Old Testament texts. Commenting upon Matthew 8:21–22, Thomas knows that the burial of one's father is a precept regarding the honor owed to a father.[69] Yet, he cites 1 Kings 19:20 about Elijah's call of Elisha. Elisha stipulates, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Elijah replies, "Go back again," only to find that then Elisha slaughters his oxen and follows Elijah. The Law thus gives an example of the obedience of discipleship being a higher order than familial obedience. Moreover, Aquinas quotes again from the Old Testament, this time from Psalm 45:10, "Forget your people and your father's house." Not only is Jesus therefore obedient to the Law, but also he calls his disciples to the fullness of that obedience, which places God above obligations to family. By offering Psalm 45 as his support Aquinas further alludes to divine marital love as the call for obedience. Psalm 45 is a royal marriage psalm that Aquinas understands as the marriage of Christ and the Church, begun when the Son of God united to himself a human nature.[70] In the human obedience that has Jesus as the saving exemplar, Christian disciples can entrust themselves completely to the divine Bridegroom whose love is made present in that same Christ our Lord, circumcised and obedient for our salvation.[71]

Accordingly, Aquinas is able to give a well-argued scriptural account for the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaching:

> Jesus, Israel's Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfill the Law by keeping it in its all-embracing detail—according to his own words, down to "the least of these commandments." . . . The

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[69] *In Matt.* 8, lect. 3. Although the comments on Mt 5:11–6:8 and 6:14–19 do not come from Aquinas, the rest of the commentary is a *reportatio* of Thomas's teaching. See Gilles Emery's analysis in Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas,* vol. 1: *The Person and His Work,* Robert Royal, trans. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 339.

[70] In his commentary on Ps 45(44), Thomas writes, "Est ergo materia hujus Psalmi de quisbusdam sponsalibus Christi et Ecclesiae, quae quidem primo initiata fuerunt quando Filius Dei univit sibi naturam humanam in utero virginali: Psal. XVIII: *Et ipse tanquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo*. Unde eadam est materia hujus Psalmi et libri qui dicitur Cantica canticorum." For a beautiful translation of this commentary, see *Thomas Aquinas: The Gifts of the Spirit*, Benedict M. Ashley, ed., Matthew Rzeczkowski, trans. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995), 101–33.

[71] Jews and Christians made many connections between circumcision and marriage through the Lord's covenant, as the rite does have an anthropological basis in preparation for marriage. For a *locus classicus* in Jewish and Christian meditations, see Ex 4:24–26.

> perfect fulfillment of the Law could be the work of none but the divine legislator, born subject to the Law in the Person of the Son.[72]

The Law's fulfillment culminates in the saving passion, where Jesus offers himself as the supreme sacrifice in obedient love.[73] However, the fulfillment of the passion should not be seen outside of the context of Jesus' life-long observance of the Law, which he undertook in the circumcision. Without this perfect bodily fulfillment by Jesus of the Law, the Christian claim to salvation *in the body of Christ* seems disconnected from the everlasting covenant of circumcision.[74]

Concluding with the Questions and Beauty of Saving Mystery

Recalling part of Rahner's question cited at the beginning of this essay, "What do we hear of Christ's Circumcision?," we might answer: Not much, but surely a lot can be said. A study of the Lord's circumcision can reach beyond the limitations of certain modern preconceptions that have dismissed this mystery. Such a study can recover a profound awareness of this mystery's contributions to our salvation, an awareness exhibited in St. Thomas's theology.

Yet ours is an agenda for the needs of beginning the third Christian millennium. Applications from this mystery can be drawn through asking the right questions. Can the circumcision of Jesus, the enfleshed Son of God, help us better to understand the everlasting covenant of Genesis 17 in a fulfilled, rather than superseded, sense? After a long custom of decrying Jewish circumcision after Christ as deadly to the soul,[75] can a renewed appreciation for Jesus' circumcision now give us a more refined outlook on circumcision today? Can the circumcision of Jesus aid us in developing a theology of Christ's body that sees him as the New Adam, naked and without shame for our salvation? Can this mystery enable us to re-examine our bodily appropriation of salvation, especially in the "circumcision of Christ"

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[72] See the treatment of Jesus and the Law in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 577–582; cf. Mt 5:17–19.

[73] Cf. Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple,* 51–79.

[74] Note Levering's astute observation in ibid., 88: "Aquinas's view that one can continue to fulfill the laws, but now according to the new meaning and fullness that Christ gives them, might seem to be relativizing the laws by 'spiritualizing' them. Yet far from 'spiritualizing' the laws, Christ's passion—and human beings' participation in Christ's passion through the sacraments and through the life of charity—gives a radically *embodied* fullness to the laws." [original emphasis].

[75] Cf. Augustine, Epist. 82, to Jerome.

received in baptism (Col 2:11)? Can Jesus' circumcision contribute to feminist questions about the salvation of women?

For a final meditation that can advance our re-searching, this essay offers John Milton's poem on the circumcision of the Lord.[76] Perhaps this poet of Puritan England can rescue us from a lingering puritanism that in part caused the obliteration of the circumcision's theological remembrance. It demonstrates that by beauty we can better behold the circumcision within the mysteries of Christ.

Ye flaming Powers, and winged Warriours bright,
That erst with Musick, and triumphant song
First heard by happy watchful Shepherds ear,
So sweetly sung your Joy the Clouds along
Through the soft silence of the list'ning night;
Now mourn, and if sad share with us to bear
Your fiery essence can distill no tear,
Burn in your sighs, and borrow
Seas wept from our deep sorrow,
He who with all Heav'ns heraldry whileare
Enter'd the world, now bleeds to give us ease;
Alas, how soon our sin
Sore doth begin
His Infancy to sease!
O more exceeding love or law more just?
Just law indeed, but more exceeding love!
For we by rightfull doom remediles
Were lost in death, till he that dwelt above
High thron'd in secret bliss, for us frail dust
Emptied his glory, ev'n to nakednes;
And that great Cov'nant which we still transgress
Intirely satisfi'd,
And the full wrath beside
Of vengeful Justice bore for our excess,
And seals obedience first with wounding smart
This day, but O ere long
Huge pangs and strong
Will pierce more neer his heart.

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[76] John Milton, "Upon the Circumcision," *The Student's Milton,* rev. ed., Frank Allen Patterson, ed. (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1946), 18–19.

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The Psalms as a Particular Mode of Revelation*

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Introductory Remarks

IN THIS ARTICLE, I wish to revisit an ancient understanding of the psalms as a God-given way to enter into living contact with him by allowing him to reveal himself in the words of prayer he has given to his people. In this act of revelation we are also revealed to ourselves and the disorders of our soul are healed. St. Athanasius of Alexandria, writing to his friend Marcellinus, points to this quality of the psalms by which our own emotions are rectified and brought into deeper contact with the realities that are mediated there by the word of God.

> But in the Book of Psalms, the one who hears, in addition to learning these things, also comprehends and is taught in it the emotions of the soul, and, consequently, on the basis of that which affects him and by which he is constrained, he also is enabled by the book to possess the image deriving from the words. Therefore, through hearing, it teaches not only not to disregard passion, but also how one must heal passion through speaking and acting.[1]

Our age and our culture are in need of this medicine. We are in a post-modern world, that is, a world that is consciously seeking to go beyond and to rectify the aberrations of modernity. Allow me to cite the remarks of two Catholic thinkers who reflected on the deficiencies of a modernism

* This was first given as a lecture of the Joel E. Smilow Chair for Studies in Catholic–Jewish Relations at the John Paul II Cultural Center, Washington, DC. The author holds that chair.

[1] Athanasius, *The Life of Anthony and the Letter to Marcellinus,* Richard J. Payne, ed., Robert C. Gregg, trans. (New York: Paulist, 1980), 108.

that is still with us and part of us. Christopher Dawson speaks of our culture as "detached from spiritual aims and values" and "faced with a spiritual crisis of the most acute kind"; an atmosphere in which there is no "spiritual sense of religion as a objective reality transcending our private experience." Paul Gallagher, who is citing Dawson, adds: "Modernity in this light, is a case of unbalanced growth, where the mentalities of secularism and technology are incapable of healing the broken unity of a previously spiritual culture." The second Catholic thinker, Romano Guardini, spoke of the loss of "an objective sense of belonging to existence," and the need for "root virtues of earnestness and gravity grounded in truth."[2]

There are efforts being made to overcome the isolation effected by modernity while retaining those positive advances, which it did achieve. From a Christian perspective this means moving ahead to a deeper understanding that human existence is a gift that finds its perfection in responding to God, the Giver, and in accepting the communion with the Trinity that is offered to us in Christ. But this also means seeking communion with others in a mutual relationship of generosity and receptivity. In brief, the challenge is to recover a genuine interiority.

It is worth noting, then, in this regard how strong is the insistence in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* that an important aspect of our moving out of the dilemmas of modernity is to retrieve and develop the *interpersonal* dimension of our knowledge of the truth. This is particularly stressed in §32:

> Human perfection does not solely consist in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, rather it finds its place in a living habit of self-giving and fidelity towards others. In this very fidelity in which a man learns how to give himself, he discovers full certainty and firmness of spirit. But at the same time knowledge that comes through confidence and depends on interpersonal esteem is not given without reference to truth: a man, by believing, is committed to the truth which another has shown him.[3]

Our journey back to truth begins by recognizing that truth is most often found in a relationship of trust in another that leads us to a move-

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[2] I am taking these quotes from Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols. An introduction to Faith and Culture* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1997), 79–80. who is citing Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 217; and idem, *Understanding Europe* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1952), 241–45.

[3] Translation from Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, eds., *Restoring Faith in Reason. A New Translation of the Encyclical Letter Faith and Reason of Pope John Paul II Together with a Commentary and Discussion* (London: SCM Press, 2002).

ment of self-giving and of commitment to the truth that the other has shown us. We must be clear about this: Thinking is an activity of the person and not merely of the mind, and thus the highest form of truth is found as an interpersonal possession. The interpersonal dimension of truth finds its perfection in relation to God. The foundation for this, as Thomas Aquinas teaches, is that God is known implicitly in every act of knowledge. Thus, in answering the question whether all things desire God himself, Aquinas confronts the objection that all things are ordered to God as knowable and desirable, but not all beings capable of knowledge actually know God, therefore neither do they actually desire him. This is his answer:

> All knowing beings implicitly know God in whatever they know. For just as nothing is desirable except as it bears a likeness to the First Goodness, so nothing is knowable except as it bears a likeness to the First Truth.[4]

To move from an implicit knowledge of God to an interpersonal knowledge of him requires faith, an entrusting of oneself to him and an acceptance of what he says. What John Paul II said above in regard to interpersonal knowledge among human beings is super-eminently true of our relation to God: "knowledge that comes through confidence and depends on interpersonal esteem is not given without reference to truth: a man, by believing, is committed to the truth which another has shown him." This is truth in and through a communion of persons, and this communion with God comes about through prayer. It is for this reason that, as I hope to show now, the psalms are a revelation of God and of humanity, they are the word of God bringing us to that interpersonal sharing in which we enter into the awesome presence of God.

Psalm 86

I have chosen this psalm for several reasons. First, it is an intensely personal psalm that appropriates the prayer tradition of Israel even while

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[4] *De Veritate* 22, 2, ad 1. The same thing is said in the *Summa theologiae* (I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1). "To know that God exists in a certain common and confused way is implanted is us by nature, inasmuch as God is the happiness of man. For man by nature desires happiness. And whatever is naturally desired by man is naturally known by him. But this is not to know in an absolute way *(simpliciter)* that God exists, just as to know that someone is coming is not to know Peter even if it is Peter who is indeed coming." Translation from Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God,* David Schindler, ed., Marc Sebanc Alexander Dru and Cassian Fulsom, trans. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 75.

it expresses the suffering of one person. The pronoun "you," not usually necessary in Hebrew, is addressed to God six times within a tone of direct address sustained throughout the whole psalm. Secondly, though it is personal, it is not individualistic. Not only is the covenant with Israel evoked by several allusions but also Israel's role in regard to the nations is set forth with prophetic insight. Finally, by the place assigned to it in the final edition of the Psalter, it acquires an added dimension of meaning that is important for Israel's self understanding and that of the Church as well.

The discussion of the place of the psalm within a series of "editions" may strike some as a new notion. Serious work, building on observations as ancient as the rabbinic writings, has shown that the clearly visible editorial work that assembled the Psalter into five "Books" was only part of the profound and refined organization of the psalms that gave them an enhanced meaning that includes and transcends the meaning that the individual psalm had in its own right.[5] Collecting independent works and placing them in mutual context is much like placing bells or chimes in a carillon in order to create a specific sound effect: Collecting psalms and placing them together serves to create a "meaning effect." This is part of the Holy Spirit's action in revealing both God and humanity to us.

Commentators usually classify Psalm 86 as an "individual lament," meaning a prayer in time of suffering that appeals to God for help. The psalm is surely that, but it is also a psalm whose central section (Ps 86:10–13) includes praise and prayer both for the universal reign of YHWH and for deeper personal conversion that includes an expression of confidence in God's saving help. The title given to the psalm is, "A Prayer of David," or less likely, "A Prayer for David," thus making it one of approximately seventy-two psalms which bear his name in their title.[6] The attribution fulfills various functions and is often, as here, an editorial designation meant to evoke the figure of David, the ideal king, the model of prayer, the embodiment of Israel and, as Ezekiel 34:23–24 promises,

[5] There are five "books" which make up our present psalm collection: 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, 107–50. These books, perhaps modeled on the five books of the Pentateuch, are clearly delineated by a doxology at the end of each collection: Pss 41:14; 72:18; 89:53; 106:48; Pss 148–50. For an introduction to this aspect of research in the psalms, one may consult Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series* 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); and J. Clinton McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, England: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1993).

[6] Some manuscripts omit the title, probably correctly, at Psalm 133 while the Septuagint has the title over fourteen other psalms.

the king who will be "prince" and "shepherd" when God himself reigns over his people.[7]

We may ask the question, then, who is praying this psalm and in what context? Most likely, this prayer was first composed by a person who was able effortlessly to incorporate phrases from other psalms and other places in Scripture in order to express his plight before God, to pray for a universal manifestation of God, "the worker of wonders," and to ask for the gift of a unified heart. The fact that the psalm was known and ultimately found a place in the Third Book in the collection of 150 psalms may point to a use in the public worship of Israel where the people prayed as one, appropriating as individuals and as a corporate group, the words of the psalm. At one point, the individual was identified editorially with David in whom all Israel found expression. Thus, psalms such as this became the prayer of all Israel in its centuries of suffering during the exile and after. People prayed individually or collectively in union with the prayer of David in whom they saw themselves summed up. This ability to identify with David, the king, as he prayed in suffering was part of the heritage of Israel that enabled the Christians, seeing in Jesus the new David, to pray in union with him and with one another. This mystery was plain to St. Augustine who, commenting on this very psalm, had this to say:

> When we speak to God, praying, we do not separate the Son from him, and when the Body of the Son prays it does not separate its head from itself. Thus it is he, the one Savior of his Body, our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God who prays for us and prays in us and is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our priest, he prays in us as our Head, he is prayed to by us as our God. Let us then, recognize our voice in his and his voice in ours.[8]

In what follows, we must try to bear in mind all the levels of the psalm as it is now present to us. There is the level of the suffering poor man, then that of the community identifying itself with him, and then the personification of the community in David, and then in Jesus. Because the first level is the foundation of all the rest, I will devote most of my time to it, allowing the word of God to reveal him as we enter into it, and in this process we will come to understand ourselves in dialogue and in communion.[9]

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[7] For an early study on this point, see James Luther Mays, "The David of the Psalms," *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 143–55.

[8] In Psalm 85,1 (Corpus Christianorum Latinorum 39, 1176 [Turnholt: Brepols, 1956]).

[9] A good commentary on this psalm, one sensitive to many of its dimensions and competent in discussing its technical aspects, can be found in Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 374–84.

The First Section of the Psalm: Verses 1–7

A prayer of David.

Incline your ear, O YHWH
for I am poor and needy
2 Preserve my soul
for I am loyal.
Save your servant, you are my God,
save this one who trusts in you.
3 Be gracious to me, my Lord,
for I call to you all day long.
4 Make the soul of your servant glad,
for to you, my Lord, I lift up my soul.
5 For you, my Lord, are good and forgiving
and great in loyal-love to all who call to you.
6 O YHWH listen to my prayer,
be attentive to the sound of my pleading.
7 On the day of my distress I call to you
for you will answer me.

Something mysterious happens when we call to someone: We place ourselves and the other in a new manner of relating. This call activates for the first time, or reactivates and deepens for a time past counting, the transition from relation to relationship: to a mutual presence and attention in love. The psalm begins, as do so many, by a direct call and a plea that the Other turn as well to me. This interior gesture is so instinctive that even atheists make it: It is an indication of our implicit knowledge of the First Goodness and the First Truth, and of the fact that we know that this Other is personal and capable of response. Here, of course, we are not dealing with a vague and implicit knowledge but are calling to the God of the covenant, YHWH.

The psalmist, with whom we are identified, asks that the Lord "pay attention" to him because he is poor and needy. A poor man is one who finds confidence in the experience of dependence upon God. He is poor, and therefore has a special right to God's care who, as the King of Israel, must, as he has instructed the earthly kings of Israel, care for those who cannot assert their own rights. Thus, the ideal king to come "shall rescue the needy when they cry out, and the poor when they have no one to help them" (Ps 72:12). However, even when we wish to place ourselves in such a position of being poor and needy, we find in all that we have absorbed from our culture a pervading cynicism that fears such vulnerability and intimacy. But this is the word of God, given to us precisely to enable us to move beyond the illusions of our culture to a position of

communion and trust. It is also being prayed by "David" as the embodiment of the people, and as Augustine often remarks, as Christian see it, there is one person praying:

> All the members of Christ, the body of Christ diffused throughout the world, are like a single person asking God's help, one single beggar, one poor suppliant; and this is because Christ himself is that poor man, since he was rich became poor, as the apostle tells us: *Though he was rich he became poor, so that by his poverty you might be enriched* (2 Cor 8:9).[10]

The original petition of direct address is followed by three more: "preserve my soul . . . save your servant . . . be gracious to me." And three reasons are given: "for I am loyal . . . you are my God, [I am] one who trusts in you . . . I call to you all the day long." The word I have translated as "loyal" here is the famous word, *ḥāŝid*, deriving from the noun, *ḥesed*. The more one encounters this word in the Scriptures, the more it yields its secrets, revealing God as affectionately faithful to his promises and covenant, indeed making him present in the very act of "doing *ḥesed*." God is faithful even when his people are unfaithful; he does not revoke his choice of them, and this consistency is seen as his mercy. The response to God's *ḥesed* can be described as obedience born of trust, gratitude, and praise: all personal actions that lead to intimacy.[11] This word is one of the leitmotifs of the psalm.

The fifth direct address of petition asks: "Make the soul of your servant glad, for to you, my Lord, I lift up my soul." In Hebrew the word "soul" *(nepeš)* evokes the whole *physical* human being, living, desiring, relating, but seen, as it were, from the inside. This is not far from the way "subjectivity" is used in modern theological anthropology. The interior gesture of lifting up one's soul implies an act of entrustment, of confiding oneself to God expecting protection and guidance. We read in Deuteronomy 24:15 that a person who hires a day laborer must not withhold his pay: "For he is poor and he is lifting up his soul for it." Just as the poor man

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[10] *On Psalm 39,18.* Translation is from St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms,* vol. 2, John E. Rotelle et al., eds., Maria Boulding, trans. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 221.

[11] H. J. Stoebe describes the reality mediated by the word *ḥesed* in these terms: "an expression for magnanimity, for a sacrificial, humane willingness to be there for the other. . . . It is a given that *ḥesed* always has to do in some way with the life of the other, and one expects and hopes from the recipient of such *ḥesed* a similar willingness that surpasses the obligatory." Stoebe, "hesed," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 2, Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 456

lifts his soul for his wages, which he needs for his existence, so the one praying directs his whole being toward God who alone is his trust and the object of his longings.[12]

Intimately linked with the interior gesture of "lifting one's soul," of entrusting oneself to the Author of the Covenant, is the prayer for guidance, of needing YHWH's covenant faithfulness, as the psalm later says: "Teach me, YHWH, your way; I will walk in your faithfulness." It is remarkable that this same type of petition for guidance is found as well in the only other two psalms that have the phrase "To you I lift up my soul."[13]

After the five requests the reason for our confidence is expressed: "For you, my Lord, are good and forgiving and great in *ḥesed* to all who call to you." There has already been an allusion to the psalmist's covenant relation to God in the phrase "You are my God," echoing and individualizing the formula: "I will be to you a God, and you will be to me a people." Now we find the first of two allusions to a crucial turning point in Israel's relation to God, one whose narrative, while difficult to piece together on our western norms, is fraught with an anxious question: Can a broken covenant be renewed? This is a question often pondered in the postexilic editing of the sacred tradition.

According to Exodus 32:1–29, while Moses was receiving the Law from the Lord, the people rebelled against its very first commandment and persuaded Aaron to make a golden calf which they then considered their god and the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt. On the next day, Moses interceded for them asking that he himself also be blotted out of the Book of Life if that were how God so intended to punish his people. God answered, "Him only who has sinned against me will I strike out of my Book" (Ex 32:33), but then added that he would no longer travel with his people, "because you are a stiff-necked people, otherwise I might exterminate you on the way" (Ex 33:3). Moses continues to plead with the Lord who finally accedes to Moses' request that the Lord continue to go with his people: "This request too which you have made, I will carry out, because you have found favor with me and I know you by name" (Ex 33:17). Moses then goes further and asks for a guarantee that God will keep his promise: "Do let me see your glory!" (Ex 33:18, compare Jn 14:9). The Lord explains that Moses cannot see his face

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[12] I owe this insight and part of its wording to A. A. Anderson, *Psalms* (1–72) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 207.

[13] Ps 25:1, 4, *et passim*; note the prayer for Israel in the editorial conclusion; Ps 143:8. On the contrary, the man who "lifts his soul to Fraud" cannot climb the mountain of the Lord (Ps 24:4).

and live, but that he will make all his beauty pass before him and will pronounce his name. The medieval Jewish commentator Rashi echoes a long tradition that God did this in order to teach Moses and others how to call upon him when they intercede for the people.

> The time has arrived when you shall see of My Glory so much as I will allow you to see according as I wish and *therefore* I find it necessary to teach you a set form of prayer. Just now when you felt the need to pray for mercy on Israel's behalf you besought me to remember the merits of the patriarchs and you thought that if the merits of the patriarchs are exhausted there is no more hope—I will therefore cause all the attributes of my goodness to pass before you on the rock whilst you are placed in the cave . . . to teach you the formula when praying for mercy even though the merits of the patriarchs should be exhausted.[14]

The Lord instructs Moses to ascend the mountain alone and to cut two stone tablets "that I may write on them the commandments which were on the former tablets which you broke" (Ex 34:1). When the tablets were cut:

> YHWH came down in a cloud and took his stand with him there, and he called on the name of YHWH. And YHWH passed before his face and he called out: YHWH, YHWH, compassionate and gracious God, long suffering and great in *ḥesed* and faithfulness; keeping *ḥesed* for a thousand generations, lifting off wickedness, rebellion and sin, and not declaring the guilty guiltless, visiting the sins of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third generation and a fourth (Ex 34:5–7).

This formula, then, appears at a crucial moment, that is, when Moses is pleading for a restoration of the Covenant and asking specifically that the Lord give a sign that he will continue with his people. The Lord answers with this self-description. Rashi remarked that YHWH gave to Israel this means of calling upon him when the sin of Israel is so great that "the merits of the patriarchs" appear to be exhausted. This seems to be borne out in Numbers 14:8, the only other occurrence of the full formula, where Moses is pleading for the people who had just openly refused to believe the Lord and enter the Promised Land as he had commanded them.[15]

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[14] Translation from *Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth, and Rashi's Commentary*, Rev. M. Rosenbaum and Dr. A. M. Silberman, trans. (Jerusalem: Silberman Family, 1930), *Exodus* 190.

[15] In addition to the phrases in Psalm 86, which we will discuss now, resonances of this formula can be found in Pss 103:8; 145:8, and in Joel 2:13; Nah 1:3; Neh 9:17; Jonah 4:2.

There is yet another echo of this formula in our psalm, it is in verse 15 and thus serves to frame the central section: "And you, my Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and great in *ḥesed* and faithfulness." It is certainly true that the psalmist, and any one of us, could evoke these words in an individual appeal for mercy. But there is more. This psalm "of David" is clearly inserted in the midst of five psalms attributed to "the sons of Korah." Preceding our psalm we find Psalm 84, a pilgrim song longing for the presence of God in the temple, and Psalm 85, which expresses a plea for restoration and revival. On the other side of Psalm 86 there are three "Korah psalms." Psalm 87 celebrates the mystical reality of Zion as the mother of all the nations;[16] Psalm 88 is a bitter prayer of distress delivered by Israel; and Psalm 89 expresses an anguished questioning of God's faithfulness to his Covenant with David now that the monarchy has disappeared.[17] In our Psalm, therefore, David, that is, an individual and the nation (the "servant" of YHWH: verses 2, 4, 16) through the mouth of David, is pleading for a restoration of Israel and recalling to the Lord his self-description of being "great in *ḥesed* to all who call to you," and "a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and great in *ḥesed* and faithfulness." In our individualistic worlds such identification with God's people as a whole, such anguish over our communal inability to show to the world the *ḥesed* of God, is both a challenge and a revelation of God who awaits such prayer from us. It is also a revelation of ourselves as the other dialogue partner who can be enabled by the word of God to say in the last line of this section, "On the day of my distress I call to you *for* you will answer me."

The Second Section of the Psalm: Verses 8–13

8 There is none like you among the gods, my Lord,
no deeds like yours.
9 All the nations whom you have made
will come and bow down before you, my Lord,
and glorify your name.
10 For you are great, and a worker of wonders;
you are God, you alone.

[16] For a commentary on this psalm and its significance for a grasp of Israel's later self-understanding in regard to the nations, see Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, *The God of Israel and the Nations. Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms,* Everett R. Kalin, trans. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), chapter 5.

[17] Psalm 89 is the concluding psalm of Book III of the present psalter and it also concludes the "Messianic Psalter" that extends from Psalm 2, includes Psalm 72 (the last psalm of Book II). For a brief treatment of this see ibid., 159.

11 Teach me, YHWH, your way;
I will walk in your faithfulness;
unify my heart for the fearing of your name.
12 I will thank you, my Lord, my God, with all my heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.
13 Yes, your *ḥesed* is great in my regard;
and you will rescue my soul from the depths of Sheol.

It is remarkable that immediately following a personal and communal plea for the renewal of the covenant, we find this section whose first part, in anticipation of the following psalm,[18] is a celebration of the universal rule of YHWH to be realized through Israel, itself embodied in David, the servant. In Psalm 22, also "of David," we find the same rhythm: a lament that begins with the cry of a suffering servant, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" and ends by celebrating God's universal reign in words evoked as well by Psalm 86: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to YHWH; *all the families of the nations will bow down before him*" (see verse 9 above).

Israel is praying in David, and David in Israel. The rhythm of suffering and exaltation is found throughout Israel's history and is held up for all here to see and enter into by the word of God. Experiencing the time of exile and postexile when there is "no prince, prophet or leader" (Dan 3:38), and longing for restoration, Israel remembers the future when the ideal king will come will come and "All kings shall bow down before him, and nations shall serve him" (Ps 72:11). But as these horizons expand through suffering it becomes clear that the renewal of the covenant for which Israel is praying is somehow going to include all the nations: "And of Zion they shall say: 'One and all were born in her' " (Ps 87:5). That is why: "There is none like you among the gods, my Lord, no deeds like yours. . . . For you are great, and a worker of wonders; you are God, you alone."

Then, as we arrive at the hinge at the center of this section of the psalm, the direction changes again. Closely connected with this statement of universality is a petition whose spiritual depth reaches to the very core of a person and a people: "unify my heart for the fearing of your name."[19] The heart is the "within" of a person. "In addition to feelings and emotions, the

[18] Some of the expressions in Psalm 87 are as follows: "I tell of Egypt and Babylon among those that know the Lord; of Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia: 'This man was born there.' And of Zion they shall say: 'One and all were born in her.' "

[19] For the reading "unify," preferred by a majority of commentators, rather then "rejoice," as read by the Septuagint and some modern translations see Tate, Psalms 51–100, 376.

heart contains as well our memories, thoughts and ideas, our plans and our decisions."[20] Robert Sokolowski, following the lead of Robert Spaemann, speaks of the heart in these terms.

> [The heart] "is the ground for the turning away from the good," and it is also, conversely, the ground for the turn toward the good and toward truth. Furthermore according to Spaemann, this turning toward or turning against is not just a response to an argument or to an idea, but a response to someone—God, and in the more immediate situation, Christ—who discloses the truth. . . .
>
> This concept of the heart is an ultimate "explanation" for the turn toward truth or darkness, and it is original in the New Testament: "The heart is the unfounded foundation in a sense for which there is no thinkable or conceptual equivalent in antiquity."[21]

It would seem to me that the newness of the New Testament understanding of "heart" lies rather in uncovering new depths of a reality already known and spoken of clearly in the Old Testament. In this instance, as in so many others, the Old Testament provides the initial understanding that is subsequently needed and taken up in the context of Christ.[22] To pray that God "unify" the heart, then, is to pray that this "unfounded foundation" within us, the center of our personhood, cease to be divided between good and evil and respond with integrity to someone, to God. In one movement of prayer, the carefully constructed isolation of modern and postmodern humanity is done away with: We are confronted with our ineluctable orientation to Transcendence and its accompanying responsibility.

The psalmist prays that *God himself* work the change, in keeping with the whole of the biblical understanding that a "pure," that is, a single or

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[20] Jean de Fraine and Albert Vanhoye, "Coeur," in *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, Xavier Léon Dufour, ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1971), 176–79.

[21] Robert Sokolowski, "The Autonomy of Philosophy in *Fides et ratio*," in *Restoring Faith in Reason: A New Translation of the Encyclical Faith and Reason of Pope John Paul II together with a Commentary and Discussion*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons and Laurence Paul Hemming (London: SCM Press, 2002), 277–91. Sokolowski is drawing upon Robert Spaemann, *Personen: Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen 'etwas' und 'jemand'* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag, 1996), 288.

[22] This process is aptly described by Bernard Lonergan, by the term "sublation," using an insight he attributes not to Hegel but to Rahner: "What sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context." Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 241.

simple heart, is literally the creation of God: "A pure heart *create* for me, O God, renew in me a steadfast spirit" (Ps 51:12). What Israel is praying for in both Psalm 86 and in Psalm 51 is not only moral integrity, but the new covenant as described in Jeremiah 31:31–34, Ezekiel 11:19–20 and 36:25–28 and elsewhere which will be characterized by an action of God putting within the heart the power to respond wholeheartedly to himself. In this, the allusions to the renewal of the covenant found in the use of YHWH's self proclamation are made more explicit. Such a renewal will bring about the perfection of the "fear of God," that is, "fearing his name" in a deep experience of the presence of God mediated by single-hearted submission to the expression of his holiness and glory. Holiness is the inner mystery of God's unique being. Glory is the outer manifestation of that mystery, and Name is the expression of his being that he shares with us as a gift.

At this point, the poor man, David, Israel, promises to the God of the covenant (*my* Lord, *my* God) that he will thank him with all his heart, probably alluding to the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4–5 calling us to love YHWH "with all your heart." He promises further: "I will glorify your *name* forever." Is it too much to understand that at this level of the psalm's history and in the light of the universalist psalm edited to follow, Israel is here looking forward to that future restoration when the nations, as just described in verse 9, will, along with Israel, pray for an undivided covenant heart and also "come and bow down and *glorify your name*"?[23] In any event there is little doubt that the prayer is moving in that direction.

The Third Section of the Psalm: Verses 14–17

14 O God, those who defy you have risen against me
and a pack of ruthless men seek my soul;
they do not put you before their eyes.
15 And you, my Lord, are a merciful and gracious God,
slow to anger and great in *ḥesed* and faithfulness:
16 turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant,
and save the son of your handmaid.
17 Work a sign on my behalf
that those who hate me will see and be confounded
that you, YHWH, have helped me and consoled me.

These concluding verses return to the theme and the tone of the opening section, but they have to be understood in the light of the intervening

[23] I owe this suggestion to Lohfink and Zenger, *The God of Israel,* 158.

section. In the opening verse the poor man asks God to look on his plight: The words are almost exactly the same as Psalm 54:5, also a psalm "of David." It is difficult to determine whether there is any conscious borrowing and, if so, in what direction it took place, but in both contexts, and especially in Psalm 86, the poor man's suffering has become that of the king and the nation. Those who seek his life are ruthless and godless.

In even stronger terms than in the opening section, verse 15 evokes the covenant gift of God's self identification as "merciful, gracious, slow to anger, great in *ḥesed* and faithfulness." This is followed by a prayer: First that God save his servant, one born in his house so to speak, and secondly, that he work a sign in the sight of the servant's enemies so that those who hate him will be confounded and see that YHWH has helped and consoled him. What kind of a "sign" is being asked for? Clearly, some act of God delivering the poor man from his persecutors, but then also one that restores kingship to David and to Israel, and perhaps one that draws the nations into the privileges of Israel as the psalm announces. This prayer is still echoed in the Catholic liturgy that prays during the Paschal Vigil: "grant that the fullness of the whole world pass over to the status of the sons of Abraham and the dignity of Israel."[24] For Christians, therefore, the looked-for sign in its definitive expression is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this event the poor man has been heard (Ps 22:25), David reigns, and Israel has begun its vocation as the gathering place of a new people. As Charles H. Dodd expressed it some fifty years ago:

> It is this far-reaching identification of Christ, as Son of Man, as Servant, as the righteous Sufferer, with the people of God in all its vicissitudes that justifies the apparent employment of the early Church of Hos. vi. 1–3 as a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ; for the resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of Israel of which the prophet spoke.[25]

Conclusion

As the word of God, the psalms bear us along into a dialogue with God as we make their words our own. I said at the outset that our present day isolation needs this divine help in order to recover an orientation toward the Transcendent. Our journey toward an openness to dimensions beyond the reach of our instrumental reason is not so much a movement back as it is a movement forward, born along by the word of God that is

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[24] Prayer after the Third Reading (Ex 14:15–15:1).

[25] C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures. The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1952; reprint, 1961), 103.

both ancient and always new. Such a movement, as *Fides et Ratio* reminds us, requires trust and a recognition that all knowledge is an implicit invitation to communion with God.

Psalm 86, as understood on the various levels of its inclusion within the faith life and worship of Israel and its inclusion among the collection of psalms, is capable of bringing us into a living contact with God. First, we are led to understand that underlying all address to God is the fact that God has taken the initiative. From out of the depths of his ineffable holiness he created, and then he chose. There is none among the gods like him; there are no deeds like his. Needing nothing, yet seeking our love, he is, by his own self declaration, good and forgiving, merciful and gracious, great in *ḥesed*, stable, truthful, and loyal. Yet, the power of his love can make itself felt as wrath and anger: He hates sin and will allow human evil to play itself out in order finally to bring us back to him.

God acts in the realm of human history and his action is self-authenticating. It is continued when, by this same action, the event is transposed into word, not as an empty memorial but as a living presence of God. When we pray we are brought to enter more deeply into those actions through the words he gives us. We hear him call to us and teach us to pray: "Return, Israel to YHWH, your God. Yes, you fell in your own evil. Take words with you and return to YHWH. Say to him: Lift off this guilt, take the good, and we will restore to you the fruit of our lips. (Hos 14:2–3). We learn that the presence of God does not leave us at ease but moves us to call out in our own suffering and that of those bound to us in God. We may be angry, disconsolate, humiliated, and frightened by our sins, but somehow we know that the initiative of God, his covenant, is unbreakable from his side. The very words he gives us lead us to become aware of his presence. For when the Holy Spirit anoints the word of God, then God is present and we pronounce his name: YHWH, Abba. Little by little we are led to affirm what we have always dimly known: God is to be trusted even when he is silent. In this covenant trust we recover and make more explicit an instinct for his awesome presence and his love that confounds our small expectations and meager thoughts.

But the psalms also reveal us to ourselves. We come to know our poverty and need, and are not afraid to own it. We realize that God has made a covenant and renewed it and that his promises are unalterable. We pray to be guided because we begin to understand the immeasurable consequences of our decisions: We are far greater than we wish to be—we do not want the responsibility that God has placed in our hands. Most importantly, the psalms in general, and Psalm 86 in particular, reveal to us our heart: that ineradicable place that is always open to God and that is

the locus of our relation to him. Our heart bears witness: No matter how we twist and turn and deny, by our inner decisions we will either move toward God or away from him. We pray to God, the only one who can accomplish such a thing, to unify our heart, to create a pure heart, so that we will worship and obey him and enter into that communion with him that opens up once again the world we have tried to close to him.

In this movement we also learn that we cannot pray as isolated monads. We belong to a people and we must carry the weight of that reality whenever we pray. Together we are the poor and needy man who prays for a universal sharing in the privileges of Israel, one day to be shared by us all in that moment when "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26). The radical wing of Islam accuses us, Christians and Jews, of having been false to our heritage and having succumbed to the isolation created by the philosophies we have let dominate us. This, they say, has led us to apostasy. When we look at the degree to which the closed system thinking of the world has shrunk our vision, we have to acknowledge the truth contained in this charge. Christian persecution, culminating in the Shoah, has sullied us all, perpetrators, onlookers, and victims, creating a present climate of uneasy manmade arrangements: guilt on one side, fear on the other. It may be that the thought of transcendence is too difficult for us. However, if we turn to God and together pray for a unified heart, we can show the world what a gift it is to know God's will, what a privilege to share a heritage. The steps from there are hidden in the same will of God. Perhaps what we experience now is God's anger, but as Abraham Heschel reminds us:

> God's anger is not a fundamental attribute, but a transient and reactive condition. It is a means of achieving "the intents of his mind." Inscrutable though it appears to the people, "in the end of days" they "will understand clearly" (Jer. 23.20).[26]

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[26] Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets,* 2nd ed. (New York: Perennial Classics, Harper Collins, 2001).

Of Men and Angels

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THOMAS AQUINAS teaches that angels are more in the image and likeness of God than are human beings. The basis for this resides in one's intellectual nature. "Thus the image of God is more perfect in the angels than in man, because their intellectual nature is more perfect." Man may "accidentally" be more in the image of God than are angels, for example, "in the fact that man proceeds from man, as God proceeds from God," but "absolutely speaking, the angels are more to the image of God than man is" (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 93, a. 3).

Now, obviously, angels do possess a higher intellectual ability than do human beings and so, again, they are obviously, in this sense, more in the image of God. While I am an ardent Thomist, what has bothered me for quite some time is that there is very little, if any, biblical warrant for saying that angels are more in the image and likeness of God. Nowhere in the Bible is such a statement made. If Aquinas is correct, why was this not made known within the Old or the New Testament revelation? Since such was not revealed, could it be that intellectual ability is not solely, or even primarily, the criteria for establishing a creature's relative likeness to God, and thus that human beings, and not angels, could be more like God?

My musings on this question were stirred anew when recently I read Aquinas's *Commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews*, where again, not to my surprise, he argues that angels are more in the image and likeness of God than are human beings. Nonetheless, I became, instinctively, more convinced that this is not so, but I could not figure out why. In frustration I said: "Holy Spirit, somewhere along the line you are going to have to teach me why men are more in the image and likeness of God than are angels." The thought that came immediately to mind was that it all

has to do with the giving of life. The following is, hopefully, a somewhat mature expression of my further musings on this issue.

I first want to examine the nature of God as a Trinity of Persons, for it is this Trinity of Persons in whose likeness human beings (and/or angels) are created. Secondly, I want to show that human beings are indeed created more in the image and likeness of God than are angels. Thirdly, I will discuss, in a somewhat random fashion, though I hope not totally illogical manner, what I consider various important theological spinoffs from this truth that have practical ecclesial and social/cultural consequences. This is not simply an esoteric issue!

The Fecundity of God

The one God is a Trinity of Persons, but not just any sort of persons. These Persons have names and two of them possess gendered names—the Father and the Son. The Father is the Father precisely because he begets the Son. The Father is a begetter; and so, by definition, necessarily is fecund. The Son is the fruit of the Father's fecundity. The fecundity of the Father resides in the Holy Spirit, in that, the Spirit proceeds from the Father as the paternal love of the Father in whose love the Son is begotten. If the Father did not love the Son in the Spirit, he would not have begotten him in the love of the Spirit. The Son is not fecund within the Trinity as is the Father, but the Son, as the perfect Son, loves the Father with the same love with which he himself is begotten, that is, in the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the Holy Spirit, the Son confirms the Father's fatherhood, for if he did not love the Father with the same love with which the Father loved him, the Father would not truly be the loving Father of a truly loving Son. This is one reason why the title "Holy Spirit" is not a gendered name for the Holy Spirit conforms (literally en-genders) the Father to be the loving begetter of the Son and conforms (literally en-genders) the Son to be the loving begotten Son of the Father. This is equally why the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as his paternal love for the Son and proceeds from the Son as his filial love for the Father.

Aquinas, following Augustine, principally sees the image of God in the mind or intellect, in that, "as the uncreated Trinity is distinguished by the procession of the Word from the Speaker, and of Love from both of these, so we may say that in the rational creatures wherein we find a procession of the word in the intellect, and a procession of the love in the will, there exists an image of the uncreated Trinity" (*ST* I, q. 93, a. 6). Now, this may be true, but in such an understanding what is missing, as the above demonstrates, is the radically personal and creative nature of this proceeding of the Word and the procession of this Love. We are not dealing,

within the Trinity, with mere concepts proceeding from an intellectual source, but with the constitutive inter-relationships of persons. At the heart of these inter-relationships, which ontologically constitute the persons and so define the persons as to who they are, is fecundity. The Father is the eternal loving source of all life, in that he eternally begets the Son in the love of the Spirit; and the Son would not be the eternal Son if he were not eternally begotten in the love of the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit would not be the Holy Spirit if he were not the eternal love that conformed (en-gendered) the Father to be the eternal loving Father of the eternal Son and the eternal love which conformed (en-gendered) the Son to be the eternal loving Son of the eternal Father.

Of Angels and Men

While this section will primarily focus on why human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, I first want to draw what is probably now an obvious conclusion. Angels are not, in the absolute sense, created in the image and likeness of God because, while they may most closely resemble his intellectual ability, they are unable to reproduce themselves. Aquinas himself teaches that each angel is his own species and is therefore, by definition, one of a kind. Angels, therefore, are not fecund in a manner analogous to that of God. Angels never beget.

While there is some Jewish and Christian traditional warrant suggesting that the angels were, in some manner, co-workers with the Father and the Son in the creation of the world, yet they are not authors of life themselves. Moreover, while the angels, as God's messengers, are instrumental in the imparting of divine revelation, both within the Old and New Testaments, and so nurturers and guardians of the subsequent salvific life of the Spirit within human beings, they are, again, not the generators of that divine life. Angels are creative in that they cooperate in the life-giving activity of the Trinity, but they are not creative in the sense that they are able to generate, as an essential part of their nature, life. While Angels may not be absolutely sterile, yet they are deficient in what is most at the heart of who God is as a Trinity of Persons—eternal fecundity wrought by eternal love.

Human beings are, in the absolute sense, created in the image and likeness of God precisely because they are fecund; they are life-giving. It is fascinating that Aquinas does say this as quoted above. There is "a certain imitation of God, consisting in the fact that man proceeds from man, as God from God." However, because Aquinas limits this "proceeding" to an "accident" within human beings and so not a substantial defining element as is their rationality, he refuses to allow such an ability to be an essential

element constituting them in the image and likeness of God. While Aquinas rightly does say that such an ability "presupposes the first likeness, which is in the intellectual nature; otherwise even brute animals would be to God's image," he forgets that it is the whole human person, body and soul, that is made in the image of God and not merely that part of him that is rational, for human rationality is itself dependent upon the bodily senses and the human brain. Human beings' ability to procreate rationally and lovingly is not something then apart from who they substantially are as human beings and so not something apart from who they substantially are as images and likeness of God. It is precisely because they can rationally and lovingly procreate that not only sets them apart from animals but equally that sets them above the "merely rational" angels.

It is not by chance then, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the Book of Genesis clearly states: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (1:27). Man as "male" and "female" is in the image and likeness of God, and "male" and "female" have to do specifically with fecundity, procreation, the begetting of life. This is accurately witnessed in God's very next words, a command that is in accord with his own very nature as a Trinity of Persons: "And God blessed them, and God said the them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' " (Gen. 1:28). To be in the image and likeness of God is to possess the ability to be fruitful. As the Father begot his Son in love, so male and female, in imitation of God, are to multiply, in love, their own kind. The ability to beget life is indeed at the heart of being in the image and likeness of God. It is human beings' ability to rationally and lovingly procreate, moreover, that authorizes their dominion over the whole of creation. God, as the author of all life, is the supreme Lord over all of creation, and those whom he has created after his own life-giving image he empowers to be his vice-regents upon the earth, rationally overseeing and dutifully husbanding, and so actively assisting, all else that brings forth life. Human beings, and not angels, possess divinely constituted cosmic authority.

Men and Jesus as Images of the Father

Based upon this truth that human beings are created in the image and likeness of the Trinitarian God in that they are able, rationally and lovingly, to procreate, I want now to begin a series of theological spinoffs. Now, my first spinoff will be controversial and the height of political incorrectness, but we must return to the Trinity by way of introduction.

While both men and women are created in the image and likeness of God in that together, as sexual beings, they possess the potential to bring forth life, yet man, in the restrictive sense of male, most images the Father. God the Father "makes" himself Father in begetting the Son for it is only in ontologically begetting the Son that he is constituted ontologically as the Father (not in the sense that he could not have been the Father, but rather in eternally begetting the Son he is eternally the Father). While a man cannot become a father apart from a woman, yet a man becomes a father in a different manner from which a woman becomes a mother. This is precisely the point: A man "makes" himself a father in the act of begetting, and in so making himself a father a woman "becomes" a mother, in that what is conceived in her is begotten by the father. A woman cannot "make" herself a mother for, unlike a man, she is not a begetter. It is specifically in man's potential ability to beget that he is the image of God the Father.

Having argued that men bear the image of God the Father, I want now to return again to the Trinity. The reason God the Father begets a Son is because the Son, like human fathers, must be a begetter as well if he is to be truly the perfect image of the Father. If God the Father begot a Daughter, then that Daughter, unlike him, would not be able to be a begetter, and so not the Father's perfect image. She would be dependent upon another for her fruitfulness. Of course, this is what we find in pagan mythology. Goddesses are always dependent upon some divine male consort for their fruitfulness. (This is equally why the term "Mother" cannot be substituted for the term "Father." If "God the Mother" actually existed, she would, by ontological necessity, remain sterile unless some male deity came to her aid, and so we would again return to an extreme form of pagan anthropomorphism.) But how is the Son of God a begetter and how does he manifest his perfect imaging of the Father?

Within the immanent life of the Trinity, while the Son is the perfect image of the Father, he could not manifest his perfect likeness to the Father as a begetter. However, the Father loved the Son so much that the Father created the world through his Son so that the Son could manifest his perfect likeness to the Father. Actually, the Father, if he were to create the world, had to do so through his Son because his Son is precisely the perfect likeness to the Father's creative and life-giving ability. The Father bears witness to his own and, in turn, his Son's fecundity in the act of creation. In the act of creation the Father allows his Son to become a "begetter" and so manifests his perfect likeness. Moreover, it is the live-giving love of the Holy Spirit, shared by the Father as begetter and the Son as the perfectly begotten begetter, who compels them to create,

freely and lovingly, other beings, especially human beings created in their own image and likeness.

However, it is not the act of creation that fully reveals the Son's perfect life-giving likeness to the Father. Rather, it is within the Incarnation and the work of redemption that the Son fully manifests himself as a life-giver and so the perfect icon of his Father. The Son, then could not have become an angel for, if he had done so, he could not have become a life-giver and so be unable to manifest his divine likeness to the Father—that of being a begetter. The Son had to become what was created in his own image. Thus, the Son of God had to become a man and not a woman, for it is man who bears the image of the Father, and so, if the Son is to reveal the image of the Father in a human manner, it must be as a man that he does so. Moreover, in becoming a man, the Son was able to reveal that he, too, like the Father, was inherently a begetter, a giver of life. (This is why it is theologically imprecise, if not actually erroneous, to say simply that the Son of God/Word became "a human being" rather than "a man." Jesus was obviously a human being, but it is only as man that the Son could authentically reveal himself to be the Son.)

Jesus, as the Son of God incarnate, by dying on the cross and rising from the dead made himself the redeemer of the world and so the begetting cause of eternal life. In union with the Father of life, he becomes of the author of new life, for the Church, the new Eve, in accordance with the Johannine imagery and reminiscent of Adam, is born from his pierced side. Moreover, because of Jesus' life-giving actions, the Father presented to him as bridegroom his bride, the Church. The Church testifies, as do all brides, to the life-giving actions of her bridegroom, for she raises up, through the Holy Spirit, sons and daughters for the Father. Thus, the analogical image of Christ, the new Adam bridegroom, and the Church, the new Eve bride, complements and corroborates the more literal notion of the risen Christ being, through the Holy Spirit, the life-giving head of his body the Church. Here the image takes on ontological depth for the risen Christ, in the unity of the Spirit, actually does become "one flesh" with his body the Church, and equally, through the same Spirit, gives life to that body.

This is obviously why Christian marriage is a sacrament. The indissoluble union of husband and wife symbolizes the fruitful indissoluble union of Christ and the Church, as his body. Equally, this is one of the reasons why sexual activity is morally virtuous only within marriage for it too symbolizes the life-giving activity between Christ and his Church and ultimately of the Trinity itself; and also then why all positive contraceptive sexual activity is immoral for it desymbolizes and so deconstructs

Christ's life-giving activity in union with his Church and similarly desymbolizes and so deconstructs human beings' fecund likeness to the Trinity. Moreover, this is why all homosexual activity is unbecoming of human beings as images of God for such activity is sterile and so fails to reflect both Christ's creative relationship to his Church and the loving and life-giving nature of the Trinity.

Mary as the Perfect Image

Now it might appear that this essay has become an exercise in establishing the superiority of the human male. While I have certainly attempted to express clearly the importance of maleness, one of the greatest theological spinoffs is equally the supreme importance of Mary and, with her, of all women. While men, including Jesus, bear witness to the likeness of God the Father in that they possess the ability to beget and generate life, yet, if we take fecundity or fruitfulness as the chief characteristic of human divine likeness, as this essay argues, then Mary in one sense becomes, from within the economy of salvation, the perfect exemplar of what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God. She does not image the Father, but what she does exemplify supremely, in a feminine manner, is human beings' fecundity.

Again, it would seem that the Son could not become an angel, but if he could do so, it would have to be done apart from the cooperation of another angel since angels by their very nature are not fecund. No angel could conceive the Son of God as an angel. Moreover, no man could contribute to the Incarnation of the Son, for no man possesses the capability to effect the Incarnation, that is, the coming to exist of the Son of God as man, and thus no man could fully exemplify the potential fruitfulness embedded within the human divine likeness or the extent of the life-giving nature of God. However, a woman could conceive as man and give birth to as man the Son of God—and did. So life-giving is the Father that the Son of God, through the engendering power of the Holy Spirit, could become man, and so fruitful is woman that only within a woman's womb could the Son assume, through the engendering Spirit, his manhood.

While Mary could not "make" herself the Mother of God on her own, as no woman is able to "make" herself a mother, yet, because she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and not by a man, she became the perfect image of the God's inherent fruitfulness. She became the perfect image of God's fecundity because, by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, she became the human mother of the Father's divine Son. Moreover, because Mary became the Mother of God by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, and not by man, she remains a virgin as well.

Mary is the Virgin Mother of God because she displays that woman's complete potential fecundity, and so her full divine likeness, resides not in her relationship to man but in her relationship to God. This is why the Church is exemplified foremost in Mary for only because Mary first became the Mother of God, by the power of the Spirit, and thus the Mother of Life, could the Church become the mother of all those begotten again of the Spirit and so born into the likeness of Mary's Son. Moreover, while men may bear the image of the Father in that they are begetters, yet all women, like Mary, bear the full image of divine fecundity and fruitfulness, in this sense that only in them is what is begotten conceived. It is from only within the wombs of women that all human life comes (or should come) forth.

Celibacy, Priesthood, and the Image of God

I have argued that human beings' likeness to the Persons of the Trinity resides specifically in their ability to rationally and lovingly bring forth life. If such be the case, what is to be said of those men and women, who, for the sake of the Kingdom, have vowed celibacy and so have forsworn procreative activity? Here I am not able to develop a theology of the religious life where men and woman, through their vow of chastity, image, in their unique respective ways, the divine likeness. Suffice it to say that, within the Church, non-ordained celibate men bear witness to and actively engage in fatherly activity and celibate women equally bear witness to and actively engage in nurturing and fostering new life in a properly maternal manner. What I would like to do is to explore briefly the truth that celibate priests image Christ as begetters.

Firstly, priests, unlike angels, are begetters, though now the life that they beget is the new life of Jesus' Spirit within men and women both within and outside the Church. This is done specifically in their preaching of the Gospel and in the celebration of the sacraments, particularly in the Eucharist. Within the Eucharistic liturgy, priests enact and so make present the life-giving activity, the begetting activity, of Jesus' death and resurrection. While all Christians can baptize because of their share in Christ's priesthood, yet only the ordained priest, within the Eucharist, fully symbolizes and so fully enacts the begetting and life-fostering activity of Christ's redeeming work in relation to his Church. Women are by nature not begetters and so it is not merely physically impossible but also metaphysically impossible for them to enact priestly actions that are, by their very nature, "begetting" actions, of which the liturgical action of the Eucharist is—Christ, through the priest, "making" himself the bridegroom of the Church, his fruitful bride.

Secondly, celibacy is an inherent part of these priestly begetting actions. While men who are married can and do become priests, the married priest conflates within himself, and so renders unfocused, the two manners in which a man is a begetter. He is an image of the Father, as are all men, in that he is able to beget children of his wife. He is also, as a priest, the image of Christ as the begetter of spiritual life. However, the very presence of a wife and children weakens and even subverts the primary vocational task of a priest, that of imaging Christ as the begetter of the new life of the Spirit within the Church. It is only the celibate priest as such who bears exclusive and singular witness that his whole life is modeled after Christ as the begetter and nurturer of the Spirit's life within the Church and the world.

While it is often stated that priestly celibacy is merely a Church discipline and so can be discarded at will, I am not convinced. As the above demonstrates, celibacy is intrinsic to the male priestly witness as a "begetter" after the manner of Christ, and, as such, it is much more than a mere canonical law. It specifies precisely the manner in which men, as priests, are in the image and likeness of the Father and so make present the live-giving actions of his perfect image, the risen Christ. Instead of seeing a development of doctrine in the normative sanctioning of a married priesthood within the Roman Catholic Church, I would argue that authentic doctrinal development, which is presently groaning to mature, will confirm that priests, by the very nature of their priesthood, ought normatively to be celibate, for only then is that priesthood exercised in its most complete fashion and to its fullest extent.

The Angels' Flawed Brief

In approaching my conclusion, it is necessary to examine a couple of scriptural passages that look to undermine my thesis that human beings are more in the image and likeness of God than are angels, passages that the angels themselves might employ in their own defense. The first resides in the fact that the procreative activity of human beings is limited to this life. "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven" (Mk 12:25). In this passage Jesus appears to assert two truths. Firstly, it is precisely human beings' ability to procreate that distinguishes them from angels. This I would agree with. It confirms my thesis. However, secondly, in heaven human beings will not procreate because they will be like angels, the seeming implication being that they will be raised to a higher status, that of being in the likeness of angels. Thus, angels are more in the image and likeness of God and human beings, having become like angels, will be more like God in

heaven than they were when on earth. While it is true that heavenly human beings will be like angels in that in heaven they will not be given in marriage and so procreate, I do not think that this necessarily implies that angels are therefore more in God's image.

In heaven, the risen life of grace perfects absolutely each human person. What a person was on earth comes to its heavenly completion. I would therefore argue that as Christ bears the glorious marks of his earthly life-giving passion as a sign of his salvific risen triumph over sin and death and, thus, to his supreme lordship, so each human being will bear a similar glorious mark that will designate his or her singular life-giving activity on earth. This mark, along with a new heavenly name, will reveal and designate precisely who this person is and in what life-giving activity he or she excelled so as to obtain eternal life. Moreover, as human beings are life-givers in various ways on earth so they do not cease to be life-givers in heaven. They may no longer procreate, but yet, as functioning risen members of the Body of Christ, they will still, in some real manner, nurture the life of Christ's risen body and they will each do so in a manner in keeping with their earthly vocations. As the risen Christ, the Head, nurtures perfectly, through the Holy Spirit, the risen life of the members of his Body, so each risen member, in union with Christ, nurtures perfectly, through the same Holy Spirit, the same risen life within of Christ's body. While angels will contribute to the life of Christ's body in heaven, they are not life-giving members of that body, specifically because they do not possess bodies. Moreover, since heaven consists in the perfect vision of and so the perfect communion with the life-giving Trinity, so those who perfectly participate in this vision and communion will share fully, each in their singular fashion, in the life-giving nature of the Trinity. Thus, I would again conclude that human beings, precisely because of their life-giving ability, are more in the image and likeness of God both while on earth and in heaven.

The second passage is found in the Letter to the Hebrews where it is said that "we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). Since the Son of God was made for a little while lower than the angels, then human beings, in whose likeness he became, are lower than the angels and so less in God's likeness. Here we come to a topic that had been purposely left to the side—sin. While human beings were created ontologically in the image of God and so being created were ontologically more in his likeness than are angels, yet sin has disfigured and so partially rendered dysfunctional that ontological image. Human life-

giving activity bears the traces of God's image, yet the radiance of that image is very frequently darkened by the deep shadow of sin. While the angels, then, have perfectly maintained their likeness to God, human beings have not. So, while human beings were created ontologically more in God's image than were the angels, yet, in the darkness of human sin, angels presently radiate a truer likeness. This is precisely why the Son of God became man. "For surely it is not with angels that he (Jesus) is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect" (Heb 2:16–17). The Son of God assumed the sin-scarred humanity of his brothers and sisters (and so, in this sense, he too became lower than the angels) so that he might transform it, through his death and resurrection, and in so doing raise it up once more to its divine pristine likeness that exceeds the angels. Without the grace of Jesus Christ sinful human beings cannot fulfill their ontological imaging of God and so, in this sense, they are less than the angels. However, by the healing and divinizing power of the Holy Spirit human beings are able to reclaim their true status, that of being more in God's image than are the angels.

The King and Queen of Heaven and Earth

Following on from the above, I want, by way of conclusion, to make a few points that pertain to the heavenly consummation. The most convincing argument resides within the heavenly hierarchal order, for such an order is the culminating testimony that human beings are more in the image and likeness of God than are angels. Firstly, Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God incarnate, is the King and Lord of heaven and earth. He is such not simply because he is the Son of God, but, more precisely and accurately, because he became man and died on the cross. "When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs" (Heb 1:3–4, see 1:5–13). Equally, "Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9–11). Supremacy, preeminence, and primacy resides solely in the Son as the risen incarnate Lord of glory, and it is him that all creatures, including angels, are to acknowledge as their King.

Secondly, it is Mary, who, in her Assumption, already shares fully in her Son's resurrection and so, as his mother, is Queen of heaven and earth. It is as a risen human woman that Mary reigns alongside her glorious incarnate

Son. Moreover, it will be the Saints, human men and human women, who will be raised up and placed beside Jesus and Mary at the end of time. Beneath the Trinity there ensues, then, a hierarchy of human beings—Jesus, the incarnate risen Son, Mary, and all the Saints. The reason they reside in their respective heavenly rank is because they, as human beings, reflect, each in their own singular way, the very image of the Trinity and they do so because they, like the Trinity, were and are all life-givers. Moreover, human beings, in their respective life-giving activity, as the original stewards of creation, have helped bring about, in union with Christ and by the power of the Spirit, a new heaven and a new earth. Along with Jesus, then, as the Lord of creation, human beings will assume the fullness of their divinely rendered cosmic authority. Only here, within the heavenly hierarchy, appear then the angels. "Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation" (Heb 1:14)?

While of a higher intellectual nature than are human beings and so reflecting more perfectly God's omniscience, angels do not bring forth life in the image of God, and so they do not adequately reflect the heart of who God is as a Trinity of life-giving Persons. From within the Franciscan theological tradition, this lower positioning of the angels within the heavenly hierarchy was the specific cause for why some angels rebelled. These "bad" angels could not tolerate the thought that human beings, including Jesus and Mary, were greater than themselves and that they would become, within the heavenly hierarchy, their superiors. They would have argued, as does Aquinas, that as the more intelligent creatures, they were far superior to feeble-minded human beings. Yet, it is the "good" angels who possess the humility, which is their supreme glory, to grasp, in joy, that human beings are indeed created more in the image and likeness of God, and why, even now, they long to peer (as did and does the Angelic Doctor), in wonder and awe, into the mysteries of the faith; mysteries that literally embody the live-giving actions of human beings, those of Jesus, of Mary, and of all of the Saints. N&V

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From Providence to Grace: Thomas Aquinas and the Platonisms of the Mid-Thirteenth Century

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Thomas between His Two Platonic Traditions

"WHAT IS TIME?" So begins Augustine's famous treatise in Book XI of the *Confessions* with its equally famous insight: "If no one asks me, I know what time is; but if I would like to explicate it for them, I do not know."[1] It is much the same thing with less universal words, such as "Thomism." Whether urged as a model or isolated for criticism, the friends and foes of Thomism, even when using the term in the minimalist sense, would be hardpressed to explicate the core of Thomas's own most programmatic issues, much less the often crooked paths of their later reception.[2] Which claims were most central to Thomas's thought? Two of the once most common answers to the questions as to the essence of Thomism were "realism" and "grace building on nature." One problem with those two answers is that, at least in the common understanding of these terms, realism and a grace building upon nature suggest positions quite at odds with Thomas's own thought: positions, too, that would hardly be able to show Thomas's relationship to the Platonic tradition. The thesis behind the following reflections is that the programmatic

[1] Augustinus, *Confessionum libri XIII,* lib. XI, xiv.17 (CCL XXVII, 202, l. 8–9).

[2] Among the many recent attempts to situate Thomas anew in the history of his reception, cf. especially Romanus Cessario, *Le thomisme et les thomistes* (Paris: Cerf, 1999); Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas. Versions of Thomism* (Oxford et al.: Blackwells, 2002); Brian Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002); and Aidan Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas. An Introduction to His Life, Work, and Influence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

nature of Thomas's own thought and of what most deserves to be retrieved from it will become clear only if his interpretation and transformation of the Platonic tradition is clarified as well.

The topic of the realism/idealism dichotomy cannot be dealt with here at any length; two observations must suffice. First, if "realism" entails the stress on the passive or receptive dimension of knowledge, and "idealism" implies a stress on the spontaneous or productive dynamic of human knowledge, then Thomas was more of an idealist than a realist, precisely due to his criticism of what he understood as Platonism. From his first disputed questions in 1257 on, Thomas articulated his own idealism by appropriating what he understood as Aristotle's turn away from Platonic realism, and this was indeed the way many of Thomas's earliest supporters read him.[3] Because human beings have not always already received the truth (a position that Thomas opposes to Platonic epistemology with its always already given passivism), and because they expect to gain that truth that they could have neither from illuminations received from above nor passively from the senses below, they need that kind of *intellectus agens* that produces what is not yet given. With an emphasis hard to classify as traditional, Thomas argues that human truth is *made* by the human judgment, itself unlike anything received from without.[4] In a necessary but dialectical tension to internalized sense, the *intellectus agens* fulfills in its own limited and self-limiting way the task *facere omnia*.[5] The same spontaneity that makes human truth also sets limits to that cognitive relationship. It is this stress on finite spontaneity that Thomas uses to offer novel insights on pedagogical methodology[6] or to argue for the soul's need of the body.[7] In his later Christology Thomas will mention twice how reflection upon the full humanity of Christ and his *intellectus*

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[3] Cf. the genuinely Thomist epistemology of an early fourteenth-century continental school documented in 1936 by Martin Grabmann, "Mittelalterliche Deutung und Umbildung der aristotelischen Lehre vom Nous poietikos nach seiner Zusammenstellung im Cod. B III 22 der Universitaetsbibliothek Basel. Untersuchung und Textausgabe," in Grabmann, *Gesammelte Akademieabhandlungen* (Paderborn: F. Schoeningh, 1979), Vol. I, 1021–22.

[4] Cf. Thomas's first programmatic *quaestio disputata* as a regent master, especially *De veritate* I, 9 (Rome, Ed. Leonina XXII 29 sq.).

[5] Like the pair *intellectus agens/intellectus possibilis*, Thomas traces the phrasing of their paired operations *facere omnia/fieri omnia* back to *De anima* III 4 and 5.

[6] Cf. Wolfgang Schmidl, *Homo discens. Studien zur Paedagogischen Anthropologie bei Thomas von Aquin* (Vienna: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987).

[7] For example, *ST* I, q. 76, a. 5; q. 79, a. 3.

agens had led Thomas to change his Christology to allow for finite knowledge and gradual, experiential learning in Christ.[8]

The second observation is this: Thomas articulated his "anti-Platonic idealism" not only with reference to Aristotle, but by appropriating selectively the texts of three Platonic authors: Proclus, Boethius, and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. Thomas identified, *albeit* slowly, the Platonic provenance of the *Liber de causis* and *On the Divine Names*.[9] Having once held both works for Aristotelian in character, Thomas begins his commentaries on these works only *after* recognizing their Platonic provenance; and yet Thomas's hermeneutic here is one chiefly of retrieval, not of suspicion. He does intend to brush the texts somewhat against their grain,[10] but he is seeking in admittedly Platonic texts positive help for what he understands as his anti-Platonic (anti-receptionistic) program. After completing his commentary on Dionysius, perhaps sometime in the mid-1260s, Thomas continues to use the *Corpus Dionysiacum* intensely, citing this authority no less than 400 times[11] in his subsequent work on the *Summa theologiae*. The Proclan dimensions of the *Liber de causis*, recognized by Thomas after William of Moerbeke's translation in 1268 of Proclus's *Elementatio theologica*, continue to help Thomas to define the human being within a hierarchically conceived cosmos as the horizon of time and eternity, the border zone dividing the animal from the angelic and sharing attributes of both. This Proclan view of our place in the cosmic order strengthens Thomas's convictions about the necessary finitude of human knowledge and freedom.

In contrast to his reading of Dionysius and the *Liber de causis*, Thomas never seems to identify the Platonic character of Boethius. Characteristic of Thomas's Boethius-reception is his anthropological and idealistic

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[8] *ST* III, q. 9, a. 4 and q. 12, a. 2. Only on one other issue, namely the initiation sacrament of the First Covenant, did Thomas mention twice how his views had evolved. The Basil *quaestio disputata* cited above will argue that, unlike the later circle around Meister Eckhart, Thomas recognized the *intellectus agens* as by its very nature and purpose too finite a constructive principle to ever be the subject of beatitude, which could reside only in the fulfilled *intellectus possibilis*.

[9] For a comprehensive list of Thomas's explicit remarks on those he terms Platonists, cf. R. J. Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism: A Study of the* Plato *and* Platonicii *Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956).

[10] Thomas reserves a good half of the *prooemium* to his commentary on *De divinis nominibus* for a critique of its Platonism, even while extolling the significant authority of the work.

[11] R. Schenk, *Die Gnade vollendeter Endlichkeit. Zur transzendentaltheologischen Auslegung der thomanischen Anthropologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 280, n. 869.

transformation of the principle, "Whatever is known is known in the mode of the knower." Where Boethius had been speaking of God's eternal knowledge of temporal events, Thomas speaks more often than not of our very human, temporally qualified knowledge of eternal realities.[12] But this new paradigm of the finite mode of the human knower could easily have been inscribed into the Proclan sense of the human place in the hierarchical order of things.[13] Even if Thomas would have recognized it as Platonic, the Boethian text could easily have supported Thomas's larger epistemological and anthropological projects. With its redaction and recontextualization of materials handed down, reception is always more than a function of its traditions. Hermeneutical circularity is evident here, as it is spontaneity that makes authentic receptivity possible, even where that spontaneity is working chiefly on the materials of an initial and incomplete stage of receptivity. Although it is not a task that can be pursued here, there is a need for Thomistic studies to examine the history of the early reception of Thomas's epistemology to localize the advent and progessive dominance of the "realistic" interpretation of Thomas's epistemology.

A Platonic Tradition behind the Theological Text

If we turn to that other notion frequently associated with "Thomism," the claim that grace builds on nature, we must first notice that the axiom, so important to Thomas, is phrased by him more broadly. *Gratia (prae-)supponit, extollit, perficit naturam*; at the same time, it is often added: *gratia non tollit, non destruit naturam.*[14] Grace presupposes nature and does not destroy it or do away with it, even while perfecting it; the how of such graced perfection and the character of so imperfect a nature must remain here for the moment open questions. Every "building upon" presupposes its foundation, but not every kind of presupposition culminates in our relying or building upon the strengths of presuppositions; presuppositions do not always prove themselves to be reliable. The axiom implies that the destruction of nature that *de facto* is avoided by grace's efforts to perfect it might well have been expected *de iure*. Grace betters and steadily even seeks to perfect nature, which it presupposes; and it can also correct it,

[12] The history of this "gewaltsame Auslegung" of *De consolatione* would make for an organic complement to Ralph McInerny, *Boethius and Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), which focuses on the commentaries by Thomas on two of Boethius's other works.

[13] Cf. Proclus, *Tria Opuscula,* Helmut Boese, ed. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1960), 168.

[14] Cf. Schenk, *Die Gnade,* 286–442.

but it does so without eliminating its fallibility.[15] As will be seen, grace responds to the weakness of nature as well as to its strength.

The neo-Platonic provenence of the axiom has been largely overlooked. As studies by J. B. Beumer,[16] B. Stoeckle,[17] and (with reservations) M. J. Marmann[18] have shown, we first meet the explicit theological axiom in the thirteenth century in the context of Bonaventure's criticism of its Dionysian application. The commentary by Bonaventure written around 1250 on the second book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* takes up the question as to whether humans, like angels, are ranked from their start into different orders of hierarchical preference; a main source for speaking of angelic orders had been, of course, along with Gregory the Great, Dionysius's work *On the Celestial Hierarchies*. Bonaventure envisions the argument that if humans are graced in different degrees, which he seems willing to grant, then this might seem to suggest that they are not equal by nature either, but by a diversity of natural talents already of such distinct hierarchical orders as to determine the differences in graced existence—ideas that he rejects. The anticipated objection would run as follows: This angelic kind of hierarchical order also belongs to human beings by grace. But since *grace presupposes nature*, so, too, must a hierarchical order of grace presuppose a hierarchical order of nature; for, if there were not a hierarchical order of nature, there would be no such order of grace." The Minorite Bonaventure first tells us what his existential stake in the question is: "In human beings, however, even when we can determine certain advantages in matters of nature as well as in those of grace, nevertheless the two often fail to correspond to one another. Where nature is better, grace is often less; and who today is rightly called the lesser (minor) might well be the greater tomorrow."[19]

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[15] Cf. the perspective remarks in Hans Urs von Balthasar's double article, "Analogie and Dialektik" and "Analogie und Natur," both with the subtitle, "Zur Klaerung der theologischen Prinzipienlehre Karl Barths," in *Divus Thomas* 22 (1944): 171–216 and *Divus Thomas* 23 (1945): 3–56. Unfortunately, this highly refined theory of analogy was replaced by a blunter theory of theological discourse in Balthasar's "Krisis" with the Barth monograph of 1951.

[16] J. B. Beumer, "Gratia supponit naturam. Zur Geschichte eines theologischen Prinzips," in *Gregorianum* 20 (1930): 381–406 and 535–52, especially 390f.

[17] B. Stoeckle, *Gratia supponit naturam. Geschichte und Analyse eines theologischen* Axioms (Rome: Herder, 1962).

[18] Michael J. Marmann, "Praeambula ad gratiam. Ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung ueber die Entstehung des Axioms 'gratia praesupponit naturam' " (Diss., Regensburg 1974); cf. J. Auer, Das Evangelium der Gnade, 2nd ed. (Regensburg: Pustet, 1980), 189ff.

[19] *In lib. II Sent.* IX 1, 9, co. (ed. Quaracchi 1885, II 257 A).

Bonaventure then supplies us with a direct answer to the objection: "That argument is not convincing which claims that, if there be no hierarchical order in nature, there could be no hierarchical order in grace. For it is not at all necessary that grace match *(adaequare)* nature, nor is it necessary, that the order of grace presuppose *(praesupponere)* any order in nature, although grace presupposes nature in the sense that an accident presupposes a subject. And because our grace corresponds to the grace of the angels, even though our nature is not of the same species as their nature, thus, if by this (the correspondence in grace) there be in us, too, a distinction of (graced) orders, then this (alone) is to be understood as corresponding to the angelic orders. . . ."[20] Bonaventure seems less likely to be polemicizing here against Alexander of Hales's assertion of a merely temporal precedence of nature before grace[21] than to be recalling the widespread critique of the Dominicans rallying around their Parisian *confrater*, Stephanus de Varnesia (Etienne de Vernizy/de Venizy), who in 1241 and perhaps again in 1244,[22] together with other proponents or defenders ("et assertores et defensores"[23] of ten theses), was censured first by the theology faculty and the chancellor of the University (Odo of Chateauroux), then more directly and sternly by the bishop of Paris (William of Auvergne).[24] The censure may well be viewed together with a wider reaction around 1241 against the new Aristotelian influence felt at the university, since several of the theses suggest a tendency to reduce salvific-historical theology to philosophical-sapiential theology: a trend that was destined to be criticized again in the second wave of anti-Aristotelian reaction, now inspired and not just followed by Bonaventure, beginning in the late 1260s. Among the condemned theses were positions of a negative but also rationalist theology, such as that the divine essence necessarily cannot be given in beatific vision to any created mind

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20 *In lib. II Sent.* IX, 1, 9 obi. 2 et ad 2. (loc. cit., 256 sq.).

21 Cf. Stoeckle, 105f.

22 On the questions of the date(s) raised by V. Doucet and others cf. J.-G. Bougerol, "A propos des condamnatios parisiennes de 1241 et 1244," in *AFH* 80 (1987): 462–66.

23 For the possibility that these might have included Hugh of St. Cher, cf. H. Dondaine, "Hugues de S. Cher et la condemnation de 1241," in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 33 (1949): 170–74.

24 William J. Courtenay, "Dominicans and Suspect Opinion in the Thirteenth Century: The Cases of Stephen of Venizy, Peter of Tarentaise, and the Articles of 1270 and 1271," *Vivarium* 32 (1994): 186–95; and Juergen Mietke, "Papst, Ortsbischof und Universitaet in den Pariser Theologenprozessen des 13. Jahrhunderts," in Albert Zimmermann, ed., *Die Auseinandersetzungen an der Pariser Universitaet im XIII. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter), 52–94, especially 63–66.

(thesis 1), that there are eternal truths apart from those anchored personally in the Godhead (thesis 7), that the single essential dimension of the Godhead should be given greater weight than the Trinitarian Persons (reflected in theses 2 and 3), that the beginning of creation should not be considered temporally (thesis 8), and the first angelic and human sins were inevitable (thesis 10). The Dominican general chapter of 1243 had asked the members of the Order to respect the decision of 1241. Stephan himself seems to have complied, since he was allowed to incept and serve as a master in Paris, and since he is mentioned by name in few of the surviving manuscripts;[25] but the issue apparently resurfaced around 1256, just as Thomas was in Paris finishing his commentary on the *Sentences*. The general chapter of the Dominicans meeting that year at Paris and the provincial chapter of the Provence felt the need to reiterate the appeal for the brethren to comply with the earlier decision.[26] Around 1279, one of Bonaventure's prize students, William de la Mare, introduces the issue in the correctories dispute, claiming that Thomas Aquinas flagrantly maintains what was condemned as the ninth thesis in 1241.[27]

This ninth thesis of the censure, however, reflects a Dionysian origin more immediately than an Aristotelian one. It also is close to the position that Bonaventure criticized less than ten years later: "that those, whose natural gifts are better, will by necessity also have more of grace and glory."[28] The critics of the 1240s spell out their contradictory belief, leaving open the possibility of a more individualized, more salvifically historical, and yet also more arbitrary- or mythological-looking form of divine providence than fits well into a sapiential theology: "We reprove this error, because we firmly believe that God will give grace and glory to each one according to what He has elected and preordained."[29] The censure addresses much the same issue that Bonaventure will address in his commentary. There, Bonaventure weaves into his problematization of the Dionysian notion of hierarchy the pretendent axiom *gratia praesupponit naturam*. Here, as in the slightly later formulations that will continue with the words ". . . et non destruit eam," the reference seems to echo

[25] Cf. Courtenay, "Dominicans and Suspect Opinion."

[26] Cf. Courtenay, 188.

[27] Cf. the remarks by William in P. Glorieux's edition of Richard Knapwell's *Le Correctorium Corruptorii "Quare"* (Kain: 1927), art. 21, 91–95.

[28] "*Nonus*, quod qui habet meliora naturalia, de necessitate plus habebit de gratia et gloria" (*CUP* I, nr. 128, pg. 170–72, here 171); cf. Bonaventura: "Cum enim non oporteat gratiam adaequari naturae, non oportet ordinem gratiae praesupponere ordinem in natura . . ." (II 237 B).

[29] "Hunc errorem reprobamus, firmiter enim credimus, quod Deus secundum quod preelegit et preordinavit, dabit unicuique gratiam et gloriam" (ibid.).

Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus* even more than his work *On the Celestial Hierarchies*.

In his work on divine names, near the end of the long, internal treatise "Unde malum" in book IV, Dionysius concludes his defense of divine providence's "coexistence" (so to speak) with—and toleration of—voluntary human failings. He rejects explicitly the "empty-headed" opinion that providence, should it exist, would have to eliminate all evils, including those caused by human liberty, thus forcing rational creatures to always make the right choices. Dionysius counters that it does not belong to providence to destroy nature, but rather to preserve the nature of each; in this sense, to "save" it. John Sarracenus's translation of Dionysius's free-will defense differs little at this point from Eriugena's or Hilduin's: "Etenim corrumpere naturam non providentiae. Unde, sicut providentia uniuscujusque naturae est salvativa. . . ." With but very minor revisions, Robert Grosseteste's translation, too, will follow the lead of his predecessors here, as indeed in most places.[30]

In the context of his argument, Dionysius applies his principle that providence is *salvativa naturae (physeos sostike)* to that nature which is "self-moved" *(to autokineton)*, an expression used by Proclus as a technical term for free human choice, referring both to the autonomous source of its own activity (*self*-moved) and the source of its own inconstancy and its all too variable virtuosity (self-*moved*). What is "self-moved" takes its place in the hierarchy of beings between unmoved movers with all their constancy and reliability, on the one hand, and, on the other, what is so inconstant as to be moved by others and only by others. Providence rightly provides even for what is between these two groups, preserving the *per se mobilia* as *per se mobilia*, that is, conserving their tendency toward inconstancy and occasional moral failure. To force them to constant virtue would be to destroy them as *per se mobilia*.

In 1272, Thomas Aquinas used William of Moerbeke's 1268 translation of Proclus's *Elementatio theologica* to identify Proclus as the authority ultimately behind the supposedly Aristotelian *Liber de causis*. William would translate Proclus's three *opuscula* on theodicy only in the 1280s, several years after Thomas's death. Only in 1895 did Josef Stiglmayr and Hugo Koch demonstrate simultaneously the general dependence of the Pseudo-Areopagite upon Proclus[31] by comparing the Dionysian treatise "Unde malum" (in book IV of *De divinis nominibus*) with Proclus's opus-

[30] Cf. Philipp Chavallier, ed., *Dionysiaca* I (Paris: Desclée, 1937), 312.

[31] Cf. Josef Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogenannten Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Uebel," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895): 253–73, 721–80; and Hugo Koch, "Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Boesen," *Philologus* 54 (1895): 438–54.

culum, *De malorum subsistentia*. Unfortunately, Koch concludes his analysis with IV 32[32], ending just before the beginning of the question as to how there could be evil at all, if providence exists. Stiglmayr proceeds only one line further, breaking off before reaching the sentence that will later prove to be so suggestive: that providence does not destroy nature but saves it. The texts of Proclus paraphrased here by Dionysius seem to include passages from another opusculum, the sixth *aporia* of Proclus's *De decem dubitationibus circa providentiam*. William of Moerbeke seems not to have noticed the parallel; at least his translation of Proclus's opuscula makes no effort to approximate the language of Dionysius's established translators.[32] And yet the free-will defense of providence and the vocabulary reconstructed by Helmut Boese for the sixth *aporia* suggests its close reading by Dionysius: Providence *(pronoia)* saves *(sotzousan)* nature (here *to genomenon*, not *ten phusin*), preserves especially the free choice of human beings as self-movement *(autokinesis)*, including its natural tendency to be inconstant in virtue.[33] "We are not saying that providence, which first brought freedom of choice into the whole of things, now rules in order to do away with this freedom, but rather to save-and-preserve it." It is this statement by Proclus in its implicit citation by Dionysius that will be transformed into a key axiom about grace.

Alternative Platonic Traditions in Alternative Theological Readings

Thomas and his contemporaries needed to define their relationship not just toward the Platonic tradition as a whole but toward two alternative forms of Platonism, represented by the difference between the heritages of Augustine and Dionysius. Although both figures were considered to be authorities worthy of a favorable reading, wherever possible, thinkers of the thirteenth century define themselves on many major problems by their greater proximity or distance to one of these two traditions. It is ouside the scope of this paper to articulate the unresolved *aporiai* that an often ambivalent Plotinus left as an inheritance to his followers[34] or how,

[32] On the translations and commentaries conceivably available to William, cf. H. F. Dondaine, *Le corpus dionysien de l'université de Paris au XIII siècle* (Rome: Editiono di Storia e Letteratura, 1953) and P. Chevallier, *Dionysiaca* I-IV (Facsimile of the 1937 edition of Desclee de Brouwer [Stuttgart: Frommann–Holzboog 1989]).

[33] Cf. especially nos. 39, 60–63.

[34] Cf. Schenk, *Die Gnade vollendeter Endlichkeit,* 121–30: These productive problems revolved around the theodicy-related issues of God or the One (architect of evil? aware of evil? personally provident? provident of each or merely of the whole? cognizant? punitive?) and what at least seems to be related to this One (good and

in the process of dealing with these problems, Porphyry and Proclus had developed distinctly alternative forms of Platonism.[35] Through Augustine and Dionysius, respectively, this bifurcation of the Platonic tradition passed into medieval Christian thought and formed the matrix within which every theologian of the mid-thirteenth century needed to locate himself. Prior to any question of Aristotle vis-à-vis Plato, it was a question of one line of the Platonic tradition vis-à-vis another.

Where Augustine stressed the immediacy of God to the soul and of the soul to God, Dionysius will stress the necessity of mediation and that not only by Christ, but by multiple and manifold mediations, of which Christ was but one. Liturgical ritual is more important to Dionysius than it was to Augustine. For the former, we touch divine things only through the mediation of the symbols, never in pure concept, whereas for the latter there was the greater possibility of direct, intellectual, and interpersonal knowledge of God. Dionysius trusts the self to follow its own eros, while Augustine had harbored greater suspicion, corresponding, however, to a greater and more dramatic hope for a conversion of will from an emphasis on the self to the other-than-self. This lends to Augustine's thought a dramatic and dialogical dimension together with an emphatic sense of the self, with its abilities to do much better and much worse than it has. By contrast, the dialogical dimension together with the sense of the self is understated in Dionysius; the possibilities of conversion and a transformation of subjectivity are far more muted.[36] For Augustine the human's place in the world order can change; we can know more or less, come to love more or less; come to realize or lose our final hope. Dionysius shows little interest in such dramatic possibilities of change; there is less tension for him between the "is" and the "ought." As Bonaventure suspects, the order of grace in Dionysius coincides inevitably with the order of nature. From Dionysius we hear the voice of a resigned benevolence; Augustine manifests the greater hope, matched at times to a greater and more urgent severity. Where Augustine

material? matter as a second eternal principle? evil as absolute privation? evil a concern for the wise? evil for sake of the good of each or of the whole? freedom or necessity?).

[35] Cf. Schenk, *Die Gnade vollendeter Endlichkeit,* 130–253. These issues are again raised in the context of theodicy. They relate both to the notion of Godhood and to the fluid (Porphry) or fixed (Proclus) limits of human knowledge, will, and destiny.

[36] In this context, it is not surprising that the transformation of the later Albertus Magnus "school" into the system expressed in Theodoric of Freiberg and Meister Eckhart had been facilitated by the Latin translation of Proclus's opuscula after the death of Albert and Ulrich of Strasbourg.

strives for perfection, Dionysius accepts systemic imperfection. Dionysius does not seek to overcome the sensual medium of human knowledge; rather, he is resigned to it, and his stress on negative theology is the result. Augustine is less resignative: self-critical dialectic prepares the way for a more robustly positive theology. For Dionysius, human knowledge is necessarily in the mode of a very finite knower. Augustinian knowledge knows of no necessary boundary in the process of receiving illumination; the limits upon our present knowledge are *de facto*, not *de iure*. Dionysius sees God's love as universal, varying only according to the mode of the varied receivers needed for an ordered cosmos. Augustine stresses the particular loves of a God choosing individuals. As the Parisian faculty of theology would eventually put it in 1241, Augustine's is a God of *praeelectio* and *praeordinatio*. Dionysius stresses metaphysical structures; Augustine, salvific historical events, and transformations. The one stresses *a priori* experience, the "always-already"; the other waits for the new experience of new events and new revelations, complementing and enhancing structures *a posteriori*.

This general contrast manifests itself in the particular context of theodicy by the divergent ways our two neo-Platonic theologians interpreted the traditional Platonic axiom that evil is permitted by providence only for the sake of a greater good. Dionysius understands that good as non-individual; Augustine looks for new concrete goods. For Dionysius the possibility of evil was the prior condition of the possibility of finite goods; the realization of evil was ever a danger, seldom a hope. The fragility of crystal is the condition of the possibility of its beauty; its actual fracture helps no one. By contrast, Augustine suspects that the realization of evil will in the near future promote either some new good of justice or some new good of mercy; in either case, Augustine sees this new, future, and particular good chiefly as one for individuals. For Dionysius, God permits the realization of evil, but he does not cause it; for evil does not cause the good, but is the condition or at most the occasion of some of its possibilities. For Augustine, given evil's more immediate relation to the good, God can also more directly cause it.

Correspondingly, even human freedom chooses evil for Dionysius only under the appearance of good; the mistake is more clearly in the intellect. For Augustine, human freedom can will evil with greater clarity of insight, with less illusion, with a malice far more intentional and intense. Dionysius goes beyond even Proclus in stressing the non-existence of evil as evil, while Augustine remains more in the traditional neo-Platonic interpretation of that kind of *privatio boni*, which, as a violation and robbery of our well-being, marks the stark reality of our most painful experiences.

Thomas Aquinas's Reception of the Axiom on Grace and Nature

As stated above, the interpretive reception of texts, with its redaction and recontextualization of the materials handed down, is always more than a function of its traditions. If we are attentive to how Thomas responded to the legacy of this bifurcated Platonic tradition, we will see him in the question of theodicy at first staying closer to Dionysius. Even where he cites Augustine expicitly about God's permitting evils so as to use them for the good, Thomas interprets the texts in an initially Dionysian sense. This is especially evident in Thomas's use of Dionysius's axiom on providence from *De divinis nominibus* IV, 33. In his commentary on the work, written sometime in the 1260s, Thomas follows closely in the sense of Proclus and Dionysius: "Providence preserves the nature of every given thing. And because rational creatures, according to their nature, are defectible and able to be defective and to fail through free will, it does not pertain to divine providence to impede that mobility."[37] What is striking is the consistency of Thomas's use of the axiom and the notion of *per-se-mobilitas* outside of his commentary. Thomas seems to have settled on the direction of his thought on this matter as early as during the lectures he heard on Dionysius by Albert between 1248 and 1252. From the time of his own commentary on the *Sentences* (1252–1257) and his first disputed questions (1257–1259), through his middle works such as the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the *Compendium theologiae*, and the first book of the *Summa theologiae* all the way up into the *Secunda secundae* of that work in the early 1270s, Thomas's use of the axiom, recorded in at least twenty citations, remains consistent: With the major premise he cites the axiom that grace preserves nature; with the minor, he interprets human nature by adducing an anthropological application of Aristotle's cosmic principle from *De caelo*: But human nature is marked by the law that what can fail, will fail. Thomas's conclusion about God's preserving the experience of human weakness is allowed to hold up even for the eschatological vision of God, when our lack of complete comprehension (1241!) and the continuance of the dialogical principle of *timor filialis* are said to remain *in patria* for this very reason.[38]

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[37] *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus* IV, lc. 23 (Turin/Rome: Marietti, 1950, no. 596): "Providentia est conservativa naturae uniuscuiusque rei. . . . Et quia rationalis creatura secundum suam naturam defectibilis est et per liberum arbitrium potest deficere, non pertinet ad divinam Providentiam ut eius mobilitatem impediat."

[38] Cf. Schenk, *Die Gnade vollendeter Endlichkeit,* 336–56, for an analysis of texts following this pattern in *In librum I Sent.* 39, 2, 2; 46, 1, 3 sq.; *In librum II Sent.* 23, 1, 1 sq.; 34, 1,1; 34, 1,3; *In librum IV Sent.* 49, 2,3; *QD de ver* 5,3 sq.; *SCG* III,

What distinguishes Thomas from a thorough-going Dionysian, however, and what defines his way of making Dionysius his own is his approximation to Augustine on God's attentiveness to individual fates and his belief that salvific events can alter the course of *a priori* structures, although in ways less experiential than Augustine suggests. Evil is not instrumentalized but opposed by God, who opens new possibilities for life for individuals not so much through as in spite of evil.

This cautious note of Augustinian distance to a basically Dionysian theodicy means that Thomas is further than he often sounds from offering any easy "solution" to the theodicy problem, *unde malum*, than were his predecessors. The Dionysian insight into the sheer counterproductivity and the destructive character of evil along with concern for its victims forbids the theoretical instrumentalization of evil; the suffering of persons cannot be fully explained by the evolutionary needs of the cosmos. Augustinian belief in the vocation of individual persons to beatitude forbids the cosmic explanation with its free-will defense. With Kant, although less explicitly than he, Thomas seems to think that progress in theodicy is shown in preserving the *niveau* of the problem from merely apparent answers. Unlike Kant, Thomas seems to think it is precisely faith in the revelation of God's love of persons, albeit a philosophically reflected faith, which keeps the question open against the temptations of all too cosmic a philosophy or all too dramatized a faith. Thomas rejects both cosmic and dramatic instrumentalizations of evil. This attempt to find a middle ground between the two Platonic traditions of Dionysius and Augustine would lead Thomas to a position more radical than theirs, not just in this general question of nature and grace vis-à-vis God, but also in its application to the three constitutive questions of anthropology: What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for? In comparing the human experience of knowledge, freedom, and mortality with the Gospel promise, Thomas found reason to keep open the *discrimen* of experience and faith. That was an alternative both to the tradition of Dionysius, with its tendency to reduce faith to philosophical experience, and to the tradition from Augustine, with its attempt to allow revelatory events to rewrite basic human experience and its temptation to equate antecedent and consequent will in God.

The future of what could be retrieved from this genuinely Thomistic alternative might offer Catholic theology an alternative to today's sterile antithesis of dymythologizing doctrine into our prior experience of

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71 sq.; *In De divinis nominibus* IV 33 and VIII 7; *Comp. Theol.* I 142; and *ST* I, q. 22, a. 4; q. 48, a. 2, ad 3; q. 62, a. 7; II–II, q. 165, a. 1.

humanity or remythologizing as the more genuine faith allegedly new experiences of the Trinity drawn from private revelations. The retrieval of a genuinely Thomistic alternative would, however, also need to be more aware than was neo-scholastic Thomism that the nature that is presupposed by grace is not only the source of strong reason and accomplished virtue, but of the often painful and uncertain experience of a very human finitude as well. This Thomistic revival would interpret Thomas in closer proximity to 2 Corinthians 12:10 than was often the case, seeing in graced weakness the chance for an otherwise impossible strength. It would also be a retrieval that would not reject but refigure Thomas's Platonic sources. N&V

In What Straits They Suffered: St. Thomas's Use of Aristotle to Transform Augustine's Critique of Earthly Happiness

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Aristotle in the Service of Augustine

IN AN ESSAY on St. Thomas's appropriation of pagan virtue, Brian Shanley affirms that "Aquinas admits Aristotelian virtue, but within Augustinian limitations." Shanley remarks that "In the end, Aquinas's analysis of pagan virtue represents a creative appropriation of Aristotelian and Augustinian elements into his own theological synthesis."[1] Shanley's insight also well describes Aquinas's theology of happiness. Aquinas admits Aristotelian happiness, but within an Augustinian recognition of the limitations of earthly happiness. At the same time, however, he uses Aristotelian insights to strengthen and refine Augustine's critique of earthly happiness. In this way, Aquinas's theology of happiness is truly a "creative appropriation of Aristotelian and Augustinian elements" that integrates these elements into Aquinas's Christian theology of happiness.[2] In the pages that follow, we shall investigate one facet of this work of integration. We shall investigate how Aquinas integrates Aristotle's analysis of happiness into Augustine's pointed critique of pagan conceptions of happiness.

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[1] Brian Shanley, "Aquinas on Pagan Virtue," *Thomist* 63 (1999): 554.

[2] Kevin Staley offers a similar argument. He asserts "that Aquinas borrows the crucial premise of his main argument in *ST* I–II, qq. 1–3 from Augustine and that Aquinas's account of happiness in the *Summa theologiae* should therefore be characterized as an at-bottom Augustinian tract that incorporates but does not proceed from Aristotle's philosophical insights" (Kevin M. Staley, "Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas on the Good and the Human Good: A note on *Summa theologiae* I–II, QQ. 1–3," *Modern Schoolman* 72 [1995]: 313).

The thesis of this article is that Aquinas adopts a core Augustinian critique of the pagan view of happiness, but refines this critique by structuring it according to Aristotle's own analysis of happiness and its limitations.

St. Augustine's Critique of Pagan Happiness

Augustine admires many pagan insights concerning happiness. In his mature thought, however, there are two things he vigorously attacks: the notion that happiness is attainable in this life, and the notion that it is attainable by unaided human effort.[3] For the mature Augustine, true happiness is the loving contemplation of God attained only in the next life, in the beatific vision.[4] Happiness is essentially a gift from God granted through the grace of Christ with which we must cooperate by living lives of true virtue.[5] During our earthly pilgrimage the most we

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[3] See *De civitate Dei* 19.4. See Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God: *A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 199: "Thus two principles of philosophical enquiry are rejected: the principle that the good sought, and thus happiness, is to be found in our temporal, earthly existence, and the belief that happiness, and so virtue, can be found by unaided human effort."

[4] *De civitate Dei* 22.30: "quanta erit illa felicitas, ubi nullum erit malum, nullum latebit bonum, vacabitur Dei laudibus, qui erit omnia in omnibus. . . . sic enim et illud recte intellegitur, quod ait apostolus: 'ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus.' Ipse finis erit desideriorum nostrorum, qui sine fine videbitur, sine fastidio amabitur, sine fatigatione laudabitur." *De Trinitate* 1.18: "hoc est enim 'plenum gaudium' nostrum quo 'amplius non est,' frui trinitate deo 'ad' cuius 'imaginem facti' sumus." Augustine's theology of happiness developed considerably over time. John Rist offers a concise summary of this development: "After his conversion, as the opening lines of *The Happy Life* make clear, Augustine thought of the event in terms of reaching port after a storm. Christ is the way to reach the port; the Christian who professes faith in Christ and becomes a member of the Christian community is more or less in the port already. He can now work on perfecting his soul, and happiness can be attained in this life. It was a view which during the 390's Augustine came to repudiate; no one can be happy, only on the road *(iter)* to happiness in this life (*On Human Responsibility* 2.16.41). Augustine now professed the strikingly unclassical notion that there are no sages among us. . . . the Stoic sage—even for the Stoics as rare as the phoenix—has disappeared. Jesus (and perhaps Mary) alone have achieved perfection in this life, and only because he was the man 'predestined' to do so. As for the rest of us, Augustine goes out of his way in the *Reconsiderations* to correct those passages of his early writings which state or imply the possible early perfection of the soul" (John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient thought Baptized* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994] 169–70). See also Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse: Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1962).

[5] *De Trinitate* 13.12: "quanto est credibililius natura filios hominis gratia dei 'fieri dei filios' et habitare in deo in quo solo et de quo solo *esse* possint beati participes immortalitatis eius effecti, propter quod persuadendum 'dei filius' particeps

can expect is to enjoy a certain foretaste of happiness through the virtue of hope.[6] As St. Paul says, we are saved in hope.[7]

Peter Brown, in describing the general method Augustine pursues in the *City of God*, offers an account that well describes Augustine's way of critiquing pagan happiness. Brown states that Augustine's procedure is to present a Christian solution to a question against "an elaborately constructed background of pagan answers to the same question."[8] By juxtaposing the Christian answer to the question of happiness with various pagan answers to this question, Augustine both reveals the inadequacy of the pagan answers and shows how the Christian answer better fulfills the requirements implicit in the pagans' own understanding of the problem of happiness. By

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nostrae mortalitatis effectus est?" *De civitate Dei* 4.3: "quapropter si verus Deus colatur eique sacris veracibus et bonis moribus serviatur, utile est ut boni longe lateque diu regnent; neque hoc tam ipsis quam illis utile est, quibus regnant. nam quantum ad ipsos pertinet, pietas et probitas eorum, quae magna Dei dona sunt, sufficit eis ad veram felicitatem, qua et ista vita bene agatur et postea percipiatur aeterna." *De civitate Dei* 6.12: "nam cui nisi uni felicitati propter aeternam vitam consecrandi homines essent, si dea felicitas esset? quia vero non dea, sed munus est Dei: cui deo nisi Datori felicitatis consecrandi sumus, qui aeternam vitam, ubi vera est et plena felicitas, pia caritate diligimus? . . . vitam igitur aeternam, id est sine ullo fine felicem, solus ille dat, qui dat veram felicitatem."

6 *De Trinitate* 1.17: "neque enim quaeremus aliud cum ad illius contemplationem pervenerimus, quae nunc non est quamdiu gaudium nostrum 'in spe' est. 'spes autem quae videtur non est spes. quod enim videt quis, quid et sperat? si autem quod non videmus speramus, per patientiam exspectamus quoadusque rex in recubitu suo est.' " *De Trinitate* 13.10: "nam multi per transitoria mala ad permansura bona fortiter tetenderunt. qui profecto spe beati sunt etiam cum sunt in transitoriis malis per quae ad bona non transitura perveniunt. sed qui spe beatus est nondum beatus est. exspectat namque per patientiam beatitudinem quam nondum tenet." *De civitate Dei* 19.20: "quis est qui illam vitam vel beatissimam neget vel in eius comparatione istam, quae hic agitur, quantislibet animi et corporis externarumque rerum bonis plena sit, non miserrimam iudicet? quam tamen quicumque sic habet, ut eius usum referat ad illius finem, quam diligit ardentissime ac fidelissime sperat, non absurde dici etiam nunc beatus potest, spe illa potius quam re ista."

7 *De civitate Dei* 19.4: "sed ut vita humana, quae tot et tantis huius saeculi malis *esse* cogitur misera, spe futuri saeculi sit beata, sicut et salua. quo modo enim beata est, quae nondum salua est? unde et apostolus Paulus non de hominibus inprudentibus inpatientibus, intemperantibus et iniquis, sed de his, qui secundum veram pietatem viverent et ideo virtutes, quas haberent, veras haberent, ait: 'spe enim salui facti sumus. spes autem quae videtur non est spes. quod enim videt quis, quid et sperat? si autem quod non videmus speramus, per patientiam exspectamus.' sicut ergo spe salui, ita spe beati facti sumus, et sicut salutem, ita beatitudinem non iam tenemus praesentem, sed expectamus futuram, et hoc 'per patientiam.' "

8 Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 306.

drawing on principles that the pagans themselves accept, Augustine reveals the painful inadequacy of the happiness attainable by unaided human effort.

Augustine's basic argument is straightforward. All people desire happiness, although they do not all agree on what constitutes happiness.[9] Nevertheless, if you analyze this desire, Augustine believes, you discover the following.

> —All who desire happiness want to be free from evils such as ignorance, sickness, and death. In short, they want their happiness to be lasting.
>
> —Our life on earth, however, can never be entirely free from the evils of this world: We all suffer from ignorance, sickness, and eventually we all die. We are unable to prevent this.
>
> —Therefore, happiness is not possible in this life, nor are we able to attain it by our own efforts.[10]

Augustine believes that this conclusion is inescapable. He takes it for granted that all of his pagan interlocutors agree that happiness consists in having what you desire (as long as you desire rightly).[11] From this shared premise, Augustine believes he can show that happiness must be lasting and not subject to suffering, and thus that it cannot be attained in this life. The only way to escape this conclusion is by trying to deny that this life contains suffering. Augustine argues that this is, in fact, what the bulk of pagan philosophers have attempted to do.

> These philosophers . . . attempt to fabricate for themselves a happiness in this life, based upon a virtue that is as deceitful as it is proud.[12]

[9] *De Trinitate* 13.6-7: "at si [mimus] dixisset: 'omnes beati *esse* vultis; miseri *esse* non vultis,' dixisset aliquid quod nullus in sua non agnosceret voluntate. quidquid enim aliud quisquam latenter velit, ab hac voluntate quae omnibus et in omnibus satis nota est non recedit. mirum est autem cum capessendae atque retinendae beatitudinis voluntas una sit omnium, unde tanta exsistat de ipsa beatitudine rursus varietas et diversitas voluntatum, non quod aliquis eam nolit, sed quod non omnes eam norint. si enim omnes eam nossent, non ab aliis putaretur *esse* in virtute animi, aliis in corporis voluptate, aliis in utraque, et aliis atque aliis, alibi atque alibi. ut enim eos quaeque *res* maxime delectavit ita in ea constituerunt vitam beatam."

[10] See the extended arguments that Augustine offers in *De civitate Dei* 19.4; *De Trinitate* 13.6-12, 24-26; and *De Trinitate* 14.23-26.

[11] *De Trinitate* 13.8: "omnes autem beati habent quod volunt, quamvis non omnes qui habent quod volunt continuo sint beati; continuo autem miseri qui vel non habent quod volunt vel id habent quod non recte volunt. beatus igitur non est nisi qui et habet omnia que vult et nihil vult male."

[12] *De civitate Dei* 19.4: "quam beatitudinem isti philosophi . . . hic sibi conantur falsissimam fabricare, quanto superbiore, tanto medaciore virtute." James Wetzel

They attempt this because they have despaired of eternal life.

> As long as they despair of immortality, without which true happiness is impossible, they will look for, or rather make up, any kind of thing that may be called, rather than really be, happiness in this life.[13]

Augustine recognizes that some philosophers acknowledge the immortality of the soul and place happiness in the next life when the soul will be freed from the body. Yet, even these fail to discern the true nature of happiness, because they believe that their unaided powers of contemplation can bring them to this beatitude. Moreover, their belief in the transmigration of souls means that for them too what they call happiness is only a temporary reality.[14] From this perspective, the plight of the pagan philosophers is that they are unable to discover a lasting happiness.

> People have tried to work these things out by human reasoning, but it is the immortality of the soul alone that they have succeeded in getting to some notion of, and then only a few of them, and with difficulty, and only if they have had plenty of brains and plenty of leisure and plenty of education in abstruse learning. Even so, they never discovered a lasting, which is to say a true, life of happiness for this soul.[15]

The pagan philosopher, therefore, is left in distress. He desires lasting happiness but is unable to attain it. The pagan sage, Augustine informs us, "is not truly happy, but is bravely unhappy."[16]

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has noted that in holding that all pagan philosophers essentially agreed concerning the essential features of happiness, Augustine was eliding the views of various different schools of philosophy. "When Augustine applied this syncretic view of beatitude to pagan philosophy, he was under the impression that nothing of importance distinguished the ethics of Stoics from those of Peripatetics or Platonists" (James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 48).

[13] *De Trinitate* 13.11: "sed qualiscumque beatitudo quae potius vocetur quam sit in hac vita quaeritur, immo vero fingitur, dum immortalitas desperatur sine qua vera beatitudo *esse* non potest."

[14] *De Trinitate* 13.12: "ad miserias eam quippe vitae huius etiam post beatitudinem redire dixerunt. et qui eorum de hac erubuerunt sentntia et animam purgatam in sempiterna beatitudine sine corpore conlocandam putarunt talia de mundi retrorsus aeternitate sentiunt ut hanc de anima sententiam suam ipsi redarguant." See note 25 on page 366–67 of the Edmund Hill, OP,translation of *De Trinitate* (St. Augustine, *The Trinity* [Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991]).

[15] *De Trinitate* 13.12: "humanis quippe argumentationibus haec invenire conantes vix pauci magno praediti ingenio abundantes otio doctrinisque subtilissimis eruditi ad indagandam solius animae immortalitatem pervenire potuerunt. cui tamen animae beatam vitam non invenerunt stabilem, id est veram."

[16] *De Trinitate* 13.10: "non est beatus veraciter sed miser fortiter."

Augustine explains that what the philosophers lack is a mediator who can give them faith in eternal life—faith in resurrected life—and lead them to this resurrected life through the empowering gift of his grace. The philosophers' inquiry into truth "is not enough for the unhappy, that is for all mortals who have reason alone without any faith in the mediator."[17] "All will to be happy, but not all have the faith which must purify the heart if happiness is to be reached."[18] What they lack is Christ, who is the only way to the true life of happiness. "Although he is our native country, he made himself also the way to that country."[19] "Thus, he says, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life;' that is, you are to come through me, to arrive at me, and to remain in me."[20] Augustine explains that the grace of Christ empowers us with efficacious virtue and enables us to attain lasting happiness.

> And thus it is written, "the just one lives by faith," for we do not as yet see our good, and must therefore live by faith; neither have we in ourselves power to live rightly, but can do so only if he who has given us faith to believe in his help does help us when we believe and pray.[21]

In essence, therefore, Augustine presents Christ as the answer to the pagan question of happiness. More accurately, Augustine argues that the vision of God made possible through Christ is the answer to the human person's natural desire for happiness. "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."[22]

In advancing this argument Augustine sharply distinguishes both Christian virtue from pagan virtue and Christian happiness from pagan happiness. In fact, Augustine contrasts them so sharply that he ends up denying that the pagans have virtues or that they in any way enjoy happi-

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[17] *De Trinitate* 14.26: "sed iste cursus qui constituitur in amore atque investigatione veritatis non sufficit miseris, id est omnibus cum ista sola ratione mortalibus sine fide mediatoris."

[18] *De Trinitate* 13.25: "beatos *esse* se velle omnium hominum est, nec tamen omnium est fides qua cor mundante ad beatitudinem pervenitur."

[19] *De doctrina Christiana* 1.11: "cum ergo ipsa sit patria, viam se quoque nobis fecit ad patriam."

[20] *De doctrina Christiana* 1.38: "sic enim ait: 'ego sum via et veritas et vita,' hoc est 'per me venitur, ad me pervenitur, in me permanetur.' "

[21] *De civitate Dei* 19.4: "propter quod scriptum est: 'iustus ex fide vivit;' quoniam neque bonum nostrum iam videmus, unde oportet ut credendo quaeramus, neque ipsum recte vivere nobis ex nobis est, nisi credentes adiuvet et orantes qui et ipsam fidem dedit, qua nos ab illo adiuvandos *esse* credamus."

[22] *Confesiones* 1.1: "fecisti nos, domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te."

ness.[23] In Augustine's view, what is commonly called happiness in this life is "a false happiness and a profound misery."[24] In Augustine's terms pagan happiness is false, because it is not lasting, and pagan virtue is false, because it cannot lead us to lasting happiness. Christian virtue, on the other hand, is true virtue because it empowers us to attain true, that is, lasting, happiness.

It is at this juncture that the power of Augustine's rhetoric begins to draw the contours of his larger argument out of focus. Just as an eye by focusing sharply on a point in the foreground blurs the background, so too Augustine by focusing so sharply on the inadequacy of pagan happiness and virtue blurs his background insight that the grace of Christ fulfills the aspirations of the human heart. As we have seen, Augustine's intention is to underscore that pagan virtue is not meritorious toward eternal happiness and that pagan happiness does not fulfill the requirements of happiness. Yet, by denying that pagan happiness and virtue are in any way a true, albeit imperfect, happiness and virtue, Augustine begins to undercut the foundation of his argument. As is well known, Augustine maintains that the actions that the philosophers style as virtues only become true virtues and only lead to true happiness when they are motivated from true piety *(pietas)*: from a faith enlivened by charity and directed toward God as our end.[25] What this terminology fails to convey,

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[23] *De civitate Dei* 19.25: "virtutes, quas habere sibi videtur, per quas imperat corpori et vitiis, ad quodlibet adipiscendum vel tenendum rettulerit nisi ad Deum, etiam ipsae vitia sunt potius quam virtutes. Nam licet a quibusdam tunc verae atque honestae putentur esse virtutes, cum referuntur ad se ipsas nec propter aliud expetuntur: etiam tunc inflatae ac superbae sunt, ideo non virtutes, sed vitia iudicanda sunt. sicut enim non est a carne sed super carnem, quod carnem facit vivere: sic non est ab homine sed super hominem, quod hominem facit beate vivere."

[24] *De civitate Dei* 19.20: "illa beatitudo falsa et magna miseria est."

[25] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 15.25: "quod si virtus ad beatam vitam nos ducit, nihil omnino *esse* virtutem affirmaverim, nisi summum amorem Dei. namque illud quod quadripartita dicitur virtus, ex ipsius amoris vario quodam affectu, quantum intelligo, dicitur. itaque illas quatuor virtutes . . . definire etiam sic licet, ut temperantiam dicamus esse, amorem Deo sese integrum incorruptumque servantem: fortitudinem, amorem omnia propter Deum facile perferentem: justitiam, amorem Deo tantum servientem, et ob hoc bene imperantem ceteris, quae homini subjecta sunt: prudentiam, amorem bene discernentem ea quibus adjuveretur in Deum, ab iis quibus impediri potest." *De civitate Dei* 5.19: "dum illud constet inter omnes veraciter pios, neminem sine vera pietate, id est veri Dei vero cultu, veram posse habere virtutem, nec eam veram esse, quando gloriae servit humanae." *De civitate Dei* 19.10: "sed tunc est vera virtus, quando et omnia bona, quibus bene utitur, et quidquid in bono usu bonorum et malorum facit, et se ipsam ad eum finem refert, ubi nobis talis et tanta pax erit, qua melior et maior *esse* non possit."

however, is that whether or not these actions are informed by charity and rightly ordered to God, they retain their natural goodness and thus afford the agent some measure of natural happiness. This is important because unless the natural act of contemplation generates some natural happiness, it is difficult to see how the eternal contemplation of the divine essence can be regarded as fulfilling a natural desire for happiness. Unless there is at least some continuity between natural and supernatural happiness, how is it possible for grace to be intelligibly understood as a perfection and elevation of human nature? Elsewhere in his works Augustine demonstrates that he recognizes this continuity, but his rhetorical division between true and false happiness obscures this fact. John Rist well describes this tension in Augustine's thought.

> Towards the end of the *City of God* (19.25), Augustine says that the "virtues" of pagans may seem to be true and beautiful, but that they are vices *rather* than virtues, just as a Stoic might speak of the "good" deeds of the non-sage. In fact, Augustine does not go quite as far as the Stoics who would insist that the "virtues" are really vices. He seems to wish to assert that, if a choice must be made, such acts must be classed as vices rather than virtues, but to recoil from condemning them outright as vicious. The virtues of pagans are "sterile" (i.e. ineffective, like Donatist sacraments), hence not good, but not explicitly bad either (*Against Julian* 4.3.33). Pagan virtues are significantly different from pagan vices and will therefore be punished less severely by God (4.3.25, etc.). The Romans, says Augustine, have a "certain uprightness of their own" (*Letter* 138.3.17). Assuming—as is reasonable—that *Sermon* 349 is genuine, Augustine is even prepared to say in about 412 that pagan virtues exhibit a certain "human love" *(caritas humana)*.[26]

In other words, on the deepest level Augustine recognizes that what is at work in pagan virtue and happiness is the wrong use of something good, and not merely the use of something evil. Yet, by calling pagan virtue and happiness "false" and "deceitful," he obscures this fact. Augustine, therefore, leaves future generations a mixed inheritance. On the one hand, he offers a powerful way to understand the relationship between the Gospel and the natural desires of the human heart. The grace of Christ leads us to the happiness for which we all long but cannot of ourselves attain. On the other hand, Augustine's manner of describing the limitations inherent to human virtue and happiness undercuts his own best understanding of the relationship between grace and our natural desire for happiness.

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[26] John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 171–72.

St. Thomas, Aristotle, and Augustine's Critique

When we read St. Thomas's theology of happiness in light of his mixed Augustinian inheritance, we discover similarities as well as differences. First, the similarities. Like Augustine, Aquinas affirms that all people desire happiness.[27] Like Augustine, Aquinas also maintains that only the unending vision of God fulfills this universal desire, and that this vision is only attainable in the next life.[28] So, too, Aquinas shares with Augustine the Christian recognition that happiness is essentially a gift of God's grace with which we must cooperate.[29] For our present purposes, however, the most interesting similarities concern their way of portraying the relationship between Christian and pagan conceptions of happiness. Augustine and Aquinas both regard the happiness attainable in Christ as the fulfillment of pagan philosophy's search for happiness. Likewise, they both appeal to the principles of the philosophers themselves to reveal the inadequacy of the happiness attainable by philosophy on its own.

This last similarity, however, also points to their primary divergence: While Augustine employs the philosophers' principles in order to reveal what he regards as the perfidy of the philosophers' own conclusions, Aquinas employs Aristotle's conclusions as well as his principles to reveal the limits of philosophy. Aquinas regards Aristotle as one who himself recognized the inadequacy of the happiness attainable by unaided human

[27] *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 5, a. 8: "appetere beatitudinem nihil aliud est quam appetere ut voluntas satietur. quod quilibet vult." *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 25, 14: "ultimus autem finis hominis, et cuiuslibet intellectualis substantiae, felicitas sive beatitudo nominatur: hoc enim est quod omnis substantia intellectualis desiderat tanquam ultimum finem, et propter se tantum."

[28] *ST* I–II, q. 3, a. 8: "ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest *esse* nisi in visione divinae essentiae." *ST* I–II, q. 5, a. 3: "habet. bona autem praesentis vitae transitoria sunt, cum et ipsa vita transeat, quam naturaliter desideramus, et eam perpetuo permanere vellemus, quia naturaliter homo refugit mortem. unde impossibile est quod in hac vita vera beatitudo habeatur." In this second passage, Aquinas explicitly cites *De civitate Dei* 19.4 to support his claim that perfect happiness is not attainable in this life.

[29] *ST* I, q. 12, a. 4: "impossibile est quod aliquis intellectus creatus per sua naturalia essentiam dei videat." *ST* I, q. 12, a. 5: "cum autem aliquis intellectus creatus videt deum per essentiam, ipsa essentia dei fit forma intelligibilis intellectus. unde oportet quod aliqua dispositio supernaturalis ei superaddatur, ad hoc quod elevetur in tantam sublimitatem. cum igitur virtus naturalis intellectus creati non sufficiat ad dei essentiam videndam, ut ostensum est, oportet quod ex divina gratia superaccrescat ei virtus intelligendi." *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 5: "vita autem aeterna est finis excedens proportionem naturae humanae, ut ex supradictis patet. et ideo homo per sua naturalia non potest producere opera meritoria proportionata vitae aeternae, sed ad hoc exigitur altior virtus, quae est virtus gratiae. et ideo sine gratia homo non potest mereri vitam aeternam."

effort. Although Aquinas acknowledges that Aristotle only describes "happiness as it is attainable in this life," he does not begrudge Aristotle this practice because "happiness in a future life is entirely beyond the investigation of reason."[30] As a pagan living without explicit knowledge of revelation, Aristotle cannot be expected to investigate a happiness he knows nothing about. Indeed, from Aquinas's perspective, part of the power of Aristotle's account is that he both identifies the requirements for complete happiness—identifies what happiness must be if it is to quiet the natural desires of the human heart—and recognizes that this type of happiness is "something divine" and beyond the strength of humans, *as human*, to attain.[31] Thus, in his commentary on Book One of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, recognizing the discrepancy between Aristotle's description of the requirements for human happiness and his description of the happiness that is in fact attainable by us, Aquinas offers the following observation.

> But since these things seem not to fulfill entirely the conditions required for happiness described above, [Aristotle] adds that we call these people happy "as men," who in this mutable life are not able to attain perfect happiness.[32]

The philosophers, Aquinas elsewhere explains, are not able to attain perfect happiness because they are not able to satiate the deepest desire of the human heart: They are not able to satiate their desire to know.[33] Drawing

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[30] *In Ethic.* 1.9 (113): "loquitur enim in hoc libro philosophus de felicitate, qualis in hac vita potest haberi. nam felicitas alterius vitae omnem investigationem rationis excedit."

[31] *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7 (1177b27-31): "But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of virtue. If intellect is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life."

[32] *In Ethic.* 1.16 (202): "sed quia ista videntur non usquequaque attingere ad conditiones supra de felicitate positas, subdit quod tales dicimus beatos sicut homines, qui in hac vita mutabilitati subiecta non possunt perfectam beatitudinem habere. et quia non est inane naturae." See *SCG* III 48.9: "unde nec felicitas, secundum suam perfectam rationem, potest hominibus adesse: sed aliquid ipsius participant, etiam in hac vita. et haec videtur fuisse sententia aristotelis de felicitate. unde in i ethicorum, ubi inquirit utrum infortunia tollant felicitatem, ostenso quod felicitas sit in operibus virtutis, quae maxime permanentes in hac vita *esse* videntur, concludit illos quibus talis perfectio in hac vita adest, *esse* beatos ut homines, quasi non simpliciter ad felicitatem pertingentes, sed modo humano."

[33] *SCG* III, 39, 6: "voluntas cum consecuta fuerit ultimum finem, quietatur eius desiderium. ultimus autem finis omnis cognitionis humanae est felicitas. illa

on the Aristotelian principle that knowledge of an effect arouses in the mind a desire to know its cause, a desire that does not come to rest until it knows the cause's essence, Aquinas asserts that the human desire to know only comes to rest in union with the divine essence in the vision of God.

> When a person knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause, there naturally remains in him the desire to know about that cause, *what it is*. And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry, as is stated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. . . . Hence, if the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than *that he is*, the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach simply the first cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. Wherefore it is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very essence of the first cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object in which alone human happiness consists.[34]

The result of this inquiry is what Jan Aertsen has called "the 'distress' of philosophy."[35] The summit of philosophical inquiry is the discovery that philosophy cannot fully attain the end it seeks. Aquinas unequivocally proclaims that "every intellect naturally desires the vision of the divine essence."[36] It naturally desires this, but it cannot on its own know what

igitur cognitio dei essentialiter est ipsa felicitas, qua habita non restabit alicuius scibilis desideranda cognitio. talis autem non est cognitio quam philosophi per demonstrationes de deo habere potuerunt: quia adhuc, illa cognitione habita, alia desideramus scire, quae per hanc cognitionem nondum sciuntur. non est igitur in tali cognitione dei felicitas."

[34] *ST* I–II, q. 3, a. 8: "si ergo intellectus aliquis cognoscat essentiam alicuius effectus, per quam non possit cognosci essentia causae, ut scilicet sciatur de causa quid est; non dicitur intellectus attingere ad causam simpliciter, quamvis per effectum cognoscere possit de causa an sit. et ideo remanet naturaliter homini desiderium, cum cognoscit effectum, et scit eum habere causam, ut etiam sciat de causa quid est. et illud desiderium est admirationis, et causat inquisitionem, ut dicitur in principio metaphys . . . causae. si igitur intellectus humanus, cognoscens essentiam alicuius effectus creati, non cognoscat de deo nisi an est; nondum perfectio eius attingit simpliciter ad causam primam, sed remanet ei adhuc naturale desiderium inquirendi causam. unde nondum est perfecte beatus. ad perfectam igitur beatitudinem requiritur quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae causae. et sic perfectionem suam habebit per unionem ad deum sicut ad obiectum, in quo solo beatitudo hominis consistit." See Jan Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 42–53.

[35] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 213.

[36] *SCG* III, 57, 4: "omnis intellectus naturaliter desiderat divinae substantiae visionem."

this is, or know that it is attainable or how it is attainable.[37] Philosophy culminates in what Thomas Hibbs, borrowing from von Balthasar, has called the "*aporia* of finitude."[38]

Hibbs argues that Aristotle's great merit is that he is faithful to philosophy's limits. He is faithful to the disjuncture existing between what we desire and what we can attain. Unlike some Platonists or even some of his own Arab commentators, Aristotle does not appeal to myth or unwarranted speculation to overcome philosophy's distress. Instead, he leaves us with a faithful account of the "straits" into which unaided reason falls without the gift of revelation. Far from criticizing "the Philosopher," Aquinas, in one of his most poignant passages, sympathizes with Aristotle's plight.

> Since Aristotle saw that there is no other knowledge for humans in this life than through the speculative sciences, he maintained that humans do not achieve perfect happiness, but only their mode of happiness. From which it is sufficiently clear how even the brilliant minds of these men suffered from the narrowness of their perspective.[39]

Perhaps a better translation of this final phrase is "in what straits these brilliant minds suffered" *(quantam angustiam patiebantur hinc inde eorum praeclara ingenia)*. As Hibbs notes, these straits, or "narrowness of perspective," offer an opening to the message of the Gospel.[40] The discovery that we have a desire for something that nothing in this life can fulfill renders an aspect of the Gospel message intelligible: In Christ, God's grace empowers us to attain the happiness we all desire but only vaguely understand and cannot on our own attain.

> We shall be freed from these straits if we hold . . . that man is to reach perfect happiness after this life, when man's soul is existing immortally.

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[37] Kevin Staley, "Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas on the Good and the Human Good," 312, n. 4: "the philosopher can show *that* the human good requires an immediate relationship with an infinite and transcendent Good without being able to say much about what such happiness would be like, how it is to be achieved, or Who the Supreme Good is."

[38] Thomas S. Hibbs, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas: An Interpretation of the* Summa Contra Gentiles (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 115.

[39] *SCG* III, 48, 14–15: "quia vero aristoteles vidit quod non est alia cognitio hominis in hac vita quam per scientias speculativas, posuit hominem non consequi felicitatem perfectam, sed suo modo. in quo satis apparet quantam angustiam patiebantur hinc inde eorum praeclara ingenia."

[40] Hibbs, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas,* 28.

> . . . For which reason our Lord promises us "a reward in heaven" and says that the saints "shall be as the angels . . . who always see God in heaven."[41]

The flowering of philosophy leads us to the sad recognition of our own inability to fulfill our deepest desires. By doing so, however, it also renders the Lord's promises intelligible. What we cannot attain on our own, we can attain through the grace of Christ that leads to the promised glory of heaven.

Aristotle at the Service of Augustine

In Aquinas's view, therefore, when philosophy is true to itself, far from attacking the Gospel, it points to why the Gospel is necessary. In which case, philosophy becomes truly the maidservant of theology. From this perspective, Aquinas is able to describe Aristotle's happiness as a participation of ultimate beatitude. It does not fulfill the full notion of happiness. It remains a painfully imperfect happiness. (It is not lasting, stable, nor free from evils.) Nevertheless, it is a true participation of heavenly beatitude. By recognizing this fact, Aquinas is able to show, more successfully than Augustine, how the Gospel fulfills the deepest longings of the heart. Aquinas can say to Aristotle: the joy you receive from contemplating the truth is a foretaste of what the Lord is offering you in the grace of Christ. Aquinas, therefore, uses Aristotle's own recognition of philosophy's limitations to proclaim, but also refine, Augustine's insight that only in heaven and only by God's grace can our desire for happiness be fulfilled. In short, Aquinas draws on Aristotle's insights to render more intelligible Augustine's Christian proclamation that "you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." N&V

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[41] *SCG* III, 48, 15: "a quibus angustiis liberabimur si ponamus, . . . hominem ad veram felicitatem post hanc vitam pervenire posse, anima hominis immortali existente. . . . propter quod, matth. 5–12, dominus mercedem nobis in caelis promittit; et matth. 22–30, dicit quod sancti erunt sicut angeli, qui vident semper deum in caelis."

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Discussion

On Anthony Kenny's *Aquinas on Being*

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IN 2002, Anthony Kenny published a book on St. Thomas Aquinas's doctrine of being.[1] He presents his aim as follows:

> The subject of Being is one of the most important of all philosophical concerns. St. Thomas Aquinas was one of the greatest of all philosophers. It will be the aim of this book to show that on this crucial topic this first-rank philosopher was thoroughly confused. (preface, v)

He also describes what he is doing as "writing about a philosopher at his weakest" (x). The book takes the form of a chronological survey of Thomas's works beginning with *De ente et essentia* and ending with the *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*.[2] Kenny looks at some key texts on being, and ends with the judgment he indicated at the beginning. I hope, here, to offer some ray of hope for the student of St. Thomas, that things may not be quite as bad as Kenny thinks. To do so, I must follow him somewhat in his visits to texts, and indicate not only where I think he is mistaken but also what other texts he might have considered, and, more fundamentally, why he might have trouble with Thomas's teachings.

It would be absurd to deny that there are disagreements about the meaning of Thomas's doctrine of being. Without going outside the classical

[1] Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Reference to this text will be in the body of the article, simply indicating the page number.

[2] Actually, a given chapter is named for the work mainly considered in it, but there are small supplementary considerations, as, e.g., in the chapter on the *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* there is a very brief consideration of *De substantiis separatis*.

Thomist school, one thinks of the complaint of Banez so heavily insisted upon by Gilson, that when Thomas proclaims that "*esse* is the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections" *"Thomistae nolunt audire!"*: The Thomists do not wish to hear it! As regards the doctrine of being, the Thomists have not agreed among themselves.[3] Gilson himself assures us that *nobody* has ever demonstrated the real distinction between essence and *esse*. That suggests that one of those who "most admire" Thomas (to use a "Kenny-ism") has considerable difficulty with his doctrine of being.[4] It would also be absurd to deny that Thomas has had, outside the school of his interpreters, many doctrinal adversaries.

Moreover, there is certainly development in Thomas's presentations, considering his views in morals, ontology, and elsewhere, whether that bears witness to a change in theory or to a change in pedagogical context. The nature of the development has to be judged instance by instance. In general, it has seemed to me that Thomas was always fundamentally Aristotelian, and that, if anything, he became more thoroughly so as he went along; that he benefited from the work of Avicenna and Averroes in this respect, and that he exercised critical discernment about them all. In his earlier work, Avicenna is very prominent: He notably criticizes Avicenna in *De potentia* in favor of Averroes, as to some creatures having absolutely necessary being;[5] but while Avicenna is criticized as regards the accidentality of the act of being in *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*,[6] he is praised in the same *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* regarding the inclusion of matter in the essence of material things, and thus as having the authentic view of Aristotle.[7] Averroes, while he is praised for his view of the existence of necessary beings in *De potentia*, is

[3] Banez, *Scholastica commentaria in primam partem Summae Theologiae s. Thomae Aquinatis.* P. 1, Q. 3, a. 4; ed. Luis Urbano, Editorial F.E.D.A. Madrid-Valentia, 1934 (Biblioteca de tomistos espanoles, v. 1. Valentia, 1934), 141a.: Et hoc est quod saepissime D. Thomas clamat, et Thomistae nolunt audire: quod *esse* est actualitas omnis formae vel naturae, sicut in hoc art. in ratione secunda dicit, et quod in nulla re invenitur sicut recipiens et perfectibile, sed sicut receptum et perficitur id in quo recipitur: ipsum tamen, eo ipso quod recipitur deformitur, et ut ita dixerim imperficitur.

[4] Cf. my paper "Etienne Gilson and the Actus Essendi" (revised version of 1999 publication), *International Journal of Philosophy* [Taipei] 1 (2002): 65–99. At one moment in his career Gilson thought Cajetan was someone who had truly seen the light, but later, Cajetan fell out of favor with him: cf. Gilson, "Compagnons de route," in *Étienne Gilson, Philosophe de la Chrétienté* (Paris: Cerf, 1949), 275–95, at 293. Gilson is not mentioned in Kenny's book.

[5] *De potentia* 5.3.in corp. and ad 12.

[6] *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 4.2 (556 and 558).

[7] Ibid., 7.9 (1469).

criticized in *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* for his failure to understand Aristotle on the cause of being as being.[8]

We must certainly ask ourselves why the line of argument concerning essence and *esse* so famously present in *De ente et essentia* and *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* is not repeated in later works, and notably not in *Summa contra Gentiles* 2.52.[9] In short, we do not have the ideal presentation we all (who are in metaphysics) would like Thomas to have provided. He was not, after all, primarily a metaphysician, but rather a professor of Christian theology, "*sacra doctrina*."[10] What I do not think for a moment is that Thomas was "confused" about being.

Form as Cause of Being

Kenny's first chapter concerns the *De ente et essentia* prior to its discussion of immaterial substances. One can hardly fault Kenny for beginning with the *De ente*, which has been used by some prominent Thomists to present Thomas's doctrine of being.[11] It is only after his two chapters on the *De ente* that Kenny comes to speak of the *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. It is regrettable that he completely ignored such fundamental presentations as the probably earlier *Commentary on*

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[8] Ibid., 8.2 (ed. Maggiolo, no. 974 [4]–975 [5]); cf. also *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 8.21 (1154 [14]). Cf. also In De caelo 1.6.5, where Averroes is seen to misunderstand the potentiality that belongs to form with respect to being.

[9] This most remarkable text is never alluded to by Kenny! I quote it in the next section.

[10] Kenny's book is not a place to find out about Thomas's history or the nature of his works. Thus, we have the statement that the *Summa contra Gentiles* is "a work not of revealed theology, but of natural theology, and natural theology is a branch of philosophy" (81). Even if we limit this, as Kenny presumably intended, to the first three books, it is quite untrue. Of course, the reasons for its being an untrue description are not of the sort that interest Kenny, but they are solid nevertheless. The title "On the Truth of the Catholic Faith" is quite truly appropriate. Kenny, after translating the words *"Summa contra Gentiles"* as "summary or synopsis against unbelievers" and mentioning that the most frequently used English translation bears the title "On the Truth of the Catholic Faith," opts to keep the Latin. He tells us he will be referring in the notes to the Pera edition (81n1), but he does not mention that that edition bears the primary title: *"Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium,"* i.e., "Book concerning the truth of the Catholic faith, against the errors of the unbelievers" (it adds *"seu 'Summa contra Gentiles'"* in smaller print). Thomas is only interested in the truth that the Catholic faith professes, i.e., the revealed truth. This truth, he tells us, includes two modes: truth that the faith professes and reason can investigate, and truth professed by the faith but beyond the investigatory power of human reason.

[11] I think especially of Joseph Owens.

the Sentences of Peter Lombard 1.8, which, in my judgment, could have saved him some difficulties.

What I notice first of all about Kenny's presentation of the *De ente* is that he fails to comment on the introductory passage, which speaks of the hierarchy of being to be discussed. Thomas explains:

> But because *"ens"* is said absolutely and primarily of substances, and posteriorly and in a somewhat qualified sense of accidents, thus it is that *essentia* also properly and truly is in substances, but in accidents it is in a certain measure and in a qualified sense. But of substances, some are simple and some are composite, and in both there is *essentia*; but in the simple in a truer and more noble degree *[ueriori et nobiliori modo]*, inasmuch as they also have more noble *esse*; for they are the cause of those which are composite, at least [this is true of] the first simple substance which is God.[12]

This picture of "truer and more noble" essence in separate substance, and "more noble *esse*" as related to causal hierarchy, should have been noted. We will eventually see Kenny puzzle over Thomas's Fourth Way (of proving the existence of a God), claiming that it cannot be about hierarchy of *existence*. But, indeed, that is just what it is about, just as it is here what the *De ente et essentia* is speaking of.

I will begin with the doctrine that form is the cause of *esse*. Kenny expresses puzzlement about this already in his chapter 1, and it is repeated in chapter 2.

In chapter 1, Kenny raises a question concerning the following:

> [I]t is necessary that the essence, in function of which the thing is called "a being," be not merely the form nor merely the matter, but both, *though the form alone, in its own mode, is the cause of such esse*.[13]

Kenny wonders why matter is omitted from the causal picture, since there is obviously such a thing as material causality. He says that surely the point cannot be that only form is the *formal* cause.[14]

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[12] *De ente et essentia* c. 1 (ed. Leonine, lines 53–63), emphasis added.

[13] Ibid., c. 2 (lines 50–66), emphasis added:

> oportet quod essentia, qua *res* denominatur *ens*, non tantum sit forma neque tantum materia, sed utrumque, quamvis *huiusmodi esse suo modo sola forma sit causa*.

[14] Cf. Kenny at p. 11 *ca* n. 18. I would say that the point of the limitation, i.e., "in its own mode," is to exclude the idea that the form is the *efficient* cause of the *esse* of the thing; i.e., the form alone (excluding the matter) is the cause of being, but only the formal cause, not the efficient cause. Thomas is not saying that the matter is not a formal cause since, as Kenny says, that is too obvious to need saying. Cf. *De ente et essentia* c. 4 [lines 127–35]:

In Kenny's chapter 2, the same point seems to be at issue. Thomas, having argued (*De ente et essentia* c. 4) that the intelligences or the soul must be immaterial, explains the doctrine of the *Liber de causis*, that they are forms without matter, by the argument that since form gives being to matter, form can exist without matter (since a cause of being can exist without its effect, but not inversely). Thomas says that if there are forms that cannot exist without matter, this is not proper to form as form, but because these forms are remote from the first cause, which is pure act.[15]

This troubles Kenny. He does not see form as the cause of *esse simpliciter*, but only of *esse quid*, relative to the matter (cf. 31n11; the Latin is Kenny's). Already from the point of view of vocabulary Kenny's view of is alarming. Thus, in the early treatise *De principiis naturae*, c. 1, Thomas explains:

> Be it known that something can be though it is not, whereas something else is. That which can be is said to "be in potency"; that which already is, is said to "be in act." But being *[esse]* is twofold: viz. *the essential or substantial being of the thing*, as for example: being a man; and this is "being" in the unqualified sense *[esse simpliciter]*. The other is accidental being, for example, that the man is white; and this is "being something."[16]

> Omne autem quod convenit alicui vel est causatum ex principiis naturae suae, sicut risibile in homine, vel advenit ab aliquo principio extrinseco, sicut lumen in aere ex influentia solis. *Non autem potest esse quod ipsum esse sit causatum ab ipsa forma vel quiditate rei (dico sicut a causa efficiente)* quia sic aliqua *res* esset sui ipsius causa et aliqua *res* seipsam in *esse* produceret, quod est impossibile. . . . [Everything which belongs to something either is caused by the principles of its own nature, as capability of laughter in man, of comes from some extrinsic principle, as light in air from the influence of the sun. Now, it cannot be that being itself be caused by the form itself or quiddity of the thing *(I mean as by an efficient cause)*, because thus some thing would be cause of its very own self, and some thing would launch itself into existence; which is impossible.]

[15] The first cause itself is not termed "pure form" here in the *De ente et essentia*, which is indebted here to the *De causis*; however, in the *Summa theologiae* I, q. 3, a. 2, Thomas has no qualms about presenting God as "through his own essence, form" *[per essentiam suam forma]*.

[16] *De principiis naturae,* c. 1:

> Nota quod quoddam potest *esse* licet non sit, quoddam vero est. Illud quod potest *esse* dicitur *esse* potentia; illud quod iam est, dicitur *esse* actu. Sed duplex est *esse:* scilicet *esse essentiale rei, sive substantiale ut hominem esse, et hoc est esse simpliciter.* Est autem aliud *esse* accidentale, ut hominem *esse* album, et hoc est *esse* aliquid. [emphasis added]

And we see this in many texts throughout Thomas's career. Cf. *ST* I, q. 5, a. 1, ad 1:

For Thomas, "being a what" and "being unqualifiedly" go together: That is, *esse quid* is *esse simpliciter*. I would say Kenny fails to grasp the existential importance of generation and hylomorphism; a thing that is corrupted ceases to *be*. Yes, matter is "incorruptible," but only in the way that matter "is" at all.[17]

The question for me is what Kenny means by "*esse simpliciter*," such that he distinguishes it from "*esse quid*." In the main text, which his note 11 complements, Kenny writes:

> When Aquinas says that form gives *esse* to matter, all that he can mean is that form makes matter to be the kind of thing it is; he cannot mean that it brings matter into existence. When a substantial change takes place, no new matter enters the world, but matter that already existed under one form begins to exist under another. (31)

What this suggests to me is that Kenny's word "existence" really refers to the answer to the question: "Does it exist?" rather than to the act of being *(actus essendi)*.[18]

Thomas's word "*esse*," though it does the work of signifying the answer to the question: "does it exist?" (thus signifying the truth of propositions),

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> cum ens dicat aliquid proprie *esse* in actu; actus autem proprie ordinem habeat ad potentiam; secundum hoc simpliciter aliquid dicitur ens, secundum quod primo discernitur ab eo quod est in potentia tantum. Hoc autem est *esse* substantiale rei uniuscuiusque; unde per suum *esse* substantiale dicitur unumquodque *ens simpliciter*.

And *ST* I, q. 76, a. 4:

> *forma substantialis* in hoc a forma accidentali differt quia forma accidentalis non dat *esse* simpliciter, sed *esse* tale, sicut calor facit suum subiectum non simpliciter *esse,* sed *esse* calidum. . . . *Forma autem substantialis dat esse simpliciter,* et ideo per eius adventum dicitur aliquid simpliciter generari, et per eius recessum simpliciter corrumpi.

17 Indeed, while Thomas appeals to the incorruptibility of matter when arguing that God will not annihilate things (cf. *ST* I, q. 104, a. 4), it is also part of that picture that matter can only be incorruptible as participating in actuality through a form: cf. *ST* I, q. 46, a. 1, obj. 1 (if you have matter, you must have form and a world), and *De potentia* 5.7.in toto and ad 11.

18 Cf. *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2. I notice in the above-mentioned review by Jörgen Vijgen that at p. 217 he criticizes Knasas for insufficiently distinguishing "between *esse* as actual existence and *esse* as the intrinsic act of being *(actus essendi)*." Without making any judgment here about Knasas, I would insist that the word "existence" is ambiguous, and must be used at times not only for the answer to the question "does it exist?" but also for the intrinsic act of being. My point is that Kenny uses the word "existence" exclusively for the answer to the question "does it exist?"

also signifies the thing's own act which is "to be," as meaning the perfection which terminates a thing's generation.[19] It is what characterizes, we may also say, the effect of an efficient cause, which, in giving form to matter, gives the thing its peculiar existence. Thomas speaks of the situation, for example, in *Summa contra Gentiles* 2.54 (a most prominent ontological text never referred to by Kenny), as follows:

> Now, the composition out of matter and form is not of the same sort as that out of substance and being: though each is out of potency and act.
>
> Firstly, this is because matter is not the very substance of the thing: for [if that were so] it would follow that all forms were accidents: just as the ancient natural philosophers opined; but rather, matter is a part of the substance.
>
> Secondly, because *the very act of being is not the proper act of the matter,* but rather of the substance as a whole: for being is the act of that concerning which we can say: "it is"; now, "being" is not said of the matter, but of the whole; whence, *matter cannot be called "that which is,"* but rather the substance itself is that which is.
>
> Thirdly, because neither is form the very being *[esse]*, but they [viz. form and *esse*] stand related in an order: for the form stands related to the very being as light [the quality] stands to illuminating, or as whiteness stands to being white.
>
> Then again, because the very being [esse] has the role of act relative even towards the form itself; for it is *through this* that in things composed out of matter and form the *form* is said to be *the principle of being [principium essendi]*, viz. because it is the completion of the *substance* whose act is being itself: just as the transparent is for the air the principle of being actually illuminated, in that it makes [the air] the proper subject of light.
>
> Hence, in things composed out of matter and form, neither the matter nor the form can be called the very "that which is"; nor also [can] the very *esse* [be called "that which is"]. Nevertheless, the *form* can be called "that by which it [viz. the substance] is," inasmuch as it is *the principle of being*; but the substance as a whole is "that which is"; and the very being *[ipsum esse]* is that in function of which the substance is called "a being."[20]

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[19] Cf. *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.33.1.1.ad 1 on meanings of *"esse."* For the connection of the act of the essence with terminus of generation, cf. e.g., *SCG* 2.52 and 1.26.

[20] *SCG* 2.54 [in part]:

> [1287] Quod non est idem componi ex substantia et *esse,* et materia et forma.
>
> Non est autem eiusdem rationis compositio ex materia et forma, et ex substantia et *esse:* quamvis utraque sit ex potentia et actu.

The substance as a whole has the act of being. It has it from an efficient cause which confers a new form on matter: In that way, a new mode of substantial existence, that is, a new mode of unqualified existence, for example, being a dog, is conferred on the matter, which previously had some other mode of unqualified existence, as the matter of a quite other substance. The matter in itself is only that which receives unqualified existence from an agent through a form: Thus, in its "substance," it is a pure receptive potency for unqualified existence. Indeed, it is never unqualifiedly true that the matter "is": It participates in the act of being only through form.

Because of its precise ontological status and role, the matter cannot exist save as under form. No miracle could bring about "pure matter."[21] If Kenny thinks of the matter as something having its own act of being, its own existence, he is returning to the error of the ancient naturalists. This is not surprising since, as Aristotle says concerning his notion of primary matter, it is the answer to a most difficult problem. In *De generatione et corruptione* he shows how difficult it is to conceive of unqualified coming to be, precisely because of the difficulty of conceiving of primary matter, that which is potentially a substantial actuality.[22] Only when it is realized that such matter

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> [1288] Primo quidem, quia materia non est ipsa substantia rei, nam sequeretur omnes formas *esse* accidentia, sicut antiqui naturales opinabantur: sed materia est pars substantiae.
>
> [1289] Secundo autem quia ipsum *esse* non est proprius actus materiae, sed substantiae totius. Eius enim actus est *esse* de quo possumus dicere quod sit. *Esse* autem non dicitur de materia, sed de toto. Unde materia non potest dici quod est, sed ipsa substantia est id quod Est.
>
> [1290] Tertio, quia nec forma est ipsum *esse,* sed se habent secundum ordinem: comparatur enim forma ad ipsum *esse* sicut lux ad lucere, vel albedo ad album *esse.*
>
> [1291] Deinde quia ad ipsam etiam formam comparatur ipsum *esse* ut actus.
>
> Per hoc enim in compositis ex materia et forma dicitur forma *esse* principium essendi, quia est complementum substantiae, cuius actus est ipsum *esse:* sicut diaphanum est aeri principium lucendi quia facit eum proprium subiectum luminis.
>
> [1292] Unde in compositis ex materia et forma nec materia nec forma potest dici ipsum quod est, nec etiam ipsum *esse.* Forma tamen potest dici quo est, secundum quod est essendi principium; ipsa autem tota substantia est ipsum quod est; et ipsum *esse* est quo substantia denominatur ens.

[21] Cf. *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 4.11.2; *ST* I, q. 66, a. 1; *Quodl.* 3.1.1 (a full discussion).

[22] Aristotle says:

> it is extraordinarily difficult *[thaumasten aporian]* to see how there can be "unqualified coming-to-be" (whether we suppose it to occur out of what

never does and indeed cannot exist separately is there a satisfactory solution to what Aristotle describes as the "wondrous difficulty." Primary matter exists only as part of the composite of form and matter.[23]

On the other hand, the peculiar ontological role of form, as the principle of actual being, includes in itself no obstacle to its existing by itself. Its role of formal cause is all that is needed to make the argument that the cause of being *can* exist without its effect.[24]

Kenny asks what about material causality and its role as cause of being? The answer to this, I would say, one sees in Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*. Matter has a causal role as regards the being of the resulting generated thing inasmuch as that thing must preexist in something else. However, speaking of the resulting thing, just in itself, only the form is the cause of its being. We read:

> It is necessary that the causes be four. Because, since a cause is that upon which the being of another follows, the being of that which has a cause can be considered in two ways: *in one way, absolutely*, and thus *the cause of being is the form, through which something is in act*; in the other way, according as from potentially a being there is brought about what is actually a being. And because everything which is in potency is reduced to act by that which is a being in act, on this account it is necessary that there be two other causes, viz. the matter, and the agent which reduces the matter from potency into act. Now, the action of the agent tends towards something determinate, just as it proceeds from some determinate principle:

> potentially "is" *[ek dunamei ontos]*, or in some other way), and we must recall this problem for further examination. (317b18–20) [Oxford trans: Harold H. Joachim]

Thomas's paraphrase, *In De gen.* 1.6 (49 [8]), runs:

> because even after the preceding determination there still looms a *wondrous difficulty [mirabilis dubitatio]*, one must once more attempt [to determine] how unqualified coming to be occurs *[sit]*, whether out of being in potency or how it comes about in any other way.

23 Aristotle, *De gen. et corr.* 1.3 (317a32–318a27); cf. Thomas, *In De gen.* 1.6–7.

24 That argument, just by itself, does not establish there does exist any separate form; it is merely about the possibility (in contrast to the case of separate matter). The actual existence of subsisting form is established, for example, by showing that the human soul must be subsistent form, on the basis of the requirements of intellection: cf. *ST* I, q. 75, a. 2 and 5, but also *De ente et essentia* c. 4 [lines 8–40], and in *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.5.2 and 2.17.1.2. On Thomas's use throughout his career of that argument for the possibility, cf. my paper: "St. Thomas Aquinas against Metaphysical Materialism," in *Atti del'VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, t. V, 412–434 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 412-34.

> for every agent brings to actuality that which is suitable for itself; and that towards which the action of the agent tends is called the "final" cause. Thus, it is necessary that there be four causes. But because *the form is the cause of being absolutely*, whereas *the others are causes of being inasmuch as something receives being*, thus it is that in immobile things the other three causes are not considered, but only the formal cause.[25]

This, of course, as a text from the *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, takes a rather restricted, that is, physical, view of the final and efficient causes, and even a limited view of "immobile things," by which Thomas seems here to mean mathematicals. In the perspective of metaphysics, which considers things precisely as beings, one considers the "receiving" of being where the receiving is not a change, that is, creative efficient causality. Form has an instrumental role, under the creative cause, but matter is strictly in the role of effect. Thus, in *De veritate* we read:

> God causes in us natural *esse* by creation, without the mediation of any efficient cause, but nevertheless through the mediation of a formal cause: because natural form is the principle of natural *esse*.[26]

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[25] *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 2.10.15 [Maggolo 240], emphasis added:

> Necesse est autem quatuor *esse* causas. Quia cum causa sit ad quam *sequitur esse* alterius, *esse* eius quod habet causam, potest considerari dupliciter: uno modo absolute, et sic *causa essendi est forma per quam aliquid est in actu*; alio modo secundum quod de potentia ente fit actu ens. Et quia omne quod est in potentia, reducitur ad actum per id quod est actu ens; ex hoc necesse est *esse* duas alias causas, scilicet materiam, et agentem qui reducit materiam de potentia in actum. Actio autem agentis ad aliquid determinatum tendit, sicut ab aliquo determinato principio procedit: nam omne agens agit quod est sibi conveniens; id autem ad quod tendit actio agentis, dicitur causa finalis. Sic igitur necesse est *esse* causas quatuor. Sed quia forma est causa essendi absolute, aliae vero tres sunt causae essendi secundum quod aliquid accipit *esse;* inde est quod in immobilibus non considerantur aliae tres causae, sed solum causa formalis.

Cf. also *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 3.2 (346), 3.4 (369), and 3.4 (384), and my paper, "St. Thomas, Metaphysics, and Formal Causality," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 36 (1980): 285–316, at 289–90.

[26] St. Thomas, *De veritate* 27.1.ad 3 (ed. Leonine, t. 22/3, lines 182–86). An important remark is to be found at *De potentia* 3.1.ad 17. The question is posed: Can God make something out of nothing? The objector reasons that the maker gives *esse* to the thing made. If what receives the *esse* is *nothing*, then it is nothing thatis constituted in existence *[esse]*—and thus nothing is made. If, on the other hand, it is *something* that receives the *esse,* then this is not making something out of nothing. Thomas replies:

> God, simultaneously giving *esse,* produces that which receives *esse:* and thus it is not necessary that he work on something already existing. This

And Thomas says in *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*:

> In substances composed out of matter and form, we find three [items], viz. matter, and form, and, [as a] third, *esse,* whose principle is form. For matter, by the fact that it receives form, participates in *esse*. Thus, therefore, *esse* follows upon form itself, nor nevertheless is form its own *esse*, since it is its principle *[cum sit eius principium]*.[27] And though matter does not attain to *esse* save through form, form nevertheless, inasmuch as it is form, does not need matter for its *esse*, since *esse* follows upon form itself *[cum ipsam formam consequatur esse]*; but it needs matter since *[cum]* it is such form as does not subsist by itself.[28]

It occurs to me that another way of making my point is to stress that there is no divine idea of matter just in itself. As Thomas says:

> Plato, according to some people, held that matter is not created, and so he did not posit that there is an idea of matter, but that matter is a concause [along with God]. But because we hold that matter is created by God, but not without form, it has indeed an idea in God, but not other than that of the composite: for matter, taken as regards its very self, neither has being *[esse]* nor is knowable.[29]

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allows us to see that, God being posited on high as agent, we analyse his product, a being, i.e., *ens,* in which are found together a multiplicity of intelligible ontological factors, such as *esse*, form, matter, etc., i.e., *only* by what I would call "formal analysis" does metaphysics make sense. One should not view the *esse* of the thing as something that itself *has esse* and gives it to essence; this is to view it as an agent, i.e., a subsisting thing. Least of all should matter be regarded as itself having *esse*.

[27] I translate *"cum"* here as "since" rather than "though" because a few lines below it twice clearly means "since."

[28] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* q. 6, lines 229–40 (*Opera omnia,* t. XXIV, 1. Roma-Paris: Commissio Leonina/Cerf, 1996, ed. B.-B. Bazan). On the argument concerning form in this passage, see my paper, "St. Thomas Aquinas against Metaphysical Materialism," in *Atti del'VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, t.V (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 412-34.

[29] Thomas, at *ST* I, q. 15, a. 3, is asking whether all items which God knows have ideas in the divine mind. The third objection holds that whereas God knows primary matter, it cannot have an idea since it has no form. The reply is:

> Ad tertium dicendum quod Plato, secundum quosdam, posuit materiam non creatam, et ideo non posuit ideam *esse* materiae, sed materiae [*read:* materiam] concausam. Sed quia nos ponimus materiam creatam a deo, non tamen sine forma, habet quidem materia ideam in deo, non tamen aliam ab idea compositi. Nam materia secundum se neque *esse* habet, neque cognoscibilis est.

Separate Entity: Form without Matter

Kenny's second chapter considers *De ente et essentia* 4, on essence as found in separate substance: the human soul, intelligences, and the first cause.[30] Kenny begins (25) by speaking as though we had not been told at the outset of *De ente et essentia* that essence was to be found more truly in simple substances. In fact, Aquinas does not "spring" separate substance on us at the beginning of *De ente et essentia* 4, as a reader of Kenny alone could very well think.

He notes that Thomas does not bother to prove the existence of the beings he is speaking of here, but that he does undertake to prove their substantial immateriality. In fact this amounts, in the case of the human soul, whose existence is evident,[31] to proving that it is a subsisting form. This has its importance, since Kenny seems immediately to think of Platonism whenever form by itself is mentioned; Thomas's route to the existence of subsistent form is not at all Platonic. Opposing here Solomon Ibn Gebirol's doctrine that all beings but God must be matter-form composites, Thomas calls the argument he himself uses "the strongest demonstration" of the philosophers. Kenny questions the argument's adequacy to show that the intellective soul must be immaterial. He accuses (28) Thomas of not distinguishing between sense and intellect here, but Thomas actually does so, mentioning that the intellect considers things in

[30] Kenny, presumably because of the term "separate," says [p. 25] that we are discussing the human soul as in an intermediate state, between death and the final resurrection. This is not so. In fact, we are simply considering the ontology of the human soul, whether in a body or out of a body. Perhaps Thomas starts out with the expression "separate substances" because he wants to indicate the distance that exists between what Gebirol teaches and what the philosophers teach, calling spiritual beings below God "separate," i.e., from matter: cf. lines 5–11. (Thomas, at this point in the *De ente et essentia*, is using the vocabulary of the *Liber de causis*: cf. *De veritate* 5.9.ad 7, where we are told that the term *"anima nobilis"* in the *Liber de causis* will apply to any rational soul.) In the present chapter, it is clear that it is the operation of the human soul in this present life that is providing the basis for saying anything about intellectual substances: cf. *De ente et essentia* c. 4 (lines 13–22). Thus, Thomas neatly speaks in the chapter of "intellectual substances," and especially in lines 178–92, where the ontology of the human soul is focused upon.

[31] That the existence of the human soul is evident by itself is clear from the fact that in *ST* I, q. 75, on the essence of the human soul, the first article does not address the question: "Does it exist?" Instead, it asks whether the soul is a body: Since "soul" means "first principle of life in those living things which are in our realm (of corporeal reality)," soul exists as evidently as does the distinction between living and non-living thing.

abstraction from matter *and material conditions*,[32] something not true of sense.[33] Kenny also conjectures that Thomas is using some unspoken premise, such as that like is known by like. That of course is something Thomas would hold, but I would suggest that two truly relevant unspoken premises would be (1) that things are received in keeping with the mode of the receiver, and (2) that every agent produces something like itself. I say this because Thomas's extremely compact argument neatly includes the roles of both possible and agent intellects. We read:

> Of this the strongest demonstration is from the power of understanding which is in them [viz. intelligent substances]. For we see that forms are not intelligible in act save according as they are separated from matter and from its conditions, nor are they rendered intelligible in act save by the power of the intelligent substance, according as they are received in it and according as they are effected by it. Hence, it is necessary that in any intelligent substance whatsoever there be complete immunity from matter, in such a way that it have neither a material part of itself nor even that it have the status of a form impressed on matter as is the case with material forms.[34]

The separation is from matter and its conditions. The being of actual intelligibles requires reception in something entirely immaterial, in that something is received in accordance with the mode of the receiver. The coming to be of the actual intelligibles requires the sort of agent that can produce such a product: The agent produces something like itself. Thus, we have the respective roles of possible and agent intellect.[35]

Kenny objects to the very notion of "form" as applied to the separate substances. In doing so, he says that form was introduced in this book, that is, the *De ente et essentia*, in relation to the Aristotelian categories:

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32 *De ente et essentia* c. 4 (lines 13–15).

33 Cf. the *De ente et essentia* contemporary text, *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.38.1.2. Cf. also SCG 2.82.

34 *De ente et essentia* c. 4 (lines 11–22):

> Cuius demonstratio potissima est ex virtute intelligendi, quae in eis est. Videmus enim formas non *esse* intelligibiles in actu nisi secundum quod separantur a materia et a condicionibus eius, nec efficiuntur intelligibiles in actu nisi per virtutem substantiae intelligentis, secundum quod recipiuntur in ea et secundum quod aguntur per eam. Unde oportet quod in qualibet substantia intelligente sit omnino immunitas a materia, ita quod neque habeat materiam partem sui neque etiam sit sicut forma impressa in materia ut est de formis materialibus.

35 At p. 26 Kenny says that Aquinas is great on "mind," but his remarks here on the roles of agent and possible intellect ["the storehouse of ideas and knowledge once acquired"] do not suggest he is the best judge.

> substantial forms being what corresponded in reality to true predicates in the first category, and accidental forms being what corresponded in reality to true predicates in the remaining nine categories. But it is hard to see how pure form can be explained by reference to predication. (29–30)

This is rather odd. This may have been Kenny's way of approaching substantial form, but it is clearly not Thomas's. There is no doubt that the predicational considerations are helpful, but they require supplementation from more philosophical considerations, such as generation and corruption. Indeed, substantial form is first actuality relative to matter's potentiality. Thus, in the very context, Thomas speaks of form giving being to matter. When we come to Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* we are told that the predicational approach is only a preliminary, and that when one comes to matter and form, one has introduced the real principles of things; this is done by the physical route.[36] Accordingly, the proper approach to form is one that gets us into being as divided by act and potency, and it is no wonder that the term "form" is used according to priority and posteriority, in order to speak of what is substantial in immaterial beings.[37]

In the *De ente et essentia*, in fact, c. 2 begins with the statement that form and matter are *known*, and gives as example soul and body in man. Thus, it does not really explain form or soul, but takes it for granted that

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[36] On the logical and the physical approaches to essence, form, and matter, cf. Thomas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7.2 (1286–287); on the general role of these approaches in metaphysics, cf. *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7.11 (1535–536), and my aforementioned paper: "St. Thomas, Metaphysics, and Formal Causality," 293–304.

[37] Thus in his *QD de immortalitate animae*, obj. 17 and ad 17, Thomas explains how, even though the human soul is incorruptible, the common definition of soul as "form of a natural, organized body" is verified. We read:

> Ad decimum septimum dicendum, quod sicut supra dictum est (ad primum), forma non est corruptibilis nisi per accidens. Unde ex hoc quod anima vegetalis est corruptibilis, non autem rationalis, non sequitur quod aequivoce dicatur utraque: nec tamen oportet quod omnino univoce, *nam forma et actus et hujusmodi sunt de his, quae analogice praedicantur de diversis.* It is to be said that, as was said above (ad 1), form is not corruptible save through association. Hence, from the fact that the vegetative soul is corruptible, but the rational soul is not, it does not follow that they are called ["form"] equivocally, nor nevertheless need it be altogether univocally: *for "form" and "act" and the like are among those items which are analogically predicated of diverse items*. [emphasis added]

This work is to be found in Leonard A. Kennedy, "A New Disputed Question of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Immortality of the Soul," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 45 (1978): 205–8 (introduction) and 209–23 (text).

there is some acquaintance with such a doctrine as one finds in Aristotle's *Physics* and *De anima*.

Kenny tells us:

> Forms are forms of the entity which is the subject of predication: Socrates's wisdom is what corresponds to the predicate in the sentence "Socrates is wise," and Plato's humanity is what corresponds to the predicate in the sentence "Plato is human." In the same way, a pure form would be something that corresponded to a predicate in a sentence that has no subject; but this seems close to an absurdity.[38] What, we wonder, is the difference between the angelic pure forms that Aquinas accepts and the Platonic Ideas or Forms that he rejects? (30)

What I wonder is why it does not occur to Kenny that he has got things wrong somehow. It is very clear in *De ente et essentia* 4 that we are working with conceptions that pertain to the study of cognitive beings and the nature of the intellective soul, as presented in Aristotle's *De anima* and commentaries on it. Kenny's merely predicational approach will not do.

If Kenny really did wonder how Thomas's subsisting forms differ from Platonic Ideas, he might have looked at the texts where Thomas explains this. I have not found him doing so in the book. What is clear in the *De ente et essentia* is that it is on the basis of the argument for the human intellective soul as incorporeal, subsisting and pure form that he develops a discussion of such beings. It is simple enough to find him explaining his rejection of the Platonic approach to the existence of separate entity.[39]

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[38] This is very odd for a reader of Aristotle, let alone Thomas Aquinas. As we see in the logical or predicational treatment of a thing and its quiddity, in *Metaphysics* 7.6 (1031b28–1032a2), and cf. *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7.5 (1373–375), the thing, i.e., the subject of predication, and its quiddity, i.e., the predicate, are identical, not in just any way, but even notionally. A separate entity is excellent for per se predication, precisely because of the identity of subject and predicate. Cf. *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7.11 (1536), concerning pure subsistent forms; and Aristotle, 7.11 (1037a33–b4). The problem posed by Kenny reminds one of the objection made to predicating anything of God, in that, as Boethius says, pure form cannot be a subject: *ST* I, q. 13, a. 12, obj. 2; as St. Thomas says, the objector has not taken into consideration the way our minds must approach simple things.

[39] Of course, one thinks especially of the relatively late *De substantiis separatis* c. 2, where Thomas begins by rejecting the Platonic approach at its very root; nevertheless such texts exist at every stage in Thomas's career: cf. e.g., *In Boeth. De trin.* 5.2 and 5.4. The general criticism is best spelled out in *ST* I, q. 84, a. 1. Nevertheless, one can establish the existence of subsisting form and even of subsisting *esse* and goodness, and in that way can see a truth in what Plato held: cf. e.g., *ST* I, q. 6, a. 4.

Thomas, having argued that the intelligence or the soul must be immaterial, explains the doctrine of the *Liber de causis*, that it is form without matter, by the argument that since form gives being to matter, form can exist without matter (since a cause of being can exist without its effect, but not inversely, and form gives being to matter). Thomas says that if there are forms that cannot exist without matter, this is not proper to form as form, but because these forms are remote from the first cause, which is pure act, that is, pure form. We discussed the meaning of this argument earlier.

Treatment of the "Intellectus essentiae" Argument

It is true that the argument in *De ente et essentia* 4 for the distinction between the essence or quiddity of a thing and its *esse* has occasioned much argument. It is also true that it is an argument that Thomas used only in the first Parisian period (indeed, while still a Batchelor of the *Sentences*). Is this to say that it is not valid? I do not think so.[40]

One source of puzzlement is the examples used, man and phoenix. In parallel texts of the period, sometimes the example is man alone.[41] In one text man is omitted and an eclipse is mentioned along with the phoenix.[42]

As I read the argument, while it clearly has a background in Avicenna (and Algazel's presentation of him), it should be seen as using the doctrine of Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 7, chapters 10 and 15. Aristotle teaches that we can know the definition of man, and yet not know whether the individual man exists.[43] Aristotle is speaking of the individual as an individual;

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[40] Cf. my paper "St. Thomas, Joseph Owens, and the Real Distinction between Being and Essence," *Modern Schoolman* 61 (1984): 145–56.

[41] Cf. *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.4.2, where the argument (as to why God is not in any genus), whose subtlety Thomas notes, is traced to Avicenna. Cf. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, tr. 8, cap. 4 [S. Van Riet, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1980), tr. V–X, 404, especially lines 97–100: There, Avicenna is arguing that the first principle is not in a genus. An objection is made, contending that the first principle is in the genus of substance: It maintains that the notion of substance is simply "being, and not in a subject." Avicenna argues that this is not the notion of substance. That notion is rather of something having a quiddity to which not being in a subject belongs. In order to prove the difference between what he is saying and what the objector contends, he continues:

> The proof that between the two there is a difference, and that one of them is a genus and the other not, is this: that concerning the individual [substance] of some man of whose existence one is ignorant it can be said that it is that whose being is that it not be in a subject; nor do you say that he now is and not in a subject. [I translate with the help of the editor's supplements from the Arabic.]

[42] *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 2.3.1.1.

[43] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.15 (1039b20–1040a7), and especially 7.10 (1036a2–8).

in the 7.10 passage, his example is the individual circle, whether physical or mathematical.

The *Intellectus essentiae* argument bears on this situation. We have encountered essence in our experience. Thus, we already know what we mean by an "essence," and what its real requirements are; and so we can formulate the premise that no essence is understandable if one omits a part of it. This should be something one can appreciate with respect to either of the two examples Thomas uses, the man and the phoenix. I generally use the approach of presenting a well-known artifact, the bicycle. We understand the operation and can appreciate what are the essential parts of the thing that make operation possible. It is this grasp of a thing as a coherent viable entity that is meant by understanding the essence. We understand what it would be for it to be missing an essential part. Our conceptions of artifacts are imitations of our conceptions of natural things. However, there is this significant difference, that what we mean by an "essence" is tied to that in a natural thing that is a principle of reproduction.[44] We also see that the sort of thing we are primarily aware of is destructible. Thus, when the individual is absent, we do not know whether it exists.

While Kenny found the argument odd when the example of the man was used, obviously because when no one else is present, still we are always present to ourselves when we are thinking about such things, I see no difficulty because I take it that the argument is about knowledge of the essence and knowledge of the existence of the individual, taken as regards such things. If one's own humanity gets in the way of making the point, then by all means substitute elephants. St. Thomas points out elsewhere that if all lions or horses were eliminated, one could still know their essences, speaking of knowledge in the mode of "what the thing is."[45]

Thus, for me, the more problematic example is the phoenix. I pointed out in my paper on the *Intellectus essentiae* argument that it must be taken as at least a pseudo-essence. Kenny draws from its use, I would say, the conclusion that the argument must be about the meanings of words, not about real essence having real definition. I think the real point is that even

[44] I would say that it is crucial that our knowledge of essence, as used in the argument, arises from experience of the reproduction of natural things, and is not merely based on predicational considerations. Cf. Thomas, *Expositio libri Posteriorum* 1.37 (ed. Leonine, lines 173–87, Spiazzi no. 330), commenting on Aristotle, 85b15, on the mode of being which pertains to the common nature, in contrast to the existent individual; on the reality of the form which grounds the common nature, cf. *Expositio libri Posteriorum* 2.20 (lines 183–92), concerning Aristotle at 100a7b.

[45] *SCG* 1.66.5.

pseudo-essences are based on our prior knowledge of real essence. We do not have to know, when we deal with the meaning of a substantial name, whether we are dealing with a real thing or not. We already understand the general sort of thing our words are meant to signify, and that is enough. That is why we can raise a question such as "does it exist?" It is because we already have words like "man," "stone," etc., which do not normally require an investigation to see whether there is such a thing, that we can raise such a question about some unknowns. The general situation, with respect to generable and corruptible things, on which our conceptions and language are based, is that we can know what they are and not know whether an individual exists in such a nature.

How was the phoenix example used by Algazel? Algazel, presenting a doctrine concerning the necessary being (that is, God), viz. that it is not called "a substance," even though it is existent by itself and not existent in a subject, uses the *phoenix* as follows:

> For just as they [the philosophers] have agreed that substance is nothing else but that which is a thing whose being is not being in a subject, that is, that when it will be, it is not in a subject, not that it has in itself being actually: of which thing let an example for you be the animal which is called "a phoenix": it is a substance, without doubt, and nevertheless you are in doubt whether [now] it is or is not; and it is similar with many other substances.[46]

Surely it is chosen because it is the sort of thing about which one is not sure of its existence; yet it is meant to illustrate the case of *every substance*.

This is obviously a reporting of Avicenna's doctrine that the meaning of "substance," as naming the genus, is that which has a quiddity such that being per se belongs to it, though the quiddity is other than the *being*. Such a meaning of "substance," he teaches, should not be used concerning the Necessary Being, who has no quiddity other than being. Algazel, aiming to show that this is indeed what we think under the name of "substance," that

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[46] Algazel, *Metaphysica,* J. T. Muckle, CSB, ed. (Toronto: St. Michael's College, 1933), part I, tract. 2 (ed. cit., 57, lines 25–30):

> Sicut enim convenerunt substancia nichil est, nisi id quod *res* est, cuius *esse* non est *esse* in subiecto, scilicet quod cum fuerit non sit in subiecto, non quod habeat *esse* apud se in effectu. *Cuius rei tibi sit exemplum animal quod dicitur fenix quod quidem substancia est sine dubio; tu tamen dubitas si nunc sit vel non, similiter et multe alie substancie* [II, no. 11; 57, lines 25–30]

[In Appendix B, 222, we are told that a variant omits the word "nunc" in the last line above.]

is, that we do not include the substance's being in act in our so thinking, takes "phoenix" because it is quintessentially a case of knowing what I mean by "substance," and yet not knowing whether the thing exists.[47]

Of course, with an item such as a phoenix it is not really authentic quidditative knowledge that we have, since we have never encountered such a thing, and do not know whether there is such a nature at all. But even when we have encountered a thing and seen that there really is such a nature, such as a horse, if no horses are in evidence, we do not know whether there are any (though we may have a solid opinion).

This situation is the fruit of our experience of the beings with which we live. Accordingly, it is quite in order to argue that since quiddity is a kind of completeness, if we can know one, we can be sure that what we do not know about it does not belong to the quiddity, but is a somehow adventitious associate. And this is true of the *existence* of that quiddity.[48]

It is not surprising that Thomas takes this line in *De ente et essentia*, since it has already been suggested that the essences of the material things he has discussed have being in reality only in individuals.[49] However, here in chapter 4 he is no longer aiming to speak of the essences of those kinds of things. In fact, his argument has satisfied *merely for such things*, and it is only by going further that he can make his point about separate substances. Could not the essences of the separate substances be cases of pure *esse*? Accordingly, he now sets out to show that there can only be one case of pure *esse*, one *ipsum esse subsistens*. Thus, he will be able to conclude that the conclusion he has just reached applies even to the acknowledged multitude of intelligences that are below the first cause. And he will then go on to show that they must be caused by that one first cause.

This should be stressed. The *Intellectus essentiae* argument is not a general argument that proves the real distinction between essence and *esse* in *all*

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[47] "Phoenix" here is playing a role similar to "centaur" in Aristotle, *APo* 2.1 (89b33), Thomas *In Post. An.* 1.2 (Leonine lines 100–108).

[48] If we put the question: "Why does Thomas not continue to use this argument?" I would suggest that it might be seen as suggesting the idea that the *esse* of things is an accident, the point on which Thomas criticizes Avicenna in *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 4.2 (556 and 558); instead, he subsequently tends to present the distinction in the light of efficient causality and its implications (cf. e.g., *SCG* 2.52 in general; and cf. *ST* I, q. 3, a. 7, ad 1). Cf. also my paper "St. Thomas and the Distinction between Form and *Esse* in Caused Things," *Gregorianum* 80 (1999): 353–70. He also begins to feature the per se relationship between the thing's form and its *esse:* cf. my paper "Saint Thomas, Form, and Incorruptibility," in Jean-Louis Allard, ed., *Être et Savoir* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1989), 77–90.

[49] Cf. *De ente et essentia* 3 [lines 52–72].

things other than the first. It only clearly applies to essence as known in generable and corruptible things.

Kenny says that the phoenix argument does establish something other than a merely conceptual distinction (36) and that "the doctrine, whether or not its formulation is confusing, seems to be true and important" (37). He contends that a thing's essence and a thing's existence provide answers to "questions of totally different kinds" (36). He then says:

> The query "is there a real distinction between essence and existence?" should bring us up short like the question "In three blind mice is there a distinction between the threeness and the blindness?" (36)

Here, I take it that he means that the predicating of existence about a thing is not the predication of a real predicate (just as "blindness" names a mere absence). Thus, Kenny goes on, not to complain about distinguishing essence from existence, but about making existence the essence in the case of God (37). In so doing, he makes it plain that his recognition of a distinction between essence and existence does not bear upon the distinction meant by Thomas. Thomas was, of course, thinking of the actual existence of the human being as some positive actuality such as is found at the terminus of generation. Form gives being to matter.[50]

Kenny says:

> It is when the doctrine is employed to mark a fundamental difference between creatures and God that it becomes more difficult to comprehend. For it seems that, in the same way that I can have a concept of phoenix without knowing whether or not there are phoenixes, so I can have a concept of God without knowing whether or not there is a God. Atheists, after all, have a concept of God; otherwise they wouldn't know what it was they were denying when they deny that God exists. (37)

Kenny goes right on to say that "this, no doubt, is too crude a way of disposing of St. Thomas's celebrated thesis." Why say it, then? Is it a bad and misleading point, or does it have some truth in it?

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[50] As we read in *SCG* 1.26:

> Generation, speaking precisely, is the road to being *[esse]*, and corruption the road to not being *[non esse]*: for form would not be the terminus of generation, and privation [the terminus] of corruption, were it not that form brings about being and privation not being; for, given that some form did not bring about being, what received such a form would not be said to be generated.

Cf. also *SCG* 2.52, a perfect text which associates *esse* with both the terminus of generation and what is proper to the efficient cause as such.

In fact, it is a point on which Thomas himself insists when teaching that the existence of a God is not self-evident for the human mind. In other words, such meanings of the word "a God" as are actually used in the proof of the existence of a God have exactly the same status as "phoenix," as far as St. Thomas is concerned. Whether the meaning is "first origin of change, which is changed by nothing" or "something than which a greater cannot be thought," or even "something in which essence and existence are identical,"[51] a thoroughgoing understanding of what is said does not, in itself, require affirmation that that thing exists. Thus, Kenny's point is not merely "crude." Mentioning it in the way he has is grossly misleading. In fact, he could only say what he says by ignoring the importance of the last line of Thomas's argument: "unless perhaps there is some thing whose quiddity is its very own being; and this thing can only be one and first,"[52] that is, he is about to undertake to *prove* that such a thing exists.

Or should we speak of it as the "last" line? In fact, what Thomas has set out to prove is that in beings, which are forms subsisting without matter, other than God, there is a composition out of form and *esse*. At the present point in his argument, he has brought forward beings that are composites of quiddity and *esse*, yet there is apparently still room for a being to be its own *esse*; only by showing that such a being can only be one and first can he conclude that the multitude of intelligences, spoken of by the philosophers, must be composites of form and *esse*.

Treatment of the One-Only Status of *Ipsum esse subsistens*

In any case, Kenny proposes to follow the steps by which Thomas establishes that in God essence and *esse* are identical. He first comes to the contention of Thomas that a thing in which essence and *esse* are identical would *necessarily be one only*. (This will serve as the key premise for concluding that the intelligences, whose multiplicity is taken for granted, fall under the judgment of the just seen *Intellectus essentiae* argument.) We have the passage in which the modes of multiplication of something are examined:

> unless perhaps there be some thing whose quiddity is its very *esse*; and this thing can only be one and first; because it is impossible that multiplication

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[51] Of course, assuming the proper stance of supernatural faith, which looks at things from God's own point of view, one can say, with the *sed contra* of *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3: *Sed contra est quod dicitur Exodi III, ex persona dei, ego sum qui sum.* [But on the contrary, there is what is said in *Exodus* 3 [14], [speaking] in the very person of God: I am Who Am.], i.e., God so truly exists that his very name is "I am." Cf. *ST* I, q. 13, a. 11 (the first argument in the body of the article).

[52] *De ente et essentia* c. 4 (lines 103–5).

> of something be effected save through the addition of some difference, the way the generic nature is multiplied in species; or else by the fact that the form is received in diverse matters, the way the specific nature is multiplied in diverse individuals; or else by the fact that one is all by itself and another is received in something, the way that, if there were a separate heat, it would be other than non-separate heat by virtue of its very separation.
>
> Now, if some thing be posited which is *esse* alone, such that *esse* itself be subsisting, this *esse* will not receive the addition of any difference, for then it would not be *esse* alone, but rather *esse* and besides that some [particular] form; and much less could it receive the addition of matter, for then it would not be subsisting *esse*, but rather material *[esse]*. It remains, then, that such a thing which is its *esse,* can only be one.[53]

Kenny uses a variant reading that speaks of a separate "color" [Latin: *color*] rather than a separate "heat" [Latin: *calor*]. He says he does this only "to facilitate discussion in translation," and that the variation does not affect the argument. However, he then gets into discussions of "the color of the sky" as a modern example of "a color that is not the color of anything." He says:

> The blue of the sky is not the property of any substance: yet it is a distinct entity from the blue of this thrush's egg, even if it is exactly the same shade. So we can, for the time being at any rate, accept Aquinas's schema of three types of multiplicity. (38)

Now, I am sure that Thomas would not accept the example. The point is that even the blue of the sky is taken as *extended*. Thus, for Thomas, it is a quality received in a quantitative base. Such a base provides multiplication. The blue of one part of the sky is distinct from the blue of another part of the sky. Kenny has not understood Thomas's hypothetical exam-

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[53] Ibid., c. 4 (lines 103–21):

> nisi forte sit aliqua *res*, cuius quiditas sit ipsum suum *esse;* et haec *res* non potest *esse* nisi una et prima, quia impossibile est, ut fiat plurificatio alicuius nisi per additionem alicuius differentiae, sicut multiplicatur natura generis in species, vel per hoc quod forma recipitur in diversis materiis, sicut multiplicatur natura speciei in diversis individuis, vel per hoc quod unum est absolutum et aliud in aliquo receptum, sicut si esset quidam calor separatus, esset alius a calore non separato ex ipsa sua separatione. Si autem ponatur aliqua *res*, quae sit *esse* tantum, ita ut ipsum *esse* sit subsistens, hoc *esse* non recipiet additionem differentiae, quia iam non esset *esse* tantum, sed *esse* et praeter hoc forma aliqua; et multo minus reciperet additionem materiae, quia iam esset *esse* non subsistens sed materiale. Unde relinquitur quod talis *res*, quae sit suum *esse,* non potest *esse* nisi una.

ple, and so his understanding of the third mode of multiplication is skewed from the start.

Thus, when Kenny reads the rest of the argument, applying the modes of multiplication to the case of *esse subsistens*, he cannot understand the result. Kenny rightly says that the third case of multiplication will make possible that there be created and uncreated being. He says that if one asks: "More than one *what*?" the answer will be "*ens*," which he translates as "being" (that is, "that which is"). This is accurate inasmuch as what we are attempting to multiply are the instances of *esse*, the act of being; and *"ens"* signifies *"esse habens."* Thus, the point is: If *esse* must be multiplied on the "all by itself" (on the one hand) and "in a receiver" (on the other hand) model, then obviously there can only be one *ipsum esse subsistens*. (*Ipsum esse subsistens* is *"esse habens,"* we may concede, with the proviso that God *is* whatever he *has*.)[54]

However, Kenny has misunderstood the application to the third sort of multiplication, as we see in his complaint:

> [I]n the first premise the third kind of multiplicity came about because one of the items to be counted was an instance of a property in the abstract, belonging to nothing.[55] In the application to *esse*, the first item to be counted is not at all abstract; it is not *esse* with no owner, but *esse* identical with its owner. So the parallel with color, however charitably interpreted, does not provide the parallel that is needed for Aquinas's conclusion. (39)

Now, this is quite wrong. In the first premise, what is posited in the third case is merely an item taken all by itself. The example is a "separate heat" (or, if one will, a "separate color"). That is not supposed to be something "abstract" at all, if by "abstract" one is speaking of the abstraction proper to the first act of the intellect.[56] Rather, we are speaking of an actually existing separate heat or color. One sees such a hypothetical entity discussed in one of Thomas's early quodlibets:

> [B]y a miracle, therefore, it could be brought about that *the nature of whiteness subsist without any quantity*; nevertheless, that whiteness would

[54] Cf. *SCG* 1.23. So also, in *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3 (the Fourth Way), God is *"maxime ens."*

[55] Does Kenny thus mean that the blue of the sky is an abstraction?

[56] On the two senses of "abstract," as pertaining to the first ("absolute consideration") or the second operation ("composing and dividing") of the intellect, cf. *ST* I, q. 85, a. 1, ad 1.

> not be like this sensible whiteness; rather, it would be a particular intelligible form, along the lines of the separate forms that Plato posited.[57]

This is the sort of thought experiment Thomas is proposing. In the quodlibet it is indeed compared to a Platonic separate form, but it is also proposed on the basis of a miracle whereby God bypasses secondary causes, such as the quantity which naturally is the immediate subject of color. It should also be noted that it is not the same thing as proposing that there exist the Platonic idea of a material substance: that is the sort of Platonic Idea that Thomas holds is intrinsically impossible.[58] As the quodlibetal discussion makes plain, Thomas gives careful consideration to questions of intrinsic impossibility, especially in that he is in the context of the possibility of miracles.

Thus, Kenny's contention that the argument of Thomas is invalid is wrong. As I have argued elsewhere, the argument for there being only one *ipsum esse subsistens* works only if *"esse"* names something known as *intrinsically common*, after the manner of a form. It is of this sort of thing that Thomas is providing a list of modes of multiplication: A generically common nature such as "animal" must have added to it some particular form, such as "rational" or "irrational," and thus one would seem to have the common *esse* plus form.[59] A specifically common nature such as

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[57] *Quodl.* 7.4.3, emphasis added:

> Posset ergo fieri miraculo ut *natura albedinis subsisteret absque omni quantitate*; tamen illa albedo non esset sicut haec albedo sensibilis, sed esset quaedam forma intelligibilis ad modum formarum separatarum, quas Plato posuit.

[58] Cf. *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7.11 (1535–536) and 7.9 (1469–470); also *De veritate* 3.1, ad 4. It is still another point that, if *per impossibile* there were many Platonic Ideas, they would have to be composed of essence and *esse*. Thomas makes this point in lect. 2 of his *In De Hebdomadibus*. At p. 80, in concluding his extremely inadequate discussion of Thomas's *In DH*, Kenny makes the complaint: "what are those of us who are not Platonists to make of the notion of subsistent immaterial forms?" He completely omits reference to the fact that Thomas there explicitly says:

> it makes no difference, on this score, if we posit those immaterial forms at a higher level than are the natures of these sensible things, *as Aristotle maintained*: each of them, inasmuch as it is distinguished from the others, is some special form participating in being itself *[ipsum esse]*; and so none of them will be truly simple. [nihil differt quantum ad hoc, si ponamus illas formas immateriales altioris gradus quam sint rationes horum sensibilium, ut Aristoteles voluit: unaquaeque illarum, inquantum distinguitur ab alia, quaedam specialis forma est participans ipsum *esse;* et sic nulla earum erit vere simplex.]

[59] That the logical considerations such as genus and species require the backing of the real distinction between form and matter I also discuss in my paper "St. Thomas,

"man" must be multiplied by material individuals, such as "Peter" and "Paul," and thus, if *esse* were so multiplied, it would be *esse* in the material mode. The last possibility of retaining a subsisting *esse* and yet multiplying *esse* is to have a subsisting *esse*, on the one hand, and *esse* received in something other than *esse*, on the other. All of this supposes that *"esse"* names something that is somehow common to all.

Now, this is already a point that separates Thomas from Kenny. Thomas is thinking of the sort of act or perfection that the things we most immediately know have by virtue of an efficient cause. An efficient cause has *esse* and it communicates *esse* when it produces its effect.[60] Indeed, as Thomas implied at the beginning of *De ente et essentia*, the *esse* of the cause is more noble that the *esse* of the effect (the *esse* of separate substance is more noble than the *esse* of material substance). To a hierarchy of essences there corresponds a hierarchy of acts of being. Let us repeat the passage from the beginning of *De ente et essentia*:

> [O]f substances, some are simple and some are composite, and in both there is *essentia*; but in the simple in a truer and more noble degree, inasmuch as they also they have more noble *esse*; for they are the *cause* of those which are composite, at least [this is true of] the first simple substance which is God.[61]

I would say we need everything that Thomas deploys in such a text: causal hierarchy, hierarchy of *esse*, hierarchy of essence. A causal hierarchy is understood in terms of grades of natures. And a hierarchy of *esse* is an integral part of the same picture.

Kenny is working with an idea of *"esse"* as merely expressing our awareness that an item is found outside of thought. Trees "exist" and God "exists" and blindness "exists"; thus, not a predicate expressing a formal reality in the thing.

Joseph Owens, and the Real Distinction between Being and Essence," *Modern Schoolman* 61 (1984): 145–56.

[60] Cf. *SCG* 2.52: "Since every agent activates [agat] inasmuch as it is in act, therefore it belongs to the first agent, which is most perfect, to be in act in the most perfect way. . . . Now, the most perfect act *[ipse actus perfectissimus]* . . . is *esse*, at which all generation and all change has its terminus: for every form and every act is in potency until it acquires *esse*. Therefore, to God alone does it belong that he be being itself *[ipsum esse]*: just as [to him] alone does it belong that he be the first agent."

[61] *De ente et essentia* c. 1 (lines 58–63), emphasis added.

Ipsum Esse Subsistens Must Exist and Be Causally First, Since an Efficient Cause Is Needed for All Else

Kenny already mentions his question as to whether *"ipsum esse subsistens,"* the subsisting act of being, expresses a coherent notion (40). And we immediately think: No wonder!—given what he means by *"esse."* However, he proposes to put that issue off until after examining the argument for saying that *Ipsum esse subsistens* must be first causally. (The argument is not just for the causal primacy of *Ipsum esse subsistens*; it is primarily an argument for the *existence* of *Ipsum esse subsistens*.)[62] Kenny looks through the argument, and notes that *"esse"* here must mean "existence." He says that it depends on the point that nothing can be the efficient cause of its own existence, but he adds in parentheses that the *Intellectus essentiae* phoenix argument "implied that nothing could be the formal cause of its own existence."[63] Here again, Kenny is in error. The phoenix argument merely implies that if the phoenix is to exist, its essence cannot be the *efficient* cause of its existence. A formal causality on the part of the essence is quite conceivable if the thing depends on an outside efficient cause. Thus, as we saw, Thomas teaches in the *De veritate*:

> God causes in us natural *esse* by creation, without the mediation of any efficient cause, but nevertheless through the mediation of a formal cause: because natural form is the principle of natural *esse*.[64]

Thus, God being the efficient cause, formal causality can be seen as the role of form vis-à-vis the thing as a whole. Kenny should have said that the phoenix argument implies the need for the phoenix, if it is to exist, to have an efficient cause.[65]

The Coherence of *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*

It is at this point that Kenny begins his discussion of the coherence of the notion of *Ipsum esse subsistens*. He has not really questioned the validity of

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[62] I agree with Joseph Owens here, against Gilson, that there is a proof of the existence of *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* in *De ente et essentia*; cf, my paper "St. Thomas and the Existence of God: Owens vs Gilson, and Beyond," in *God and Argument*, William Sweet, ed. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999), 115–41.

[63] Page 41. Could Kenny mean, here, that there could never be absolute identity between the formal cause and its effect? Thomas would not agree with that, as we see in *ST* I, q. 39, a. 2, ad 5.

[64] St. Thomas, *De veritate* 27.1.ad 3 (ed. Leonine, t. 22/3, lines 182–86).

[65] I take it that it is the generability and corruptibility of the things we most readily know that is at once the evidence that they need an efficient cause and the reason why we do not know whether they exist when they are absent.

the argument of the need for a God. He rather questions the possibility of conceiving of the God it proves as *Ipsum esse subsistens*. "There seems to be an absurdity in saying of anything that its essence is pure existence" (41). One cannot reasonably say: "There is a God, that's what God is."

Now, of course, so put, the point holds. But should it be put that way? Do we not have ample answer in Thomas's writings as to why it should *not* be put that way? The statement: "There is a God" is the normal expression of the conclusion of a human argument answer to the "does *X* exist?" question.[66] On the other hand, suppose that we prove that there exists a first efficient cause, and we say that that is what we mean by "a God." Obviously such a being is going to have to have an essence and an act of being. It turns out by subsequent argument that they must be identical. We in fact conclude that such an essence is beyond our comprehension. As for existence itself to be the essence of something, while we can see that the proposition is necessarily true, we cannot comprehend such an act of being, such an "existence." Thus, we say that both God's essence and his existence are beyond our mode of knowing. Of this, we are sure, just as we are sure that they are identical. We can even draw the conclusion that this is the highest mode of identity.[67]

As for "there is a God," if one wishes to envisage God himself considering his own existence, then the same act by which he grasped it would

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[66] Of course, it would also be the expression of a human conviction by someone saying that no argument is needed by the human being in this matter. I have heard Peter Van Inwagen take such a stand.

[67] This is well explained in both *SCG* 1.12 and *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2, both extremely prominent texts. *SCG* 4.11 is a passage from St. Thomas that shows the ineluctable variety of intelligible roles of the various items in the metaphysical analysis:

> it has been shown in the First Book (ch. 31) that those things which in creatures are divided are unqualifiedly one in God: thus, for example, in the creature *essence* and *being [esse]* are other; and in some [creatures] *that which subsists* in its own essence is also other than its essence or nature: for this man is neither his own humanity nor his being [esse]; but God is his essence and his being.
>
> And though these in God are one in the truest way, nevertheless in God there is whatever pertains to the intelligible role *[ratio]* of [1] the subsisting thing, or of [2] the essence, or of [3] the being *[esse]*; for it belongs to him not to be in another, inasmuch as he is subsisting; to be a what *[esse quid]*, inasmuch as he is essence; and being in act *[esse in actu]*, by reason of being itself *[ipsius esse]*.

On the highest mode of identity, cf. *ST* I, q. 11, a. 4, and ad 3.

be the act by which he grasps what he is. But we cannot really "tune in" on that, at least in the present life.[68] As Thomas says:

> to know being itself subsisting *[ipsum esse subsistens]* is connatural to the divine intellect alone, and . . . it is beyond the natural power of any created intellect whatsoever.[69]

Kenny presents his case as one already made by Peter Geach. Kenny says that he believes it "is effective in disposing of the notion of subsistent existence" (41). In what follows, then, he is merely seeking alternative ways of understanding "that God is his own *esse*," ways that "do not involve the nonsensicality just exposed."

My contention is that no nonsensicality has been exposed—merely the inability of Kenny and Geach[70] to cope with the real doctrine of the text. When one considers the centrality of this point for the entire doctrine of being of St. Thomas, it gives one pause.

We need not follow out Kenny's effort to offer an alternative doctrine.[71] He eventually contends that to say that God's essence is existence sounds like saying that one knows what the essence of God is. It would "sound more respectful, as well as more plausible" (45) to say that his essence entails existence. This again is quite misleading. As Kenny must know, Thomas affirms that we know neither what God's essence is nor what his existence is. That is part of the same doctrine that his essence is his existence.[72]

Kenny suggests reducing the doctrine to "for God to exist is for God to continue to be God," but then observes that this applies to anything. What then happens to the distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures? Quite so. The real doctrine is that God is *Ipsum esse subsistens*. Kenny has simply failed to grasp it. He has failed to consider *esse* as we know it: the perfection of the efficient cause and of its effect.[73]

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[68] On the question whether Paul in his rapture saw the divine essence and whether he was in his body, cf. *ST* II–II, q. 175, a. 1, and 5.

[69] *ST* I, q. 12, a. 4:

> cognoscere ipsum *esse* subsistens, sit connaturale soli intellectui divino, et quod sit supra facultatem naturalem cuiuslibet intellectus creati.

[70] Supposing that Kenny has understood him.

[71] We should note the Kretzmann link concerning IES as "thin," and the absurd contention on Kretzmann's part that Thomas "prefers" "God being his own existence."

[72] *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2.

[73] An excellent place to see this as the approach to *esse* is *Quaestiones de quolibet* 12.4.1 [6], in Leonine ed., t. 25–2 (Rome/Paris: Commissio Leonina/Cerf,

Did Thomas Posit Essences of Non-Existent Beings?

Kenny, in puzzling over the doctrine that God's essence is identical with his existence, is led, at page 45, to wonder about the doctrine of the real distinction between them as applied to dogs. We read:

> Can we say that Fido's essence and Fido's existence are distinct? If a real distinction between A and B means that we can have one without the other, then it seems that the answer must be in the negative. For a dog to continue to exist is simply for it to go on being a dog, and for a human being to continue to exist is for it to go on possessing its human nature or essence. . . . But would Aquinas agree with the statements we have just made? (45)

Thomas would certainly agree with Kenny's statement about a dog continuing to exist and continuing to be a dog; and so also for the case of man.[74] This is to say, as we said earlier, against Kenny, that *esse quid* and *esse simpliciter* are identical. What Thomas would not agree with is Kenny's premise that "a real distinction between *A* and *B* means that we can have one without the other."[75] Anyone thinking that would clearly rightly go on to conclude that essence and existence cannot ever be really distinct.[76] However, anyone thinking that would not have arrived at the sort of ontological analysis one finds in Thomas Aquinas. By a "real" distinction, here, we do not mean one such that each (or even one) of its members is a thing, a subsistent being, or in Latin, a *"res."* Rather, we mean that the distinction is one to be found within the thing and not merely within our minds considering the thing (a mere "distinction of reason"). Thus, the distinction is called real, that is, pertaining to things themselves. It was not said, in presenting the distinction between a thing's essence and its act

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1996), 403–4. See my paper "St. Thomas and the Distinction between Form and *Esse* in Caused Things," *Gregorianum* 80 (1999): 353–70.

74 So true is this that, as Thomas teaches, when a man dies, even though the soul is immortal, the individual man does not exist; the person does not exist: The ceasing to exist of the complete nature is the ceasing to exist of the person. Cf. e.g., Charles De Koninck, "La personne humaine et la résurrection [part 1]," *LTP* 10 (1954).

75 Thus, though we say that God is the subsisting act of being, we do not say that he is existence without essence; we rather say that in him the two are identical. In fact, as we have noted, at the very outset of the *De ente et essentia*, Thomas makes it clear that essence and *esse* are both found *most truly of all* in God.

76 Indeed, this is a classical wrong-headed argument against the real distinction between essence and existence; cf. for example, the attempts to argue against it by Peter Aureol, which I present in my paper "St. Thomas, Capreolus, and Entitative Composition," *Divus Thomas* 80 (1977): 355–75.

of being, its *esse*, in *De ente et essentia*, that I can have a real phoenix or man, and not have that thing's actual existence. The distinction was not proposed on the basis of having the one reality without the other reality. The argument was rather based on the discerning of distinct targets of intelligible necessity within the thing. One may object to such a procedure as such, but one should at least recognize that it was that which was at stake.[77]

Does that procedure reduce ultimately to finding one of the items without the other? How is essence as completeness discerned, and how does its discernment stand with respect to the existence of individuals? Essence, or its principle, namely form, is seen as that in generable and corruptible individuals whereby the individual maintains itself in being and causes the reproduction of something similar, that is, another self-maintaining and reproducing individual. It is on the basis of the success in carrying out such operations that we form the conception of the essence, and what it is for the individual to be "all there." All of this is recognized even though we also see the perishability of the individual. We thus see what it is to be an essence, and that it is something with a completeness that constitutes its intelligibility: As such, it "makes sense" (like seeing that a bicycle without one of its wheels needs that other wheel). However, the essence is seen to exist only in the "larger context" of the perishable individual: Existence is the actuality of the whole individual. It is, indeed, the fact that one distinguishes the essence from the existence only inasmuch as one appreciates the thing's need for *outside* help in order to *exist*. The essence is a principle of existence, but in a generable and corruptible thing it is obviously an inadequate principle of existence: The thing only comes to be through something prior, which is an efficient cause, and one even needs the contribution of outside efficient causes to maintain the thing in existence. All this I would maintain is wrapped up in the experience that I can know what a man is, and not know that this or that man exists. One can very well say that the real distinction of essence and existence within the thing is grounded in the

[77] No one who had given the least consideration to the argument regularly used by Thomas to establish the incorruptibility of the rational soul could think that a real distinction implies that one can have one of the components without the other; on the one hand, the form is other than the act of being; on the other hand, the form and the act of being are inseparable: cf. *ST* I, q. 50, a. 2, ad 3, and I, q. 50, a. 5; I, q. 75, a. 5, ad 4, and I, q. 75, a. 6, and my paper "Saint Thomas, Form, and Incorruptibility," in Jean-Louis Allard, ed., *Être et Savoir* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1989), 77–90.

real distinction between the efficient cause and its effect, and there, indeed, the one can be without the other.[78]

Kenny has quite another reason for suggesting that Thomas might not agree with what he has just said. Here Kenny becomes a master of suspicion. He tells us that Avicenna, whose *influence* is apparent in Thomas's *De ente et essentia*,

> *may perhaps* have believed that there were individual essences of non-existent beings; that long before Adam and Eve were created there were already such things as the essence of Adam and the essence of Eve, and that the creation of Adam and Eve consisted precisely in God giving existence to these essences, actualizing these potentialities. This was an error which Aquinas, later in life, would explicitly reject as mistaken; but it is not clear whether at this stage he had seen through its confusions. Someone who thinks in this way will regard the relation of existence to essence as being *exactly parallel* to that of form to matter or accident to substance—all three cases will be in the same way instances of the actualization of a potentiality. And that is indeed how Aquinas speaks in this context. (45–46, emphasis added)

Leaving Avicenna aside,[79] it is easily seen that in the period when Thomas wrote the *De ente et essentia*, he was quite clear concerning the ontology of creation as it touches the remarks of Kenny. Kenny is clearly referring to a preexistent passive potency. However, in the *Sentences* presentation of creation we read:

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[78] Cf. my paper "St. Thomas and the Distinction between Form and *Esse* in Caused Things," *Gregorianum* 80 (1999): 353–70. In the above I have limited myself to speaking about essence as the other member of the composite; eventually one must speak of the matter-form composition of such essence. In that discussion it is clear that the essence itself is a real composite, one of whose members does survive the ceasing to be of the composite; the matter remains, though this is only possible inasmuch as it is under another form. As we have said, the matter is not, in itself, the subject of the act of being.

[79] I leave him aside only for simplicity. Thomas, as we see, refers to Avicenna in making the very point we are about to show. While I have myself often seen this claim of Avicenna proposing essences as possibles, which are "out there," so to speak, awaiting actual existence, I notice that as anti-Avicennian a Thomist as Beatrice Zedler, following A. Forest, says: "in Avicenna the possibles are offered eternally to the divine action because they are not constituted as such by his will. God necessarily thinks his own nature; his liberality is only his acquiescing to this universal order of things that he does not constitute." Cf. my paper: "St. Thomas and the Possibles," *New Scholasticism* 53 (1979): 76–85, at p. 76. In that picture, the possibles would have more the role of active potency in God than passive potency awaiting the coming of existence. The difference from Thomas would be rather in the conception of God and his freedom with respect to his ideas.

> [A]ccording to Avicenna there are two sorts of agent: the one natural, which is an agent by means of change, and the other divine, which [is an agent as] giving being *[esse]*, as has been said. And similarly it is necessary to recognize two sorts of product of action or of making: one is through change [effected] by the natural agent: and in the case of all such making it is necessary that a potency precede temporally, and not merely an active potency, *but also a passive [potency]*: because change is the actuality of what exists in potency. But there is another [sort of] made item, inasmuch as it receives being from the divine agent without [there being involved any] change: and if this made item is new, then it is necessary that an active, *not a passive,* potency precede, as to both nature and duration, its *esse*: and from the active potency such a made item is said to be "possible with respect to being made." But if it is not new, then the active potency does not precede durationally, but only by nature.[80]

There is, of course, throughout Thomas's career, the doctrine that every nature pre-exists in the potency of the divine nature and in the divine ideas (and also an infinity of natures that never will exist in their own being outside the divine essence).[81]

Thus, it is clear that Thomas already rejects the sort of pre-existing potential essence that Kenny conjured.[82] However, since the entire basis for the Kenny suspicion seems to be Thomas's use of the word "receive" to describe the relation between the essence of the creature and its *esse*,[83]

[80] *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 2.1.1.2, ad 1. The distinction within this text between newness of the product of creative causality and non-newness is simply the distinction between a doctrine of the production of an eternal creature and that of a creature with a beginning of duration.

[81] At *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.36.2.3, ad. 3 and ad. 2, we see that particulars ("Peter," "Martin") have divine ideas, but not as perfectly as do the composites in function of the *form*: "man," "horse."

[82] And so, as Thomas reads him, does Avicenna.

[83] Kenny continues the passage I quoted from pp. 45–46, illustrating Thomas's way of speaking with the following text:

> Everything which *receives* something from another is in potency with respect to that, and the item which is *received* in it is its act. Therefore, it is necessary that the quiddity itself or form, which is the intelligence, be in potency with respect to *esse*, which it *receives* from God, and that *received esse* has the role of act. And thus one finds potency and act in the intelligences, though not matter and form, *save equivocally*. Hence, it is clear that "to be affected by," "to *receive*," "to be subjected" and all like [expressions], which seem to belong to things by reason of matter, belong *equivocally* to intellectual substances and to corporeal things, as the Commentator says in *De anima* 3. And because, as has been said, the quiddity of the intelligence is the intelligence itself, therefore its quiddity or essence is the very

we should note the following passage from very early in Thomas's *Sentences*, speaking of the ontology of angels (and the human soul):

> But if it is not *esse* itself, it is necessary that it have *esse* acquired from another, which is the case for every created quiddity. And because this quiddity is posited not to subsist in matter, *esse* would not be acquired for it in another, as with composite quiddities; rather, it will be acquired for it in itself; and thus the quiddity itself will be the thing which is, and its own very being will be that in function of which it is. And because *everything that does not have something from itself is possible with respect to that*, this sort of quiddity, since it has *esse* from another, will be possible with respect to that *esse*, and with respect to that from which it has *esse*, in which no potency is to be found; and thus in such a quiddity potency and act will be found, according as the quiddity itself is possible and its *esse* is its act. And in this way I understand a composition of potency and act in angels, and of "by which it is" and "that which is"; and similarly with the soul.[84]

Thomas here uses a slightly more vague "acquire" rather than "receive," but the reason I cite this text is the doctrine of "having" and "not from itself," which are the ontological grounds of the use of such words as "acquire" and "receive" in this context. No pre-existence of the essence is envisaged in such usage. Kenny is a victim of failure to abstract from matter and change.

This failure on Kenny's part is important. On its basis, he conjures a change in Thomas's doctrine, as we move from the *De ente et essentia* to such later texts as he mentions on page 116. Kenny stresses that later in life Thomas insisted against Avicenna

> that there can be no individuation without actualization (only what actually exists can be identified, individuated, counted). But once this is made clear, then the real distinction between essence and existence appears unintelligible, or at best vacuous. (46)

> thing which is, and its *esse*, *received* from God, is that by virtue of which it subsists in natural reality. And for that reason such substances are said by some people to be composed out of that by which it is and that which is, or out of that which is and being, as Boethius says. [emphasis added]

The translation of the passage is my own, as are the stresses. Kenny in fact quotes *only to just before the words "save equivocally."* Thomas himself goes on to note that the word "receive" here is not to be taken in the way that matter receives form. Kenny should have noted this, instead of proposing an *exact parallel* between essence/existence and matter/form as Thomas's thinking.

[84] *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.5.2.

Here he refers us to page 116, but there we find Kenny finding no trace of a doctrine we have found he merely dreamt up here on page 46. Kenny's Aquinas is far from the real Aquinas.

He has exhibited so far no understanding of the real distinction, so it is understandable that he calls it "unintelligible." His conception of a necessary *separability* of one from the other of essence and existence for the distinction to be real is mistaken.[85]

What does he mean by "no individuation without actualization" as constituting the change in doctrine? He imagines Avicenna as positing preexistent possibles that are individuals. (This comes out more clearly on page 90, where, in connection with the conception of generables and corruptibles as in themselves possibles with respect to being and not being, and needing a cause in order to be actually, Kenny posits as the generable and corruptible being being discussed "my dog Stigger.") Thus, in note 13, page 89, he says that there is no need to discuss merely possible individuals in presenting Thomas (presumably because of what he finds later, at page 116). All of this I find rather odd, since obviously Thomas has a doctrine of the preexistence of the individual in the divine ideas, just as Avicenna had a doctrine of the preexistence of things in the divine being. Thus, at *ST* I, q. 15, a. 3, and ad 4, it is clear that there are ideas, in the sense of exemplars, in God of all individuals that are created. Taken as merely in the power and cognition of God, they are possible individuals. The possibility is quite definite and real.

The question is why Kenny thinks that the doctrine of *De ente et essentia* on the distinction between essence and existence involves the preexistence of individuals as possibles. Is it merely the word "receive"? It would seem so, since it was on the basis of this mistake that Kenny saw the supposed exact parallelism between matter and form, essence and existence. Both of course pertain to the analogy of potency and act, but the parallel is not "exact" in the Kenny sense. Kenny thinks that a real distinction means that one can have one without the other. That this is not the case with essence and existence should be clear.

[85] As I have said, we see the unsuitability of Kenny's conception of the essence-existence composition from the way that Thomas argues for the incorruptibility of the human soul. In his *Quaestiones Disputatae de immortalitate animae*, ad 5, he distinguishes carefully between matter-form composition and form-*esse* composition. *Esse* and form are distinct but *inseparable*. Moreover, as I have shown in my paper on this, the argument actually derives from the much-maligned (in this respect) Avicenna. I date this text around the beginning of Thomas's first teaching in Italy. For the Avicennian background, cf. my paper "Saint Thomas, Form, and Incorruptibility," in Jean-Louis Allard, ed., *Être et Savoir* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1989), 77–90, at p. 87 and n. 37.

One can understand the desire to have a text which makes it clear that the composition out of essence and *esse*, a potency and act composition, involves no pre-existence outside of God of the potency in question. And it is entirely possible that one will find such a text later that was merely presupposed earlier. Thus, I certainly value such a text as *QD de anima* 6. ad 10: The topic is whether the human soul is composed out of matter and form. The tenth objection runs:

> Besides, an agent is necessary for this, viz. that it reduce something from potency to act. But to be reduced from potency to act belongs solely to those things in which there is matter and form. If, therefore, the soul is not composed out of matter and form, it does not need an efficient cause: which is clearly false.

And the reply is:

> [I]t is to be said that a thing acting by virtue of change reduces something from potency to act; but a thing acting without change does not reduce something from potency to act, but rather it makes to be in act that which according to [its own] nature is in potency with respect to being *[esse]*, and this sort of agent is creating.[86]

However, attentive reading of the earlier texts, such as that I have indicated from *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.5.2, gives the same understanding.

It is remarkable that Kenny ignores the end of the chapter, in which we have the conception of the hierarchy of separate entity, a hierarchy in terms of act and potency and proximity to the first cause, together with the *grades of esse* and form, right down to the mere perfecting of primary matter by the most material of forms. Investigating this would have suggested more readily the meaning of *"esse"* as the effect of the highest efficient cause on lower things through efficient causality and form. The

[86] *QD de anima* 6.obj. 10:

> Praeterea, agens ad hoc necessarium est ut reducat aliquid de potentia in actum. Sed reduci de potentia in actum competit solum illis in quibus est materia et forma. Si igitur anima non sit composita ex materia et forma non indiget causa agente; quod patet *esse* falsum.

And the ad 10:

> Ad decimum dicendum quod agens per motum reducit aliquid de potentia in actum; agens autem sine motu non reducit aliquid de potentia in actum, sed facit *esse* actu quod secundum naturam est in potentia ad *esse,* et huiusmodi agens est creans.

creator uses form as his instrument in giving being to things. This is hardly a part of the doctrine of being to be neglected.

God Is Not in a Genus

Kenny does consider what is said of God in the next chapter. He says that Thomas, in reporting that there are philosophers who have said that God has no essence, is saying that "this is correct if all it means is that he does not have an essence that is distinct from his *esse*" (46). In fact Thomas says nothing about their being "correct." He simply reports what leads some people to make such a statement. I think it is a good moment to repeat that at the very outset of *De ente et essentia* Thomas taught that *essence* is found *most truly and nobly* in God (just as *esse* is so found there).[87]

Kenny devotes only one sentence to the point that God is not in a genus. Oddly, he even provides a different argument than the one found in the text he is reading, mentioning Thomas's argument only in a footnote. Kenny in his main text says: "God does not fall under any genus; no doubt God and creatures are both beings, but 'being' does not denote a genus" (46–47). Here Kenny is touching upon the second of three arguments given in the *ST* I, q. 3, a. 5.[88] However, the argument that Thomas uses here in the *De ente et essentia* and that is still given as third argument in the same *ST* article (and in fact comes first and second in the *Summa contra Gentiles*) he finds "puzzling."[89]

The actual text of Thomas runs:

> And from this [viz. the fact that God's essence is his very own *esse*] it follows that he is not in a genus, *since the quiddity or nature of a genus or species is not distinguished in function of the intelligibility of the nature in those things whose genus or species it is, whereas esse is diverse in diverse things.*[90]

Kenny quotes in a footnote only the part of the text I have blackened. His comment, in the footnote, is this: "But surely two different species of

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[87] This is worth pointing out when one is dealing with a critic who seems utterly incapable of appreciating that in God the act of being or existence could be such as to verify in the maximal way what one here calls "essence."

[88] It is the last of four arguments given on the point in *SCG* 1.25.

[89] Kenny, 47, n. 29. The *De ente et essentia* argument is related to the point made in the entire *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.24, that a thing in a genus exists in act only as designated by an essential difference, and in 1.25, the first three arguments of four.

[90] *De ente et essentia* 5, emphasis added, Leonine lines 8–14:

> Et ex hoc sequitur quod ipse non sit in genere; quia omne quod est in genere oportet quod habeat quiditatem preter *esse* suum, cum *quiditas uel natura generis aut speciei non distinguatur secundum rationem nature in illis quorum est genus uel species, sed esse est diuersum in diuersis.*

animal—cats and dogs, for example—*do* differ in nature and not just in *esse*." Kenny again has failed to cope with the text. Thomas is not denying that cats and dogs have different natures. If anything, he is affirming it! Take a genus, viz. "animal"; it is said of both cats and dogs, and if one asks for its meaning, the *same* reply is given for both. Thus, the nature of the genus, as such, does not differ in those admittedly diverse things, cats and dogs. Again, take a species: "cat"; it is said of both Sylvester and Krazy Kat. If one asks what is meant by their being "cats," the answer is the same for both, yet the two cats are different as to the actuality of being. In short, Thomas is not saying that the specific natures do not differ from each other; he is saying that the species is said in common of the individuals of that species, which individuals differ from each other; and the genus is said in common of the diverse species, which indeed are diverse from each other. *To take the genus as divided by its species is to take the genus as it actually exists.*

The *De ente et essentia* argument is beautifully spelled out already in the earlier *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.4.2, and attributed to Avicenna:

> The third argument [to prove that God is not in the category of substance], more subtle [than the two previous] is that of Avicenna. Everything which is in a genus has a quiddity differing from *esse*: for example, a man: for humanity by the mere fact that it is humanity, does not necessitate existing actually *[esse in actu]*: for humanity can be conceived and nevertheless it remain unknown whether some particular man exists. And the reason for this is that the common item which is predicated of those which are in the genus predicates the quiddity, since the genus and the species are predicated as to what the thing is; but being *[esse]* is not owed to that quiddity save inasmuch as it is received in this or that. And therefore the quiddity of the genus or the species is not had in common in function of one *esse* for all, but only in function of one common intelligibility. Hence, it is clear that its *esse* is not its quiddity. But in God, his *esse* is his quiddity; otherwise it would happen to the quiddity, and thus would be acquired for him from another, and he would not have *esse* through his own essence. And therefore God cannot be in some genus.[91]

[91] *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.4.2:

> Tertia ratio subtilior est Avicennae. Omne quod est in genere, habet quidditatem differentem ab esse, sicut homo; humanitati enim ex hoc quod est humanitas, non debetur esse in actu; potest enim cogitari humanitas et tamen ignorari an aliquis homo sit. Et ratio hujus est, quia commune, quod praedicatur de his quae sunt in genere, praedicat quidditatem, cum genus et species praedicentur in eo quod quid est. Illi autem quidditati non debetur esse nisi per hoc quod suscepta est in hoc vel in illo. Et ideo quidditas generis vel speciei non communicatur secundum unum esse omnibus, sed solum secundum unam rationem communem. Unde constat quod esse

Notice how thoroughly this chimes in with the *De ente et essentia* setting. And Kenny finds it "puzzling" (47n29)!

God is not common being

Next Kenny comes to the point about God's *esse* not being *esse commune*. In the *De ente et essentia* we read:

> Nor need it be, if we say that God is being alone *[esse tantum]*, that we fall into the error of those who say that God is that universal being *[esse universale]* by which any being whatsoever formally is; for this *esse* which God is is of this condition, viz. that no addition can be made to it; hence, by virtue of its very own purity it is *esse* which is distinct from every [other] *esse*. For this reason it is said in the *Book of Causes*, proposition 9, that the individuation of the first cause, which is being alone, is through its pure goodness. On the other hand, the common *esse*, just as in its notion it includes no addition, so also in its notion it does not include exclusion of addition; if that were not so, nothing could be understood to *be* in which, besides *esse*, something would be added.[92]

Kenny's problem now (47) is that he cannot see how *"esse"* here, as said of God, can mean "existence," as the context would seem to require. This is because he focuses on the divine *esse*, as that to which no addition can be made. He does so because he attempts to formulate what we mean when we say that "God exists." Our question must be: Does he distinguish two meanings of "God exists"?, as, for example, we see in *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.12.7 and in *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2. In fact, he does not, and that is why he has so much trouble here. He is talking about *"esse"* as

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> suum non est quidditas sua. In deo autem esse suum est quidditas sua; aliter enim accideret quidditati, et ita esset acquisitum sibi ab alio, et non haberet esse per essentiam suam. Et ideo deus non potest esse in aliquo genere.

Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard 1.8.2.3: expositio primae partae textus, [Mandonnet, 209–10] also includes the *Intellectus essentiae* argument. It even has God in a genus all by himself! (explaining Hilary).

92 *De ente et essentia* 5 [Leonine lines 15–29]:

> Nec oportet, si dicimus quod deus est *esse* tantum, ut in illorum errorem incidamus, qui deum dixerunt esse illud *esse universale, quo quaelibet res formaliter est.* Hoc enim esse*,* quod deus est, huius condicionis est, *ut nulla sibi additio fieri possit*; unde per ipsam suam *puritatem* est *esse* distinctum ab omni *esse.* Propter quod in commento IX propositionis *Libri de causis* dicitur quod individuatio primae causae, quae est *esse* tantum, est per puram bonitatem eius. *esse* autem *commune* sicut in intellectu suo *non includit aliquam additionem, ita non includit in intellectu suo praecisionem additionis*; quia si hoc esset, nihil posset intelligi *esse,* in quo super *esse* aliquid adderetur. [emphasis added]

related to the truth of a proposition, and Thomas here is speaking of God's act of being as identical with his essence. In fact, Thomas makes this clear when speaking of the *"esse"* said commonly of things here: He speaks of it as "by which formally every thing is." He is speaking of something formal within the thing itself, and not merely of the *"esse,"* which is used in replying to the question: "Does it exist?"[93]

The Individuation of the Human Soul

Kenny takes a quick look at the doctrine of the individuation of the human soul, as presented in *De ente et essentia* at this point, which passage of *De ente et essentia* reads:

> [there is no multiplication of individuals within one species in created intellectual substances] save in the human soul, on account of the body to which it is united. And though its individuation depends on the body as the *occasion* for its beginning, because individuated *esse* is not acquired by it save in the body whose act it is, nevertheless it is not necessary that, the body being taken away, the individuation perish, because *since* [the human soul] has absolute *esse*, by the very fact that individuated *esse* has been acquired for it inasmuch as it has been produced as the form of this body, that *esse* remains always individuated. And therefore Avicenna says that the individuation or multiplication of souls depends on the body as far as its beginning is concerned, but not as concerns its end.[94]

Kenny suggests that Thomas is referring to the idea that "the effects of a cause may remain after the cause has disappeared" (48). The reason for this judgment is clearly that Kenny is mistranslating. He quotes only part of the argument, and he translates:

> *cum* habeat *esse* absolutum, ex quo acquisitum est sibi *esse* individuatum ex hoc quod facta est forma huius corporis, illud *esse* semper remanet individuatum.

[93] The distinction in meanings of *"esse"* is discussed in more detail than in the *De ente et essentia* c. 1 in *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 2.34.1.1, on the existence of the bad.

[94] Emphasis added. *De ente et essentia* 5 [Leonine lines 58–71]:

> nisi in anima humana propter corpus, cui unitur. Et licet individuatio eius ex corpore occasionaliter dependeat quantum ad sui inchoationem, quia *non acquiritur sibi esse individuatum nisi in corpore, cuius est actus*, non tamen oportet ut subtracto corpore individuatio pereat, quia *cum habeat esse absolutum*, ex quo acquisitum est sibi esse individuatum ex hoc quod *facta est forma huius corporis*, illud esse semper remanet individuatum. Et ideo dicit Avicenna quod individuatio animarum vel multiplicatio dependet ex corpore quantum ad sui principium, sed non quantum ad sui finem. [emphasis added]

as:

> *Though* it has absolute *esse* by acquiring individuated *esse* as the form of this body, its *esse* always remains individuated.

Though he uses a capital letter to begin (both in his translation and in the Latin in footnote 31), in fact he is breaking into the sentence. The *whole* argument is needed so as to stress, first of all, the fact that the body is the mere "occasion" for the soul's acquiring its individuated being. Thomas obviously carefully chose the word *"occasionaliter"* to characterize the role of the body in this situation. It *is* the occasion because the soul only acquires individuated *esse* by coming to be as the act of the body; but St. Thomas then hastens to add that this does not entail that its individuation perishes if the body is removed. The reason this is so is:

> because, *since* it has *absolute esse*, once that individuated *esse* is acquired for it inasmuch as it is made as the form of this body, that *esse* will always remain individuated.

that is, the insistence is on the *absoluteness* of the *esse* that has been acquired.[95]

Accordingly, Thomas is not making a reference to the idea that an effect can remain after *its cause* has disappeared (like a house after the builder leaves?).[96] The reason that the soul remains individuated is that the individuated *esse* it has obtained in being made as the form of this body is an absolute act of being.[97] Thus, the soul remains in its own

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[95] Armand Maurer, in his translation, *On Being and Essence* (Toronto: PIMS, 1949), 52, has:

> Although the soul's individuation depends on the body for the occasion of its beginning, since it comes into possession of its individuated act of existing only in the body of which it is the act, it is not necessary that the individuation come to an end when the body is removed. *Since* its act of existing is independent, once it has acquired an individual act of existing from its being made the form of this particular body, that act of existing always remains individuated. [emphasis added]

[96] In fact, as is well-known, Thomas's conception of causality is such that the effect cannot remain if the cause is removed. That the builder can leave and the house remain means that the builder is not the cause of being of the house, but only the cause of its coming to be: cf. e.g., *ST* I, q. 104, a. 1.

[97] Notice that translation of St. Thomas can require some adaptability. At *De ente et essentia* 5, lines 47–48, he uses the adjective *"absolutum"* in contrast to *"receptum"* in order to distinguish the *esse* of creatures from that of God: God's *esse* is "all by itself," not received in something. At line 65, he uses *"absolutum"* concerning the human soul's *esse*, in order to deny any *dependence* on the body for its existence.

being, with a relation to a body. Kenny should have paid more attention to the word *"occasionaliter."* Union with the body is the occasion for the individuation of the soul; the body is not a sort of physical cause of the individuation of the soul.

I make this last remark because Kenny says:

> This [the idea that the body is the cause of the individuation, but the effect can remain when the cause is no longer there] seems to involve an insouciant passage from one kind of causation to a very different kind. Individuation is surely something logically prior to relationships between physical causes and effects. (48)

Kenny is the one who has introduced the whole system of causes and effects he is placing individuation before. He is simply not coming to grips with the text (having taken the *"cum"* for a "though" instead of a "since"). He should have looked at such a text as the earlier *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.5.2, ad 6, as well as the whole article. The individuation of the human soul is not *"ex corpore,"* that is, is not *caused* by the body, though it is acquired *"in corpore,"* in the body.[98]

This concludes our look at *De ente et essentia*. There really seems no hope for much better from Kenny, but I will touch a few other points just to be sure.

A Visit to the *Summa contra Gentiles*

The Anselmian Argument

Already, in the remarks on Thomas's treatment of the Anselmian argument, we see the Kenny weakness as to Thomas's doctrine concerning God as *Ipsum esse subsistens*. On page 84, concerning Aquinas's presentation of Anselm's *Proslogion* 2 argument, firstly, I do not agree with the Kenny criticism of the presentation of the Anselmian argument. While it is true that Thomas, in formulating the argument, does not use the literal form of the self-contradiction that is involved in saying that "that than which a greater cannot be thought does not have being outside the mind," he does use the very meaning of "God" to say that one cannot say it exists only in the mind and not in things. The argument is the same. I would concede that Anselm's own formulation is more arresting or dramatic.

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[98] Of course, later texts are also clear: cf. *SC* 9.ad 4; and *DA* 1.ad 2. I would grant that in *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.5.2, ad 6 there appears to be a minor textual difficulty. Near the beginning the text speaks of the individuation as *"ex corpore,"* but this is clearly rejected in the detailed explanation.

Most of all I disagree with what Kenny says about Thomas's view of the meaning of the name: "that than which a greater cannot be thought." He claims Thomas is saying it is *intrinsically incoherent*, and Kenny says it is probably the case, like "the greatest possible natural number." If Kenny thinks Thomas means this, Kenny is quite wrong. For Thomas, the Anselmian formula has nothing wrong with it, and rightly is said of God (though not as the meaning of the word "God"). However, the God so characterized is not available to the human mind as an immediately evident existent. The human being needs a demonstration that there is a "that than which a greater cannot be thought."

When he comes to Thomas's point about the existence of God being *per se nota* in itself but not to us, he accuses Thomas of confusing being with existence (85), but it is he himself who is confused as to the ambiguity of "existence." That it be the same item by which one answers the question "does he exist?" and "what is he?" is true in the unique case of God. It is also true that we cannot know God's *esse* any more than his quiddity. We know his effects and can conclude to the *truth* that there *is* a God. And, of course, such a cause must be an extra-mental existent, not a privation, etc. What we know is the truth of the conclusion that couples God and real existence. Eventually we can even conclude that in God there must be identity of essence and existence.

Ipsum Esse Subsistens *Revisited*

Kenny rightly spends time on *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.22, that in God there is no essence other than his *esse*. Let us examine his discussion of one of the arguments, described by Kenny as Thomas's "longest argument." He is referring to Pera edition no. 207, the third of the six arguments, based on God being the first cause, itself having no cause.

Thomas's argument is actually very simple and one that he often uses. Since the divine essence is simple, if the *esse* is other than it, it cannot be a part of the essence; it must be a sort of attachment. Such an attachment belongs to a thing only through a cause. If the cause is other than God himself, he will not be the first cause, itself uncaused. But if the cause is the essence itself, what follows? *The essence is [that is, "exists"] in virtue of that esse*. Thus, the essence will be cause of its own existence, something obviously impossible since it would have to be prior to itself.

I put the one sentence in italic letters because I notice immediately (100) that Kenny has once more mistranslated the text. The text has: *"Essentia autem est secundum illud esse."* Kenny translates it as "The essence is determined by the *esse*." Obviously, the proper translation is: "The essence *is* in virtue of that *esse*." And it thus continues: "it follows that something is for

its own self the cause of being." The argument itself should have suggested the translation.[99]

Now, Kenny's problem with the argument has to do precisely with this mistranslation. He asks what is meant by saying that the essence is "determined by *esse.*" He interprets it to mean "not, clearly, that essence is determined by existence, but that to have a certain essence is to have a certain kind of being, to be in a certain way." Now, again, this is not what Thomas means, even though it is true. This interpretation of Kenny's comes down to saying that the essence determines the act of being, something Thomas teaches,[100] but that is not his point here. His point here is that through *esse* the essence *is*, that is, exists. This is not merely the "exists" that answers the question "is it?" This is the actuality of the essence, and is the "most perfect act"; thus, in *Summa contra Gentiles* 2, we read:

> Since every agent activates *[agat]* inasmuch as it is in act, therefore it belongs to the first agent, which is most perfect, to be in act in the most perfect way. . . . Now, the most perfect act *[ipse actus perfectissimus]* . . . is *esse*, at which all generation and all change has its terminus: for every form and every act is in potency until it acquires *esse.* Therefore, to God alone does it belong that he be being itself *[ipsum esse]*: just as [to him] alone does it belong that he be the first agent.[101]

It is the very contribution proper to an efficient cause that is meant by *"esse."* It is the *existence* of the nature. (On the other hand, the "exist" that answers the question "does it exist?" can apply even to blindness and other privations, even though they have no essence and so no act of being or existence.)

Kenny read the "determination" of the essence by *esse* as "not, of course, one of efficient causality; it is a conceptual determination." On the contrary, the *esse* here is the proper effect of the efficient cause. A thing whose essence is not its *esse* is a thing that requires an efficient cause in order to be or exist. In fact, the argument Kenny is discussing here, though he does not

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[99] The sentence is correctly translated by Anton Pegis: cf. *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Book One: God* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 1.22 (para. 6): "the essence is through that being."

[100] Cf. e.g., *SCG* 2.52:

> Esse autem, inquantum est *esse,* non potest *esse* diversum; potest autem diversificari per aliquid quod est praeter *esse;* sicut *esse* lapidis est aliud ab esse hominis. [The [act of] being, precisely as such, cannot be diverse; but it can be diversified by something which is other than [the act of] being: the way that being a stone is diverse from being a human being.]

[101] *SCG* 2.52 (1279).

know it, really is a repeat of the argument in the *De ente et essentia*, c. 4, where Thomas is explicit about it being a matter of efficient causality:

> Everything that belongs to something either is caused by the principles of its own nature: as capability of laughter in man, or else comes to it from some extrinsic principle: as light in air from the influence of the sun. However, it cannot be the case that being itself *[ipsum esse]* be caused by the very form or quiddity of the thing *(I mean, as by an efficient cause)*, because then some thing would be cause of its own self, and some thing would produce itself in existence *[esse]*: which is impossible.[102]

This is the argument again given in first place in the *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4 *(corpus articuli)*, absolutely central to Thomas's doctrine of being.

Thus, once more Kenny has failed to understand the argument. He has not made contact with Thomas Aquinas on this at all. Indeed, after reading the section on *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.22, I have concluded that Kenny does not understand it at all. His rejection of the arguments is worthless.

We now come to c. 23, the topic of which is that in God there is no accident. In it God is spoken of as *"ipsum esse"* [that is, *Ipsum esse subsistens*]. Kenny contends that the thesis has been changed here. Previously (here in *Summa contra Gentiles*), we were saying that God is *"his esse,"* whereas now God is said to be *"esse itself."* It is certainly true that the thesis of the previous chapter was expressed almost entirely as "in God the *esse* and the essence are identical" or that "God is his *esse*." We notice there, nevertheless, that the confirmation of the thesis at the end of the chapter, with the citation of Boethius, is that God is *"ipsum esse"* and that from him is *"esse"* (1.22). Still, does any argument in 1.22 lead one to expect that God is *"esse itself"*? If there is one that prepares the reader for this, it is the last, not discussed by Kenny:

> Every thing *is* through this, that it has *esse*. Therefore, no thing whose essence is not its *esse is* by its very *essence*, but rather by participation in something, viz. in *esse itself [ipsius esse]*. But that which *is* through participation in something cannot be the first being *[primum ens]*, because that which something participates in order to *be* is prior to it.

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[102] *De ente et essentia* 4 (lines 127–35) [my stress]:

> Omne autem quod convenit alicui vel est causatum ex principiis naturae suae, sicut risibile in homine, vel advenit ab aliquo principio extrinseco, sicut lumen in aere ex influentia solis. Non autem potest *esse* quod ipsum *esse* sit causatum ab ipsa forma vel quiditate rei *(dico sicut a causa efficiente)* quia sic aliqua *res* esset sui ipsius causa et aliqua *res* seipsam in *esse* produceret, quod est impossibile.

> But God is the first being, to which nothing is prior. Therefore, the essence of God is his *esse* (1.22).

Even though this merely concludes that God is "his *esse*," it is obvious that *"esse"* is here being taken along the lines of a common nature that can exist either in its purity, that is, as an essence, or as something participated. Thus, it emerges that the *esse* of God is *"ipsum esse,"* that is, that it is *esse* as having the status of an *essence*.

Quite explicitly, this depends on God being proved to exist as the first being, something established in an argument in 1.13, which Kenny left out of the discussion. There God was seen as *maxime ens*, that is, the being having most of all the status of a being.

Of course, we will get further information about God being *"ipsum esse"* as we go along, but it is not true that it did not get into 1.22.

Here in 1.23 the point is that there can be no accidents in God. The argument that leads off, and on which Kenny is focusing, is as follows:

> *Esse itself* cannot participate in something which is not of its essence, though that which is can participate in something else. [The reason is] that nothing is more formal or more simple than *esse*. And thus *esse itself* cannot participate in anything. But the divine substance is *esse itself*. Hence, it has nothing that is not of its own substance. Therefore, no accident can inhere in it.[103]

This is practically a quotation from Boethius's *De hebdomadibus* or Thomas's commentary on it (already discussed by Kenny).

Kenny asks about the meaning of this argument. He says, "It cannot mean that God is pure existence, as is widely recognized by philosophers" (105). In support of this, seemingly, Kenny refers us to Christopher Hughes, and Norman Kretzmann approving of Hughes. He adds that the reason for this impossibility is not that "pure existence" would be "too thin a predicate" (the reason given by the other two), but that it is not a predicate at all.

Thomas himself means something which Kretzmann, Hughes, and Kenny have not caught sight of.[104] I would again stress the ambiguity of "existence," which can mean either the answer to "whether it exists" or signify the act of the essence. "Existence" as truth sign is, indeed, too thin.

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[103] *SCG* 1.23.

[104] I criticize Kretzmann and Hughes in "Review of Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism*," in *EIDOS* 14 (1997): 97–121. I will return to them in a forthcoming article in *Nova et Vetera*, "St. Thomas, Norman Kretzmann, and Divine Freedom in Creating."

It expresses no essence at all. That is why it is said of blindness. On the other hand, the act of existence is the actuality of the essence, and is the "most perfect act," as we saw above.[105]

Kenny says "pure *esse*"; this is his translation of *"ipsum esse,"* which more literally is "*esse* itself." Still, there is nothing wrong with saying "pure *esse*," provided it is clear that it can be identical with "pure essence" (and indeed with essence at its most authentic). The expression *"esse purum"* does occur once, at least, in Thomas's writings, in his *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. 9. where the *esse* of the first cause is said to be pure *rather than participated*. Kenny is wondering how to conceive of it. The way, I would say, is to develop a hierarchical picture starting from below (actually, this is already underway with a distinction between potency and act: Act "has more of the nature of *esse* than potency has").[106] In fact, an efficient causal hierarchy involves lower and higher modes of *esse*. Thus, one eventually develops a "trajectory" toward an act of being that is not received in anything, but rather is pure. One is not supposed to be able to imagine it, as such; it is not an object of imagination. Indeed, as the essence of God, the constant lesson is that it is humanly inconceivable. We know that there is such a thing, but we do not know it in the mode of knowing "what a thing is."

Thomas presents the overall project of climbing to *Ipsum esse subsistens* time after time in his writings, from beginning to end of his career. Thus, at the very beginning of the *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, asking whether there is one God, Thomas presents the following argument:

> It is necessary that every nature which is found in many instances according to priority and posteriority descend from one first in which it is had

[105] *SCG* 2.52. On the *"esse"* had by that which has no essence, and so is "thin" and no "predicate" in Kenny's sense, cf. *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1, and 2, ad 2. Cf. *SCG* 3.7 and 9.

[106] *De substantiis separatis* c. 7:

> the more something has of the nature of being *[de ratione essendi]*, the higher it is among beings. But it is evident that, while being *[ens]* is divided by potency and act, act is more perfect than potency and has more of the nature of being: for we do not say of that which is in potency: "it is," unqualifiedly; [we say that] only of that which is actually. Therefore, it is necessary that that which is higher among beings attain more to act, but that which is lower among beings be closer to potency. (tanto aliquid in entibus est altius, quanto magis habet de ratione essendi. Manifestum est autem quod cum ens per potentiam et actum dividatur, quod actus est potentia perfectior, *et magis habet de ratione essendi: non enim simpliciter esse dicimus quod est in potentia, sed solum quod est actu*. Oportet igitur id quod est superius in entibus, magis accedere ad actum; quod autem est in entibus infimum, propinquius *esse* potentiae.) [emphasis added]

> perfectly: for unity in the effect attests to unity in the source: as all heat originates in one thing which is hottest, which is fire. But entity *[entitas]* is found in many according to priority and posteriority. Therefore, it is necessary that there be one first most perfect being *[ens]* from which all beings have being *[esse]*; and this is God. Therefore, there is one God.[107]

This is repeated at the beginning of book 2, where the topic is creation, and it is asked whether there is one first principle of all things.[108] One sees it again in the presentation of the overall metaphysical project in another youthful work, Thomas's *Commentary on Boethius's De trinitate*. Thomas is explaining that metaphysics is about things that are without matter or change. In order to present a hierarchy of more and more universal causes, he says:

> the principles of the accidents are reduced to the principles of substances, and the principles of corruptible substances are reduced to the incorruptible substances, and thus by a stepwise order all beings are traced back to certain principles. And because that which is the principle of all beings must be maximally a being, as is said in *Metaphysics* 2, therefore such principles must be most complete, and for that reason they must be maximally in act, such that they have nothing or little of potency: because act is prior and more powerful that potency, as is said in *Metaphysics* 9. And for that reason they must be without matter, which is in potency, and without change, which is the act of what exists in potency. And such are divine things, because if the divine exists anywhere, it exists most of all in such an immaterial and unchangeable nature, as is said in *Metaphysics* 6.[109]

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[107] *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.2.1.1.sed contra 1 [Mandonnet, 59–60]:

> omnis natura quae invenitur in pluribus secundum prius et posterius, oportet quod descendat ab uno primo, in quo perfecte habeatur. Unitas enim principiati attestatur unitati principii, sicut omnis calor originatur ab uno calidissimo, quod est ignis. Sed entitas invenitur in pluribus secundum prius et posterius. Ergo oportet *esse* unum primum ens perfectissimum, a quo omnia entia habent *esse,* et hic est deus. Est igitur unus deus.

In the context the arguments sed contra are approved by Thomas.

[108] *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 2.1.1.1 (Mandonnet, 12–13): It is the second of three arguments in the body of the article.

[109] *In De trin.* 5.4:

> principia accidentium reducuntur in principia substantiae et principia substantiarum corruptibilium reducuntur in substantias incorruptibiles, et sic quodam gradu et ordine in quaedam principia omnia entia reducuntur. Et quia id, quod est principium essendi omnibus, oportet *esse* maxime ens, ut dicitur in II metaphysicae, ideo huiusmodi principia oportet *esse* completissima, et propter hoc oportet ea *esse* maxime actu, ut nihil vel

In short, there is no shortage of presentations of ontological hierarchy based on efficient causal hierarchy in Thomas. I generally begin such discussion by considering how the "being up high" of a book depends on the "being up high" of my hand, holding the book on high. The one existence flows from, depends on, the other. This relates to the nature of the book and of the hand, as regards being sources of efficient causality.

Kenny, in footnote 32, page 109, concerning *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.30, on the words we use about God, speaks of Thomas speaking of "Platonic subsistent forms." In fact, there is no mention of such beings in the chapter. One must assume that any reference to subsisting form is "Platonic" for Kenny. Kenny speaks of Thomas ruling out the subsistent form Kenny is speaking of only because of "the imperfection of sublunar entities." All this is very hard to make correspond to the discussion in chapter 30. Thomas does say there that our minds have a way of understanding and speaking that is suited to things composed of form and matter. This, of course, is not merely "sublunar entities," since for Thomas the heavens were matter/form composites. Thomas teaches that the human soul is a subsistent form, and so are the angels. Thomas certainly is affirming the existence of wisdom, goodness, and being, just in themselves subsisting. This is his doctrine concerning God. Such an entity is not necessarily "Platonic." What is rejected by Thomas is the Platonic way of establishing the existence of immaterial reality, whether secondary or supreme. Now, how a thing's existence is established has a great deal to do with what one ends up talking about. This is presented especially in *De substantiis separatis*, one of St. Thomas's most mature and thorough presentations of ontology. Thomas there rejects the very root of the Platonic approach to separate entity. This is not discussed by Kenny.

Obviously, Thomas thinks there is much to commend in Plato, even though he criticizes him.[110] Nevertheless, he takes an Aristotelian approach to separate entity, including God. Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, teaches that there is one principle of the entire universe, and that it is

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minimum habeant de potentia, quia actus est prior et potior potentia, ut dicitur in IX metaphysicae. Et propter hoc oportet ea *esse* absque materia, quae est in potentia, et absque motu, qui est actus exsistentis in potentia. Et huiusmodi sunt *res* divinae; quia si divinum alicubi exsistit, in tali natura, immateriali scilicet et immobili, maxime exsistit, ut dicitur in VI metaphysicae.

[110] Thus, in *De potentia* 3.5 Plato is presented along with Aristotle and Avicenna as among those philosophers who attained to a consideration of universal being and its need of a cause; we see the same thing in *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1, in *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 8.2 [5], and in the *De substantiis separatis* 3.

good.[111] Its simplicity and primacy certainly would merit it being designated linguistically by the abstract form, as discussed in *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.30: that is, that it need not merely be called "good" or "the highest good," or "the source of all good," but indeed could well be called "goodness itself." Thomas's general appeal to a philosophical predecessor as regards climbing to being itself subsisting is Aristotle, as presenting a hierarchy of being as being, especially in *Metaphysics* 2.[112]

Kenny ends his chapter on the *Summa contra Gentiles* with 2.28, comparing *esse* to whiteness, with the idea that whiteness, if separately subsisting, would have all the power of whiteness. Kenny sees this whiteness as a "Platonic Idea" and concludes that for Thomas *esse* is a Platonic idea. This is not true. It is certainly true that Thomas sees some truth in Plato speaking about the highest Ideas. However, Thomas does not think that one arrives at the existence of *esse* subsisting by a Platonic route. One cannot make an adequate judgment of the meaning and suitability of Thomas's doctrine of *esse* without considering how it is arrived at. There is little sign of Kenny ever having done so.

As we come to the end of the treatment of *Summa contra Gentiles*, I repeat that it is amazing that Kenny chose to omit 2.52–55, which bear on the most important and fundamental ontological issues. It is interesting that there is no mention of the *Qq. de anima*, with their many interesting ontological considerations. We also have from this period the *Divine Names* commentary, of which nothing is said.[113]

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[111] On the first principle as immaterial and pure act, cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.6 (1071b17–22); 12.7 (1072a24–26); Thomas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 12.5 (2495–99) and 12.6 (2518); on the first principle as both end and agent, good and unique, 12.10 (1075a38–b1; b8–10; 1076a3–4); Thomas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 12.12 (2644–5; 2648 and 2662–63).

[112] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 2.1 (993b19–31); Thomas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 2.2 (289–98).

[113] Thomas's *Divine Names* is notable, besides the more important reasons, for using the vocabulary of *"existentia"* for *"esse"* at many points. This is simply because of options exercised by the translation of Dionysius that he is using. It would not be of any significance were it not that Kenny has trouble understanding that "existence" can name a formal perfection in things themselves. Cf. for example, *DN* 5.1(628):

> Thirdly, to the note of being *[essendi]* pertains generation, which is change [terminating] at being *[esse]*; and so [Dionysius] adds that God is generation, [speaking] causally, for all items generated in whatever degree: because he confers generation on all, as is said in Isaiah 66 [verse 9]. And thus it is clear that from the first existent itself *[ex ipso primo existente]*, which is God, are caused perpetuity *[aevum]*, which is the measure of being, and also substance, which is that which exists through itself *[per se existente]*, and

A Visit to the *De potentia*

In his chapter on *De potentia*, Kenny again comes to the argument for God not being in a genus. In *De potentia* 7.3 it is the first of the three arguments that interests Kenny, and which he thinks presents *esse* in a way contrary to what we have been seeing. It runs:

> [God cannot be in a genus] because nothing is located in a genus in function of its *esse*, but by reason of its quiddity; this is clear on this basis, *that the esse of each thing is proper to it, and distinct from the esse of any other thing,* whereas the intelligibility of the substance can be common; for that reason, also, the Philosopher says that being *[ens]* is not a genus. But God is his very *esse*; hence, he cannot be in a genus.[114]

Now, what bothers Kenny is that we have seen *esse* presented as most common of all, and the above has *esse* as diverse in diverse things. Is it common or individual?

In fact, the doctrine being presented is not new in the *De potentia*. It harkens back to *De ente et essentia* 5, that God cannot be in a genus because his essence is *esse*, and things in a genus or species must have diversity of essence and *esse*; this is because "*esse* is diverse in diverse things," whereas a generic or specific quiddity is not distinguished as regards the intelligibility of the nature in the things of which it is predicated.[115] And Thomas repeats this in *ST* I:

> All those things which are in one genus have in common the quiddity or essence of the genus, which is predicated of them as to what they are. However they differ in function of being *[esse]*: *for the being of a man and of a horse are not the same, nor of this man and of that man.* And thus it is necessary that for whatever things are in a genus, there differs in them being and "what it is," that is, essence. But in God these do not differ, as has been shown.[116]

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everything which exists in whatever way *[omne existens quocumque modo]*; and again, by God is caused that which is the measure of change, and generation itself and that which is generated, and not only are existents themselves *[ipsa existentia]* caused by God, but also whatever are in existents *[in existentibus]*, such as parts and natural properties and those which in any ways either inhere, as accidents, or have the role of subject, as substances.

114 *De potentia* 7.3: quia nihil ponitur in genere secundum *esse* suum, sed ratione quidditatis suae; quod ex hoc patet, *quia esse uniuscuiusque est ei proprium, et distinctum ab esse cuiuslibet alterius rei;* sed ratio substantiae potest *esse* communis: propter hoc etiam philosophus dicit, quod ens non est genus. Deus autem est ipsum suum *esse:* unde non potest *esse* in genere. [emphasis added]

115 *De ente et essentia* 5 (lines 8–14). We saw earlier that Kenny, 47, n. 29, misunderstood this text.

116 *ST* I, q. 3, a. 5.

Still, the question is a good one. If both the generic nature and the *esse* are common, why is it that whereas the generic nature is the same as predicated of two individuals belonging to the genus, the *esse* of each individual is diverse from the *esse* of the other?

I believe that the answer is to be found in a contrast between particularity of form and universality of form.[117] Even though a generic nature is universal, it is a particular nature as compared to the nature of being.[118] Being is, as we know, the proper effect of the highest or most universal cause.[119] Thus, its proper influence extends to everything whatsoever that is in the thing, including the matter as individuating.[120] Accordingly, *esse* is the absolutely *completive* actuality, embracing everything within a thing.[121] Thus, it is *the subsisting thing as such* that is "that which itself has *esse*."[122] The particular form is a merely instrumental cause relative to the efficient cause's conferring of *esse* on the thing. And the efficient cause of which we are primarily speaking is not merely the particular cause of generation, but the cause of creation/conservation.[123]

The act of being has the mode of a nature or essence only in the first efficient cause, and thus is present only by participation in all else.[124] It is diversified by its receivers. Moreover, as the proper effect of the most universal cause, it is most *deeply* within all its recipients, and so is the proper perfection of the supposit, the thing in its totality, the "concrete" thing. In material things it thus is diverse numerically from individual to individual. In this way it stands in contrast to particular common natures such as constitute things in genera and species, and which have an intrinsic formal

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[117] Let us recall that *esse* is what is most *formal* of all, having the role of an item received in a receiver: *ST* I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3, and I, q. 7, a. 1. This relates to the identification of form and first actuality; it pertains to first actuality to be "in" its subject [cf. *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 9.5 (1828)], and *esse* is most intrinsic of all perfections: *ST* I, q. 8, a. 1: "*esse* is that which is most 'within' any thing, and most deeply inheres in all, since it is formal with respect to all [items] that are in a thing."

[118] *ST* I, q. 19, a. 6.

[119] *ST* I–II, q. 66, a. 5, ad 3.

[120] *ST* I, q. 44, a. 2, ad 3.

[121] *Quodl.* 12.5.1.

[122] *ST* I, q. 45, a. 4.

[123] Another most helpful text for understanding the doctrine of *esse* is *SCG* 3.66, that nothing gives *esse* save as acting under the influence of the divine power. This might have helped Kenny.

[124] *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1 and again *Quodl.* 12.5.1.

diversity.[125] They are considered in themselves inasmuch as they are abstracted from being, and so are predicated commonly of all the relevant individuals. However, when considered according to being, they are seen as individuated by the supposit, just as the act of being is. The argument of the text we are here considering takes the common nature as predicated of the individuals: Thus, it is taken in itself absolutely, and thus is taken as abstracting from the act of being (as was explained in *De ente et essentia*).[126] This is then contrasted with the consideration of the same nature taken "according to being," that is, as actually found in the supposit, where along with the act of being it has individual distinction from all other instances of that particular nature.

The question raised by Kenny is helpful, though it might have been raised already with the text of the *De ente et essentia*, which Kenny found puzzling. It helps to bring out the difference between the two sorts of formal and received metaphysical targets of attention, the act of being, on the one hand, and the particular forms, on the other. We nowhere experience the act of being with the kind of intellectual experience we have of particular form. It has the status of essence only in God, who is beyond our properly quidditative knowledge. It obtains diversification only in receivers. It is the proper perfection of the thing taken as complete, that is, the supposit. This, I would say, helps explain why there is the possibility of confusing what is meant by saying that blindness exists and what is meant by saying that existence is the proper effect of the efficient cause and the terminus of generation and all becoming. Both have a certain "facelessness," but for different reasons.

A Visit to the *Summa theologiae*

Anselm Revisited

Kenny (132) declares his primary interest in questions 2 and 3. Let us then see what he does with question 2. He begins by criticizing the rejection of the Anselmian position. Kenny again fails to appreciate Thomas's position. Thus, he now says that Thomas fails to consider that the notion of "that than which a greater cannot be thought" is incoher-

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[125] I take this point from Johannes Capreolus, *Defensiones theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis* [C. Paban and T. Pègues, ed. (Turonibus: Alfred Cattier, 1900), vol. I, 305b–306a].

[126] This was a primary teaching of *De ente et essentia* 3 (ed. Leonine, lines 26–72): The nature of man, e.g., absolutely considered, abstracts from every *esse* whatsoever, in such a way that it does not exclude its having *esse* happen to it; and it is the nature so considered that is predicated of all individuals.

ent (133). In fact, as we have already pointed out, Thomas's position is that God is indeed that than which a greater cannot be thought; that is what is demonstrated in *Summa theologiae* I, q. 7, a. 1 (the divine infinity of being). This should be clear from the approach, in *ST* I, q. 2, a. 1, in terms of "self-evidence" in itself but not to us. Just as the article looks ahead to the doctrine that God's essence is *Ipsum esse subsistens*, a point that for us requires demonstration, so also in Thomas's notion of God it is clear that he is unqualifiedly infinite (*ST* I, q. 7, a. 1), and thus is that than which a greater cannot be thought;[127] but for us, the existence of such a thing requires demonstration, not because of the notion, but because of the nature of human access to reality.[128] Thomas gives exactly the right answer for someone affirming the metaphysics he does. Admittedly, the appropriateness of his answer is better seen as one goes on to the next article, on what is involved in a demonstration of existence. If there is a genuine question of existence, one must start with "the meaning of a name," that is, with a mere verbal formula.[129] Thomas thus treats "that than which etc." as a verbal formula similar to "goat-stag"; we know what it means, but we do not know whether there is such a thing, since all we have is a verbal formula. I suggest that Kenny's criticisms of Thomas's approach here reveal his failure to take seriously the body of the article and its epistemological implications. Kenny actually notes the point about starting with the meaning of a name, not about a genuine "what the thing is," where the question is whether the thing exists (134), but he fails to see the relevance of that to the way Thomas handled the Anselmian argument.

The Third Way

Coming to *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3, the demonstrations of the existence of a God, Kenny chooses to speak about the third and fourth ways, as pertaining to the "theory of being." While we might note that he would do well to pay more attention to the metaphysics of efficient causal hierarchy (which is the very starting point of the second way), let us see what he does do.

Pages 135–138 are on the Third Way, and indeed on its first part. Kenny immediately tends to *identify* it with a *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.15 argument,[130] save that it is not as well expressed! He begins by saying that there is a *resemblance*, but then slips into identity, saying that "*this* cosmological argument is not as well presented in the later as in the earlier

[127] Cf. *ST* III, q. 10, a. 3, ad 3.
[128] Cf. *ST* I, q. 88, a. 1, and 3; *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 2.1 (279–86).
[129] *ST* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.
[130] *SCG* 1.15.

Summa" (135, emphasis added). This already causes me concern, since I hold that the arguments are quite different.[131] Kenny tells us that Thomas "includes material that would have been better omitted," this of course in the perspective that he is *adding* to the *Summa contra Gentiles* argument, rather than making a different argument.

The first suspected fallacious premise that Kenny mentions is: "a possible with respect to not being, at some time is not." Kenny asks why there cannot be something that has the "power not to exist" but as a matter of fact always does exist. He does not enter into any lengthy discussion about this.[132] I believe that the answer is to be found in Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's* De caelo. Thomas introduces the very question that Kenny asks here, and replies that the premise is based on the intrinsic tendency of things to maintain their being with all their strength. Thus, a thing that does cease to be is of a nature that it must cease to be. Accordingly, a "possible with respect to *not being*" is not like "a possible with respect to sitting down or standing up"; those latter are neutral options, but things that cease to be reveal an intrinsic incapacity to remain in being. It should be stressed that the Third Way is asking whether intrinsically necessary *substantial* being exists, and not just generally about necessity in things. Otherwise, it could not formulate necessary premises about the natures being discussed. The premise in question is akin to "it belongs to the nature of things that what can go wrong eventually will go wrong."[133] It also is to be taken in the context of eternal existence. We are supposing that the thing has *always* maintained its existence if it still exists.

In any case, Kenny here merely casts doubt on that premise in passing (having said in note 6, page 134, that he has already discussed these two Ways, the third and fourth, in detail in his book on the Five Ways). His focus here is whether it follows that if everything has what he calls "the power of not being," then at some time there is nothing. It should be remarked that "power" is an odd word for someone linguistically sophisticated to choose to translate *"quod possibile est non esse"*: Thomas, at any rate, does not say *"virtus,"* and "power" in English normally means *active* potentiality. "Power to not be" sounds like the rational agent's ability to commit suicide.

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[131] Cf. my paper "The Interpretation of St. Thomas's Third Way," in *Littera, sensus, sentential: Studi in onore del Prof. Clemente J. Vansteenkiste, OP*, A. Lobato, OP, ed. (Milan: Massimo, 1991), at n. 22.

[132] I have criticized his approach to this in my paper: "The Distinctiveness of St. Thomas's Third Way," *Dialogue* 19 (1980): 201–18.

[133] Cf. *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2, ad 3, "ipsa autem natura rerum hoc habet, ut quae deficere possunt, quandoque deficiant."

Kenny contends that there is a logical flaw in Thomas's argument that if all beings are possibles with respect to not being, then, since a possible with respect to not being at some time is not, it follows that at some time nothing was. In order to bring out what he sees as the flaw he asks why corruptible beings should not *overlap* each other, so that each one comes to be and passes away, but there is never any time when nothing at all exists (136).

In reflecting on this, seemingly, he notes that Thomas contends that the non-being of all would *already* have occurred. Why, Kenny asks, think the time of general non-existence was in the past rather than the future? Kenny then suggests that Thomas is addressing "Aristotelian philosophers who believed that the world always existed." Thomas may be thinking, says Kenny, that "a possibility that has not been realized in an infinite time is not a real possibility." Kenny says that this too is fallacious, since one cannot argue from "each thing has the possibility of corrupting" to "there is a possibility of everything corrupting" (137).

Indeed, Thomas here is thinking of an eternal world scenario. As he says in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the most efficacious way to prove the existence of a God is on the supposition of the eternity of the world, since that supposition makes it less evident that there is a God. If the world and its change have begun to exist, then the existence of a cause is evident, since nothing brings itself from potency to act, or from non-being to being.[134]

Now, within this picture of eternal generation and corruption, Kenny is suggesting that there might be eternal "overlap." However, that is precisely to posit a "failsafe" *system*. What guarantees this eternal arrangement? That is, of course, what leads to Thomas's conclusion that there must exist a substance not subject to corruption, that is, precisely to account for such a system. As we read, for example, in a passage on quite another subject

> If there are many successive agents, that is, one of which acts after the action of another, the *continuity* of action of these [agents] cannot be caused by some one of them, because none of them always acts; nor by all [of them], because they do not act together; hence, it is necessary that it be caused by some superior [agent] which always acts; just as Aristotle proves in *Physics* 8 [c. 6 (258b28–32)] that the continuity of generation in animals is caused by some perpetually [existent] superior [cause].[135]

[134] *SCG* 1.13.

[135] *SCG* 3.155: Thomas is teaching that a human being needs the help of grace in order to persevere in the good. One should read all of the argument of Aristotle, right to 259a14.

This is how I read the Third Way. It bears upon the mode of substantial being we most immediately know, namely that of corruptible things. The question he is posing may thus be framed as: Can all substance be corruptible? Is it conceivable that there exist no other mode of substantial being? The law of such being is that it ceases to exist. If one posit that as the sole mode of being, it will apply to all there is. At some time, we can conclude, the "all" will have ceased to be.[136] If one posits a failsafe system, so that while all cease to be, something always exists, one must posit the adequate principle of such a system, and that can only be a necessary being. Otherwise, one must be saying that a system that clearly can fail, and indeed must fail, has eternally succeeded.

That reading is in accordance with Thomas's argument being a rewrite of the well-known argument of Maimonides. Albert the Great wrote a version of it in his *Metaphysics*, but I think that Thomas's is the most precise statement of the case, and expressed in terms of ontological necessities.[137] I find that the flaws Kenny accuses Thomas of committing are not applicable. It is true that if the mode of being of every substance is that of corruptible being, then the entire assembly of individuals engaged in reproduction will not have sufficed to maintain reality eternally.

Kenny goes on to speak of people suggesting that a universe of temporal beings might be everlasting. I would say, rather, that this is impossible unless one posits, for example, matter as a necessary substance. In fact, Thomas so presents it in *ST* I, q. 104, a. 4: Matter is incorruptible, in its role of subject of generation and corruption (626a27–31). However, the necessary being of primary matter seems to me less evident than the conclusion of the first part of the Third Way that we are discussing: "Therefore, there must be *something* necessary among things." Of course, if one makes primary matter the uncaused necessary being, one assumes the position of David of Dinant.[138] And if one thinks that the existence of primary matter implies that there must be necessary *actual* being, one is moving in the right direction. In any case, I would say that Kenny has failed to grasp the power of the argument.

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[136] Am I conceiving of the "all" as a *system* that is *built to fail*, or am I conceiving of the "all" as not truly a system at all, and thus whose failure is accidental? It is the latter that Thomas has in mind in the sort of argument I have indicated (see the previous note), i.e., if reality is made up of reproducers that may well "overlap," nevertheless unless the overlap has a substantial source of guarantee, i.e., is a failsafe system, then in the eternal-world perspective it must already have failed. One has posited no cause of the continuity of the agents.

[137] See my paper, "The Interpretation," mentioned above.

[138] Cf. *ST* I, q. 3, a. 8: David "most stupidly" identified God with primary matter.

The Fourth Way

Kenny discusses the Fourth Way at pages 139–141.[139] He tells us:

> One thing is immediately clear: If we can talk about degrees of *esse*, then *esse* must be something different from existence. . . . Things either exist or they do not; there is no halfway house between existence and non-existence. Of course, things may exist for longer or shorter periods, but they cannot exist to a greater or lesser degree (139).

In a footnote to this (page 139, note 15), he claims that elsewhere in *Summa theologiae* Aquinas seems prepared to accept that there cannot be degrees of *esse*. His reference is to I, q. 5, a. 1, obj. 3, and ad 3. Here again Kenny seems unable to cope with the inevitable ambiguities, due to change of context, of metaphysical writing. In the context of 1.5.1, where the issue is whether "good" adds to "a being" some reality or a mere notion, Thomas is speaking of the situation *within one thing*, contrasting its substantial being or existence with its being good. That the substantial being or existence, in function of which a thing is called "a being" unqualifiedly, is not had *by that thing* in terms of "more and less" is clear; whereas "good" is said according to more and less because it is said more properly in function of the perfections added to substantial being. But what about the Fourth Way context, a context of *hierarchy of diverse things*? Kenny should have seen the difference.

Thus, the question is: Can *existence* be found in a hierarchy of things according to the more and the less, the more noble and the less noble? We might begin with a discussion we have already had reason to visit a few times, the well-known text early in *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, that is, 1.8, thus before the *De ente et essentia*. Thomas is defending the text of Peter Lombard (and St. Augustine) against misunderstanding. Peter has quoted Augustine on the divine *esse*, as follows: "And who *is more [magis est]* than he who said to his servant: 'I am who am?' "[140] The objector, a Kenny precursor, complains: "This seems to be

[139] I would not translate quite as Kenny does. He translates "*magis* et *minus*" by "more or less." Thomas is taking his start from a vision of things actually in hierarchy, the more *and* the less (my hand is good and my head is better, i.e., has *more* of the nature of the good.). The expression "more or less" might, if only unconsciously, suggest a doubt as to whether a thing is good or not. It is better to use the more literal rendering, since it is meant. (The old Dominican translation has this right. The French translation from Editions du Cerf, that of A.-D. Sertillanges, has "ou" rather than "et.")

[140] Peter Lombard here is quoting St. Augustine, *De trinitate* 5, cap. 2 [PL 8 (of Aug.), col. 912]: Augustine's own text, taking a first step in speaking of God, runs:

said inappropriately, because "is *[esse]*" is not susceptible to the more and the less." Thomas replies:

> It is to be said that something can be spoken of as "more" and "less" in two ways: (1) either as regards the participated nature itself, which just in itself is more intense or less intense in virtue of approach to or distance from a term: and this occurs only in accidents; or else (2) in function of the measure of participating: and in this way even in essential things *[in essentialibus]* one speaks of the more and the less in virtue of diverse measure of participating: for example, an angel is said to be "more intellectual" than a human being. Now,[141] "God purely is *[tantum est]*, he who does not know 'was' or 'will be'," by experiential knowledge so to speak, such that successions of time be experienced in his own being.[142]

> [II 3] Est tamen sine dubitatione substantia uel si melius hoc appellatur essentia, quam graeci *ousian* uocant. Sicut enim ab eo quod est sapere dicta est sapientia et ab eo quod est scire dicta est scientia, ita ab eo quod est *esse* dicta est essentia. *Et quis magis est quam ille qui dixit famulo suo: Ego sum qui sum, et: Dices filiis Israhel: Qui est misit me ad uos?* Sed aliae quae dicuntur essentiae siue substantiae capiunt accidentias quibus in eis fiat uel magna uel quantacumque mutatio; deo autem aliquid eiusmodi accidere non potest. Et ideo sola est incommutabilis substantia uel essentia quae deus est, *cui profecto ipsum esse* unde essentia nominata est *maxime ac uerissime competit*. Quod enim mutatur non seruat *ipsum esse*, et quod mutari potest etiamsi non mutetur potest quod fuerat non esse, ac per hoc *illud solum quod non tantum non mutatur uerum etiam mutari omnino non potest sine scrupulo occurrit quod uerissime dicatur esse*. [emphasis added]
>
> I would say that this doctrine of *"esse"* is most important. Notice that it is presented as the act whence "essence" or "substance" or "ousia" gets its name. To an objector who challenges this doctrine that wisdom gets its name from wisely knowing and essence gets its name from *esse*, Thomas Aquinas replies that Lombard (and Augustine) are speaking in terms of the order of human knowledge, which proceeds from acts to habits; the implication is that *esse,* the act of being, is the effect of essence.

[141] I am taking this further remark as part of the explanation of the "is more" text, though it also explains the sense of the word "know" in saying that God does not know past or future.

[142] *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1.8.2.3.*expositio textus* [Mandonnet, 209]:

> "Et quis *magis est* quam ille qui dixit famulo suo: ego sum qui sum?" Videtur inconvenienter loqui: *quia esse non suscipit magis et minus*. Dicendum, quod magis et minus potest dici aliquid dupliciter: vel *quantum ad ipsam naturam participatam*, quae secundum se intenditur et remittitur secundum accessum ad terminum vel recessum; et hoc non est nisi in accidentibus; vel *quantum ad modum participandi*; et sic *etiam in essentialibus* dicitur magis et minus secundum diversum modum participandi, sicut Angelus dicitur magis intellectualis quam homo. Deus autem *tantum est*, qui non novit

We see that we are already very much in the Fourth Way picture. God is being viewed as what Thomas will eventually call *"ipsum esse subsistens,"* and is thus existence itself subsisting. In contrast, all else is viewed as participating in existence in a way proportionate to the thing's substantial nature, as being closer or more remote from the divine: Thus, some things "are more" and some things "are less," whereas God maximally *is*.[143]

How is it that Thomas himself clearly sees existence as admitting of the more and the less? We must note, to begin with, that we are saying that the word "existence" translates both meanings of *"esse,"* that is, signifying the true and as signifying the act of being. It appears to us that by "existence" Kenny really means the *"esse"* that signifies the true ("Blindness exists"). Secondly, if one is to understand the act of being as subject to the more and the less, one must view it, in things other than God, as caused by both the form of the thing whose being it is and the efficient cause of the thing whose being it is. Indeed, one must view the efficient cause as conferring existence on the thing *by* conferring form.[144]

Within the confines of this review I will merely indicate generally the hierarchical situation in Thomas's metaphysics. Thus, if we take the presentation already quoted from *In De trin* 5.4, we see that the main hierarchy is that between generable/corruptible beings and permanent beings.

Being in act is found originally in the efficient cause, and since there can be no procession to infinity in efficient causes, most originally of all in the first efficient cause. If one thing dominates another in the line of efficient causality, this is because its proper nature has a more primary

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> fuisse vel futurum *esse,* notitia quasi experimentali, ut scilicet successiones temporum in suo *esse* experiatur. [emphasis added]

143 Here in Thomas's explanation, the defense of the Augustinian quotation makes use of a quotation from St. Jerome, one also included in the same text of Peter Lombard, i.e., the presentation of the divine *esse* as excluding "was" and "will be." Jerome, *Epist.* 15.4 (PL t. 1, col. 357). It is interesting, in this regard, to consider the presentation of Peter Lombard himself, who, having quoted a text of Augustine explaining our use of all the tenses in speaking of God, goes on to explain the statement of Jerome that excludes past and future in speaking of God. We see that he rightly speaks of the *"essentiam sive existentiam"* of God (Mandonnet, 188); he has no doubt that *"esse"* here is existence.

144 Consider the way Thomas argues in *Summa contra Gentiles* 2.43, where the issue is whether the forms whereby created things have distinction from each other are caused by some angel, God providing merely the matter:

> Just as *esse* is first among effects, it accordingly corresponds to the first cause as its proper effect. But *esse* is through form and not through matter. Therefore, the primary causing of forms is to be most of all attributed to the first cause.

"purchase" on actual existence than does the nature of the effect. We thus see grades of participation in actual existence. A thing's place in the hierarchy of actual existence is proportionate to its essential nature.

We see this in *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 2.2. The hierarchy presented is of (1) generable and corruptible things, (2) caused things that never cease to be, and (3) uncaused things. Thus, we read:

> the principles of those things which are always, viz. of the heavenly bodies, must necessarily be truest. And this for two reasons. Firstly, they are not sometimes true and sometimes not; and by this they transcend in truth generable and corruptible things, which sometimes are and sometimes are not. Secondly, because nothing is a cause relative to them, but they are the cause of being for the others; and by this they transcend in truth and entity *[in veritate et entitate]* the heavenly bodies: which though they are incorruptible nevertheless have a cause, not only as regards their being moved, as some have opined, but also as regards their being *[suum esse]*, as here the Philosopher expressly says. (295)

And we have a corollary:

> Since the situation is such that those which are to others the cause of being *[causa essendi]* are most true, it follows that each thing, as it stands towards precisely this, that it *is [quod sit]*, so also it stands towards the fact that it *has truth [quod habeat veritatem]*. Those things whose being *[esse]* does not always stand in the same way, neither does their truth remain always. And those whose being *[esse]* has a cause, also have a cause of their truth. And this is because the being of the thing *[esse rei]* is the cause of the true assessment *[verae existimationis]* which the mind has concerning the thing. For the true and the false are not in things, but in the mind, as is said in book 6 of this work. (298)

It is surely clear that Thomas is considering a hierarchy of measures of the act of being, that is, of existence, the perfection of the efficient cause and of its effect.

Kenny admits that we can "arrange things in hierarchies" in terms, for example, of beings having cognition and beings lacking cognition. However he says: "This provides a scale of beings, not of being. Socrates is not more real than his dog, and his dog is not more real than his cactus" (140). On the contrary, as Thomas explains in *ST* I, q. 14, a. 1, the nature that knows is more ample than the nature that lacks the ability to know, precisely inasmuch as the nature that knows "is in a way all things." This is to say that the hierarchy is one in function of "measure of being" of the things involved. Hierarchy here also pertains to distinguishing what has more of the nature of an efficient cause from what has less of that nature. The efficient causal hierarchy is essentially divided by the members "reason" and "mere nature," a doctrine presented by

> Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 9.2, and followed by Thomas in for example, *ST* I, q. 19, a. 4 (first argument in the corpus), and I, q. 4, a. 1 (efficient causality and being in act). Kenny is simply unconscious of the existential meaning of natural being.[145]

Kenny asks, apropos of the approaching a maximum, whether the maximum is supposed to be ideal or real. Kenny does not seem to appreciate the universality of the method used in Fourth Way. This is perhaps in part because it appeals to the doctrine of the elements, and to fire as the source of heat in all hot things. A more sympathetic reader might ask what was at the foundation of this early chemistry. I would say that it is an experience that is universal, and on which all scientific investigation is based. We see it in such devices as sonar (asdic) and radar. We see it in the etymology of "investigation" (the trailing of an animal by its footprints being deeper or shallower, the trail being "hot" or "cold"). It is the experience of the bonfire. If one is warm, one is close to the source, the maximum. If one is less warm, one is further from the source. All doctrines of "traces" follow that schema.[146] Thus Thomas can write:

> To the extent that something is closer to the cause, to that extent it participates more in its effect. Hence, if something is all the more perfectly participated by some things the closer they get to some thing, this is a sign that that thing is the cause of that which is participated in diverse degrees: as, for example, if some things are warmer the closer they are to a fire, this is a sign that the fire is the cause of the warmth.[147]

Now, in the Fourth Way, we are not simply dealing with *particular* natures and their derivatives. The starting point of the way is a vision of reality in terms of the more and the less in the line of goodness or truth or nobility, what Thomas on one occasion calls "universal form."[148] It might be as well to mention that these are all aspects of reality presented

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[145] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.2 (1046a36–b24): active power *[dunamis]* is either linked to rational soul or is merely natural; cf. Thomas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 9.2. Efficient causal power is precisely the active *dunamis* discussed here.

[146] See *The Works of Aristotle*, translated into English under the editorship of Sir David Ross, vol. XII: *Selected Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 87–88 (fr. 16): Simp. *In De Caelo* 289.1–15. Aristotle speaks of this in the work *On Philosophy*. In general, where there is a better there is a best. Since, then, among existing things one is better than another, there is also something that is best, which will [p. 88] be the divine.

[147] *SCG* 3.64.

[148] *ST* I, q. 19, a. 6 (136a47–b4).

by Aristotle in terms of being as divided by act and potency.[149] Thus, speaking of nobility, Thomas says:

> Everything which *is*, whether substantially or accidentally, *is actually,* and is a likeness of the *first act*, and by virtue of this [situation] it has *nobility*. Also, what *is potentially*, by its *order towards act*, is a *participant* in nobility: for it is in this way that it is said to *"be."* It remains, then, that each thing, considered in itself, is *noble*; but it is called "lowly" [Latin: *vile*] relative to a more noble [thing].[150]

Of course, such a text presupposes that one has recognized the existence of a first in the hierarchy of "being in act." This is an efficient causal hierarchy, or a hierarchy of the effects of an efficient cause.[151] Clearly, to be a being and to be noble are one and the same thing.

There should be no doubt that Thomas is reasoning toward a real, actual maximal in the order of goodness and being and intelligibility and perfection. This means a "by nature" first, and so, given that it is the source of goodness for all that is good, it is also the ideal. We are proving the existence of an actual ideal. This pertains to the universality of the forms involved.

Kenny asks why the object occupying the maximum point on a scale should cause the other objects to occupy the place they do on the scale. Mount Everest is not the cause of all lesser mountains (141)—the asking of this question is a measure of Kenny's remoteness from what is being discussed. Kenny is in the realm of corporeal quantity. Thomas is in the realm of quantity of power.[152]

Kenny notes that Thomas refers to "a piece of Aristotle's physics to the effect that fire is the cause of heat in objects." However, Kenny claims that it is the Platonic doctrine of Ideas that really "fills the gap." One wonders why Kenny does not refer to the philosophical text to which Thomas himself explicitly refers in the fourth way. Indeed, it is the only occasion in the five ways where he explicitly refers to a text. It is Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 2. As is well-known, it is a cornerstone of Thomas's approach to being. If we look further into the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle we see this hierarchy as pertaining to the distinction between being in act and being in potency. Thus, it is important to realize that the Aristotelian doctrine of

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[149] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9, shows (ch. 8) that act is prior to potency, i.e., more noble; that it is better than potency (ch. 9); and that it is truer and more intelligible than potency (ch. 9 and 10).

[150] *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.70.

[151] *ST* I, q. 4, a. 1.

[152] On the distinction between quantity of mass and quantity of power, cf. *ST* I, q. 42, a. 1, ad 1.

being as divided by act and potency is what might well be called the "existentialism" of Aristotle.[153]

A Visit to the *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*

I will note only some remarks on book 7. On pages 185–187 Kenny looks at *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7.5. It concerns the question: whether a thing and its essence are identical. Kenny sees a change in terminology, and a new distinction, between the quiddity of Peter and the essence of Peter (187). He says that a new point is that in God there is no distinction between "the concrete quiddity" and "the abstract essence."

I would say that Kenny should have considered the procedure of *Metaphysics* 7 as Thomas explains it. He would then have realized that the section he is commenting on here is the pure "logical approach" to the question, and that later we will have a different presentation, fully philosophical. We see this spelled out in 7.11 (1535–1536).

As Thomas explains in 7.5 (1375), following up on what Kenny quotes at page 185, note 18, here the thing and its quiddity are one not in just any way, but one in notion *[secundum rationem]*. What that means is that, *pace* Kenny, we are not really speaking of "Peter" at all, but of "man," the subject of the definition. It is not the individual that is defined, but the species. The distinction that Thomas introduces is between *"homo"* and *"humanitas."* He is not speaking about "Peter." In 1378 it is said that the quiddity is what the definition signifies. Since the definition is predicated of the defined item, the quiddity of "man" is not "humanity," but rather "rational, mortal animal." Thomas continues in 1379 to talk precisely about *"homo,"* not about "Socrates." As he says, *"homo"* does not exclude accidents but neither does it include them.

That is why he can conclude in 1380, that a thing such as God, having in it no accidents, could have predicated of it both the abstract and the concrete indifferently. Notice that he says this is *most evident of all* in the case of God. He does not here make it proper to God.

My point is that in 7.11 (1536) the passage in 7.5 that Kenny has been discussing is explained as having been about "man" as abstracting from the singular. Now, in the fully philosophical treatment at 7.11, we find out that the concrete human being, Peter or Socrates, is *not* identical with his quiddity. And in this mode of consideration, the realistic mode, the quiddity of Socrates is signified by "humanity" (1535). Also, it is pointed

[153] Here I touch on matters which I have dealt with more fully in my paper, "Aristotle as a Source of St. Thomas's Doctrine of *esse*," which can be read on the website of the Notre Dame University Maritain Centre, the "Summer Institute" papers for the year 2000.

out that "subsisting forms" (not just God) have identity of the thing and its quiddity (1536).[154]

A Visit to *On Separate Substances*

Kenny comes to *De substantiis separatis* on pages 187–188. He focuses on the answer to Gebirol concerning universal hylomorphism. I would say that, considering all his complaints about "Platonism" in Thomas, he should have said something about the earlier chapters in which Thomas carefully explains the difference between Plato and Aristotle, what he saw them as agreeing on, and what he saw as their limits.

Kenny reads the passage he selects as saying "that the *esse* that is identical with God is the *esse* that is common to all entities" (188). This is obviously *not* what is said. In God *esse* is universally, and in creatures it is particularly. There is a unity of *ratio*, as was taught in for example, *ST* I, q. 4, a. 3, by analogy. The *De substantiis separatis* text is exceptionally clear. The very response begins by arguing that there can only be one *esse subsistens* and that is God.

What is happening here is that Kenny understands the word "universal" only as pertaining to *predication*, whereas it is clearly meant here to signify the mode of being that pertains to *causal domination*. Thus, for example, in the *ST* we read:

> [I]t is to be said that something is called "general" in two ways. In one way, by *predication*, as, for example, "animal" is general relative to "man" and "horse" and to other such items; and so taken, it is necessary that the general be identical essentially with those items relative to which it is general: because the genus pertains to the essence of the species and falls within its definition. In the other way, something is called "general" as to *power*, as the *universal* cause is general relative to all effects: for example, the sun relative to all bodies which are illuminated or changed by its power. And so taken it is not necessary that it be essentially identical with those things relative to which it is general, because there is not the same essence of the cause and of the effect.[155]

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[154] On the distinction between the two modes of consideration, as presented in *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7, cf. my paper "St. Thomas, Metaphysics, and Formal Causality," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 36 (1980): 285–316.

[155] *ST* II–II, q. 58, a. 6, "Respondeo dicendum quod *generale* dicitur aliquid *dupliciter*. Uno modo, per praedicationem, sicut animal est generale ad hominem et equum et ad alia huiusmodi. Et hoc modo generale oportet quod sit idem essentialiter cum his ad quae est generale, quia genus pertinet ad essentiam speciei et cadit in definitione eius. Alio modo dicitur aliquid generale secundum *virtutem*, sicut *causa universalis est generalis* ad omnes effectus, ut sol ad omnia corpora, quae illuminantur vel immutantur per virtutem ipsius. Et hoc modo generale non oportet

For the direct application of this distinction to the study of being as being, consider again *In De trin.* 5.4. We read:

> But just as for each determinate genus there are some common principles which extend to all the principles of that genus, so also all beings, inasmuch as they agree as to being, have some principles which are the principles of all beings. Now, these principles can be called *"common"* in two ways, according to Avicenna in his *Sufficientia*: in one way, by *predication*: as when I say "form is common to all forms," because it is predicated of any one; in the other way by *causality*: as we say that the numerically one sun is the principle for all generable things. Now, *there are common principles of all beings,* not only according to the first way: which the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* 11 [read: 12] calls "all beings having the same principles according to analogy," but also *according to the second way*: such that there be things remaining numerically the same and the principles of all things.[156]

This is obviously what Thomas is saying in *De substantiis separatis*, viz. that God is being itself in the mode of the universal cause of existence. This is his doctrine from start to finish of his career. Kenny never comes in contact with it. It is a mark of the problem of the book that here, at the end, he is unable to understand the word "universal" as applied to the *esse* of God.

Kenny here also expresses his surprise at Thomas allowing that form can be called both *"ens"* and *"non ens."* He sees this as testimony to Thomas's dissatisfaction with his theory of being. That Thomas might have experimented with new modes of expression regarding being would not be surprising. Any professor who has to deal with a variety of

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quod sit idem in essentia cum his ad quae est generale, quia non est eadem essentia causae et effectus," emphasis added.

[156] *In De trin.* 5.4, emphasis added:

> Sicut autem uniuscuiusque determinati generis sunt quaedam communia principia quae se extendunt ad omnia principia illius generis, ita etiam et omnia entia, secundum quod in ente communicant, habent quaedam principia quae sunt principia omnium entium. Quae quidem principia possunt dici communia dupliciter secundum Avicennam in sua sufficientia: uno modo per praedicationem, sicut hoc quod dico: forma est commune ad omnes formas, quia de qualibet praedicatur; alio modo per causalitatem, sicut dicimus solem unum numero *esse* principium ad omnia generabilia. Omnium autem entium sunt principia communia non solum secundum primum modum, quod appellat philosophus in XI metaphysicae omnia entia habere eadem principia secundum analogiam, sed etiam secundum modum secundum, ut sint quaedam *res* eadem numero exsistentes omnium rerum principia.

adversarial arguments must vary his language in order to clarify. In fact, there is nothing surprising about the point that form, for example, can be called *"ens"* and *"non ens"* from two very carefully distinguished points of view. The passage is in entire agreement with what Thomas taught in, for example, *Summa contra Gentiles* 2.52–54 (key texts on being that are not discussed in this book). It merely adds considerations helpful in answering the Gebirol arguments.

Conclusion

The primary weakness of Kenny's outlook is his failure to see the doctrine of the act of being, that is, existence, as related to efficient causality and the terminus of generation. Secondly, I would mention his failure to consider Thomas's criticism of Plato's doctrine, as necessary for understanding any use Thomas makes of Platonic elements.

In the matter of texts considered, it is remarkable that no use was made of *Summa contra Gentiles* 2.52–54, extremely important statements of fundamental ontology. So also, absence of consideration of the role of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 2.1 is most surprising. All in all, Kenny seems to me to have remained rather remote from the real doctrine of being of St. Thomas.

Kenny accuses Thomas of being confused. In the above I have tried to show that, reading the texts he read, Kenny's accusation was unjustified. Nor do I think that such an accusation would be justified by reading other texts. However, that does not mean that I do not find causes for concern about consistency in texts of St. Thomas on being. Thomas did change his techniques for making his point about essence and *actus essendi*. I am sure he had good reasons for doing so, and that some texts, compared with others, can cause difficulty.

In particular, there are some texts that speak of the act of being as providing the answer to the question: "Does it exist?" This is most especially true of *Quodl.* 2.2.1 (3).[157] This is also a view that might be gathered from the general line of what I have called the *Intellectus essentiae* argument in *De ente et essentia*. I will address this situation in a forthcoming paper. However, since my main criticism of Kenny is that he fails to distinguish the act of being from the *"esse"* that answers the question: "Does it exist?" I consider it only fair that I note the existence of such texts that can cause trouble. N&V

[157] *Quodl.* 2.2.1 [3] (Leonine ed., t. 25-2, Rome/Paris: Commissio Leonina/Cerf, 1996, at pp. 214–15). I am even led to wonder whether this text belongs with the generally considered late texts it is placed with.

Book Reviews

Mystical Consciousness: Western Perspectives and Dialogue with Japanese Thinkers by Louis Roy, OP *(Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003),* xxi + 229 pp.

IN *FIDES ET RATIO*, Pope John Paul II calls for an increased study of Asian metaphysics. Fr. Louis Roy's *Mystical Consciousness* might be read fruitfully as a response to this demand. By subjecting a variety of mystical texts to modern epistemological readings, this Dominican scholar has forged a curious—if cautious—alliance between thinkers East and West on the subject of consciousness.

Roy's work aims to explicate the various forms of consciousness and clarify their epistemological importance, especially in regard to the insights of those skilled in meditation. To this end, he identifies three main forms of consciousness. The first, "consciousness C," is the ordinary consciousness we have of things and people. It is often referred to as "consciousness-of," "positional consciousness," or "awareness." The second form of consciousness, "consciousness B," is the non-positional but reflexive consciousness-in that permeates every act of consciousness-of. Finally, Roy considers "consciousness A," the mystical consciousness that obtains beyond ordinary acts and states when consciousness B is appropriated in an extraordinary way, such that one's consciousness-in or non-positional consciousness becomes a permanent state or basic disposition by which the mind is united to God. Such consciousness is, by definition, consciousness without an object: Beyond ordinary consciousness-of and consciousness-in, mystical consciousness is a knowing that transcends thinking-of and a loving that surpasses and unites all of our ordinary intentions.

After establishing this basic framework, Roy goes on to address the insights and oversights of several philosophies of consciousness. The first part of *Mystical Consciousness* explores western philosophies of consciousness and includes discussions of well-known philosophers, such as Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl

Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, and John Searle, as well as lesser-known figures such as John Crosby, Daniel Helminiak, Elizabeth Morelli, Robert K. C. Forman, Sebastian Moore, and David Granfield. The second part of the book contains separate chapters devoted to Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, and Friedrich Schleiermacher, while its third part is an extended dialogue with Zen philosophy, embodied by two luminaries of the Kyoto school, Kenji Nishitani and Shin'ichi Hisamatsu. Roy, it should be said, does not claim originality in his interpretations of these Japanese thinkers (xi). He wishes only to show the similarities, indeed the basic convergence, among several western and Japanese intimations of that which "escapes the purview of ordinary consciousness" (189). In this regard, Roy's choice of the philosophers of the Kyoto school as dialogue partners is ideal because they have already appropriated the more typically European discourses of epistemology and existentialism for their own religious ends. More importantly, this choice allows him to address two problems in most studies of consciousness. In Roy's estimation, most studies restrict consciousness to an individual's consciousness, which either rules out mystical consciousness altogether or misrepresents it in terms of a subject/object duality that is either false or misleading. Roy's inclusion of Japanese thinkers is most helpful here, since both Nishitani and Hisamatsu have detailed accounts of mystical consciousness that stress its freedom from such subject/object duality. Even so, Roy believes that those familiar with meditation often ignore non-positional consciousness-in, which prevents them from understanding the relationship between mystical consciousness and ordinary positional consciousness-of. This ignorance of non-positional consciousness causes scholars to ignore the hermeneutic point he wishes to emphasize: Mystical consciousness, far from being a night in which all cows are black, is indeed able to judge ordinary consciousness in a proper analogical fashion.

The relationship of mystical states of consciousness to more ordinary states is a topic fraught with hermeneutic, metaphysical, and theological implications. While Roy rightly raises the issue—and correctly indicates the way forward—one may legitimately ask whether the language of consciousness is truly the language of interfaith dialogue or whether it is the philosophical language most adequate to addressing questions of judgment and analogy. Consider the following passage from Roy: "The advanced meditator then partakes of the consciousness that permeates all beings, with no definition added to their suchness. Everything is de-reified, de-substantialized, de-dualized, including 'I,' 'God,' 'world,' 'Being,' 'Nihility.' Mystical consciousness then includes all particulars dynamically. The Self refashions the selves, in its own image and likeness

perhaps, instead of abolishing them" (188). The meaning of a statement rife with such metaphysical terms is difficult to understand in terms of the language of consciousness alone. It seems to imply that those skilled in meditation can judge metaphysical realities such as God, Being, the "Self," and "Nihility" without submitting to the usual rigors of metaphysics. How, though, might a judgment remain analogical if both "Being" and "Nihility" are "de-dualized?" We risk an almost Heideggerian disregard of the Thomistic tradition here, in which the supposed "de-reification" of being makes it not convertible with truth, goodness, and beauty but rather with the "Nothing" itself, and one is left only with the breeziest of tautologies so favored by Heidegger, in which the "world worlds" or the "nothing nothings."

More to the point, Roy does little to address other scholars who might object to his characterization of mysticism. Indeed, he and his reader seem to share a tacit agreement that all the thinkers under discussion share enough of an epistemological framework to converse about mysticism without much further ado. He simply assumes that mysticism is the cross-cultural phenomenon that is best discussed epistemologically—apart from concerns of language, history, or culture—and sets about his task. This assumption can be seen in Roy's description of Hisamatsu's conception of emptiness, the ultimate reality according to Mahayana Buddhism: "Far from being a mere psychological concentration that would exclude all forms of consciousness-of, this void integrates all components of our finitude. It embraces history as well as the cosmos. It is the Self that takes up all that is valid in the self, purifies it, and energizes it. Despite differences owing to cultural diversity, that absolute reality consists of the mystical consciousness that parts 1 and 2 of this book have characterized" (186). The final caveat "despite differences owing to cultural diversity" might appear a bit too easy for those inclined to believe consciousness, even mystical consciousness, is historically effected, linguistically mediated, and/or metaphysically grounded.

In all fairness, if Roy has not delved into the metaphysical ramifications of his claims, neither has he denied the legitimacy of doing so. The question, which I shall leave to the reader to answer, is whether one can pursue such epistemological reflections coherently without addressing such concerns. One's answer to this final question will largely determine how one responds to Roy's work. I fear that his discussions will convince those who are already predisposed to think that one can address epistemology apart from metaphysics and hermeneutics, but madden those who are not. Either result would be unfortunate. Roy's judgments are often sound, and one need not be advanced in meditation to appreciate

them. He rightly criticizes the false peace and self-serving placidity that endanger mysticism and chastises meditators who are averse to philosophical rigor. Above all, his analyses are clear and straightforward, which is no mean feat in a field where technical jargon often obscures the issues.

Although Roy clearly states that he does not aim to present the complex whole of Christian mysticism (xx), readers of *Nova et Vetera* might have liked to see a greater attention paid to traditional Dominican contributions to mystical prayer. Roy occasionally invokes Thomas Aquinas and devotes an entire chapter to Meister Eckhart, but both seem strangely divorced from their Dominican context. Indeed, Roy's Eckhart is less the Eckhart of Armand Maurer or Bernard McGinn than the Eckhart of D. T. Suzuki and Thomas Merton. Even so, further investigation of traditional sources might very well support many of Roy's findings. The scholastic tradition, for example, explores any number of subjects that might be of interest to theoreticians of mystical consciousness, including frankly exotic topics such as the natural omniscience of Adam, the temporality of angels, and the relationship of Christ to space and time, among others. Much the same might be said for the traditional philosophical texts of both Buddhism and Hinduism, which—it must be said—contain many of the most refined discussions of consciousness in the history of epistemology, East or West.

Apart from these quibbles, the book has minor problems in editing (vii, 58, 184 et al.), and its index is incomplete, lacking full entries for Paul, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. Nevertheless, Roy's achievements are solid. His work makes an important advance beyond much of the work on cross-cultural comparisons of mysticism by avoiding typologies of mysticism and actually interpreting the writings of different mystics. More importantly, Roy has raised a series of crucial questions about the relationship of mysticism to the analogical judgments of ordinary consciousness. Still, he will need to clarify some of the ramifications of his research in future publications. At its current stage, Roy's work is an excellent primer for those interested in the major participants in this discussion but will be less satisfying for those who have deeper training in the older philosophical traditions of the Church or non-Christian religions. This, however, is all the more reason for those so trained to follow his lead. N&V

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Bioetica: Storia, princìpi, questioni by Lino Ciccone *(Milano: Edizioni Ares, 2003),* 408 pp.

IF WE HAD to rank the most recent and most successful neologisms of our time, "bioethics" would certainly be in the top five. Since its first appearance in an article by Van Renselaer Potter published in 1970 ("Bioethics: The Science of Survival"), it has given titles everywhere to research centers, university chairs, and national and international committees. The specific literature and the legal documents related to bioethics increase every day. Many people who would carefully avoid getting involved in philosophical questions as such end up today involved in bioethical issues.

In Italy, there are now many textbooks trying to offer a systematic account of bioethics. The best and most eminent one is the *Manuale di Bioetica* by Elio Sgreccia (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1999). The most recent one (and a good one at that) is Lino Ciccone, *Bioetica: Storia, princìpi, questioni*. Ciccone is not a beginner; he is a well-known Italian moral philosopher who has already published several good and useful books, including *Non uccidere* and *Salute e malattia*. Those who, like me, have already had the chance to appreciate his style, will easily detect in this last book too his ability to approach ethical issues, not only with great clarity, but also highlighting their many aspects related to law, medicine, biology, psychology, and so forth.

The "Second Part" of *Bioetica* deals with many "Questioni particolari" [particular issues] such as the identity and status of human embryo, artificial insemination, cloning, prenatal diagnosis, experiments on human embryos and on animals, transplantation of organs, drug abuse, alcoholism, smoking, and AIDS. The "First Part," on the other hand, is "fundamental and general," and, besides two chapters on the "origins of bioethics" and its "general principles," includes one chapter bearing the title "Verso uno statuto epistemologico" ("Towards an epistemological status")—a title which is "un po' inconsueto" (a little unusual), the author warns us immediately, but which is justified because "the very young age of bioethics makes it problematic and, according to some, premature to draw a precise epistemological status" (21).

Problematic and premature . . . or simply wrong? Ciccone himself has already dealt in other moral books with many particular issues now addressed in the same way in *Bioetica*, but not under the label "bioethics." What changed now? Whatever it is, we should be able to find it in the object and method of bioethics as explained in the chapter on the "epistemological status" and as applied in the "second part" of the book.

The object of bioethics, says the author, relates to the field of "biological and medical sciences" as they have brought about an "enormous increase of man's possibilities to intervene on life, especially at its origin and at its decline. Old problems have thus acquired a new physiognomy" (22). Fair enough. But human beings' possibilities of intervention on the world have enormously increased in almost every field—from economics to law, to the weapons industry, to the means of communication, and so forth—and there are plenty of "old problems" that acquired "a new physiognomy" (think, in the economic field, of usury). Should we coin many neologisms, like "warethics," "internetethics," "economyethics," and "lawethics," and draw a specific epistemological status for each of those fields? This would obviously be mistaken.

Ethics has a peculiar scientific *physiognomy*: It is reflection on human action as good (or evil), not in a particular technical sense, but absolutely speaking, everything considered. Consider the formal difference between the two following judgments on *my good*. Medical judgment: "It is good for me to stay three days in bed in order to heal from fever." Moral judgment: "It is good for me to get out of my bed straight away even at the cost of making my health condition worse (because, for example, I have to take care of my little baby)." The *physician as physician* does not have a *scientific* competence on moral judgment. More: if he expresses a moral judgment *as physician* he contradicts the very science in which he is expert.

Ethics is a *practical science*: That is to say, it concerns human action. And human action must always be understood in its real context, which involves a multiplicity of aspects often related to highly specialized scientific disciplines. In these cases (which are not only those of medicine and biology), a qualified (scientific) knowledge of reality is a necessary presupposition of moral reflection. This, however, does not reduce the formal difference between moral good and the proper objects of the other disciplines. It is certainly useful to group together some ethical issues as they refer to specific scientific fields. So, we speak of economy ethics, medical ethics, and so forth. However, it is not good to create confusion about the proper object of ethical reflection.

Ciccone himself, I hasten to say, does not run any such risk of confusion. The risk does not usually involve philosophers, who know that ethics belongs to philosophy and that the term "bioethics" is in fashion, generates interest, and is *expedient*. Rather, Ciccone's use of the term poses a problem because it may encourage other people to think that they can do ethics without knowing philosophy. For instance, I know of university courses on bioethics entrusted to physicians who expressly do not know anything about philosophy. This induces not only confusion but also

unjustified, not grounded, moral judgments. Physicians, biologists, and others, ought to raise moral questions, but they also should know that the answers to these questions require specialized philosophical knowledge that is different from the knowledge specific to their sciences.

In short, the key question has to do with methodology. We might agree that the object of bioethics does not make it different from ethics. But is it not true that the method of bioethics is specifically different in that it requires "a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach" (22)? In this regard, we should say that bioethics (like business ethics) is indeed leading the way, but not in constituting itself as a specific science, but (a) in freeing many philosophers from a kind of academic segregation they had chosen for themselves, and (b) in recalling experts, in fields particularly charged with moral questions, to the importance of facing these questions in a serious and rationally disciplined manner, which includes discussions about them with expert moral philosophers. Again, ethics is a practical science that concerns the moral good to be done in concrete human choices. Thus ethics is interdisciplinary because human life is interdisciplinary. In some cases (law, economics, medicine, biology, and so forth), the need for interdisciplinarity emerges in a more evident and intense way, but never in such a way as to create a different science. N&V

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The Power of God: *Dynamis* in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology by Michel Rene Barnes *(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001),* 333 pp.

THIS FIRST BOOK of Michel Barnes is a revision of his doctoral dissertation at University of St. Michael's College, Toronto. It provides a helpful window into the formation of early Christian doctrine after the Council of Nicaea by detailing the debate between Gregory of Nyssa and Eunomius of Cyzicum on correct understandings of the term *homoousios*. Barnes explains Nyssa's orthodox understanding of consubstantiality through an exploration of the term *dynamis*, which for Gregory conveyed the idea that whatever shares the same power must share the same nature.

Barnes says his study will proceed with three tasks in mind: (1) to recover power as a technical term; (2) to look at Gregory's Trinitarian theology in its historical context; and (3) to understand the role of philosophy in the development of Christian doctrine via Gregory's thought, taken as a patristic case study. The first two tasks he completes

with thorough and attentive study, but it is the third that deserves more direct attention in this review.

For his first task, Barnes looks at pre-Platonic usages of power, especially the medical writings of the Hippocratic and Empedoclean schools, which are later appropriated by Christians. He focuses on how the term is understood as working oppositionally and also how power can be either constitutive of a thing or derivative of a thing. This latter understanding becomes important in attempts to determine the kind of power the Son has: Is it the same power as the Father, or one delegated and hence derived from the Father, making the Son purely an instrument without his own proper power? The primary description of power by pre-Platonic philosophers is that it is the causal capacity of a material entity.

The development of the Platonic use of the term eventually moves away from purely material causality to "teleological causality." Barnes sees Plato as using the term to explain an entity in terms of why it is what it is. Here we see that power has become an ontological term (though Barnes tells us he is unhappy about using words like ontology and metaphysics, he grudgingly acknowledges that this is the sense in which Plato understands it). For Plato, power is said to belong to a thing insofar as it exists; its existence is somehow constituted by its particular powers. Chapter 3 turns to the second- and third-century Trinitarian controversies, focusing upon Tertullien, Hipploytus, and Origen. Here the development of the understanding of the term power has evolved from the medical to the metaphysical to the psychological, and finally to the transcendent or theological. It is precisely this kind of movement that provides the seeds of an answer to the third main task of Barnes's study, but unfortunately receives little commentary beyond the observation that such an evolution has indeed occurred. Such an evolution is that which interests most of those who desire to know how theology, and not just doctrine, develops.

This time period sees the development of two doctrines of power in relation to the Godhead: one which expresses the power of God insofar as his nature is one, the other which applies the term specifically to the Son, who uniquely manifests God's power. All three of the fathers highlighted in this chapter have representations of both of these senses of power. Questions begin to arise, however, about the second sense. Is the Son the very power of God or is he a produced power, a power from a power? In the early Nicaean controversy, there was no problem with the language of *"X from X"* to describe the relation between the second and first Persons of the Trinity. The concern to distinguish the Son as distinct from the Father was the motivation of such language, but their relation-

ship could not be conceived of as an effect generated from a cause that is different from the effect in nature. The result of such confusion saw the expense of the Son's full divinity, leading to a necessity for greater precision with theological language and thought.

This is the subject of the fourth chapter, the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century. All parties in the debate use power language in ways that have historical precedent, as the author has been at pains to detail in the previous chapters. Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra, Eusebius of Caesarea, Asterius, the creeds from 340–360, and even the western fathers Phoaebadius of Agen, Hilary, and Ambrose receive attention here in the attempt to show how the concept of *dynamis* is vital and functioning, and which lead to the main chapters of the book where we finally enter the argument between Eunomius and Gregory.

Barnes sees this debate as much more important than the "overstated" battle between Athanasius and Arius (148–49). His reading of the second half of the fourth century is that Arius has receded in importance and the new heretics on the block who receive the brunt of ire and wrath are Eunomius and Aetius. It is certainly true that the years leading up to Constantinople in 381 focused on a new type of Arianism, but that Arius has vanished from the picture seems a hard saying. The main argument of Eunomius, though meant to protect the transcendence of God, is in fact another species of subordinationist Arian theology. Eunomius establishes a theological hierarchy of essence (God)-activity (Son)-product (creation) in which the highest, as utterly transcendent, has no part in the lower. If God is unbegotten and unproduced, then it would compromise his essence to enter into the messy business of production. It is the Son, then, who is produced (first among creation, yet distinct from it), and in turn produces the rest of creation. The only relation between God and the Son is that of a moral or political union in which the Son is obedient to the will of the Father, but there is no unity of essence. This creates obvious subordinationist problems, but behind it is the even greater threat to Christian doctrine and theology: the rejection of any doctrine of participation in God, and hence the rejection of analogy. For Eunomius, the only way in which God can be known is through language that expresses God's unbegotten stature.

Gregory has the burden of proof on him to show how God's transcendence is not threatened by the act of creation. As we have seen, the stakes in the debate are high, since it ultimately becomes a question about the knowability of God. The early Trinitarian debates are wrestling with more than just the doctrine of God; they are establishing the grounds for the possibility of a Christian theology, in which humans attempt to understand

who God is. Scholars have drawn attention to this point in the Gregorian/Eunomian debate, but Barnes points out that it is often from within an unfortunate paradigm. Traditional scholarship tended to artificially divide Gregory's "mystical theology" from his Trinitarian/doctrinal theology, such that he has earned the reputation of being radically apophatic. In fact, the contextual (and polemical) background for his work is the Eunomian theology that privileges univocal language.

Here is where Barnes sees the importance of the power controversy coming to a head, and how Gregory can answer Eunomius: There is no division between the nature and power of God. God's nature is to be creative, to be productive, to be generative. Because Eunomius has divided God's activity from his essence, there can be no "analogical ladder." But because Gregory insists upon the unity of nature and power, there exists the possibility of analogy.

The importance of such a possibility for Christian thought cannot be underemphasized, which again ties into the third main point of Barnes's study. But again, the meaning of analogy and how it is demonstrated or revealed to us by Gregory is given short shrift. Examples of analogies Gregory uses, especially that of fire, are noted but what exactly Gregory thinks he is doing (or not doing) by giving such analogies is never developed. This point is merely hinted at as an implication of the importance of the power debate. One hopes that Barnes's further work on this "father of fathers" will draw out these tantalizing implications in the future.

There are two other important contributions that Barnes makes in his study that should be mentioned. The first is that his rereading of Gregory's Trinitarian theology focuses upon the text *Contra Eunomium*, instead of the two texts to which scholars have traditionally shown preference: *De Sancta Trinitate (On the Holy Trinity)* and *Ad Ablabium (On Not Three Gods)*. The *Contra Eunomium* is Gregory's longest, and arguably, most comprehensive doctrinal work, providing a much more thorough and representative picture of his thought. Secondly, through his study, Barnes has managed to debunk again the faulty scheme still dominant in parts of theological discourse that "Eastern theologians begin Trinitarian discourse with *persons*, Western theologians begin with *nature*." If Barnes's "De Regnon Considered" (*Augustinian Studies* 26 [1995]) did not persuade one, this work certainly provides a more in-depth exposure to the work of one eastern father who had no qualms "beginning with" the nature of God, since his adversary Eunomius had identified divinity with one Person (God) and one Personal relation (Unbegotten).

Overall, Barnes's work contributes positively to the task of "re-examining" Gregory of Nyssa that has rightfully been undertaken by patristic

scholars of late. His willingness to move beyond schemes dominant in previous scholarship has far-reaching implications not only for the understanding of Gregory's thought, but also for ecumenical dialogue and bridging the difference between eastern and western theological methods. N&V

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The Resurrection of the Son of God, volume 3 of Christian Origins and the Question of God by N. T. Wright *(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003),* 817 pp.

SIMPLY PUT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* is a book that in its breadth, argumentative vigor, and capacity to raise questions about basic aspects of New Testament studies is unlikely to be surpassed by any scholar in Wright's generation. The work engages relevant material from the classical world, the Old Testament, the period known as Second Temple Judaism, the New Testament, the New Testament Apocrypha, the Apostolic Fathers, the early Apologists, early Syriac Christianity, and Nag Hammadi, to name only the general textual "groups," most of which can be subdivided many times over into areas that provide enough space for entire academic careers. Yet, in this vast expanse of material Wright loses neither his focus nor his energy in expression. Indeed, the ability to present a witty and coherent case through multiple, detailed exegetical investigations and wide cultural and chronological gaps is a large part of what makes the book so compelling.

Wright's argument, so he reminds the reader over and again, is a historical one. It has profound theological implications to be sure (see esp. part V, "Belief, Event, and Meaning"), but the argument itself proceeds not at the level of metaphysical reflection but at that of historical, textual investigation. Four of the book's five parts (roughly 680 of the 740 pages of main text) thus deal with resurrection in ancient paganism and in Old Testament and "post-biblical" Judaism, resurrection in Paul, resurrection in early Christianity (apart from Paul), and, finally, the resurrection narratives themselves. The historical insight here, evident in each section and taken cumulatively, is actually most radically—at its roots—linguistic, in the sense that the investigation discloses something about the vocabulary of resurrection upon which the entire argument can later be seen to depend.

In antiquity, to speak about resurrection was to say something rather definite about postmortem existence. It was to say that the deceased

would be made alive again *bodily*. Leaving aside some of the Nag Hammadi documents (cf. esp. the *Epistle to Rheginos*) and allowing for variation and nuance, in no way was resurrection understood in any other way than as corporeal. Indeed, its somatic nature would hardly have appealed to pagans ("not an option," despite Alcestis and Nero *redivivus*). Resurrection of the dead, that is, was a distinctively Jewish affirmation, though it became widespread only in the postexilic period and was denied in the days of Jesus and Paul by the "aristocratic" Sadducees.

Jewish belief in the resurrection was not, however, a belief about what happened to individuals immediately after their physiological demise—least of all, the Messiah (see, for example, 205, 700). Instead it was both corporate and two-staged: In the eyes of the Second Temple Jews, resurrection was an affirmation about the restoration of Israel and about "life after life after death." Immortality of the soul, conceived in strictly Platonic terms, evidently played little to no part in Jewish theology (even in the *Wisdom of Solomon* the notion of immortality is "pressed into [the] service" of resurrection [168]), but neither did resurrection as corporate and future exclude an "intermediate state," a kind of ongoing existence immediately after bodily death. This intermediate state, the life after death, will be followed by resurrection, in which the deceased will receive bodies and Israel be restored—the "life" after the life after death (sections 3 and 4 of part I).

For the early Christians to speak at all about resurrection was thus for them to speak Jewishly (specifically, for Wright, with Pharisaic intonation). Yet the early Christian claim—across the board, from the earliest Pauline material (part II) through the rest of the New Testament and on to even Origen (part III)—involved two profound and historically unexpected "mutations" within the Jewish affirmation of resurrection: first, that something had already happened that merited resurrection language, and, second, that this something had happened not to all Israel but to a particular individual. Both of these mutations obviously find their locus in the early Christian conviction about Jesus of Nazareth, namely, that after his crucifixion he was raised bodily from the dead.

To observe and document textually these mutations is not, however, to get at their historical cause. That requires a further step, one that Wright takes in the direction of the belief of the early Christians. Perhaps obviously, but no less significantly, the Christian mutation in the Jewish view of resurrection occurred because the early Christians believed these things to be true of Jesus. The language of "resurrection" fit the Christian faith. The Christians spoke what they believed. It is here that many scholars have been content to stop: The faith of the early Christians is alone enough to account for the language of resurrection. Not so N. T. Wright.

Wright avers strongly that to claim "faith" or belief as that which motivated the early Christians to speak about Jesus as they did is already to ask—whether acknowledged or not—what could have caused them to believe in this particular way. Their language betokens their belief, but what is it, historically speaking, that moves them toward belief? Wright's answer, noetically logical if historically contentious, involves yet another step, this time toward the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances. In contrast to many scholars and theologians who deny the importance of the empty tomb, Wright mounts a case for its unsubstitutable significance. The point is simple, though (for some) shocking, and its bite equals Wright's bark about resurrection vocabulary: Given the *bodily* meaning of resurrection, it is historically improbable—Wright might say, if he were pressed, inconceivable—that the early Christians would have used resurrection language of Jesus had his body still in fact been in the tomb. In other words, the thesis runs, a body in a tomb could bring forth all manner of language about postmortem life except that of resurrection.

By itself, however, an empty tomb would not lead to talk of resurrection (the body could have been stolen, for example, as one hoary theory would have it). To speak of resurrection requires something further. This something further is found in the appearance narratives. For Wright, the description of Jesus in the resurrection stories of the canonical Gospels confirms the emptiness of the tomb (part IV), for the appearances illustrate and even stress the bodily nature of Jesus' resurrection. The empty tomb on the one hand and the corporeal nature of Jesus' appearance on the other thus both require and explain the use of "resurrection" as that language—in fact, the only language—that fits or corresponds to the reality.

For critical New Testament scholars after Bultmann, Wright's final move is probably the most controversial, not necessarily in its question—What best accounts for the language of resurrection, the empty tomb, and the appearances?—but rather in its answer: the actual, bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Wright is careful here to draw a distinction between the knowledge of a mathematician and a historian (historians should not, because they cannot, offer "mathematical proof") and also to avoid a kind of crude natural theology that would read God directly off the face of certain events. Yet he is nevertheless resolutely insistent that the historical explanation, both in the sense of what happened and in the sense of being open to investigation, for the phenomenon as a whole is the actual, bodily resurrection of Jesus. No other solution, so Wright argues, can wield the explanatory power needed to coordinate the meaning of "resurrection" in its cultural encyclopedia with the language and belief of the early Christians, the empty tomb, and the resurrection appearances.

N. T. Wright's newest big book is thus in a sense about origins (it is after all part of a series with the words "Christian origins" in the title). It is disarmingly simple in its main contention: that if one moves back through history step by step, the bodily resurrection of Jesus is the best historical explanation for all that followed. The resurrection, that is, is the origin for the experience that was described as resurrection in all its various ways.

Quibblers of all kinds will find plenty here to satisfy them (for example, the understanding of the Imperial cult, the treatment of the resurrected "bodies of the saints" in Matthew 27:52–53, and the implications for resurrection expectations in the first century, etc.). But it is certainly questionable whether even cumulative quibbling could offer anything like a challenge to the book. Strictly theological queries along the lines of human access to the resurrection (for example, the nature and role of faith) will come from across the theological spectrum, though both stanch skeptics and devout pietists, let it be said clearly, will likely misunderstand Wright to say that he has proven scientifically the resurrection of the Son of God and all the subsequent (Christian) meaning engendered by this conviction. Historically, however, the primary threat to Wright's overall interpretation would be the accumulation of evidence—either examples to the contrary or different, equally plausible readings of the same texts—along a linguistic line that would divide the language of resurrection from that of bodies. One might also conceive, at least theoretically, of the possibility of an analysis that would show the bodily language of resurrection to be inextricably bound with ancient cosmology such that we cannot receive its meaning without an essential reinterpretation. But this is probably a much larger question about the nature of time and language, hermeneutics, and theological truth. In any event, producing a serious historical challenge to the book as a whole is a massive undertaking, one which will certainly not be forthcoming any time soon, and one which may not even be forthcoming at all. N&V

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Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence by John P. O'Callaghan *(Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003),* ix + 358 pp.

ON THE EVIDENCE of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the terms "representationalist" and "representationism" were first used in the 1840s in discussions of Hume's critic Thomas Reid, the "great aim" of whose philos-

ophy, wrote J. D. Morell in 1846, was "to controvert the representationalist hypothesis." (The form "representationalism" apparently wasn't used until 1899.) Reid himself had called what he was attacking "the theory of ideas," and although he was particularly concerned with its development from Descartes to Hume, he seems to have thought that it had infected philosophy from Plato onward. Hilary Putnam, in his anti-representationalist *Representation and Reality* of 1988, suggests that the trouble really got going with a brief passage on meaning and reference in Aristotle's *De interpretatione* (16a3–9), according to which, in Putnam's explanation, when we understand a word we associate it with a "concept" or "mental representation" that determines what the word refers to. Putnam insinuates that the subsequent philosophical tradition is, by and large, guilty of a fundamentally Aristotelian representationalism. The present work offers a Thomistic response to the implicit accusation.

Two first-person remarks in the Introduction, "Words, Thoughts, and Things," establish that the Thomism will be partly exegetical and partly innovative. "In this work I hope to make some progress toward a better understanding of what the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition does and does not claim about the relations that hold among words, thoughts, and things" (3). "I want to contribute toward moving my tradition forward by a critical engagement with one aspect of the *Linguistic Turn*. In doing so, what I will argue will in some ways be implicitly and at times explicitly critical of aspects of my own tradition. So, for instance, I will make no use of the *verbum mentis*, one of the most venerable interpretations of St. Thomas, because I believe it is not part of his philosophical account of understanding and language" (12). This renunciation is explained by the absence of the theme of *verbum mentis* from Aquinas's "latest and most extensive philosophical discussions" (300, n. 16); thus it seems to be related to the author's reluctance to make use of Aquinas's earlier works because of their "pronounced Augustinian flavor on cognitive issues that is much more strongly mediated by Aristotelian analyses in the later work" (322, n. 40).

The first chapter, "Aristotle's Semantic Triangle in St. Thomas," begins by discussing Boethius's translation of and Aquinas's commentary on the passage of *De interpretatione* referred to by Putnam, as well as the theme of "absolute consideration" of a nature in Aquinas's *De ente et essentia*. This sets the scene for two definitions, both offered in the first person. "Let me introduce the term 'intelligible character' to designate the determinate form delimiting or structuring the first operation [of the intellect] in act—I am attempting to pick out one of the senses of the multifaceted Latin word *ratio*" (26). ("Intelligible character" is synonymous with Aquinas's "nature absolutely considered" [31]; as a principle of knowing

it is distinguished from "intelligible species," which is an accident of intellect [165]). "Let me introduce 'concept' as a technical term to designate the first act so informed or intelligibly delimited by the intelligible character, that is, 'concept' names the first act of understanding" (31). The reason why the author emphasizes that this sense of the term "concept" is his own would seem to be that it is certainly not the sense Aquinas gives to the cognate terms *conceptus* and *conceptio*, which he rather identifies with the *verbum mentis* that is here left undiscussed; the *conceptus*, *conceptio*, or *verbum* is, for Aquinas, not the first act of the intellect, but something that this act produces. Accordingly, the author's subsequent attribution of his definition of "concept" to Aquinas (168, 255) is surprising.

He suggests that readers not concerned with close examination of historical issues can pass over the second chapter, "Three Rival Versions of Aristotle," without much difficulty (12), but its careful discussion of the terms for "sign," "symbol," and "first" in the Greek text and Latin translation of, and in some Latin commentaries on, *De interpretatione* 16a3–9, both is interesting in itself and leads to a significant conclusion: "[T]his chapter provides at least an initial historical understanding of the plausibility of the charge of mental representationalism directed at the Aristotelian tradition in its account of language. When contemporary philosophers make this charge, it cannot simply be dismissed as completely unfounded. There is evidence for it in Ammonius and Boethius, even if, as I have just argued, there is no evidence for it in St. Thomas's commentary on Aristotle" (77). Still, apart from his work as a commentator, what did St. Thomas himself think?

Before coming to this question, the author turns in chapters 3 to 5 from "the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition" to modern developments favoring and opposing representationalism. Chapter 3, "Language and Mental Representationalism: Historical Considerations," begins by tracing the intensification of representationalism in Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, with increasing insistence on an internal mental entity as what is directly known and increasing skepticism about the knowability of an external world (99). The chapter then sketches the emergence of anti-representationalisms in Reid, Husserl, Frege, and above all Wittgenstein, and it concludes by identifying the following representationalist themes: the dichotomy between the internal and the external; the structure of mind, concept, and thing; the question of the relation, if any, between representation and thing; and the representation as what the mind knows directly by introspection (111–12).

The next two chapters profile contemporary authors. Chapter 4, "The Language of Thought: A Revival of Mental Representationalism," samples representationalism in the work of Jerry Fodor, who substitutes a causal

relation for the traditional resemblance relation between representation and object. Although perhaps unnecessary to the argument of the book, the chapter is of interest as an exposition of a self-conscious, contemporary version of representationalism, and as a background for the central and pivotal chapter 5, "Hilary Putnam's Criticism of Aristotelian Accounts of Language and Mental Representationalism." Putnam severely criticizes Aristotelianism for its "cryptographer" model of language use, according to which the mind is supposed to think in mentalese, encode its thoughts in the local language, and transmit them to a hearer, who then decodes them. Putnam objects that "meanings just ain't in the *head*," for "environment rather than mental representation is determining reference" (148–49). From Fodor's defense and Putnam's attack the author extracts three "theses" of representationalism: that "in addition to the mind and external things, there is a third realm of mental things" (the Third Thing Thesis); "that the mind in its activity of thinking directs itself to these internal objects as *what* it primarily knows, or attends to, or is related to" (the Introspectibility Thesis); and "that there is no intrinsic or necessary relation between the so-called 'mental representations' in the mind and the represented things outside it" (the Internalist Thesis) (155–56). At the book's crucial juncture, the philosophical first-person steps forth: "In the next three chapters, I examine the Thomistic-Aristotelian account *I* have been providing against the background of these three theses" (157, emphasis added). But soon it becomes clear that the deeper intention is to test Aquinas himself against the theses.

Addressing the first thesis, chapter 6 asks whether St. Thomas's intelligible species and concepts are a third kind of thing in addition to mind and external things. First of all, when we say that forms are in things (or, more to the point, that we have something in mind), what do we mean by "in"? Locke and Hume seem to take the preposition at face value, at least as a metaphor; Aquinas rather follows Aristotle's metaphysical interpretation of it as meaning "dependence" of whatever is said to be "in" on that in which it is said to be. "The spatial sense of 'in' for 'classical representationalism,' whether taken metaphorically or literally, is simply not at play in St. Thomas's discussion of intellect and world. . . . [I]t is more appropriate to ask which beings actively depend upon me for their existence, and which do not? But this question does not lend itself to imagining two 'spaces,' the inner space of the mind, and the outer space of the world, as well as a gulf between them" (165). A concept is not the product of the intellect's act of grasping something outside the soul, for it is by definition the act itself. (Occasionally, for example on 170–71, the dense style exposes the reader to a hazard of English-speaking Thomism,

that of confusing "act" meaning "actuality" *[actus]* with "act" meaning "action" or "operation.") To the objection that we speak of "having" concepts, the author allows that "concept" in a secondary sense means a "stable capacity or developed potency" to engage in an act of conceiving or understanding; in this sense, it is a habit, the habitually conserved intelligible species (174–75). To Robert Pasnau's claim that the intelligible species is a third thing, the author replies that it is rather the form of the act of understanding (176). Then, in a dramatic move, he partly takes back what he has said: There is a sense in which a concept, as an act, may, in keeping with Aquinas's thought, be called a thing, a *res*, as a comparison of the meanings of *ens* and *res* in Aquinas's work shows (182–94). As the operation of a substance, a concept is an accident with a quiddity, as well as an act of being, of its own, and in this regard it may be called a thing. "But the result is that it is not a thing or *res* in the sense that pertains to the Third Thing Thesis; it is not a thing distinct from the act of understanding" (194). "Thing" must be understood analogically, which, incidentally, answers Putnam's call for recognition that terms such as "thing," "being," "existence," and "object" are not univocal (ibid.).

Chapter 7 begins by clarifying that the term "object" in Aquinas's vocabulary means "formal aspect," not "thing" or "being." It then measures the Thomistic intelligibile species against the introspectibility thesis by means of a close analysis of *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 85, a. 2, the classic text for proving that the intelligible species is the "by which" *(quo)* of knowledge, and not, primarily, the "what" *(quod)* or object, but that it nevertheless can be an object secondarily. St. Thomas regularly calls the form in the intellect a "likeness" of what is known, but "there are two characteristics of *likeness* in the Introspectibility Thesis missing from St. Thomas's Aristotelian account. First, *likeness* is not specific to his account of knowledge the way it is in the Introspectibility Thesis." Rather, it is simply an instance of the general Aristotelian principle that any effect somehow resembles its cause: The intelligible species is a likeness because it is an effect of a causal engagement with the object. "Second, *likeness* does not provide the mechanism by which a known internal representation becomes knowledge of something else." Instead, it is the form of the act of understanding, which is an identification of the mind with its object (228–31). The chapter goes on to address Pasnau's un-Thomistic hypothesis of a psychological, noncognitive apprehension of intelligible species, then concludes by appropriating a phrase of John McDowell's. "McDowell is correct when he writes that 'the possibility that goes missing in Putnam's argument could be described as the possibility of mental representing without representations.' St. Thomas provides just such an

account" (236). The intended contrast, it seems, is between, on one hand, a lively action of representing, and, on the other, a collection of inert items designated for representational purposes, although "representation," like *repraesentatio*, is ambiguous as between an action and a product.

Chapter 8 responds to the internalist thesis by considering in turn two Thomistic themes. First it attempts to explain the admittedly difficult Thomistic notion of a formal identity of concept and *res*: "Absolutely considered *what it is* for an act of understanding to be of an *X*, the act's *essence* or *quod quid est esse*, does not differ from *what it is* for the *X* to be, the *X*'s *quod quid est esse*" (240). If there were a Thomistic skepticism, it would concern not things, but concepts, and not the existence of concepts—which are, after all, operations of intellect—but the difficulty of characterizing them beyond their existence, except in terms of the things with which they are formally identical; but a better term than skepticism might be "negative psychology" (242–43). The second theme is that of the intellect's "reception" of forms, which should not be thought of as some kind of transfer or "exchange," but as the active response of intellect in its encounter with an object: "The form of understanding, the intelligible species, is the formal principle of the active response of the human person to the *res* that it engages in its experience" (249). St. Thomas's account of knowledge is a form of what Colin McGinn calls "externalism," that is, a theory that individuates mental states by reference to something other than the states (238), although it is difficult to situate St. Thomas in McGinn's taxonomy of "strong" and "weak" externalists: With respect to simple concepts, he is a "strong externalist," requiring that the non-mental item corresponding to a simple concept be in some sense in the environment of the one who knows; with respect to fictions and nominal definitions founded on simple concepts, his position might be called a "fundamental strong externalism" (255–56). The chapter closes with some metaphysical contrasts: For Putnam essence is at most part of a classificatory scheme, but for St. Thomas it is an intrinsic principle of a being (271); for Putnam metaphysics begins with the latest results of contemporary science, against which common sense must be defended, but for St. Thomas metaphysics provides a context and a support for the world of common sense (274).

The concluding chapter, "Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence," takes a Thomistic linguistic turn, reflecting on Aquinas's remarks on language in relation to the various Aristotelian sciences that study human nature. Consideration is given to John Haldane's criticism that the Thomistic account of mind is overindividualistic, insufficiently recognizant of the public and linguistic aspects of concept acquisition, to which

the author responds with measured Thomistic counter-considerations: "human language is rooted in understanding, which is an act of a person, that is, an act of a *subsistent individual of a rational nature*" (291); "to insist upon the priority of understanding over linguistic expression is not to retreat into" the "modern privacy" that seals thought off from the bodily, the social, and the political (296). "Thought is not by nature private, but rather public. But the public is not just the educated or even uneducated speaking public. A better, and non-reductive, understanding of the sciences under which human beings fall presents an opportunity for developing an authentic philosophical anthropology. Here, perhaps, one can see a deep affinity between *Thomist Realism* and a certain understanding of Wittgenstein and the *Linguistic Turn*" with respect to the ordering of conceptual functioning to linguistic and non-linguistic acts (298).

The foregoing summary hardly does justice to the details of the author's argument, but perhaps it suffices to indicate how his bridge-building between Thomism and analytic thought will be instructive and thought-provoking to both parties and to others. He shows an admirable willingness, even a sense of obligation, to perpetuate the Thomistic tradition of engaging contemporary modes of thought (12), which, as he is aware, involves assuming all the difficulties of being simultaneously an expositor, a defender, and a renovator of the Thomistic position, of alternating between the first and the third persons, and of learning the ways of thinkers very different from Aquinas. Of course it also involves the prospect of criticism from both sides, and in this regard one can perhaps identify some basic points of possible contention. Thomistic scholars will be inclined to regret the omission of any treatment of the *verbum mentis*, and to object to the use of "concept" to name the first act of the intellect; anti-representationalists will not fail to be struck by the eventual admission that Thomistic concepts are in some Thomistic sense things, and even, as habitually conserved species, enduring possessions. But all will agree that the author has succeeded in condensing and articulating a large and interesting philosophical problem.

His defense of St. Thomas on the charge of representationalism depends in part on setting fairly strict requirements for the latter. A more relaxed understanding of the term—say, as meaning "any theory of cognition which attributes a crucial and indispensable role to some sort of mental representation"—might seem to lead rather quickly and definitively to a verdict of "guilty" (see Claude Panaccio, "Aquinas on Intellectual Representation," in *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, D. Perler, ed. [Brill: Leiden, 2001], 185 ff.). But perhaps Thomists should embrace the charge, recalling that "represent" and "representation" entered modern

languages from scholastic Latin, where they may have had overtones that have been lost in translation or eroded over time. Do we know exactly what Aquinas, who had a keen ear for etymologies, had in mind when he said that intelligible species represent things? Did he think that "represent" just means "stand for"? The word is built on a root that means "being" *(esse)*; the *prae-* makes it mean "be before" or, as we say, "be present to"; the *re-*, which means "again," indicates that what is represented is made present by being made to be in a second way, which nicely harmonizes with the Thomistic theme of a second, intentional being that things acquire in being known. As for intelligible species, it seems relevant to note that Jacob Klein tried to suggest the paradox of the Platonic term *eidos* by translating it as "invisible looks," an expression that might also serve to convey something of the oxymoronic flavor of *"species intelligibilis."* In knowledge, then, the "invisible looks" of a visible thing's nature would be said to come to be in a second way, "before" and "in" the mind, in a "likeness" that is both a transparent medium and a qualification of the knower. This kind of rumination, which would try to preserve the residue of opacity and metaphor in Aquinas's language, might lead Thomists to capitulate in the face of accusations of representationalism, but then to reconsider the whole question on their own terms. N&V

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Traité des sacrements. I. Baptême et Sacramentalité. 1. Origine et signification du baptême by Jean-Philippe Revel *(Paris: Cerf, 2004)*, 688 pp.

FATHER JEAN-PHILIPPE REVEL has undertaken, as a crowning achievement of almost fifty years of teaching, the publication of a treatise of sacraments, which will include five volumes that cover the whole of sacramental theology. The present volume is the first of the forthcoming series (5). The general introduction defines the method and situates sacramentology in the realm of theology as a whole, especially in regard to ecclesiology and liturgy. The fundamental choice of Revel is to tackle the classical questions of a treatise *De sacramentis in genere* from and within the study of baptism. By doing so, he wants to avoid treating first the sacraments in general, and then applying deductively this "prefabricated form" (26) to the seven particular sacraments, which risks—as often experienced in the past—missing the originality of each of the sacraments. Revel prefers rather an inductive approach, which allows drawing

the issues addressed by theology from the sources, especially from baptism (27). This does not mean that the Medieval elaboration of the treatise of the sacraments in general loses all of its interest. On the contrary, Revel presents carefully the general framework of this treatise as it appears in the Summa theologiae, suggests some corrections (28–32), and presents his own proposal (32–34). The latter is ordered by four questions: origin (institution, efficient cause); nature (formal causality in particular); destination (final causality, both efficacy and fruit); and subject (extrinsic material causality). The present volume treats the first two questions.

The second important point of this long and rich general introduction concerns manifesting the intrinsic link between sacramental theology and the theology of the Church. Revel takes one step at a time. He presents first the connection between the sacraments and the liturgy (42–46). We have here a small treatise of fundamental liturgy that starts with the principal aspects of the virtue of religion to present Christian worship in the general framework of sanctification. He then addresses the mystery of the Church. Revel shows that the Church itself is a sacrament, by placing the sacraments in the Christian community both as lifegivers and as its most significant acts (67–89). The general introduction ends with a long reflection on ecclesial time (92–121), ordered according to the different stages of salvation. This perspective is very illuminating for the rest of the treatise.

The first part, the institution of baptism (125–245), poses right away the so-called question of Christ's divine institution of the sacraments. The presentation is widely based—and rightly so—on the historical dimension, which dismisses the "naïve" thesis, according to which all the sacraments were entirely, completely, instituted by Christ. However, the testimonies of the magisterial tradition in this regard are not to be overlooked. Rather, they have to be deepened. The author undertakes this task in a very convincing way, to my mind (150 ff.), in two ways. First, he mentions the important role of Christ's miracles that, by their repetition and chosen symbolism, *design . . . a proper meaning of sanctification*. Revel underlines then (153 ff.) the anthropology first assumed by the Word through the Incarnation and then honored in those that he saves. Revel amply develops this "incarnation law," which structures in some way salvation, and which is manifested first in Christ, the primordial sacrament (162). These Christological developments are truly the foundation for any sacramental theology, since they show themselves to be fitting and coherent throughout the history of salvation (177). Revel then tackles explicitly the issue of the institution of baptism (181 ff.). A long study of the prehistory of this rite—both in ancient religions and in Judaism—allows us to grasp the fundamental symbolism assumed by

Christ taking its origin from John's baptism. This long review of the progressive institution of baptism results in the promulgation by the risen Christ of baptism in the Spirit and to the practice of the Church since Pentecost, as described in Acts. These developments highlight the appropriateness of the establishment of the institution from the repetition of Christ's deeds. This thesis is indeed the most illuminating.

The second and last part of the volume is dedicated to the nature of baptism (249–end). It is ordered in three steps: the description of baptism (rite), the nominal definition (the verb *baptizein*, the word *sacrament*, and the word *mystery*), and the essential definition (starting from the notion of *sign*). We will reflect upon this third consideration, not without remarking that the first two give a very accurate classical presentation.

The essential definition (431–622) starts with a long presentation of the Latin tradition, which is rooted in St. Augustine (431–460). From then on, it is the logic of the *sign* on which the whole tradition has been based. This tradition, however, is not strictly homogeneous in the sense that the weakening of symbolic meaning toward the end of the high Middle Ages (eighth to tenth centuries) introduced the scholastic debate between *sign* and *cause*. This allows Revel to enhance the effort accomplished by St. Thomas Aquinas, who, at the end of a long evolution, will put the sign back into its central place (477–92). The speculative analysis of the concept of sign (493–518) is very well developed. It is followed by the study of symbol (520–81)—the most significant contemporary contribution—allowing, in particular, to show both the depth of the meaning and its historical enrichment. Finally, Revel offers an analysis of what has been conventionally called, not without risk of misanderstanding, *sacramental hylemorphism*. Starting from a precise analysis of Aquinas's major text on this matter (*ST* III, q. 60, a. 4–8), he shows the profound unity, which is a sacrament as a compound of gestures and words. From this doctrine, classical after all, but purified from the logical rigidity added by a certain scholastic tradition (597), Revel offers a deepening based on E. Schillebeeck's observations. The fundamental intuition is kept with very meaningful comments, but carefully corrected in order to better distinguish the Christian sacraments from both "natural" and Old Testament rituality. This is also an occasion for Revel to enhance the stimulating aspects of Dom O. Casel's work for the sacramental renewal of the twentieth century (611–15).

Given the abundance of materials treated by Revel, it is impossible to comment on each of his developments individually. We will rather attempt to give a global impression in the most precise way possible.

As for the form, first of all, the book is very well-written. It reads easily and uses precise and accessible language. This easily understood treatise is

written both for an academic audience and more widely for a cultivated public. The book reveals the talent of a teacher gifted for pedagogy, as is apparent on every page. The mass of documents is treated with great ease; the reader is never overwhelmed with an avalanche of facts, footnotes, and developments that could make the text heavy, even though the inquiries of the sources are well-documented and critical. This expose is the work of a master, who goes to the positive sources, shows the continuity as well as the shifts, proposes solutions, invites us to enter into the meaning of the evolution, and incessantly ties the parts together in one coherent whole.

As a matter of fact, we note that the theological method, clearly manifest and justified from the beginning (9–13), demonstrates its aptness and fruitfulness throughout the book. It is a properly scientific theology. It constantly gathers its revealed data with the resources of disciplines including history, exegesis, and patristic studies (positive theology or theology of sources). It then penetrates them with a profound intelligibility, thanks to properly speculative reflection, that has found, manifested, and exploited all the resources offered by the tradition that follows St. Thomas. Revel demonstrates the faith's profound intelligibility in its actual state, while suggesting often very pertinent developments yet to come. The last word is not pronounced, of course, on a subject as vast as the sacraments, that is not the intention of Revel. But he does present the matter in its fundamental architecture, and studies each of its parts as well as the relation that unites them. In this way, all the specialized inquiries that are evoked by such a perspective can receive their own place and the necessary clarification. From their side, they can contribute to the enrichment of all matter. This method allows a permanent development of the theological effort. This is the first important quality of the book to have recalled in mind and to have illustrated this very way of doing theology.

Revel's major methodological option is to present the sacramentality of salvific acts starting with baptism. This is a justified choice (25–33) that we would like to discuss. We in no way contest the fact that the general treatise of St. Thomas needs to be continually thought out with personal investment. On the one hand, the deductive method proper to the *Summa theologiae* bears a risk—from which we think that St. Thomas knew how to protect himself—of an excessive logical constriction of theology. The danger is—as Revel rightly underlines—to lose sight of the very analogical character of the sacraments by restrictively arranging them in a genus of which they would be too closely related species. It is necessary then, not to replace the deductive approach, but to unite it with the more inductive approach that offers its own resources. This being the case, the

debate exists concerning the starting point. Revel has chosen baptism, as we already mentioned. This permits him to follow the order—which is not fortuitous—of the sacraments of initiation in order to show what is essential to sacramentality, and to be able then to understand better the other sacraments. This approach is legitimate and fruitful. But is it the only one? Moreover, is it the best one? Let us discuss this point.

We consider that it would have been fruitful to ask these questions first and then to make a proposition. However, one choice seems obvious for Revel. The treatise of sacraments belongs *"inside the treatise on baptism from which it has been taken"* (26). We readily accept a historical basis for this claim. But as we will now demonstrate, we think that another approach is possible and perhaps even better.

If we perceive sacramentality as the "structuring law" of the economy of salvation, we should start from the mystery of Christ, the fundamental sacrament, and continue with the ecclesial sacrament. These two sacramental realities are united like the head to the body or the spouse to the bride. They accomplish the salvation of humankind through the particular sacraments. Revel does not ignore this (cf. 78 ff. for the Church, 162 f. for Christ), even though he presents this matter in a more scattered way and the recent developments on the sacramentality of the Church are not sufficiently taken in account. The order preferred by Revel for the particular sacraments starts with the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, and, then in this perspective, the other sacraments. It is an order of generation that shows the progressive generation of Christian qualities. But this generation presupposes the generative sacramental realities, namely Christ and the Church.

There is, however, another order, an order of perfection, which mentions first the most complete element according to which the other elements are arranged. This order puts forward the Eucharist, the most perfect sacrament, the *Holy Sacrament*. What is the nature of this Eucharistic perfection? First of all, the Eucharist is the major place where we find the combined presence of the two primordial sacraments—Christ, the founding sacrament, and the Church, the founded sacrament. The Eucharist is the fruit of their common action, as the source and the end of the other sacraments. It is the Eucharist that, out of its own perfection, nourishes the other six sacred acts and finalizes them. The sacramental "structure" is accomplished perfectly and therefore interpreted the more precisely in the *Holy Sacrament*. It is only through the Eucharist that we can grasp the other sacraments that do not reach the same perfection. To our mind, we cannot move, according to an order of intelligibility (from the more perfect to the less perfect), when we move from baptism toward

the Eucharist, but rather the other way round. The perspective chosen by Revel puts the receiving subject first, who will determine the theological significance of the other sacraments, through his birth to grace and the progressive accomplishment of his vocation. The other perspective, starting from the Eucharist, privileges the study of sacraments starting from their fundamental actors, namely Christ and the Church. It then demonstrates how sacramental beings enact salvation in a sacramental way and how they model the receiving subject on themselves.

The sacramental "structure" of the Eucharist is the most completely formed in its three instances (sign only, sign and reality, reality only). On this account, the Eucharist serves to explain very clearly the sacramentality of the particular sacraments. This ternary structure is central and has to be applied, analogically of course, in every sacrament. This task will not always be easy, especially regarding the intermediate reality. But this is a task to accomplish. Even in the Eucharist's specificity in this regard (the intermediary reality is in the signs before being in the receiving subject in order that it can be received), this sacrament is most illuminating: The "real presence" is the highest expression of salvation in its continuous self offering (this presence lasts as long as the sign that expresses it lasts) and in its power to attract us. In some way, we find in any particular sacrament this intermediate instance, which is the continuous offering of salvation. This offer is permanent, inherent to the subject, a real sign of paschal mystery accomplished by Christ, the true assistance promised by the Spirit, an ultimate disposition to receive the grace given for Easter and to be accomplished by the subject. This intermediate instance can be clearly found in the sacrament of the Church (it connects unfailingly the social reality of the mystery and the theological final reality). Starting with baptism, in this point of view, runs the risk of delaying too long, until the end, the consideration of this intermediary reality (the character in this case), and for an aspect that, although historically grasped first, is not the most determinant (the case of baptism received in unfavorable conditions, cf. 34). The baptismal character is just as important and necessary in the sacrament when received with the best possible dispositions.

On the other hand, the Eucharist shows very well the temporality of the whole life of grace. It focuses on typically Christian time (good remarks on 93 f.), which is the time of the acquired perfection in its source and its communication. Man cannot add anything to the accomplished Christological perfection, if not to add himself as a member of the Body of Christ that is the Church. This idea of an acquired perfection at its source, which communicates itself, makes man, as the subject of sacraments, particularly receptive to this sacramentality that sacramen-

talizes him. What we mean is that baptism, if it comes from paschal mystery, gives the quality of being a member of the Church, and it lets the baptized person enter into this paschal logic of the intimate eucharistic life of the Bridegroom and the Bride that precedes him and attracts him to itself.

The fact that the usual liturgical place for the celebration of sacraments is the celebration of the Eucharist confirms what has already been said. This shows that the paschal mystery of the union between Christ and the Church is the "context" of Christian life. We distinguish between the sacraments as being (Christ and the Church) and the sacraments as actions (baptism, confirmation, etc.). The Eucharist is at the junction of the two: It is the presence of Christ and the Church according to a unique realism (being) in view of the unique source of action (Christ's sacrifice) and end (the sacrifice of Christians in Christ's sacrifice), which accomplishes our salvation. The other six sacraments exist in order to enter into this redemptive "logic," to come back to it after being drawn away by sin, to provide ministers for it, and to model one's whole life on it. Moreover, the Eucharistic mystery allows us to grasp the distinction between objective redemption (Christ's deeds) and subjective redemption (the act through which grace is given to each person). Though illuminating from the standpoint of the dispositions of the receiving subject, the Eucharistic mystery (from Revel's approach) risks being seen as a repetition of Christ's very action. This is wrong, since it is always the act of objective redemption that reaches us today—Christ's paschal mystery in the Eucharist—which is "spread" through the other sacraments according to their specific meaning.

These remarks are present in the volume, but they may not be sufficiently brought forward. When he presents the unfolding of Incarnation (165–69), Revel shows very well that all the actions in Christ's life are oriented toward Easter. When the mystery of Easter has been accomplished, it is Christ who communicates himself in and through the Eucharist. Therefore, the Eucharist represents Christ's Easter in men's lives in order to model them on this mystery. Here is the meaning and the purpose of all the other sacraments. Thus, like Christ's life, the lives of Christians—and even more so the life of the Christian community, the Body of Christ, who forms with his a single mystical Person—can be modeled on the Eucharist. In short, the fact of considering the Eucharist first because of its excellence reveals maybe better the mystery of salvation; it also allows us to consider according to this center the individual appropriation perspective that is served by the other sacraments, but always in the perspective of the accomplishment of the Christ-Church mystery in the receiving subject.

If he would have chosen this perspective, according to which the Eucharist is the real and explanatory center of the sacraments as a whole, would the treatise on sacraments have been deeply changed? We do not think so. Indeed, the Christological and eccesiological developments would have been more ample and better connected, but the order chosen by Revel to examine the issues could have remained the same. The first chapter would still have treated the question of the origin, since the institution of the sacraments is the extension of the developments on the mystery of Christ and the Church. The second step, treating the nature of the sacraments, would have tackled the question of sign concerning the Eucharist and would have allowed us to grasp in its perfect realization the realism expressed by the sacrament, and so forth for the finality (the instrumental causality would have linked together the Christological and the sacramental issues), and for the subject of the sacraments (communion as integral part of the sacrament).

Apart from these observations, it has to be said that this *Treatise of Sacraments* is a very remarkable work that fills a long and deplorable gap. The courteous but clear discussion of other less satisfying proposals (518–19, 531–32, 637) shows even better the relevance of this beautiful and fruitful theology of salvation. We wait impatiently for the next volumes. N&V

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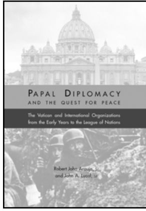

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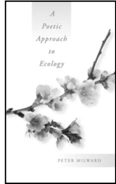

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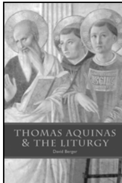

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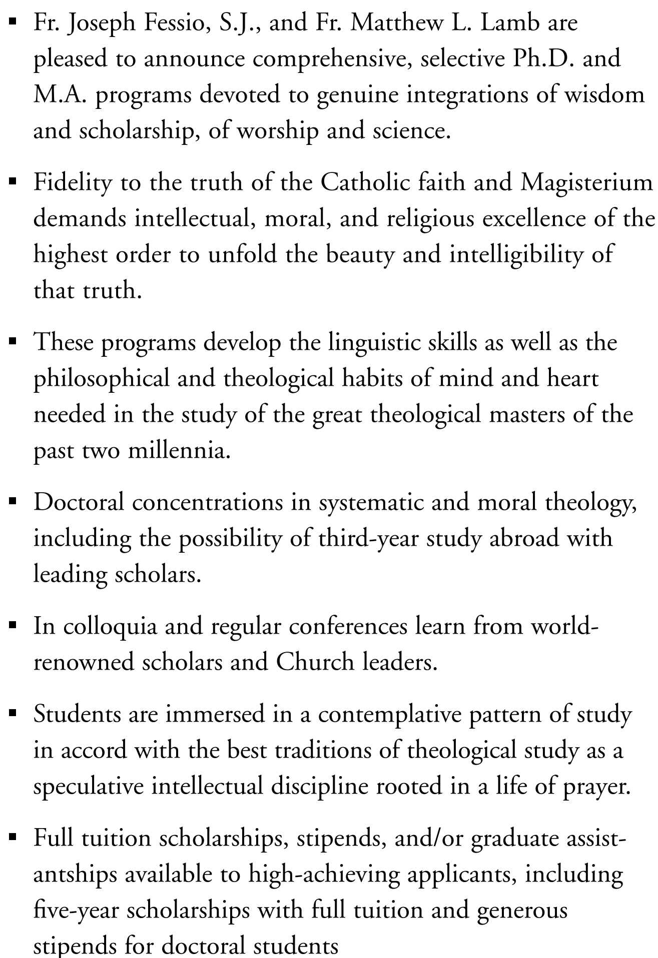

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