# DESIRE FOR HAPPINESS AND THE COMMANDMENTS IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF *VERITATIS SPLENDOR**

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"THE DESIRE for happiness" and "the commandments" seem to constitute two irreducible alternatives, representing a contrariety that separates the classical conception of morality from the modern. The choice that Catholic post-Tridentine handbook theology made to remove the treatise on happiness from moral theology and to focus on the commandments appears unavoidable, even to contemporary moral theology. The perspective of the desire for happiness, which is thought to bind the ethical imperative to an empirical element that is indeterminate, subjective, and, above all, self-interested, has been eliminated from the ambit of moral thinking as incapable of guaranteeing the absolute and unconditional character of morality. This has been achieved by means of a philosophical critique[1] that appears not to have lost currency and persuasiveness. Moreover, from a theological point of view, the perspective of the desire for happiness seems unwittingly to risk turning God, the end of all, into the means of "my" self-realization.[2] Faithfulness to Biblical inspiration, rather than to an Aristotelian schema, seems necessarily to privilege the commandments as the original form of morality.[3]

* Translated by Margaret Harper McCarthy.

[1] Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981), 7-43.

[2] Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Homo creatus est," in *Homo creatus est,* vol. 5 of *Skizzen zur Theologie* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1986), 9-26.

[3] Cf. G. Angelini, *Il senso orientato al sapere: L'etica come questione teologica,* in G. Colombo, ed., *L'evidenza e la fede* (Milan, 1988), 387-443, esp. 414-19.

It is therefore surprising to note how the Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, in its evocative rereading of the dialogue between Jesus and the young rich man (in Mt. 19:16-21), reintroduces the category of the "desire for happiness," characterizing it as proper content for moral inquiry. The Encyclical also, however, associates this perspective with that of the commandments when it cites the response of Jesus, who, after having invited the rich man to turn his gaze toward the One who alone is good, directs the young man to observe the Decalogue. This is not simply a juxtaposition of different and mutually incompatible perspectives. While it is not obliged to provide a theoretical and systematic justification, the papal document does solicit attempts to grasp the constitutive connections that would provide for an integration of these two categories; this is specifically the task of the moral theologian. Thus, when the Encyclical suggests that the question about happiness—as the question "*about the full meaning of life*," and as prior to the question "about rules to be followed"—is the "echo of a call from God who is the origin and end of man's life" (n. 7), it situates itself within the perspective of the renewal to which the Second Vatican Council called moral theology, which, in its theoretical exposition, will have the task of illustrating "the lofty vocation which the faithful have received in Christ, the only response fully capable of satisfying the desire of the human heart" (n. 7).[4]

This article intends to accept the invitation of the Encyclical and the Council by thematizing the relation between the desire for happiness and the commandments. Starting from the indications of the first chapter of *Veritatis splendor*, moral theology is called to establish this relation at a fundamental level. I shall develop my reflection on this theme in three stages. In the first place, I shall present an examination of the three terms at issue (desire, happiness, and commandments) with the intention of grasping the similarities and dissimilarities between them. In the second place I shall take up the global context within which *Veritatis splendor* situates the relation between these terms, and which is provided by the link between freedom and truth.

[4] Cf. The Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam totius*, n. 16.

Finally, the specific theme of the first chapter of the Encyclical will be put into relief by displaying the novel points of departure of the framework it presents.

## I. Preliminary Consideration of the Terms of the Problem

### *"Desiderium"*

Already the ancients associated the term "desire" with *sidera*, the stars.[5] What does desire have to do with the stars? The original semantic environment seems to be the sacred language of the oracles, hence, of an anxious search in the stars for some sign of assurance that that for which the heart hopes will be fulfilled. With respect to the verb *considerare*, which has the same root, desire would therefore be a moment of disappointment, the downward glance of a gaze originally turned toward the stars. In this way the characteristic ambiguity of desire may be appreciated. On the one hand there results a compromise of its original yearning for the heavens (the infinite), hence a restless wandering among earthly objects, unable to find in them either an adequate satisfaction of its aspiration or a sure sign that the hope inscribed in one's heart will come true (this wandering has rightly been called the "nomadic character of desire").[6] On the other hand, one can observe that desire, although poised towards the finite, continues to bear within itself the memory of, and the nostalgia for, the infinite: in every one of our desires this *Sehnsucht* for the heavens remains as a secret yearning, never attained in the finite.

The category of desire, therefore, shows itself to be anthropologically revelatory of the creaturely indigence constitutive of the human being, a being thrown into the world with the original

[5] Cf. A. Ernout - A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine: Histoire des mots* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1932), 897; *Thesaurus linguae latinae,* vol. V, pars I, D (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1909-34), 697-710. The ancients to whom one should refer are: Paul. Fest., 75; Prisc., Gramm. II, 274, 19; Isid., Orig. 10, 76. The original meaning deduced from the etymology is: "amissum vel absentem requirere," "libido absentem videndi."

[6] F. Botturi, *Desiderio e verità: Per un'antropologia cristiana nell'età secolarizzata* (Milan, 1985), 124-26.

promise that his thirst for the infinite will be quenched, but who inevitably runs up against disappointment. If the reality that man encounters awakens the promise, it also painfully denies it, so that in the face of desire one is obliged to make a fundamental choice of attitude. One must either affirm and confirm the native promise of the heart, notwithstanding disappointments, maintaining an openness to the possibility of fulfillment (which is not brought about by any human "doing"); or one must renounce the promise of the infinite, and adapt to the finite. The reasonableness of the former attitude is evident in the fact that it does not entail a rejection or negation—as does the latter—of any element of human experience. Above all it does not require one to censure the most interesting and decisive element of the heart: the promise.[7] If, on the one hand, faithfulness to that promise requires the affirmation of the existence of an answer adequate to our desire, and if, on the other hand, realism excludes that such an answer be situated within the horizon of human doing, then it follows that the answer can only be given in the form of a gift from Another. The fulfillment of desire can only be believed and awaited, not projected and constructed as some work to be done.[8]

The great poet Dante has expressed with unsurpassable verses desire's original tension as well as its temptation to turn in on itself:

> Everyone confusedly apprehends a good in which the mind may be at rest and desires it, so that each strives to reach it, and if the love is sluggish that draws you to see it or gain it, this terrace, after due repentance, torments you for that. Other good there is which does not make men happy; it is not happiness, it is not the good Essence, the fruit and root of every good.[9]

[7] These anthropological perspectives are evocatively outlined by L. Giussani in his writings, particularly in *Morality: Memory and Desire,* trans. K. D. Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986) and in *The Religious Sense*, trans. J. Zucchi (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990).

[8] Cf. Angelini, *Il senso orientato*, 416.

[9] Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia, Purgatorio*, Canto XVII, vv. 127-35: "Ciascun confusamente un bene apprende / nel qual si quieti l'animo, e disira: / per che di giugner lui ciascun contende. / Se lento amore in lui veder vi tira, / o a lui acquistar, questa cornice, / dopo giusto pentér, ve ne martira / Altro ben è che non fa l'uomo felice; / non è felicità, non è la bona / essenza, d'ogni ben frutto e radice." The English transla-

The aspiration for total fulfillment dwells, in a confused manner, within the restless searching of the human heart, a heart that desires in every thing loved that final end that alone grants happiness. The ascent of purgatory is essentially the purification of desire because, freed from bonds of limited and apparent satisfaction ("pure and ready to mount to the stars"),[10] it can be assumed into the same movement by which God moves the universe; so, finally, it can there find its peace, contemplating "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars."[11]

From this comes the need for an education in desire. Such an education, by renouncing the immediate appeasement in the finite, once again orients the gaze and the tension of the heart towards the heavens, towards the stars; the heart thereby recuperates its global horizon, the fullness of satisfaction. In order to be saved, then, desire needs to entrust itself to a promise of fulfillment, and to find a personal reference point that, in accompanying desire, allows for its purification.

*Happiness*

Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, in a classical study of the term "happiness,"[12] has shown its extreme semantical complexity. There seem, however, to be two principal conceptions of happiness that he brings to the fore. In the first place there is the modern conception ("happiness"[13]), which he interprets as satisfaction with one's own life, taken as a whole. What is in question here is a subjective perspective, in which the one, unquestionable

tion given here and throughout this article is that by John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). I owe the suggestion of this citation once again to L. Giussani, *Si può vivere così? Uno strano approccio all'esistenza cristiana* (Milano, 1994), 67, in the context of a particularly interesting meditation on freedom (62-79). For a study on *desìo* in Dante's work, see M. Camisasca, *Riflessioni de medio corso* (Forlì, 1994), 19-33.

[10] *Purgatorio, Canto* XXXIII, v. 145: "puro e disposto a salire alle stelle."

[11] *Paradiso*, Canto XXXIII, v. 143-5: "Ma già volgeva il mio dìsìo e il velle, / sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa, / l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle" (but now my desire and will, like a wheel that spins with even motion, were revolved by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars).

[12] W. Tatarkiewicz, *Analysis of Happiness,* trans. Edward Rothert and Danuta Zielinskn (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1976), 1-36.

[13] The author employs the English word here.—TRANS.

criterion for happiness is the judgment of the subject, who does not therefore have to distinguish between true and false happiness. The single criterion for this definition of happiness is psychological: the saturation of desire. In the second place, there is the classical conception (*eudaimonìa* or *beatitudo*), which he takes as the perfection of life in the objective sense. In this view of things it is not only possible but also necessary to refer to objective and rational criteria in order to establish what is true happiness.

Saint Augustine, in the *De Trinitate*, offers a definition of that which constitutes happiness in the objective sense: "A happy man is one who has all that he wants and, at the same time, wants nothing bad."[14] The two elements complete each other, and serve to define happiness as the correspondence of the tending of the subject with the presence of its proportionate object. For happiness, in fact, the state of subjective satisfaction (having all that one wants) is not enough; rectitude of the will (not wanting anything bad) is also necessary. And here it is the object that decides: "it is the good that causes the happiness of the happy man." For the Doctor of Hippo happiness has, therefore, an objective character: one can distinguish between true and false happiness on the basis of the object of the will, the Good.

For his part, Saint Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa*, places the criterion for the determination of true happiness within the subject: "To desire happiness is nothing other than to desire the satisfaction of the will."[15] He then affirms, however, that only the true good can satisfy the will *fully*. Here he recovers the totality of the horizon of desire, tied to the will (i.e., the appetite guided by reason), which preserves its openness to the infinite. For Thomas, too, happiness has an objective character, for it is connected with the goodness of the object; on just this basis the goodness of the subject and his happiness is defined. Beatitude has an objective meaning (*finis cuius*) and in this sense is identified with God, the *Summum Bonum* and final end. But beatitude also has a subjective meaning (*finis quo*) and in this sense it coin-

[14] St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII, 4, 7-9, 12.

[15] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 5, a. 8.

cides with an activity of the subject.[16] To be truly happy one must become the kind of person who loves the good, wherein true happiness is found, and in this way become himself good.[17]

At this juncture surfaces the theme of the structural disproportion between desire, which animates human action, and its object. Desire cannot be fulfilled by the possible objects of action: it is made for the stars. As Maurice Blondel has pointed out, between the *volonté voulante* (willing will) and the *volonté voulue* (willed will) there exists a structural disproportion,[18] which action attempts in vain to overcome. The desire for happiness, i.e., the desire for the complete fulfillment of the will in its openness, the secret spring of every action, must be guided by reason. At the same time, however, the truth about the Good is always beyond any rationalistic pre-comprehension that would attempt, prior to our actions, to seize it in a concept. It is therefore necessary to entrust oneself to *praxis*, to live action with a trusting "pre-sentiment" of complete fulfillment. Action seems to have to function as reason's guide in its tending towards its proportionate object. But action so understood takes the form of a practical "entrustment" to a promise, in order to receive its fulfillment as a "gift."

### *The Commandments*

A conflict of principle between desire for happiness and the commandments is necessarily implied by the legalistic conception of modern moral thinking[19] and by the correlative subjectivist conception of happiness. The commandments, even if

[16] Cf. *Summa Theologiae,* I-II, q. 1, a. 8.

[17] Cf. P. J. Wadell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Mahwah, 1992), 44-62.

[18] M. Blondel, *L'action (1893): Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique,* 3rd ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), 132.

[19] Cf. G. Grisez, "Legalism, Moral Truth and Pastoral Practice," in T. J. Herron, ed., *The Catholic Priest as Moral Teacher and Guide* (San Francisco, 1990), 97-113. For a historical judgment on the question of legalism in the post-tridentine handbook tradition, see L. Vereecke, *Da Guglielmo d'Ockham a Sant'Alfonso de Liguori: Saggi di storia della teologia morale moderna (1300-1787)* (Rome, 1990) and S. Pinckaers, *Les sources de la morale chrétienne: Sa méthode, son contenu, son histoire* (Fribourg, 1985), 258-82; English translation (ET) by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 254-79.

reabsorbed into the autonomy of an interior norm, continue to be opposed to desire, now reduced to the empirical sphere of the passions (Kant). This contraposition is not, however, the necessary consequence of classical ethics, provided this ethics is not interpreted in a "rationalistic" manner.

In the ethics of classical inspiration, and in particular in Thomistic ethics, the concept of *lex* is secondary and subordinate to that of *virtus*.[20] The law, which maintains an irreducible character of exteriority, but which at the same time is recognized in its intrinsic rationality, has as its aim the guidance of men towards virtue.[21] As such the law is reformulated and is understood to have as its finality the education of desire. In fact, we might say that virtue is desire educated to see the stars: appetite molded by reason, which maintains its intentional openness to the final end. Therefore, the commandments exist in function of an education of desire. So, on the one hand, they posit the external limits of its immediate satisfaction, in order to save its total openness; on the other hand, they forge its aspirations in conformity with their authentic ends. The commandments deny our urges towards partial satisfaction so as to protect our secret and ultimate longing. Impeding the reduction of desire or its collapse into itself, the commandments guide desire towards the stars.

The priority of virtue over the commandment is a decisive characteristic of the "ethics of the agent-subject" or "ethics of the first person" vis-à-vis the "ethics of the observer" or "ethics of the third person."[22] For the former, the agent subject is at the center,

[20] Cf. G. Abba', *Lex et virtus: Studi sull'evoluzione della dottrina morale di San Tommaso d'Aquino* (Rome, 1983). See also two other recent interpretations of Thomist ethics: E. Schockenhoff, *Bonum hominis: Die anthropologischen und theologischen Grundlagen der Tugendethik des Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, 1987); M. Rhonheimer, *Praktische Vernunft und Vernünftigkeit der Praxis: Handlungstheorie bei Thomas von Aquin in ihrer Entstehung aus dem Problemkontext der aristotelischen Ethik* (Berlin: Akademik Verlag, 1994).

[21] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* I-II, q. 107, a. 2: "Finis vero cuiuslibet legis est ut homines efficiantur iusti et virtuosi."

[22] This shift of the principal point of view according to which ethics is elaborated and which indicates a decisive fracture between ancient and medieval ethics on the one hand and modern ethics on the other, has been articulated by S. Hampshire in his study of 1949, reprinted in A. MacIntyre and S. Hauerwas, eds., *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983) and by E. Pincoffs in his "Quandary Ethics," *Mind* 80 (1971): 552-71.

with his aspiration towards the good and towards happiness; for the latter, an external regulation of behavior, by means of norms and precepts, is at the center. *Veritatis splendor* explicitly makes the former framework its own when it affirms that in order to grasp the object that morally specifies action it is "necessary to place oneself in *the perspective of the acting person*" (n. 78). Moreover, this is also the orientation of its first chapter, which emphasizes as the origin of morality the question the young man puts to Jesus : "Master, what good thing must I do to obtain eternal life?" Precisely by starting with this question *Veritatis splendor* reintroduces the desire for happiness as the original experience and foundational principle of morality, within which the commandments, in their turn, find their proper place and significance.

## II. The Global Context of *Veritatis splendor*: The Connection between Freedom and Truth

*Veritatis splendor* situates the problem of the relationship between desire (for happiness) and the commandments within the more comprehensive thematic of the *connection between freedom and truth* (nn. 4 and 84), whereas that which connotes the specifically theological dimension of the problem, namely, the connection between faith and morality, is set in the background. This framework, centered on freedom, is characterized as "modern," for within it are gathered the most debated questions of contemporary moral reflection (n. 31). Nevertheless, freedom is reunited to truth from within (n. 34) as the condition of its authenticity. In order to grasp the significance of this contextualization, so decisive for the Encyclical's perspective, it is necessary to consider the conception of freedom and truth proposed by the pontifical document.

### *Truth*

The truth of which it speaks is not the object of a merely "speculative" knowledge, in which reason alone is at play. It is rather a matter of a *practical truth:* a truth on which one's personal life depends, a truth that is not only to be contemplated,

but to be done, and that therefore is given to be known only in the form of a "re-cognition," i.e., only insofar as one's freedom is engaged with it.[23] In this regard, Saint Thomas Aquinas speaks of a *veritas vitae*[24] as the complete correspondence, both interior and exterior, of the whole of man's being with divine truth; the individual virtues bring this correspondence to fruition within the specific ambits of their competence. At issue here is a principle of general rectitude, which sustains and grounds the whole of human existence, in conformity with the divine law.[25] Man assents to moral truth only by virtue of his freedom and with the whole of his being, which must be shaped by the virtues: "the virtuous man judges everything rightly, and in each thing the truth appears to him . . . he being the canon and measure of them."[26] It is precisely the decisive function accorded to the appetite in regard to moral knowledge that characterizes the classical position of Aristotle and Saint Thomas Aquinas, and that differentiates them from every intellectualistic reduction of virtue to a merely executive role.[27]

*Veritatis splendor* discusses this theme in reference to conscience (n. 64), recalling the indispensable connaturality required for the knowledge of the concrete good and citing Jn. 3:21: "He who does what is true comes to the light." But also in regard to the final end, happiness, the decisive criterion for its determination cannot but be *practical reason* (cf. n. 40).[28] It seems to me

[23] In this regard, see my *La conoscenza morale: Linee di reflessione sul Commento di San Tommaso all'Etica Nicomachea* (Rome, 1987). On the subject of conscience see also E. Schockenhoff, *Das umstrittene Gewissen: Eine theologische Grundlegung* (Mainz, 1990), 115-33.

[24] *In IV Sent.*, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1; *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 16, a. 4, ad 3; II-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 3; II-II, q. 109, a. 3, ad 3. Contrary to E. Schockenhoff's argument in *Das umstrittene Gewissen* (90-91, 129-33), the *veritas vitae* is not for Thomas set against the *veritas doctrinae* as a merely self-referenial factor of personal authenticity. Life is "true" when it brings about that to which it is ordained by the divine intellect and reflects therefore that fundamental divine truth, which is at the heart of the truth, be it the truth of life, or the truth of doctrine.

[25] Cf. R. Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 21.

[26] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 4, 1113a, 29-35.

[27] Cf. Cessario, *The Moral Virtues*, 79-90.

[28] Cf. Abba', *Felicità, vita buona e virtù*, 45.

that the Encyclical acknowledges this practical connotation of the decisive theme of truth when it notes that the moral question is a question "*about the full meaning of life*" (n. 7). This signifies quite a different thing from a purely theoretical or rationalistic truth; it expresses, rather, the relation established between a particular action and the whole. An action is meaningful only insofar as it becomes intelligible; and this is achieved when it is connected with the ultimate end of existence, and therefore with reality as a whole, understood as the expression of a divinely sapiential design. The moral question cannot be limited to "moralistic" terms, i.e., as the mere conformity of an action with a rule. Rather, it must be viewed more radically as a question about the identity of the person (*veritas vitae*), about the link that connects his action to his end, which gives meaning to his life. "There exists a connection between the moral good and the fulfillment of his own destiny" (n. 8). In this tending towards truth, where what is in play is the meaning of one's life as a whole, even knowledge is attained only through the whole person, who must be in harmony with the good, and who, in the engagement of his freedom, risks by entrusting himself.

*Freedom*

The relativity of freedom to truth, according to the attestation of the gospel "the truth will make you free" (Jn. 8:32), also necessarily implies a reinterpretation of the modern conception of freedom. Freedom is not "indifference,"[29] but love for the true good. The theme of the desire for happiness is integrated into morality as the original and constitutive inclination of freedom, but this is oriented in turn by the judgment of reason. Reason regards the desire for happiness not as an empty psychological formula left up to subjective interpretation. Rather, desire is viewed as the tension towards the ultimate end of man's aspiring, guided by reason.[30] Desire, once it is brought fully back into the dynamic of freedom and morality, is not a naturalistic passion

[29] Cf. Pinckaers, *Les sources de la morale chrétienne,* 329-54; ET, 327-53.

[30] Cf. M. Rhonheimer, *La prospettiva della morale: Fondamenti dell'etica filosofica* (Rome, 1994), 45-49.

of only empirical and psychological relevance, but the conscious openness to the fullness of the horizon of the Good. At the root of all diffidence about desire and the natural inclinations is perhaps the prejudice of a reductivistic interpretation that places them at the level of merely sensible experience. What is decisive, therefore, is the rediscovery of their properly spiritual dimension: The desire for happiness is the expression of our *natura spiritualis* in its spontaneous aspiration for the true and the good.[31] Such a nature, theologically understood as a manifestation of the image of God, far from leading one to the particularism of sensible experience, opens the person to the universality of the spirit.

The *truth concerning the good* thus mediates between desire and its full satisfaction, between native aspiration and its final fulfillment. Freedom is animated by an aspiration restored and maintained in its original openness: the commandments and the virtues have this purpose.

In conclusion, it may be useful to touch on the thesis of the philosopher Karol Wojtyla concerning the *truthful integration of desire*,[32] which can perhaps be identified as the underlying philosophical background to the Encyclical, permitting us to grasp the meaning of this thematic. The freedom of man is made for the gift of self to the other; in this gift even desire is integrated, which, by submitting itself to the truth, agrees to acknowledge the primacy of the other and so to realize itself ecstatically. At issue here is a gradual process that assumes instincts, impulses, emotions, and sentiments, but that can bring about their integration only within the truth. The reference to the truth, in fact, conditions the authentic freedom of self-determination and permits a transcendence with respect to various forms of determinism. The virtues have a decisive role in this process, for they are precisely the formation of desire in the light of the openness to the truth.

[31] Servais Pinckaers has opportunely attracted attention to this in his *La morale catholique* (Paris, 1991), 71-88.

[32] K. Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 114-18; *The Acting Person*, trans. A. Potocki (London: D. Reidel, 1979), 231-34.

## III. Novel Points in the First Chapter of the Encyclical

In the first chapter of *Veritatis splendor* the connection between desire for happiness and the commandments is grasped in the concrete dynamic of the encounter and dialogue between the rich young man and Jesus (Mt. 19:16-22). This original perspective allows certain novel points to emerge—points that are important for the renewal of moral theology at its very foundation.

### *A) The Moral Life as "Encounter" with Jesus Christ*

The moral path is grasped at its genesis as an "encounter" with Jesus (n. 7), an encounter in which the desire of the young interlocutor (but in him also human beings of all ages) is aroused with all of its force, as aspiration for eternal life, for the "fulfillment of his own destiny" (n. 8). It is on account of the "attractiveness of the person of Jesus," a promise intuited in his words and in his actions, that the question is reawakened with all of its openness.

In this way man's ethical dimension is situated within the concrete context of a personal relationship, a relationship that develops dialogically in history. From this is derived an emphasis on the fundamental value for moral theology of categories such as "vocation," "covenant," "promise," "trust," "companionship," "hope," and "gift." Such categories are well represented in the Sacred Scriptures, but for centuries have been obscured by the systematic moral theology of the handbooks; indeed, they have remained irrelevant even in the elaboration of post-conciliar normative ethics. The concentration on the commandments, or on norms, has favored a reductive focusing of the debate on the autonomy of moral reason, which has overshadowed and rendered essentially pleonastic all reference to revelation and, in particular, to its contents.[33] The reinsertion of these contents into

[33] Cf. W. Kerber, "Limiti della morale biblica," in K. Demmer and B. Schüller, eds., *Fede cristiana e agire morale* (Assisi, 1980), 129-43; J. Endres, "Genügt eine rein biblische Moraltheologie?" *Studia Moralia* 2 (1965); J. Fuchs, "Christian Morality: Biblical Orientation and Human Evaluation," *Gregorianum* 67/4 (1986): 745-63. For a panoramic view of the current debates and problematics in fundamental moral theology, see my *Morale: tra crisi e rinnovamento: Gli assoluti morali, l'opzione fondamentale, la formazione della coscienza* (Milan, 1993), 7-39.

moral theology, under the auspices of *Optatam totius*, n. 16, requires not so much a reproposal of Holy Writ according to the modes of persuasive or "narrative" discourse (so fashionable today) as a fundamental reflection, on the basis of a phenomenology of the ethical experience of man as such, that grasps its transcendental categories in their structural connections[34] and, above all, that provides a properly theological hermeneutic, in reference to Christ. It is, in fact, in Him, in the encounter with Him, "true light which illumines everyone" (Jn. 1:9, cited in *Veritatis splendor*, n. 1), that the solution can be found for the problem in theological anthropology so decisive today for moral theology, the problem concerning the relation between nature and grace.[35]

In the encounter with Jesus, desire is saved from its withdrawal into itself and lifted up towards a goal, in which one can find fulfillment in a form heretofore unknown. Christian revelation proposes a surprising and superabundant fulfillment of the desire for happiness; and this resolves the paradoxical tension between the necessity of finding an answer for living and acting reasonably and the impossibility of full satisfaction of this desire in this world. To linger with the metaphor that, beginning with the etymology of desire, accompanies the thread of our reflection, we could say that the stars have come to earth in order to encounter and save the errant and vagrant desire of man.[36]

At the same time, this encounter so full of promise, which occurred as an unexpected and unthinkable grace, demands the reformulation of the young man's original question. If one's expectation is to be fulfilled, one must accept that it be surpassed. From out of the sphere of human "doing," Jesus invites man to turn his gaze to the fount of goodness, to Him who, being the absolute Good, constitutes the final end of action. Only in total and disinterested love for this end does moral initiative and

[34] Cf. Angelini, *Il senso orientato al sapere*, 420-25.

[35] Cf. the articles of R. Tremblay on *Veritatis splendor:* "Le Christ et la morale selon l'Encyclique de Jean Paul II *Veritatis splendor*," *Lateranum* 60 (1994): 29-66; "Jésus le Christ, vraie lumière qui éclaire tout homme: Réflexions sur l'Encyclique de Jean Paul II *Veritatis splendor*," *Studia Moralia* 31 (1993): 383-90.

[36] Cf. St. Leo the Great, *Sermo XXIII, III in Nativitate Domini*, 3: *PL* 54, 199-203.

the question of eternal life make sense. In the encounter with Jesus, the young man discovers the depth of his own desire; on the other hand, he is invited to let that desire be reformed through education, by means of the commandments and the following of Christ. In fact, the Encyclical underlines the fact that the dynamic of the dialogue, beginning with the ardor of love for the absolute and final good, continues to recall the commandments, those "paths" towards the fulfillment of the desire for eternal life, and then the following of the very person of Jesus (discipleship), after having abandoned everything for him.

*B) The Christological Dimension of the Commandments*

"From the very lips of Jesus, the new Moses, man is once again given the commandments of the Decalogue" (n. 12). Jesus confirms and proposes the commandments to men of every age as the way and condition of salvation. In this way the connection between commandment and promise is established from within the relation of the *covenant*. In fact, since the time of the Old Testament, the context in which the commandments are given to us has been that of the Covenant:[37] they have the form of a gift offered by God out of love, and received by His people in trust on the strength of a promise. Through the commandment the people of Israel entrusts itself to its Lord, who will guard and bring its desire for happiness to fruition (cf. Dt. 6:3). The commandment is the typical form of the education in desire that is realized by means of faith within the historical relationship of the covenant. The exterior dimension of obedience is lived in the attitude of trust. In sum, even the commandments of the Old Covenant are a way of imitating God in his salvific action towards the people.

But, once again, the full form of the commandment is personal. *Veritatis splendor* reproposes the affirmation of Saint Ambrose according to which "plenitudo legis in Christo est," asserting that "*he himself becomes a living and personal Law*" (n. 15). In the face of man's desire there is no longer the abstract and impersonal expression of the law, but the concrete and personal form

[37] Cf. J. L'Hour, *La morale de l'Alliance* (Paris, 1985, originally published in 1966).

of Jesus, who, according to the Balthasarian formula, is "the concrete categorical imperative,"[38] since he lived his eternal filial obedience to the will of the Father in a human existence wholly the same as ours. In its definitive Christological dimension, the commandment is revealed to be in function of the imitation of Christ, and so in perfect and free conformity to that archetypal Image, in which and for which man was created.

The original vocation inscribed from the image of God encounters the wholly unprecedented eschatology of the Son made man: the human desire for happiness encounters a gratuitous reality exceeding every human expectation and project, a reality of fulfillment through participation in the life of the divine. Christ in his humanity becomes the "way," the synthesis of every preceding moral law, the definitive hermeneutic of every commandment.

In this way the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy is also surpassed. "In Christ" the law is perceived as the expression of the will of the Father and embraced in a filial way; in the Spirit, while remaining *heteron* (something other) with respect to God, we are assumed gratuitously into a filiation that makes us also *heteros* (someone other). In the Spirit, the Christological commandment is interiorized and becomes the new law of love, without, however, completely eliminating on earth the exterior elements (cf. n. 53),[39] which are nevertheless subordinated in function of the interior element (*lex nova Spiritus Sancti*).

### *C) The Commandments in the Itinerary Towards the Perfection of One's Personal Vocation*

In *Veritatis splendor* the commandments are seen not only as the way to the end (n. 12), but also as a stage leading towards the maturation of freedom (n. 13), or rather leading towards perfection (n. 17). Now, the perfection of freedom is realized in the "gift of self," in charity (nn. 18 and 87). This is the imitation of God and has the measure of God. N. 18, connecting by way of inter-

[38] H. U. von Balthasar, *Neuf thèses pour une éthique chrétienne* (Bologna, 1979), 612-45.

[39] Cf. St. Augustine, *De Spiritu et littera, PL* 44, 201-46, CSEL 40, IV, I; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq. 106-8; E. Kaczynski, *La legge nuova: L'elemento esterno della legge nuova secondo San Tommaso* (Rome, 1974).

pretation Lk. 6:36 with Mt. 5:48, places Christian perfection, the imitation of divine perfection, within mercy. Charity is the fullness of the law (Rm. 13:10) and according to its Christological reference, it is the "new" commandment (Jn. 13:34). In it is surpassed the presumed conflict between the (egotistical) quest for one's own happiness (*eros*) and the gratuitous dedication "to the glory of God" (*agape*) (n. 10).[40] The desire for happiness, whose objective value has been entrusted to and protected by the commandment, reveals and nourishes its ecstatic character: it becomes charity, which affirms Another.

For this reason beatitude and charity are ultimately one. It is this authentically Thomistic conception of happiness that liberates happiness from every suspicion of egotistical interest.[41] In fact, for Thomas beatitude is, on the one hand, an activity, the most perfect activity of a person who has reached the highest level of development possible for a human being; and this activity is identical with charity perfectly realized. On the other hand, charity, as friendship with God, is our happiness inasmuch as it is that type of life in which the original potentialities of man are actuated to the highest degree in the gift of self to God and to neighbor. Therefore, the desire for happiness, which is an expression of creaturely indigence and the beginning of the moral journey, culminates in charity, which is the affirmation of an Other and the perfect availability to receiving its form. The paradox of the Christian moral life is that it is precisely through welcoming the initial need for fulfillment and in allowing oneself to be educated by the presence of God in Christ that the human being is guided beyond himself, to be fulfilled in the gift, receiving from God even his very capacity to love.

At the same time the perfection of freedom is the fulfillment of the person in his unique and unrepeatable vocation (n. 17 and n. 85). In the call of the Good one can hear, in fact, the echo of a personal vocation (n. 7) that concerns the "fulfillment of his own destiny" (n. 8); this call is a journey of freedom, in which "the

[40] Cf. Balthasar, "Homo creatus est," 9-26.

[41] On this theme see R. Guindon, *Béatitude et théologie morale chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Ottawa: Editions de l'Universite d'Ottawa, 1956); P. J. Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 120-41.

good of the person" is affirmed (n. 13). The personalistic visage of the moral life is evident, in an ever more decisive way, in the encounter with Jesus as the movement from the commandments to the following of His person.

It must also be said that the *sequela Christi*, proposed by the Encyclical as the "essential and original foundation of Christian morality" (n. 19), fully protects the dimension of personal singularity belonging to the truth of morality, a dimension about which our contemporary mentality is particularly sensitive. The moral life does not consist only in the fulfillment of the universal regulations contained in the commandments; more importantly, it is a matter of the realization of the person, in his unique and unrepeatable vocation, which emerges from the most personal encounter with Christ. The contingency of the different calls implied by differing vocational circumstances requires us to accord the virtue of prudence its full value. Prudence is "*in Christ*," a real participation in His wisdom, which through the gifts of the Spirit makes us attentive and sensitive to every suggestion of the Friend and enables us to act according to the end gratuitously given us.[42]

### *D) The Ways Towards the Fulfillment of the Desire for Happiness*

The first chapter of the Encyclical appears now, at the end of this reflection, as the proposal of a moral itinerary that, taking up the desire for happiness, reconciles it with its authentic and original horizon (the stars) and opens it to the gratuitous fullness of the divine life.

The commandments of God are the first "way" indicated by Jesus for obtaining eternal life (n. 12). Inasmuch as they are a negative "limit," they block false aspirations by turning desire away from the dead-ends of the finite and by orienting it elsewhere, namely, towards the infinite object for which it is made. The commandments, however, are also and above all "a path involving a moral and spiritual journey towards perfection, at the heart of which is love" (n. 15). In this second sense the com-

[42] Cf. Cessario, *The Moral Virtues*, 60, 76-79.

mandments are at the service of the practice of love (n. 17); they educate desire to open itself up to love.

Yet the truly great *Way* to the fulfillment of the desire of life is Jesus Himself. Through the gift of the Spirit there is now the possibility of following Christ, the "living and personal law," and fulfilling the commandments—which represent partial stages leading up to that fullness which He is (n. 17).[43] Nonetheless, even under the regime of the new law the commandments remain necessary reference points, since we possess only the first fruits of the Spirit.[44] In any case all of the paths converge in the end, so as to bring to fruition in the moral subject the intimate conformation of our desires to those of Christ (Phil. 2:5-8, cf. n. 21).

The intrinsic link between the desire for happiness and the fulfillment of the moral life is indicated by the Encyclical with the theme of the *beatitudes* (n. 16), a theme that has been overlooked by modern moral theology, but that is well represented in the great theological tradition.[45] These mark the gratuitous anticipation of the end within Christian action: they are a foretaste of the eternal along the journey. *Veritatis splendor* recalls their Christological character (the beatitudes "are *invitations to discipleship and to communion of life with Christ*," since they are a "sort of *self-portrait of Christ*") and their indication of a promise that opens up in the disciple hope for the fulfillment that will be realized fully in the future Kingdom. By following Christ, in the paradoxical form of obedience and the abandonment of everything, man's desire for happiness already mysteriously participates in that beatitude of the Kingdom of heaven to which he aspires and which is given him gratuitously.

[43] The Christocentric perspective of morality and the elements for a possible Christological integration not only of the commandments of the Old Law but also of Natural Law are offered in I. Biffi, "Integralità cristiana e fondazione morale," *Scuola Cattolica* 115 (1987): 570-90, as well as in G. Chantraine-A. Scola, "L'évenement Christ et la vie morale," *Anthropotes* 1 (1987): 5-23, and in R. Tremblay, *L'"Homme" qui divinise: Pour une interprétation christocentrique de l'existence* (Montreal, 1993).

[44] Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ep. ad Romanos*, c. XII, lect. I (Turin: Marietti, 1953), n. 971.

[45] See St. Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, *PL* 34, 1229-1308, CC 35; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 69. Opportunely, S. Pinckaers has directed attention to this theme in *Les sources de la morale chrétienne*, 144-94; ET, 134-90.

# REDISCOVERING VIRTUE*

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## INTRODUCTION: THE DEBATE ABOUT VIRTUE

VIRTUE is back. Especially in the United States, a widespread discussion about its role in moral theology has been initiated, a discussion modeled on Aristotle's *Ethics*, particularly as Aristotle's thought was developed in the Middle Ages by Thomas Aquinas.

Accompanying this rediscovery of virtue is a criticism of modern ethical theories. These theories, having broken with Aristotelian tradition, have led to a burgeoning of contradictory systems: a morality of obligation on the Kantian model; utilitarian morality; and a radical critique of morality by Nietzsche. Because of such divergences any discussion between moralists, especially where the foundations and principles of morality are involved, has up to the present seemed doomed to failure.[1]

* Translated by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P.

[1] The author who has contributed most to this discussion of virtue is undoubtedly Alasdair MacIntyre in his three principal books: *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981; second edition, 1984); *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1988); *Three Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1990). The Italian edition of the last book, *Enciclopedia, Genealogia e Tradizione* (Milan, 1993), includes a special introduction on MacIntyre and a biography. I should also like to mention the article by Martha Nussbaum, "Virtue Revived," *Times Literary Supplement* 4657 (July 3, 1992): 9-11.

See also a recent book by André Comte-Sponville, *Petit traité des grands vertus* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995). This work is very interesting because it proposes to a wide readership a moral system drawn from Aristotle that is at the same time based entirely on modern philosophy. In my opinion the author unintentionally confirms the thesis of the incompatibility of modern ethical systems of obligation and the

In view of this ethical pluralism, certain philosophers have undertaken to set up ethical norms through reflection on justice, using the methods of discussion and decision prevalent in our democratic societies. The initiative has been designated as procedural ethics.[2]

In this rather chaotic situation, other writers have thought a return to Aristotelian ethics opportune—a move that would enable us to reconnect with the long tradition of virtue-based morality represented therein, while bringing it up to date. In fact, the introduction of the concept of virtue offers many opportunities for the shaping of a morality that takes the human person into account. Virtue is a dynamic human quality acquired through education and personal effort. It forms character and assures continuity in action. Furthermore, it is set within the framework of community and a strong tradition, to whose development it contributes. Teaching on virtue would seem to be a good corrective for excessive individualism. This is what the so-called "communitarian" trend has emphasized.[3]

The debate on virtue has also surfaced within traditional Catholic teaching. Since the first half of this century, under the inspiration of St. Thomas, several authors of moral theology textbooks have undertaken to reorganize special morality on the basis of the virtues rather than the ten commandments, as had been done since the seventeenth century.[4] Admittedly, the change

Aristotelian construct of the virtues held by MacIntyre. With the moderns he rejects a natural foundation for morality, within man, and thus robs the virtues he treats of their deep roots. Virtue is not spontaneous; it remains voluntaristic.

[2] To mention a few titles: K. O. Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie,* 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1981); Apel, *Ethique de la discussion* (Paris, 1994); J. M. Ferry, *Philosophie de la communication* (Paris, 1994); Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handeln,* 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1981); Habermas, *Moralbewusstsein und kommunikativer Handeln* (Frankfurt, 1983); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard, 1971).

[3] See, for example: J. H. Joder, *Jésus et le politique: La radicalité éthique de la croix* (Lausanne, 1984); S. Hauerwas, *The Peacable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, 1983); W. Reese-Schäfer, *Was ist Kommunitarismus?* (Frankfurt, 1994); Charles Taylor, *The Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991); Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "the Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton, 1992); M. Walzer, "Les deux universalismes," *Esprit* 187 (December, 1992): 114-133.

[4] A few examples: D. M. Prümmer, O.P., *Manuale theologiae moralis ad mentem divi Thomae* (Barcelona, 1946); J.-B. Vittrant, S.J., *Théologie morale* (Paris, 1948).

remained superficial, since the virtues served only to classify obligations and prohibitions in a new way. The focus was still obligation, not virtue. Nonetheless, these authors drew attention to the inadequacy of a moral teaching limited to the commandments, and indicated the direction to be followed for a revision of the presentation of moral theology.

In the opposite direction, reacting to Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, certain Catholic moralists worked out a new concept of morality and criteria of judgment based principally on the weighing of the good and evil consequences of human actions, seen as means in view of the end sought. This has been called "consequentialism" and "proportionalism." It amounts to a modern translation of casuistry combined with reflections based on Kantian categories. This construct, tending to utilitarianism, harmonizes well with the technological mindset of our age.

Taking as its point of departure a pre-moral judgment formed by relating an action to its circumstances and external consequences, this system is unable to assign a determining role to virtue, which is an interior principle of human action. If virtue is referred to at all, it is associated with an habitual, general good intention. "Consequentialism" avoids the consideration of virtue even more decisively than did traditional casuistry.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, too, has encountered the problem of virtue. In organizing the subject matter of morality it had to choose between using the commandments or the virtues as a base. If it opted for the commandments, in order to lend firm support to the teaching of the Decalogue, it has been at pains to elucidate them by their relationship to the virtues. Nor has it hesitated to reintroduce into moral theology the too-long-neglected teaching on the New Law and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that perfect the virtues.[5]

The problem of the role of virtue has far-reaching ramifications in philosophy as well as in theology. In order to resolve this problem, it is not enough to assign a place to virtue in a moral

[5] See my article, "Le Catechisme de l'Eglise catholique," *Sources* XIX (1993): 49-59.

system based on concepts of obligation, duty, or utility. The nature of virtue calls for a specific systematization in which the other elements, particularly obligations, commandments, and means, play a subordinate role. We are no longer dealing with a morality of individual actions that are either allowed or forbidden by law. Virtue builds up a moral system around those qualities inherent in man that enable him to perform with freedom good actions involving continuity and development.

Obviously, I cannot treat the question of the place of virtue in moral theology exhaustively here. I should simply like to offer some reflections that may help us to rediscover the true nature of virtue, and more particularly, its rightful role in the making of practical judgments and in the study of moral cases.

## I. Toward a Morality of Dynamic Interiority

It is very important to situate virtue accurately in its relationship to moral action. Our actions are actually richer and more complex than the ordinary treatment of cases of conscience would have us believe. According to Aristotle's analysis, in order for an action to be voluntary and hence moral, two conditions are required: it must proceed from within the acting subject; and the agent must be aware of the component elements of his act. Spontaneity and awareness are, therefore, the two essential notes of a moral action.

Awareness of our actions, like consciousness, operates at two levels. The first level draws our initial attention. This is the "external action" with its purpose, circumstances, and the result sought: for example, a job to be done, a role to exercise, a debt to pay, or a duty to perform. The second level goes deeper. It stems from our capacity to reflect upon ourselves, our personal dispositions, desires, intentions, and feelings. This is the level of "interior action," where the roots and causes of our actions lie. Now the question becomes: Am I acting out of self-interest or out of a concern for justice? Out of vanity and egoism, or out of devotion? From a sense of duty, or out of love? Here we are at the moral level of voluntary and rational commitment, at the level of the "heart" in the biblical sense of the word. This is where the virtues have their place (vices also), as stable and personal dis-

positions to do good (or evil). These dispositions are dynamic and shape the man together with his actions, according to Aristotle's definition: "Virtue renders its possessor good, and also his actions."[6]

There are two elements, therefore, in every moral act: inward and outward action. Note well, we are not speaking of two separate acts, for the first stands to the second as soul to body. We can therefore speak of the two dimensions of a human act: its inwardness and its outwardness. The interior act is paramount because it emanates directly from the will, from the person. It takes place at the source of human morality. Virtues are likewise interior principles of action as contrasted with law which, by its origin, is an external principle, above man.

Casuist morality has focused on the external action considered as individual, for example, a case of conscience, relating it to law, the source of moral obligation. In this way morality is closely linked to law and justice. Casuist morality abstracts from interiority or reduces interiority simply to a good or evil intention. Being concerned about rationality, it will also avoid the intervention of affectivity in the forming of a moral judgment. Although careful to consider concrete circumstances, the moralist will study human action in an impersonal, abstract way, as "one case" falling under the general law. The expression "consequentialist" is significant in this regard: judgment of actions should first be made at the pre-moral level, by an adjustment of circumstances and means to the end, in a technological type of relationship. Morality will only intervene at a later stage, with the intention.

Such a break with the interior dimension of human action logically leads to relegating the virtues to a position outside the moral realm, thus constricting them. Virtue becomes a kind of habit of obeying the law.

The restoration of a virtue-oriented morality calls therefore for a fundamental change. The central focus of morality needs to be returned to the level of the interior act and seen from the

[6] Aristotle, *Ethics*, II, 6 (1106 a 15); see St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 3, obj. 2.

viewpoint of the person who is acting, with all his intellectual and affective dispositions—beginning with the "discerning mind" that Scripture attributes to Solomon (1 Kings 3:12). This was the point of the ancient Socratic maxim "Know thyself!" which was deepened by St. Augustine in the brief prayer at the beginning of his work on free will: "That I may know myself, that I may know Thee!" This interiority is the realm of the virtues, theological as well as human. From this center, they enlighten and direct moral action.

I should like to make it clear that in placing morality once more at the level of interiority we are not taking up a morality of intention, after the manner of Kant and others. If virtue remains merely a good intention it risks being no more than an illusion. It only becomes real and effective when it produces good actions, as a tree produces fruit. Virtue is altogether ordered to actions and to their excellence, as well as to the object that specifies them. One of the tasks of virtue is precisely to effect coordination between the interior and external act, between our disposition to act and its realization in actions done and done well.

*A) The treatment of cases of conscience*

If virtue is oriented to action, it cannot remain a general principle. It must enter the concrete area of action. The first change it effects is a deepening of the approach to the study of cases of conscience. The difference between virtue-based morality and that of the casuists stands out clearly when we compare their contrasting procedures with St. Paul's method of solving moral questions in First Corinthians. Let us take the case of food offered to idols. The Apostle first states that such food cannot contaminate, since idols have no real existence. Christians, therefore, may eat it. This reasoning establishes a general norm of what is allowed and forbidden. St. Paul is of the opinion, however, that this material, external judgment does not go far enough. As a more basic criterion he introduces the consideration of charity toward the weak, taking into account their persons and their dispositions. The concern to avoid scandal and to practice fraternal charity modifies the practical judgment and calls for abstinence from the idol offerings. Thus reflection rises

to the decisive level of personal interiority, which opens out to others and to the common good. The quality of the Christian's actions and his or her perfection will depend more on charity than on abstract knowledge.

St. Paul solves other cases in the same way. He first examines the external data involved and then introduces as his principal criterion the personal bonds that faith and charity establish with Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Thus the Apostle provides us with models for analyzing and solving cases of conscience. The virtues, human and Christian, predominate, in conformity with the moral catechesis exposed in his letters (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* n. 1971). Here we have a clear, authoritative invitation to renew casuistry by way of a virtue-oriented morality.

Such a change of method in the study of conscience cases will also have its pastoral effects. In order to handle a problem of conscience properly, it is not enough to examine it in itself as if it were a general case. It needs to be seen within the life context of the person concerned, and we should reflect with him on the underlying intentions directing and inspiring his actions. Very often the clarification of a case brings to light some personal problem involving relationships with God and others. Deeper exploration shows the important bearing of the virtues, especially faith and charity, on our actions. The moral question undergoes a transformation. It is no longer limited to what is legally permissible and forbidden, but is inserted into the dynamism of a life, into the heart of personal relationships, against a background of an advancing progress toward goodness and happiness. The commitment and dispositions of the person make up the essential data where cases of conscience are being considered in the concrete.[7]

### *B) Two concepts of justice*

A moral system based on the virtues includes a significant change in the concept of justice.

[7] For the study of actual cases, see my explanations: "Le cas du Dr. Augoyard," in *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire* (Fribourg, 1986); "Le jugement moral sur les problèmes de la vie naissante," in *L'Evangile et la Morale* (Fribourg, 1992).

In many current theories that limit ethics to interpersonal relationships, the idea of justice plays a determining role. Justice, which governs societal relationships by means of laws, seems capable of providing ethics with rational foundations not to be found elsewhere. In a pluralistic society like ours justice thus seems to be the final court of appeal in laying down moral norms and in establishing criteria for evaluating human actions. Justice and morality tend to merge.

The beginnings of this kind of merger could already be seen in handbooks of moral theology of recent centuries. Morality, being based on obedience to legal obligations, was conceived of and often exercised in a juridical manner. Canon law and morality used almost the same methods. The section on justice in the textbooks was particularly well developed. This casuistry, however, recognized natural law, the expression of the divine will, as the first foundation of morality, and affirmed its superiority over all human law. In spite of its similarity to law, morality remained distinct from justice and maintained its primacy.

Modern theories have abandoned natural law and rights because of the opposition that has been directed at them, and no longer take into account man's relationship with God. Deprived of these supports, ethics clings to justice and law as the only foundations generally acceptable in the name of reason. Thus morality may hope to exercise once again a role in modern societies where, moreover, the need for ethical criteria is becoming more and more widely felt. But in doing this, ethics becomes subservient to theories of justice and society.

I should like to clarify once more precisely what is meant by justice. In our liberal societies justice results from a rational organization that aims at establishing equality between the rights of individuals, that is, the right of each person to satisfy his needs. We are dealing here with a basically self-centered concept of man. We could call it "rational egoism" and "solipsism."[8] Justice becomes the art of organizing society, viewed as "a col-

[8] J.-M. Ferry, *Philosophie de la communication* (Paris, 1994), 2:63.

lection of egoisms," by dint of laws that will avoid violent confrontation, favor collaboration, and contribute to the well-being of the majority. To assure their rational and scientific character, these theories will, moreover, abstract from what pertains to affectivity and personal factors which do not lend themselves to generalization.

If we now consider the virtue of justice in the setting of a virtue-oriented morality, as described by Aristotle, St. Augustine, or St. Thomas, for example, it will be easy to note some profound differences.

According to the traditional definition, the virtue of justice consists in "a permanent and constant will to give to everyone his due."[9] Going back to Cicero's *De Officiis*, St. Ambrose adds some fine-tuning: "Justice renders to each one what is his and claims not another's property; it disregards its own profit in order to preserve the common equity."[10]

Such a definition makes it clear that the virtue of justice is quite different from the balance of "egoisms" discussed above. It could almost be called its opposite since its focus is not self but the other. Its proper activity is not receiving, but rather giving to others what is due them. In order to do this, it will even transcend the consideration of one's own profit out of love for the common good. Justice is a virtue of the will, which it renders constant and firm, in conformity with reason, which discerns the law to be respected and carried out. It is a quality that perfects man in his most personal aspect, his free will and his relationship with others.

Such an idea of justice presupposes a different concept of man. Beyond needs to be satisfied, it implies the existence within us of a capacity to open ourselves to others, to recognize their rights and honor them. Justice is more than respect and the desire not to infringe on others' rights. It is the beginning of a certain kind of love, an esteem for another that inclines us to give him his due.

[9] *STh* II-II, q. 58, a. 1.

[10] St. Ambrose, *De Offic.*, I, c. 24; quoted in *STh* II-II, q. 58, a. 11, *sed contra.*

Seen in this light, the virtue of justice is rooted in man's natural inclination to live in the society of other men, which proceeds from an innate sense of the other, as expressed in the golden rule and the commandment to love others as oneself. Justice will be expressed in laws seen less as constraints than as means of education, effecting coordination and harmony between members of society in view of the common good. It will find its perfection in friendship, which goes beyond the measure of legal obligation and is exercised through liberality or generosity. Virtue forms a love of justice in us and through this it opens the way to charity.

*C) Two remarks*

I should like to make two important distinctions. Seen as a balance of "egoisms," justice presupposes that man is morally undifferentiated. The recognition of "egoisms" is a precondition for the distinction between good and evil that will precisely determine the formation of laws. Let us note, however, that it is difficult to see how a balance of "egoisms," whatever the skill and imagination of the legislator, could logically produce anything more than a multiple and reinforced "egoism," and how such an amalgamation of "egoisms" could produce a moral system that would improve man's condition.

The virtue of justice, on the contrary, bases the distinction between good and evil in man himself, in his natural sense of what is true and good, in the will and desire intent on what is just or unjust. The question of moral excellence is of prime importance here. It affects both the person and his actions. The virtue of justice is both a challenge and a demand, urging us on and judging us.

My second point is that modern theories of justice, inspired by rationalism, separate reason from affectivity. Norms are established with the aid of purely rational procedures on the basis of material data which form the matter of law. Man is viewed as a thinking being, for whom the command of duty or law is sufficient motivation. This concept is too cerebral. It is impossible to deny that affective factors such as patriotism, family attach-

ments, class solidarity, fidelity to tradition, or a passion for freedom can play powerful roles in politics and society, and that they must be taken into account in the areas of law and morality.

Casuist morality manifests the same tendency. Its rational and juridical character causes it to banish affectivity from moral judgment. In the textbooks, passions are viewed simply as obstacles to the voluntary and free character of actions and threats to their moral excellence. This school of morality requires an obedience of the will alone; it is distrustful of sensibility and affection. Moral judgment ought therefore to be purely rational and should beware of the intervention of any emotion.

In a virtue-oriented morality, the situation is quite different. Doubtless the virtue of justice has a material objective—the law—and this distinguishes it from the affectivity-related virtues, courage and temperance. As a quality of the will, however, justice has its seat in the affectivity; it is a disposition of the personal will, an efficacious love of what conforms to the law. In particular it will generate love for the common good.

Furthermore, in order to be practiced concretely, justice requires other moral virtues. We cannot perform a work of justice without possessing sufficient control over our feelings and passions, and without having enough courage to overcome obstacles such as fear and resistance. Better still, in moderating the affectivity, these virtues render it capable of contributing to moral action. Thanks to them justice will not operate in a stiff, dry way but rather with upright and firm sensitivity in regard to others. Virtue engages the heart as well as the reason.

The virtues connected with affectivity also collaborate in the prudential discernment that directs justice, at both legislative and personal levels. They prevent the passions—avarice, ambition, fear, and anger—from blinding the vision and disturbing the judgment. They contribute to a clear view of things and a perceptive discernment.

A morality based on the virtues includes therefore a connectedness between reason, will, and sensitivity. It tends to effect the dynamic unification of our faculties in the exercise of justice, among other virtues. This work is achieved thanks to moral education and to our gradual progress through actual experience.

## II. Virtue and Concrete Moral Judgment

Let us return to the objection made against a morality based on the virtues, namely, that it remains on a general plane without indicating concrete norms or precise determinations for judging cases of conscience. For example, to be just, chaste, charitable, or temperate are universal precepts. They do not define which actions are just or unjust, chaste or impure, charitable or not. Thus a moral system based on the virtues remains on a general and abstract level. It cannot resolve the chief ethical problem, which is to move from the universal to the particular, from the general to the concrete in moral judgment.

I hold exactly the opposite position. Only a morality based on the virtues can truly assure a connection between the universality of principles and the particularity of human action.

In order to understand this, we need to rediscover the meaning of virtue. Virtue cannot be reduced to a simple idea or proposition, however precise. It is a specific reality and is only revealed in the experience of action and life.

### *A) Virtue is formed by repetition of interior actions and through experience*

What then is the experience in which virtue manifests itself or exercises its ability to relate the universal to the particular?

Let us consider virtue at its origin. It is commonly taught that virtue is acquired through the repetition of actions. This is true, but has to be understood correctly. Repetition of the same material actions engenders, certainly, a habit—a kind of psychological mechanism that inclines us to repeat the same actions, smoking or drinking for example. But this is not virtue. Virtue is much more than a habit.[11] It is formed by the repetition of interior actions that insure excellence and progress in performance. For example, we exercise ourselves in overcoming our laziness or timidity, in controlling our impulses, or in practicing justice, generosity, or patience. Virtue is formed in us by the repetition of personal

[11] See my book *Le Renouveau de la Morale chrétienne* (Paris, 1978), especially the chapter entitled "La vertue est tout autre chose qu'une habitude," pp. 144-64.

actions, by a series of successful efforts that enable us to keep improving. Virtue is properly called a *habitus*, to use the classical term which has unfortunately been lost in our modern languages. Whatever the out-modedness of the word, it is through such active experiences that we learn what virtue really is.

*B) Prudential discernment and knowledge attained through connaturality*

In the formation of virtue prudence plays a major role through the discernment and decision that are its functions.[12] Thanks to the repeated experience of acting appropriately and well in a given area such as justice or temperance, we learn to relate the universal to the particular as we discern what is most fitting and profitable in the various circumstances that arise. This is how an artisan learns his trade, training himself by applying the rules, how an artist perfects himself in his art and makes progress, profiting even by his mistakes. In this work where we encounter reality, both interior and external, we develop a kind of knowledge that is proper to virtue, a knowledge attained through connaturality: a rapid, sure, penetrating, and intuitive ability to judge. We see things at a glance, as skilled and experienced workers do. This kind of knowledge is accompanied by inspiration, which favors invention and creativity.

Thus it is by the repeated experience of good actions that we acquire the art of applying rules and laws in the moral order. Experience is all the more necessary here since prudence is distinguished from the other intellectual virtues in that it not only gives us the ability to act, but also causes us to act effectively. This is its essential activity: the decision to act, which leads to action and gives experience. All the virtues are engendered in this ambiance and develop under the aegis of prudence.

[12] We also need to rediscover prudence. It is not simply the virtue of being cautious. True prudence is enterprising. It is exercised in active discernment and practical decision. It joins practical judgment to the determination that leads to action (the "precept" or "command" of Saint Thomas). Only he is prudent who acts effectively, at the right time and in the best way.

I shall illustrate this teaching with a few texts from St. Thomas. He did not hesitate to adopt Aristotle's affirmation that "the virtuous man himself sets the measure and standard for human acts." He explains this by the connaturality and inclination to the good that the moral virtues develop in us, prudence for example, in combination with the other moral virtues, particularly chastity, according to the classic example. This would be most especially the case with charity, which conforms us to divine realities and renders us capable of judging them in the light of the gift of wisdom.[13] Here are two passages dealing with this subject:

> Since having a formed judgment characterizes the wise person, so there are two kinds of wisdom according to the two ways of passing judgment. This may be arrived at through inclination, as when a person who possesses the habit of a virtue rightly commits himself to what should be done in consonance with it, because he is already in sympathy with it; hence Aristotle remarks that the virtuous man himself sets the measure and standard for human acts [*Ethics*, Bk. X]. Alternatively, the judgment may be arrived at through a cognitive process, as when a person soundly instructed in moral science can appreciate the activity of virtues he does not himself possess. (*STh* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3)

> As by the habits of natural understanding and science, a man is rightly disposed with regard to general truths, so, in order that he be rightly disposed with regard to the particular principles of action, namely, their ends, he needs to be perfected by certain habits, whereby it becomes, as it were, connatural to him to judge rightly about an end. The virtuous man judges rightly of the end of virtue, because, as Aristotle says in *Ethics* III, "as a man is, so does the end seem to him." (*STh* I-II, q. 58, a. 5)

Let us simply note that these maxims of Aristotle, "The virtuous man himself sets the measure and standard for human acts" and "As a man is, so does the end seem to him," would lead to pure subjectivism if we applied them to a morality of obligation, in which morality is imposed from without, by law, upon an indifferent will. The maxims presuppose the interior rule of

[13] *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 2.

virtue, itself rooted in man's natural inclination to the true and good. In a moral system based on the virtues, law will intervene in relation to this interior morality, acting as a tutor.

*C) The need for right experience*

Thanks to the experience acquired at the level of intelligence and action, knowledge of morality, itself universal like the laws or norms it studies, can reach its full development through the virtue of prudence, which is personal, and can be transformed into an active, experiential knowledge. Through virtue a kind of reciprocity is established between science and prudence, thought and action, reflection and experience.

In a morality based on the virtues, the ethicist cannot remain at a distance from his object, nor can he maintain a kind of neutral attitude toward good and evil. His personal commitment to the good and the true is needed, lest he be lacking in the experience indispensable for the perception of profound ethical realities. This is why Aristotle insisted on the need for experience before a man could study morality, and therefore thought it ill-suited to the young. We could also maintain that an experience of the life of faith is indispensable for a proper treatment of moral theology. Faith constitutes a richer source of knowledge than any book. Actually, it is at the heart of such experience that practical wisdom is formed in us. The experience of faith is like a source of light that clarifies and directs the virtues in the concrete, ordering them to their end.

*D) The gap between science and experience in moral systems based on actions and norms*

In a moral system based on actions and norms, the situation is not the same. The universal, which is operative on the side of law, is in a permanent state of tension with the singularity of actions that operate in freedom. In the framework of this concept of morality, the problem of moving from the universal to the particular can only persist and in fact remain insoluble, since the tension between law and freedom is irreducible. Experience cannot play its unifying role here. Actually it is viewed as a kind of

subjective datum that cannot be universalized as the norms require. It is also viewed as indifferent in itself, like the acts it leads to, and can acquire moral significance only through the intervention of law. We are not dealing here with an experience of right action in accord with virtue, but with the experience of an action that is blurred as to its moral quality, or is pre-moral, so to say.

In such a system, knowledge and experience can remain completely separated. The knowledge one acquires through study is one thing; moral experience, a personal matter, is something else again. It is not necessary to be an honest man in order to be a competent ethicist, any more than one needs to have faith and live by it in order to study moral theology. It even seems that the rational exigencies of knowledge demand that the ethicist distinguish clearly between his study and his personal belief or devotion. He may even consider this separation as a necessary form of asceticism that will guarantee the objectivity and universality of his research. This way of seeing things has certainly played an important role in recent debates over the existence of a Christian morality. One cannot understand the latter without a certain experience of faith joined to moral reflection.

Another effect of this separation will be the impoverishment of morality. Obliged to disregard experience, this science is deprived of knowledge attained through connaturality. It becomes dry and abstract in thought and language, even when it discourses on the importance of the concrete and of experience in morality.

## Conclusion: The Need for Varied Terminology in Virtue-Based Morality

We shall conclude these reflections by touching on a difficulty encountered in a morality based on the virtues: the problem of terminology. A virtue-oriented morality requires a richer and more varied vocabulary than does one based on acts and norms, precisely because of its link with experience.

In order to reach a scientific level, every moral system tends to create for itself a universal language which cannot help

including a certain amount of technical and abstract terminology. We can take St. Thomas's work as an example. It offers us a model of theological language that has reached a high degree of perfection, now become classical. But if it is true that experience is essential to virtue, we cannot really understand the moral teaching of the Angelic Doctor without relating it to experience. In the light provided by personal experience this teaching, which at first appears abstract and impersonal, comes to life and reveals its power, precision, and capacity for disposing and directing concrete action.

If it is to be fruitful, the reading of St. Thomas's works on moral theology therefore calls for contact with experience. Yet even then, in my opinion, it cannot be totally fruitful unless complemented by the reading of authors who use a language more directly associated with experience, such as the great spiritual writers. Among the Angelic Doctor's own sources, I would mention St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, Denis the Areopagite, Cassian, and St. John Chrysostom, without overlooking their common and higher source, the Word of God in the sapiential books and in the moral catechesis of the New Testament, particularly the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. Obviously we should add to this list modern authors who help to make the Gospel teaching clear to our age.

A virtue-based morality calls for various types of terminology. Narration and examples are also necessary, as well as a broad, well-ordered synthesis. St. Augustine, for example, is more expressive and personal but less precise than St. Thomas, who excels in definitions and analyses but is less rich in images and examples. So it seems to me that no single author can utilize all genres with equal expertise. Does this not show that we can only attain to an understanding of moral and spiritual reality through collaboration and communion?

It will even be true to say that a virtue-based morality, however precise and perfect, will always remain incomplete. Its real function surely is to open our minds and hearts to the mystery of man and God, so that our actions may participate in the

"unsearchable riches of Christ" in his mystery (Eph 3:8). No philosophy, no theology can fill such a role. Only the Holy Spirit possesses the power of the Word who reveals the truth to us interiorly and gives the grace that transforms our hearts and actions.

# "ALL EXISTING IS THE ACTION OF GOD": THE PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY OF DAVID BRAINE

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Thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made: for never wouldest thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it. And how could any thing have endured, if it had not been thy will? or been preserved, if not called by thee? But thou sparest all: for they are thine, O Lord, thou lover of souls.

Wisdom 11:24-26

He is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

Acts 17:27-28

IT HAS long been traditional to regard God as upholding all things in existence. This belief is known as the doctrine of continuous creation; it is a doctrine widely shared by Jews, Christians, and Moslems, and was first clearly articulated by St. Augustine.[1] The phrase "continuous creation" can be misleading, for there is more to the doctrine than simply the extension of God's creative act through time. If that were all that is at stake, we would not need to revise our ordinary notion of the creator as craftsman or artist; we might think of God as like a painter who

[1] Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* iv.12. The history of the development of this doctrine has yet to be written, but important sources include *Timaeus* 41ab; Philo of Alexandria, *De Providentia* i.7; Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3; John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* i.3; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 104, a. 1. See also David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 14-17; G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 31-36; Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1983), 303-304.

never stops adding new scenes, or a writer continually elaborating his story. That picture will not do. If the painter were to cease painting, what he has made up to that point would remain in existence, whereas it is precisely the ability to stand on its own that the doctrine of continuous creation seeks to deny of what is made. Nor does anything in the relation of artisan to artifact properly convey the special intimacy and presence that the act of continuous creation is supposed to establish between God and creatures. A painting or a story does not "live and move and have its being" in the one who fashions it—nor would even a living and thinking creature, if the manner of its making were solely that of an artisan.

These shortcomings raise the question of whether we should seek to replace the image of artisan and artifact with one that is more dynamic. We might think of God as like a singer and of what is made as His song, or of God as like a dancer and of what is made as His dance. By envisioning the act of creation as a "doing" rather than a "making," analogies of this type more adequately indicate the continuing ontological dependence of creation on Creator. They also draw our attention to a mode of presence radically different from that of one body to another, the presence of an agent "within" his own actions. They may thus bring us closer to what St. Paul presumably has in mind in the passage quoted from Acts. On the other hand, they have faults of their own, for they are hard to reconcile with creaturely freedom and the reality of secondary causation. How could any kind of "doing" act contrary to the will of its doer? Indeed, how could it act at all? Actions are not causal agents; a song does not act in its own right, but is at best an instrument of the one who sings it. So it would seem that, taken to their logical conclusion, analogies such as that of the singer and his song lead to the denial of both creatures' freedom and their causal efficacy. There have been thinkers in each of the religious traditions mentioned who have been willing to accept these consequences, but in the Christian tradition, at least, they form a distinct minority.

Both sets of images share the additional fault of depicting the act of creation as one that takes place within time. Properly

speaking, on the traditional conception time itself is a creature, and so cannot be the framework within which creation takes place. Many today are skeptical that this traditional notion of an eternal God who creates time can be rendered coherent. Surely one source of such doubts is just the fact that the traditional images of creation fail entirely to illuminate what the creation of time could be like.

Yet despite all of these qualms, it must be insisted that the fact that an adequate analogy cannot be found to illustrate a doctrine is no reason why the doctrine should be rejected. Certainly if there is any relation for which we should expect to be unable to find a fully adequate analogy, it is that of the Creator to His creation. The advantage of examining the analogies critically is that it makes clear the issues that must be faced by any attempt to spell out more prosaically the nature of creatures' continuing dependence on God. On the short list of topics are existence, action, presence, causal agency, and time (and that is the short list!). Fortunately, ambition has its rewards: if an argument can be found that truly does illuminate this fundamental question, then many other areas of philosophy and theology may be expected to profit as a result.

David Braine's *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God*[2] is an attempt to develop such an argument. Indeed, it is even more ambitious than I have so far indicated, for it seeks to use the insight that continuance in existence requires a cause to *demonstrate* that God exists. In order to bear such weight this insight must be more than just a received doctrine or an intuition widely shared among believers; it must be demonstrable from premises that non-theists may reasonably be expected to hold. The bulk of the book is accordingly an attempt to demonstrate that continuance in existence requires a cause and that this cause possesses the traditional attributes of deity. Since the notion that creatures depend on God for their continued existence is built into the conception of deity from the outset, answers to the questions we have raised about God's presence in the world and

[2] Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. Page references in the text are to this work.

about His relation to time, causal agency, and creaturely existence emerge naturally within the course of the argument.

Braine's work has received little attention since its publication in 1988.[3] This is unfortunate, but a little time spent with the book quickly reveals why. The book is dreadfully obscure, both in detail and in overall structure.[4] My aim in this essay is therefore mainly expository. I shall seek to summarize Braine's argument, recasting the order found in the book into one that seems to me to better display the structure of the argument as a whole, while retaining enough detail to enable the reader to make a fair assessment of the argument's worth. I have offered some criticisms here and there, but they are incidental to the main train of thought. In a few places where Braine's text is most obscure, I have also had to fill in what I take to be the logical connections intended (for an example, see the end of Section 4 below). I have tried to do this in a way that is consistent with his evident intentions, but serious students of the argument will naturally wish to consult the original and draw their own conclusions.

Let me say just a word about my own opinion of Braine's work. I am not personally convinced of the cogency of his argument; neither am I convinced that it could not be made to work (as well as any such argument may be said to "work"), given some additional attention at certain key points. These issues are important, and I hope that the present essay will make it easier for competent scholars to address them. But even supposing that one or another step in Braine's long chain of reasoning is found to be faulty, I believe that great value may remain in the whole. He addresses creatively and forcefully some of the most difficult issues in philosophical theology—the nature of God's presence in the world, the reality of secondary causation, and the compatibility of an eternal God with a temporal creation. What he says

[3] *Philosopher's Index* reveals only several short reviews, all of them favorable—e.g., David Burrell in *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (1990): 361-64; W. N. Clarke in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1990): 109-11; Eleanore Stump in *Philosophical Review* 100 (1991): 657-60.

[4] I do not wish this judgment to sound harsh; Braine mentions that he labors under physical disabilities and had to produce the book "by dictation and instruction as to the handling of papers" (vii), and that no doubt accounts for much of its infelicity.

on these topics deserves a hearing, and may contain valuable insights even apart from the particular strategy he employs to give it justification.

## 1. A Criterion of Existence

Like so many arguments in philosophy, Braine's is based upon a recognition of certain types of entity as primarily and distinctively real. Any such position will be doubly controversial: first, in the ontology that is advocated; and second in the criterion or argument-type that is used to justify that ontology. Quine's dictum that "to be is to be the value of a bound variable" is only one of a number of competing views as to what considerations ought to govern ontological commitment. Braine is aware of this and so devotes considerable effort to justifying his methodology before moving on to the advocacy of a particular ontology.

His first thesis is that the term "exists" as used in ontology has a meaning distinct from, and prior to, that of the existential quantifier in logic. This may seem like an odd mark at which to concentrate one's fire, but it will prove crucial to Braine's rejection of the Quinean approach and of several others that are currently popular. He gives three arguments in support of this thesis. The first appeals to the common-sense view that there is a distinction between expressing and presupposing existence.[5] The two statements "There are tame tigers" and "Some tigers are tame," for example, although possessing the same truth conditions, seem to differ in that the latter presupposes the existence of tigers. If the only significant meaning of "exists" is that expressed by the quantifier, then despite this appearance both statements are to be translated as "there exists an x such that x is a tiger and x is tame." This procedure obscures an important difference in meaning. More importantly, it involves the fundamental absurdity of attempting to quantify over the unspecified domain of "all things." The impossibility of taking "all things" as a domain of discourse has been established by a variety of logical and semantic paradoxes (92-93, cf. 73-74). In consequence we

[5] A presupposition is a statement whose truth belongs to the truth-condition both of the statement presupposing it and of that statement's negation (101-02).

must recognize that the distinction between expressing and presupposing existence is a real one, and that although the existential quantifier may be used to express existence, such use always presupposes the existence of a determinate non-empty domain over which the quantification takes place.

The second argument is that the restriction of "exists" to what is expressed by the quantifier leads to the treatment of existential statements as if they were tenseless—as if "there is" were properly taken to mean "there is, was, or will be." This in turn involves an implicit denial of the reality of time. A universal assertion, for example, is on this view equivalent to an infinite conjunction in which some of the conjuncts pertain to future individuals. Such a statement must then be conceived as if made from a "God's eye" point of view, so that the distinction between the possible and the actual becomes a matter merely of causal or epistemic relation to the inquirer (94-95). What is needed is a recognition of a type of existence that is internally tensed; this is a subject to which we will return in Section 7 below.

Finally, Braine argues that singular statements of the form "a is F" are conceptually prior to quantified statements of any type, whether existential or universal. (The notion of conceptual priority is a tricky one; Braine remarks that it "is not a matter simply of the conditions of learning but of internal and contemporaneous conditions intrinsic to understanding as such" [98].) Furthermore, singular statements themselves presuppose the existence of their subjects. The upshot is that every use of a quantifier presupposes not only the existence of the relevant domain but also that of the individual members of that domain, and that this meaning of "exists" is conceptually prior to that indicated by the quantifier.

There is a distinction, then, between what Braine calls "logical existence" and "metaphysical" or "real" existence, and the latter has priority. By what criterion shall we identify the subjects of real existence? The Quinean approach is to search for intertheoretic reductions such that talk about one class of entity (sets, for example) can be eliminated in favor of talk about another class (individuals), and so only the latter declared real. Braine's objection to this is based on the distinction of meaning just

drawn. "If I deny that a class has any metaphysical reality over and above the reality of its members, I do not seem to *mean* that talk of classes is dispensable, but to be using the expression 'metaphysical reality' in some sense not belonging either to logic or to epistemology" (106). He maintains that the history of philosophy bears this out. Berkeley, for example, did not feel it necessary to give a full reduction of matter-talk to idea-talk in order to launch his idealist ontology, nor did any but the most naive of his critics think that his failure to do so was an important objection to his system.

A few other possible criteria are discussed more briefly. One is that of possessing spatio-temporal location. This seems to beg the question in favor of materialism; it also runs afoul of the same objection as the reductionist criterion, that in saying that something "really exists" one does not simply mean that it is spatially and temporally locatable (107). Many philosophers relax the criterion to require only temporality. Braine thinks there is something right about this approach, for temporality and existence are closely linked. But at this point in the argument we have no account of what time is or why it should possess such significance. It is at least plausible that the reality of time is derivative from that of temporal entities, rather than vice versa (107). A third alternative would be to take a broadly idealist line and emphasize appearing in a determinative and coherent fashion to more than one subject. This is too narrow in begging the question against the reality of private visions, and too broad in seeming to admit as real the objects of mass hallucination (118-119, cf. 209).

These brief remarks are scarcely a definitive refutation of any of the alternatives mentioned, but they serve to indicate the scope of the question and some reasons for dissatisfaction with current answers. Braine rests the main weight of his argument on his own constructive account. This begins with an emphasis on the centrality of understanding to our judgments of what is real: we must recognize as real that which we find we must posit in understanding the world around us. That we *do* achieve real understanding, and not merely elaborate redescription at higher and higher levels of generality, he thinks has been adequately

shown by the downfall of positivism. It is important that, contrary to positivist accounts of induction, we do not accord high probability to extrapolations from observed instances unless there is some background of belief that renders the extrapolation reasonable. We must be convinced that the observed correlation is consequent upon something in the nature of the things involved; otherwise we regard it as a mere coincidence or anomaly (66). The natural complement of a positivist account of induction is the Deductive-Nomological model of explanation, in which particular events and less general laws are explained by derivation from more general laws. Against such an account, Braine observes that derivation is never in itself explanatory. To recognize it as such we must also believe that the more general law is expressive of the nature of the things involved in a way that the *explanandum* was not previously known to be (65-66).

So the distinctive feature of real explanation, as opposed to mere redescription, is that of connecting in an appropriate way with the nature of the items involved. Even a cursory examination of successful explanations shows that a "nature" as it is conceived here includes both active and passive elements, the ability to act as well as the ability to be acted upon. This suggests three possibilities. The distinctive mark of the real is either the ability to act, the ability to be acted upon, or both.[6] Clearly, in the explanations themselves there is a certain priority granted to that which acts. Citing the element that acts and explaining its relevance to the situation constitutes "the" explanation proper, the gain made in understanding beyond mere awareness of the *explanandum*. In those rare instances where we can conceive of changes as not due to any causal agency at all—for example, changes in intentional objects presented to the visual field during a dream or hallucination—the mere fact of undergoing change does not carry with it any suggestion of substantiality (120). For these reasons, it seems that the appropriate criterion is causal efficacy. "Only the real in so far as it is real can *cause* anything in its own right, i.e. by the exercise of its nature in an appropriate context" (118).

[6] Compare *Sophist* 247de.

Thus we arrive at a criterion to be used in judging whether something is "metaphysically" real. This criterion will play a key role in the argument to follow.

## 2. Substance and Actuality

Adoption of the causal criterion means that we must recognize as real those entities whose existence is required by our causal explanations. Such explanations are generally couched in terms of substances and their operations, where a "substance" is simply a bearer of active causal powers. Barring objections, then, the causal criterion gives support to a substance ontology. There has been much controversy in the past over whether the appropriate substances to recognize are the middle-sized objects of ordinary experience or the micro-entities of physics. Braine denies that a choice need be made. Granted, there is a distinction between accidental unities, the explanation of whose nature and behavior is in principle reducible to that of their parts, and natural unities, for which the appropriate explanation is not thus reducible (119-121). This distinction would be significant given a reductionist criterion of ontological commitment, under which eliminability of reference carries with it elimination from the furniture of the world. Since we have rejected this criterion, however, we are free to maintain that both the fundamental particles of physics (natural unities by definition) and middle-sized objects (which may or may not be natural unities) are equally substances and equally real.

The greatest threat to substance ontology is posed by analyses of the causal relation that do away with bearers of causal powers. Such a threat may come from two directions. It is sometimes thought that physics supports an ontology of space-time and fields in which "bearers" need play no significant role. Braine denies this on two grounds: first, because the concept of field is intelligible only given the existence of objects that are either the bearers of the field or objects of its action, or both; second, because talk of space similarly presupposes the existence of objects locatable in space, and locatable precisely in virtue of being able to act or be acted upon (55-56, 69). This is not to deny that fields may make up part of the "furniture of the world" in

addition to substances, but only that substances themselves are dispensable.

Empiricist philosophers, on the other hand, have argued that the causal relation is to be analyzed in terms of events or states of affairs rather than causal agents. Again a distinction must be drawn between the question of whether such entities have a place in ontology—which they do, as we shall see—and the question of whether recognizing this place furnishes grounds for dispensing with substance. Braine gives two reasons why it does not. One is that events cannot stand as causal *relata*, for since time is continuous (as must be supposed to avoid Zeno's paradoxes) no two events can ever be exactly temporally contiguous (77, 135).[7] The second reason returns to considerations of conceptual priority. We can refer to or describe events or states of affairs only by nominalizing reporting-statements that presuppose the existence of objects—thus, for example, "Smith's car collided with the wall" becomes "the collision between Smith's car and the wall." In itself this might be thought to indicate something about priority in the order of human knowledge rather than priority in reality. The problem, however, is not one limited to individual events or states of affairs, but to the nature of these entities as a class; what events or states of affairs are simply cannot be made intelligible without presupposing the existence of substance (114-15). A skeptic might still be inclined to ask why considerations of intelligibility should play such a decisive role in ontology. The final answer to this question must await Section 5, when we discuss Kantian objections to Braine's project; for now we remind the skeptic of the premise advanced in Section 1, that the real is that which makes the world intelligible.

Just as the causal criterion leads us to recognize the real existence of substances, so also it leads us to recognize that of events, actions, and states of affairs (or situations). As Braine notes, "no primary substance acts without an 'act' or 'activity,' and the

[7] It will be noted that this argument presupposes that causation of one event by another cannot occur across a temporal gap; so far as I can tell, this is an assumption that Braine does not attempt to justify.

mere possession of a nature by a substance or merely a situation involving substances is not enough" (155). Events, actions, and states of affairs he groups together under the rubric "actualities." Like Aristotle, he denies that any single definition of "actuality" can be given; the best we can do is illustrate the concept by examples, drawing out the systematic interconnections among types of actuality that justify grouping them together under a single term (218-19).[8] Actualities differ from substances in that they fail to be spatio-temporally discrete in a way that would allow them to be counted or grouped under class-concepts (152). They also come in varying degrees of "positiveness," as can be inferred from Aristotle's distinction between first potency, second potency or first act, and second act.[9] The existence of an instance of each higher rung on this ladder presupposes and incorporates that of an appropriate instance of the rung below. Significantly, the existence of the prior potentiality is presupposed not only *qua* potentiality, but also *qua* actuality—for if it were not actual it could not enable the higher degree of actuality to be actual (152-53). So even Aristotelian first potency must be recognized as an actuality, albeit in a lesser sense (a lesser degree of "positiveness") than second potency or second act.

Braine thus accepts the Aristotelian thesis that actuality is prior in definition to potency, but by identifying first potency as actuality he gives this thesis an unaristotelian twist. Potencies are not only expressed by and defined in terms of actualities; they are also *grounded* in actualities, as the condition of the possibility of their existence. And these prior actualities are not themselves expressions of some potentiality in a way that would force analysis in terms of act and potency to cycle forever backward. Analysis comes to an end, and it does so at actuality. "We do not think of an animal's existence as being in the relevant sense an actuality in virtue of its being a realization of some prior potentiality, e.g. Aristotelian matter, but in virtue of its being in

[8] Compare *Metaphysics* ix.6.

[9] The stock example of this distinction is that a man is a knower in one sense when he is of the right type to be able to learn (first potency); a knower in a second sense when he actually possesses knowledge (second potency or first act); a knower in a third sense when he is actually exercising his knowledge. See *De Anima* ii.1 and ii.5, *Physics* viii.4.

some way positive or 'actual' in itself" (153). This confirms the lesson of the conceptual-priority arguments given earlier, that the real existence of substances is what "gives positive character to actualities." If we are to recognize actualities at all, then the real existence of substances must be among them (155).

The identification of the existence of substances as an actuality will be important at a later stage in the argument, when we attempt to specify the difference between created and uncreated being (Section 6). For now it underscores that substance and actuality are distinct ontological categories, neither of which can be reduced to the other, however closely they are intertwined. Both substance and actuality "exist," yet in saying this we use the term "exists" in different senses. As Aristotle maintained, the existence of actuality is focally related to that of substance (82n).[10] Expanding upon this metaphor, Braine suggests that we envision substances as focuses within the ordered structure of actualities.

> Within the structure of non-discrete actualities, there are focuses, namely primary substances, which have reality but are not themselves actualities because picked out by proper logical subject or object-denoting expressions, not signified only by propositional expressions as is the case with actualities. The peculiarity of statements of the existence of substances is that they identify these focuses. What they state *qua* fact is a structural aspect of actuality, rather than an extra element in actuality. (156)

With this ontology in hand, we can turn to consider the more directly theological aspects of Braine's argument.

## 3. The Reality of Time

A crucial premise of Braine's argument is the reality of time. What does it mean to say that time is real, and how does Braine attempt to argue that it is?

First, what it does *not* mean: it does not mean that time is something with positive existence of its own, "real" in the sense in which we have so far been using the term. Braine rejects a

[10] *Metaphysics* iv.2.

substantival view of time for two reasons—on the grounds that it is inconsistent with the Special Theory of Relativity, and because time is conceptually posterior to substance (42, 115). His own view is that "time is something co-constituted, or, if there is such a thing as creation, concreated with the system of things in time: time exists by the very act of the existing of things whose nature is temporal" (42). In a sense time is real precisely by not being real, by not existing complete and as an entity in its own right; for only on such a view can it exist as that which we normally take it to be, an open-ended succession in which the future is simply "not yet." It is this present non-existence of the future that figures crucially in Braine's argument. "The very point of insisting on the reality of time lies in maintaining in clear view the present non-existence, non-establishedness, and non-fixedness of the future" (31).

Braine elaborates his view by contrast with two important rivals. One is the idealism of McTaggart. McTaggart famously argued for the unreality of time based on the conceptual priority of what he called the A-series (events ordered as past, present, and future) to the B-series (events ordered as earlier and later). Against McTaggart, Braine holds that even the ordering of the A-series does not turn on contrasts in modes of experience or knowledge, but on "the stage presently reached in the unfolding of a causal or dramatic history" (44). Another very different way of denying the reality of time is by taking time to be a quasi-spatial fourth dimension, as do many philosophers inspired by relativity theory. On such a view the future tenselessly exists and is in an important sense already fixed at the present. Braine counters this view by appeal to a number of arguments advanced by Peter Geach.[11] The most important of these are: first, that simultaneity is a transcendental concept governed by laws of logic, rather than an empirical relation like neighborhood in space; second, that temporal conjunctions ("when," "while," and the like) function in ways more similar to logical connectives than to spatial conjunctions (35-36, 39, 43).

[11] Peter Geach, "Some Problems About Time," in *Logic Matters* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 302-18.

As was the case in Section 1, these negative arguments provide an overview of the terrain of debate and establish a presumption against some important rivals. Braine's positive case for the reality of time is based on causal realism. His discussion at this point is rather unclear, but he seems to give three separate arguments:

i) Temporal relations are simply that in virtue of which causal relations are possible (41). This is a view supported by modern science and particularly by relativity theory, which treats only what is past from the standpoint of all observers at a given place and time, regardless of velocity, as relevant to the explanation of what occurs there (60). Since causal relations are real, temporal relations must also be real.
ii) Any exercise of active power requires that the agent exercising that power persist through some period of time, and further that the effect be identifiable at some later time (56). Hence there must be temporal relations.
iii) Causal agency, if it is to be real, cannot be merely the working out in our experience of something that in itself already atemporally exists (40, 47). So time is real.

It will be noted that the first two of these arguments arrive only at the conclusion that temporal relations are real. They are thus effective against an idealist position such as McTaggart's, but not against the theories of substantival time or space-like time, both of which acknowledge the reality of temporal relations. The third argument goes further and does seem to establish that time is real, as Braine means that claim to be taken.

If the future history of an entity is not somehow already there, waiting to be unfolded, then presumably it needs a cause in order to come about. This is true quite irrespective of the entity's qualitative stability or alteration; even if the entity undergoes no change at all, its mere continuance is not "given" within its present existence, and so needs a cause. What could that cause be? Evidently not other temporal entities. Quite apart from the danger of infinite regress, it simply is not the case that temporal entities are related to one another in this way. Neither any one nor any set of the entities around me causes me to continue in existence from moment to moment. (Among other puzzles such a view would create is that of specifying *which* one or set this might be.) What about the entity itself? Surely it is simply natural

to a thing to continue in existence from moment to moment unless something else disturbs it. Even then, science tells us, there is no true annihilation, but only a change in the form of matter-energy, so that at the most fundamental level it is simply the nature of the stuff of the universe to continue in existence. Braine replies:

> The continuance of the very stuff of the Universe, the fact that it goes on existing, is not self-explanatory. It is incoherent to say that the very stuff of the universe continues to exist by its very nature since it has to continue to exist in order for this nature to exist or to be operative. Hence, nature presupposes existence.
>
> If we say that something happens according to nature we generally have in mind that it happens in the way that it regularly does. But thus ascribing things to nature explains nothing, since it leaves the question why things regularly behave as they do and, in the example here concerned, why they regularly and reliably continue to exist quite unexplained, so that one has emptied the notion of nature of all explanatory significance. (10)

There are here two arguments. The first is that even on a strong (e.g., Aristotelian) construal of "nature," it makes no sense to say that the nature of a thing explains its continuance in existence from one moment to the next, for the thing has to exist in order for the nature to operate. The obvious reply is that the causal relation spans more than a single moment: nature at time t causes existence at time $t + \Delta t$. Surely that is what the objector really has in mind. Now to posit such trans-temporal causation *may* create a difficulty, but if it does then the onus is upon Braine to explain why. In lieu of such an explanation, this argument appears rather suspect.[12] The second argument is more straightforward. Grant that the objector's causal schema is coherent; what explanation of continuance in existence does it offer? "Nature" cannot really bear in such an explanation any strong sense, for we have no theoretic background or context by which to give it meaning. When we say that it is the nature of water to freeze, for example, we do not mean merely that water always freezes; we can appeal to a theory of water's molecular structure and various physical laws by which to cash out "nature" in more

[12] See also note 26 below.

explicit terms. There is nothing analogous in the case of existence. When one says that it is the nature of things to keep existing, one merely means that they tend to keep existing. That is scarcely explanatory. Perhaps more sophisticated attempts at a naturalistic explanation of continuance in existence could be given, but it seems likely that for similar reasons they will also fail.[13]

So the naturalist is well-advised to give up claiming to be able to explain continuance in existence. But there is a second and stronger line of defense that he might wish to adopt. That is simply to deny that we need to search for a cause at all. As Hume famously argued, not everything that might have been otherwise necessarily requires a cause for the way that it is; we can imagine any event as occurring without a cause, and so its occurrence without a cause is at least in principle possible.[14] Only empirical evidence can answer the question whether a cause is to be sought in a particular case. What form should such evidence take? It is difficult to say in general, but important confirmatory signs include the existence of other theories that have been successful at explaining similar phenomena in the past, and the ability of the proffered explanation to unify some otherwise disconnected body of knowledge. The continuance of things in existence is so utterly *sui generis* that in its case neither of these confirmatory signs appears to be available.[15] Why then should we suppose that it needs a cause? Perhaps continuance in existence is something like what inertia was conceived to be in Newtonian physics, a fact that must be taken as given in any rational approach to the world.

This is an important objection and one that Braine takes quite seriously. The next section recounts his answer.

[13] Several such attempts are examined and refuted by Jonathan Kvanig and Hugh McCann, "Divine Conservation and the Persistence of the World," in *Divine and Human Action,* ed. Thomas Morris (Ithaca: Cornell, 1988), 13-49. This essay is in many ways a useful supplement to Braine's work.

[14] David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* I, iii, 13.

[15] If the postulated cause turns out to possess the attributes of deity, then one might argue that it plays a unifying role relative to considerations brought to the fore by other theistic arguments, such as the design argument. Braine does not examine this possibility.

## 4. The Humean Objection

One way of replying to the objection is to question the inference from conceivability to possibility. Conceivability taken as imaginability proves very little, as philosophers have been pointing out at least since Arnauld's reply to Descartes. Taken as freedom from logical or conceptual incoherence it does show possibility, but then the problem becomes that to establish conceivability requires a particular type of non-existence proof, a proof of the non-existence of a source of incoherence. Such proofs are notoriously hard to come by. "We have no way of proving the non-existence of even logical impossibility within the field of natural arithmetic, except for the proof from truth or actuality, let alone of proving the non-existence of just any kind of conceptual impossibility where more open fields are concerned" (229-30). In general, judgments of possibility must be based on likeness to cases of known actuality or other applications of the argument *ab esse ad posse* (221). To appeal to the mere imaginability of a scenario, as Hume so often does, is ineffectual and misleading.[16]

The Humean will reply, rightly enough, that the burden of proof is not on him to show that the continuance of things in existence without a cause is a real possibility; it is on Braine to show that this is *not* a real possibility. Braine, after all, is the one who is attempting to establish something that goes beyond the common ground conceded by both parties. Advocates of the cosmological argument have generally recognized the force of this challenge and attempted to meet it by invoking some version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR). If every state of affairs requires a cause, as the PSR holds, then the continuance in existence of things without a cause is surely an impossibility.[17]

[16] Braine here draws on William Kneale, *Probability and Induction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 71-72, 77-89. Both Kneale and Braine overlook that conceivability (in the sense of imaginability) may be taken, not as a demonstrative proof of possibility, but merely as *prima facie* evidence of possibility which is to be accepted in the absence of defeaters. See Stephen Yablo, "Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53 (1993): 1-42.

[17] More narrow (and more plausible) versions of the PSR might also suffice at this point. See particularly the version labeled Ps5 by Robert Kane, "Principles of Reason," *Erkenntnis* 24 (1986): 115-36.

Interestingly enough, Braine rejects the PSR. Since this is one of the major differences between him and other advocates of the cosmological argument, his reasons for doing so are worth examining carefully.

Consider the following question (257): Are general principles to be accorded priority in understanding, such that no conclusion can be drawn regarding one example from another without first establishing the relevant general principle; or is priority to be accorded to particular instances, general principles merely serving to codify (with greater or lesser accuracy) an understanding that does not depend on them and can be possessed without them? The former view is characteristic of the rationalist tradition and underlies the great weight placed in that tradition on the PSR. Braine argues that it is in error; true priority resides in the understanding of the particular. One familiar example is that a correct judgment of the rightness or wrongness of an action can be made without any understanding of the general principle of which this judgment is an instance. The same is true in other areas of philosophy: the judgment that something cannot be red and green at the same time, for instance, is intuitively obvious, yet formulating a principle that would underwrite it proves remarkably difficult (258). This is not to say that the capacity to make particular judgments has no more universal "root" or "ground," but only that such a ground need not take the form of the understanding of a law-like proposition. It may, for example, take the form of "the appreciation of some perceptual *Gestalt* or group of perceptual *Gestalten*" (259); that is presumably what is operative in the color case. Such a root or ground, whatever its type, does not first exist fully-formed and merely await deployment. We start with the ability to make judgments in a relatively small number of particular cases, and develop by exercise the ability to make judgments in a larger range of particular cases.

In the case of the concept of cause, our starting point is the explanation of striking events.

> We judge that the bridge was destroyed by a flood, not a bomb and not an excessive load: there was a flood and some people observed the bridge being swept away by it, and there was no bomb and no notable

load. We judge that a person was knocked over by a falling rock, not by a gang of attackers . . . . In these and suchlike ways we apply the concept of 'causal agent' to floods, rocks, people, and so on. (263-64)

We never develop out of this primitive diversity any single univocal concept of cause. Instead, our applications of the concept cluster into what seem to be four distinct causal modes. They are distinct insofar as no one can be reduced to any of the others. They can, however, be arranged in sequence so that each one exhibits the distinctive features of that before it as well as new features of its own. They jointly constitute what Ryle called a polymorphous concept, or what the medievals called a case of analogy of proportionality (72-75, 82n).[18]

What are these four modes? The first is brute physical causation—pushes and pulls and the like—and the others are the action-types characteristic of Aristotelian nutritive, sensitive, and rational soul. What distinguishes the causation characteristic of nutritive soul from purely physical causation is its obedience to teleology. In the case of sensitive soul there is this as well as some degree of knowledge and desire; in the case of rational soul, the same but a heightened degree of knowledge and desire that enables us to speak of choice (78, cf. 291-93). The dominant tendency in the modern era has been to seek to reduce the latter three modes of causation to the purely physical. Materialists exhibit this tendency, of course, but so do dualists insofar as they maintain that intentional action results from a sort of push or pull of the will on the body—for that, in Braine's view, is what talk of volitions amounts to (78). Braine regards such dualism as having been effectively refuted by Wittgenstein and Ryle. The upshot of their criticisms is that we must recognize that intentionality cannot be eliminated from explanations of human behavior.

[18] See Gilbert Ryle, "Thinking and Language," in his *Collected Papers*, vol. 2 (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 258-71. For an explanation of the scholastic terminology used here see William Alston, "Aquinas on Theological Predication" in *Reasoned Faith*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell, 1993), 145-78. Analogy of proportionality is distinct from analogy of attribution, which is a relation of focal meaning like that identified in Section 2 between "exists" as applied to substance and actuality.

> [Intentional] action is a particular mode of causal agency, to which intention is integral as a modal or adverbial aspect and in no way an external previous cause. It is as absurd to regard intention as merely an extrinsic cause of action as it would be to regard looking at a thing as merely an extrinsic cause of seeing it: all seeing is a 'seeing lookingly', and likewise all 'fully human' acting is an acting intentionally. (79)

The ineliminability of intentionality ensures that rational causation is irreducible to any other mode.[19]

Braine's criticism of the Principle of Sufficient Reason is based on this recognition that there are irreducibly distinct modes of causation. The rationalists typically presumed that metaphysical principles are like logical principles in applying uniformly to all things. But since there are fundamental distinctions among types of causation—as well as parallel distinctions among types of being—no metaphysical principles that apply univocally to all things are possible (199-201, 210-12). Instead we must seek local principles to govern each distinctive realm. In view of the priority of particulars for understanding, the appropriate procedure for doing this is the type of induction described by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics*, what Kneale has called "intuitive induction."[20] This is the procedure of drawing out of from the understanding of a particular case the principle that implicitly grounds that understanding. Our understanding that a given thing cannot be both red and green, for example, is grounded in the principle that nothing can be two colors at once (however this principle ought properly to be stated). We do not need many instances of things that cannot be two colors at once in order to arrive at this general conclusion. If we understand the particular as such, in all its particularity, then we understand the principle that it exemplifies.

Now consider again the Humean objection. Braine and the Humean are in agreement that the judgment that a given phenomenon needs a cause must be empirically grounded and cannot be made *a priori*. They differ in that Braine thinks that in the

[19] Braine does not in this book give separate arguments for the irreducibility of the other causal modes.

[20] Kneale, *Probability and Induction*, 30-37 (cited by Braine, 243).

case of the continuance of things in existence such empirical grounding can be found. How? Crucially, what is at issue is not the continuance in existence of things of an indeterminate type, but that of substances as possessors of causal powers (197-98). It is true that we have no experience of an empirical object maintaining some other real thing (as opposed, say, to a mental entity) in existence. But another type of analogue is available—that of the maintenance of a thing in existence with a heightened state of causal power. This is something we witness routinely. When I pick up a pen to write, I impart to it a power—that of expressing my thoughts on paper—that it did not previously possess. The power is derivative and for most purposes scarcely worth noticing, but it is there nonetheless. When I put the pen down, it loses this power. Now the gain experienced by the pen is assuredly much less than that experienced by substances in continuing to exist; in the former case the comparison is to some lesser mode of being, in the latter to not existing at all. Yet we suppose that the gain experienced by the pen requires a cause. Since the difference effected by the continuance of substances in existence is similar, and indeed much greater, it too must require a cause (197-202).

This reasoning fits the pattern of intuitive induction. By examining a particular instance such as that of the pen we come to the conclusion that a positive difference in the causal powers of an object requires a cause. This is a local causal principle that neither relies upon nor entails the PSR. Since the continuance of substances in existence is the greatest such difference known to us, *a fortiori* it too requires a cause.

## 5. The Kantian Objection

A second objection remains to be confronted, one that attacks Braine's argument at an even more fundamental level. The Humean is willing to concede that experience might in principle furnish grounds for believing that continuance in existence requires a cause; what he denies is that it actually does so. A more radical objection, of which Kant may be taken as the progenitor, denies this possibility altogether. Kant maintained that human concepts give no knowledge of things-in-themselves, and

that causality, in particular, is a category imposed on the phenomenal realm by the mind. Hence it cannot be extrapolated beyond that realm to infer the existence of a being that transcends the phenomenal. If Kant is right, then Braine's entire argument, beginning at Section 1, is an illegitimate attempt to apply causal concepts outside the realm of the phenomenal.

As Braine sees it, the issue between himself and Kant is partly one of where to begin.

> Should we begin with second-order considerations of epistemological and methodological kinds and only afterwards allow ourselves to advance to any first-order [i.e., ontological and metaphysical] conclusion, or should we regard the consideration of epistemology and methodology as parasitic upon an underlying level of first-order apprehension of the real? (234-35)

This question was made inescapable by Descartes, whose methodological skepticism fairly explicitly embraced the first alternative. Descartes did not, however, succeed in purging his philosophy of a variety of first-order assumptions inherited from scholasticism, and the same can be said of most of his successors. It is only in Kant that "the principle of the primacy of epistemology, and thereby of the second-order, comes to adulthood" (238).

Braine's reply draws on Spinoza's critique of Descartes and Hegel's critique of Kant. Both critics showed that "something has to be conceded about the knower or thinker if any conclusion even about thought and knowledge is to be reached, and something about the senses if any conclusion about sensory knowledge is to be reached" (241, cf. 236). To that extent, first-order inquiry must take primacy. This is not to say that Kant is wrong in urging a critical attitude toward our faculties and the concepts that they employ. Any first-order conclusion must always be subject to second-order critique; that is required simply in view of the fact that no conclusion can ever be based on all the data that are ultimately relevant (246-47). In fact Braine himself frequently brings to bear second-order considerations, as in the conceptual-priority arguments of Section 2 and the analysis of the concept of cause in Section 4. Kant's error is rather in supposing that the conceptual scheme composed of notions such as those of cause

and substance operates "like a set of restricting spectacles introducing systematic limits on what man is able to know" (245). Such pessimism is not borne out by experience. The history of physics shows that fundamental concepts such as mass and cause can be reinterpreted in ways that could not have been anticipated by those who took as definitive their then-current interpretations. Likewise in mathematics, Gödel demonstrated that there is a capacity for arithmetical proof that outruns what any formal criterion of provability can allow. Both historically and formally, then, "there seems to be no case of a term as general as the terms 'substance' or 'cause' being limited in its disciplined or scientific application by a 'schema' in the way Kant envisaged" (246).

There are thus solid grounds for rejecting Kant's basic orientation. Kantianism is more than a matter of orientation, however; Kant also confronts us with an array of powerful arguments. Braine's counter-attack is limited to one strategic point. This is the Kantian claim that "for a necessity in some principle to arise from something on the side of the object, the very concept which we form of the object would have to be such as to give rise analytically to the principle concerned" (243). Presumably Kant means the term "analytic" to be understood in terms of logic, an analytic proposition being one whose negation would lead to contradiction.[21] If that is what is meant, then Kant's claim is *prima facie* highly implausible.

If we review a wide variety of propositions, some relating to the relations between colours and some having to do with space, the number of its dimensions, its continuity, and so forth, some having to do with motion in its intimate connections with a continuous space and time, some having to do with time, its non-cyclical character and suchlike,

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[21] Kant defines an analytic statement as one in which the predicate is "contained" in the concept of the subject (*Critique of Pure Reason* A6/B10). This definition seems rather to suggest a psychological criterion, an analytic statement being one of which one cannot think the subject without also thinking the predicate. But then it is unclear how analytic statements express a genuine necessity, particularly one arising (as Braine puts it) "from something on the side of the object." In addition, many of the apparently necessary propositions that Braine cites as not logically necessary are also not psychologically necessary (243).

some with relations between solidity, spatiality, and causation, some having to do with relations between time and causation, some having to do with the intrinsic evil in pain and harm or damage, and others with the good in thinking the truth, in knowledge, in rationality, and in many non-controversial aspects of well-being and its structures, it becomes extraordinarily implausible to question that there are many conceptually necessary propositions to deny which implies no such formal contradiction. (243-44)

Such *prima facie* implausibility does not show definitively that Kant is wrong; it merely establishes a burden of proof. Unfortunately, Kant fails to discharge that burden, partly because of the unclarity of his concept of the analytic. We are left with no reason to reject our intuitive sense that non-analytic necessity can arise "from the side of the object." But then there is no need to postulate the mind and its structure of *a priori* intuitions and categories as the source of such non-analytic necessity. And if there is no structure of *a priori* categories, causality among them, then the Kantian objection falls to the ground.

## 6. Composite Being

We can now pick up the thread of the argument where we left it at the end of Section 3. We have established that the continuance in existence of things requires a cause and that this cause is not to be found in any one or any collection of temporal objects. We have not established that there is a single cause rather than many, nor that the cause or causes possess anything like the attributes of deity.

Traditional forms of the cosmological argument usually proceed at this point to discuss the possibility of an infinite regress. The argument is typically that an infinite chain of causes would leave us with no explanation of the phenomenon that originally prompted the search for a cause; hence, although there may be a *finite* chain of causes, it must come to an end in a being that is uncaused in the respect concerned.[22] The possibility of even a finite chain is sometimes excluded at a later stage of the argu-

[22] See William Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), ch. 1.

ment, depending upon precisely which aspect of reality (e.g., change or existence) has been picked out as in need of a cause. Braine wishes to avoid any such bifurcation of the argument. For him, it is important that God is immediately the cause of continuance in existence, and that we apprehend this fact in the same act as that in which we apprehend that God exists (296, 343, 357). He thus employs a different strategy. Taking it as established that the objects of our experience are incapable of causing continuance in existence, he seeks to learn what it is about them that bars them from doing so. The explanation he finds in what he calls their "compositeness." It follows that the cause or causes of continuance in existence must be incomposite. This in turn entails a number of important facts about the cause, including that it is one rather than many.[23]

As Braine uses the term, an entity is composite if there is a real distinction between that entity and its existence (148). A "real distinction" is one that is relevant to efficient causal explanation (147). The mere fact that we pick out two entities by expressions that are not interchangeable does not show that they are distinct in this sense. A lightning bolt and the corresponding electrical discharge, for example, are not really distinct, although the expressions "lightning bolt" and "electrical discharge" are not interchangeable. Real identity is thus a looser notion than Leibnizian identity, which does require intersubstitutibility *salva veritate* in non-intentional contexts (158-59).

Section 2 argued that the existence of a substance is an actuality and so is among the furniture of the world, in the same sense in which all actualities are among the furniture of the world. This does not yet show that a substance and its existence are really distinct. They might stand in the same relation as a lightning bolt and the corresponding electrical discharge, really identical although not Leibnizian identical. What does show that they are really distinct is the fact that the continuance of the substance in existence admits of explanation. We need not insist at this point that it *requires* explanation; the mere fact that an explanation can be envisioned, that the continuance of the

[23] To show that it is personal requires further considerations adduced in Section 8.

substance is the type of thing about which questions can sensibly be raised, shows that the distinction between the substance and its existence is one pertinent to causal explanation (145-47). Note that to be composite is thus not the same as to be contingent. Even if we were to accept Hume's suggestion that the material universe is necessary in the sense of having no cause, it would still be composite in that it would not by its very nature exclude even the possibility of a cause.[24] It would be "*de facto* underivative, not intrinsically so" (149).

Since all temporal substances are such as to admit of explanation, all are composite.[25] Does the converse also hold: are all composite substances temporal? Braine thinks that the answer is yes, but he does not wish his argument to hinge upon it (17-18). Since he is trying to show that compositeness, not temporality, is the root of the inability to cause existence, it is useful for the purposes of argument to allow that there may be atemporal composites. Even they must be unable to cause continuance in existence. Why? Because any composite, even one that is atemporal, is distinct from its own nature (166, 193-96). By a thing's "nature" is meant that aspect of the causal background to the thing's existence that renders its existence possible. The nature of a thing defines and circumscribes the type of action in which its existence can find expression. As Aquinas pointed out, however, to cause existence (or continuance in existence) requires power that is unlimited.

> The gap between being and absolute or unqualified non-being is infinite and requires infinite power if one is to get from one to the other. That is, whereas, granted a framework of nature which might be presupposed in its causal activity, the finite power might achieve a finite effect, by contrast, in order to create things out of nothing or to uphold them in existence without relying upon any of the presuppositions which natural things . . . rely upon, an infinite power is required. (191)[26]

[24] See Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* Part ix.

[25] Braine states this conclusion as if it were dependent on the reality of time (147), but I see no reason why it should be.

[26] For this argument in Aquinas, see *Summa theologiae* I, q. 45, a. 5, ad 3; *De Potentia* q. 3, a. 1, ad 3, and a. 4; also Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), 90-91, which discusses the disagreement on this point between Aquinas and Scotus. Oddly, Braine first rejects this argument

No being whose nature limits its activity can cause existence, simply because no being whose activity is limited by a prior causal background can cause existence.

The cause of existence, then, must be atemporal and incomposite. Its incompositeness means not only that it is identical with its own existence, but also that it is identical with its nature—using the term "nature" now in a slightly different sense. Unlike other entities, the incomposite has no nature as a "quasi-abstract object," for since it has no cause and no explanation there is no causal background to its existence rendering that existence possible. It is identical with its nature only in the sense that it is that in virtue of which it is whatever it is. Its nature is just itself. As Braine draws the contrast:

> In other cases when we say that something is 'such that so-and-so' . . . this [is] true in virtue of something general about it such as might have been exemplified in the case of other things or some character it has which might not have been exemplified by anything; but in this case when we say such things they [are] true in virtue of nothing other than the reality . . . itself, not anything general nor anything which might not have been exemplified at all. (171)

It is for this reason that there can be only one incomposite being. For there to be more than one would require the existence of a corresponding quasi-abstract nature that could be multiply exemplified (170-71).

In denying that God possesses a nature as a quasi-abstract object that He exemplifies, Braine makes common cause with those critics of natural theology who have warned how easily it can become an "idolatry of concepts."[27] As he carefully explains:

(192) only to endorse it later (312), without indicating how his reasoning has changed. So far as I can see, it is an argument that he cannot do without. He does hold that the natures of temporal entities debar them from causing continuance in existence due to the impossibility of something at one time causing something else to be at a later time (193). This does not address the issue of atemporal composites. It also strikes me as a bad argument, for if it worked at all it would work against all causation, not only causation of existence.

[27] Braine cites Kornelius Miskotte, *When the Gods are Silent* (London: Collins, 1967); Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (London: T&T Clark, 1957), vol. ii, pt. 1, ch. 6, sect. 28 (Braine, 335n).

There has been [in the foregoing] no suggestion that the root of there being but one God is in the nature of God, conceived of in a Platonic or rationalist way—it is not in virtue of any quasi-abstract nature or essence that there is a God or that there is only one God. We cannot even say that it is in virtue of the individuality of the nature in the case of God that there is only one God, as if individuality was one property among others or the key property of a conceptual-isable or partly conceptualisable essence: even this would be to make a false concession to the ontologism which would allow the inference, first of existence, from the conceptualisable content of what existence is being asserted or denied of, and then of existence just once . . . . The point of regarding the unity of God, like His existence, as intrinsic to Him is precisely to deny that this unity, any more than this existence, has any root distinct from or in any way prior to Himself. (172-73, cf. 352-53)

## 7. The First Cause and Time

The assertion that the cause of existence is atemporal raises some important questions. As we saw in Section 3, Braine understands temporal relations as those that make causal relations possible. How then can there be an atemporal cause? What could this mean? The issue is not only one of how to explicate the nature of the First Cause and its relation to the world, important though that is. Unless we are given some explanation at this point, the coherence of Braine's entire enterprise is in danger.

Braine believes that the traditional picture of God as "outside" time is misleading. On this view only the effects of God's actions, and not the actions themselves, are to be conceived as taking place in time.[28] Braine remarks:

What has happened in this theory is that the unity of an action as such has been lost sight of or conceived of as compatible with there being intermediates between some primary will-act and its effects—in a view compatible with supposing that, in God, the primary act expressive of will in regard to creation is an eternal act, internal to God's own mind, rather than the performance willed itself. If the communicating of existence as such, as in creating or upholding in existence out of nothing, as

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[28] Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann endorse such a view in their well-known essay, "Eternity" (*Journal of Philosophy* 78 [1981]: 429-58).

I argue in this book, excludes intermediates, then this dissolution of an action into supposed parts (some mental and some material) is excluded beforehand in the case of God's action toward creation in respect of existence . . . . The time of God's acting is not 'in eternity' but here 'in time', at the time of what happens. (130-31, cf. 360-61)

The claim that God is immediately the cause of existence thus neatly dovetails with the rejection of a dualistic model of action in Section 4. That it is proper to say that God "acts now" and "exists now" is in fact already implicit in the causal criterion of existence. Given this criterion, "temporality . . . is internal to existence whenever it is asserted in the primary sense" (129). Unlike our statements and thoughts in regard to, say, number theory, those in regard to God are essentially tensed.

Then what sense does it make to say that God is atemporal? Braine continues:

Thus, the instinct of those philosophers who associated existence with being temporal was not wholly misguided. Their mistake was to think of things which act in time as being in some sense thereby implicitly *contained* within a temporal framework. No such inference can be made. If one describes what is contained in a temporal framework as 'in time', the mistake made by such philosophers as the empiricists, and the early Russell and Moore, has been to identify having a genuinely tensed existence with being 'in time'. This mistake is in fact much older. Many of the convolutions of scholastic discussions in this area, including those of Aquinas, involving peculiar types of time or non-time for the angels, intermediate between time and eternity, and inviting the suggestion that for angels succession involves 'time in the imagination', arise from the same confusion. The opinion I would offer as preferable is that, besides the temporality which enters into all human statements, discourse and thought as such in regard to the real, one can speak of temporality in a different way as *intrinsic* to the nature of a thing in order to signify that the very life or existence of the thing is realized in a succession of states or activities. (131)

The argument for the existence of the First Cause requires only that the First Cause be atemporal in the sense of not passing through a succession of stages, not possessing a life-history that can be analyzed into a series of "temporal parts" as can that of any material substance, including the universe as a whole. This need not prevent it from being temporal in the quite different sense of performing actions that are temporally located. Yet even

to say that the actions of the First Cause are temporally located (as Braine does here) may be misleading insofar as it suggests that time exists apart from them as a framework in which they take place. The actions of the First Cause *create* time—not as a separate entity, but as a necessary concomitant to the creating and perpetuating in existence of temporal things.

> It is as if the existence of things is drawn by the movement of [God's] finger or brush. Thus, for each thing its present existence is constituted or done by the present action of God; its past existence is the expression or realization of God's previous action; and its future existence, if it has any future existence, will be the expression or realization of God's future action; but, since the future in no way yet exists and God's future action in no way yet exists, this action is free and the future (so far as God's action is concerned) is radically open. (135, cf. 47)

Hence the claim that gives this essay its title: "all existing is the action of God" (133). As an aside, let me point out the deep concordance between this claim and the position of Section 2 that existence is an actuality. Aristotle developed the concept of actuality as an extension of that of action. Both are expressed by a single Greek term, *energeia*, and the notion of action remains integral to that of actuality as its clearest and most intuitive case.[29] To understand the most central and important kind of actuality—existence itself—as a form of action thus results in a remarkable intellectual economy.

The understanding of existence as divine action can go far toward making sense of puzzles about God's relation to the world. One notorious puzzle is that of how God, being eternal, can know propositions that seem to require the knower to exist temporally—for instance, that it is now a given time. Braine replies:

> God can indeed know time for what it is in its true character, and the present as the present, not just as a member of a series of things ordered from the earlier to the later, but only because He knows the 'now' of time precisely as the dramatic now. That is, He knows the 'now' as indeed now, not by a theoretical, factual, or propositional observer's

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[29] See John Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 105-19.

knowledge, but by the practical knowledge which an agent has of what he does in his doing of it . . . . The agent does not correlate a 'now' in an 'outer' world, the arena of his action, with another 'now' in his 'inner' life of thoughts, experiences, intentions, and decisions: rather, he knows his own action, only secondarily by observation, but . . . primarily simply because it is what he does intentionally; and in this knowledge he knows the 'now' of his action as no different from the 'now' of the arena of his action. Likewise there can be no question of God correlating a 'now' in an outer created world with another 'now' in his inner life: rather, He, no less than other agents, knows what time is and knows the dramatic now as indeed 'now' precisely in knowing this dramatic now as the juncture or take-off point of His action in the world. (44-45)

It has long been traditional to understand God's knowledge of the world as like an artisan's knowledge of his works.[30] Braine substitutes for that image the rather different one of an agent's knowledge of his actions. This is what Anscombe has called practical knowledge as distinct from theoretical knowledge.[31] The net effect of understanding divine knowledge in this way, coupled with the rejection of the traditional picture of God as "outside" time and of the dualistic model of action that it presupposes, is to underscore the intimacy of God's engagement with the world. The created world is indeed at least as much a thing done as a thing made.

As we noted at the outset of this essay, however, such an understanding of creation can raise questions about the reality of creaturely freedom and secondary causation. It should be clear by now how Braine would respond to such questions. Causal realism is the foundation of his argument, and unless it is presupposed the argument goes nowhere. The First Cause upholds things in existence with their natures, but a nature cannot exist unless there can also be action in accordance with that nature. If the nature is to be the nature *of* a particular thing, then the

[30] E.g., *Summa theologiae* I, q. 14, aa. 8, 11, 16.

[31] Elizabeth Anscombe, *Intention* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1958), sections 28-33, 45, 48. Cf. Peter Geach, "God's Relation to the World," in *Logic Matters*, 318-27, for an anticipation of Braine's suggestion that God's knowledge of the world is practical knowledge; and for a much earlier anticipation (not mentioned by either Geach or Braine), see Plotinus, *Enneads* iv.4.9, 12, 15.

action must also be the action of that thing, not of any other agent. Thus "it is the created subject or *suppositum* which brings its nature or dispositions into act by acting . . . . [The First Cause] gives to the created existence which it causes the character, not of a mere state or situation, but of an activity—something in itself active" (204).[32]

One important issue that Braine does not address is that of divine foreknowledge. His view gives rise to divergent tendencies. On the one hand, his emphasis on the reality of time and his attempt to understand divine knowledge as practical knowledge make it hard to conceive how God can literally know the future. For, as Braine so often asserts, the future is simply "not yet"; how then can it be an object of knowledge? (This does not exclude that God might accurately predict the future, nor that He might know those aspects of the future that will be directly within His control.) On the other hand, by asserting that God is atemporal Braine commits himself to the traditional view that God is not subject to change. Since God's knowledge-states are unchanging, it follows that whatever He knows at one time He knows at all times. A brief allusion to the subject suggests that Braine would endorse the latter of these tendencies (96n), but the issue is badly in need of further discussion.

At this point in the argument, however, even to speak of the First Cause as if it possessed knowledge and of its action as if this were intentional action is premature. We have not yet examined whether the First Cause is personal. That is the next and final stop on our tour of Braine's work.

## 8. The First Cause and Personality

Section 4 distinguished four modes of causality: material, vegetative, animate, and rational. There is no reason why only these

[32] Compare Alfred Fredosso, "Medieval Aristotelianism and the Case Against Secondary Causation in Nature," in *Divine and Human Action*, 74-118. Fredosso argues that the only consistent form of occasionalism is what he calls the "no-nature theory," closely allied to Berkeleyan idealism. This lends support to Braine's claim that if God does create things with natures, then occasionalism (and the denial of secondary causation generally) cannot be right.

four should be possible; presumably, however, any further mode would have to subsume or otherwise be related to one of these four in order to qualify as a form of causality at all (292). The question now arises of how we are to understand the causality exercised by the First Cause. Does it match any of these, or does it somehow transcend them all? Note that there are two ways in which the First Cause might be considered personal: either by exercising the rational mode of causation as its highest, much as human beings do, or by exercising some other mode that subsumes the rational mode, just as the rational mode subsumes those below it. When it is necessary to observe the distinction between these two, we shall speak of the latter as the First Cause's being "supra-personal."

To properly address this question requires that we again examine the concept of cause. Consider a case that has stretched and tested causal concepts throughout history: the mind-body problem. Despite the variety of solutions that have been offered, there seem to be certain common presuppositions guiding inquiry. Even materialists have recognized that to explain mental phenomena requires the identification, within the material base, of "structures of function and activity isomorphic with the structures supposed to be involved in thinking; that is, the attribution of thinking to the material is alleged to be grounded in some appropriate structures within the material realizations of the nature of the material, not foreign to it" (282). Why this restriction? Evidently because that is simply what explanation requires. There must be some structural and functional isomorphism, even of a very general kind—even of a kind not envisaged as possible before the explanation becomes available—if the connection between cause and effect is to be made intelligible. Otherwise we could merely assert that brains do think, and so be done with it. The moral to be drawn is that, for something to be a cause, "it has to have a quality, structure, or constitution formally adapted to or reflected in that of which it is the cause . . . . We have no basis in example or otherwise for doubting the necessity, if the notion of causal agency is appropriate to a certain being at all, that the action will be expressive of what the thing is in itself" (282-83). This view of causation will be familiar

to many readers as the one that Hume attempted to dethrone. In view of the failure of the positivism descended from Hume, discussed in Section 1, it should be no surprise that the earlier conception of causality is left in command of the field.

One important objection to this principle is the success of theories of action at a distance. They seem to present a case where causation is conceived as external or adventitious, consisting merely in a correlation between movements rather than an actual exercise of power. That is true enough, Braine concedes, but it is also the very reason why action at a distance remains problematic. The inclination to regard a mere correlation of movements as not really explanatory has always been widespread; nor, in light of the anti-Humean arguments already made, is there any good reason why it should be resisted. The proper way to regard theories of action at a distance is as assuming that Nature itself is the causal agent responsible for the observed regularities—that is, Nature has an internal constitution, and the observed regularities are expressive of that constitution (189).[33]

Now the First Cause causes the continuance in existence of many things—trees, rocks, stars, and, most notably, persons. Can we infer anything from this about its character? Obviously we cannot infer that the First Cause is rocky or arboreal. The causation of any particular genus of existing things tells us nothing about the First Cause, for an adequate account of the existence of things *qua* members of a genus can be given by natural science. "Person," however, is not a genus. To be personal is an irreducibly separate mode of existence, one defined by exercise of the rational mode of causation. Just as the rational mode of causation subsumes the others, so the personal mode of existence subsumes the other modes of existence; thus, by examining its implications for the nature of the First Cause we implicitly examine those of the others as well. The principle that an effect is expressive of the nature of its cause leads directly to the conclusion that the First Cause must be personal in the broad sense

[33] I take it that Braine is thus committed either to counting Nature as a substance, or to including Nature alongside substance and actuality as a distinct element of his ontology. He does not address this point explicitly.

defined earlier (284-85). For if the First Cause were not personal, its causation of the continuance in existence of persons would be, as Braine puts it, "out of a hat." Persons would be given existence "without there being in the nature of their cause of existence anything connected with 'what they are' in respect of being personal" (284).

What about the question posed earlier: Is God personal in the strict sense, or supra-personal? This Braine declines to answer (293-95). To assume God to be supra-personal is certainly plausible, and would be rendered almost inevitable if we knew that human beings fully and completely exemplify rational causation. As it happens, however, human beings "realize personhood only in ways that are in many ways limited and deficient" (272), so that for all we know it is more appropriate to regard the First Cause as alone fully personal, rather than as supra-personal. Does anything hinge on this question? Although Braine does not spell this out, I take it that there are implications for the nature of religious language. The different causal modes are related by analogy of proportionality (82n). To speak of God as supra-personal would therefore be an analogical form of discourse, whereas to speak of God as personal would be a univocal form of discourse. William Alston has recently argued that Aquinas was mistaken to infer from divine simplicity (or, in Braine's terms, incompositeness) that predicates applied to God and creatures cannot be univocal.[34] Since Braine allows at least the possibility that God is a person in the same sense in which human beings are persons, I take it that he would agree with Alston on this point.

Christian doctrine, of course, has regarded God as supra-personal in a quite different sense, as comprising three persons (*hypostaseis* or *subsistentiae*) rather than one. Nothing in the argument so far need exclude that possibility. Divine incompositeness rules out distinctions relevant to efficient causal explanation; it does not rule out distinctions relevant to other types of explanation, such as those in terms of knowledge or desire. Only the latter are at issue in Trinitarian doctrine.

[34] Alston, "Aquinas on Theological Predication" (cited above, n. 18).

> The personal acts of knowing and loving in which God's life is represented as consisting presuppose the persons as objects of love and knowledge without there being any order of efficient causal priority between Them: so even in God there is some distinction, at least according to Christian doctrine, pertinent to some kind of explanation, between subject (*hypostasis*, *subsistentia,* or *suppositum*) and actuality . . . but no distinction relevant to efficient causal explanation. (122)[35]

So there is a distinction to be drawn between types of distinction: only one type, that relevant to efficient causal explanation, is ruled out by divine incompositeness. Rightly understood, however, incompositeness does provide important insights into some further divine attributes. We have already seen that to bridge the gap between absolute non-being and being requires infinite power (Section 6). Since God is a person, the activity of sustaining in existence is not His only activity; He must be possessed, at a minimum, of life, intelligence, and love as well. Since He is incomposite, however, anything shown in regard to the degree of one such activity applies to all. Hence God's life, love, and intelligence must also be infinite (312). Nor are these activities distinct from God; again because of incompositeness, all must ultimately be the single divine actuality regarded under different modes of signification; there can be no distinction in God between *is* and *has*. As Braine explains:

> It is not just that God possesses active power because He causes the continuance in existence of created things with active power, but that He is the active power, activity, or actuality which . . . grounds or energises all created actuality or activity. To express the point with a flourish of rhetoric, we might say that God is the actuality which gives actuality and the character of being an actuality to every other actuality, or, as some with less discipline have said . . . God is existence, activity, vigour, life, and love itself. (311-12)

Statements such as this one, although highly traditional, are often regarded as suspect because they seem to reduce God to something like an idea or a property. One way to view Braine's

[35] Although Braine gives no references at this point, he is correct that according to traditional Christian teaching the relations of origin in the Trinity are not efficient causal relations. See *Summa theologiae* I, q. 27, a. 1 and q. 33, a. 1, ad 1.

argument is as an attempt to reinterpret divine simplicity along the lines, not of an idea or property, but of an actuality. As he suggests elsewhere, the best image for this simplicity is not a point, but a furnace (133).

The attributes of life, intelligence, and love are trans-generic, for they define a mode of existence (the personal mode) rather than a particular genus. Now it happens that such positive trans-generic attributes are also those in virtue of which we evaluate things as good, great, or beautiful (318). It follows that since God exemplifies these attributes in infinite degree, He is infinitely good, great, and beautiful. "The First Cause is the primordial archetype of whatever in the world is the object of any such pro-evaluation in respect of what makes it thus to be valued. Thus there is nothing positive in creation which makes anything to be valued which is not exemplified pre-eminently in the First Cause" (318).

This conclusion, as sweeping as it is, still leaves many questions unanswered. The most important is this: Should we conceive of God "not only as First Cause and person, but as a Father, all of whose work in creation is the work of Love, so that beneath all is not only a mind but a heart"—or would to do so be merely a "romantic and sentimental" indulgence in anthropomorphism (326)? On the principles already laid down, if self-giving love is a perfection of persons then it must be present pre-eminently within the First Cause. The question is whether it truly is a perfection of persons. Cultures influenced by Judaism or Christianity affirm that it is; other cultures, such as that of ancient Greece or those influenced by Buddhism, assert that it is not (322-23).

We thus reach a point where further elucidation of the nature of the divine depends on one's understanding of the perfection of persons, but this in turn depends on one's attitude toward at least the normative claims of Judaeo-Christian revelation. This is a fitting point at which to bring a purely philosophical examination to a close. Further progress is impossible without confronting the claims of revelation. What must be sought is an integrated conception of the perfection of both God and man,

and of how man as person can come to know God as Person. Braine writes in conclusion:

> The situation is then this: part of creation has become, as the human species has emerged, reflective, reflective upon the world, upon itself, and upon God. Within this context, each fresh aspect of personhood as it comes to light in human thought and awareness in one act shows something of man and something of God, something of the workings of this creation and something of the character of God's dispositions for creation as a whole. Man's recognition of God is like one person uncertain as to whether he recognizes another, initially even indeed whether he is having to do with another person or 'thou' at all, and who, stage by stage, gets to know the other in new aspects and, as the development proceeds, gets to know himself in new aspects in the same acts. (332)

# THE RECTITUDE OF INCLINATION

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OF THE MOST plausible mainline treatments of the relation of inclination to action and of their combination to moral estimation—Kantian, Classical Utilitarian, and Aristotelian-Thomist—only the third, remarkably enough, provides for the possibility of intrinsic rectitude as regards inclination. For Kant, of course, inclination is not only indifferent to morality but censurable as a criterion for action; indeed, any act done from inclination is, for Kant, pre-moral at best and immoral at worst. Classical Utilitarianism would appear to hold that the desire for pleasure, since it is correct by nature, must also be indefectibly and intrinsically correct. But this is not so, since in any choice situation an inclination toward a given pleasure, right by nature, may be counterbalanced by competing claims, whether these claims themselves arise from other inclinations within the one moral subject or from distinct subjects with differing claims. Hence, Classical Utilitarianism must accept a doctrine of extrinsic correctness as regards the evaluation of any inclination unless the version in question can establish a universally valid overriding principle of right—in which case it is Utilitarianism no longer but some form of deontological ethics. Only in the moral thought of Aristotle and Aquinas do we actually find a plausible case for the rectitude of inclination. And it is therefore surprising that so little attention has been paid this and that so many doctrinal Aristotelian-Thomists seem unaware of it.

For many scholars, otherwise well acquainted with the basic philosophical views defended by St. Thomas Aquinas in his

Aristotelian commentaries, remain surprisingly unfamiliar with one of the most interesting parts of his metaphysics of morals: right appetite, inclination, or emotion as an integral part of moral science, moral activity, and reflexive knowledge of the morality of conduct and of disposition.[1] I should like to set out what seem to me to be the general Aristotelian-Thomist views, as expressed in the commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and to develop from them a full account of intrinsic, extrinsic, stable, and *per se* rectitude as regards inclination or appetite. The first step in this development requires us to consider whether a moral science is possible and, if so, of what kind it must be.

## I

Initially both St. Thomas and Aristotle appear to neglect altogether the problem whether there can be moral science as such. In listing the five intellectual virtues (understanding, science, wisdom, prudence, and art) neither mentions a science of right action. Would such a discipline be theoretical? Ordinarily the theoretical sciences in Aristotle and Aquinas perfect only theoretical powers. Does right action fall only under prudence? Prudence ordinarily is taken to be a practical virtue, not one specifically pertaining to the sciences.

Three solutions to the difficulty offer themselves at once: first, moral science belongs essentially among the theoretical disciplines, even where allowance is made for the inclusion of practical elements in some methodologically defensible way; second, it is science but only in a highly derivative and improper sense and, in fact, is more correctly treated as providing something like a schema for the exercise of the cardinal virtues, especially prudence; third, it is thoroughly scientific in the strict and unqualified sense of the term, yet essentially not a theoretical but a practical discipline.

[1] It is surprising how little serious attention seems to have been paid to Aristotle's remark in *Ethics* VII, 3, 1147a26-28, that, while the immediate conclusion of theoretical reasoning is affirmation, the immediate result of practical reasoning is action.

The first solution, as one might easily imagine, has been championed by many of the most illustrious commentators. John of St. Thomas appears to hold that moral science is, as such, purely theoretical, even though it has practical application in prudential application.[2] Maritain seems to believe that it is the theoretical treatment of a subject matter intrinsically practical in nature.[3] Lottin holds that it is speculatively practical—a mixture

[2] "Scientia moralis potest dupliciter considerari; uno modo, ut etiam includit prudentiam, alio modo, ut eam excludit et solum versatur circa cognitionem virtutum speculando. Primo modo habet rationem practici ex parte prudentiae, quam includit, et utitur illo principio practico: Bonum est faciendum—modo practico" (*Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus*, ed. B. Reiser, vol. 1, *Ars Logica* [Turin: Marietti, 1930], II P., q. 1, a. 4 [p. 276]). "Si vero scientia moralis secludat prudentiam et solum tractet de materia virtutum definiendo, dividendo, etc., est speculativa . . . . Nec utitur principiis practicis aut modo practico, id est ut moventibus et inclinantibus affective, sed praecise speculativis, quatenus cognoscunt naturam virtutum et prudentiae in ratione veri, ut in *Ethicis* . . . videri potest. Et ita bene potest aliquis esse insignis philosophus ethicus et theologus et imprudens peccator" (ibid., II, P., q. 1, a. 4 [p. 277]). Hence John of St. Thomas concludes with perfect consistency: "Neque est inconveniens, quod non detur scientia practica, si vere et proprie scientia est, qua scientia procedit resolvendo et definiendo, practica movendo et componendo" (ut supra, p. 277).

Nor has the significance of this conclusion escaped his admirers. "This view is thoroughly unaristotelian and constitutes a paradox never fully explained" (*The Material Logic of John of St. Thomas*, trans. Yves Simon et al. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955], p. 592). But then these same admirers often go on to countenance a merely modified version of the basically "unaristotelian" position. "True, the theory of the practical sciences in Aristotle is far from clear. . . . A practical science is necessarily an ambiguous entity, less scientific than a theoretical science, less practical than a prudential habitus" (pp. 592-593). Cp. also John Naus: "Practical science is in a way speculative; theoretical science can be practical as to its object" (*The Nature of the Practical Intellect According to St. Thomas Aquinas* [Rome: Gregoriana, 1959], p. 201), and William A. Wallace: "Practical science is not completely practical knowledge, and in this it is distinguished from prudence, and at the same time it is not completely speculative knowledge . . ." (*The Role of Demonstration in Moral Theology* [Washington, D.C.: Thomist Press, 1962], p. 79).

[3] "What moral philosophy thus prepares and gathers up in view of operations to be directed from afar, is knowledge whose structure is wholly intellectual, whose truth implies neither regulation by right appetite nor affective motion, and which examines its different objects according to the laws of ontological analysis, *dividendo et resolvendo*, in order to grasp their intelligible constituent. Thus in moral philosophy the mode of science is not practical but speculative *as to the fundamental equipment of knowledge and as to the structure of notions and definitions*" (Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. G. B. Phelan, J. Maritain, et al. [New York: Scribners, 1959], pp.457-458).

of the theoretical and the practical, guaranteed scientific status by its theoretical part alone.[4]

The second solution appears to me to abandon all hope for a really proper science of morals and should, therefore, be adopted only as a last resort.

Despite both its comparative neglect and its *prima facie* improbability, and despite the almost uniform adherence of the best commentators to a solution of the first type, a solution of the third type seems to the present author to be the correct one and, in fact, to be a pre-requisite for avoiding either Kantian or Utilitarian consequences. But it is not easy to see the significance, or even the likelihood, of this third solution without a careful investigation into texts scattered about St. Thomas's commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. So in defense of this third alternative, I should like to set out what appears to me to be the correct view of the matter, to extend and amplify it somewhat beyond St. Thomas's own words, and to draw a few general conclusions.

The detailed treatment of the question requires, as we should expect, the traditional distinction between truth that is theoretical and truth that is practical. The first, of course, is the product of the mind's agreement in judgment with the nature or character of an object, especially in virtue of some necessary or essential property of that object. The second, according to Aristotle and Aquinas, is the product of the mind's agreement in judgment with what might be called "correct appetite" or "correct aversion and inclination" as a directly perceived datum of immediate, inner, mental presentation. Truth in the first sense is, thus, what is usually called truth in the strict or narrow sense of the word, while truth of the second sort might more aptly be called the truth of integrity or the truth of inner rectitude in a judgment

[4] "La science morale . . . est à fois théoretique et pratique. Il faut donc d'abord s'enquérir de la théorie de la moralité, c'est-à-dire des conditions requises pour qu'un acte humain soit moralement bon; il importe ensuite d'envisager la pratique de la moralité, à savoir la manière dont s'acquiert et s'organise une vie moralement bonne. De là deux parties: la théorie de la vie morale: la pratique de la vie morale" (Dom Odon Lottin, O.S.B., *Principes de Morale*, vol. 1 [Louvain: Editions de l'Abbaye du Mont César, 1946], p. 16).

of value. But there is an important further qualification to this distinction, one that bears upon any scientific status claimed for a practical discipline in the third solution. The sense in which both the true, as truth narrowly construed, and the integral, as truth more broadly construed, agree is a univocal one. For in both a judgment occurs; in both that judgment is an *adequatio;* and in both the judgment is called either true or false by reference to that *adequatio*. Indeed, calling truth of the second sort the "truth of integrity" is not far from what St. Thomas actually says about its "conformity" with reality; for the chief source of such truth will manifest itself, according to St. Thomas, in the experience of the virtuous—especially the prudent. So I should like now to clarify in detail this twofold *adequatio* and to indicate why the truth of integrity, truth of the second sort, is a fully objective truth, differing from theoretical not in its nature but in the grounds to which we would appeal in calling it an *adequatio*.

After discussing the moral virtues in three earlier books of his commentary on the *Ethics*, St. Thomas defines the intellectual virtues in Book VI.[5] Observing that the measure of morality is the determination of correct or right reason, he then asks what is meant by rectitude of reason.[6] He answers by making an initial distinction: there are two species of correct reason, two senses to the concept of the rectitude of reason, depending upon a difference in object. The object of scientific reason is what is "with necessity." The object of deliberative or estimative reason is what is but without necessity.[7] He elaborates no further at this point; but earlier on, he had defined the object of theoretical reason as being insofar as it is considered but not established or ordained by reason; and the object of practical reason as being insofar as reason had a hand in its production or ordination. So we may say very generally that a theoretical science takes being insofar as it is an object of that consideration whose aim is to ascertain the truth in the light of some necessary or essential

[5] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum Aristotelis*, ed. R. A. Gauthier, in *Opera Omnia*, Leonine edition, vols. 47.5 & 47 (Rome: S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1969), VI:1109-1123.

[6] Ibid., VI:1110.

[7] Ibid., VI:1118-1123.

characteristic; and that a practical science takes being insofar as it is an object of that production or ordination whose aim is to produce or order something in the light of supervenient necessary truth. What is crucial to note here is that in no instance does either Aristotle or St. Thomas identify necessary truths as *per se* theoretical. Indeed, the alethic modal status of a truth is prior to and in principle independent of its status in a scientific scheme. In the view of the present author, John of St. Thomas (see footnote 2 above) bases his considerations about moral science on this assumption, that knowledge of the necessary is *per se* theoretical. Yet even though necessary truth figures largely, even chiefly, in the determination of the theoretical sciences, necessary truth and theoretical science are not coordinated as part and whole, for not all necessary truths possess only a theoretical import.

Having noted, however, that the standard of theoretical reason is conformity to existing being through knowledge of its nature, St. Thomas asks a perfectly natural and predictable question: What, if anything, is the standard of practical reason and how does conformity to such a standard occur?

Here he makes a crucial connection between reason and appetite by attending to a well known Aristotelian analogy between the two.[8] Reason reaches its goal, the truth, by affirming and denying (judgment, *praedicatio, enuntiatio*). Appetite reaches its goal, the good, by pursuit and avoidance. Thus reason can be called correct or incorrect only in reference to some judgment while appetite can be thus called only in reference to some course of pursuit or avoidance. Is there a further structural parity that would permit us to say that a certain judgment "called for" a certain appetitive, affective, emotive, or inclinatory response, or vice versa, that a certain response "called for" a certain judgment? Following Aristotle very closely at this point, St. Thomas holds that such a parity exists when the judgment of reason and the motion of appetite, affection, emotion, or inclination (hereafter "appetite") converge in appropriate ways upon a single object: this occurs in choice, the election of a means to an

[8] Ibid., VI:1128.

end. In choice, he avers, the reason either affirms or denies as having a certain axiological or value property what the appetite either pursues or avoids in respect of this axiological property. Practical reason in moral judgment, then, is directed to ordaining a choice whose object is not only good but rightly desirable or appetible. Accordingly, if there is to be moral science, among its tasks lies the determination of which objects are correctly desirable in reference to rational choice and of which objects of rational choice should be elected when they are desired.

St. Thomas is now in a position to introduce his reading of Aristotle's doctrine of correct reason in both theoretical and practical sciences.

> . . . the good and evil of the mind . . . which is theoretical but not practical, consists simply in truth and falsehood, so that absolute truth is its good and absolute falsehood its evil. Now to declare what is true and what is false is the task of all intellect. But the good of the practical intellect is not absolute truth but conformable truth, namely, what agrees with correct appetite.[9]

By this "conformable truth" St. Thomas means what we have called the truth of integrity or inner rectitude of judgment. His distinction of practical from theoretical truth may be looked upon as the outcome of a truncated argument by elimination. To what standard, we might ask, does practical reason conform, when it judges correctly that a certain object is to be chosen or a particular course of action followed? It cannot be to the mere goodness, the goodness *simpliciter*, of the proposed object of choice; for this goodness is found in the object in virtue of its nature and makes the object desirable as such. Such a criterion would be inadequate, for every possible object of choice, so considered, is desirable; but not all such objects are equally right or wrong to choose. Neither can a judgment expressive of the choice—"this and not that is to be done or admitted"—conform merely to the actual ensuing choice without vicious circularity. Nor, similarly, will further deliberation solve the problem in any case where the known attributes of the object are insufficient to determine more than mere goodness or are inadequate to distinguish

[9] Ibid., VI:1130.

the object as preferable to alternatives. But what, then, remains, as a standard for right choice, right action, and a correct judgment expressive of the choice? St. Thomas seems to be saying that it is correct appetite as such, the directly experienced inclination of the good agent to his final end: happiness. Thus rectitude of appetite, emotion, inclination, or desire stands in tandem with rectitude of choice regarding any object of such appetite, emotion, inclination, or desire, and with the truth of the judgment that the given object or course of action is, indeed, the one to be chosen.

Now, ostensibly, this just pushes the problem back one stage. How are we to say when an agent is sufficiently well disposed so as to guarantee the rectitude of his practical judgment, the rightness of his appetite, and the objective truth of the judgment expressive of his choice? Four questions are sufficient to state and solve the terms of this problem: a) how is practical reason *said* to be correct in relation to appetite; b) how is practical reason *known* to be correct in relation to appetite; c) how is appetite *said* to be correct in relation to reason; d) how is appetite *known* to be correct in relation to reason? St. Thomas lays the foundation for a completely precise answer to each question by noting an initial difficulty, the one to which we have just called attention.

> . . . if the truth of the practical intellect is determined by comparison with right appetite, but right appetite is determined by the fact of its agreement with right reason, a vicious circle appears to follow.[10]

The solution lies in distinguishing two moments in our application of the term "correct" to reason and to appetite: an ontological moment and an epistemological moment.

> There is in the soul a natural habit of first principles of action which are the universal principles of the natural law.[11]

Aside from difficulties as to the extension of the term "natural law," it is still quite clear that St. Thomas is attributing necessary and axiomatic status to certain moral judgments—those that

[10] Ibid., VI:1131.

[11] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (Ottawa: Studii Generalis O.P., 1941), I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

express first principles of action, such as "Good is to be done and pursued, evil declined and avoided." Some such moral judgments are known not by instruction but by innate cognitive power. We might clarify this nativist thesis in terms of the judgments themselves and the character of the objects about which they are made. Let us say that a moral judgment, "X is to be pursued as good," places some axiological property in relation to some object. Goodness, badness, or some such thing is ascribed to or withheld from the object by such a judgment. If ascribed, the judgment is affirmative, if withheld negative. St. Thomas would then be saying that certain moral affirmations and denials are not merely true as such but known with necessity and of themselves to be true (*per se nota*). Indeed, if it were not likely to create misunderstandings, we could even say that such moral affirmations and denials could be known as first judgments *synthetic a priori*. So if such a judgment is affirmative and *per se nota*, the object to which the property has been ascribed is known *per se* to possess the property, while if the judgment is negative, the opposite is known.

Such judgments—and they may start out as very few in number—present themselves not merely as principles upon which the truth of others rests, but as affirmations and denials whose terms are seen at once to belong together or apart. Indeed, these might be called the very source of our knowledge of moral concepts; for the juxtaposition of object and property by the mind, in either a positive or a negative mode, confers positive epistemic status on the truth of the affirmation or denial expressed. St. Thomas would say, I believe, that such truths *per se nota* form the foundations of the metaphysics of morals and that knowledge of them constitutes the natural knowledge of that happiness which is our distinctive proper good. Their possession gives anyone the ultimate standard, theoretical or practical, by which any choice, desire, inclination, or judgment of election can either be said to be correct or be known to be correct.

Yet simply as first truths, they may still lie unapplied. A further principle is needed for their implementation; and in St. Thomas's view, the elimination process considered above requires, as an adequate working principle of application, some

initial harmony between reason and appetition. If there is to be moral science, the agent must have—at least by endowment—a directly perceivable inclination to choose so as to be happy, as this happiness is revealed by the knowledge of first truths. Such inclination is what is meant by correct appetite.

Assuming a preliminary and unperverted knowledge of these first truths, other truths are discoverable by the application of first truths to the life situation; and, thus, a corpus of moral knowledge, derived ultimately from the application of first truths, comes to be built up for the individual and for society.

St. Thomas the theologian will, of course, add to this. Revealed truths concerning value, character, and conduct may supplement the developing body of moral knowledge; but the position of these revealed truths within the body of moral science will be as parts among other parts within the whole—even when such revealed truths are of overriding significance in comparison with others. The manner in which they come into play as regards choice, judgment, and conduct, will be purely a function of their status as parts within the whole. They will not work in some peculiar or autonomous way, divorced from moral truths known apart from revelation proper.

Thus we may say that the two "moments of rectitude" in reason and in appetite are not circularly related. They differ as *causa essendi* and as *causa cognoscendi*—that by which something is and that by which it is known to be. Appetite is *said* to be correct insofar as it inclines to an object whose choice accords with the body of moral knowledge, mediate and developed as well as immediate, primary, and *per se nota*. Similarly, a particular judgment, "X is to be chosen or admitted," and the ensuing choice of X are *said* to be correct by reference to the same standard, the known corpus. It is in this sense that the truth of integrity, St. Thomas's "conformable truth," and truth as more narrowly conceived are univocal. Exactly the same kind of *adequatio* founds both: the knowing conforms to the object known, not vice-versa. Accordingly, correct practical reason and correct appetite have one and the same *causa essendi* and rest on first moral truths whose status is objectively necessary and knowable as such. This makes such knowledge both practical and scientific.

It suffices to answer questions a) and c) above. To answer b) and d) further distinction is needed. Consider, first, question b): How is practical reason *known* to be correct in relation to appetite? There are two cases. If the truth of the judgment of choice, "X is to be chosen or admitted," is already certain, the rectitude of the judgment and of the expressed choice are known through accord with the prior known corpus of moral knowledge, and a movement of appetite, emotion, or inclination can add no efficacious countervailing evidence. But if it is the other way about, and "X is to be chosen or admitted," is not already known, then the appetite adds the needed evidence. It is by knowledge of my appetite that I shall know the status of my putative choice. An inclination or aversion to X will be the *causa cognoscendi* of the status of the judgment. This suffices to answer question b). Now to d): How is appetite *known* to be correct? Again, there are two cases.

If the truth of the judgment "X is to be chosen or admitted," is already certain, then a concurrent inclination or aversion to X may be evaluated against this truth; if "X is to be chosen or admitted" is true, then inclination toward X can be known to be correct, aversion to X incorrect. So when there is knowledge independent of the accompanying appetite, emotion, inclination, desire, or aversion, reason itself through the prior corpus of moral knowledge is both *causa essendi* and *causa cognoscendi* of the correctness of the judgment and the status of the concurrent inclination or aversion.

But if the truth or falsity of the judgment, "X is to be chosen or admitted," is not yet known, then the reverse holds. Knowledge of the truth or falsity of the judgment can come about only through knowledge of my appetite; thus, knowledge of the rectitude of the appetite is accessible only through knowledge of the appetite itself. So in cases where the axiological properties of some possible object of choice X are insufficiently known in advance, the further axiological properties necessary to make a choice are revealed through knowledge of the concurrent inclination or aversion; and, hence, the rectitude of the appetite—though dependent on reason for its *causa essendi*—is known through the very presence of that movement of the

appetite. Indeed, I can have no other way of knowing whether my inclination or aversion is right or wrong here than by appeal to the fact that here and now I am well-disposed to what the corpus of moral knowledge reveals to me as conducing to happiness and that here and now this inclination or aversion is directed toward *this* particular object. So in cases where determinate knowledge of axiological properties is denied me in the absence of perceived appetition, my appetite is *causa cognoscendi* of the correctness of my judgment and of its own rectitude. Further, as a datum contributing evidence to the basis on which I would choose, perceived inclination or aversion is itself a part of the *causa essendi* of the rectitude of any such choice and of a judgment expressive of the choice.

What seems oddly circular here—and perhaps reminiscent of Descartes's appeal to innate ideas for knowledge of God and, thereafter, to God as the guarantor of knowledge through innate ideas—is the notion that the presence of a movement of the appetite may be part of the very standard by which the appetite in that situation is *said* and not merely *known* to be correct. It would be tempting to conclude that we have here a covert situationalism in which appetite is made its own ground of rectitude.

But this does not follow, for the same movement of appetite might have been incorrect in the presence of countervailing non-appetitive evidence, as we can see in the examples where reason itself acts as *causa cognoscendi*. An appetite always derives its rectitude from something other than itself in every case from first principles to individual decisions, even when the causa essendi includes the appetite as a part. This is the necessary and sufficient condition for saying in such a case that the above treatment of appetite is not relative, and that the truth of integrity is always objective. The justification of any movement of the appetite is an ontological moment that may be dependent on, but is never reducible to, the mere occurrence of the movement itself.

The more serious difficulties, as it seems to me, lie with St. Thomas's initial assumption of the harmony between appetite and reason, and with those cases where an agent would later regret or even disown a choice honestly and squarely made. How can this accommodate the "objectivity" claimed above?

I think that the only effective way to deal with the first problem is to beg the question. We either do or do not choose on the basis of what we correctly judge conducive to our proper good. Doctrines of universal depravity have never been lacking to challenge this initial assumption. I see no way to prove it except by observation of who we are and how we behave. Attempts to prove a primordial harmony between reason and appetite all seem flawed by various forms of circularity or regress. To the judgment that we are by nature inclined to choose in accord with what first truths of morals present as our end, I see only three positions possible: it is a demonstrable truth; it is a mere hypothesis or vulgar opinion; it is simply known to be so. In all my years of thought on the problem, I have found no demonstration anywhere in sight. The view that we entertain a mere vulgar opinion as to the harmony of reason and appetite is countenanced only by the skeptic and the partisan of some doctrine of depravity. The view that it is a mere hypothesis simply pushes the question back as to why this hypothesis rather than a contrary one. I believe that we have no presumptive evidence in favor of any one of the above. This leaves the third alternative. I think that any reasonable person will share this view and, so long as we do actually hold it in the way we do, I think it unseemly to pretend either that demonstration is required or that skepticism must be refuted on the matter.

The second general difficulty is the more interesting. Many sincere choices, made on the basis of perceived inclination or aversion [and, therefore of type b) above] are later regretted. Are we to say that these choices were objectively correct? It would appear to be more sensible to say merely that they were honest but mistaken. If this is so, then we cannot uniformly claim that knowledge of our appetite, where other factors are lacking, is sufficient to determine a correct choice or judgment expressive of choice. Since a choice, otherwise in conformity with the body of moral knowledge, may later be regretted, notwithstanding the agent's inclinations or aversions at the time, we would have to say that an appetite might have been known to be correct/incorrect even though the concurrent judgment was incorrect/correct, or that the appetite could not really have been known to be correct.

In either case, though, the view thus far ascribed to Aristotle and St. Thomas is jeopardized.

There appear to be but two ways out. The first, and more drastic, is to jettison the epistemic theses b) and d), claiming that concord of appetite and reason is *causa essendi* of the rectitude of appetite but that there is no general *causa cognoscendi.* This view, though consistent as far as it goes, is compatible, it should be noted, with moral skepticism; so if we ambition something like moral science, we cannot embrace it *tout court.*

The other way accepts the above account of the *causa cognoscendi* but at the price of paradox. It obliges us to say that even in b)-type situations—where we make a choice we later regret—the choice and the appetite were both objectively correct whenever the evidence provided by inclination or aversion in the appetite was not countervailed by the pre-existing corpus of moral knowledge. I am not sure that this solution is much happier in the short run. We could, naturally, say that these decisions, later repented, were objectively correct and that, placed back in the choice situation with all the then prevailing circumstances intact, the agent ought to have chosen in the regrettable way he did. This would salvage moral science but only by allowing that a disastrous choice was actually correct—not merely the best I could do at the time.

The best defense I can offer in the long run would be to show that a similar difficulty must attend even those accounts of moral choice that do not apply to appetite for evidence and that propose no general account of the *causa cognoscendi* in moral decision; and that, more generally, the same difficulty must attend any observational claim in the unchallenged empirical sciences. Surely every choice may find that its future betrays it; and surely every scientific theory must be prepared to revise its observational claims and the interpretation of the significance of such claims on the basis of subsequent discoveries or new hypotheses. Every moral theory must to some extent gulp and swallow over moral choices made on the available evidence but unhappy in their outcomes; even as every empirical scientific theory must admit the revisability of statements of empirical fact without requiring skepticism as the only sure ounce of prevention. Are

we to say that these sincere choices were *merely* sincere and that correct choices happen only when fortune smiles? Are we, similarly, to say that the fallibility and implied revisability and refinability of observation annuls the marriage of theory and fact? All this, I think, flowers into full skepticism in every case where the future is not knowable with certainty—both morally and empirically. Thus, despite the air of paradox involved, I would submit that those b)-type judgments, made on the basis of perceived appetite—and not out of accord with the body of pre-existing moral knowledge relevant to the individual and the situation—these very judgments are objectively correct even when future events militate against them, warrant a sentiment of regret, or require the surrender or revision of appropriate moral claims.

To sum up thus far, St. Thomas, commenting upon the text of Aristotle, would seem to be saying that one and only one object is correctly desirable without qualification and a means to no other end: happiness.[12] Any other object is rightly or wrongly desirable as a means to happiness. Since choice is the election of a means to an end, any object is rightly or wrongly desirable or detestable in reference, not to itself, but to some possible choice. Thus there may be objects that are, by their very natures, desirable as a means to happiness; these could be called the *objects of intrinsically correct inclination.* There are other objects variably appetible in relation to happiness; these could be called the *objects of contingently correct or incorrect inclination.* There may also be objects that, though not intrinsically correct to desire, are in fact for the most part and in general correct to choose for the sake of happiness; these could be called the *objects of extrinsically or stably correct inclination.* A similar breakdown is left to the reader for objects of intrinsically incorrect inclination and of extrinsically or stably incorrect inclination. For none of these does either Kantian or Classical Utilitarian Ethics make any plausible provision.

In all cases without exception the *causa essendi* for the rectitude of choice, judgment of choice, and perceived appetite, is the

[12] Of course St. Thomas will identify happiness with knowing and loving God, but for present purposes the less specified formulation will do.

standard of right practical reason whose first principles are truths necessary and *per se nota*. But in crucial instances, knowledge of appetite may be the *causa cognoscendi* of its own rectitude and of the rectitude of the practical reason. This, I submit, is the correct interpretation of St. Thomas's comment upon Aristotle:

> But the good of the practical intellect is not absolute truth but conformable truth, namely, what agrees with correct appetite.[13]

## II

Can a case ever arise in which all possible or feasible objects of choice equally attract or repel and would be equally desirable or detestable by the standard of correct reason? I believe that, although he does not enter upon the details of an answer, St. Thomas, at least, would have to say no, on the basis of the theory just described. If in a given particular case P and Q are mutually exclusive objects of possible choice—equally correct or incorrect to desire—then P and Q must be opposed not as contradictories but as contraries and, between them, cannot exhaust all the options.

In brief, in every choice situation there must be at least one alternative that it is correct to desire over another that it is incorrect to desire and, thus, to choose. Otherwise the true and the false will not apply to judgments of choice in the way we have considered above. So if P and Q are presented to me as opposed and mutually exclusive and exhaustive alternatives, equally correct or incorrect by the standard of right reason, then either I am mistaken in my evaluation of them, or they are contrarily opposed in the specific sense that to choose P would be different from choosing merely not-Q and to choose Q would be different from choosing merely not-P. Thus for St. Thomas, Buridan's ass, stranded between two bales of hay, has not two options but three: to eat the first, to eat the second, to eat neither. Either meal is opposed to the other as a contrary; and eating is opposed to not-eating as a contradictory. So if the ass is correctly disinclined

[13] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum Aristotelis*, VI:1130.

to starve, then it is right to desire either bale and incorrect to detest both, even though desire does not single one bale out over the other. To use a Leibnizian expression, for St. Thomas the ass has thus a sufficient reason to eat the first and a sufficient reason to eat the second, but no sufficient reason to eat the first rather than the second or the second rather than the first.

This exclusion of a *tertium* is more than an academic nicety, because of the consequences it entails on the theology of the Divine will. If we call an action truly blessed provided that it would be equally correct to desire to perform it and to desire not to perform it, then no action would seem to be blessed and, accordingly, the Divine will would suffer compulsion if it is to remain correct. For example, if it would have been correct for God to have desired not to create and equally correct for God to have desired to create, then we would apparently have to countenance a case of contradictory opposition in which both options were equally correct.

St. Thomas would argue, I believe, that the opposition here, like Buridan's, has been incompletely put and that the apparently contradictory character is actually a merely contrary character. For God's perfectly blessed option presupposes His own beatitude and would actually be of the following form: i) to enjoy His own surpassing excellence along with creating a world; ii) to enjoy His own surpassing excellence without creating a world. Put thus, the creation option involves contrarily but not contradictorily opposed objects. Since God's desire to enjoy His own surpassing excellence is either correct in an absolute or unqualified way (as an end in itself) or intrinsically correct, the production or non-production of a world would stand as objects of equally and stably, if not intrinsically, correct desire. Indeed the very solution to the difficulty shows that beatific actions presuppose a prior ground of blessedness—in God's case the enjoyment of His own goodness. If this is so, then there is very deep significance to the claim that the widest liberty of desire belongs only to the blessed.

Can correct desire coexist with incorrect desire for one and the same object? St. Thomas's moderate realism would appear to imply an affirmative answer; for I might correctly desire an

object under the aspect given by one universal concept, while incorrectly desiring it under the aspect given by another. I might desire, for instance, to behave like Belloc's merchant who was "of such enormous wealth that his lightest expressions of opinion caused the markets of the Euphrates to fluctuate in the most alarming manner."[14] I might wish to engage in the manipulation of commodities both as an intellectual game and as a source of crooked profit. One aspect might be an object of correct desire; the other surely would not be.

Similarly, correct desire might exist with correct aversion to the extent that I might desire an object for its actual value while deploring its limitations. Philip IV of Spain was said to have wept that his Escorial was so beautiful, even as he wept that it was not more beautiful.

It should be easy for the reader to see that this same principle of distinguishing aspects under which objects may evoke desire and aversion can be extended to the remaining cases: incorrect desire together with correct aversion and even incorrect desire together with incorrect aversion. If, for example, I desire to use my limited nuclear armamentarium for destruction but am averse to use what would fail to destroy all that I desired to obliterate, surely my aversion is just as incorrect as my desire.

The extension of the theory thus outlined to other emotions is, in principle, a simple exercise, to the extent that all emotions can be analyzed as composites of desire and aversion or as fulfillments of desire or aversion. Take delight, the fulfillment of desire. We see easily that if a desire is correct, then the fulfillment of that desire must also be correct, since fulfillment consists in the production or ordination of the desired object. Sorrow, seen as the fulfillment of aversion, behaves similarly. In this way, certain appetitive states and their cognate emotions can be seen to be intrinsically incorrect: delight at the presence of an object of correct sorrow (spite or *Schadenfreude*); sorrow at the presence of an object of correct delight (envy). By contrast, other states appear intrinsically correct: compassion for the suffering; desire to grow in love of God; joy in reward due to merit; satisfaction

[14] Hilaire Belloc, *The Mercy of Allah* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976), p. 3.

at just recompense, etc. Indeed, if we now classify actions in terms of their performance or omission, exactly the consequences we should expect will follow for inclinations toward or against them.

Let G, B, and N, stand respectively for Good, Bad, and Neutral. There are, then, nine possibilities, if we consider, first, the performance and, second, the omission of the act in question. If both performance and omission receive B, then the action is totally immoral, reflects a prior evil posture of the will, and is either absolutely or intrinsically incorrect to desire. Such actions might, indeed, be called demonic. If performance receives B and omission N, then we have an impropriety of commission, one that it is wrong to desire or commit, but nothing more. If the performance of the action receives B and its omission G, then the act is forbidden as such; very plausibly, it is intrinsically incorrect to desire and intrinsically correct to disdain. If the performance of the action receives N and its omission B, then we have the mirror situation of the second above: an impropriety of omission. An action that receives N for both performance and omission is neutral and, thus, can at most be extrinsically correct either to desire or to disdain. But notice that if desire for the action is correct, then performance of the action will be correct [cf. cases b) and d) in the analysis above], *pari passu* for incorrectness, so that St. Thomas and Aristotle would be right to say that even an indifferent act is, *in concreto*, either rightly or wrongly desirable and, accordingly, either good or bad. An action whose performance receives N but whose omission receives G would be a supererogatory omission. An action whose performance receives G but whose omission receives B is a moral obligation and, as such, is intrinsically correct to desire and intrinsically incorrect to disdain. An action whose performance receives G and whose omission receives N would be the mirror of the sixth above, an act of supererogatory commission. Finally, an act that receives G for both performance and omission would be a beatific action of the kind described in connection with God's creative options, one presupposing a prior indefectibly correct will and precluding any but an intrinsically correct inclination.

## III

Finally, it should be clear why St. Thomas would insist that for an habitual inner rectitude in practical moral judgment—for real skill and suavity in moral choice—prudence is indispensable. They alone are prudent who, already well-disposed toward their natural end, have chosen rightly again and again, so refining their appetitive powers that their inclinations and aversions are virtually always correct in cases where prior knowledge of the value of an object of choice is the *causa cognoscendi* of the rectitude of appetite. Only through habitually correct choice, St. Thomas would say, have the prudent acquired the ability to discern those significant axiological properties that, initially, correct appetite alone reveals.

> The virtuous man differs from others in that he sees what is truly good in the particulars of an action, being, as it were, the rule and measure of all actions.[15]

As we have chosen, so we have become; and as we have become, so do we perceive and desire. On this basis I believe that St. Thomas would allow for the appetite of the prudent to be a publicly accessible evidential principle for rectitude of choice and of appetite. Just as the great theoretical scientist has an instinct for what facts of observation will be important—even though he sometimes cannot say just why until a discovery vindicates this instinct—so the prudent have a similar instinct for right preference; their appetite has regularly and dispositively inclined not only toward the natural proper good but toward the objects whose ordination or production is most in harmony with that proper good. Thus, too, one who lacks prudence lacks important equipment for success as a moral scientist.

In conclusion, then, St. Thomas, commenting on the text of Aristotle, would appear to urge that there is indeed a science of morals that is essentially practical, not theoretical and not dependent on any admixture of the theoretical and the practical to secure its scientific status, yet that, in addition, recognizes the possibility of intrinsic rectitude of appetite or inclination. Such a

[15] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum Aristotelis*, III:494.

science, like all science, possesses first truths, attends to what is with necessity, and reaches conclusions admitting of objective certitude; but it is squarely practical and productive. In this respect, moral science requires a concept of truth as inner rectitude of practical judgment, over and above the concept of truth as correctness of assertion or belief about an entity or its nature; indeed, in some instances, knowledge of an entity and its nature may presuppose the inner rectitude of practical judgement.

I do not believe that any alternative treatment, whether Kantian or Utilitarian, allows for so thorough or consistent a development of the matters addressed or for so rich a conceptual scheme as regards the analysis of actions: good, bad, or indifferent in relation to their performance or omission respectively. If the greater expressive richness of a moral analysis counts as evidence favoring its probable correctness and if the analysis in question also accommodates any problem susceptible to treatment by competing theories, then such an analysis enjoys, by that fact, greater probability than its most serious rivals.

# THE TWOFOLD DIVISION OF ST. THOMAS'S CHRISTOLOGY IN THE *TERTIA PARS*

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ST. THOMAS AQUINAS divides the *tertia pars* of his *Summa theologiae* into three parts, the first of which, embracing the first fifty-nine questions, is on the Savior Himself. This section, in turn, is divided into two parts: the first considers the mystery of the incarnation (qq. 1-26); the second, that done and suffered by the Savior (qq. 27-59).

How are we to understand this seemingly straightforward division? As the latter half deals with the life of Christ, M.-D. Chenu saw it as essentially scriptural, in implied contrast to a more scientific consideration in the first section.[1] It is precisely this distinction between the scientific and the scriptural, however, that is problematic and that needs to be evaluated critically in light of Thomas's conception of *sacra doctrina.*

The twofold division of christology that appears in the *tertia pars* is one of many organizational innovations in the *Summa,* representing Thomas's answer to a problem with which his predecessors and contemporaries struggled: the organization of christology. Because Christ is a historical figure, the problems of the historian also beset the theologian. The facts of history occur in a temporal sequence and, for this reason, history is in part a temporal narrative. The historian, however, wants to do more than tell a good story; he wants to explain it. He therefore seeks those categories of intelligibility that will explain why certain events happen in the way they do: the role terrain plays in suc-

[1] M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas,* trans. A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), pp. 315-17.

cessful military strategy, for example, or the motives (economic, psychological, or social) that move men to action. Through an abundant number of such categories, the historian tries to make sense of history. In this lies his problem. The categories that interpret what happens have their own principles and rules of exposition, which may not be wholly compatible with a narrative sequence. For this reason, the historian is torn between two masters in his work: the narrative sequence and the categories of intelligibility.

The theologian, in considering the life and mission of Christ, confronts much the same problem. He has before him both the temporal narrative of that life and the need to understand and explain it, albeit far more profoundly than the historian can. For his information on the life of Christ, the theologian is dependent upon Scripture; the fourfold Gospel narrates the story of Christ's life. For his primary categories of intelligibility, the theologian is also dependent upon Scripture. For example, the Gospel proclaims that Christ is the Word made flesh and thereby understands the import of Christ's life, passion, death, and resurrection. The epistles provide a great number of decisive categories that interpret the mission of Christ: Christ the redeemer of a fallen humanity; Christ the true mediator between God and man; Christ the great high priest; Christ the head of the Church. The theologian must make sense of the life and mission of Christ in such a way as to account for the varied themes and categories already provided by Scripture. Likewise, he must seek to understand and make sense of these categories themselves. In a temporal narrative of Christ's life, there is no obvious place for the treatment of His mediatorship, priesthood, or headship. Each extends throughout, and even beyond, His earthly life, although each is intimately bound to particular aspects of that life. The problem is thus one in which both the narrative and its primary categories of intelligibility are in Scripture. It is not simply making sense of history, it is making sense of Scripture. The task is to formulate a christology that is in some way adequate to the New Testament revelation about Christ. Thomas's predecessors and contemporaries

struggled to organize and explain not only history but also its biblical interpretation.[2]

A brief consideration of how Peter Lombard,[3] the compilers of the *Summa fratris Alexandri*,[4] and Albert the Great[5] organize their christological reflections will bring out the novelty and insight of Thomas's account. As might be expected, none of these thinkers adopts a division dominated solely by interpretive categories without regard to temporal sequence. Likewise, none opts for a simple retelling of the Gospel. We find various combinations, which tend in one or the other direction.

The structure of Peter Lombard's christology in book III of his *Sententiae* is not exactly self-evident, as his commentators' varied divisions testify.[6] In its broadest sweep, it reflects a temporal sequence beginning with the incarnation and concluding with the descent into hell. Within this sequence Lombard clusters more or less cognate ideas. The first twenty-six chapters constitute something of a cluster around the Word made flesh, considering such requisite topics as person and nature, assumption and union, and the twofold character of Christ's nativity. A second cluster around aspects of Christ's humanity follows. Here Lombard considers Christ's grace, wisdom, knowledge, and power. Corporal defects follow, which lead to considerations of

[2] Every theologian of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, certainly those we consider here, would affirm the fundamental unity of the scriptural revelation according to which one part may be used to interpret another. The idea that a Pauline notion and a Johannine notion are so distinct as to be only inappropriately applied to each other or to the synoptics is wholly foreign to the medieval mind.

[3] Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae,* edd. PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 3d ed., 2 vols. (Grottaferrata: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1971-81). Written between 1154 and 1158, Lombard's *Sententiae* became the most influential theological textbook of the later Middle Ages.

[4] *Summa theologica* [vol. four adds:] *seu sic ab origine dicta "Summa fratris Alexandri,"* edd. PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 4 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1924-48). Long attributed to the Franciscan master Alexander of Hales, the *Summa fratris* (1236-45) is a Franciscan compilation drawn from a variety of sources.

[5] Albert the Great, *De incarnatione,* ed. I. Backes, in *Opera omnia* (Cologne edition), vol. 26 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1958), pp. 171-235. This work (ante 1246), lost until this century, was intended as part of a massive *summa,* other parts of which circulated independently.

[6] Lombard himself only divided his work into books and chapters, which we follow here; his thirteenth-century commentators divide the work into distinctions.

His suffering, will, doubt, and fear. The passion, death, and descent into hell constitute a third cluster (cc. 50-73). In these chapters, Lombard considers Christ's merit, His redemption, His role as mediator, and His just conquest of the devil. A chapter on whether Christ had the theological virtues (c. 74) provides an awkward transition to the remainder of the book on the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus there is a general temporal movement from the incarnation to the passion and death. Within this general frame, thematic groupings seem to dominate: a cluster of chapters on the incarnation, a cluster on Christ as man and His human nature, and a cluster on the redemption.

The *Summa fratris Alexandri* presents a clearly temporal structure. The christology is divided into eight tractates which follow the life of Christ: (1) the incarnation and assumption; (2) the conception and nativity; (3) the grace, knowledge, and power of Christ; (4) His merit and will; (5) His passion and death; (6) the descent into hell and resurrection; (7) the ascension and His sitting at the right hand of the Father; and (8) the final coming and last judgment.[7] With Peter Lombard, the compilers of the *Summa fratris* treat the constitutive elements of union, the twofold nativity, and related issues together at the beginning. Then come various aspects of Christ pertaining primarily to His human nature: grace, knowledge, power, will, and merit. The end of Christ's mission is greatly expanded. The *Summa fratris* not only considers the passion, death, and descent into hell, but also the resurrection, the ascension, the second coming, and the final judgment. Lombard had paid scant attention to them and then as issues for the fourth book on the end times. The *Summa fratris* situates these topics firmly within its christology.

Thematic material usually finds its principal treatment at a point that seems most fitting in the temporal sequence. Christ as mediator, for example, is treated most fully in tractate five on the passion and death. Again, the grace of Christ has its principal treatment in tractate three as part of the middle section that considers Christ's grace, knowledge, power, merit, and will. And yet,

[7] *Summa fratris*, III.div; vol. 4, p. 3. The division here must be compared to the actual treatment for variations.

the fit is awkward. Because the *Summa fratris*' principal treatment of the grace of Christ occurs here, tractate three contains the fullest treatment of the grace of union; nonetheless, another, albeit briefer, treatment of the grace of union appears necessarily in tractate one on the incarnation and assumption, which is then repeated almost verbatim in tractate three.

The *Summa fratris* is no slave to temporal sequence, however, and its authors will override such sequence in view of thematic needs. For example, the transfiguration is considered as a demonstration of the resurrection and is therefore in tractate six on the descent into hell and the resurrection.

Albert the Great's *De incarnatione* is a particularly interesting effort at organizing the revelation about Christ. Within a generally temporal sequence, Albert divides his subject into categories that give direction and structure to his thought. The primary division is fourfold: the necessity of the incarnation; the annunciation, which includes the conception and birth of Christ; the union, that is, those issues that pertain to the immediate condition of union; and finally, the consequences of that union. Albert's efforts to find a conceptual structure for his material are most evident in the fourth part on the consequences of the union which comprises the bulk of the work. He divides it into two parts. The first considers those consequences of the union that arise from the union itself; the second considers those consequences of the union that arise from the end of the union. The first is in turn divided into two parts: consequences in Christ Himself, and consequences in comparison with other men. The first considers the knowledge (with nominal attention to the grace), will, acts, and corporal defects of Christ (tractate four). The second considers the tithing of Christ in the loins of Abraham and His headship (tractate five). Albert concludes his christology with those consequences that arise from the end of the union (the second part of the first division). These are the final deeds of Christ: the passion, death, burial, descent into hell (all tractate six) and resurrection (*De resurrectione*).[8]

[8] *De resurrectione*, ed. W. Kübel, in *Opera omnia* (Cologne edition), vol. 26 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1958), pp. 237-354.

Albert follows the general temporal sequence that has been seen in others: an initial consideration of Christ's origins, a middle consideration focused on aspects of His human nature and life, and a final consideration on the passion, death, and resurrection. Albert seems to be looking for conceptual categories that will structure the temporal sequence. Thus he uses the idea of consequence to organize the wealth of material that floated in various configurations in the middle and concluding sections of treatises on Christ.

Each of these works tries to make sense of the revelation about Christ. This includes not only His life and mission, but also, and sometimes more importantly, how that life and mission is understood in relation to other revealed truths about Him. Each follows a roughly chronological sequence within which other topics are fit as best they can be.

From this background, the significance of Thomas's simple twofold division emerges. He divides the questions on the Savior into those on the mystery of the incarnation and those on the things done and suffered by God incarnate. Thomas casts the first part broadly as "the mystery of the incarnation according to which God became man for our salvation." These twenty-six questions contain such topics as the union and assumption, Christ's grace, knowledge, will, His priesthood, and mediatorship. The remaining thirty-three questions consider the deeds of that God made man. They begin with the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin and then treat the life of Christ: from His birth, baptism, teaching, and miracles, to His passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and judgment. This second division follows the life of Christ in proper chronological sequence. The second part presents the life and mission of Christ; the first part sets forth the categories and principles according to which that life and mission are to be understood. Thomas considers what it means for God to become man for man's salvation: he considers what it means for Christ to have grace, he explains the great biblical notions of Christ as head of the church, Christ as mediator, and Christ as priest. In doing this, he arms his reader with an understanding of who and what Christ is so as to grasp more profoundly the meaning of what Christ does. Thomas divides what

his predecessors had tried to make fit within a single temporal sequence. The simplicity of this arrangement is striking: the categories according to which Christ is to be understood; followed by the life of Christ, which is explained by those categories.

I do not subscribe to the view that this twofold division is a division between a scientific part and a biblical part. Chenu, who has done so much to draw attention to the scriptural dimension of Thomas's thought, implies just such a contrast. He speaks of "biblical zones" in the *Summa*, such as the life of Christ here in questions 27-59. He says: "The principle of a biblical zone throughout the *Summa* remains, however, and in any case, one cannot delete its place and meaning without throwing the whole edifice out of equilibrium."[9] He is quite right, but I would argue that fundamentally the entire structure of the *Summa* is biblical, not simply certain blocks inserted into an imposed scientific structure. Perhaps drawing upon Chenu, R. Murphy in the New Blackfriars translation of the *Summa* sees the introduction of such biblical material as the life of Christ as one of Thomas's "great innovations."[10] This brief consideration of Thomas's contemporaries and predecessors suggests that this is hardly the case. For all of them, including Thomas, the issue was to make sense of the wealth of biblical revelation.

At the same time, to say that both parts are biblical in their foundation is not to say that they are without any scientific character. This too would concede the kind of bifurcation so common to contemporary theological self-understanding. Indeed, Thomas's twofold division of christology also conforms to some essential characteristics of his notion of *sacra doctrina* as a science.

A more adequate consideration of the twofold division is possible. Let us consider briefly a particular aspect of Thomas's understanding of *sacra doctrina* as developed in the opening question of the *Summa* itself. James Weisheipl has argued that for Thomas the task of *sacra doctrina* is not primarily the creation of new theological knowledge but rather the fuller understanding

[9] Chenu, *Toward Understanding St. Thomas*, p. 316.

[10] *Summa theologiae*, New Blackfriars ed., vol. 54 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. xix.

of the revealed truths of faith.[11] That is, both the premises and conclusions of the science are often articles of faith. In arguing for the scientific nature of *sacra doctrina*, Thomas gives St. Paul as an example: Because Christ has risen from the dead, so we too shall rise. As Weisheipl notes, both the premise and the conclusion are revealed articles of faith. What St. Paul does is to connect them and to connect them causally; and in so doing, Paul renders the conclusion, that we too shall rise, better known for it is now known in one of its causes, the resurrection of Christ.

In part then, Thomas sees the task of *sacra doctrina* as the intelligible connecting of revealed truths. In this, it is analogous to the philosopher's finding of the middle term. Introducing students to theology, Thomas wants to show how the truths of the faith are ordered one to another. It is, of course, another instance of faith seeking understanding. Just as St. Paul had done in his consideration of the final resurrection, Thomas seeks to bring out, as is proper to any science, the connections between things, in this case, the articles of faith about Christ. Who and what Christ is grounds the understanding of what He does. Christ's actions that are of interest to the theologian are those that serve to bring man to God. They are important as they have supernatural effects. This is the perspective from which Thomas considers Christ. If Christ's actions are understood as having supernatural effects, who He is is all the more important and fittingly comes first in study. Because the reader already knows that Christ is the incarnate Word, is head of the Church and mediator, he better understands the life and its effects. Because Christ is God and man, for example, His passion and death are redemptive. What matters in the passion and death is not simply that Christ suffered and died, but that in so suffering and dying He satisfied for a fallen humanity. When that revealed union of God and man is understood, the satisfaction accomplished through His passion and death is understood. Examples could be multiplied; the innumerable allusions and references from the second part back to the first testify to this relation. The complexity of Thomas's

[11] James A. Weisheipl, "The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1," *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 49-80.

analysis of Christ's life is only possible given the fullness of his examination of who and what Christ is in the first part.[12]

No doubt reacting to an enduring but distorted view of Thomas's theology that all but ignored its scriptural dimension, students of Thomas in this century are struck by the mere existence of questions 27-59.[13] Such wonder, however, tells us much more about ourselves than about Thomas.

To the extent that *sacra doctrina* is scientific, the whole of Thomas's treatment of the Savior is scientific. Likewise, the extent to which *sacra doctrina* is scriptural, the whole of Thomas's treatment of the Savior is scriptural.[14] The twofold organization of the questions on the Savior of the *tertia pars* is a significant innovation in the organization of christology precisely because it is a structuring of scriptural revelation according to Thomas's understanding of the scientific character of *sacra doctrina.*

[12] G. Lafont, *Structures et méthodes dans la Somme Théologique de s. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Desclee, 1961), p. 320, appreciates the first half of Thomas's christology as revealed matter that makes sense of the second half; however, he makes no use of it in his structural analysis.

[13] In addition to Chenu cited above, see also Y. Congar, "Le sens de l'"économie' salutaire," in *Thomas d'Aquin: sa vision de théologie et de l'Eglise* (London: Variorum, 1984), III, p. 83 (this article originally appeared in *Festgabe Joseph Lortz, II: Glaube und Geschichte*, ed. E. Iserloh and P. Mann [Baden-Baden: Bruno Grimm, 1957], pp. 72-122); and Y. Congar, "Le moment 'économique' et le moment 'ontologique' dans la *Sacra Doctrina* (Révélation, théologie, *Somme Théologique*)," in *Thomas d'Aquin: sa vision de théologie et de l'Eglise*, XIII, pp. 178-79 (this article appeared originally in *Mélanges offerts à M.-D. Chenu* [Paris: Vrin, 1967], pp. 135-87).

[14] The scriptural character of Thomas's christology is brought out in F. Ruello, *La christologie de Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1987), pp. 285-337.

# CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN THE SOCIAL THEORY OF THOMAS AQUINAS

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## INTRODUCTION

IN HER ESSAY, "The Concept of Social Hierarchy in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas," Katherine Archibald claims that the properly ordered society, according to Thomas Aquinas, is one that is based on the natural inequality of peoples, with dominance and subordination being the key to that order. Given her strong emphasis on social hierarchy in Aquinas's thought, she is led to the conclusion that "he who leads is wiser and better than he who follows, and rebellion on the part of the follower is treason and sin."[1] While Aquinas does view sedition as "a special kind of sin"[2] and obedience as "a special virtue,"[3] one should be cautious in interpreting him as precluding all types of civil disobedience. On the contrary, Aquinas's social theory includes criteria for determining when civil disobedience is justified and perhaps even obligatory.

After first defining civil disobedience and classifying it into four forms based on motive and extent of dissent, I shall present Aquinas's account of justified civil disobedience. The first question

[1] Katherine Archibald, "The Concept of Social Hierarchy in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Historian* 2 (1949-50); reprinted in *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, ed. & trans. Paul Sigmund (New York: Norton & Co., 1988), p. 139.

[2] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 42, a. 1, from *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Dino Bigongiari (New York: Hafner Press, 1953).

[3] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 1.

to be addressed is that of how one judges a law or system of laws to be unjust. Next, the duty (virtue) of obedience to just and unjust laws will be discussed. Finally, I shall argue that of the four possible forms of civil disobedience (as I have classed them) Aquinas only clearly allows the fourth, while at times also apparently allowing the third. My argument is premised on the fact that human law is derived from natural law as a means to the common good.[4] In other words, "law must concern itself in particular with the happiness of the community."[5] In addition, the law that the subject is obligated to disobey is the product of a system in which the representatives entrusted with the common good fail to enact laws directed toward this end (section II).

Since Thomas Aquinas uses "law" to indicate a wide range of rational orderings, from the rational ordering of the universe by God to the ordering of society by the sovereign, some distinctions need to be made at the outset. This paper pertains to the relationship between the ruler and the subjects of a civil society and therefore the "law" to which I refer is human law. More specifically, human law may be divided into the "law of nations" and "civil law." The law of nations covers "those things which are derived from the law of nature as conclusions from premises, e.g., just buyings and selling,"[6] and civil law pertains to that which is derived from the law of nature "according as each state decides on what is best for itself."[7] Thus, since civil law deals with individual states and more specifically, the relationship between the ruler and the subjects in these individual states, civil law is that with which this paper deals.

One further note about human law is its teleological nature. On the microcosmic level, the purpose of human law is to bring

[4] Daniel A. Degnan, S.J., "Two Models of Positive Law in Aquinas," *The Thomist* 46 (1982): 1-32. "The end to which the judicial precepts are ordered is a structure of justice in society. The institutions of the actual, detailed structure of justice in society is the work of positive law" (p. 19). "The ordering of law is an ordering of just relationships among men and this ordering is, at the same time, an ordering to the common good" (p. 21). See also *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 1.

[5] *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 2.

[6] *STh* I-II, q. 95, a. 4.

[7] *STh* I-II, q. 95, a. 4.

one to virtue. Humans are not without virtue, but law is required to help most achieve higher virtue. In other words, "man has a natural aptitude for virtue, but the perfection of virtue must be acquired by man by means of some kind of training."[8] On the macrocosmic level, the purpose of law is the "order to the common good."[9]

With this in mind, I am now able to proceed to a definition of civil disobedience followed by a discussion of the criteria for justified civil disobedience in Aquinas's social theory.

## I. Civil Disobedience Defined

First of all, civil disobedience is characterized by "public, conscientious, nonviolent refusal to comply with the law"[10] with the goal of changing the law(s) that are judged to be unjust.[11] While Aquinas does not offer a definition of civil disobedience, I suspect that he would agree with this one. The disobedient action must be conscientious because it is only through virtuous reasoning that one may disobey a human law in order to comply with the natural law, for "it is true and right among all men that action proceed in accordance with reason."[12] Aquinas explains further that "human reason must proceed from the precepts of the natural law as from certain common and indemonstrable

[8] *STh* I-II, q. 95, a. 1.

[9] *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 3.

[10] James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 132.

[11] Gary Percesepe, *Philosophy: An Introduction to the Labor of Reason* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1991), p. 760. While most definitions of civil disobedience agree on the first part of this definition, not all include the phrase about the goal of dissent being the bringing about of some change in the unjust law. Aquinas's teleological virtue theory compels me to include this in my operative definition for this paper.

John Rawls, following H. A. Bedau's lead, offers this definition of civil disobedience: "a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about change in the law or policies of the government" (*A Theory of Justice* [Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1971], p. 364). In addition, Rawls adds "that civil disobedience is a political act not only in the sense that it is addressed to the majority that holds political power, but also because it is an act guided and justified by political principles, that is, by the principles of justice which regulate the constitution and social institutions generally" (p. 365). This position does not seem to diverge much from the position Aquinas espouses.

[12] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 4.

principles to other more particular dispositions. Those particular dispositions arrived at by reason are called human law."[13] Civil disobedience must be nonviolent in Aquinas's view because to disobey through violent means would bring about more evil than to obey the unjust law.[14] At the same time, civil disobedience must be public, because otherwise this would indicate that one's actions do not have the common good as the sole purpose.

Those who choose to disobey the civil law do so for one of two reasons. The first is that the disobedient individuals believe the law to be an unjust burden on themselves. In other words, the motives for disobeying are selfish, regardless of the consequences that may indeed be for the common good. The second reason for disobeying the civil law is based on an altruistic motive. The individual or group protests the law because of its effect on others or on society in general.[15] In the language of Thomas Aquinas, these latter citizens disobey an unjust law because they recognize it as not being the proper means to the proper end, i.e., the common good.

While there are two motives for civil disobedience, there are also two levels of disobedience. One may protest a single unjust law; for example, Thoreau refused to pay a particular tax. Or one may protest an entire unjust system, as Gandhi protested British rule of India, and Martin Luther King, Jr., protested the segregation laws.

From the above it is clear that there are four classes of civil disobedience: 1) the selfish disobedience of an unjust law; 2) the selfish disobedience of an unjust system of rule; 3) the altruistic disobedience of an unjust law; 4) the altruistic disobedience of an unjust system of rule. Of these, only the fourth is clearly permissible in Aquinas's social theory. Before I argue why this is the case, the criteria by which one determines an unjust law must first be clarified.

[13] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 3 and q. 94, a. 4.

[14] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 6. Violent disobedience is inherently evil because it creates discord or, in other words, it is opposed to the "unity and peace of a people" (*STh* II-II, q. 42, a. 1).

[15] Thomas Morawetz, *The Philosophy of Law* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1980), p. 228.

## II. Unjust Law

In deciding to disobey a human law, one must first judge it to be unjust. According to Aquinas, a law may be unjust in one of two ways: as contrary to human good or as opposed to the divine good.[16] Laws of the latter type are clearly to be disobeyed, as they are contrary to divine law. For example, the ruler's command for the subjects to worship idols violates the divine law that prohibits idolatry and thus must be disobeyed. With regard to the former, i.e., laws contrary to human good, Aquinas is not so clear. The determination of human laws as unjust because they are contrary to human good is the subject of this section.

In his protest against the segregation laws, Martin Luther King, Jr., was forced to address the question of how one determines whether a law is just or unjust. He did so in his "Letter From a Birmingham City Jail" and used his understanding of Thomas Aquinas to explain his position:

> How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.[17]

King's statement raises the question of the relationship between human law and natural law with regard to determining whether or not a law is unjust. Law, according to Thomas, is "nothing else than an ordination of reason for the common good promulgated by the one who is in charge of the community."[18] Although it is not explicit, one can surmise that Aquinas is referring to at least human law that has the good of the community as its primary goal. Human laws are the "particular dispositions arrived at by

[16] *STh* I-II, q. 96, a. 4.

[17] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," in *Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice,* ed. Hugo Adam Bedau (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1969), p. 77.

[18] *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 4.

reason" from the precepts of the natural law.[19] The unjust law, then, is one that does not properly follow from the precepts of natural and eternal law: "Human law has the quality of a law in so far as it is in accordance with right reason and in this respect it is evident that it is derived from the eternal law."[20] The classic example of law that is not in accord with right reason is tyrannical law.[21]

In addition to the criterion that the human law must comply with natural law in order for the former to be just, Aquinas gives another, frequently overlooked standard: the people subject to the law must have had a voice in its formation, either directly or by representation through those entrusted with the common good. In Aquinas's words, "the making of a law belongs either to the whole people or to a public personage who has care of the whole people, since in all other matters the directing of anything to the end concerns him to whom the end belongs."[22] The most important purpose of the law is the ordering of the common good. The ordering of the common good is "the responsibility of the whole people, or of someone who represents the whole people."[23] This point is very important for a clear understanding of those situations in which civil disobedience is permissible.

Within his discussion of human law, Aquinas presents four distinguishing features that belong to the notion of human law. The first is what I have characterized as the first criterion for judging a human law to be just, i.e., that it is in accord with natural law (derived from precepts of natural law via right reason). The second, third, and fourth features belonging to human law together make up my second criterion for judging a law to be just or unjust: 2) "it belongs to the notion of human law to be

[19] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 3.

[20] *STh* I-II, q. 93, a. 3.

[21] *STh* I-II, q. 92, a. 1. In addition, Aquinas says: "Human law has the nature of law in so far as it partakes of right reason; and it is clear that, in this respect, it is derived from the eternal law. But in so far as it deviates from reason, it is called an unjust law and has the nature, not of law, but of violence" (*STh* I-II, q. 93, a. 3, ad 2; see q. 95, a. 2).

[22] *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 3; q. 105, a. 1.

[23] *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 3.

ordained to the common good of the state"[24]; 3) "it belongs to the notion of human law to be framed by that one who governs the community of the state"[25]; and 4) "it belongs to the notion of human law to direct human actions."[26] Considering these jointly, one is able to determine, according to Aquinas, whether a particular law is just. A particular law is just according to its end, author, and form if: the end is the common good; the law is authored by the person entrusted with care of the community; and it is imposed equally and proportionately on those subject to the law.

> Now laws are said to be just—from the end, when, to wit, they are ordained to the common good—and from their author, that is to say, when the law that is made does not exceed the power of the lawgiver—and from their form, when, to wit, burdens are laid on the subjects, according to an equality of proportion and with a view to the common good.[27]

Although his conception of government is vastly different from Aquinas's, Henry David Thoreau, in his well-known essay, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," uses similar criteria to justify civil disobedience. He says that in order for a law or system of laws to be strictly just "it must have the sanction and consent of the governed."[28] Likewise, Martin Luther King, Jr. asserts that a "law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law."[29] To put it in terms of the determination of an unjust law: a law that is unjust is one in which those subject to the law had no voice in the formation of said law. Since Thoreau

[24] *STh* I-II, q. 95, a. 4.
[25] *STh* I-II, q. 95, a. 4.
[26] *STh* I-II, q. 95, a. 4.
[27] *STh* I-II, q. 96, a. 4.
[28] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Signet Classic, New American Library, 1960), p. 240. In addition, Thoreau says the following of the state: "There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the state comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly" (p. 240). See note 50 for further discussion of Thoreau's position.
[29] King, "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," in Percesepe, *Philosophy*, p. 772.

bases government on the primacy of the individual, his liberal conception of state requires that individuals participate in the formation of the laws to which they are subject. Aquinas differs, of course, in that government is based on the good of the community which is entrusted "either to the whole people, or to someone who is the viceregent of the whole people."[30]

Given that the criteria for judging a human law to be just are compliance with natural law and participation of the subjects in the formation (either directly or through representation), it follows, according to Aquinas, that a law so formed ought to be obeyed. In the case of representation, the people entrust the common good to those they think virtuous enough to rule. In addition, the subjects evidence their virtue by obeying the dictates of those trusted to rule.[31] So the question then arises as to when the subjects may justifiably disobey the command of those trusted to govern. In the next section I explore the extent of the duty of obedience so as to present a clear picture of justifiable civil disobedience in Aquinas's social theory.

## III. Obedience and Respect for the Law

Obedience, according to Thomas, is a special virtue that is necessary for the good of the community. In nature, the higher things move the lower "to their actions by the excellence of the natural power bestowed on them by God."[32] Since social order imitates what is found in nature, it follows that "inferiors are bound to obey their superiors."[33] If this were Aquinas's final word on civil obedience, then his social theory would certainly preclude civil disobedience. It is not, however, the last Aquinas has to say on the subject.

The virtue of obedience is tempered by justice. One obeys the sovereign out of the desire to uphold the common good, whose preservation and advancement the community has entrusted to the ruler. That is, "the common good of the state cannot flourish

[30] *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 3. See note 50 for further discussion of Aquinas's and Thoreau's different conceptions of government.

[31] *STh* I-II, q. 92, a. 1.

[32] *STh* II-II, q. 104. a. 1.

[33] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 1.

unless the citizens be virtuous, at least those whose business it is to govern. But it is enough for the good of the community that the other citizens be so far virtuous that they obey the commands of their rulers."[34] So the duty of the subject is to obey the command of the ruler. In addition, the ruler is said to be more virtuous than the subject and the law or law system is to direct the subject to higher virtue.[35] Obedience is thus a duty of the subject not only because it promotes the common good and "in order to avoid scandal or danger,"[36] but also because it provides a means to higher virtue. E. A. Goerner suggests that it is the obedience itself that is required by law and that will lead one to virtue. He claims that "Thomas says that the law does not command that one obey it in the mode of virtue but only that one obey it, and he who does obey it does all that the law requires of him."[37] The question, then, is whether it is obedience to the law or obedience to the law in a virtuous manner that leads one to higher virtue. Regardless of the answer, it is clear that the virtue of obedience itself is quite compelling in Aquinas.

Thomas also includes within his discussion of obedience the justification for a subject disobeying his or her superior. First of all, that which is commanded must pertain to what is done "externally by means of the body."[38] In internal matters, i.e., the will, one is bound only to God. In external matters, however, the superior commands that which concerns human affairs and the subject is bound only in so far as the superior acts within the appropriate realm of authority.[39] The realm of authority is established by the people entrusting the common good to chosen representatives. The extent of authority depends, then, upon the political regime. So, in these external matters, i.e., human affairs, the "superior stands between God and his subjects; whereas in respect of other matters the subject is immediately

[34] *STh* I-II, q. 92, a. 1.

[35] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 6; q. 92, a. 1; q. 95, a. 1; q. 96, a. 2.

[36] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 6.

[37] E. A. Goerner, "Thomistic Natural Right: The Good Man's View of Thomistic Natural Law," *Political Theory* 11 (1983): 397.

[38] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 5.

[39] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 5.

under God, by Whom he is taught either by the natural or by the written law."[40]

Obedience "in order to avoid scandal or danger" is obedience to what appears to be an unjust law or system on the grounds that to do otherwise would do more harm to the common good. In other words, there may be instances in which one is compelled to obey an unjust law in the belief that doing so promotes the common good more than attempting to change the law through civil disobedience.

Those who resort to civil disobedience do so on the grounds that the law or system is unjust and that they are choosing the lesser of two evils,[41] having exhausted all other means to bring the law to justice. In choosing to disobey, one ought to have also considered the possible loss of respect for law. That is, included in the effects of obeying or disobeying a law on the common good is the overall respect for law. Too frequent disobedience of a law or system of laws weakens the belief of those subject to law that it is worthy of respect. In the view of the dissenters, however, the danger that subjects will lose respect for law in general is outweighed by the injustice caused by the law. As long as the people as a whole, or the ruler entrusted with the good of the people as a whole, act virtuously toward the common good then the subjects will respect the authority of law.[42] In Aquinas's words:

Man is bound to obey secular princes in so far as this is required by the order of justice. Wherefore if the prince's authority is not just but usurped, or if he commands what is unjust, his subjects are not bound

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[40] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 5.

[41] Percesepe, *Philosophy*, p. 760: "Civil disobedience advocates argue that some social disruption is bound to occur. But when the goal is the abolition of a fundamentally unjust institution (for example, segregation), such nonviolent disruption is morally permissible. Perhaps the innocent people whose lunch has been disturbed at the lunch counter will reflect on the ways that the existing law benefits them to the exclusion of others who are made to suffer unjustly."

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* p. 391: "Yet if justified civil disobedience seems to threaten civic concord, the responsibility falls not upon those who protest but upon those whose abuse of authority and power justifies such opposition. For to employ the coercive apparatus of the state in order to maintain manifestly unjust institutions is itself a form of illegitimate force that men in due course have a right to resist."

[42] Degnan, "Two Models of Positive Law in Aquinas," p. 3.

to obey him, except perhaps accidentally, in order to avoid scandal or danger.[43]

Along these same lines, Martin Luther King, Jr. argues that disobeying the unjust law is actually indicative of greater respect for law than obeying said law would be:

> One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.[44]

## IV. The Duty of Civil Disobedience in the Social Theory of Thomas Aquinas

So in opting for civil disobedience, one is also deciding whether the greater evil or harm will occur in obeying the law or in disobeying the law. Earlier I distinguished four forms of civil disobedience. I shall now discuss each to illustrate which form is clearly allowed in Thomas Aquinas's social theory.

The first class of civil disobedience is the selfish disobedience of an unjust law. In this class the motive of the individuals disobeying is the belief that a law places an unfair burden on them. In other words, their purpose in changing the law is to promote their own interest or to appease their own conscience. But since human law is only rightly changed for the benefit of the common good,[45] their acts of civil disobedience are not justified. Nor can the selfish dissenters justify their protest on the grounds that the consequences do indeed benefit the common good more than continuing to obey the law would. That is, the evidence of greater benefit to the common good must be clear prior to the dissent from the unjust law. This is why Aquinas quotes the Jurist who says that "in establishing new laws,[46] there should be

[43] *STh* II-II, q. 104, a. 6.

[44] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham City Jail," in Percesepe, *Philosophy*, p. 772.

[45] *STh* I-II, q. 97, a. 2.

[46] Recall that the goal of civil disobedience is to change the unjust law.

evidence of the benefit to be derived, before departing from a law which has long been considered just."[47]

The second class of civil disobedience is the selfish disobedience of an unjust system. Like the first, the motive for this class of civil disobedience is askew and may be discarded as unjustifiable civil disobedience on the same basis as the first.

Skipping now to the fourth class of civil disobedience, we note that the altruistic disobedience of an unjust system of rule is the only form of civil disobedience that is clearly permissible and may even be obligatory. If a law or system of rule is found to be unjust according to the criteria presented in section II, then the subject is faced with the decision of whether or not to disobey. This decision is based on whether there will be more harm to the common good if one continues to obey the law or whether the greater harm will occur if one disobeys the law.

If one determines that the greater harm would result from continued obedience to the law, then the system is corrupt. This is the case because of what Aquinas says regarding obedience and laws as was discussed above. A law that would bring about more harm if it is obeyed than if it were to be disobeyed is clearly contrary to the right ordering of the state, according to Aquinas. For the right ordering of the state "all should take some share in the government, for this form of constitution ensures peace among the people, commends itself to all, and is most enduring."[48] So it is the people's responsibility to remedy the injustice with the goal of greater benefit to the common good by means of civil disobedience.

If, on the other hand, one determines that more harm would occur from disobeying the law, then the particular law is corrupt, but the system still works for the common good. In this instance, one is bound to continue to obey the law even if it is clearly unjust.

So, either the system is corrupt or the law is corrupt. If it is the law that is corrupt then the system still works for the common good and the subject ought to continue to obey it. In addition,

[47] L. I ff., *de Constit. Princip.*, leg. 2; quoted at *STh* I-II, q. 97, a. 2.
[48] *STh* I-II, q. 105, a. 1.

greater harm might result from doing otherwise. If the greater harm would result from continuing in one's obedience to the law, however, then the system of rule is said to be corrupt and the common good is not being served, so the subject is permitted, or even obligated, to disobey.

The third class of civil disobedience, altruistic disobedience of an unjust law, is then seemingly not allowed. This form of civil disobedience would bring about greater harm to the unity and peace of the community. Yet in his response to the question of whether laws may be changed, Aquinas does allow for the disobedience of a particular unjust law. This disobedience, however, is sanctioned not by the conscience of the subject but by the permission of the ruler:

> he who is placed over a community is empowered to dispense in a human law that rests upon his authority, so that, when the law fails in its application to persons or circumstances, he may allow the precept of the law not to be observed.[49]

In the end, then, the subject is bound to obey a particular unjust law, because to do otherwise would do more harm to the common good, unless the sovereign authority declares it permissible to disobey said law. Thoreau's refusal to pay the particular tax would then be an instance of unjustified and impermissible civil disobedience on Aquinas's principles.

## POSTSCRIPT

At the start of this paper I set out to defend a form of civil disobedience in the social theory of St. Thomas Aquinas against the charge by Katherine Archibald that to do other than obey one's superior was a sin. It should be noted here that she is not false in her charge but merely cautioned from overstating the position.

If by "rebellion" Archibald means a violent action against the civil authorities, then her statement is correct, i.e., "rebellion on the part of the follower is treason and sin." However, since she places her statement within her discussion of social hierarchy, in which inferiors steadfastly obey superiors, I am led to believe

[49] *STh* I-II, a. 97, a. 4.

that she holds the position that disobedience of any form on the part of the inferior toward the superior is not permissible on Aquinas's account. This, as has been shown above, is not the case. Civil disobedience is indeed permissible when the law is contrary to divine law, when those subject to the law had no voice in the formation of the law, when the representative of the people usurped the civic authority entrusted to him or her in order to promote that which is other than or contrary to the common good, or when the civil authority declares it permissible for subjects to disobey a particular unjust law. In any case, nonviolent, public, conscientious noncompliance with the law (with the goal of changing it) constitutes civil disobedience. The one who would practice civil disobedience must act out of altruistic motives in his or her dissent against an unjust system of laws.[50]

[50] It is interesting to contrast this notion of civil disobedience with that of Thoreau. Thoreau's version calls for more individual civil disobedience on the basis of conscious deliberation. He also seems to have a rather strong bias against a sort of "common folks" civil disobedience. At the root of the difference between Thoreau and Aquinas is their respective understandings of the role of government (perhaps we might go so far as to say their respective views of human nature!). For Thoreau, the government "is best which governs least" or even "not at all" whereas for Aquinas government is charged with the common good, which means that individuals may have to put up with what they view as unjust. Thoreau, on the other hand, claims: "Those who, while they disapprove of the character and measure of a government, yield to it their allegiance and support, are undoubtedly its most conscientious supporters, and so frequently the most serious obstacles to reform" (*Walden*, p. 228). Is it any surprise that Thoreau's form of civil disobedience would not be permitted according to Thomas's social theory?

# IS EVERY HUMAN BEING A PERSON?*

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## I. DEFINING THE QUESTION

THE PAPAL encyclical, *Evangelium vitae (EV),* declares solemnly that ". . . the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral" (*EV* 57). This unconditional ethical obligation to respect every human life is justified by reference to "the incomparable dignity of the human person." Such an unconditioned claim is made upon us by the face of every human being we meet. The encyclical supports this claim of intuitive perception with two arguments.

First and foremost, the claim to unconditional respect is based biblically and theologically on the recognition of the human being as the *imago Dei.* The human is the "image" of God. Humans, however, are not unconditioned simply taken in themselves; merely as such, theirs is a most conditioned, finite being, which can be transformed from living to dead with hardly the lifting of a finger. And yet, such violence, while always possible for us physically, is absolutely impossible on another level. In the human being something "reveals" itself to us that is more than any finite and conditioned mode of being; thus, the term "image." In contrast to mere pictures, which are images only in an accidental sense, the human is created *as* image. Human being is being an image. Thus human being participates in the

* Translated by Richard Schenk, O.P.

incorruptibility of the One of whom the human is an image. Human beings are called to eternal life.

The second and secondary argument is based on the consequences of not respecting the unconditioned dignity of the human being. The encyclical points out that an order of law in which the freedom from being at another's free disposition is lacking does not deserve the name of law; it is merely an organization of the power of the stronger over the weaker. In section nineteen the pope mentions a theory held by some who would acknowledge only those humans as subjects of legal rights who already manifest certain signs of personal autonomy. He also speaks of the theory of those who would "identify the dignity of the person with the capacity for explicitly verbal communication." Not included in this category are therefore the unborn, the dying, and severely impaired or senile humans; although not mentioned by the encyclical, it must be added that by this theory infants are excluded as well.

In his book, *Practical Ethics,*[1] the most influential proponent of this theory, Peter Singer, has declared outright that the life of a human infant is of less value than that of an adult pig.[2] Because the encyclical argues for the most part theologically, it does not deal closely with the arguments proposed by Singer and his followers in their attempt to eliminate human rights and to claim that not all human beings are persons.[3] The Holy Scriptures do not speak of "persons" as such, but simply of human beings. For revelation, humanity is one single family: all that are begotten of humans belong to this family. The conviction that even newly-born children possess human dignity is reflected in the infancy

[1] Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). An expanded second edition appeared in 1993 (Cambridge University Press).

[2] "A week-old baby is not a rational and self-conscious being, and there are many non-human animals whose rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, capacity to feel, and so on, exceed that of a human baby a week, a month, or even a year old. If the fetus does not have the same claim to life as a person, it appears that the newborn baby does not either, and the life of a newborn baby is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee" (Singer, *Practical Ethics,* 122-23; in the second edition this statement appears with slight modifications on p. 169).

[3] Cf. also Norbert Hoerster, *Abtreibung im saekularen Staat: Argumente gegen den Paragraphen 218* (Frankfurt, 1991).

narratives of the Gospel, where shepherds and kings worship the child at Bethlehem. The conviction that human being begins with conception is reflected in the celebration of the Annunciation as a feast of the Lord; the conviction is also shown by the feast of Mary's conception as well. Peter Singer responds that this might all be well and good for believing Jews and Christians, and thus they can respect their own babies, if they wish, but they should not demand that others do likewise, as there are no arguments of reason for doing so. Quite to the contrary, he argues, the partisanship for one's own species is merely a kind of racism, or "species-ism," here for the human race and species. If humans have higher rights than animals, then that is merely because they possess certain properties lacked by others: self-consciousness, the sense of one's own life as the whole of a biography, linguistic communication, *et cetera.* Every other being in the universe that had these properties would possess the same rights. But human beings who do not have these properties, those who do not *yet* have such properties or who *no longer* or perhaps even *never* had them *in actu*, also do not have such rights. They are not persons. Peter Singer is simply drawing the ultimate consequence out of the theory already held by John Locke, who separated the being of a person from human being for the first time, considering personality as one particular characteristic of human beings, a characteristic that need not always be present.

In the following reflections, I would like to present quite briefly several theses about this theory in order to show that this separation makes no sense even on rational grounds, much less on religious ones. Rational argument shows that we must continue to hold that all humans are persons.

## II. On Persons and Properties

Of course, in one sense we do name individuals of a certain species or even of several species "persons" on the basis a number of certain properties. On the other hand, the concept of person is not a predicate by which we name an individual as one instance of a concept and thus subsume it under a certain class. In order to characterize some individual as a person, we need to

know in advance to what class it belongs: whether it is a human being or an angel or a rational being of some still unknown kind. The question which needs to be answered is this: If there are certain specific characteristics by which we describe certain beings as persons, then are those individuals of this species still persons, even if they do not possess these characteristics?

I shall not discuss here in detail the different conceptual definitions of person, beginning with the famous one of Boethius (*individua substantia rationalis naturae*), but rather I wish to begin with a notion introduced into the discussion by Harry Frankfurt. Harry Frankfurt speaks of "secondary volitions."[4] He means by this term wishes and other acts of will that direct themselves towards one's own wishes and one's own acts of will. It is uniquely human that we not only have intentions and propositional attitudes, not only wishes and acts of will, but that we can wish that we might wish or that we might not wish for something in particular. Anyone who struggles with an addiction or another self-destructive habit knows this: We can wish to wish differently than we do. Humans *are* not just in some set mode, but they can wish to be otherwise. To some degree, they can try to influence and manipulate themselves; truly, we can wish somehow to be altogether different human beings than we are. With this we have admittedly gone a good way beyond that which Frankfurt had meant to say. Humans can imagine themselves to be both completely different and yet still themselves. The dreams, fairy-tales, and the religious imagination of humanity contain repeatedly the notion of *metamorphosis*. The ability of fairy-tales to imagine that someone could be first a man, then a frog, then a prince, but all the time the same identical person, points to the difference we all assume between person and properties or characteristics.[5] The same presupposition is evident in

[4] Cf. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-21; idem, "Identification and Externality," in A. Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 239-252.

[5] Cf. also the preparation of Homer's Ulysses to hear the Sirens. His well thought out command not to be unbound, even when, as he rightly anticipates, he will ask to be, shows again the perceived distinction of personal identity and property or characteristic.

Franz Kafka's story of "Metamorphosis." In each case, the abiding numerical identity of the human being is presupposed, which is not a function of some qualitative identity. We can imagine ourselves to be *otherwise* without being *others*.

Persons are beings who are what they are in a way different from other beings. They are not simply instances of a species, but rather they relate themselves to what they are. Thus human beings can shed tears at a theatrical performance and even enjoy this pain and that anxiety; already Augustine was fascinated by this phenomenon. A person is therefore not just "something," but "someone." Someone is never something. To be "someone" is not a property of something, not the property of a thing or an organic being, which could already be adequately described as such and such in non-personal terms. Rather, we identify distinctly from the start either someone or something. We identify an exemplar of the species *homo sapiens* from the start and without consideration of any factually possessed characteristics as someone, thus, as a person. I want to give five reasons here why that is the case.

*First, the presuppositions of interaction between parent and child:* A child first develops specifically personal characteristics, including the ability to relate to itself, when the mother (or some other human being) has already oriented herself towards the child as "someone," that is to say, when she has treated the child as a person in encounter. No mother acts with the intention of manipulating "something" in a way that someday will make a "someone" out of it. No mother intends to "make" a person, but she turns her attention towards someone, towards a person; and by doing so, she gives this person the possibility of developing step by step the characteristics in which persons show themselves. This "turning towards" must be spontaneous and genuine. Were mothers in fact by their attentive turning towards their children only making somethings into persons, then we would have to take steps to hide this theory from parents, lest the precondition of successful "conversion" be destroyed, namely the conviction that they are in fact already dealing with persons. There is no gradual transition here from something to someone.

*Second, the experience of a well-founded caution against drawing conclusions from the argument* e silentio *in regard to the*

*apparent lack of intentional acts:* One of the characteristics of personality is the presence of intentional acts, different from mere propositional attitudes, from merely being set on doing something, which must be ascribed to animals as well. We are completely certain that intentional acts are present whenever we manage to enter into living communication with other beings. We do not have the same degree of assurance in deciding about the absence of such acts. Davidson has shown that we can only identify intentional acts and deeds as such, when we acknowledge a certain degree of rationality in them, that is to say, when we share in large part their views on the world and their propositional attitudes. If the views of any human being about what he or she had to do to attain a certain effect were totally false, then we could not even know which effect, if any, they had intended to reach. It might still be possible that they had acted intentionally, but if they act in a totally irrational manner, then we cannot know whether or not they had acted intentionally. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the concepts of responsibility and accountability. These who are mentally ill might not always be accountable for their actions, because they often give their deeds a meaning which we cannot recognize; and yet they could possibly still be as responsible before God for such deeds as any "rational" human being.

*Third, the fundamental difference between someone and something:* What is the case with those too seriously impaired to still coordinate their movements or again with infants who have not yet learned to do so? Do we have any grounds for viewing and treating them as "someone," although that can demand great sacrifices of us? The question is how do we perceive the incapacitated? As mere things? As animals of a unique type? Precisely not. We perceive them as patients, as infirm. Unavoidably, they stand in a personal relationship as someone needing help. We do not consider them merely as "something." That is clear from the fact that we search for means to cure them, that is to say we search for means of helping their nature in a way that would allow them to assume that place in the community of persons that is reserved for them until their death. We

do not know what it is like to be such a human being, but we do know that whether we shall ever have an appropriate access to what personhood means depends in large measure on the way we deal with such human beings. Humans *are* not simply what they are; they *have* their nature. And there is no reason to drop this view whenever the nature thus held becomes sufficiently deformed.

We can easily try an experiment at falsification. Imagine a being, born of humans but otherwise very unlike them. Let us imagine that the behavior of this being contained no indication of identifiable practical and theoretical intentionality. Imagine further that this being would appear to us to be entirely healthy, that it moves normally in the world. It would be called an animal, equipped with all the instincts necessary for survival, recalling that the absence of such instincts is one of the decisive marks of a human being. By contrast, this being needs no outside help to survive. It is not dependent on communication with other humans; of course, it is also not capable of such. Such a being would have to appear to us in fact as a new, previously unknown species of animal, since we perceive that it is not sick. It would not be a person; and it would not belong to humankind.

By contrast, the mentally infirm do belong to humankind. The infirm are those who in the universal community of persons are in the immediate sense only the recipients of physical and psychological benevolence without being capable either of acknowledging such help or of anything that normally makes such an acknowledgment possible. But in fact they give more than they receive. They receive help on the level of basic vitality. That the healthy part of humanity provides this help is itself a fact that has a fundamental significance for humanity itself. It lets the meaning of the community of persons shine forth.

As we have seen, love and recognition of a human being are addressed to that being itself, not to its properties, even though we perceive what this kind of being is by its properties. In particular, without the special characteristics of the beloved, no love of friendship or eros could ever come about. There is some charm or wit, some mutual interest or shared conviction that

initiates these kinds of love. And yet love, even if first initiated by such characteristics, is directed toward the person having the properties and not toward the properties themselves; otherwise, it would be said that no real love of the other person was present. The totally infirm do not possess many charming characteristics of this kind. But by our way of living with human beings who lack such characteristics, it becomes clear in an exemplary manner that, in the human community of acknowledgment, it is really the acknowledgment of selfhood that is at stake and not merely an esteem for useful or pleasant characteristics. Those who are totally debilitated challenge and bring out what is best in humankind, the authentic foundation of our self-respect. That which they thus give to humanity by their taking is more than what they receive.

*Fourth, the inappropriateness of the term "potential persons":* The argument of nominalism regarding small children is that they are only potentially persons, that they need first to be coopted into the community of mutual recognition and acknowledgment in order to become persons. I have already given an answer to part of this argument: acknowledgment presupposes what is acknowledged. But beyond this something needs to be said about the notion of potential persons. There are no potential persons; persons have potencies, capabilities. Persons can develop themselves, but nothing develops itself into a person. Someone does not come to be from something. Were personality a mere state, then it could come to be by and by; but if a person is someone, who can be found in various states and dispositions, then the person is always prior to such states. The person is not the result of a change but of a generation, like Aristotle's substances. Person is substance, because person is the way in which human being *is*. Person neither begins to exist after human being nor ceases to exist before it.

Only after some time does the human being begin to say "I." But that one, whom a human means with "I," is not simply "one I," i.e., some sub-case or other of egoness, but precisely the very human being who says "I." We say, for example, "I was born then or there," "I was begotten then or there," even though the being that was begotten or born did not say "I" at the time. And yet we

still do not say: "Then or there something was born, from which I then came to be." I *was* this being. Personality is not the result of a development but rather already the structure of a unique kind of development. It is not the structure of a development that only becomes visible as a development from an external point of view, while its own reality was embodied merely in each of its actual states. Rather it is the structure of a development, one that can recognize itself retrospectively as this development and as the subject of this development, as a unity that spans the time in which it developed. This unity is the person.

There is also another reason why it is meaningless to speak of potential persons. The concept of potentiality in this context only comes up if personality is presupposed. Persons are the transcendental condition of possibilities. Ever since the Megaric school, there has been repeated criticism of the fact that we say that there are some things that are not actually. What is merely possible seems to lack precisely that precondition necessary for actualization; precisely as non-actual, it is impossible. It is possible only when all preconditions are given; but in that case it is also actual. There is only one counter-example against this line of argument: the consciousness of freedom. In fact I only have freedom to do something when it is also possible for me not to do it. The meaning of this can be defined only in a circular manner, that is to say by referring back to the consciousness of freedom. That which is at the very foundation of the conditions of possibility cannot itself be thought of as mere potentiality. Persons are, or they are not. But if they are, then they are always actual, *semper in actu*. They are like Aristotle's substance, *prote energeia*, first actuality, which contains within itself the possibility of a plurality of further actualizations. It does indeed make sense to speak of possible and originating intentionality. Intentional acts rise up out of the stream of consciousness and take on step by step the propositional structure by which they then become distinct, atomic unities. But whenever we speak of potential intentionality, we are assuming actual persons.

*Fifth, the absurdity of trying to assign conditions to what we admit and want to be unconditional:* The acknowledgment or recognition of personhood is the acknowledgment or recognition

of an unconditional claim. The unconditioned nature of a claim would, however, be illusory, if on the one hand the claim itself were termed unconditional, while on the other hand the right to file the claim, so to speak, were made dependent upon fulfilling certain empirical preconditions that remain hypothetical. A sentence that with certainty is either true or false can just as certainly make an unconditional claim to its acceptance, if it is true; that which remains uncertain in such a case is merely whether it is in fact true. But if it is true, it has a right to be acknowledged as true.

Sentences that are either true or false are of two kinds. Firstly, there are some sentences that, if true, are true by necessity. The sentences of arithmetic are of this kind. If an addition sum is true at all, it is because it follows necessarily from the basic principles of number. It can be said in advance that, if it is true, it must be true by necessity. It might be a matter of debate, especially for the beginner, whether some given sentence in fact belongs to this kind of necessarily true sentences. But if it is true, the student knows at the start that it will be true by necessity.

The same thing does not hold for practical sentences, the other group of sentences that are either true or false. They cannot be known to be apodictic and binding without the concomitant certainty of their apodictic nature. If I am obligated to do something here and now, then it is impossible not also to be able here and now to know this: to the degree to which such knowledge is impossible, to that degree is the knowledge of the obligation weakened. If we are not yet capable of knowing this with certainty, then it also cannot yet oblige us *in concreto*, here and now. In situations of objective uncertainty there must be rules for dealing with such uncertainty, rules that are not equally uncertain, but rather rules that provide a greater measure of reliable orientation. Descartes's provisional morality is a summary of such rules.

The obligation to acknowledge persons unconditionally would be illusory, as already mentioned, if it were a matter of our prudential judgment about whether or not we should acknowledge that a given human being is in fact also a person, arguing, say, that the very acknowledgment of the criteria for personhood

is debatable or that there is doubt whether the criteria are met in a given case. The word "unconditioned" would be degraded to a mere *façon de parler.*

In fact it is not the case that there is, to begin with, clarity about a general rule, held with certainty, that persons must be unconditionally respected, and that only then deduced from this general certainty does it come to this or that less certain, posterior application of the rule to individual cases, which as individual could always be called into doubt. The unconditional respect for human beings is not more certain on the general than on the concrete level. The claim of persons to unconditional respect is rather perceived primarily and fundamentally as a claim that comes from a particular person or from several particular persons. The very claim is perceived in reflection as unconditional, only when the conviction is in fact already given that this is a case of such unconditional being. The unconditioned nature of the sentence of which Lévinas speaks, "You will not kill me," goes forth in each case from the face of a particular, individual human being. That I may not kill this or that human being is even more certain than that I may kill no one at all.

Person is not the concept of species but rather that way by which individuals of the species "human" are. They *are* in such a way that each of those existents in that community of persons we call "humanity" holds a unique place, irreproducible and incapable of substitution. Only as holding such a place are they perceived as persons by someone who also occupies such a place. To make the recognition of such a place depend upon the prior realization of certain qualitative conditions would be to have already destroyed the unconditional character of the claim at its very root. Whoever lays claim to this place asserts this claim as a born, not an elected, member of humanity. Personal rights are not granted or permitted, but rather they are claimed by everyone with equal right. "By everyone" means at least by every human being. The idea of unconditional rights enjoyed only after conditions for approval by others are fulfilled is a self-contradiction. Personal rights *are* only unconditional rights, if they are not made to depend upon the fulfillment of some qualitative condition, about which others decide who are already

acknowledged members of the community of rights and law. Humanity cannot be a community of law in the sense of a "closed shop"; were it otherwise, then even the axiom *pacta sunt servanda* would be valid only in regard to those whom the majority had agreed to acknowledge as subjects of rights. There can be, and there may be, but one single criterion for personality: that of biologically belonging to the human race. Personal rights are what is meant by their concept only if they mean the same thing as human rights. And if someday we should discover other natural species in the universe, whose adult individuals often possess rationality and self-consciousness, then we would also have to acknowledge all such creatures of this species as persons as well.

# BOOK REVIEWS

*The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great through the 12th Century*, volume two of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*. By BERNARD MCGINN. New York: Crossroad, 1994. Pp. xv + 630. $49.50.

This second volume of the History of Western Mysticism covers the period from the sixth through the twelfth century, from Gregory the Great to the Victorines. It fully lives up to the high expectations raised by the first part and displays the same skill in presenting the fruit of enormous learning in a clear, comprehensible manner. The compact section of notes, occupying one-third of the volume, shows how well the author has succeeded in mastering the abundance of sources, primary and secondary, the current Renaissance of medieval studies has rendered available. Undaunted by the mass of recent literature McGinn's established and constantly renewed acquaintance with the original texts enables him judiciously and critically to compare interpretations and judgments. Method and balance mark this work as much as learning and erudition. Its unadorned but easy style, the language of the lectern, renders his work accessible to a wider public, even if the casual tone does not always reflect the intensity of its subject.

The author has structured his study around four major figures: Gregory the Great (sixth century), Scottus Eriugena (ninth), Bernard and William of Saint-Thierry (twelfth). They form the centers of three spiritual epochs of the early Middle Ages. Each one of these periods is introduced by informative chapters on the general conditions of spiritual life. The study concludes with a chapter on visionaries who belong to none of the schools represented by the key figures and a chapter on Victorine writers that already prepares for the next volume on the high season of Christian mysticism. The simple structure allows each of the great ones to be given a full chapter. Rather than drowning his survey in an abundance of forgettable names as encyclopedic histories tend to do, McGinn has accommodated the minor figures in his transition chapters where general headings dominate individual characteristics.

By devoting so much space to the great ones, the author has transformed much of what could have remained a mere survey into a series of monographs. It enabled him to highlight the unique significance of at least two previously neglected figures in the rather arid span of time that separates the patristic period from the flowering of the twelfth century: Scottus Eriugena and William of Saint-Thierry. Eriugena's intellectual importance has been established for some time, yet mainly with historians of philosophy and Neoplatonist thinkers. Here he appears as the key thinker who transmits

Dionysius's negative theology to the Latin West and who prepares the new mysticism of the divine image that was to culminate in Eckhart and Ruusbroec.

Was Eriugena a mystic? The question returns us to the provisional definition given in the general Introduction and consistently maintained throughout volume one and most of volume two. There we learned that "mystical" refers to any belief, system, or practice conducive to the experience of God's presence (vol. I, p. xvii). This definition happily replaces the one adopted through much of the modern period of exclusively private, mostly exceptional, experiences and the unusual expressions (visions, raptures, etc.) that often accompany them. Professor McGinn presents a more objective and more controllable criterion. He extends the mystical to a more or less direct consciousness of the divine presence as evident in texts that witness of, or are conducive to, such a consciousness. This sensible change enables him to include a great many theological texts of the first millennium without having to worry about the degree of their authors' subjective awareness of God's presence and to avoid the predicament to which all attempts to ascertain another person's private experience lead. Before the twelfth century almost no reports of private experiences exist and the ones that do exist, such as Augustine's "vision" of Ostia, so closely follow an established Neoplatonic pattern that they leave us wondering about their private nature. His more objective approach also dispensed the author from having to be overly concerned about the fine, in the early centuries almost invisible, line to be drawn between speculative and mystical theology.

Viewed in that light the substantial discussion of Eriugena's Neoplatonic philosophy in chapter three appears more than justified. The Irish thinker's work was spiritually important not only because of the deeply spiritual passages in the final part of *De divisione naturae*, but even more because it transmitted the very structure of the mystical descent and ascent to future spiritual writers. The *exitus-reditus* line of his thought became the dominant model of mystical literature before the fifteenth century. His inclusion may raise the question, however, why other theologians of the previous period were denied a place among the mystics. What supports the preference for some theologians over others before Abelard and subsequent Scholasticism drew a relatively clear distinction between systematic school theology and spiritual theology? McGinn does not really answer that question, nor do I think that it can be answered by a hard-and-fast rule. The historian's judgment will in the end be decisive and I see no reason to challenge the author's selection.

In the twelfth century, however, a more formidable problem confronts Professor McGinn. Having discussed the two major figures, Bernard and William of Saint-Thierry (whom he rescues from the subsumption under the

spiritual lordship of his illustrious friend, Bernard) as well as some "other voices of Citeaux" whose spiritual credentials no one would question, he inserts an intriguing chapter on "Visionaries and Contemplatives in the Twelfth Century Monasticism." Here all the problems that have beset the field for some time rear their heads again. Our author himself, though wiser than his subjectivist predecessors, still appears to be struggling with them. Visions have, of course, formed a substantial part of the Christian's spiritual universe since the Book of Revelation. But with the beginning of early, twelfth-century humanism when the individual and his or her experience suddenly blossomed, more and more religious writers started reporting private visions in which they themselves occupied a central position. By the alleged weight of these private visions they supported their theories, occasionally even theories that were not "mystical" in the earlier sense of the term. Apropos of Rupert of Deutz, one of the first to do so, McGinn raises the question: "Must every mystic be a visionary? Is every visionary to be considered a mystic?" (326). He rightly denies that visions constitute an essential ingredient of the direct experience of God. To the question whether the presence of visions is a sure sign of such an experience, he again answers negatively. Subjective reports, no less than objective treatises, require an explicit reference to the divine presence in order to qualify as mystical. Rupert's visions that began with a spiritual perception of "the Son of Man on the Cross" followed by a sequence of "dreams" clearly meet that criterion, whatever the quality of his other writings may be. Indeed, the first person report of his "seeings" anticipates most of those reports to which the modern age would exclusively reserve the term "mystical." But with Hildegard of Bingen and Elisabeth of Schönau serious definitional difficulties arise. Not only do Hildegard's writings not belong to the objective-mystical type, but even the subjective report of her "visions" raises questions about their religious character. Some of her visionary states seem to consist in no more than an expansion of consciousness. Others refer to the seeing of a light "that is not spatial," even though it was conveyed through a synaesthetic, quasi-physical perception. By means of these exceptional states Hildegard claims to have received messages *from* God, but, McGinn claims, they do not appear to involve "a direct experience *of* God in the mystical sense" (335). Still, though with considerable hesitation, the author concludes that it would be difficult to deny the name mystical to these "experiences of contact with God" (336). The distinction between "of God" and "from God," however, lays the basis for a restriction that disqualifies a visionary like Elisabeth whose seeings grant her no more than "an entry into the heavenly world where messages are communicated to her, often in a mediated fashion by angels" (337).

Reading this argument, continued in the discussion of Joachim da Fiore (well known to our author!), one wonders whether the definition of the "direct

presence of God" has not been too strictly applied—both subjectively and objectively. The question whether the object of the vision was truly "God" may cause some surprise coming from an author who so strongly defends the negative theology of Dionysius, Eriugena, and Eckhart. Why insist on more precision than "an entry into the heavenly world"—a vague description but one surely intended to refer to a "supernatural" source? What would a "vision" of God in the strict sense mean in any event?

The author is, of course, entitled to limit his history to a specifically Christian form of mysticism, without considering other forms, even if experienced by Christians. But to insist too much on precision in defining the divine presence risks introducing a theological norm into a study the purely historical method of which seems to exclude such a precision. In a narrative of the succession of ideas only descriptions and definitions inherent in the ideas themselves must carry full authority. To be sure, ideas do not originate in a vacuum and the author has anchored them solidly within a specific, communal tradition. But the interpretation of the experience of those who consider themselves part of that tradition need not be questioned on the basis of a theologically more accurate definition lest we exhibit norms foreign to the subject matter. That rule would also apply to the dubious origin of Hildegard's states (and those of so many others in ages to follow) who interpreted an expanded consciousness or a vision of light as derived from the presence of God. Whether such states are induced by pathological conditions, e.g., by "scintillating scotoma" (335), seems not directly pertinent to the issue. The fact remains that Hildegard and others (Margaret Marie Alacoque, Jeanne Guyon, *inter alios*) *interpreted* their abnormal experiences as originated in a direct, supernatural presence understood in a Christian sense. Interpretation forms an essential part of all experience! To test that interpretation by the rules of "right" definitions may constitute an unwanted intrusion of theology or of psychology into a history of ideas.

It would be wholly inappropriate to charge the totally open-minded Bernard McGinn with theological prejudice. But, as his remarkable project proceeds, it may well force him to refine the provisional definitions he, correctly, set up in the Introduction. To do so is, for that matter, what he promised for the final volume. Meanwhile, we all continue to profit from the learning and judgment of a most expert guide through often wayless territory.

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*Saint Thomas au XXe siècle: Actes du colloque du Centenaire de la "Revue thomiste."* Paris: Saint-Paul, 1994. Pp. 475 (paper).

In March of 1993 the *Revue thomiste* marked its centenary by sponsoring a three-day colloquium at the Institut Catholique of Toulouse on "St. Thomas in the 20th century." The commemoration resumed the following month with a conference at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), site of the journal's foundation. This volume assembles the papers presented at the Toulouse colloquium and a selection of those read in Fribourg. All of the contributions are in French.

The volume opens with a letter (dated 11 March 1993) that His Holiness John-Paul II addressed to the Prior Provincial of the Toulouse Dominicans, under whose aegis the *Revue thomiste* is now published. The Pope pays tribute to the "lucid discernment" that has guided this journal in a "critical and constructive reflection on the major problems of our epoch, assuring it a place of choice in Catholic intellectual life" (p. 7). Next follows an editorial introduction by Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P., who examines the pertinence of the *Revue's* motto *vetera novis augere.* Acknowledging that the Thomistic revival of this century has largely proven to be unsuccessful, to judge by the extent of its cultural impact, he concludes nevertheless that this failure may pave the way for an eventual renewal, on condition that the past achievements and deficiencies of Thomism come to be adequately understood. The present volume thus aims to assess the efforts of Francophone philosophers and theologians to advance the thought of Thomas Aquinas; it thereby provides us with a valuable *status quaestionis*, enabling Aquinas's contemporary disciples to measure better the challenge that lies before them.

The first of the volume's three sections is devoted to historical studies on the *Revue thomiste's* role in the formation of contemporary Neo-Thomism and its contribution to some of the important theological controversies in the first half of this century.

Francesco Baretta narrates the vicissitudes of the journal's inception and first years (1893-1905). Not until the establishment in 1907 of the *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* by members of the Dominican order's Paris province (the reasons that motivated the foundation of a rival journal are taken up by André Duval in a paper wholly devoted to this topic [pp. 96-108]) did the *Revue thomiste* come to be closely affiliated with the Toulouse province. Prior to this time it enjoyed the active collaboration of the order's three French provinces: Lyon, Paris, and Toulouse. Inspired by the recently promulgated *Aeterni Patris* (1879), the founders of the *Revue thomiste* sought to implement the encyclical's recommendation that the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas be brought into fruitful dialogue with modern science. Yet in so doing the *Revue thomiste* encountered serious obstacles, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the journal's chief collaborators were unable to recognize the originality of the hypothetico-deductive method and thus persisted

in thematizing modern science according to the epistemological categories of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics.* Practically, they were unable (some exceptions aside) to enlist the support of contributors competent in both experimental science and scholastic thought.

Thomism's engagement with modernity is taken up anew by Henry Donneaud, who charts the *Revue thomiste*'s role in the nascent modernist crisis. During this period (1900-1908) the journal's rapprochement with the physical sciences attenuated, giving way to a preoccupation with modernism and its attendant controversies: the evolution of Catholic dogmas, the nature and role of apologetics, etc. Far from presenting a united front in the face of these theological developments, the principal collaborators of the *Revue thomiste* diverged in the fundamental orientation of their responses. Gradually, two very different Thomisms emerged: one, markedly conservative, refused any compromise with the new trends, condemning them *in toto* by appeal to a literalist, a-historical reading of the master; the other, progressive, sought to confront the modernists on their own terrain by drawing on the resources of a Thomistic doctrine open to amendment. After a period of internal strife the latter orientation became the more dominant of the two.

The very mention of theological conservatism cannot but elicit the memory of a much later debate to which the name of the *Revue thomiste* is now inextricably tied. I am referring of course to the journal's famous controversy with the proponents of the so-called "nouvelle théologie." It has become commonplace to brand the Dominican Fathers under whose leadership the *Revue thomiste* was then published, viz., M.-M. Labourdette, M.-J. Nicolas, and R.-L. Bruckberger (all three of the Toulouse province's studium at Saint-Maximin), as retrograde critics of the groundbreaking work carried out by H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou (*inter alia*) at the Jesuit theological faculty of Lyon-Fourvière. This reputation is due in large measure to the 1950 sanctions that Church authorities directed against the Jesuit faculty, which many attributed to the infelicitous polemics of the Saint-Maximin theologians. Etienne Fouilloux examines this episode in an impressive piece of historical analysis, entitled "Theological Dialogue? (1946-1948)," which is essential reading for anyone interested in the affair. Drawing heavily on primary source materials (chiefly unpublished correspondence), Fouilloux goes a long way toward dispelling common misconceptions about the abortive dialogue. In particular, he shows that the Roman sanctions were due in large part to the intervention of R. Garrigou-Lagrange, who acted independently and in opposition to the theological intentions of Labourdette and his St. Maximin confrères. Even more importantly, Fouilloux elucidates the substantive issues that were at stake in the controversy (the scientific status of theology, the historicity of theological discourse, the legitimate plurality of theologies within the unity of the Catholic faith), issues that have been obscured by the facile imposition of labels more fit for politics than theology.

The remaining studies in the first section of this volume delve into other episodes or prominent figures in the life of the *Revue thomiste*. Jean Caron considers the reception accorded to the thought of Maurice Blondel in the early years of the journal, with a special focus on the articles published in 1895-1898 by P. Schwalm regarding the method of immanence in apologetics. In an essay amusingly entitled "The devil, probably: Fr. Mandonnet, the Jesuits and probabilism (1901-1903)" Fabrice Bouthillon unmasks the ideological underpinnings of the Dominican historian's interpretation of the 1679 condemnation of probabilism by Pope Innocent XI. The impact of the Action Française crisis (1925-1928) on the editorial orientation of the *Revue thomiste* is taken up by Philippe Chenaux, while Bernard Montagnes analyzes the journal's defense of the historico-critical method in biblical exegesis (then championed by M.-J. Lagrange) against the attacks of Henri Lusseau, who accused the renowned Dominican exegete (and his supporters at the *Revue thomiste*) of heterodoxy. The role of Jacques Maritain in the journal's revival during the years just preceding World War II and his advocacy of a Christian moral philosophy subalternated to theology are taken up in an informative essay by Michel Fourcade.

From the outset, the Neo-Thomistic projects of this century were accompanied by a vigorous expansion of historical research on Aquinas and other medieval thinkers. The articles that comprise the volume's second section are accordingly devoted to the historiography of medieval philosophy during this period.

Today no serious student of Thomas Aquinas could fail to recognize the presence of Platonic and Neo-Platonic elements in the master's philosophical-theological constructions. Yet at the turn of the century such was not the case; more often than not the exposition of Thomas's philosophy was separated from Aristotle's by no more than a dash. In a concise and well-documented paper (which includes a useful annotated bibliography) Cristina d'Ancona Costa surveys this century's abundant literature on Aquinas's relation to the various strands of Platonism. On another front, François-Xavier Putallaz traces the evolution of contemporary scholarship on medieval nominalism. Similarly, Olivier Boulnois sketches the peripeties of Scotistic historiography in this century, dividing them into four epochs: opposition, exhumation, rehabilitation, and consecration. Finally, J. Follon and James McEvoy present the medieval historiography of the Louvain school, as seen through the prism of the *Revue philosophique de Louvain*.

Étienne Gilson's polemic against Cajetan, whose authoritative commentary on the *Summa theologiae* was dubbed by the eminent medievalist a "corruptorium Thomae," is the topic of a suggestive paper by Serge-Thomas Bonino. Despite occasional appearances to the contrary, Gilson's animus against the famous cardinal and his commentatorial successors did not stem from a naive hermeneutical method that would privilege a direct and exclusive

reading of Aquinas's text. On the contrary, in his rejection of the commentators Gilson was motivated first and foremost by metaphysical and theological concerns. On the metaphysical plane, Gilson contended that Cajetan had contravened Thomas's insistence on the primacy of *esse,* surreptitiously replacing it with Aristotle's less robust teaching on the primacy of substance. Thus, for Cajetan, *esse* no longer functions as the supreme existential act that individually informs all aspects of each being; its sole task is to confer the bare fact of existence on substances already fully complete in their own order. Pertaining as it does to the very first principle of metaphysics on which all the rest depends (*more geometrico?*), this error cannot but contaminate the entire body of Cajetan's doctrine, and *a fortiori* the doctrine of all those who take him as their chief guide in reading Thomas Aquinas. On the theological plane, Cajetan is accused of separating nature and grace into isolated spheres. In Gilson's eyes this separation portends disastrous consequences for an incipient Neo-Thomism: no longer in vital contact with theology, philosophy is henceforth construed as a purely secular reflection on God. A vague deism is thus substituted for the Christian philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

"The Middle Ages according to Jacques Maritain" is the title of a nuanced essay by Yves Floucat, a Toulousian philosopher whose writings on contemporary Thomism have frequently appeared within the pages of the *Revue thomiste.* On his reading, Maritain's vision of the Middle Ages is at once retrospective and prospective: retrospective, because Maritain interprets the thirteenth century as a privileged moment in history when faith and reason joined together harmoniously to transfigure the temporal order; prospective, because this epoch furnishes him with a "concrete historical ideal" (a paradigm for communal action) of an age to come, an age in which the demise of modern "anthropocentric humanism" will set the stage for the advent of a "theocentric humanism of the incarnation," the only humanism truly worthy of the name. On a related theme, Bruno Pinchard turns to the poetry of Dante and Rabelais in order to illustrate how scholastic conceptions of the self prompted the emergence of Renaissance humanism. Finally, Ruedi Imbach takes up the question whether Aquinas's political writings can legitimately buttress the conviction that democracy is a form of government superior to monarchy. After examining some conflicting views advanced by French Thomists on this issue, he concludes that in some texts at least (most notably *Summa theol.* II-II, q. 105, a. 1) Aquinas argues in favor of a participation of the multitude in the election (*electio*) of public authorities, the formal element of a democratic political regime.

In a third section entitled "Thomism and Contemporary Thought," the assessment of twentieth-century Thomism is brought up to the present. Several of the papers continue the historical reflections of the previous chapters: thus B.-D. de La Soujeole narrates the *Revue thomiste*'s role in the

preparation of the second Vatican Council; Jean-Louis Bruguès outlines the place accorded to the doctrine of St. Thomas within recent Roman church teaching on morals; Servais Pinckaers traces the evolution of Thomistic ethics during the last half-century and recommends some promising avenues for future reflection; Roger Arnaldez situates the *Revue thomiste*'s contribution to the advancement of Islamic studies; and Jean-Pierre Torrell evaluates some Thomistic perspectives on controverted questions in Christology, such as the status of Christ's human *esse*.

Also included in this section are several essays of a more systematic cast. Thus Georges Cottier describes the virtues of intellectual character that will best equip Thomists for a critical and fruitful engagement with the spirit of the times; in so doing he suggests illuminating definitions for the elusive terms "modernity," "postmodernity," "ideology," and "historicism." Similarly, André Dupleix elucidates aspects of St. Thomas's spirituality that are especially worthy of emulation by those who style themselves his disciples. Finally, the two remaining essays offer substantive contributions to issues long disputed in the Schools.

Cyrille Michon examines the Thomistic theory of concept formation in the light of William of Ockham's minimalist critique. The *Venerabilis Inceptor* argued that Aquinas's *conceptus* ought to be jettisoned in favor of a more economical explanation: "concepts" are another name for the *acts* of abstract cognition that arise in the mind under the combined impact of sensory and intellective intuition. On this account there is no need to posit special mental entities mediating between intellectual acts and their objects. Despite the alluring simplicity of this explanation, Michion argues that it succumbs to Peter Geach's trenchant critique of abstractionism (the doctrine that concepts are traces left in the mind by the causal impact of sensible entities, traces that allegedly enable the mind to recognize other individual entities as instantiations of like kind). By contrast, Aquinas's theory of concept formation is free of abstractionism: for him the concept is neither a mental sign nor an inner picture or representation of the object; rather it is a *rule* enabling the knower to apply acts of judgment to extramental things. Emerging unscathed from Ockham's razor, the Thomistic *conceptus* is vindicated as a valuable antidote to empiricism.

Turning to the hotly debated question of Christ's human knowledge, J.-P. Torrell advances a "re-reading" of *Summa theologiae* III, qq. 9-12. This "re-reading" signifies more than a novel historical interpretation; instead the author intends to amend the letter of Aquinas's text in the light of recent advances in biblical exegesis and speculative theology. More specifically, Torrell recommends that we dispense with the Angelic Doctor's teaching that Jesus (*qua* man) enjoyed the beatific vision during his entire earthly existence (the reason: Aquinas misapplied scriptural passages on the risen Christ to the pre-Easter Jesus) and instead ascribe to him the theological virtue of

faith. Yet faith-knowledge alone is insufficient to account for Jesus' extraordinary gifts as a teacher: for this we must appeal to a special charism along the lines of an infused knowledge. According to Torrell this knowledge is best understood by reference to Aquinas's mature teaching on prophecy: God equipped the prophets with an infused light (but not infused ideas) enabling them to communicate divine truths to others. Likewise, God conferred on Jesus an infused light akin to that of the prophets, but with this qualitative difference: in him the *lumen* is a permanent feature of his cognitive life (a *habitus*), while it is given to the prophets only intermittently (*per modum actus*).

The foregoing summary will have served its purpose if it has conveyed to the reader some sense of the very rich historical, philosophical, and theological reflections that comprise this volume. The editorial team of the *Revue thomiste* is to be commended for the high caliber of this and the other special publications it has produced in recent years: the 1992 commemorative volume on the theological achievement of M.-M. Labourdette; the 1993 centenary index ("tables générales 1893-1992"); the Gilson issue of 1994; and most recently an issue devoted to Thomas Aquinas and the onto-theo-logy debate (1995). This reviewer eagerly waits for more.

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*The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan.* By J. MICHAEL STEBBINS. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Pp. xxii + 399. $65.00 (cloth).

Aquinas insists that the creator's primary intent is the "order of the universe," and Bernard Lonergan's dissertation on "operating grace" in Aquinas's writings managed to move beyond the stalemated discussion of "sufficient" and "efficacious" grace precisely because he displayed how any discourse about grace had to be connected with larger theorems of the creator's operation in creation. What speaking of the divine action called "grace" requires is a set of metaphysical skills adequate to speaking of the "order of the universe" as created. A tall order, whose scope the published edition of his dissertation—*Grace and Freedom*—so understated that its implications have been missed by many philosophers and theologians fascinated with such questions. Stebbins's careful reconstruction of that text reminds us of its daunting scope. And part of the reason it can do so is that he illustrates both the method and conclusions of *Grace and Freedom* through a later text which Lonergan had composed (in Latin) for a course on grace offered from 1947 to 1960: *De ente supernaturali* (which will appear in volume 16 [*Early Latin Theology*] of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* published by

University of Toronto Press). The significance of this collateral source is that it can profit from and respond to Henri de Lubac's epochal *Surnaturel* (1946).

For those not familiar with *Grace and Freedom,* as well as some who thought they were, a list of Stebbins's chapters manages to convey the scope of Lonergan's achievement: 1. The Role of Understanding in Theological Speculation; 2. The Principal Instance of Supernatural Being: The Created Communication of the Divine Nature; 3. Thirteenth-Century Breakthrough (The "Theorem" of the Supernatural); 4. Supernatural Transformation of Human Activity; 5. Obediential Potency and the Natural Desire to See God; 6. Molinist and Bannezian Systems; 7. Theoretical Perspective on Divine Concourse; 8. Contingence, Sin and Divine Efficacy. As always, Lonergan must actively reflect on method while executing a theological inquiry, so Stebbins rightly begins with his insistence that such inquiry must be more than "just a networks of concepts; it is primarily an act of understanding" (xix)—Chapter 1.

Then, following the expository order of *De ente supernaturali,* he shows how Lonergan roots the supernatural in the theorems developed to speak of the natural: of creation itself. ("Theorem," as we shall see, is a favorite word of Lonergan's, intimating what it takes to move beyond our imaginations to a set of propositions able to articulate the metaphysical issues at stake.) Following the analogy of nature, we can see how the "two operations by which creatures attain God *uti in se est*" (47)—the beatific vision and acts of charity—require a created participation in the divine nature. But this entire domain will be falsely construed if conceived as a result of divine "intervention"; it is rather part of the "order of the universe." And "this insight into cosmic order—a hierarchy of being, with the highest grade of being lying absolutely beyond the proportion of any possible finite and contingent substance—is what Lonergan calls 'the theorem of the supernatural'" (56). Chapter 2 represents a largely philosophical exposition of the terms required to construct such a *theorem,* while chapter 3 gives its historical roots in the thirteenth-century theological debates culminating in Philip the Chancellor's achievement in articulating the notion of *supernatural* in a way that respected the realities of nature. (This historical excursus is especially useful here, since it locates the emergence of the notion as a strategy to handle outstanding questions, and so sets the stage for a later critique of the "two-story universe" picture, which most moderns inescapably associate with any use of "supernatural.")

The following chapter (4) details diverse meanings of "act" and of "operation," noting how acts are specified by their formal objects, and taking note of the way in which Aristotle's and Aquinas's understanding of *act* has been distorted in the later scholastic notion of "vital act," which conceives "potencies as capable of producing their own acts" (107). This manual notion has its roots, of course, in Scotus's *actus elicitus,* whereby the will must be the source, in the sense of efficient cause, of its own operation. And all we need

is that articulation to nod in agreement: is not that what we mean by "autonomy"? Yet, as Anscombe's analysis of Aristotle has reminded us, causality is exhibited by an alteration in the thing caused, not in the cause itself. Powers need to be moved to act; human or created action includes a receptive dimension. This clarification of philosophical vocabulary is then brought to bear on the acts of the theological virtues, leading to an intelligibility appropriate to actual grace. The next chapter (5) enters into the theological controversies surrounding de Lubac's *Surnaturel*, where the polemic pitted a "merely obediential potency" over against an "exigence" for the (admittedly undeserved) vision of God. Here again, Lonergan clarifies the metaphysical issues at stake—end, exigence, and passive potency—and restores the notion of *obediential potency* to its properly theological role—that is, as a quasi-technical notion introduced to resolve the apparent contradiction between affirming a "natural desire to see God" and the utter gratuity of the order of grace. (Stebbins introduces a useful terminological clarification between Lonergan's earlier and later writings here, noting the utility as well as the secondary role of terminology in such inquiries.) This positive elaboration of "obediential potency" allows us to see how it functions in Aquinas's theological understanding, and at the same time allows him to counter the familiar and misleading picture of a "two-story universe," traceable to Cajetan's misreading of Thomas. So these two chapters accomplish, in tandem, an articulation of supernatural activity that will be poised to cut through later controversies and present "the supernatural order [as] 'a harmonious continuation of the present order of the universe' (*Insight*)" (142).

Anyone who requires a certain kind of "systematic theology," however, will miss the achievement of these chapters, functioning as they do to help us develop the skills required to carry out an inquiry as an ordered set of acts of understanding, and not content themselves with a network of concepts. And while that very distinction has to be experienced to be understood, Lonergan's presentation of the notorious *de auxiliis* controversy will allow the reader to see why he speaks of both Molina and Bañez as introducing "systems." Stebbins's rendition of Lonergan's rejection of both "essentialism" and "conceptualism" (160-182) allows him to clarify the speculative role of "pure nature" in scholastic discussions, as well as to show how Lonergan's larger vision allows him to speak of the orientation of natures in the "order of the universe" while "avoiding an appeal to a 'supernatural existential' [Rahner] to account for the human person's receptiveness to grace" (xviii). These tools will be employed to expose how "both positions [of Molina and of Bañez] were riddled with flaws [and] that the entire controversy was itself a mistake" (183). (It would be useful for a contemporary reader to compare this treatment with the more overtly linguistic deconstruction of these positions in Kathryn Tanner's *God and Creation in Christian Theology* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1988] 141-52.) This excursus into baroque philosophical theology was *de rigueur* for Lonergan to undertake in his setting, yet has also attained a curious

cogency today when Molina's approach has captured the imagination of a group of philosophers of religion. Once having found a way through that intractable controversy by exposing its philosophical inconsistencies, he is now poised (in Stebbins's lucid reconstruction) to speak to the topic itself: first more philosophically, in offering "a theoretical perspective on divine concourse" (ch. 7) and finally more theologically, in "contingence, sin and divine efficacy" (ch. 8).

These final chapters are the *pièce de résistance* of the work, bringing all the threads together in a conscious reflection on the role of method in theological understanding. Any construction that purports to lead to a positive understanding of such matters will prove to be a "false friend"; the best one can hope to attain is a *dialectical* resolution in which the twin demands of faith and of logic might be conciliated to "attain the negative coherence of non-contradiction" (288). These are Lonergan's own words, and pointedly summarize his insistence on the role of philosophical sophistication in doing theology, all the while insisting that philosophy not be the sole norm of this intellectual activity best characterized as "faith seeking understanding." Whereas both Molina and Bañez had sought to show us *how* it is that God "moves the will" and everything else in creation, Lonergan is intent on showing that Aquinas never presumed to offer *how*-propositions concerning divine actions, but may help us attain "a profounder understanding of motions already known or supposed." That is why he insists that "the conclusion reached by St. Thomas was simply a theorem" (250). The tools for exhibiting this more profound understanding are first, a clear conception of causation as a relation of dependence rather than attempting to imagine a "causal influx," and second, a grasp of the fact that the "cause of being" is more immediate in causing creatures' actions than the creatures themselves. In the first case, our penchant (which Hume presumed) for imagining causation needs to be exposed, for the second, diverse meanings of "immediate" and "mediate" have to canvassed.

The late scholastic obstacle to a clearly Aristotelian grasp of causation as a relation of dependence was the notion of a "vital act," shared by both Molinists and Bañezians, which required that an agent be the cause of its own act, and especially that act by which the agent turns itself into a agent. But what if there is no such act? What if causation consists in an alteration in the thing caused, and *not* a change in the agent—as G. E. M. Anscombe has argued so persuasively with respect to Aristotle? Lonergan, writing before Anscombe's analysis, showed how Aquinas had assimilated Aristotle in precisely that way. So asserting that "God is the principal efficient cause of every actual instance of willing" (247), as Aquinas does, does not entail—as Bañezians thought it did—that God create something in us to effect that action, but simply that God be who God is: the cause of being, and hence of acting in every creature. Lonergan rehearses Aquinas's argument that the initial movement of the will—"to will its last end, the good in general" (246)—

requires that it be moved by the One who creates it with that orientation. Yet such a movement is the precondition for freedom of choice, which must then ascertain which means are expedient to reach that end, and often errs in its deliberations. Yet without the actual willing of "the universal good" (246), there could be no rational choice at all. All this shows how Aquinas's understanding of freedom is inextricably linked with a metaphysics of creation: rather than fastening on *choosing* as the paradigm of freedom, as modern "libertarians" presume, everything turns on the orientation of our created natures, which *as created* need to be moved to act. This scheme offers a viable and coherent alternative to the presumed "vital act" of later scholastics, introducing a metaphysics that allows the "cause of being" to "rule the will" (248) without constraining it. "Divine concourse" will not be pictured as though creator and creature were rowing in tandem, but as the very empowering of a free agent to act.

The final chapter introduces a corollary to the philosophical therapy of the preceding one: the efficacy of the creator as transcendent agent, here explicated characteristically as "the theorem of divine transcendence" (259), which, "precisely because it is a theorem, . . . adds to one's store of knowledge . . . not a new fact but a new way of intelligibility relating a set of facts already affirmed as true" (261). In fact, all of the theorems are in place to assert this one, since God as cause of being "is above and beyond the created orders of necessity and contingence" (262). All that is required is to note that sin is a surd in the system; the reach of free creatures is to be able to deny their very destiny by acting in such a way as to cut that very action out of the finality that makes an action part of God's plan. The care with which Michael Stebbins has exposed Lonergan's method and its results hardly frees them from contestation, but at least makes his sometimes cryptic remarks accessible to all those who have the stamina to explore these issues, and so leaves both philosophers and theologians without excuse for attending to so demanding a synthesis.

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*Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet.* By ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA. New York: Continuum, 1994. Pp. 262. $22.95 (cloth).

In this book, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza engages five "hotly debated issues" in feminist christology, using the critical feminist liberation methodology she has developed, and working from within the hermeneutical space—an *ekklesia* of wo/men—she has constructed. After describing her method and purpose in chapter one, Schüssler Fiorenza addresses the following critical

issues: (1) the theological relevance of Jesus' maleness; (2) anti-Judaism (the shadow-side of asserting Jesus' liberating uniqueness); (3) the theology of the cross; (4) the usefulness of early Christian Wisdom (Sophia) discourses; and (5) mariology and the feminine naming of the Divine. Each chapter opens with summations, analyses, and assessments of the work of other—chiefly feminist—theologians and concludes with her own proposed reconstruction of the question. Extensive new biblical research appears in the chapter devoted to weighing the value of the Wisdom tradition for feminist christologies.

Schüssler Fiorenza sets out "to uncover the hidden frames of meaning that determine malestream as well as feminist christological discourses" (3), to assess their deleterious effects on the lives of "women in the global village," to de-stabilize their apparently common-sense articulations, and then to promote multiple, non-exclusive christological images that will make possible a different church and a different world—different because radically democratic.

Her chief target is not "patriarchy" but "kyriarchy," viz., a pyramidal system of power relations. Gender dualism is not the only source of oppression, she argues, because there are sociopolitical differences among women. Some women belong to the ruling elite, while others live at the bottom of the kyriarchal pyramid; we are divided by differences of class, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, health, etc. ("Wo/men" is coined to keep this point before the reader.) The real divisions are between the powerful and the powerless, regardless of gender; multifaceted power relations are, nevertheless, *symbolized by gender dualism* (the "kyriarchal sex/gender system"). In order to take up the cause of women's struggle against kyriarchal oppressive structures, a critical feminist theology of liberation must adopt a standpoint (the "ekklesia of wo/men") outside the totalizing binary sex/gender system. This, Schüssler Fiorenza maintains, is the only way to see gender dualism for what it is—a sociopolitical, not a "natural" construct—and to demystify it.

Classical christology is kyriarchal, she reports, because it teaches that Jesus is "the Divine Son whom G*d the Father sent to redeem us from our sins" (4). The christological definition of the council of Chalcedon "enshrines the dualism of human and divine difference in the identity construction of Jesus Christ as the union of opposites," and simultaneously inscribes kyriarchal sex/gender dualism in "orthodox" belief "by associating fatherhood/masculinity with divinity and eternity and by firmly placing motherhood/femininity in the temporal realm of humanity" (22). The christological dogmas of the councils are kyriarchal, on a second count, because they were shaped by imperial political interests and enforced by the authority of an imperialized church. In addition, classical christology is kyriarchal because in making claims about Jesus' "singular greatness" it promotes the superiority of Christianity over Judaism in a way that betrays the "will to power" of Christian supersessionism. This "exclusivist" posture is unacceptable

because it undermines the solidarity of feminists who need to collaborate in order to transform the patriarchal biblical religions.

For Schüssler Fiorenza, critical feminist christology must be liberated from the constraints of church and academy and also from an "indiscriminating acceptance of Scripture and tradition" (12). The ultimate test or norm is practical. Christology continues to legitimate the oppression of women. Christological biblical discourses and Christian identity constructions must, therefore, be reconceptualized in the interest of emancipatory praxis.

The five issues are examined in light of these theoretical presuppositions. Schüssler Fiorenza invites many feminists to dialogue about them at the "table of Divine Wisdom": Radford Ruether, Daly, Moltmann-Wendel, Grey, Johnson, Grant, Heyward, Nakashima Brock, Stroebel, Plaskow, Gössman, Pui-lan, Hyun-Kyung, D'Angelo, Gebara and Bingemer, Schaberg, and Schroer, to name only some. The book provides a valuable overview of the ongoing struggle to articulate a feminist christology, and it is fascinating as an example of the author's feminist method of analysis.

Here, in brief, is how Schüssler Fiorenza responds to each issue. She would abandon the effort to deal with the maleness of Jesus, since it only reinscribes what must be put in question, the supposed basis for sex/gender dualism, namely, that sex is "biologically given." Arguing in favor of a paradigm shift from the sex/gender system to the analytic of kyriarchy, she adopts a liberationist paradigm and concentrates on unmasking the social and political interests that benefit by affirming gender difference. To meet the challenge of anti-Judaism the author focuses on soteriology rather than christology, and social-cultural rather than anthropological interests. She reconstructs the Jesus movement as one among several Jewish renewal movements. Spearheaded by Galilean women, it is directed not against Judaism but against kyriarchal oppression. She uses the same construct to de-stabilize the classical doctrine of the atonement. Instead of interpreting Jesus' death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice, she views it as the civil execution of one whose proclamation of a rival *basileia* made him an actual political threat. The women's experience of the empty tomb and their "tradition" of Jesus' story do not assign religious or redemptive value to his suffering and death, but announce that these do not have the last word because the Risen One "goes before us into Galilee." The women disciples in Galilee, and later in Corinth, regarded Jesus, respectively, as Sophia's prophet and Sophia-Spirit herself, but this female tradition was suppressed by the male tradition of apostolic witness which assimilated the female depiction of the Divine Sophia into the symbol of the Logos. For Schüssler Fiorenza, this makes the danger of Sophia-christology evident: Jesus, a historical human being, is "proclaimed in masculine mythological terms as a divine being" (149). Ultimately, in the Fourth Gospel, the masculine grammatical gender of Logos and metaphorical father-son language have been theologized and used in the service of an exclusive divine revelation in Jesus. In her chapter on mariology,

Schüssler Fiorenza rejects evaluations that make Mary the ideal type of femininity and project her into heaven, on the one hand, and calls for a liberating use of Marian language in the re-mythologization of the Divine, on the other.

The truly radical character of the author's method becomes apparent in the course of the book. She calls her feminist colleagues to account for their uncritical acceptance of the "hidden frames of meaning" that have traditionally determined christology and that tend to pass for "common sense." What are these? They are: first, the "kyriarchal" and "hegemonic" christological doctrines of the church (e.g., of Nicaea and Chalcedon) which confess Jesus as the divine Son of God and rule out competing views by the exercise of patriarchal authority; second, the classic doctrine of the atonement which spiritualizes Jesus' execution by attributing redemptive value to his obedience, suffering, loving self-sacrifice, and death; third, the biblical christological discourses which assert Jesus' superiority, uniqueness, and universal authority; fourth, the kyriocentric historical reconstructions which link Christian identity to the historical man, Jesus of Nazareth; and finally, the preconstructed kyriarchal frame of the sex/gender system which attributes soteriological value to masculine and feminine constructs.

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, feminist theologians must "interrupt" all of these assumptions, "name" reality themselves, and claim the universal validity of their constructions, even while they allow for the possibility of multiple and contradictory readings. In her view, "Christological discourses are best understood as social rhetorical practices that produce and reconstruct religious-theological identity in an ongoing intertextual and intercultural process" (34).

The author's stated intention is to dislodge christological discourses from their malestream frames of reference. It becomes difficult to see how this can be done without abandoning the fundamental Christian truth claims. As much as she would like simply to examine christological discourses at the level of a politics of meaning, and as much as she desires only to stand in a new hermeneutical location, not to deny the traditional Christian vision whose liberating potential she knows, in the end, the author's decision to privilege the feminist movement over Scripture and Tradition carries a higher price than she admits. She inevitably does more than "de-stabilize" the central Christian confessions of the Incarnation, the Redemption, and (by implication) the Trinity.

The implications of taking the interpreted experience of oppressed women as a theological norm become clear. Any christological framework that might be construed as legitimating the exercise of authority by males over females (understood broadly to include that of fathers, husbands, and male clerics) is automatically suspect. In the hermeneutical space of the *ekklesia* of wo/men, feminists are free to come up with their own christological discourses, unfettered by these constraints. In an interview given to Continuum, the author

explains that she did not intend to include the name "Jesus" in the book's title: "It is not Jesus but Sophia, Divine Wisdom, who inspired my christological explorations."

It seems fair to turn the tables and ask: What are the "hidden frames of meaning" that govern *this* book? I suspect that the fundamental frame is the author's conviction regarding the virtual identity of the sexes. Schüssler Fiorenza has long held that not only gender but biological sex itself is a socially-constructed rather than natural difference. (For this remarkable assertion she typically cites as evidence only Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society* [1972].) The difference between the sexes, she insists, must not be inserted into the essentializing frame of male-female dualism, or endowed with any ontological symbolic significance. Her resistance is rooted in the feminist philosophical conviction that the admission of *difference* necessarily entails the admission of a hierarchical ordering of male over female. This reflects her fundamental inability to imagine a true complementarity of the sexes, equal but different, and ordered to one another in a pattern that models the interpersonal character of the human community and, beyond that, echoes the mystery of the triune God. It betrays a suspicion that God did not create us "male and female" in the divine image and did not "see that it was very good." Rejection of the nuptial paradigm has serious consequences. It removes from religious discourse and imagery the language of love, of self-gift, of freely-chosen interdependence in a covenant relationship, of the life-giving power of loving communion. I think it can be shown that this view ultimately construes the God-world relationship, wrongly, as one in which divine authority competes with, rather than establishes, human freedom and well-being. It replaces a theology of communion with power politics.

I suspect there are several other hidden frames of meaning in Schüssler Fiorenza's analysis: she assumes that the oppression of women is the result of a faulty religious symbol system, rather than of sin; she assumes that the goal of religion is the establishment of a radically democratic social order, rather than participation in divine life; she regards admission to holy orders as a right belonging to all the baptized, rather than Christ's gift through which his authoritative ministry is made present in the Church. Sadly, she rejects the authority of divine revelation which alone undergirds properly theological reflection and chooses instead the dubious "freedom" of coming up with a new configuration, woven from selected elements of that revelation. It seems that this will lead not only to a "different church," but to a different religion.

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*La Trinité Créatrice.* By GILLES EMERY. Paris: Vrin, 1995. Pp. 590 (paper).

It was only a question of when, not if, the late rejection of Thomism in Catholic circles would be followed by the next turn toward the thought of the Angelic Doctor. This movement is already underway, and on the European continent two groups of young Dominicans are playing prominent roles.

In Toulouse, though he only assumed its editorship in 1991, S.-T. Bonino already has made the venerable *Revue thomiste* indispensable reading again. Two recent thematic issues are especially noteworthy: "Autour d'Etienne Gilson" (94 [1994]: 355-553) and "S. Thomas et l'onto-théologie" (95 [1995]: 1-192). Bonino's own *bulletins et recensions* are erudite and lively, and he is very clear about the present situation:

> After the decline of the last decades, Thomism is searching for a new élan, a new look, and not without success: . . . the corpse of Thomism is stirring again.

Though the new look is not yet complete, one feature is set:

> One common point unites all now approaching the works of St. Thomas, whatever their ultimate goals: the necessity to put Thomistic doctrine into serious historical perspective. . . . Historical-doctrinal study of St. Thomas is opening the possibility of an authentic revival of Thomism. (*Revue thomiste* 95 [1995]: 485-6)

While Anglo-Americans approaching Aquinas from neoscholastic or analytic perspectives might not be so enthusiastic about history, Fr. Bonino is simply correct.

For evidence, he turns to the historical work of the other group of Dominicans, at Fribourg. Chief among them is J.-P. Torrell, whose masterful 1993 biography, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, is now in English, and was accompanied by a *Festschrift* for the eminent professor of theology—*Ordo sapientiae et amoris*, ed. C.-J. de Oliveira. Not least among Torrell's contributions has been to direct the thesis of Gilles Emery—*La Trinité créatrice.*

One paragraph of Emery's helpful general conclusion reveals three dominant themes in his important work:

> In virtue of the *nexus mysteriorum*, faith in the Trinity clarifies faith in the creative and saving activity of God, while the doctrine of creation in its turn clarifies our approach to the mystery of the Trinity. It is this mutual clarification and support among the articles of faith that we mean by speaking of the "function" of the theme of the creative Trinity. The unity of the Trinity in its works *ad extra* constitutes a fundamental rule of the trinitarian theology of our scholastics. But it does not exhaust their theological discourse on the subject of God as creator. To arrive at a balanced doctrine, trying to give all the aspects of the mystery their due, one must add to the rule of unity a second rule, which completes it: the procession of the divine persons is the origin of the procession of creatures. (519)

Emery's primary theme is captured in the title—*The Creative Trinity.* Creation involves not only the one God as efficient cause bestowing existence

on a multitude of creatures (rule 1), but also the Trinitarian multiplicity within God as exemplar cause of the procession of creatures (rule 2). The neoscholastics ignored rule 2, separating creation (which was turned over to the philosophers) from Trinity (the exclusive domain of the theologians). This too neat division of labor produced unhappy consequences: a doctrine of creation with no role for the Trinity, and a doctrine of the Trinity with no function in creation. What can be called Emery's *Trinitarian theme* is a corrective for such mistakes. To understand this side of creation rightly, Emery situates Aquinas's thought in relation to Albert and Bonaventure, on whom he heavily depends. This is his *historical theme*. From the development of these two principal themes there gradually emerges a third, less overt, but in the long run of signal importance for the new look of Thomism—what might be called the *integration theme*, uniting reason and revelation in Aquinas's theology.

To break through the crust that had built up around Aquinas's genuine doctrine of creation Emery turns to history. Limiting himself to the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, he finds the Trinitarian aspect of creation stands out when Aquinas is read as he composed—with the *Sentences* commentaries of Albert and Bonaventure ready to hand. The *historical theme* is arguably Emery's most important, because his method can and should be adapted for other issues. One hopes that future work on Aquinas will match Emery's historical sophistication.

The book follows chronological order, and for each theologian Emery looks at three issues: (1) the nature of theology, especially "the place of the creative Trinity in the organization of theological material" (24), taken from the prologues to I *Sent.*; (2) the impact that the treatment of the procession of persons in book one has on the doctrine of creation; (3) the same relation the other way round, the import that the treatise on creation in book two has for the doctrine of the Trinity. A sketch of his main conclusions on the *Trinitarian theme* only indicates Emery's rich yield. (For his own overview, see "Trinité et création," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 79 [1995]: 405-430.)

As is so often the case, Albert has been undervalued. He initiates what Thomas completes. Albert begins the scholastic argument that the neoplatonic doctrine of the *exitus* and *reditus* of creatures *from* God must have an exemplar—the procession and return of the other two persons *within* God. He understands both processions in causal terms, based on the philosophical idea of *principium*. This "fundamental concept" (94) has important consequences: Within the Trinity, it opens up theological reflection on the persons, by providing a generic description unifying the Biblical terms for them, like Word, Love, Gift, all of which describe effects flowing from a cause. If so, a "reductive" movement of mind then becomes possible, proceeding from the procession of creatures, to the procession of persons, to the Father. Such a

reduction is a movement from effect to cause. Finally, "principle" justifies combining reason with faith in arguing from created vestiges and images to the Trinity: "We can, with the aid of faith, move from creatures to a kind of knowledge of the persons," says Albert (155).

In Emery's view, Bonaventure does not reject so much as refine Albert's causal account. Bonaventure analyzes Albert's *principium* into two even more "fundamental concepts"—*primitas* and *bonum*. Every causal order requires a first cause. This "first" brings all the causes to bear together on the effect by completing the causal chain (and avoiding infinite regress). Within God this "first" is the Father, while God is the "first" in relation to creatures. Bonaventure arrives at his other foundational notion by asking what a cause produces. Causality is the bestowal of some reality, a good, by a cause which itself possesses the goodness it gives: *bonum est diffusivum sui*. The "natural diffusion" within God produces the Trinity. (Cf. the ontological argument for the procession of persons parallel to his ontological argument for God's existence in *Itin.* 5-6.)

Creation comes from God's "*voluntary* diffusion." Because voluntary, creative causality is exemplar causality, requiring both cognition and volition, as we can see when an artist puts ideas on canvas. Within God, the cognitive side of exemplar causality produces the Son, the Word of God, who in turn causes creatures by way of being an exemplar, the pattern making them exist. Within God, the volitional side of such causality produces the Holy Spirit, the Gift of God, which causes creatures by way of bestowing grace on them (202). Son and Spirit are not merely causes of creatures, however, but "as it were a medium between us and God," whereby we are "led back" to God. There is a double *reductio*. The Son leads the Spirit, and us, back to the Father, the "overflowing source (*fontale principium*), from whom and to whom all things are led back by the Son" (226).

According to Emery, the originality of Br. Thomas lies in using the "elements" Albert and Bonaventure provided to produce a more "rigorous and systematic development" of the doctrine of the creative Trinity than they had achieved. Aquinas initiates his program in the prologue to I *Sent.* by reshaping Bonaventure's two "fundamental concepts" into a theological syllogism:

> As a channel comes off the river, so the temporal procession of creatures comes from the eternal procession of persons. Hence the psalm says: "He said and they were made," that is, according to Augustine, "He generated the Word in which He was, in order that things be made." For what is first is always the cause of what comes later, according to Aristotle. Therefore, the first procession is the cause and reason for every other procession (cf. 278-85).

This passage begins the "mutual clarification" of Trinity and creation. Trinity "clarifies" creation because the procession of persons is an exemplar for the procession of creatures from God. The generation of the Son is the

"reason for all the production of creatures," while the Spirit as Love of Father and Son is "the reason in which God bestows every effect of his love" (386). This one knows from faith. But creation also has a purely rational side, for it is the bestowing of an act of existence on creatures by a God who is subsistent existence.

The Trinity also "clarifies" salvation. The *exitus* of Son and Spirit is accompanied by their *reditus* to the Father. If the procession within the divinity exercises a complicated kind of causality that "lies at the crossroad of efficient, exemplar, and final causality," then creatures should exhibit a tendency to return to their source. That intellectual creatures can return to see the Father face to face, through the same "means" whence they came—the Son and Spirit—one knows through faith (404). But here again, reason combines with faith, since philosophy shows that all creatures exhibit a dynamic tendency to return to their source. The "clarification" moving *from* Trinity *to* creation and salvation, then, starts from faith, proceeds within faith, but is not constrained by faith.

When the movement of clarification proceeds in the opposite direction, from creation-salvation to Trinity, the same dynamic is at work. What we know through faith about the procession of creatures "clarifies" the nature of the Trinity; but so too what we know purely rationally about creation helps our understanding of the Trinity. Both sides of this mutual clarification, then, make use of philosophical reasoning, as well as faith arguments.

The logic of Emery's *Trinitarian* and *historical* themes, in short, leads inexorably to the *integration* theme. This final theme is manifest in the very nature of theology:

> Theology is a wisdom; it is a participation, by way of the Son, in the knowledge God has of himself, who manifests himself through the works of his Wisdom (299).

These "works" are known through revelation and reason. Emery emphasizes the role of revelation because he is rejecting de Regnon and K. Rahner, "who see in Thomas the representative par excellence of a 'Latin schema' taking its point of departure in the *unity of essence*," (301) and which is consequently overly philosophical. Emery does not deny the role of philosophical reason in theology, but he does reject the kind of interpretation given by those like Rahner who presented us, not with Br. Thomas himself, but a neoscholastic impostor too purely philosophical.

This is a fine book for theologians, but especially important for philosophers. Better to accommodate both, one might make some suggestions. Indices of subjects and texts cited would be helpful. The *integration theme* calls for fuller treatment of the philosophical side of Aquinas's doctrine. A book on creation in Aquinas whose bibliography has no entry for Avicenna, whom he so clearly follows, is not a complete treatment of the topic.

Both theologians and philosophers need to see a completely integrated treatment of both rational and faith aspects of Aquinas's theology of creation.

To this end, more work on theology as science also would be helpful. Emery's treatment of the end and subject of a science is not quite neoplatonic enough. His presentation of the subject of theology forces God, its subject in the *Summa theologiae,* on earlier texts of Albert (49) and Aquinas (302). In I *Sent.* Aquinas says the subject is *ens divinum,* "being as related to the divine," which is much wider than God, who is the end but not subject of theology. His model is Avicenna's *ens commune* as the subject of a metaphysics with God as its end. More work also must be done on the articles of faith, part of the subject of theology for Albert, but theology's proper principles for Aquinas. How primordial the articles are, and the interplay of reason and faith in knowing them, are still unresolved issues.

In sum, one hopes this fine book by Fr. Emery will be the first of many helping give Thomism the new look it deserves.

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*Relation als Vergleich: Die Relationstheorie des Johannes Buridan im Kontext seines Denkens und der Scholastik.* By ROLF SCHÖNBERGER. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, Band 43. Leiden/New York/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1994. Pp. 489. $108.75 (cloth).

This book is a revised version of the author's 1990 *Habilitationsschrift* at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. It aims to articulate the theory of relations developed by the noted Parisian philosopher, John Buridan (ca. 1295-1358), "in connection with the extensive scholastic discussion of this problem," and, in particular, to show how the same arguments were advanced or refuted by different philosophers from "fundamentally different starting points" (ix, 59). This stems from the author's working hypothesis that the medieval debate on the nature of relations proceeded dialectically, and that Buridan's contribution to it can be better understood by taking its argumentative context into consideration.

The scope of the book is wide-ranging, to say the least. Readers expecting a book about Buridan's theory of relations will find the title somewhat misleading, however, since background material and a survey of the "scholastic context" of Buridan's theory fill up the first 372 pages, with the author's presentation and discussion of the theory itself limited to the final

75. Furthermore, the author seems to regard the relevance of the former discussion to the latter as self-evident. This is fine where the connections are fairly uncontroversial, as in the case of William of Ockham, but where they are less so, as in the cases of Giles of Rome, Henry of Ghent, Meister Eckhart, Durand of St. Pourçain, and Peter John Olivi, one is left in the dark about why separate chapters are devoted to each. Giles and Olivi are not even mentioned in the chapters on Buridan. Henry and Durand make one appearance each, both in the course of the trivial observation that unlike in their theories, "consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity plays no role in Buridan's theory of relations" (399). Eckhart is mentioned a few times, but in terms so speculative as to be useless for the general reader. For example, the author finds Jan Pinborg's characterization of Buridan as a someone who "took the arbitrariness of language seriously" to be "of course . . . too microscopic" (393). The reason is that Pinborg allegedly failed to see the radicalization of conventionality in the fourteenth century in terms of an "epochal shift" from "the symbolic and quasi-naturalistic conception of language in the early Middle Ages," a conception that, the author parenthetically notes, "is perhaps still to be found (or further strengthened) in Bonaventure or Meister Eckhart" (ibid.). But even bracketing the question of how this description fits the latter authors, the Buridan story is more complex than this. Buridan does emphasize that spoken and written expressions signify conventionally, but he never abandons the Aristotelian/Boethian tripartite conception of language, according to which concepts are said to be *naturally* significative. Furthermore, as L. M. de Rijk has shown ("John Buridan on Universals," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 97 [1992]: 35-59—an article listed [with incorrect page references] in the Bibliography, but never discussed in the book itself), there are striking *methodological* similarities between Buridan's treatment of the problem of universals and that of one such "earlier" medieval thinker, viz., Peter Abelard. This is symptomatic of the general lack of continuity in the book, which reads more like an encyclopedia of what later medieval philosophers had to say about relations than an attempt to defend a thesis about how their views are dialectically related.

The question "At what price comprehensiveness?" becomes all the more acute here because the author clearly regards breadth as an important scholarly desideratum that is satisfied by his book. This emerges in his remarks about the best English-language study of the problem to appear to date, Mark Henninger's *Relations: Medieval Theories 1250-1325* (Oxford, 1989), which discusses only seven medieval authors, but each in considerable detail. The author comments that "Henninger's interpretations—like those of his teacher, M. McCord Adams—hold to a strictly argumentative line," even conceding that "as far as his own standards are concerned, Henninger is thorough and solid" (59). But this is qualified by the criticism that "if a Meister Eckhart or a Dietrich of Freiburg is left out [as in Henninger's book], there

remains the theoretical possibility that the High-Scholastic period has not been completely evaluated" (ibid.; cf. 117, n. 1). This is a puzzling remark in view of the merely cameo appearances these same thinkers make in the author's own discussion. Even more puzzling is the author's observation that in contrast to Henninger's thematic focus on the doctrine of the Trinity, "the perspective of discussion in German medieval scholarship regards all of these [theological and non-theological considerations] as crucial" (ibid.). I shall not comment on the implications of the latter remark (which strikes me as outrageous), other than to note that Henninger's decision was a deliberate one (Henninger, 10), since it made possible more detailed reconstructions of the views he presents. The result is that his book is more successful than the present study in showing how medieval theories of relation are really related to each other.

The two authors' discussions of the theory of Thomas Aquinas illustrate this point. Both agree on the basic details, viz., that Thomas sees real relations in creatures as stemming from their quantity, together with an active or passive potency—the former giving the inherent root of the relation (its "*esse-in*") and the latter its external orientation (its "*esse-ad*") (Henninger, 17-21; Schönberger, 66-72). But Thomas also seems to think that the first condition must exist prior to the second (*In Phys.* V, lect. 3). This creates a two-fold problem: (1) how the substance plus the inherent root of the relation changes once the *non*-inherent, external orientation is "added to it" (following, as Thomas does, Aristotle's *Physics* V.2 claim that there is no motion with respect to relation); and (2) how the mode of existence of this *esse-ad* is to be understood, given that it is neither substance nor accident—since it lacks by definition the *esse-in* of inherence, the mode of being proper to other accidents. The standard example here is that I could become really related to you without doing anything at all, e.g., if you grow to be equal to me in height. Henninger finds Thomas's answer to the first question in the notion of extrinsic perfection, so that in each created thing "a double perfection is to be found: one by which it subsists in itself and another by which it is ordered to other things" (*In III Sent.*, d. 27, q.1 , a. 4; Henninger, 24). The author likewise recognizes Thomas's need to say that a substance could be perfected merely by a change in the way it is ordered to something else, so that ". . . relational-being cannot in the end be identified with substance-being. It must constitute a *proprium modum essendi*, as Thomas calls it" (Schönberger, 72). But this last sentence indicates that the author is willing to go farther out on a limb than Henninger in his answer to the second question. Henninger is (rightly, I think) agnostic on the interpretive question of just how Thomas understands the being of *esse-ad*. While granting that Thomas's (non-)account is more parsimonious that either Scotus's realism or Aureol's conceptualism, he tempers this with the observation that "it seems there is no room in

Thomas's Aristotelian ontology for such a 'free-floating' thing as this *esse-ad*" (Henninger, 24-25). The author, in contrast, wants to commit Thomas to the view that being comes in degrees: "insofar as relation is ultimately treated as an accident, it can be said on the one hand that it is nothing without its underlying substance, but on the other that in relation to it, it signifies an 'increase in being [Seinszuwachs]'" (Schönberger, 76). But while it is true that one can (as Henry of Ghent in fact did) introduce the notion of modes of being in order to solve this problem, there is no textual evidence that Thomas himself did so—and the absence of any relevant references in the author's discussion seems to indicate that he is aware of this. So why even mention it?

A clue, perhaps, can be found in the author's discussion of the related issue of how the distinction between intentional and extra-mental being should be specified, a problem Thomas does not "explicitly" address. Nevertheless, the author believes that a solution can be constructed "*ad mentem sancti Thomae*" (67). This is that "thought-being [*Gedacht-sein*] is not simply another mode of reality; it is the doubling of the world in the mode of thought-being—a counterpart, so to speak, of the Neoplatonic doubling of the world in the realm of ideas" (ibid.). These passages indicate that the author has a much more Neoplatonic and Augustinian reading of Thomas than is typical of recent Aquinas scholarship on both sides of the Atlantic. This is all well and good, of course, but it needs to be brought to the foreground and properly defended.

The author's discussion of Buridan contains many worthwhile points. Buridan's humility in treating philosophical questions is nicely brought out (245), as well as the fact that this never led him slavishly to expound authoritative views—thus, he finds in Aristotle "no oracle of truth" (253). The author also makes clear his determination to avoid reading Buridan anachronistically (276), cautioning on the one hand against "systematic" interpretations until "the entire corpus" of Buridan's writings has been properly edited (4), and on the other against the tendency of some recent commentators to see Buridan's teachings as motivated by Church politics, i.e., as a kind of moderate-nominalist response to the "anti-nominalist" statutes promulgated at the University of Paris in 1339-40 (26-29). The author prefers to approach the texts before him "seriously" on the grounds that they were meant that way (28, 51), with his own interpretive strategy consciously seeking to avoid what he calls "a (moral-) psychological perspective" (29).

For the most part, these points are well-taken. But two qualifications are in order. The author's first caution exaggerates the danger of trying to understand Buridan's philosophy in the absence of modern editions of his writings. Buridan is unlike most medieval philosophers in that we have virtually all of his mature writings in the form of incunabular editions which, although not perfect, are still reliable enough to justify comprehensive conclusions about his thought. Buridan is also, as Sten Ebbesen once put it, "remarkably con-

sistent" in what he says. No one who reads Buridan can avoid being struck by this—and there is a good reason for it, viz., that Buridan revised his lectures on Aristotle many times over the course of his career at Paris, so that the "final [*ultima*]" versions of these lectures cohere more than one might otherwise expect. Buridan does change his mind about some things, but it is almost always between earlier and later versions of commentaries on the same work (e.g., when he comes to reject the notion of intensive magnitudes to explain the difference between intellectual acts and dispositions in the final version of his commentary on *De anima*—cf. QDA III.10 [*prima redactio*]; QDA III.15 [*tertia sive ultima redactio*]), not between final revised versions of *different* works. Second, the author's desire for a context-free interpretation of Buridan seems disingenuous in view of the fact that some of Buridan's most important views *were* partly motivated by political considerations, as in the case of his response to the skeptical consequences of Nicholas of Autrecourt's view of certainty (for which, see my "Buridan and Skepticism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 191-221). The author's account makes it difficult to see why Buridan would even bother responding to what is really a non-problem for his own naturalistic epistemology, *unless* Autrecourt's ideas had already acquired some purchase on the philosophical community at Paris. And their condemnation in 1346 certainly suggests that they did.

One political question the author does want to consider is the relation between philosophy and theology—a delicate subject for someone as concerned as Buridan was not to overstep his curricular mandate as an Arts Master. The author decides that this led to a "methodological separation" of theological and philosophical concerns in Buridan's writings (305). But he also says that one finds in Buridan ". . . no examination of belief and reason [*Glaubens und Vernunft*] as forms of assertion," citing as an example his treatment of the logic of propositional attitudes (apparently a reference to the *Sophismata*), which fails to lead to an attempt "to define the independence of philosophical knowledge" (298). But why should it? That is, why should one expect to find a defense of the possibility of empirical knowledge in a discussion of the logic of knowing, which would surely *presume* such an account? The right place to look for the latter is in Buridan's writings on metaphysics and natural philosophy. Moreover, in deciding to base his study only on published sources (with the exception of two mss. of the *Tractatus de relationibus*), the author has excluded another key piece of evidence: Buridan's account of scientific knowledge in his *Questions on the Posterior Analytics*—the text of which has been circulating among Buridan scholars for years in the form of Professor Hubert Hubien's reliable typescript edition. One wonders what else has been missed because of the book's limited evidential base.

Buridan's account of relations is straightforward enough, and the author's exposition of it appears sound. He rightly emphasizes that most of the nominalist/realist battles over the ontological status of relations had already been

fought by Buridan's time (410; cf. 387, 416). This made it natural for Buridan to follow Ockham's lead in recasting the debate in a logico-semantic direction, in which the ontological question is whether absolute and relative terms supposit for the same thing in relational propositions. Buridan's answer is that they do, a move that ensures him of an ontology free of relational entities. What makes a term relational, however, is a more interesting semantic property (or pair of properties): in addition to signifying one or both *relata*, relational terms also *connote* their *relata* as existing in a certain way. On this view, the truth of propositions such as "Socrates is the father of Plato" does not depend on the inherence in Socrates of the abstract quality of paternity; rather, Buridan says that the terms "'Socrates' and 'paternity' signify and supposit for the same thing and nothing else outside [the soul], although [they signify it] under different concepts, viz., under absolute and relational [concepts]" (*Quaestiones in Metaphysicam* VI.3: 118ra; 384-85); that is, "'paternity' signifies what begets [*genuit*] under a concept relative to what is begotten [*genitus est*]" (ibid., 118va; 384-85). On the question of what *grounds* such relational concepts, Buridan parsimoniously asserts that if A and B are similar, they are similar "all by themselves," without anything else added to them (391, 404). This stops what later came to be known as "Bradley's regress"—Buridan's response to which is cited in a passage from the unedited *Tractatus de relationibus* (410, n. 122).

What is the difference between Buridan's theory and Ockham's? Primarily one of emphasis, it seems. Although both use "concept and intention" to characterize categorical distinctions, Ockham did so (as one might expect) "without recourse to the *modi praedicandi* typical of the Parisian tradition" (365). The author finds Buridan's contribution to this tradition in "the thesis that these *modi praedicandi* do not correspond to simple *modi essendi*," thus blocking the possibility of what he calls "an indirect foundation for a 'realistic' theory of the categories" (ibid.).

The comprehensiveness of this book comes at a high price because the brevity of the author's exposition of the "scholastic context" of Buridan's thought often masks the rationale for the views discussed, as well as controversial points of interpretation. The discussion of Buridan is generally good, but ironically, not as comprehensive as it should be, since the author leaves out important sources in Buridan's unedited writings. Yet the book retains a certain encyclopedic value in the sheer number of figures it covers, supported by the author's evident knowledge of the primary literature, much of which is helpfully cited and/or quoted in the notes. In this respect, the book should provide an informative introduction for anyone interested in studying medieval theories of relation.

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*Possibility, Necessity, and Existence: Abbagnano and His Predecessors.* By NINO LANGIULLI. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. Pp. xv + 205. $44.95 (cloth).

Although Nicola Abbagnano would agree in some sense with the currently fashionable claim that metaphysics is dead, Nino Langiulli's treatment of Abbagnano's thought constitutes a challenge to that claim. The aim of *Possibility, Necessity, and Existence* is "to expound and elucidate historically and analytically the concepts of possibility, necessity, and existence as they are refracted through the thought of the twentieth-century Italian philosopher Nicola Abbagnano." Langiulli characterizes Abbagnano as a bold and original thinker whose defense of "possibility" as the fundamental sense of being is understood by Abbagnano himself as an anti-metaphysical position. In his critical reflections, however, especially in the last chapter, Langiulli shows that Abbagnano is indeed engaged in an inquiry that can only be called metaphysical.

Parts I and II are preparatory to the third part in which the concept of possibility and its relation to existence are most directly addressed. Part I provides a historical overview of four phases of the movement of Abbagnano's thought "from a positive existentialism to a radical empiricism." Abbagnano's version of existentialism is "positive" in that it sees in human finitude the very possibility of man's relationship with being. Here Abbagnano is distinguished from other existentialists such as Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, and Sartre. His criticisms of these positions are among the most important and interesting parts of the book. Heidegger and Jaspers both begin by apprehending human existence as a structure of possibilities but then reduce human existence to a structure of impossibilities. Christian existentialists such as Marcel really treat possibilities as potentialities to be inevitably realized. For Sartre all possibilities are equivalent, but for Abbagnano "the complete arbitrariness of choice among human possibilities does not imply freedom at all, but the impossibility of choice" (18). Here also Langiulli's comparison of Abbagnano with Quine, Sellars, and Rorty is pertinent and illuminating: Abbagnano would share Rorty's criticism of Quine and Sellars for holding on to vestiges of the old empiricism, but Abbagnano would not accept Rorty's "emptying" of philosophy itself. The influence of Abbagnano on his student Umberto Eco and on Gianni Vattimo and the differences between Abbagnano and Derrida's views of possibility are spelled out by Langiulli.

In a section entitled "Dumping Philosophy and the Madness of It That Is Also Folly," Langiulli locates Abbagnano clearly and precisely within the debate over the legitimacy of reason. Abbagnano finds the basis of philosophical madness in the persistent tendency to take one aspect of human life as an absolute determinant, thus marginalizing or ignoring all others. "This privileged status has even been attributed to *reason*, but *only* when it

is absolutized or divinized as a superhuman force regulating the whole of nature, humanity included, according to necessary and necessitating laws" (39). So, for example, the order of mathematics or the techniques of verification and control employed in physics are transferred to the human world. But Abbagnano's rejection of absolutized reason is not a rejection of reason as such. He sees the current favoring of the nonrational and irrational aspects of life as a kind of folly and madness, "the vertigo of absurdity." The deliberate and crass ignorance of history and the search for novelty are also forms of madness.

Part II consists of four chapters that trace the sources for Abbagnano's concept of possibility. The first of these sources is Plato's treatment of existence and possibility in the *Sophist*, where Abbagnano finds what he takes to be the antecedent for his own thought and for existentialism in general: the idea that possibility is both the structure and the ground of existing things. The two persistent themes of Greek metaphysics that Abbagnano is concerned to overcome are found most explicitly in Aristotle: the priority of actuality over possibility and the primacy of necessity over possibility. Kant is credited with opening the path for contemporary thought with his concept of *real* possibility (as distinguished from merely logical possibility). Finally, Abbagnano is indebted to Kierkegaard's criticisms of Aristotle and Hegel in the *Philosophical Fragments*. Throughout this discussion of Abbagnano's sources, Langiulli provides not only elucidation of Abbagnano's thought but also a critical perspective on Abbagnano's interpretations of his predecessors.

Part III takes us directly to the center of metaphysics and to the core of Abbagnano's thought. With clarity and precision, Langiulli leads us through the three fundamental conceptual definitions of possibility, explaining and pointing to the difficulties and consequences of each. The first definition is possibility as non-contradiction. For Abbagnano this definition of possibility as "that which is not necessarily false" depends upon a well-defined notion of necessity and is therefore extremely problematic. The second definition is possibility as necessary realization. The discussion here focuses on the so-called Master Argument of Diodorus Cronus, and on Hobbes's and Hartmann's formulations of it. Here, too, the very significant distinction between possibility and certain medieval notions of contingency is explained: contingency in this Islamic and Scholastic sense refers to what is possible with respect to itself but necessary with respect to its cause.

Two chapters are devoted to the third and proper sense of possibility: possibility as that which can exist or not exist and which obtains only as such. (This is the sense for which the term *contingent*, rightly understood, could be a synonym.) Langiulli discusses the logical behavior of the third sense of possibility, the relation of this third sense to existence, the differences between possibility and actuality, and the ontological predicate. For Abbagnano "the term *is* or *exists* does not designate the purely subjective conditions of the

speaker, nor the purely objective conditions of the object spoken about. Both the subjectivization and the objectivization of the ontological predicate are abstractions in Abbagnano's account. Subject, object, and context together constitute its meaning" (140).

The philosophical high point of the discussion occurs at the end of Chapter eleven and of Chapter twelve. Abbagnano recognizes that Aristotle starts from the many ways in which being can be expressed. But Aristotle then seeks a unique sense of being to which all the others are reducible as their common ground and finds it in substance. For Abbagnano it is the techniques of the particular sciences that must distinguish that which is and that which is not in particular cases. These different techniques define different senses of being. A unique sense of being is meaningless since there is no special discipline or inquiry to define this unique sense. (Here Langiulli quite rightly objects that ontology is precisely that inquiry and that Abbagnano himself is Aristotelian in his insistence on possibility as the unique and grounding sense of being.) A possibility can be determined solely on the basis of empirical investigation, never in a purely speculative, *a priori* manner. Hence, Abbagnano's "radical empiricism."

Throughout this book Langiulli is an active participant in the "conversation about the fundamental human issues and questions," the conversation that he and Abbagnano take the history of philosophy to be. This active voice is especially in evidence in the last chapter where Langiulli explains his doubts about Abbagnano's anti-metaphysic. He argues that Abbagnano does carry on a metaphysical inquiry and assert a metaphysical doctrine: the primary and fundamental sense of being is possibility. Further, he argues that Abbagnano's own ontology entails a *necessary* relationship between possibility and existence, thus ascribing some sort of reality to necessity.

*Possibility, Necessity, and Existence* engages the reader in a genuinely metaphysical inquiry. One hopes that this inquiry can be continued in two ways: first, with the translation of more of Abbagnano's works (Langiulli has already translated a selection of Abbagnano's papers under the title *Critical Existentialism*) and second, with a development of Abbagnano's bold and original ideas. Two lines of inquiry suggest themselves: Can Abbagnano be located in terms of the Italian humanist tradition? Abbagnano begins from and stays close to the human world in his metaphysical concerns. His radical empiricism leads him to admonish contemporary philosophy to "put aside the contempt for poetry and literature as loci of truth and value" (43). Can Abbagnano's notion of possibility serve as the basis for a genuinely philosophical theology? That is, can it provide an account of contingency that avoids the difficulties of the Islamic-Scholastic account?

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*Contingency and Freedom: Lectura I 39.* By JOHN DUNS SCOTUS. Introduction, translation, and commentary by A. Vos, H. Veldhuis, A. H. Looman-Graaskamp, E. Dekker, and N. W. den Bok. Vol. 42 of The New Synthese Historical Library. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994. Pp. viii + 205. $97.00 (cloth).

In this volume, the John Duns Scotus Research Group under the direction of Professor Antonie Vos at Utrecht University has provided scholars of medieval philosophy and theology with an accurate and readable English translation of John Duns Scotus's earliest treatment of divine foreknowledge and future contingents. Interweaving the Latin text of Scotus's *Lectura* with their translation, the translators provide a very useful commentary on Scotus's text on the facing pages. The *Lectura*, as the introduction to the volume rightly notes, is the written version of Scotus's first lectures at Oxford on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and, despite its early date, it reveals the extent to which the central ideas of Scotus's thought were already in place. Furthermore, although many of the Subtle Doctor's characteristic doctrines are mentioned herein, pride of place is given, both in the introduction and in the commentary accompanying the text, to Scotus's outstanding contribution to the medieval discussion of divine foreknowledge: his substantial revision of the modal notions of necessity, possibility, and contingency.

The text translated in this volume is the entirety of Scotus's commentary on distinction thirty-nine of the first book of the Lombard's *Sentences*, the customary place in medieval theological commentaries for raising questions about the reality of future contingents, their knowability, and the compatibility of future contingency with divine foreknowledge. In his commentary, Scotus raises five questions in connection with distinction thirty-nine: 1) whether God has determinate knowledge of things according to every aspect of their existence, including the future; 2) whether God has infallible knowledge of things according to every aspect of their existence; 3) whether God has immutable knowledge; 4) whether God necessarily knows every changeable aspect of things; and 5) whether the contingency of things is compatible with God's knowledge.

Prompted by these questions, Scotus reviews traditional explanations of God's infallibility and immutability as well as contemporary accounts of how the future is knowable. Regarding the former, Scotus first introduces an explanation, similar in its outlines to that found in St. Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences* and St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae*, of the infallibility of God's knowledge based on the preeminence and lucidity of the Divine Ideas. According to this explanation, the Divine Ideas are so comprehensive and so distinctive that they allow any mind aware of them to perceive the most intimate and subtle connections between things as well as the things themselves; yet the things known through the Ideas need not be necessary since the mode of the cognition does not necessarily reflect the mode of the

things known through it. Scotus's main objection to this explanation is that it does not adequately account for how God could know contingent things since the truth of contingent things is not, by definition, contained in the notions of the simple terms, to which the Divine Ideas are often likened, composing a contingent proposition; indeed, if the truth of contingent things were contained in the notions of the simple terms composing the propositions that express them, the truth of contingent things would not be contingent but necessary. The failure of this explanation is traceable, in Scotus's view, to an insufficient appreciation for the role of the Divine Will in the production of created things. As to the matter of how the future is knowable, the Subtle Doctor reviews Aquinas's theory that God's eternity is present to all times. Scotus rejects this theory on the ground that, among other difficulties, God cannot cause something new in the future since the future, qua present, is already laid out before God as something that is caused. Hence, unless the theory can accommodate the possibility of God causing something twice, God's causal role in the future is nugatory. In other words, the notion of the past and the future being somehow present, albeit present only to eternity, seems to deprive the future of its novelty, contrary to our ordinary intuitions about it.

Having set aside current theories, Scotus turns his own attention to the issues at stake. The first matter to be settled is whether contingency is real. Scotus concedes that one cannot prove the reality of contingency on a priori grounds since the existence of an absolutely Necessary Being does not necessitate the existence of contingent and created reality. Despite the indemonstrability of contingency, the existence of contingent things is so obvious, Scotus notes, as to be self-evident and the claim that our actions are contingent is the basis for our whole practical life, the realm of deliberation and moral reasoning. The second matter to be settled is what is the ultimate source of contingency. In this area, Scotus must outline an understanding of the modal notions of necessity, contingency, and possibility different from that found among most thirteenth-century theologians, as the necessary prelude to his own location of the ultimate source of contingency in the Divine Will.

Historically speaking, the shift in the history of the modal notions of necessity, possibility, and contingency began much earlier than Scotus with the writings of Robert Grosseteste, whose *De libero arbitrio* was a landmark in the conception of possibility. Yet it was Scotus more than any other medieval author who used and refined these modal notions to develop a remarkably consistent interpretation of divine foreknowledge, human freedom, and the drama of salvation history. As the translators point out both in their introduction and in their commentary, Scotus articulates a manner of understanding contingency that allows for things to be contingent even at the very time that they exist; that is to say, contingent things are not simply contingent with respect to their proximate causes, as Aquinas had asserted, but

even with respect to the First Cause. To render such a view plausible, Scotus needs to develop an account of the logic of contingency that can show how things being contingent even when they exist does not violate the law of non-contradiction. He does so by arguing that the fact that some state of affairs *p* obtains at a given moment *t'* is logically incompatible (that is, constitutes a violation of the law of non-contradiction) only with the factual state of affairs *-p* at that same moment; the obtaining of some state of affairs *p* is compatible with the *possibility* of *-p* at that very same moment of time. Such an understanding of the logic of contingency is well described by the translators as "synchronic contingency" in contrast to the model of "diachronic contingency" characteristic of the Aristotelian view of nature and time. This logic of contingency, furthermore, points to Scotus's more positive assessment of the being of things that are contingent: contingency is one of two disjuncts expressing a transcendental disjunction of being and although contingency is less perfect than necessity, the other disjunct, contingency is not merely a privation of necessity, as many previous metaphysicians had held.

Armed with this logic of contingency, Scotus now has a logical and ontological model of how to understand free acts of the will. Beginning with the human will, Scotus takes pains to point out that, although we possess the power to act successively in different ways and with respect to different objects, the most perfect form of freedom we enjoy is the ability to will at the same time either of two opposite acts; the exercise of this freedom entails that, while we may will some act at a given time, the logically contradictory act could be willed at that same time, an example of synchronic contingency. Flowing from our rational nature, this type of freedom over opposites is, in turn, the best analogy for understanding God's own act of creation and conservation. God's act of creation is rooted in the transcendent dignity of His Will which can create or not create and the contingency of the Divine Will is the ultimate source of the contingency of things in the created order. God can know, moreover, the truth of future contingent propositions since He knows the disposition of His own will. Yet even here Scotus is careful to emphasize that the determinate truth value of contingent propositions is not traceable, in the final analysis, exclusively to the Divine Intellect. For, according to Scotus, the Divine Intellect knows the truth of contingent propositions, in a prior logical moment, as neutral in terms of their truth value; in a subsequent logical moment, the Divine Will chooses which of the states of affairs described by these propositions will obtain and in yet another logical moment the Divine Intellect knows the determinate truth value of these contingent propositions, including those that bear upon the future.

So much for the major contents of the book. The quality of the translation is good in the main. Both in the introduction and in the commentary, however, one notices the occasional slip from standard English expression, which serves as a reminder that the translators' mother tongue is not English; but such slips are, fortunately, rare and unobtrusive. Furthermore, the commen-

tary provides both historically relevant notes and theoretically precise formulations of Scotus's argumentation, the latter often making use of the tools of modern sentential and modal logic. Such a practice makes the book desirable for those who teach the philosophy of religion to advanced undergraduate or graduate students not altogether conversant with the history of medieval metaphysics and theology.

In sum, this volume is quite well done and should be a welcome addition to the growing number of English translations of Scotus's writings. These translations, as well as the ongoing editions of the Latin texts upon which they are based, are making the philosophical public increasingly aware of the importance and relevance of the Subtle Doctor's thought not only for an understanding of medieval philosophy and theology, but also for discussions of contemporary issues in metaphysics and philosophy of religion.

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