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# WHICH ESSENCE IS BROUGHT INTO BEING BY THE EXISTENTIAL ACT?

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ALTHOUGH SCHOLARS agree that according to Thomas Aquinas there is a distinction between essence and existence (*esse*) in created things, they are often unclear about the nature and even the terms of this distinction. In this article, for the sake of clarity, I follow Joseph Owens in translating "*esse*" as "existence" when it means the existential act of a being. One should perhaps first ask what Thomas means by "essence" in this context. I argue that the essence that is actualized by existence is the essence that is a determinate nature in an individual and not the essence absolutely considered. This essence in individuals has a potential being that is actualized by existence.

Owens and some other Thomists argue that the essence at stake in this distinction is the essence absolutely considered. Owens writes:

> [An] essence is individual when existent in the human intellect, but common and not existent when considered absolutely. Essence as common nature, essence in its absolute consideration, and essence contrasted with existence coincide. All three denote the essence that may be brought into being by existential act, either in reality or in cognition.[1]

[1] Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 139-40. See also idem, "Common Nature: A Point of Comparison between Thomistic and Scotistic Metaphysics," *Mediaeval Studies* 19 (1957): 1-14, at 5-7. For a related account, see John Knasas, "The Intellectual

Owens emphasizes that this essence has no being of its own. I will argue that the essence absolutely considered is an essence to which it makes no sense to attribute existence. The essence that is really distinct from existence is distinct from existence in the way that being in potency is distinct from being in act.

First, I will show that Owens neglects an important distinction between two kinds of potency, namely, that which results from God's power to create and that which belongs to an existing essence that receives an existential act. Second, I will consider the text of Thomas's early *De ente et essentia*, in which Thomas makes the distinction between the kinds of essence or nature, of which one is the essence absolutely considered. I will show that when Thomas establishes the distinction between essence and existence as one of potency and act, he has in mind not essence absolutely considered but the essence that is in individuals. Third, I will show that this interpretation of *De ente* is the only one that is compatible with Thomas's statements about the distinction between nature and existence in his Christological treatments. Although there are many relevant texts, the Christological discussions perhaps most clearly bring out the relationship between essence or nature, the individual substance (*suppositum* or *hypostasis*), and existence.

## I. Two Kinds of Potency

A distinction between two kinds of potency is important for understanding how essence is really distinguished from existence. First, an essence can be considered as merely possibly existing. In this sense an essence depends only on the being of the divine essence. Essence itself has no being before it is created except insofar as it is in God's essence.[2] It is in potency with respect to the ability to come into existence at all by an

Phenomenology of *De ente et essentia*, Chapter Four," *Review of Metaphysics* 68 (2014): 107-53.

[2] Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 6 (*Quaestiones disputatae*, ed. P. Bazzi et al., 2 vols. [Turin: Marietti, 1953], 2:48).

agent.[3] Second, an essence can be considered insofar as it is actualized by existence. In this second sense essence receives being. It is in potency to the existence that it receives in a way similar to that in which matter is in potency to the form that it receives. This second kind of potency is the kind that is at stake both in the distinction between essence and existence and in the distinction between matter and form.

Thomas thinks that the distinction between essence and existence is needed to provide a real composition in created creatures that lack matter, namely, the angels or spiritual creatures. All created being is divided between potency and act. Material creatures are in potency because of their matter. Since angels lack matter, there must be another explanation for their potency. Thomas writes:

> There is to consider in created things a twofold act and a twofold potency. For first a certain matter is as potency in respect to form, and form is its act; and again a nature constituted from matter and form is as potency in respect to its existence, in so far as it is receptive to it. Therefore, with this foundation of matter being removed, if there remains some form of a determinate nature per se subsisting and not in matter, it will be still compared to its existence as potency to act: I do not say as a potency separable from act, but that which its act always accompanies.[4]

[3] For different interpretations of such possibility, see Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the Possibles," *The New Scholasticism* 53 (1979): 76-85; Beatrice Zedler, "Why are the Possibles Possible?," *The New Scholasticism* 55 (1981): 113-30; John F. Wippel, "The Reality of Nonexisting Possibles according to Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Godfrey of Fontaines," *Review of Metaphysics* 34 (1981): 729-58, at 730-40, 758; repr. in Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 163-89, at 164-73, 189.

[4] *De spir. creat.*, a. 1: "in rebus compositis est considerare duplicem actum, et duplicem potentiam. Nam primo quidem materia est ut potentia respectu formae, et forma est actus eius; et iterum natura constituta ex materia et forma, est ut potentia respectu ipsius esse, in quantum est susceptiva eius. Remoto igitur fundamento materiae, si remaneat aliqua forma determinatae naturae per se subsistens, non in materia, adhuc comparabitur ad suum esse ut potentia ad actum: non dico autem ut potentiam separabilem ab actu, sed quam semper suus actus comitetur" (*Quaestiones disputatae*, 2:371).

In this text, the potency of a nature to existence is compared with the potency of matter to form. Although similar, the two potencies are not entirely the same.[5] For instance, the matter of a natural being is in potency to become something else, and it is limited by its form. In contrast, a nature or essence is not in potency to become something else, and it limits its act to a determinate kind of being. Despite such differences, essence and existence divide being according to potency and act in a real way, just as matter and form do. Thomas clearly has in mind the potency of an essence that is actualized by existence and not the mere possibility that an essence has for existence. He notes that the determinate nature's potency is inseparable from its existence. Consequently, an essence that is not actualized by existence lacks potency in this sense, even if it is possible for such an essence to exist.

This distinction between these two kinds of potency is sometimes called a distinction between objective potency and subjective potency. In such later Scholastic terminology, objective potency is "the capacity of a mere possible to be created," and subjective potency is "the passive capacity in a subject that is already existing."[6] Objective potency is a nonrepugnance that can be brought into being. In contrast, subjective potency indicates a member of a division of real being into potency and act. For instance, the matter of Socrates is in subjective potency to his form. According to this terminology, on the traditional Thomistic account, Thomas would think that

[5] For a discussion of matter and form in light of this difference, see John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 103-5, 296-312. Cajetan, *In "De ente*," c. 5, q. 12, n. 101, lists two similarities and ten differences between the two compositions (*In "De ente et essentia" Thomae Aquinatis*, ed. M-H. Laurent [Turin: Marietti, 1934], 141-44). For Dominic Banez's partial criticism of Cajetan on this point, see my "Continuity and Innovation in Dominic Banez's Understanding of Esse: Banez's relationship to John Capreolus, Paul Soncinas, and Thomas de Vio Cajetan," *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 367-94.

[6] Bernard Wuellner, *Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1956; repr. Fitzwilliam, N.H.: Loreto, 2012), 94. For other Scholastic uses of "objective potency," see Alexander a Jesu, *Metaphysica iuxta mentem D. Thomae et doctrinam nostrorum Complutensium,* tract. 1, disp. 3, q. 2, n. 2 ([Naples, 1688], 1:163).

an essence has subjective potency that is actualized by existence. The real distinction between essence and existence is a distinction between principles of being, namely, potency and act.

Owens's account of the role of the essence absolutely considered may in part be rooted in his alternative understanding of subjective and objective potency. Owens rejects earlier Thomistic accounts of Thomas's distinction between essence and existence in part because he seems to agree with Suarez's criticism that such Thomists make essence into something that has its own actuality apart from existence.[7] Unlike his Thomist contemporaries, Suarez thinks that something can have subjective potency only if it has real actuality. Suarez holds that matter has subjective potency to form because it has its own actuality apart from form and can at least by God's power exist without form. In contrast, it would be contradictory for essence to exist without existence, and therefore essence cannot have its own actuality or be in subjective potency. It follows that essence can have only objective and not subjective potency. In accepting Suarez's criticism of his contemporary Thomists, Owens adopts an understanding of subjective potency that earlier Thomists rejected. Suarez's criticism that contemporary Thomists attributed actuality to essence has plausibility only if it is assumed that subjective potency has some level of actuality. But Thomists explicitly deny this assumption. In summary, Suarez has a non-Thomistic account of what it means to be a potential being, and Owens apparently either accepts this non-Thomistic

[7] Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 135 n. 8; idem, "The Number of Terms in the Suarezian Discussion on Essence and Being," *The Modern Schoolman* 34 (1957): 147-91. For the argument, see Francisco Suarez, *Disputationes metaphysicales*, disp. 31, sect. 3 (*Opera omnia*, vol. 26 [Paris: Vives, 1861], 233-35). For the wider differences between Suarez and Thomists on this issue, see Norbert Del Prado, *De veritate fundamentali philosophiae christianae* (Fribourg: St. Paul, 1911), 188-91; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *La synthèse thomiste*, ed. nouvelle (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1950), 78-93. Owens mentions Del Prado's criticism of Suarez but I cannot find that he addresses Del Prado's arguments. See Owens, "Suarezian Discussion," 189-90.

account or does not recognize the nature and importance of Suarez's divergence from Thomas on this point.

Suarez rejects the doctrine of the real distinction because objective potency is a mere logical possibility that cannot be part of a real composition with existence. If Suarez is correct that essence only has objective potency, then essence cannot be distinct from existence in the way that potency is really distinct from its act. On such an account, this objective potency or logical possibility could perhaps belong to the essence absolutely considered. For instance, rationality can be predicated of humanity precisely because of this essence absolutely considered, which depends only on the nature of humanity as in God's essence, and not on any actually existing man. This possibility does not depend on any existence apart from that of God.

Owens seems to share Suarez's non-Thomistic understanding of potency when he writes that "essence as 'objective potency' and as 'receptive potency' or 'subjective potency' coincide. The essence that receives being has no actuality whatsoever prior to the reception of being."[8] Like Suarez, Owens seems to identify the nonrepugnance of essence to existence, or the possibility of an essence to be created by God, with the essence that is distinguished from existence. Owens accepts Suarez's criticism of the standard Thomistic position because, like Suarez, he assumes that if essence has subjective potency it would have some degree of actuality. On the other hand, Thomas understands the act/potency distinction in such a way that a potential principle such as matter or essence has, on its own, no actuality. Potency is a different sort of being. Nevertheless, it is a division of being, and not mere possibility.

Although it seems to me that Owens's interpretation might lead to serious errors concerning Thomas's use of the *intellectus essentiae* argument and his wider understanding of act and potency, my focus here is his narrower account of how essence is in potency to existence. His approach seems to blur the distinction between the two kinds of potency, namely, potency

[8] Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 139 n. 20.

as a possibility of existing and potency as a recipient of act. Consequently, he obscures the fundamental issue at stake in debates over the real distinction between essence and existence, namely, that it is a real distinction between potency and act.

Moreover, as Deborah Black and Paul Vincent Spade have pointed out, if Owen's account of Thomas is true, then it is difficult to see what explanatory role essence plays in Thomas's metaphysics. Black notes that on Owens's account Thomas focuses on the individually existing thing in such a way that the metaphysical role of essence disappears.[9] She thinks that in contrast with Avicenna's view of the common nature as having relatively equal being in the intellect and in things, Thomas's account undermines the distinction between essence and existence. According to Spade, Thomas's account both denies existence to the common nature and yet demands some diminished existence for it.[10] If the common nature has no existence, it cannot play the metaphysical role that Thomas assigns to it. While I do not agree with Black and Spade in their description of the problem or its alternatives, they are right to be puzzled over the role of essence in Owens's interpretation. I will argue that for Thomas, an individual essence plays a metaphysical role in the composition of an individual that receives an act of existence. It is the determinate nature or essence in individuals that plays this role, not the essence merely insofar as it is considered absolutely apart from its existence in individuals.

## II. *De ente et essentia*

In *De ente et essentia*, Thomas considers the meaning of the two most basic terms in metaphysics, namely, "being" *(ens*), and

[9] Deborah Black, "Mental Existence in Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna," *Mediaeval Studies* 61 (1999): 45-79, at 77-79.

[10] Paul Vincent Spade, "Degrees of Being, Degrees of Goodness: Aquinas on Levels of Reality," in Scott MacDonald and Eleanore Stump, eds., *Aquinas's Moral Theory*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 255-75, at 270-74.

"essence" (*essentia*). At the beginning of the work, after distinguishing between real being and being as the truth of a proposition, he discusses different senses of essence or nature. I am concerned here with the way in which the essence/existence distinction is relevant to two distinctions that Thomas makes concerning essence. First, he distinguishes between essence taken with and without precision, such as the difference between "humanity" and "man," or between "equinity" and "horse." Essence taken with precision signifies a part and essence without precision signifies a whole. Second, he distinguishes between three different kinds of essence. The second distinction, which is between three meanings of essence or nature, comes from Avicenna. This distinction is between essence absolutely considered, essence as existing in singulars, and essence as existing in the mind.[11] In his description of Avicenna's threefold distinction, Thomas discusses only essence considered without precision, although there is no reason to think that it does not also apply in a way to essence taken with precision. For instance, he should be able to distinguish between humanity considered apart from any existence, and humanity as existing in either an individual man or in the intellect of a knower.

In chapter 1, Thomas explains the close relationship between terms such as essence, quiddity, form, and nature.[12] Essence is what places beings in diverse genera and species. For instance, humanity places Socrates in the species "human" and in the

[11] Avicenna, *Metaphysica* 1.5 (S. van Riet and G. Verbecke, eds., *Avicenna Latinus*, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina I-IV* [Louvain: Peeters; Leiden: Brill, 1977], 35). For Thomas's usage of this distinction in light of the problem of universals and the influence of Boethius, see Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Cutting the Gordian Knot of Ontology: Thomas's Solution to the Problem of Universals," in David M. Gallagher, ed., *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 16-36. For the influence of Avicenna on Thomas on this point, see Black, "Mental Existence," 45-79; Giorgio Pini, "'Absoluta consideratio naturae': Tommaso d'Aquino e la dottrina avicenniana dell'essenza," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004): 387-438.

[12] *De ente et essentia* 1 (Leonine ed., vol. 43, pp. 369-70). Unless otherwise indicated, all texts from Thomas Aquinas come from his *Opera omnia* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1884-).

genus "animal." Essence is related to nature in two ways. First, nature signifies the essence insofar as it signifies what makes the being grasped by the intellect, namely, the definition or essence. Second, nature signifies the essence insofar as it is a principle of a being's proper operation. This close relationship between essence and nature explains why Thomas sometimes shifts from one to the other in the same discussion.

The different senses of essence are explained in chapters 2 and 3. In chapter 2, Thomas treats the essence or nature of substances that are composed of form and matter.[13] Here he distinguishes between essence or nature taken with precision, which cannot be predicated of the subject, and essence taken without precision, which can be so predicated. For example, "humanity" is the human essence taken with precision, and "man" is the same essence taken without precision. We cannot say "Socrates is humanity" but we can say "Socrates is a man." Essence taken with precision is not a whole in the way that man is, but instead a formal part of this whole.[14] It excludes all that is nonessential. Socrates is not humanity because he includes much more than is present in humanity, such as his individual matter. But we can say that he has humanity.

The essence of substances that are composed of form and matter includes a matter that is undesignated, meaning that it is not individual. Humanity includes everything that makes someone human, including both his form and undesignated matter. For instance, humanity includes undesignated matter such as bone, but it does not include the individual bone of Plato or Socrates. In this way humanity is a formal part of the whole man. This formal part that is signified by the abstract nature, or essence taken with precision, is sometimes called the "form of

[13] *De ente* 2-3 (Leonine ed., 43:373-74).

[14] For many other texts and a discussion of how essence is a formal part of a substance, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 198-208. For this distinction in the context of universals, see Gabriele Galluzzo, "Aquinas on Common Nature and Universals," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 71 (2004): 131-71, at 146-54.

the whole" (*forma totius*) in contrast with the form narrowly considered apart from any matter, which is the form of the part (*forma partis*).[15] The "form of the whole" is not the substantial form alone but the essence taken with precision, which includes both the substantial form and the undesignated matter.

In what way might this essence taken with precision exist? Owens argues that precisive essence exists only in the mind and that consequently it cannot be contrasted with existence. He writes:

> [T]he essence that is really distinct from the existence is taken non-precisively. Taken precisively, the essence can have existence only in the mind—you cannot say that Socrates or any other individual is humanity.[16]

Spade makes a similar argument for understanding Thomas as holding that humanity cannot exist.[17] Spade recognizes that Thomas never explicitly draws this conclusion, but holds that it is entailed by his thesis that humanity prescinds from existence. Although it is clear to any reader of *De ente* that precisive essence cannot be predicated of an individual man such as Socrates, both Owens and Spade seem to misunderstand why it cannot be so predicated. In this context Thomas merely states that the precisive and nonprecisive essences are distinct as whole and part. Although we cannot say that Socrates is humanity, we can say that Socrates has humanity. Similarly, we cannot say that Socrates is his matter alone, or that he is a hand or eye. As we have seen, "humanity" signifies a part of the whole, whereas "man" signifies the whole. If the whole exists as an individual thing, why should we not also say that the formal part in some way exists in this whole? Owens and Spade think

[15] For this terminology and the background in Averroes and Avicenna, see Armand Maurer, "Form and Essence in the Philosophy of St. Thomas," *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951): 165-76; repr. in idem, *Being and Knowing: Studies in Thomas Aquinas and Later Medieval Philosophers* (Toronto: PIMS, 1990), 3-18; Fabrizio Amerini, "Aristotle, Averroes, and Thomas Aquinas on the Nature of Essence," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 14 (2003): 79-122, at 100-119.

[16] Joseph Owens, "Aquinas's Distinction at *De ente et essentia* 4.119-123," *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986): 264-87, at 277 n. 28.

[17] Spade, "Degrees of Being, Degrees of Goodness," 266-67.

that humanity cannot be predicated of Socrates because humanity cannot exist in individuals. It seems to me that humanity cannot be predicated of Socrates because it is a formal part of man, and Socrates is a man and not a formal part.

The difference between terms such as "man" and "humanity" can perhaps more easily be understood in the context of the distinction between signification and (personal) supposition, which was more clearly developed by terminist logicians than by Thomas himself. Although Thomas's own accounts of these terms are perhaps inconsistent, and he considers supposition to be a mode of signification, the terms do play an important role in his thought.[18] The signification of a term is more or less what that term makes known or means, whereas the logical supposit is more or less the reference of a term.[19] Both "man" and "humanity" signify the same thing, but in different ways.[20] For

[18] Gyula Klima, "The Semantic Principles underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics of Being," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996): 87-141, at 110-13. For Thomas's general understanding of supposition as a mode of signification, see Henk J. M. Schoot, "Aquinas on Supposition: The Possibilities and Limitations of Logic '*in divinis*,'" *Vivarium* 31 (1993): 193-225; idem, *Christ the "Name" of God: Thomas Aquinas on Naming Christ* (Leuvern: Peeters, 1993), 41-73; Fabrizio Amerini, "Thomas Aquinas and Some Italian Dominicans (Francis of Prato, Georgius Rovegnatinus and Girolamo Savanorola) on Signification and Supposition," in *Medieval Supposition Theory Revisited*, ed. E. P. Bos (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 327-51, at 329-36. A slightly different account is given by Eileen Sweeney, "Supposition, Signification, and Universals: Metaphysical and Linguistic Complexity in Aquinas," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 42 (1995): 267-90. For Thomas's peculiar reluctance to discuss supposition in the context of statements such as "man is a most worthy animal," see René-Antonin Gauthier, introduction to Thomas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias* (Leonine ed., 1.1*:54*-56*).

[19] For the differences with contemporary accounts of meaning and reference, see especially E. J. Ashworth, "Do Words Signify Ideas or Things? The Scholastic Sources of Locke's Theory of Language," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981): 299-326; eadem, "Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991): 39-67.

[20] Fabrizio Amerini, "Pragmatics and Semantics in Thomas Aquinas," *Vivarium* 49 (2011): 95-126, at 101-3. Allan Bäck suggests that the different uses of "man" show that a universal concrete term can be taken concretely or abstractly, but it seems to me best to apply the distinction between concrete and abstract to different words such as

instance, in the *Summa theologiae* Thomas writes "this name 'man' signifies humanity in the supposit."[21] The difference is that the concrete term "man" can have personal supposition, meaning that it can take the place of an individual, whereas the abstract term "humanity" always indicates an essence or formal part that inheres in such a supposit. For instance, we can say that "Every man is an animal." In this usage "man" and perhaps "animal" supposit for individual human beings. Nevertheless, the human beings are signified in different ways by the two terms.[22] "Man" signifies the human nature, and "animal" signifies the genus. The concrete terms "man" and perhaps "animal" supposit for individuals. In contrast, the abstract terms do not function in this way. The terms "humanity" and "animality" signify the same essences that the terms "man" and "animal" signify. Nevertheless, they lack personal supposition, since there is no separately existing "humanity" or "animality." We could say "Every man has animality," but in this case the term "animality" does not supposit for all individual men.

One complication with describing the difference in terms of supposition and signification is that some scholars argue that for Thomas the nature as a subject always has supposition but the predicate either lacks supposition or has a different kind of supposition which is really a kind of signification that is distinct from denotation.[23] Words such as "man" would have different

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"horse" and "equinity," or "humanity" and "man." See Allan Bäck, *On Reduplication: Logical Theories of Qualification* (Leiden, New York, Cologne: Brill, 1996), 315, 339.

[21] "hoc nomen 'homo' humanitatem significat in supposito" (*STh* I, q. 39, a. 4; see also ibid., ad 3). For some similar uses, see I *Sent*., d. 33, q. 1, a. 2 (Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Libros sententiarum*, ed. Pierre Mandonnet and M. F. Moos, 4 vols. [Paris: Lethielleux, 1927-47], 1:770); *STh* III, q. 17, a. 1; *De Unione*, a. 3, ad 5 and 14 (Thomas Aquinas, *De unione verbi incarnati*, ed. Walter Senner, Barbara Bartocci, and Klaus Obenauer, trans. Roger Nutt [Leuven, Paris, Bristol, Conn.: Peeters, 2015], 128, 130). For variations in Thomas's accounts, see Amerini, "Thomas Aquinas and Some Italian Dominicans," 335 n. 16; "Pragmatics and Semantics," 191 n. 9.

[22] *STh* I-II, q. 67, a. 5; II *Sent*., d. 3, q. 1, a. 5 (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 2:100). See J. L. A. West, "Nature, Specific Difference, and Degrees of Being: Background to Aquinas's Anti-Monophysite Arguments," *Nova et Vetera* (Eng. ed.) 3 (2005): 39-80, at 53-54.

[23] Sweeney, "Supposition, Signification, and Universals," 284; and Schoot, *Christ the Name of God*, 64-65.

semantic properties when serving as subjects and predicates. As Peter of Spain writes, "common terms are predicated in virtue of the essence and are made subject in virtue of the substance."[24] This interpretation is connected to the wider dispute over the "inherence" theory of predication that some attribute to Thomas, according to which predicates perhaps only signify a form that inheres in a supposit.[25] For instance, both in his commentary on the *Sentences* and in his *Summa theologiae*, Thomas notes that "terms placed in the predicate are held formally, but in the subject materially."[26] In this context a subject term might indicate the subject itself, whereas the predicate term would indicate a form or nature in the subject. The statement "The Second Person of the Trinity is a man" would attribute a human nature to the supposit that is the second person, but it would not indicate that the supposit is a man.

However, Thomas himself seems to state that predicates can both signify a form that belongs to the supposit and themselves possess supposition. For instance, in the *Summa theologiae*, he explicitly states that the terms are true because they name the same supposit, although in a different way. The statement "Man is an animal" is true, "for in the same supposit is both the sensible nature, by which it is called 'animal', and the rational,

[24] "termini communes predicantur ratione essentie et subiciuntur ratione substantie" (Peter of Span, *Sycategoreumata* 8.8.76-77 [ed. L. M. de Rijhk, trans. Joke Spruyt (Leiden, New York, Cologne: Brill, 1992), 376]). For this text in the context of Peter of Spain's account of reduplication, see Bäck, *On Reduplication*, 216-21.

[25] For the sources of this interpretation, see Peter Thomas Geach, "Subject and Predicate," *Mind* 59 (1950): 461-82; Idem, "Form and Existence," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55 (1954-55): 251-72; repr. in idem, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 42-64; idem, "Nominalism," *Sophia* 3 (1964): 3-14; repr. in idem, *Logic Matters* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1980), 289-301. For criticisms, see John Malcolm, "A Reconsideration of the Identity and Inherence Theories of the Copula," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 17 (1979): 383-400; Gyula Klima, "Geach's Three Most Inspiring Errors concerning Medieval Logic," *Philosophical Investigations* 38 (2015): 34-51, at 36-46.

[26] "termini in praedicato positi tenentur formaliter, in subjecto vero materialiter" (III *Sent*., d. 6, q. 2, a. 1 [Mandonnet-Moos ed., 3:233]). See also *STh* I, q. 13, a. 12.

by which it is called 'man.'"[27] This same text also considers the statement "A man is pale" to be similar. It is true if they both refer to the same supposit, which would have both human nature and paleness. Whatever Thomas's wider theory of predication, the difference between such concrete subject and predicate terms to some extent is concerned with supposition. The predicates that signify the whole, such as "man" and "animal," can also have the same supposit as the subject, even though they signify it differently. But predicates that signify the part, such as "humanity" or "animality," cannot supposit for the whole.

The question of whether essence taken without precision can exist is relevant to Thomas's threefold division of essence in chapter 3. In his examples of this threefold division, Thomas mostly uses the essence without precision. For example, in his examples he more often uses the term "man" than "humanity." Nevertheless, the threefold division itself seems to follow criteria that are independent of the distinction between whole and formal part. This threefold division is in part based on Avicenna and repeated by Thomas in several contexts, especially in his earlier writings.[28] It is the division between the essence absolutely considered, the essence as existing in the soul, and the essence as existing in singulars. First the essence can be considered entirely in abstraction from existence and whether it is one or many.[29] This essence absolutely considered can be predicated equally of different individual men. This essence is what Owens thinks is at stake in the distinction between essence and existence.

Essence exists only in the soul and in singular beings.[30] Insofar as the essence "man" exists in the mind, it is a single being in the soul or mind that represents different men. This

[27] "in eodem supposito est et natura sensibilis, a qua dicitur animal, et rationalis, a qua dicitur homo" (*STh* I, q. 13, a. 12).

[28] *Quodlibet* 8, q. 1, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 25.1:51-52). See also II *Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2-3; d. 3, q. 3, a. 2, ad 1 (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 2:91, 117); *De Pot.*, q. 5, a. 9, ad 6 (Marietti ed., 2:155).

[29] *De ente* 3 (Leonine ed., 43:374).

[30] *De ente* 3 (Leonine ed., 43:374-75).

essence has real being insofar as it is an accident of the knower's soul that is distinct from that of the substantial being of a man such as Socrates and Plato. We can say that "Man is a species." We cannot say that "Socrates is a species." The third kind of essence taken without precision is the essence that exists in the individual. In this way we can say that "[A] man is pale" because we can say that "Socrates is pale."

One problem in translating Thomas's text is that there are no articles in Latin. Consequently, the word "*homo*" might be translated as "the man," "a man," or simply as "man."[31] It seems to me that it might better to translate "*homo*" in this context with an indefinite article, since we are referring to someone through the essence.[32] The translation is not as important as the recognition of the distinction between an essential term such as "man" and a term such as "Socrates." There is in Latin no verbal difference between "[A] man is pale" and "Man is pale."

The essence absolutely considered and the third kind of essence are used differently in statements such as "[A] man is pale" and "Socrates is a man." When we predicate "man" of Socrates, we are predicating a common nature that excludes all nonessential elements. Consequently, if "man" is taken as the essence absolutely considered, it is false that "Man is pale." On the other hand, if "man" is taken as existing in a pale Socrates, then it is true that "[A] man is pale." It is important that when the essence is predicated of an individual it is predicated in abstraction from every existence and therefore as considered absolutely, but the absolutely considered essence itself is not predicated of the individual as so abstraced.[33] For example, the statement "Socrates is man" predicates the essence considered

[31] For example, "we say that man is white because Socrates is white" (Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 2d ed., trans. Armand Maurer [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968], 46).

[32] Peter of Spain, *Syncategoreumata* 8.8.76 (Spruyt, trans., 376-77), notes that such a term names an "indeterminate individual which is some man" ("individuum vagum quod est aliquis homo"). See also I *Peryerm.*, lect. 10 (Leonine ed., 1.1*:53).

[33] Cajetan, *In "De ente,"* c. 4, q. 8, n. 63 (Laurent, ed., 100-101).

apart from its universality in the intellect or its presence in singulars. Nevertheless, it is predicated of an existing substance that possesses a human nature. Insofar as it is absolutely considered, an essence cannot be said to exist or not to exist.

In *De ente*, Thomas uses a qualification ("*qua*" or "*secundum quod*") to indicate the difference between the use of a term to indicate the essence absolutely considered and the essence as existing in the individual.[34] For instance, "Man insofar as he is man is pale" is always false. Nevertheless, the bare statement "Man is pale" is ambiguous in that it is false if "man" signifies the essence absolutely considered but true if "man" signifies Socrates. Thomas's use of statements with qualifications has a wider theological context in his Christological writings, when he wishes to indicate whether something is predicated of the second person of the Trinity according to his divine or human nature.[35] Without such a qualification, context is needed to determine whether a term signifies an essence as absolutely considered, as existing in individuals, or as existing in the soul.

In his late *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, Thomas provides a slightly different account of these statements that nevertheless seems compatible with his earlier account in *De ente*.[36] In this late text, he states that something can be said of universals in four different ways. The first two are about the universal considered in the mind, and there is no descent to particulars. For instance, statements such as "man is a species" or "man is the most worthy creature" do not justify the statements "Socrates is a species" or "Socrates is a most worthy creature." Both sentences are about the universal considered apart from individuals. In contrast, statements such as "Man is an animal" and "[A] Man walks" both can apply to individuals. We can conclude that "Socrates is an animal" or "Plato is an animal"

[34] *De ente* 3 (Leonine ed., 43:374-75).

[35] See Michael Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 126-57; Schoot, *Christ the "Name" of God*, 67-70, 164-68; Bäck, *On Reduplication*, 312-15, 336-40; Gyula Klima, "Libellus pro Sapiente: A Criticism of Allan Bäck's Argument against St. Thomas Aquinas' Theory of the Incarnation," *The New Scholasticism* 58 (1984): 207-19.

[36] I *Peryerm*., lect. 10 (Leonine ed., 1.1*:51-53).

from "Man is an animal." Nevertheless, even though there is a descent to the particular in the case of such essential predicates or proper accidents, the predication is made on account of the essence. Socrates is an animal and is rational precisely because he is a man. These predicates belong to the nature considered apart from singular beings even though, unlike predicates such as "species," they belong to the singular beings who possess the nature. When predicated of singulars, such universals are predicated by the aspect of their common nature (*ratione nature communis*). In contrast, paleness or walking are attributed to the singulars only by reason of their singularity.

The context of *De ente* shows that the essence at stake in the essence/existence distinction is the essence as existing in individuals. It is the human essence existing in Socrates or Plato, even though it lacks the properties that can be attributed to Socrates or Plato as individuals. Although it makes sense to predicate in some way existence of essence considered with precision as a determinate nature in Socrates, it does not make sense to predicate it of the essence absolutely considered. We can say "[A] man exists" because we can say that "Socrates exists" or that "Plato exists." We are not stating that existence belongs to their common nature. The death of only one would not affect the other's existence. The statement "[A] man exists" is in some respects similar to "[A] man is pale." But since the essence absolutely considered is abstracted from existence, it is at least as strange to say "Man exists" in this sense as to say that "Man is pale." The fact that essence can be absolutely considered tells us something about created essences, namely, that they do not have existence as a formal part or as a property that flows from the formal part. However, the created essences that actually exist are not the essences that belong to more than one individual.

As we have seen, Owens identifies this essence absolutely considered as the common nature. On this reading, insofar as the essence "man" is common to both Plato and Socrates, we can say both that "Socrates is a man" and "Plato is a man." This

account of the common nature should be clarified. In some texts the nature seems to be common in the way that it is universal. For instance, in chapter 3 of *De ente*, Thomas writes:

> But it cannot be said that the character [*ratio*] of a universal belongs to nature thus taken, since unity and community belong to the character [*ratio*] of the universal; for neither of these belong to human nature according to its absolute consideration. For if community belonged to the understanding of "man," then community would be found in whatever humanity is found, and this is false, because in Socrates is not found any community, but whatever is in him is individuated.[37]

As such, the essence absolutely considered seems to prescind from either universality or individuality. This text and similar ones support Gabriele Galluzzo's claim that "The only place, so to speak, where an essence actually exists as common is in the intellect."[38]

However, as Owens emphasizes, Thomas distinguishes between different kinds of universality and of commonality.[39] In *De potentia*, Thomas more or less distinguishes between three meanings of universal, namely, as considered absolutely, in individuals, and present in the mind.[40] In this case the division between the universals is the same as the threefold division of essences in *De ente*. In the *Sententia libri De anima* and *In libros Metaphysicorum*, Thomas distinguishes between the universal considered as a universal and apart from any being, and the

[37] *De ente* 3: "Non tamen potest dici quod ratio uniuersalis conueniat nature sic accepte, quia de ratione uniuersalis est unitas et communitas; nature autem humane neutrum horum conuenit secundum absolutam suam considerationem. Si enim communitas esset de intellectu hominis, tunc in quocumque inueniretur humanitas inueniretur communitas ; et hoc falsum est, quia in Sorte non inuenitur communitas aliqua, sed quicquid est in eo est indiuiduatum" (Leonine ed., 43:374). See also I *Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, sol. (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 1:486); *ScG* I, c. 26 (in Editio Leonina manualis [Rome: Commisio Leonina, 1934], 27).

[38] Galluzzo, "Aquinas on Common Nature and Universals," 161.

[39] Owens, "Common Nature," 6-7. See esp. 7 n. 23.

[40] *De Pot*., q. 4, a. 9, ad 16 (Marietti ed., 2:155).

universal precisely as a universal.[41] The first item of the division seems to be the essence absolutely considered. Nevertheless, despite such descriptions of the essence absolutely considered as in a way common or universal, Thomas emphasizes that a nature exists as a universal only in the mind and has extramental existence only in an individual. In the *Sententia libri De anima*, he writes:

> Thus it is clear that the intention of universality cannot be attributed to a common nature except according to the being that it has in the intellect: for thus alone is one [said] of many, insofar as it is understood apart from the principles by which the one is divided into many. Whence it follows that the universals insofar as they are universal do not exist except insofar as they are in the soul. But these natures to which the intention of universality accrues are in things. And on account of this, the common names signifying these natures are predicated of individuals, but not the names signifying the intentions. For Socrates is a man, but not a species, although man is a species.[42]

In this text Thomas speaks of a common name such as "man," which can signify either the nature in the soul or the nature of an individual. He does not say that the common nature exists or receives existence insofar as it is distinct from that of an individual.

In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas compares the distinction between "humanity" and "nature" to the distinction between the color of an apple apart from its smell and the apple itself.[43]

[41] II *De Anima*, c. 12 (Leonine ed., 45.1:115-16); VII *Metaphys*., lect. 13 (nn. 1570-71) (*In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, ed. M-R. Cathala and R. Spiazzi [Turin: Marietti, 1964], 378.

[42] II *De Anima*, c. 12: "Sic igitur patet quod nature communi non potest attribui intentio uniuersalitatis nisi secundum esse quod habet in intellectu: sic enim solum est unum de multis, prout intelligitur preter principia quibus unum in multa diuiditur. Vnde relinquitur quod uniuersalia secundum quod sunt uniuersalia non sunt nisi in anima, ipse autem nature quibus accidit intentio uniuersalitatis sunt in rebus. Et propter hoc nomina communia significancia naturas ipsas predicantur de indiuiduis, non autem nomina significancia intentiones: Sortes enim est homo, set non est species, quamuis homo sit species" (Leonine ed., 45.1:116).

[43] *STh* I, q. 82, a. 2, ad 2. See also q. 82, a. 3, ad 4. For this intention of universality, see John Frederick Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism* (New York: Bookman, 1952), 196-

The color that we see exists only in the apple alongside its smell, although the similitude of the color and not the smell exists in our vision. Similarly, humanity exists only in the man himself alongside a man's individuating conditions. Nevertheless, when we through abstraction think of humanity apart from the individual conditions, there is an intention of universality. This universality belongs only to the similitude in the mind and not to the man in whom the humanity exists.

Moreover, Owens notes that in other texts Thomas speaks of the way in which the common nature is contracted to or received by the material substance.[44] This common nature seems not to be the universal in the mind, but it is not clear how it is common except insofar as distinct individuals such as Plato and Socrates share the same properties. Jeffrey Brower has recently argued that for Thomas the common nature has a kind of being and unity of its own insofar as the natures of materially distinct individuals are distinct only derivatively.[45] For instance, Plato and Socrates have humanities that are numerically distinct only because they are individuated by matter. The distinction in nature must be explained by another nature. On Brower's reading, Thomas has common natures that are not universals in the mind. In his claim that the common nature has a unity or being of its own, Brower certainly departs from Thomas's own words. Nevertheless, he is right that Thomas sometimes uses the word "common" in a way that is distinct from "universal," and more especially "universal" in the narrow sense of existing only in the mind. Although there is no agreement among contemporary scholars over the connection between the essence absolutely considered and the common nature, it seems clear in light of *De ente* and other texts that essence has being only in the mind and

99; Robert W. Schmidt, *The Domain of Logic according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Hague: Nijhoff, 1966), 177-201; Klima, "Semantic Principles of Aquinas," 102-5.

[44] Owens, "Common Nature," 7 n. 24. See especially I *Sent*., d. 8, q. 4, a. 1, ad 2 (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 1:219); *ScG* IV, c. 40 (Editio manualis, 495).

[45] Jeffrey E. Brower, "Aquinas on the Problem of Universals," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92 (2016): 715-35, at 722-32. Spade, "Degrees of Being, Degrees of Goodness," 273, argues that on Owens's interpretation the common nature should have a diminished being even though Owens states that it lacks any being.

in things, and not insofar as it prescinds from these two meanings. As I will show, this minimal claim is sufficient for my argument that the essence in things is what receives existence in the way that a potency receives act.

Of the kinds of essence mentioned in *De ente*, neither the essence existing in the soul nor the essence absolutely considered exist in the categories in which the essences place them. With respect to the first point, the known object does not exist in the soul in the same way that it exists in the material word.[46] For instance, we can know a substance such as a man or a horse. But in knowing the man or horse we do not have a new substantial existence in the soul. The same form that exists physically in an object exists intentionally in the knower. It seems to me that in this passage on the existence of the nature in the soul, Thomas has in mind not only the intelligible species, but also and perhaps primarily the mental word or concept in which the object is known.[47] Nevertheless, on either interpretation the species or concept is an accident (quality) of the soul and not a substance. The intelligible species or concept as a

[46] For a discussion of some literature, see Jeffrey Brower and Susan Brower Toland, "Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality," *Philosophical Review* 117 (2004): 193-243. The best account remains Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism*.

[47] For the nature and importance of the distinction, see my "The Concept as a Formal Sign," *Semiotica* 179 (2010): 1-21. For the accidental character of the intelligible species, see Brower and Brower-Toland, "Aquinas on Mental Representation," 197. Cajetan may be correct in stating that there are several ways of attributing *esse* to the nature in the intellect, whether considering it objectively or subjectively, or as an intelligible species or as a concept: "Primo sic: natura secundum esse obiectivum in intellectu agente est universalis in praedicando. Secundo sic: natura secundum esse subiectivum in intellectu possibili est universalis in repraesentando. Tertio sic: natura secundum esse subiectivum in intellectu possibili est universalis in praedicando" ("First thus: nature is universal in predicating according to [its] objective being in the agent intellect. Second thus: nature is universal in representing according to [its] subjective being in the possible intellect. Third thus: nature is universal in predicating according to [its] objective being in the possible intellect" [Cajetan, *In De ente*, c. 4, n. 66 (Laurent, ed., 104-5)]). In this division, the subjective being is an accidental being.

singular in the soul represents an essence or nature that exists differently in individuals outside the soul.[48]

The second point, that an essence as absolutely considered can neither be existent nor nonexistent, is made true simply by the fact that the absolute consideration prescinds from any existence. The statement "[A] man exists" uses "man" either as indicating an essence that exists as a species in the soul or a man that exists as a singular subject. "Exists" cannot be predicated of the absolute essence any more than paleness can. We can attribute "substance" to the essence "man" in the same way that we can attribute "rational" to it. But this attribution does not entail that an individual man exists.

On Owens's reading, it is unclear how such an absolutely considered essence could play the role that he attributes to that essence which is distinct from existence, namely, to explain how angelic forms are not pure act even though they lack matter. The conclusion of Thomas's argument for the distinction is stated right before the argument begins, "Therefore even though they are forms without matter, substances of this sort are not pure act nor are they yet entirely simple, but they are mixed through with potency."[49] Thomas clearly has in mind not an essence that might possibly exist, but an actually existing thing that retains potency. It is important that the essence absolutely considered prescinds from existence. Thomas's argument presupposes or entails that existence does not belong to essence absolutely considered and cannot be a proper accident of it. Nevertheless, the argument is about essences that exist in individuals. The act/potency division is here not merely within that which can exist, but instead a division within being in the way that the division between matter and form is.[50] The essence

[48] *STh* I, q. 76, a. 2, ad 3; q. 85, a. 2; *De spir. creat.*, a. 9, ad 6 (Marietti ed., 2:403-4). For the argument that Thomas rejects Avicenna's thesis that mental and individual existence have a kind of parity, see Black, "Mental Existence,"74.

[49] *De ente* 4: "Huiusmodi ergo substantie, quamuis sint forme tantum sine materia, non tamen in eis est omnimoda simplicitas nec sunt actus purus, sed habent permixtionem potentie" (Leonine ed., 43:376).

[50] For a parallel and clear statement of the similarity, see esp. *De spir. creat.*, a. 1 (Marietti ed., 2:370-71).

of an immaterial being is in act insofar as it is form, and yet it is in potency to the existence that it receives from God.[51] This division between potency and act in the spiritual creature is based on the fact that the possibly existing quiddity has its existence from another. Thomas does not indicate that this potency exists prior to or apart from its existence. The essence receives existence for as long as it exists. Consequently, Thomas must be considering the distinction between an existing individual essence and its act of existence, and not that between an essence absolutely considered and some possible existence.

In chapter 5 Thomas explains that material essences are similarly in potency to existence. He states that in material substances, "being is received and finite on account of the fact that they have being from another, and again their nature or quiddity is received in signate matter."[52] Although matter does not exist apart from form, it is in potency to form. Matter that is being actualized by form is at the same time in potency to the form. Similarly, although a determinate nature or essence does not exist apart from its existence, it is in potency to existence. God produces the essence when he gives it existence. As Thomas writes in his later *Quaestiones disputatae De potentia*, "God, at the same time giving existence, produces that which receives existence."[53]

One difficulty for interpreting *De ente* is that there is no exact parallel to this division of essence in other texts. In fact, Thomas discusses Avicenna's threefold distinction primarily in two early texts, namely, *De ente et essentia* (1252-56) and *Quodlibet* 8 (q. 1, a. 1), which is from roughly the same period (Easter 1257). In the quodlibetal question, Thomas is concerned

[51] *De ente* 4 (Leonine ed., 43:377). See also I *Sent*., d. 8, q. 5, a. 2, sol. (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 1:229-30).

[52] *De ente* 5: "esse est receptum et finitum propter hoc quod ab alio esse habent, et iterum natura uel quidditas earum est recepta in materia signata" (Leonine ed., 43:379).

[53] *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 17: "Deus, simul dans esse, producit id quod esse recipit" (Marietti ed., 2:41). For additional texts and a discussion, see Del Prado, *De veritate fundamentali*, 170-72.

with the ordering between the different senses of the word 'nature'.[54] He adopts Avicenna's threefold distinction as one between three ways of considering nature, and himself adds a consideration of nature as existing in the divine intellect and in the angelic mind. In this question he wishes to show that the essence in the human mind is posterior to the essence in singulars, which itself is posterior to the essence considered absolutely and in the angelic mind.

If essence is taken without precision, then only the essence that is in individual things is the essence that receives existence, and is consequently relevant to Thomas's distinction between essence and existence. It seems to me that the essence taken with precision is also relevant, when it indicates an essence such as humanity as existing in this or that individual. Numerically distinct individuals have numerically distinct essences. For instance, in the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas writes that there are three numerically distinct humanities in Socrates, Plato, and Cicero.[55] In this way the difference between essence and existence can also be applied to essence considered as a formal part.

Owens oddly uses the early quodlibetal text to argue that it is the essence absolutely considered that "can exist by the divine being, by real created being, and by cognitional being."[56] Although Thomas states here that the essence absolutely considered is posterior only to the essence as existing in the divine mind and is prior to essence in the mind or in singulars, this priority does not imply that this essence absolutely considered is the essence that receives existence. The essence considered absolutely is what makes possible the attribution of the predicate "rational" to humanity apart from the existence of

[54] *Quodl.* 8, q. 1, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 25.1:51-53).

[55] *STh* I, q. 39, a. 2. See also q. 50, a. 4; *De rationibus fidei*, c. 4 (Leonine ed., 40B:60)

[56] Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 136. For this quodlibetal text, see John Lawrence Dewan, "The Doctrine of Being of John Capreolus: A Contribution to the History of the Notion of Esse," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1967), 1:406-9, 421.

individual humans.[57] Although this text does not discuss the distinction between essence and existence, its account of essence absolutely considered clearly indicates that such an essence could not receive existence in the way that potency receives act. It is prior to an existing essence, and consequently not something that itself either exists or not. An essence exists only in the singular, in created minds, or in God. The essence absolutely considered cannot exist or not exist because it is considered as not existing. It is prior to the essence that is in our understanding, but is posterior to the essence as existing in and in some way identical to the divine mind. The divine essence grounds the essence absolutely considered, which in turn justifies essential predications such as "Man is rational."

My interpretation of *De ente* will be supported by the many texts in which Thomas states that existence is an actuality of that essence, such as humanity, which is part of an individual subject. In these texts he attributes to the essence or nature considered with precision much of what in *De ente* he attributed to the essence considered without precision. For instance, he attributes to an essence considered with precision, namely, "humanity," the distinction between the nature's existing either as in the soul or in the mind, and its existing in individuals. Thomas's other texts make unlikely a reading of *De ente* according to which Thomas means to say that an essence such as humanity cannot exist insofar as it is a formal part of an existing man.

[57] *Quodl.* 8, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1 and 3 (Leonine ed., 25.1:53). It seems to me for this reason that the essence absolutely considered must be considered as distinct from and prior to the universal in the mind. For a somewhat different position, see Fabrizio Amerini, "Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Alexandria, and Paul of Venice on the Nature of Essence," *Documenti et studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004): 541-89, at 550-59.

## III. Christological Discussions of Nature and Person

In Christological contexts,Thomas explicitly addresses how existence as an act of the supposit (*suppositum*) actualizes that essence which is a formal part of the supposit considered, not merely as a logical reference, but as an individual substance.[58] When it is rational, the supposit is called a "person." In a Christological context, it is also called a "hypostasis." Catholics and other Chalcedonian Christians believe that Christ is a divine person who assumed a human nature. Thomas states that Christ's divine existence is identical with his divine essence and actualizes his human nature. The philosophically relevant points are brought out when he contrasts Christ's existence, which is divine, with the ordinary way in which a man's created existence actualizes his own human nature.

Although the context is theological, Thomas uses philosophical notions that he discusses and develops elsewhere. For

[58] Sweeney, "Supposition, Signification, and Universals," 272 n. 14, distinguishes between a logical and an ontological supposit. For Thomas's understanding of nature and supposit, see Galluzzo, "Aquinas on Common Nature and Universals," 137-46; J. L. A. West, "The Real Distinction between Supposit and Nature," in Peter Kwasniewski, ed., *Wisdom's Apprentice: Thomistic Essays in Honor of Lawrence Dewan, O.P.* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 85-106. For texts and discussion of the *esse* of the *suppositum*, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 238-53. For the Christological context, see especially Thomas U. Mullaney, "Created Personality: The Unity of Thomistic Tradition," *The New Scholasticism* 29 (1955): 369-402; Othmar Schweizer, *Person und hypostatische Union bei Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1957); Corey Barnes, "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, on Person, Hypostasis, and Hypostatic Union," *The Thomist* 72 (2008): 107-46. For the background in twelfth-century disputes over person and nature, see especially Lauge Olaf Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Gilbert Porreta's Thinking on the Theological Expositions of the Doctrine of the Incarnation during the Period 1130-1180* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 47-64, 106-65, 296-312; Marcia L. Colish, "Gilbert, the Early Porretans, and Peter Lombard: Semantics and Theology," in *Gilbert de Poitiers et ses contemporains: Aux origines de la logica modernorum*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Alain de Libera (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1987), 29-50; repr. in eadem, *Studies in Scholasticism* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorium, 2006). For a more recent discussion of relevant twelfth-century texts on "*homo*" and "*humanitas*," see Christopher P. Evans, "Introduction," to Simon of Tournai, *On the Incarnation of Christ*: *Institutiones in sacram paginam 7.1-67*, ed. and trans. Christopher Evans (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2017), 34-54.

instance, in his *In libros Metaphysicorum*, Thomas writes that insofar as "nature" means "form":

> [N]ot only is the form of the part called a nature, but the species itself is the form of the whole. For instance, we might say that the nature of man is not only the soul, but humanity and the substance which the definition signifies. According to this even Boethius says, that the nature is the specific difference informing each thing. For the specific difference is that which completes the substance of the thing and gives the species to it.[59]

In this text, Thomas directly connects a way in which Aristotle understands "nature" with Boethius's use of "nature" in Christology. Moreover, both Aristotle and Boethius are connected to the philosophical tradition that distinguishes between the form of the part, which excludes matter, and the form of the whole, which includes undesignated matter.

The way in which Christ is a supposit with two natures brings out difficulties in understanding the way that existence actualizes an essence. If I am correct to argue that essence can be considered as existing either insofar as it is a whole such as a "man," or insofar as it is a part such as "humanity," then in what sense can it be said to be actuated by existence? Thomas often discusses the distinction between essence and existence as between "that which is" (*quod est*) and existence (*esse*).[60] Is the essence a *quod est*? The problem is less acute in spiritual

[59] V *Metaphys.,* lect. 5 (n. 822): "non solum forma partis dicitur natura, sed species ipsa est forma totius. Ut si dicamus quod hominis natura non solum est anima, sed humanitas et substantia quam significat definitio. Secundum hoc enim Boetius dicit, quod natura est unumquodque informans specifica differentia. Nam specifica differentia est, quae complet substantiam rei et dat ei speciem" (Marietti ed., 223). Boethius, *Contra Eutychum*, 1.1, in *The Theological Tractates*, trans. H. F. Steward, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 80. See also *Quodl.* 2, q. 2, a. 2 (Leonine ed., 25.2:216). For the importance of such texts for Thomas's Christology, see West, "Nature, Specific Difference, and Degrees of Being," 44-51.

[60] *De ente* 4 (Leonine ed., 43:376). For other texts, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 249-51. An excellent early discussion of the issue and further texts can be found in Del Prado, *De veritate fundamentali*, 11-22.

substances in which a nature is instantiated only in one individual. Human beings can be said to have an essence that is distinct from the *quod est*. Socrates has a human nature that is distinct from himself as an individual substance, and he also has a human nature that is numerically distinct from that of Plato.[61] In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Thomas writes that in creatures, "essence is other than existence, and even in some creatures that which subsists [*quod subsistit*] in its essence is other than its essence and nature, for this man is neither his humanity nor his existence."[62] In material substances the *id quod est* is distinct both from the existence and from the essence. In this context "essence" seems to be an essence taken with precision that is numerically distinct from other such essences. As Thomas states in his commentary on the *Sentences*, "humanity" is the "by which" (*quo est*) a man is, whereas "man" is that which is (*quod est*).[63] The essence or nature is a formal part of an individual subject, which is sometimes described as the supposit. This supposit itself is the subject of the act of existence.[64] The act/potency composition of form and matter is between parts of the supposit. The act/potency composition between the supposit and existence is a composition of the individual with existence. Although some Thomists have thought that the supposit itself is constituted by existence, Thomas himself never suggests such a thesis, and it would seem contradictory for a part of an individual to have existence prior to the existence of the individual

[61] See also *ScG* 4, c. 11 (Editio manualis, 446).

[62] Ibid.: "ea quae in creaturis divisa sunt, in Deo simpliciter unum esse: sicut in creatura aliud est essentia et esse; et in quibusdam est etiam aliud quod subsistit in sua essentia, et eius essentia sive natura, nam hic homo non est sua humanitas nec suum esse."

[63] I *Sent*., d. 23, q. 1, a. 1, sol. (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 1:556).

[64] *Quodl.* 2, q. a. 2, ad 2 (Leonine ed., 25.2:218). For difficulties connected with Thomas's distinction between nature and supposit in this text, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 243-53; Schweizer, *Person und hypostatische Union*, 18-53. For the danger of thinking of the supposit as having existence somehow independently of or prior to existence, see Benjamin Llamzon, "Supposital and Accidental Esse: A Study in Báñez," *The New Scholasticism* 39 (1965): 170-88, at 171-79.

that exists.[65] How would something incapable of existing and part of a whole combine with existence in order to produce the supposit, which is itself the proper subject of existence?

Although Avicenna's explicit threefold division of essence does not appear in Thomas's later texts, we find the distinction between the individual nature or essence and the absolutely considered nature or essence separated from this division both in his early commentary on the *Sentences* and in his later writings.[66] For instance, not only in the early *Sentences* commentary but also in the later *De malo*, Thomas distinguishes between human nature absolutely considered, which is unchanging, and the nature which is corrupted by original sin, which is transmitted through generation.[67] In *De malo* Thomas states that the human nature which comes from Adam is, in this respect, like water coming from a tainted fountain. The water coming from the fountain is corrupted even though the water absolutely considered remains the same. Similarly, it is not human nature absolutely considered that is corrupted by

[65] For a recent defense of this thesis that admittedly does not find it explicitly in Thomas's texts, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 243-52. This idiosyncratic view was upheld by the Carmelite Blasius a Conceptione, and was consequently attacked vehemently and with prolixity by his fellow Carmelite Alexander a Jesu, *Metaphysica* tract. 2, disp. 5, qq. 5-6 ([Naples, 1688], 2:508-35).

[66] For the essence absolutely considered, in addition texts discussed below, see *De Verit.*, q. 21 a. 1 ad 1 (Leonine ed., 22.3:594); *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 6 (Marietti ed., 2:239); *STh* I, q. 75, a. 5. For some logical issues connected to the distinction between the common nature and numerically distinct individual natures, see Gyula Klima, "'Socrates est Species:' Logic, Metaphysics, and Psychology in St. Thomas' Aquinas's Treatment of a Paralogism," in *Argumentationstheorie: Scholastische Forschungen zu den logischen und semantischen Regeln korrekten Folgerns*, ed. K. Jacobi (Brill: Leiden, 1993), 489-504, at 498-504. For the possibility that Thomas shifts positions and a response, see Pini, "*Absoluta consideratio naturae*," 407-38; Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, trans. Roger W. Nutt and Joseph Trabbic (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 88-92. For the consistency of *De ente*'s account of essence with later texts, see West, "Nature, Specific Difference, and Degrees of Being," 57-62.

[67] *De Malo*, q. 4, a. 6, ad 9 (Leonine ed., 23:121-22); II *Sent.*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1 (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 2:805).

original sin, but human nature insofar as it exists within persons.

In the *Sentences* commentary, Thomas notes that the "human nature in Christ is individual, singular, and particular."[68] Thomas's distinction between the nature absolutely considered and the determinate nature is particularly important for understanding his Christology. For instance, in the third part of the *Summa*, in his discussion of Christ's human willing, he writes:

> Through this that "to will in some way" is said, a determinate mode of willing is designated. But the determinate mode is held concerning that same thing of which it is a mode. Therefore, since the will pertains to the nature, even this "to will in some way" pertains to the nature not as it is absolutely considered, but as it is in such a hypostasis.[69]

The objection had been that since in Christ there is only one person, and it is the person who wills, in Christ there is only one will. Thomas responds that determinately willing belongs primarily to the determinate nature and not to the nature in its absolute consideration. This text consequently appeals explicitly to the distinction between the essence in individuals and the essence absolutely considered.

Thomas also continues to distinguish between essence as a formal part and as a whole in many later texts, although usually in the context of the distinction between nature and supposit.[70] Although he discusses such issues in many Christological texts, I will focus on the relatively late *Summa theologiae* and *De unione verbi incarnati*.[71] In these texts the nature is a formal

[68] III *Sent.*, d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 1: "humana natura in Christo est individuum, singulare, et particulare" (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 3:226).

[69] *STh* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 4: "per hoc quod dicitur aliqualiter velle, designatur determinatus modus volendi. Determinatus autem modus ponitur circa ipsam rem cuius est modus. Unde, cum voluntas pertineat ad naturam, ipsum etiam quod est aliqualiter velle, pertinet ad naturam, non secundum quod est absolute considerata, sed secundum quod est in tali hypostasi."

[70] West, "Supposit and Nature," 96-97.

[71] For the many relevant texts and scholarly controversy over Christ's supposital *esse*, see Roger Nutt, "Introduction," in Thomas Aquinas, *De unione verbi incarnati*, ed. Walter Senner, Barbara Bartocci, and Klaus Obenauer, trans. Roger Nutt, Dallas

part of a supposit. The supposit is a whole that can be signified by an essential term such as "man" or a proper name such as "Socrates." The nature seems, to some extent, the same as essence taken with precision as it is discussed in *De ente*. However, here the focus is on the way in which such a nature is part of such an individual subject such as Peter or Jesus Christ. Thomas writes that "the supposit is signified through the way of a whole, but the nature through the way of a formal part."[72] Christ is a divine supposit who assumes a determinate human nature and not a common one.[73]

The supposit is signified differently by a word such as "man" or by a proper name, even though both can signify the supposit.[74] When the word "man" signifies a supposit, it signifies it in the way that was described in *De ente* as signifying an essence without precision and existing in singulars. It signifies a supposit that has humanity. But proper names such as "Jesus" and "Peter" also signify such a supposit. Thomas explains the difference between the two kinds of terms:

> "[Someone] having humanity" is signified in one way though this name "man," and in another way through this name "Jesus," or "Peter." For this name "man" means someone having humanity indistinctly. . . . But this name "Peter," or "Jesus," means distinctly someone having humanity, namely under determinate individual properties.[75]

"Humanity" is an abstract term for a formal part of a supposit such as "Peter" or "Jesus." "Man" is a concrete term that itself

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Medieval Texts and Translations 21 (Leuven, Paris, and Bristol, Conn.: Peeters, 2015), 57-78.

[72] *De Unione*, a. 3: "suppositum significatur per modum totius, natura autem per modum partis formalis" (Peeters, ed., 126).

[73] *STh* III, q. 4, a. 4.

[74] *STh* III, q. 17, a. 1; *De Unione*, a. 3 (Peeters, ed., 118-32).

[75] *STh* III, q. 17, a. 1: "habens humanitatem significatur per hoc nomen 'homo': et aliter per hoc nomen 'Iesus' vel 'Petrus.' Nam per hoc nomen 'homo' importat habentem humanitatem indistincte. . . . Hoc tamen nomen 'Petrus,' vel 'Iesus,' importat distincte habentem humanitatem, scilicet sub determinatis individualibus proprietatibus."

can be used for either Peter or Jesus, even though it does not signify their particular properties.

"[A] man" and "humanity" differ as essence taken without precision and existing in singulars, and essence as taken with precision. Thomas writes, "for humanity is called that by which someone is a man, and thus it includes in its signification only those things which pertain to the essence of a species; but [a] man is called that which has humanity, in which are even many things apart from the essence of the species."[76] For instance, we can say that "[A] man is pale" because Socrates is pale, or that "[A] man is not pale" because Peter is not pale. But paleness or a lack of paleness do not belong to humanity.

In most of his texts Thomas explicitly asserts that Christ has only one and not two existences, since Christ is only one supposit, and existence directly belongs to the supposit and not to the nature.[77] In the commentary on the *Sentences*, Thomas explicitly states that the word "*esse*" in this context means the act of being, and not essence or the truth of the proposition.[78] In *De unione* and only in this text, Thomas ascribes an *esse secundarium* to Christ's humanity.[79] Scholars are divided over whether this *esse secundarium* is some sort of subordinate existence or a term for Christ's human nature, and they even disagree over whether it is consistent with Thomas's other

[76] *De Unione*, a. 3, ad 14: "nam humanitas dicitur qua aliquis est homo, et sic in sua significatione includit sola ea quae pertinent ad essentiam speciei. Homo autem dicitur qui habet humanitatem, in quo etiam multa sunt alia praeter speciem" (Peeters ed., 130).

[77] III *Sent*., d. 6, q. 2, a. 2 (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 3:237-40); *Comp. Theol.* I, c. 212 (Leonine ed., 42:165); *Quodl. 9*, q. 2, a. 2 (Leonine ed., 25.3:93-95); *STh* III, q. 17, a. 2.

[78] III *Sent*., d. 6, q. 2, a. 2 (Mandonnet-Moos ed., 3:237-40). Medieval and early modern Thomists often use the term "*esse existentiae*" to distinguish this meaning of "*esse*" from the other two. Gorman (*Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 108-12), thinks that in some of these texts Thomas is discussing *esse* as a fact and not as an act. This seems to me inconsistent with Thomas, and *esse* as fact has no foundation in Thomas's texts except insofar as it refers to one of the other two meanings of *esse*. For the twentieth-century genesis of this meaning, see Kevin White, "Act and Fact: On a Disputed Question in Recent Thomistic Metaphysics," *The Review of Metaphysics* 68 (2014): 287-312.

[79] *De Unione*, a. 4 (Peeters ed., 132-34).

texts.[80] Nevertheless, even in *De unione*, Thomas writes, "For existence [*esse*] is properly and truly said of the supposit."[81] This point is essential to his Christology, because Christ as one supposit has only one suppositalal existence even though he has two natures, namely, the divine and the human. This point also sheds light on Thomas's philosophical understanding of the way in which essence is actualized by existence. In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas states:

> For existence pertains to the *hypostasis* and to the nature: to the hypostasis just as to that which has existence; to the nature as that by which it has existence; for the nature is imposed through the mode of a form, which is called being by the fact that by it something is, just as something is white by whiteness, and someone is human by humanity.[82]

According to this text, the essence is actualized by existence, but only through the actualization of the supposit. It plays a formal role in determining the supposit to the kind of thing that it is, although it does not itself impart existence to the supposit but receives the supposit's own act of existence. It is a formal part of an actually existing individual subject. Consequently, as an essence that is distinct from and in potency to existence, it is either a determinate nature, and consequently a formal part of the supposit, or the essence considered as existing in a supposit.

As a whole, these Christological texts contradict the thesis that essence receives existence insofar as it is absolutely considered. They clearly show that an essence such as humanity

[80] In addition to the texts mentioned in Nutt, "Introduction," 57-78, see more recently John Froula, "*Esse secundarium*: An Analogical Term Meaning That by Which Christ Is Human," *The Thomist* 78 (2014): 557-80; Gorman, *Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 101-25.

[81] *De Unione*, a. 3: "Esse enim proprie et vere dicitur de supposito subsistente" (Peeters ed., 56).

[82] *STh* III, q. 17, a. 2: "Esse autem pertinet ad hypostasim et ad naturam: ad hypostasim quidem sicut ad id quod habet esse; ad naturam autem sicut ad id quo aliquid habet esse; natura enim significatur per modum formae, quae dicitur ens ex eo quod ea aliquid est, sicut albedine est aliquid album, et humanitate est aliquis homo."

receives existence as a formal part of an existing supposit such as Peter or Socrates. Similarly, we can say "[A] man exists" when we mean that an individual subject such as Socrates or Peter exists. In this context the name "man" signifies a supposit that has a human nature even though it does not signify the supposit's individual properties. On the other hand, insofar as "man" signifies the essence absolutely considered, it is not something to which it would make sense to predicate existence or even the loss of existence. It is not the kind of essence that exists. Considered as an absolute essence, we can no more say that "Man exists" than we can say that "Man is pale."

## Conclusion

The distinction between the mere possible existence of an essence and a determinate essence's reception of existence explains what is at stake in the question of whether essence absolutely considered is the essence that belongs to Thomas's famous distinction between essence and existence. According to Thomas, the essence that receives existence is in potency to the existence that is possessed by the supposit. It is actualized by this existence in a way that is similar to the actualization of matter by form. An essence absolutely considered might be said to have potency insofar as it is nonrepugnant and capable of being predicated of an existing individual, but only the essence of an existing individual enters into composition with existence. The real distinction between essence and existence is precisely about an act/potency composition, and consequently must involve a really existing essence, whether such an essence be considered with precision as a formal part of a supposit, or as without precision signifying such a supposit. It is a distinction between the supposit's act of existence and the essence insofar as it exists in singular things. The essence absolutely considered is in some way prior to this essence, and its priority explains why essential properties can be predicated of an essence even apart from the existence of individuals. It is posterior only to

the essence as present in God, but it is not as absolutely considered that it can enter into composition with existence.[83]

[83] I would like to thank the attendees of a colloquium of the Center for Thomistic Studies and a sponsored session of the American Catholic Philosophical Association for their comments on previous versions of this article. Special thanks to Domenic D'Ettore, Rose Grimes, Turner Nevitt, and an anonymous reader for *The Thomist*.

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# PRUDENCE, PRECAUTION, AND UNCERTAINTY: ASSESSING THE HEALTH BENEFITS AND ECOLOGICAL RISKS OF GENE DRIVE TECHNOLOGY USING THE QUASI-INTEGRAL PARTS OF PRUDENCE

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UNCERTAINTY HAS become a central problem for contemporary decision-making. It is difficult to predict the outcomes of actions and even more difficult to foresee the possibility and effects of rare events. Though considerations of uncertainty and contingency have always had an important place in human action, two aspects of modernity have accentuated their importance.

First, society depends upon complex, interconnected systems in areas such as communications, transport, finance, and medicine, systems that have vastly increased the efficiency of contemporary society but at the cost of increasing fragility through amplification of the effects of small events.[1] A glitch in the trading algorithm of a single firm can send markets plunging, floods in Thailand can bring the global computing industry to a halt, and a disease outbreak in West Africa swiftly threatens New York. Moreover, increasingly complex causal chains make the future effects of actions more opaque to the decision-maker, since it is difficult to predict what will result from any intervention. For example, it is unlikely that U.S.

[1] See Ian Goldin and Mike Mariathasan, *The Butterfly Defect* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015); Nassim Taleb, *Antifragile* (New York: Random House, 2014).

regulators would have let Lehmann Brothers fail in 2008 if they knew that this policy would precipitate a global financial crisis.

A second, related problem rests on the novelty of technological developments, which bring many advantages in their train, but also greater and, to some extent, unknown risks, since no one has ever had experience with these novelties. These new technologies increase dangers of random shocks to the system as they magnify the power of individual actors—a malign hacker, a DIY bioweapons designer, or even a foolish trader can have outsize effects. The unknown, the unpredictable, and the contingent play an ever-larger role due to otherwise beneficial developments in technology and social organization.

Because of these changes, society increasingly focuses on governing risks to health, security, the economy, and the environment.[2] Regulators, banks, public health officials, and intelligence agencies dig through massive amounts of data collected in the past to generate algorithms to predict future risks. In many cases, these developments are to be commended, since good risk assessment is essential for any action. For example, society needs to know how energy policy might endanger the environment. Yet these efforts can also lead to injustice and their own systemic dangers if policy makers become too confident in their ability to control and predict the future. Because such algorithms are based on past data, they cannot reliably predict the effects of new technologies, nor can they deal with rare, unlikely events that have never occurred before but can have great significance. These "Black Swan"

[2] See Gerd Gigerenzer et al., *The Empire of Chance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1992); Niklas Luhmann, *Risk: A Sociological Theory*, trans. Rhodes Barrett (New Brunswick, N.J: Aldine Transaction, 2005); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Robert Aronowitz, *Risky Medicine* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2015).

events pose the greatest threat to contemporary complex systems.[3]

Alasdair MacIntyre used exactly this point to attack the utilitarian managerial ideology that claimed to offer a science of society that could give predictive control to the leaders of industry and government.[4] MacIntyre argues that such predictive control is impossible because of uncertainties arising from radical innovation, free will, game theoretic considerations, and pure contingency.[5] He follows Machiavelli in arguing that even with "the best possible stock of generalizations, we may on the day be defeated by an unpredicted and unpredictable counter-example."[6] Instead of such a calculative rationality, MacIntyre argues, we should turn to the virtues, especially the virtue of prudence, which offers a more flexible decision-making apparatus grounded in experience, rightly formed desire, and tacit knowledge.

I will argue that current models of the virtue of prudence, at least as developed in the Thomistic tradition preferred by MacIntyre, are vulnerable to the same two problems as algorithmic risk analysis in regard to uncertain, rare events.[7] First, prudence is also formed in the light of past experiences, so it is vulnerable to the problems of novelty. Second, Thomas Aquinas explicitly says that prudential caution cannot consider rare events, but in complex systems, rare events can be the

[3] Nassim Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007).

[4] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 88-108.

[5] Ibid., 93-100.

[6] Ibid., 93.

[7] John Bowlin provides an argument for the importance of contingency to Aquinas's ethical thought, but his discussion largely refers to issues of moral luck or the passions rather than prudential decision-making under uncertainty. See John Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 76-82.

whole game.[8] Yet, as MacIntyre argues, the Thomistic system is open to development and modification in the face of new arguments and situations.[9] In this essay, therefore, I will suggest how Thomistic prudence can be modified in response to the problems of uncertainty in complex systems. I will proceed by drawing on the widely discussed precautionary principle, as it was developed by Hans Jonas, as well as on Nassim Taleb's analyses of how to protect oneself from unknown negative risks. My aim is to modify and develop the classical account of prudence by adding imagination and precaution to what are called prudence's "quasi-integral parts" (this latter concept will be engaged in greater detail below).

To demonstrate how these modifications to prudence would function, I will apply them to a case study of recently proposed gene drives in mosquitoes.[10] These are technologies that hope to reduce the burden of diseases like malaria, dengue fever, and Zika by eliminating the disease vector, the mosquito. They use advanced gene editing technology, CRISPR/Cas9, to spread a genetic modification rapidly through a mosquito population, causing either the elimination of that population or its resistance to the disease. Gene drives are an excellent test-case for three reasons. First, even their proponents admit that they are radically new and that their effects are uncertain. Second, they would affect two complex systems, human health and the environment. Finally, unlike many biotechnologies, their benefits are not aimed at wealthy consumers or corporations

[8] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 8, ad 3. In MacIntyre's defense, he is doubtful that large-scale complex societies like our own can support the virtues, and thus argues for different social institutions. While agreeing with many of his criticisms of contemporary society, I think it is necessary to learn to live well within it. From a purely practical point of view, even a renewed community of Benedict would be endangered by the ecological or biological devastation that could result from disasters of poor risk management.

[9] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

[10] For an overview, see National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Gene Drives on the Horizon* (Washington: National Academies Press, 2016).

with risks left to the poor, but they largely seek to address diseases of the poor that are difficult to address in other ways. Thus, benefits accrue to the poor while risks are generated to the environment and perhaps also to the poor.

The argument will proceed in four stages. First, I will outline the projected benefits and risks of gene drives. Then I will suggest the difficulties of addressing these issues through either current risk analysis or prudence as theorized by Aquinas, before turning to modifications that would address these deficiencies. Finally, I will apply the resulting model of prudence to the case of gene drives, while addressing problems that may arise with such an application.

Before beginning, it is important to note three caveats so that the aims and scope of the argument are not misunderstood. First, the example assumes, for the sake of argument, that these genetic modifications of organisms to advance human health are in principle licit. There are many counterarguments to this premise, most importantly concerning animal rights, but these are based largely on considerations different from those concerning risk and uncertainty for which gene drives serve as an example here. Second, the arguments of this essay specifically apply to regnative prudence—policy decisions on new technologies and social changes that might affect the common good. Uncertainty raises different issues when considered in an individual life.[11] Finally, this essay only considers prudence as a natural virtue that provides a rational process for decision-making, without, however, denying the importance or impact of spiritual aspects of decision-making. While prudence provides suggestions for how to make decisions, it is not a deterministic model, so the process of counsel may provide more than one reasonable alternative choice. Thus, judgment about which course of action to take is

[11] For example, it seems impossible to live a good life without some kinds of irreversible, risky decisions, whether it be a vocation, marriage, parenthood, or martyrdom for a cause.

required. Prayer, Ignatian spiritual discernment, and other ways of seeking divine guidance can play an essential role in a Christian's decision-making, and Aquinas suggests that the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the gift of counsel is essential for unerring wise decisions.[12] Yet, one can develop rational norms to narrow options, which is all this essay seeks to do. With these caveats in mind, let us first turn to the details of the case at hand.

## I. Gene Drives

Mosquito-borne illnesses kill millions of people every year, with malaria alone accounting for 438,000 deaths in 2015.[13] Many of these diseases, such as malaria and dengue, lack effective vaccines. Some can be treated after symptoms begin to show, although resistance to drugs that treat malaria continues to develop. For some emerging diseases, such as the Zika virus, there is no treatment at all. The most effective prevention strategies have long targeted the mosquito vector, either preventing individual exposure, through bednets, or eliminating the mosquito population. These latter strategies tend either to be time- and labor-intensive, such as removing the stagnant water in which mosquitoes breed, or to pose other risks to health and the environment, as in the case of spraying insecticides.

These difficulties have led some researchers to seek more complicated solutions to the problem through genetic technologies, especially one called a gene drive.[14] A gene drive is a tool that ensures a specific version of a gene is inherited in

[12] *STh* II-II, q. 52, a. 1.

[13] "WHO | World Health Organization," *WHO*, accessed January 27, 2017; http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/vector_ecology/mosquito-borne-diseases/en/.

[14] Austin Burt, "Site-Specific Selfish Genes as Tools for the Control and Genetic Engineering of Natural Populations.," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 270, no. 1518 (7 May 2003): 921-28.

greater than Mendelian ratios. To review some basic genetics, there are two copies of most genes in the cell, since there are two of each chromosome, one from the father and one from the mother. If an individual receives one variant of a gene, called an allele, from the father and a different allele from the mother, then there is a 50% chance that the individual will pass on the paternal allele to his children and a 50% chance of passing on the maternal allele. A gene drive is a tool that changes this pattern of inheritance, meaning that the individual's children preferentially inherit one allele at a rate greater than 50%, sometimes approaching 100%.

There are many different techniques that researchers can use for a gene drive, but the one that has made them a broadly feasible strategy is the CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing system (which I will henceforth shorten to CRISPR).[15] CRISPR originally evolved as a bacterial immune system against viral infections. It involves two elements, a short guide RNA sequence (sgRNA) that can bind to matching viral DNA and a protein, Cas9, that cuts the DNA sequence recognized by the sgRNA. In the last five years, geneticists have discovered how to modify the system to target any DNA sequence they wish by using an artificial sgRNA. CRISPR is currently used as a cheap and easy gene editing tool in many organisms and cell types.

What makes it so useful for a gene drive is that it can help to insert new stretches of DNA into a chromosome. Whenever DNA is cut, the cell tries to repair it, since having a broken chromosome is extremely dangerous. Cells use one or the other

[15] For a more detailed discussion of CRISPR's mechanism of action and its implications for Catholic bioethics, see Paul Scherz, "The Mechanisms and Applications of CRISPR/Cas9 Gene Editing Technology," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 17 (2017): 29-36. For overviews in the scientific literature, see Patrick D. Hsu, Eric S. Lander, and Feng Zhang, "Development and Applications of CRISPR-Cas9 for Genome Engineering," *Cell* 157, no. 6 (5 June 2014): 1262-78; Addison V. Wright, James K. Nuñez, and Jennifer A. Doudna, "Biology and Applications of CRISPR Systems: Harnessing Nature's Toolbox for Genome Engineering," *Cell* 164, no. 1 (14 Jan. 2016): 29-44.

of two mechanisms to effect this repair. The first mechanism consists simply in attempting to stick the two cut ends together, which tends to cause errors, such as an added or lost DNA base, and to leave a nonfunctional gene in its wake. The second mechanism, homology-directed repair (HDR), is the one necessary for a gene drive, even though it occurs much more rarely than the first mechanism. In HDR, the cell uses the sequence on the matching chromosome as a template to repair the broken strand of DNA. This is the key to the gene drive. Researchers can insert Cas9 and an sgRNA targeting a certain DNA site into that site on one chromosome in a cell. In every cell in an individual inheriting the modified chromosome, CRISPR will then target and cut the other (normal) chromosome.[16] When the cell tries to repair the damaged DNA, it will copy the section of DNA containing Cas9 and the sgRNA, resulting in both chromosomes having the modification. In theory, 100% of the offspring will then carry CRISPR, and those offspring will in turn pass on CRISPR to 100% of their offspring through the same mechanism. This self-amplifying process should result in the modified gene spreading rapidly through the population.

There are two basic strategies for using gene drives to control disease vectors. First, one could try to eliminate the population, for example by inserting the CRISPR system into a gene in such a way as to make males sterile or to cause lethality in females. As it spreads, the gene drive would kill or sterilize

[16] Two studies showing that this can be done in principle in insects are Valentino M. Gantz et al., "Highly Efficient Cas9-Mediated Gene Drive for Population Modification of the Malaria Vector Mosquito Anopheles Stephensi," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 49 (8 Dec. 2015): E6736-43; Andrew Hammond et al., "A CRISPR-Cas9 Gene Drive System Targeting Female Reproduction in the Malaria Mosquito Vector Anopheles Gambiae," *Nature Biotechnology* 34, no. 1 (2016): 78-83. There are complications, in that it will not be 100% efficient and researchers may design CRISPR only to turn on in cells that will give rise to sperm and eggs.

large parts of the population.[17] Second, one could make the mosquitoes resistant to carrying the disease. In one proof of concept experiment, researchers inserted antibodies that killed Plasmodium falciparum, which causes malaria, alongside the CRISPR and the sgRNA in the mosquito *Anopheles stephensi*.[18] This strategy would make an increasing portion of the population resistant to spreading the disease. In these ways, gene drives could be a great help in controlling disease-carrying mosquitoes.

Yet, as with all new technologies, gene drives will have their limitations. First, since the strategy that seeks to eliminate the population will not lead to very many offspring, there is a strong likelihood that these mosquitoes will not saturate the population before being wiped out themselves by natural selection. Even with the disease resistance strategy, the resulting disease-resistant mosquitoes could be less fit than the normal wild ones, so they might not take over the population. Finally, because the HDR repair mechanism does not occur every time, in many cases the broken DNA will be sutured together in a way that causes another type of mutation. In some cases, these mutations will make it impossible for CRISPR to recognize its target site, making these chromosomes resistant to the gene drives, with the result that resistance would rapidly arise in response to gene drives, as it has with other disease control strategies.[19] For these reasons, gene drives will not be a cure-all

[17] This strategy is similar to traditional methods of vector control that try to destroy a population by taking away its breeding sites, killing it with insecticides, or releasing sterile males.

[18] Gantz et al., "Highly Efficient Cas9-Mediated Gene Drive for Population Modification of the Malaria Vector Mosquito Anopheles Stephensi."

[19] Robert L. Unckless, Andrew G. Clark, and Philipp W. Messer, "Evolution of Resistance Against CRISPR/Cas9 Gene Drive," *Genetics* 205, no. 2 (1 Feb. 2017): 827-41.

for vector control, but would merely be another tool to be used in conjunction with other strategies.[20]

The biggest concerns facing policy makers are the possible risks associated with this new technology. As the researchers involved in one of the first proof-of-principle experiments emphasize, this is "a fundamentally new form of active genetics."[21] It is unlike previous forms of genetic modification of organisms in research and agriculture, in which transgenic elements are passed on in Mendelian frequencies and which are, for the most part, designed for use in spatially confined areas. In contrast, gene drives are designed to spread rapidly through dispersed populations, making them much harder to control once released. These characteristics make it imperative for policy makers to study risks before deploying gene drives. As the researchers note, "it is important to keep the unprecedented power of such systems on a tight leash."[22]

Since gene drives aim to fight diseases that preferentially target the poor, they avoid the ethical problems surrounding the justice of many genetic technologies that primarily benefit well-off consumers and the corporations that develop them. Nevertheless, they generate many risks for the environment and for human health.[23] Given both the scale of the interventions into the environment and their potential for generating unpredictable consequences, these techniques raise numerous questions. What are the effects of eliminating only certain species of mosquitoes? Will this hurt other organisms or disrupt food chains? Will it merely open a niche for an alternative

[20] Andrew Roberts et al., "Results from the Workshop 'Problem Formulation for the Use of Gene Drive in Mosquitoes,'" *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 96, no. 3 (March 2017): 530-33.

[21] Valentino M. Gantz and Ethan Bier, "The Dawn of Active Genetics," *BioEssays* 38, no. 1 (January 2016): 50.

[22] Ibid., 61.

[23] These risks are reviewed in National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Gene Drives on the Horizon*, 112-30; Roberts et al., "Results from the Workshop 'Problem Formulation for the Use of Gene Drive in Mosquitoes.'"

disease vector? Will mosquitoes immune to one disease just start preferentially carrying other diseases? What happens when mosquitoes become resistant to a gene drive, or could a gene drive be mutated in such a way as to introduce other kinds of alterations into the mosquito? And the greatest fear, one that experience with other GMOs appears to suggest can be discounted but that should still be considered: what happens if the gene drive is transferred to another species? There are a great number of dangerous scenarios.

As most of the proponents and analysts of gene drives readily admit, we are operating under a great deal of uncertainty coupled with significant risk. Gene drives are completely new, which makes it difficult to infer effects from prior biotechnologies. Scientists and ethicists can dream up some possible dangers, but there is no ready mechanism for predicting all of the effects, good or bad, of a novel technology. It is exactly in these unknown effects that the greatest dangers may lie. This is why gene drives offer an opportunity for thinking more broadly about decision-making under uncertainty.

## II. Models of Decision-Making under Uncertainty

Performing a risk assessment is central to contemporary policy decision-making. Risk assessments take a particular problem or decision, look at past data and current conditions, and decide on certain parameters to analyze. They use information about the past and present to determine harms and benefits that may arise from possible future scenarios.[24] Most risk assessment methodologies then perform a cost-benefit analysis, attempting to provide monetary values for the harms and benefits that may

[24] There are many methods of performing a risk analysis. See Kristin Shrader-Frechette, *Science Policy, Ethics, and Economic Methodology: Some Problems of Technology Assessment and Environmental-Impact Analysis* (Boston: Springer, 2013); HM Treasury, "The Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts" (Treasury, 2004); Ernest Braun, *Technology in Context: Technology Assessment for Managers* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

arise from the decision or technology. They also try to determine mitigation strategies and compare their cost to possible benefits. These cost comparisons and mitigation strategies are then used by decision-makers.

It is not my purpose in this essay to denounce risk assessment techniques. There are a number of valid criticisms of these methods, of course, based on everything from their bureaucratic nature, to their claim to be able to provide monetary values for some harms, to the way that they discount future harms. Yet, some such methodology is necessary if society is to take into account the repercussions of policies, especially in a democratic society that values transparent decision-making.[25] Risk assessment can be an extremely valuable tool when it is understood as an aid for counsel rather than as a calculation that dictates decisions:

> To say that forecasting is prone to error is not only a commonplace, but also an understatement. Nonetheless, it is an essential aspect of the human condition that we attempt to foresee the future in an effort to shape it. . . . The assessor suggests a range of possible policy options; the decision maker decides which of these . . . to implement.[26]

However, problems can arise when these calculations are taken as conclusive in situations of uncertainty.

To see these problems, it is helpful to consider the economist Frank Knight's distinction between risk and uncertainty.[27] A decision under risk concerns decisions in which one knows the probabilities of different negative outcomes with an approximate certainty. If one knows the probability of a danger, then one can protect oneself against it through insurance, hedges, or

[25] For the history and problems of this mode of transparent cost-benefit analysis-based decision-making, see Theodore Porter, *Trust in Numbers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[26] Braun, *Technology in Context*, 32-33.

[27] Frank H. Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit* (repr.; Cornell University Library, 2009), 20.

mitigation strategies. In contrast, uncertain dangers are those of which one does not know the probability, or of which one may not even be aware, and which therefore rule out the possibility of insurance or direct mitigation. Uncertainty presents situations of great profitability or disaster. It is especially dangerous to mistake a situation of uncertainty for one of mere risk.

Taleb has criticized risk assessment methodologies in many areas, especially in finance, because of their dependence on past and present data, which blinds them to novel events.[28] In complex systems, like markets or nature, rare events can have an outsized effect, leading to bankruptcies and extinctions. Such events will not be captured by risk assessments, so these will be blind to absolutely crucial considerations. Too much confidence in extrapolative calculations from past data can lead to future disaster.

Since it is not based on calculations, prudence might seem to escape these problems. Indeed, much of the classical virtue tradition attempts to teach one how to live wisely in the face of the vagaries of human existence. Yet even the best-developed description of prudence, that of Thomas Aquinas, still reveals significant lacunae when it is applied to situations of novelty and uncertainty. According to Aquinas, in line with much of the virtue tradition, prudence is "right reason about things to be done" and regulates the means to attain an end.[29] It governs the whole process of decision-making. First, through rightly formed prudence, a person recognizes the salient practical aspects of a situation, the goods to be pursued and evils avoided, and develops an intention to attain an end.[30] If a proper course of action is not immediately apparent, which it frequently is not

[28] This criticism turns up nearly every few pages in his writings, but for a good summary, see Taleb, *Antifragile*, 8-9.

[29] *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 4: "recta ratio agibilium." Latin text of Aquinas from http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/iopera.html. This discussion largely follows Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1994).

[30] *STh* I-II, q. 12.

because of the uncertainty of contingent singulars, the prudent person initiates an inquiry into the possible means available to attain the end in the situation and the benefits and harms of each before choosing a course of action. This inquiry is called counsel.[31] Then the person judges between these options and chooses one, before finally executing the action plan.[32] It is this last act of execution that is the proper act of prudence,[33] while the other actions are governed by the three potential parts of prudence: counsel, *synesis* (judgment of the ordinary), and *gnome* (judgment of exceptions).[34]

To function properly, prudence needs other ancillary virtues, "things which need to concur for the perfect act of prudence," called the quasi-integral parts of prudence.[35] There are eight of these: memory, understanding, docility, shrewdness, reason, foresight, circumspection, and caution. Five of them—memory, docility, foresight, circumspection, and caution—seem especially important to the problems of novelty and uncertain rare events.[36] To grasp the importance of these parts of prudence,

[31] *STh* I-II, q. 14, a. 1: "In rebus autem agendis multa incertitudo invenitur, quia actiones sunt circa singularia contingentia, quae propter sui variabilitatem incerta sunt. In rebus autem dubiis et incertis ratio non profert iudicium absque inquisitione praecedente. Et ideo necessaria est inquisitio rationis ante iudicium de eligendis, et haec inquisitio consilium vocatur." See also *STh* I-II, q. 14, a. 2.

[32] *STh* I-II, q. 13, a. 3; q. 15, a. 3; q. 16, a. 4.

[33] *STh* II-II, q. 47, a. 8.

[34] For a description of these virtues see *STh* II-II, q. 51.

[35] *STh* II-II, q. 48, a. 1: "alicuius quae necesse est concurrere ad perfectum actum virtutis illius."

[36] One could also see *gnome* as pertaining to uncertain or novel events, since it helps to judge exceptional situations, ones that do not accord to the standard law (ibid.: "gnome, quae est circa iudicium eorum in quibus oportet quandoque a communi lege recedere"). Yet this virtue is more about exceptions to rules in which one appeals to higher principles—it is about selecting the proper law to follow (*STh* II-II, q. 51, a. 4). Thus, the example that Aquinas gives is not to give an enemy back a sword, because the higher principle of defending one's country supersedes the lower principle in terms of true justice. For truly uncommon matters that approach chance, the only rule for judging is Divine Providence, to which we have access only through the prompting of the Spirit, not the regular virtue of prudence, although some may be better at judging

one must understand the temporality of prudence as it is described in the section of Cicero's *De inventione* that served as a source of the parts of prudence for the medieval tradition.[37] "Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened. Intelligence is the faculty by which it ascertains what is. Foresight is the faculty by which it is seen that something is going to occur before it occurs."[38] This shows how practical wisdom involves an intelligent relation to all three dimensions of time: past, present, and future. One recognizes the important lessons from the past in memory, which allows one to understand and interpret the present, which in turn allows one to foresee the future.

Aquinas uses this same temporally inflected model. One needs experience to acquire prudence, because experience teaches "what is true in the majority of cases," which is the kind of norm that should direct us in practical matters.[39] "It behooves us to argue . . . about the future from the past."[40] This experience can be gained on one's own, for which one needs a good memory, or through others, which is why a prudent

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these situations than others (*STh* II-II, q. 51, a. 4, ad 3: "omnia illa quae praeter communem cursum contingere possunt considerare pertinet ad solam providentiam divinam, sed inter homines ille qui est magis perspicax potest plura horum sua ratione diiudicare"). Thus, *gnome* does not seem to apply to the consideration of rare future consequences. A similar argument can be made about the virtue of shrewdness (*solertia*), which grasps quickly what should be done in a changing situation by discovering the middle term of a practical syllogism (*STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 4, ad 1: "solertia non solum se habet circa inventionem medii in demonstrativis, sed etiam in operativis").

[37] The others come from Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 1.8.7.

[38] "Memoria est, per quam animus repetit illa, quae fuerunt; intellegentia, per quam ea perspicit, quae sunt; providentia, per quam futurum aliquid videtur ante quam factum est" (Cicero, *Cicero: On Invention; The Best Kind of Orator; Topics. A. Rhetorical Treatises*, trans. H. M. Hubbell [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949], 2.53.160).

[39] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 1: "Quid autem in pluribus sit verum oportet per experimentum considerare."

[40] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3: "ex praeteritis oportet nos quasi argumentum sumere de futuris."

person needs docility, the willingness to learn from others.[41] These virtues allow one to understand how the world works, and thus predict outcomes. These insights from the past are then applied to the future. One uses the general understanding of what happens in the majority of cases to foresee the future and properly order future contingents to the appropriate end.[42] Circumspection (literally, the act of looking around oneself) helps one to see particular aspects of the circumstances that may make the means unconducive to the end.[43] Similarly, caution helps one identify possible obstacles to success or evils that may come from good actions.[44] Thus, one foresees the future and takes steps to prevent dangers arising from action.

From this overview of prudence, it becomes clear where the current Thomistic model might be weak in dealing with novelty and uncertainty. If one discovers the norms guiding action from past experience, then these norms start to fail once the situation changes. With a dramatically new technology, like gene drives, little in past experience can guide one properly to foresee the future outcomes of these technologies. More generally, society is changing incredibly quickly, so that the norms of experience are increasingly unstable guides to the future. Hartmut Rosa calls this "the contraction of the present," meaning by the present "the time span for which the horizons of experience and expectation coincide. Only within these time-spans of relative stability can we draw on past experiences to orient our actions and infer conclusions from the past with regard to the future."[45] Innovations and social changes make older knowledge obsolete,

[41] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 3.

[42] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 6: "Unde consequens est quod contingentia futura, secundum quod sunt per hominem in finem humanae vitae ordinabilia, pertineant ad prudentiam. Utrumque autem horum importatur in nomine providentiae."

[43] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 7.

[44] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 8.

[45] Hartmut Rosa, "Full Speed Burnout? From the Pleasures of the Motorcycle to the Bleakness of the Treadmill: The Dual Face of Social Acceleration," *International Journal of Motorcycle Studies* 6, no. 1 (2010).

contracting this present at an ever-increasing speed. Moreover, as Taleb argues, it is exactly our arrogance in thinking that the future will be like the past that leaves us vulnerable to rare important events.

Yet, there is an opening in Aquinas's discussion of prudence that would allow one to address extremely uncertain events. Aquinas himself is very concerned about the unknowability of contingent events, which is why he emphasizes considering what happens in the majority of cases. Thus, caution is directed only against common dangers:

> Of the evils which man has to avoid, some are of frequent occurrence; the like can be grasped by reason, and against them caution is directed. . . . Others there are that occur rarely and by chance, and these, since they are infinite in number, cannot be grasped by reason, nor is man able to take precautions against them.[46]

Yet, one could also read from the past a need to concern oneself with the unforeseen, which is what Aquinas's prudence would require. Thus, after saying that caution will address only common contingencies, he says that "by exercising prudence [one] is able to prepare against all the surprises of chance, so as to suffer less harm thereby."[47] Though he does not address this aspect of prudence in depth, Aquinas leaves room for injecting concern for uncertainty into prudence. Precaution offers one way to "limit the sovereignty of Fortuna" even if it cannot dethrone her.[48]

[46] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 8, ad 3: "malorum quae homini vitanda occurrunt quaedam sunt quae ut in pluribus accidere solent. Et talia comprehendi ratione possunt. Et contra haec ordinatur cautio. . . . Quaedam vero sunt quae ut in paucioribus et casualiter accidunt. Et haec, cum sint infinita, ratione comprehendi non possunt, nec sufficienter homo potest ea praecavere."

[47] Ibid.: "quamvis per officium prudentiae homo contra omnes fortunae insultus disponere possit ut minus laedatur."

[48] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 93.

## III. Precaution and Prudence

In the face of the growing power of technology and the ecological damage that humans can cause, ethicists have increasingly emphasized the importance of precaution. While many people have used this concept, it is perhaps most strongly associated with Hans Jonas, who argued that, given the unprecedented powers of contemporary technology to impact the future through nuclear war, genetic modification gone awry, and man-made ecological damage, people must focus on their responsibilities to ensure the continuation of humankind. His imperative of responsibility is to "act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life."[49] This principle, which attempts to address the imbalance between our increased power to cause harm and our decreased predictive knowledge of the future, also clearly corresponds to the precautionary principle embraced by governments, international agencies, environmental ethicists, and religious leaders, most recently Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. "If objective information suggests that serious and irreversible damage may result, a project should be halted or modified, even in the absence of indisputable proof."[50]

Understood in this way, the principle of precaution has a clear relationship to the quasi-integral parts of prudence of Aquinas. As expressed throughout *Laudato Si'*, the principle encourages decision-makers to be docile to a greater range of experiences and expertise than were used in the past—engage in interdisciplinary explorations,[51] solicit the opinions of affected segments of society, and pay close attention to the experiences

[49] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1985), 11.

[50] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 186; http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html. See also Principle 15 of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, at http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm.

[51] *Laudato Si'*, 110.

of the marginalized whenever a project is planned.[52] Based on this broad set of experiences, policy makers can circumspectly identify a range of possible risks. Out of caution, projects should be delayed until there is more knowledge of the dangers they entail or until they are altered so as to mitigate possible dangers. In this way, the prudent person can respond to dangers that she suspects but does not know will happen.

Yet framed in this way, the precautionary principle does not quite meet the problem of uncertainty. First, it assumes that people already have some knowledge, even if not certain or reliable knowledge, of possible dangers. Thus, it does not address the unknowns with which novelty and uncertainty confront us. Second, it is framed as a principle rather than as a virtue. This framing as a Kantian imperative is tied to Jonas's other achievement, which was to development a secular theoretical justification for an ethics of responsibility that encourages precaution based on the importance of purpose and the ability to value things evident in human life and the natural world more broadly. He sought an imperative of responsibility that could be based in metaphysics.[53] While I am sympathetic to his attempt to ground ethics in ontology, his justification of precaution as part of an ethics of responsibility has many weaknesses, from the basic deontological problem of motivation to broader issues in how he develops his specific arguments.[54] Fortunately, a Christian embrace of precaution need not rely on Jonas's specific justification for the protection of the existence of humanity and life in general because a Christian attitude of precaution can draw on many other sources. Even if one wanted to retain a deontological perspective, one can follow Pope Francis in interpreting the commandment in Genesis 2:15 to

[52] Ibid., 183.

[53] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 43-44.

[54] For a detailed critique of his position, see Gerald McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1997), 39-75.

"till and keep" the land as a command to protect the environment.[55]

In a more Thomistic vein, one could view the precaution in policy-making that Jonas discusses as an aspect of regnative prudence, the prudence tied to the government and command of a city or kingdom, directed toward the common good.[56] "[A] government is the more perfect as it is more universal, extends to more matters, and attains a higher end. Hence prudence in its special and most perfect sense, belongs to a king who is charged with the government of a city or kingdom."[57] It is this kind of prudence that protects nations and the entire human community from undergoing disasters caused by unpredicted effects of actions. It is especially important as it pertains to broad environmental effects, which affect the common good of the whole human community and the natural order.[58]

Though Jonas formulated the imperative to precaution in Kantian language, his argument as a whole suggests a concern for the development of a certain habit of thinking and feeling about the dangers of action. He speaks, for instance, of cultivating the emotion of fear, or of developing heuristics.[59] It therefore makes sense to think of precaution less as a principle than as a virtue. I propose that we retrieve Jonas's intuitions in this area by introducing two new quasi-integral parts of prudence, imagination and precaution. These are quasi-integral because, while they are ancillary to prudence as not tied

[55] *Laudato Si'*, 66-67.

[56] *STh* II-II, q. 50, a. 1.

[57] Ibid.: "tanto enim regimen perfectius est quanto est universalius, ad plura se extendens et ulteriorem finem attingens. Et ideo regi, ad quem pertinet regere civitatem vel regnum, prudentia competit secundum specialem et perfectissimam sui rationem."

[58] As Jean Porter notes, "Although Aquinas does not explicitly say so, it seems plausible that the orientation of the will toward a universal good can also be expressed through a love of other kinds of comprehensive good, including the political community" (Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004], 208).

[59] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 25-31.

immediately to the action of command, they are virtues that are necessary for the continued proper action of prudence.

Jonas argues that precaution presupposes the act of imagining possible dangers. Initially, there will be little knowledge, or even inkling, of possible dangers of a new technology; there will be situations "where that which is to be feared has not yet happened and has perhaps no analogies in past or present experiences."[60] It is thus incumbent on decision-makers to employ the faculty of imagination to come up with possible scenarios. "The anticipatory conjuring up of this imagination becomes itself the first, as it were introductory, duty of the ethics we are speaking about."[61] Jonas calls for a casuistry based in such imagination. The role of fiction, especially science fiction, in arguments about new technologies suggests the importance of imagination. While such imaginative works should not be determinative of ethical arguments, they broaden the possible ethical considerations, and thus have a valid role to play. Moreover, artistic works possess the second relevant aspect of imagination: imagination can evoke a proper emotional response to possible dangers; "it can instill in us the fear whose guidance we need," impelling policy makers to investigate or mitigate potential dangers.[62] Of course, after further investigation and reflection, one may decide that an imagined scenario is actually not possible or can be prevented easily. Still, the imagination is an essential aid in areas in which one lacks the knowledge otherwise needed to generate possible scenarios.

Yet there would still remain unimagined possibilities, dangers of the unthought. It is to address these situations that one needs a habit of perceiving and responding to situations that grasps their shape in a way that allows one to mitigate possible disaster; a precaution, then, that acts in the spirit of Jonas while

[60] Ibid., 27.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

going beyond his account as an exercise of the virtue of prudence "able to prepare against all the surprise of chance, so as to suffer less harm thereby."[63] The difficulty is that one has to be able to perceive vulnerabilities to disaster and loss in a situation or course of action even while not necessarily being able to predict how those losses might come about. Taleb is especially helpful for understanding how to see courses of action in these ways that help one limit the possible harms from unforeseen events by looking at the properties of systems. He describes three possible properties of systems, states, or plans of action in relation to volatile, unforeseen events: fragility, robustness, and antifragility.[64] Some systems or courses of action are fragile, meaning that usually they function well, but a shock event can lead to rapid collapse and loss. A famous example is the collapse of the power grid of the Eastern United States in 2003 as a result of a tree falling on a powerline, leading to a blackout affecting fifty million people.[65] Or one could consider the example of investing in the stock market, which generally gives a good return on investment, but occasionally loses much of its value, as in 2008. Most modern systems are fragile because they have been designed primarily with efficiency in mind. A robust system or course of action, by contrast, is one that is resistant to shocks because it has multiple, redundant safeguards. Thus, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) designed the Internet to use multiple nodes so that it would still function after a nuclear attack. The analogue for investing would be a diversified portfolio of extremely safe investments. In contrast to fragile courses of action, and going beyond robust systems, Taleb encourages what he calls antifragile courses of action—those that flourish in volatility and uncertainty, taking advantage of them. Taleb argues that entrepreneurial markets as a whole are

[63] *STh* II-II, q. 49, a. 8, ad 3.

[64] Taleb, *Antifragile*, 20-27.

[65] Goldin and Mariathasan, *Butterfly Defect*, 106-7.

antifragile (although not for the individual entrepreneurs that go bankrupt);[66] the same holds for an investment portfolio composed mostly of extremely safe investments but with some long-shot bets like venture capital or an option to short a market. Prudent actions and prudently designed systems should aim at robustness or antifragility in the face of uncertainty. While a prudent person will frequently be able to take advantage of uncertainty, she should at least aim for robustness, which is all that can be achieved in some circumstances.

The way to ensure a system's robustness is to pay attention to its maximal exposure to harm rather than to the expected average benefit and risks. The folly of the utilitarian weighing of the probability-adjusted benefits versus the probability-adjusted harms is that it cannot take into account the unknown and thus always tends toward fragility. One cannot know for certain the probability of future events, so such calculations are mere guesses. Instead, one must look at how much harm could occur if everything went even worse than could possibly be expected from past experience. With Jonas, the person concerned with systemic robustness knows how to view the future with a proper heuristics influenced by fear as well as hope.

There are many ways to get a sense of maximal exposure to harm. First, one could look to see if the action is nonlinear, so that bad effects would accelerate in relation to possible bad events, rather than merely increasing at a linear rate.[67] If one sees that bad effects accelerate, then it suggests that the results of the unforeseen could be catastrophic. Second, one could look for safeguards capable of containing the increase of harms. In finance, one can have a stop-loss order, whereby an investment is sold once it decreases to a certain price in order to limit loss. In other areas, processes should be reversible once bad effects appear. If harms can be limited, this suggests that an action meets the test of precaution. It makes little sense to act in such a

[66] Taleb, *Antifragile*, 74-80.

[67] Taleb calls this convexity versus concavity (ibid., 267-89).

way that one exposes oneself or others to great harms in the event of an unforeseen disaster in exchange for limited or even great gains. Such benefits can be erased very swiftly.

At first glance, it may seem that what Taleb gives us is merely a way of calculating effects of actions, one that may be more akin to utilitarian cost-benefit analysis than prudential judgment, even if it is a significant advance over most versions of the former. Yet, what Taleb is really trying to suggest is a different way of perceiving courses of action and ways of organizing society. As Josef Pieper describes it, such proper perception is at the heart of prudence:

> The pre-eminence of prudence means that realization of the good presupposes knowledge of reality. He alone can do good who knows what things are like and what their situation is. . . . Realization of the good presupposes that our actions are appropriate to the real situation, that is to the concrete realities which form the "environment" of a concrete human action; and that we therefore take this concrete reality seriously, with clear-eyed objectivity.[68]

Taleb is attempting to change how people see situations in order to help them avoid exposure to catastrophes. In this way, he is encouraging a habit of thinking and perceiving, a certain form of intellectual excellence akin to virtue, even if he does not use the term. This habit of precaution would help the individual prevent laws, policies, and actions that may harm the common good of nations, humanity, and the world as a whole by exposing it to disaster. In this sense, it is a habit of thought that helps one attain a flourishing existence as a social creature by protecting the common good.

## IV. Analyzing Gene Drives through Precautionary Prudence

Through a greater emphasis on imagination and a tendency toward precaution thought of in terms of robustness, prudence

[68] Josef Pieper, *Prudence* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), 25.

becomes precautionary. Precaution ceases to be a restricted principle but instead becomes a way of approaching problems so that the harms arising from the unknown will be limited. This account of precaution helps in the analysis of gene drives. This discussion will focus on the release of gene drives into the environment, since researchers have developed many safeguards to contain gene drives in lab research.

First, it must be noted that discussions of gene drives are laudable for their forthright recognition of the novelty and uncertainty of this technology, and for their calls for docility. Discussions have been interdisciplinary and have contained calls to consult local communities before the technology is used. There is even a system for testing the safety and efficiency of modified mosquitoes before they are released.[69]

Unfortunately, none of these proposed discussions or research plans can really give a good sense of the possible problems that may arise because the research plans are not designed to answer the question of how modified mosquitoes will act in complex environments. The stages before widespread release occur in highly controlled lab environments and confined field tests. They will primarily provide information about the efficacy of the gene drive rather than possible risks to the environment or human health. Once the technology is released into a complex system, it will be impossible to recall. Thus, the research will not give a thorough sense of possible bad effects that may arise.

It is also not clear that the work of imagination is sufficiently thorough. Scenarios are largely extrapolated from other technologies, which makes gene drives seem more controllable, although policy makers know this is not the case. Moreover, there has not been the time or attention for imaginative writers to become involved. It may be necessary for more time to develop a casuistry of imagination. Because of these issues, it

[69] TDR, *Guidance Framework for Testing Genetically Modified Mosquitoes* (Geneva: TDR/World Health Organization, 2014).

seems that we have little circumspection about this technology and not enough time to address it with caution.

There are further problems associated with a stance of precaution. In this technology, harms will accelerate in the case of an unexpected problem, because it is designed to amplify itself through the population. In the highly unlikely event of a gene transfer to another species, it will spread rapidly in that population as well. It is thus a fragile system, depending on everything going well.

It also seems unlikely that the effects of a gene drive will be reversible. In some cases, harms might appear only after the technology has run its course. If the loss of a mosquito population harms an ecosystem or allows another species of mosquito to expand and spread other diseases, there will be no way to bring it back. It may be that negative effects at one field site could lead to changes in implementation at others, but analysts warn that a gene drive may spread internationally once released. Researchers have designed safeguards for lab use, like making the modified organism dependent on an artificial nutrient, separating the Cas9 and the sgRNA, or inserting kill switches, but these most likely will not work in a real-world scenario.[70] Geneticists have also developed a reverse gene drive, which would introduce a second gene drive with Cas9 and an sgRNA that targets the first gene drive.[71] If something goes wrong with the first gene drive, policy makers could release this second one to spread through the population and destroy the first. Unfortunately, this approach introduces another set of uncertainties and risks with a perhaps limited chance of success. In effect, it doubles the possible problems with gene drives by introducing a second one. Gene drives thus seem to run counter to a stance of precaution.

[70] Gantz and Bier, "Dawn of Active Genetics."

[71] James E. DiCarlo et al., "Safeguarding CRISPR-Cas9 Gene Drives in Yeast," *Nature Biotechnology* 33, no. 12 (December 2015): 1250-55.

Given this analysis, it would seem that CRISPR-driven gene drives present too many uncertain dangers to use. While it is true that they have the potential to lower the burden of mosquito-borne illness among the world's most disadvantaged, they are no "magic bullet." Many commentators see their chance of great success as limited, since mosquitoes will develop resistance to CRISPR modification, and modified mosquitoes may be outcompeted by wild ones. Even if no unforeseen harms come to pass, gene drives would probably still need to be repeatedly released and complemented by other control methodologies. There is little chance of expanding our knowledge of possible harms before their release into the environment, and once released, unforeseen harms would accelerate and would be irreversible. Given the existence of other more proven and reversible techniques, such as removing breeding areas and repeatedly releasing sterile males, it is more prudent to invest in these techniques and vaccine research than to develop a new technology with large and uncontrollable potential downsides.

## V. Concerns about Precaution

There are still at least three criticisms of precaution that must be addressed. First, many have criticized the precautionary principle for ignoring the harms of the status quo, in this case mosquito-borne illness and the costs of other control strategies.[72] These costs are real, which is why it is essential to invest more money into research into treatment and vaccines for these diseases and into the actual healthcare systems of places where these diseases are endemic. The costs of other strategies are real, but they are known, in contrast to the unknown costs of gene drives. Too often, policy makers seek magic bullets that will

[72] The literature on the precautionary principle is vast, but for a thorough and thoughtful criticism, see Cass Sunstein, *Laws of Fear: Beyond the Precautionary Principle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

avoid the costs of current responses to a problem, not realizing that each new technology or policy will also have its own very real costs. While many times these costs will be well worth accepting, it is important to be clear-sighted about what those costs are. In the case of gene drives, the costs of the new intervention may vastly exceed the known costs of current interventions.

Second, some argue that, taken to extremes, precaution could stymie all technological developments, because there are always unknown or imagined dangers. These concerns are unfounded for this analysis, because there are steps to take to mitigate concerns, which is exactly the purpose of precaution. Imagined dangers can be investigated and mitigated. One can discern whether the effects of a new technology would be linear or nonlinear, leading to a diagnosis of a course of action as fragile or robust. Designers can implement safeguards in the very biology of the organism to limit damage and ensure reversibility, as synthetic biologists have already done in many cases.[73] As part of the quasi-integral parts of prudence, imagination and precaution take place within a whole structure of prudential judgment, bringing new considerations and ways of seeing, but not overpowering other aspects. Precaution modifies the analysis of new technologies rather than stopping them.

Finally, the needs of precaution could seemingly be used to justify many immoral actions out of the necessity of defending the common good. Even the originator of the principle of precaution, Hans Jonas, suggested that preserving the environment might require an authoritarian government founded on a "noble lie."[74] Any policy founded on a Weber-inspired ethic of responsibility is in danger of licensing proble-

[73] One can see steps in this direction in DiCarlo et al., "Safeguarding CRISPR-Cas9 Gene Drives in Yeast."

[74] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 149.

matic actions.[75] However, Christians should not allow their stewardship of the environment or society to lead them to act against the human dignity arising from the same image that calls us to stewardship. The way that precaution can be used prudentially to protect the common good will be limited by at least two considerations. First, it will be limited by other elements of the common good such as human rights, the good of truth, and so on. Second, it will be limited in the way that all powers of the community are limited in Thomistic thought, by the fact that the ultimate human good lies in communion with God. While supporting the terrestrial common good is an important element of human flourishing, human persons are ultimately ordered to a greater end in God, which limits the demands that the community can make on the individual.[76] For example, to further the common good, one cannot use policies such as a noble lie that would make it impossible for citizens to access truth.

In an earlier debate about the use of genetic technologies, specifically about using eugenics to counter a feared growing load of mutations in the human genome, both Karl Rahner and Paul Ramsey, who otherwise thought very differently about these issues, argued that Christians need to recognize that their ability to prevent bad consequences in the future are limited. Scripture assures us that eventually the world will end. As Rahner says, "This death is not only the zero hour through which the individual must pass on his way to the absolute future, but also the zero hour for mankind as a whole."[77] Or as

[75] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 77-128.

[76] Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).

[77] Karl Rahner, "Experiment with Man," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 9, *Writings of 1965-67 I*, trans. G. Harrison (New York: Herder and Herder Inc., 1972), 223. While generally optimistic about the limited nature of the harms of human technology because of his trust that the world contains self-regulating systems that will

Ramsey more bluntly puts it, Christians affirm that "God means to kill us all in the end, and in the end He is going to succeed."[78] Ultimately, Christian prudence aims at God rather than the world, and all stewardship must take place within that horizon. Yet part of what God calls us to is stewardship of the environment, health, and society.[79] Through prudence, one can maintain a balance between these demands.

## CONCLUSION

While there are weaknesses in contemporary models of decision-making in the face of uncertainty, Thomism can meet these problems by integrating the virtues of precaution and imagination into the virtue of prudence. These ancillary virtues allow one either better to predict negative outcomes or at least better to perceive possible vulnerabilities in courses of action. Through this habit of perceiving action and policy, decision-makers can take steps to shape their actions in ways that minimize the possibilities of unforeseen catastrophic harms. Under this model of looking at technological developments, gene drives appear to leave communities and the environment open to too many unforeseen, irreversible, possible harms to be used prudently. If something were to go wrong, the negative effects would accelerate, making it worthwhile to bear the costs of current methods rather than deploy an extremely fragile technological system. This example also shows that while this model of prudential decision-making will always require judgment of an experienced decision-maker, as does all pru-

return to an equilibrium, Rahner did warn that some actions are irreversible, like Original Sin (ibid., 217-19).

[78] Paul Ramsey, *Fabricated Man: The Ethics of Genetic Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.

[79] *Laudato Si'*, 67-70.

dential judgment, it can lead to publicly defensible reasons for action.[80]

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# "THE TWO HEADS OF THE EAGLE": AQUINAS AND ROUSSEAU ON CIVIL RELIGION

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WHEN PRESIDENT Barack Obama spoke in Cairo in October 2009, he uttered a surprising statement: "faith should bring us together." The statement was surprising first because he was speaking in a region plagued by interreligious conflict: faith would seem to be pulling the Middle East apart. But the statement was also surprising because the president was speaking on behalf of the secular and liberal West. Why would he champion the role of faith in the effort toward peace?

President Obama's words underscore the complexities of our age.[1] The ambiguities of secularism have often led to more rather than to less religious conflict in politics, and in many parts of the world secularism simply never arrived. Indeed, Jürgen Habermas has suggested that liberalism cannot articulate sufficient moral foundations for itself in the face of such threats, warning that liberalism needs to cooperate with at least some forms of religion.[2] Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that scholars have lately reconsidered a strand of modern thought that does not share liberalism's commitment to separating

[1] The speech is available at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09.

[2] Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 24-52.

religion from politics.[3] It has in fact turned to religion as a source of public values and legitimacy. This is civil religion. As the "political use of religion," civil religion is as ancient as politics itself.[4] Yet civil religion has developed a new task in modernity: to domesticate religion. Moreover, in its attempts to reckon with religious pluralism in early modern Europe, civil religion has at times served as a dialogue partner and competitor with liberalism.

Yet their differences are considerable. Whereas classical liberalism seeks to ground political obligation in non-controversial conceptions of the good, civil religion embraces religious norms and practices as politically binding. Civil religion grounds the particular of a political community in another particular, namely, religion.[5] Civil religion thereby runs counter, both to liberalism's commitments to rationalism and universalism, and to its distinction between religion and politics.[6]

The connection between civil religion and liberalism comes to the fore in the work of Ronald Beiner, whose recent studies of civil religion have clarified the origins and goals of liberalism.[7] In illuminating the central place of Rousseau in framing the role of civil religion in modernity, Beiner has shown how much civil religion and liberalism share against theocratic

[3] Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006); Aaron Herold, "Spinoza's Liberal Republicanism and the Challenge of Revealed Religion," *Political Research Quarterly* 67 (2014): 239-52; Victoria Kahn, "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*," *Representations* 106 (2012): 77-101; and Ronald Weed and John von Heyking, eds., *Civil Religion in Political Thought* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

[4] Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *La cité antique* (Paris: L. Hachette et Cie, 1866).

[5] Rhys H. Williams and Todd Nicholas Fuist, "Civil Religion and National Politics in a Neoliberal Age." *Sociology Compass* 8 (2014): 929-38.

[6] Liberalism can also be particularistic, of course; cf. Anna Stilz, *Liberal Loyalty: Freedom, Obligation, and the State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[7] Ronald H. Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion." *Review of Politics* 55 (1993): 617-38; and Ronald Beiner, *Civil Religion: A Dialogue in the History of Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

visions of politics. Yet he also equates religion with theocracy, accepting the illiberal premise of civil religion that religion is necessarily a problem that must be neutralized—what Charles Taylor calls a "subtraction story."[8]

Subverting Rousseau and Beiner, I argue that at least one religion, Christianity, can intervene in politics and thereby critically support it without becoming theocratic. Like liberalism, Christianity recognizes a distinction between the earthly and the spiritual. That distinction is not without its tensions, however, and such tensions are at the heart of navigating politics. But Christianity can direct the liberal polity away from facile resolutions of those tensions, and so fulfil Habermas's hopes for a religious dialogue partner for liberalism.

In this article, I turn to Thomas Aquinas to illuminate such possibilities. In a little-studied work, *De regno*, he treats civil religion thematically, a treatment that is in many ways the high point of the text. He details both why Christianity cannot be a civil religion and yet why it must remain politically active. In his work we will see both a challenge for liberalism to take its own principles seriously, and a recognition that religion and liberal politics can be aligned in their goal against civil religion and theocracy. Yet Aquinas also cautions that religion and politics can come to no easy settlement, a lesson which should dissolve any complacency on liberal or civil-religious terms about the possibility of achieving a lasting institutional resolution to their relationship.

In what follows, I juxtapose the arguments of Rousseau and Aquinas to bring them into conversation. After detailing Rousseau's account of civil religion, I describe *De regno* in two movements: the starkly political treatment of book I, and the more theological account of book II. I then bring Aquinas into dialogue with Rousseau, concluding with the benefits of allowing religion to speak with its own voice in this dialogue.

[8] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2008), 26-28.

## I. ROUSSEAU ON CIVIL RELIGION

While civil religion has become a trendy topic, Beiner has aimed in his work on Rousseau to uncover civil religion's enduring significance. By drawing out the inner connections between civil religion and liberalism in their shared opposition to theocracy, Rousseau illuminates the aims and limits of liberalism, and thereby the terms of modern politics.

Rousseau famously vacillates between civil religion and liberalism, a hesitation from which Beiner takes his central claim. This wavering, Beiner argues, reveals a critical truth, namely, that civil religion challenges the liberal belief that politics can be grounded in a legitimacy apart from religion.[9] While both proponents of civil religion and proponents of liberalism fear that religion would subvert politics for its own ends, they diverge in their response to that threat: liberals seek to separate religious and political authority, and civil religion advocates the domestication of religious power for the benefit of political authority. The challenge of civil religion to liberalism, then, is to deny that liberalism's separation of religion and politics is possible.

Beiner's work requires clarity on the meaning of three slippery terms: civil religion, liberalism, and theocracy. Civil religion is the use of religion for political purposes. While religion and politics were often ambiguously differentiated in ancient cultures, modern notions of civil religion assume that religion and politics are conceptually and institutionally distinct, such that political authority can manipulate religious institutions as discretely separate entities. One thinks, for instance, of King Henry VIII's establishment of the Church of England to further his dynastic aims.[10]

[9] Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau," 637-38.

[10] Political theory's understanding of civil religion as an elite-driven, top-down process contrasts with sociologists' tendency to study it as the bottom-up emergence of "nonsectarian faith" in a culture's history; see, e.g., Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1-21.

As civil religion involves the cooperation of politics and religion, so liberalism calls for their separation. Quoting Habermas, Beiner notes that classical liberalism depends upon "the unifying, consensus-creating power of reason" supplanting "the social integrative powers of the religion tradition shaken by enlightenment."[11] Indeed, liberalism arose to secure toleration and peace in the midst of the confessional strife of early modern Europe.[12] Liberalism characteristically stipulates which matters require consent by the majority of a population for political governance, and which matters are immaterial to governance.

Theocracy is the most nebulous of the three terms, in part because its etymology is misleading and its use typically pejorative. Literally denoting "rule by God," in effect it connotes government by "those who claim to rule in the name of God."[13] Pharaonic Egypt and early Israel in the times of the "judges" are ancient examples, but one also thinks of claims in medieval Europe that the Church should exercise direct authority over the temporal power.[14] In Beiner's schema, theocracy can be taken at times as a kind of civil religion.[15] But in contexts in which religion and politics are conceptually and institutionally distinct, we can distinguish between those situations in which religious authority deploys politics for the benefit of religion, and those in which political authority deploys religion for the benefit of politics.

In short, civil religion is the political use of religion, theocracy is the religious use of politics, and liberalism is the attempt to limit the role of religion in politics. Both civil religion and liberalism espouse the priority of politics over religion, although that priority takes the form of the mastery of

[11] Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau," 638.

[12] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14-15.

[13] Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau," 627.

[14] Leonard E. Boyle, "The *De regno* and the Two Powers," in Leonard E. Boyle, *Facing History: A Different Thomas Aquinas* (Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium: Collège Cardinal Mercier, 2000).

[15] Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau," 637.

politics over religion for civil religion, and the autonomy of politics from religion for liberalism. This shared goal is why Beiner wants to direct the attention of the liberal West to the civil religion tradition.

Indeed, as striking as Beiner's observations are, he means to do no more than reclaim this earlier tradition. Rousseau's treatment of civil religion in the *Social Contract* shapes the terms of the debate between civil religion and liberalism. According to Rousseau, in modernity civil religion is both necessary and unavailable.[16] No State has been founded without civil religion, and so there is simply no proof of liberalism's success.[17] And yet the possibilities for civil religion in the modern era are unacceptable, such that Rousseau cannot actually endorse any of them. He thus argues for civil religion throughout the *Social Contract*, only to adopt an anemic "religion of tolerance" in his conclusion.[18] In other words, Rousseau believes that liberalism does not answer our needs, but it is the best option that we have. He is caught between the traditions of liberalism and civil religion: he lacks the confidence of Hobbes and Machiavelli in founding a civil religion, but he also challenges the liberal conviction that human communities can flourish without it. It is precisely Rousseau's reservations about liberalism and civil religion that make him fascinating and timely.[19]

Yet if Rousseau wavers between liberalism and civil religion, he is resolute in his rejection of theocracy. He agrees with Machiavelli's and Hobbes' claims that Christian theocracy tends to subvert political authority.[20] This subversion divides the citizen's loyalties, such that he is torn between his identity as a citizen and as a man: as a public patriot of his country and as a

[16] I take the word "unavailable" from Robert Pippin's excellent "The Unavailability of the Ordinary: Strauss on the Philosophical Fate of Modernity," *Political Theory* 31 (2003): 335-58.

[17] Ibid., 618.

[18] Ibid., 617-38; Beiner, *Civil Religion*, 11-17 and 78-83.

[19] Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau," 637-38.

[20] Ibid., 634-35.

private adherent to his religious sect. For Rousseau, the responsibility of the citizen summons the best of the human person. Yet the Christian citizen gives his best to the Church. But trying to get behind Christianity will not do, either: Rousseau rejects as impossible and undesirable the efforts of Machiavelli and Hobbes to resurrect pagan or ancient Jewish theocracies. Rousseau has no choice but to promote the weak tea of a religion of tolerance, the best defense he can muster against theocracy.

Why does all of this matter today? Beiner, mindful of the complexities of twenty-first-century secularism, worries that advocates of liberalism will not see the power that religion exerts even today, and will be unequipped to meet politically resurgent religious forces. For this reason, he argues that the history of Western modern political thought should not be reduced to the ascent of liberalism, but that we should summon the resources of a long tradition developed in parallel with liberalism that does not share liberalism's optimism in the power of reason to ground human community: civil religion. The history of the dialogue between liberalism and civil religion will show why for some thinkers civil religion has at times seemed preferable to liberalism, and what resources liberalism has to respond to and surpass civil religion's claims. In this way, liberalism can avoid becoming a victim of its own success.

Beiner's treatment of Rousseau extends far beyond what I have detailed, and I intend to examine it further after my discussion of Aquinas. Yet it should be clear from this summary that, in his attempt to re-vivify the dialogue between civil religion and liberalism, Beiner leaves one voice silent: religion. His explicit interest is politics, not religion, as he himself admits.[21] For this reason, he does not study religion on its own terms, preferring to yield to liberalism's and civil religion's characterization of religion: as a threat to political order and as a problem to be solved. His failure to permit religion to speak with its own voice, however, is a curious move in a project for

[21] Beiner, *Civil Religion*, 2-3.

which religion is so critical. Indeed, Beiner's conflation of religion with theocracy means that he never asks fundamental questions about the relationship between politics and religion, questions that are logically prior to the question of the superiority of liberalism or civil religion. Rousseau, after all, wants to reunite the human person, to reclaim the "citizen" and "man" as one. But what is the nature of the person? What is the person that he is so easily torn between citizen and man? What are "politics" and "religion"? Must they be opposed? Could a politically active religion in fact be nontheocratic, and offer resources to liberalism in its commitment against illiberalism?

These are questions that liberalism ought to confront. For in failing to ask them, one fails to "get behind" liberalism and civil religion to the questions for which they are answers. When Beiner frames the problem of politics on civil religion's terms, he accepts religion as the theocratic other, and does not consider the anterior and more fundamental question of the nature of human beings and their community. Religion, however, claims to speak to the human person's nature and communal life. To assume that politics must instrumentalize religion, then, is to assume that politics must instrumentalize whatever truth religion offers about human beings. Yet for liberals to respond to new challenges by religion, it must precisely not do that.

In what follows, I give voice to the religion that Beiner leaves silent. By broadening the horizons of this debate beyond the "illiberal," as Beiner broadens it beyond the liberal, I show that "religion" does not equal theocracy, as Beiner assumes. I further aim to show how we might avoid instrumentalizing both religion and politics. At the very least, I will illustrate that the two have a coordinating term that is obfuscated, that is, the human person. Finally, in the spirit of Rousseau himself, I indicate through the terms of this fuller debate how we might have to live with certain tensions. Ultimately, I expand this debate on terms that I hope Beiner himself would find acceptable, even if

the conclusions surprise him. For religion need not be liberalism's theocratic other.[22]

## II. *DE REGNO*

Before we study *De regno,* a word of introduction is in order. As the title indicates, *De regno* is a tract on kingship. Aquinas wrote it in the early 1260s, after reading Aristotle's *Politics*, but before writing his more famous practical works, including the "Treatise on Law" in the *Summa theologiae.* The composition of *De regno* was itself something of a political act: Aquinas penned it at the behest of his superiors for the Norman king of Cyprus as encouragement to support the Dominicans in the Levant.[23]

The text comprises an introduction and twenty chapters. For most of its history, however, *De regno* has been concealed within a text of Ptolemy of Lucca. It is now generally accepted that all but the final four chapters of the first two books are the work of Aquinas.[24] As a "new" text, *De regno* has received little treatment, and primarily to confirm what scholars have already argued from other works of Aquinas.[25] John Finnis, for example, warns against taking *De regno* as Aquinas's final word

[22] Hollenbach, *Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 33-34, 114.

[23] I. Th. Eschmann, "Introduction," in Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship*, trans. I. Th. Eschmann (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949), xxx-xxxi.

[24] See H.-F. Dondaine's critical introduction to *De regno ad Regem Cypri*, ed. H.-F. Dondaine, in *Opuscula III,* Volume 42 (Roma: Editori di San Tommaso, 1979), 417-71. Other attestations to Aquinas's authorship include Francis Oakley *The Mortgage of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 105; 249-50 n. 27; Jean-Pierre Torell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work,* vol. I, trans. Robert Royal (rev. ed.; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 14; and Alfred O'Rahilly, "Notes on St. Thomas," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 31 (1929): 396-410.

[25] Partial exceptions to this neglect include I. Th. Eschmann, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Two Powers," *Mediaeval Studies* 20 (1958): 177-205; James M. Blythe, "The Mixed Constitution and the Distinction Between Regal and Political Power in the Work of Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of The History of Ideas* 47 (1986): 547-65; John Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); and Mary M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

on tyranny, yet abandons this caution when he claims to find a doctrine in *De regno* that comports with his own controversial understanding of the common good.[26] We have thus far gained little from the recovery of *De regno*.

So why *De regno*? It is Aquinas's longest sustained discussion of politics, and his only free-standing political text.[27] Aquinas did not write extensively on politics, and what he wrote tends to be interspersed with other topics; for example, the "Treatise on Law" in the *Summa theologiae* is a mere 19 questions within over 500. More to our purposes, Aquinas addresses the "Church-State" question, at the heart of the civil religion debate, in only two works: *De regno* and his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, and even in the commentary the question arises elliptically. It is of central concern only in *De regno*. Moreover, *De regno* is addressed to a practitioner of politics: it is of the "mirror of princes" genre, intended to educate its royal reader.[28] Aquinas might not have known much about this king, but he knew that he was writing a letter meant to be of value for a Norman war baron, and not an abstract delineation of theoretical principles for theology students. *De regno* is thus a valuable example of how Aquinas's theological teachings are relevant to practical affairs.

For these reasons, in this article I will focus on *De regno* to the exclusion of other works by Aquinas. By orienting ourselves toward this little-studied treatise, we will gain a fascinating insight into the relationship between Christianity and politics, one that puts Aquinas in a new perspective. In this way we will allow an underappreciated work by Aquinas to speak in its own voice.

[26] Cary Nederman, review of Finnis, *Aquinas*, in *The American Political Science Review* 93 (1999): 700-701.

[27] Mark Jordan offers a stimulating treatment of the place of *De regno* in Aquinas's political thought, although he is perhaps too quick to assume that Aquinas takes no interest in politics as such. See Mark Jordan, "*De regno* and the Place of Political Thinking in Aquinas," *Medioevo* 18 (1992).

[28] Allen Gilbert, *Machiavelli's* Prince *and Its Forerunners*: *"The Prince" as a Typical Book De regimine principum* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1938).

In the first book of *De regno*, Aquinas comes close to describing a "state of nature," emphasizing the role of necessity and the limits of reason in politics. He argues that human beings must cooperate via politics to remedy their lacks, including their lack of natural defense and of instincts (I.1.5.).[29] Yet, what they lack in the physical realm they compensate for in their rational attributes, qualities they complete with and through other human beings.

Aquinas then points to the limits of reason in politics. All things ordered to an end, he argues, require some directive principle to guide them there (I.1.3). For man, this directive principle is reason. But reason is not enough, Aquinas argues, for man naturally lives in groups. Thus, human community must itself have a directive principle. What governs human beings must reconcile their diverse interests: a ruler has "care for what pertains to the good of the multitude" (I.1.10). Man is naturally social and political, then, but his communal ordering is not spontaneous; it must adjudicate between the common and the particular. Such relations are an achievement: they must be developed and attained.

Aquinas maintains herein that politics arises out of necessity. In this account he seems as close to the early modern depiction of the "state of nature" as he does to Aristotle's city and its origins in necessity. And whereas Aristotle would go on to emphasize that the city continues to grow from this necessity into excellence, Aquinas, like the early moderns, retains his focus on necessity. For, having justified the importance of politics, he outlines a typology of regime forms—with monarchy (I.2) as the best and tyranny (I.3) the worst—that is not quite that of Aristotle. Aquinas does not argue that monarchy is the best regime because it is rule by the best person, but rather because it is rule by one person. And while he does say that the

[29] Future in-text citations will refer to *De regno* by book, chapter and paragraph number. All translations are mine, in consultation with Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship*, trans. I. Th. Eschmann (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949), and the Latin of Dondaine's Leonine text (see footnote 23 *supra*).

good king is God's gift to the people, he goes on to argue that most rulers are not particularly virtuous, and so citizens must constantly be on guard against tyranny. After his brief discussion of monarchy, Aquinas devotes the next chapters (I.3-6) to a denunciation of tyranny. While he ostensibly justifies monarchy against detractors, the net effect of these chapters is to grant that monarchy frequently flirts with tyranny.[30] As if to signal this, Aquinas closes chapter 6 with an account of citizen resistance.

The citizen has a difficult task, Aquinas thinks, for the rule of one can issue in opposite ends: justice and injustice. This leads many citizens, Aquinas notes (I.4), to conflate monarchy and tyranny, tolerating tyranny under the guise of kingship and rejecting kingship as tyranny. Yet the examples Aquinas gives suggest that this problem is more than just a misunderstanding: history points to few kings worthy of the confidence placed in them. Indeed, when Aquinas argues (I.5) that monarchy is less likely than "the rule of many" to lapse into tyranny, he concedes that "either form of government might become dangerous."[31]

When Aquinas returns to monarchy in chapter 6, his avowed goal is the devising of a kingship that can withstand the threat of tyranny. He distinguishes between mild and excessive tyranny. Mild tyranny is to be tolerated, and Aquinas implies that it is common: cities would be in endless tumult were citizens to revolt against every injustice. This reinforces his quiet emphasis on the limitations of justice throughout these first six chapters: this is no "political perfectionism."

Chapter 6 ends with an appeal to a conversion of the people: "Sin must therefore be done away with in order that the scourge of tyrants may cease." This is not a call to quietism; citizens ought to pray that they be delivered from tyranny, but they also must cultivate a political community that educates decent citizens and princes. In addition, our royal reader must also

[30] Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 64.

[31] Blythe, "The Mixed Constitution," 561 n. 48.

undergo conversion. Chapter 2 is a defense of monarchy as the best regime. Yet throughout chapters 3-6 we are reminded of the pervasive influence of vice in politics, problems from which kingship is by no means inoculated. While monarchy is a superficially common form of government, it rarely lives up to its end as the rule of the truly virtuous person.

To close book I, Aquinas in chapters 7 to 11 discusses the proper reward of a prince. Examining the competing claims of honor, glory, material goods, and happiness, Aquinas unsurprisingly opts for the last, which turns out to be the beatific vision of God.[32] Yet he then makes a curious move. The reward of the king, he argues, is also the "reward" of every flourishing human, not simply the king, and so Aquinas is able to ask what the political community should achieve for all of its citizens. Given that this section directly follows the exhortation for the conversion of citizens (I.6), we might think that the sort of regime that is supposed to cultivate the virtue of every citizen would be one in which citizens are somehow incorporated into rule in a mixed regime, not simply ruled as subjects.[33] Further, this discussion of the reward of the king follows the treatment of tyranny (I.3-6). The king who fears that he might become a tyrant could then easily fear that he would lose this reward. Yet this reward might be the best enticement for a ruler to persevere. Note, too, that Aquinas is offering the king a spiritual reward for a temporal activity; the most theological aspect of book I does not undermine politics, but rather affirms it.

Reviewing book I, we can concur with Keys that Aquinas goes to considerably more trouble to show that tyranny is the worst regime than to show that monarchy is the best regime.[34] This is an odd teaching to present in a gift to a king, and we may wonder what Aquinas has achieved through this presentation. Let us consider two themes.

[32] Cf. *STh* I-II, qq. 1-5.

[33] Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 105.

[34] Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 164.

First, he has underlined the difficulty of quotidian politics, rooted in necessity and reason. He has achieved this by drawing out the distinction between the form and end of a regime: while monarchy's form is the best, the end it seeks can easily lapse into tyranny. Thus if monarchy is the best form of government in theory, in practice our king must struggle to achieve that justice.

Second, Aquinas grants a wide role for citizens: through their "conversion" that leads to regime change; at times in reinforcing justice through the mixed regime; and as the possessors of ends that the king must serve. For what most incorporates the people into their government are their own ends. If the "reward" of the people is the good king (I.2), this reward is that of the government that seeks their end as its own (I.7-12).

In sum, book I concerns the limitations of politics that emphasize the importance of political life. Rather than seeing such difficulties as a license to turn away from politics, or to see politics as nothing more than a means for mutual protection, Aquinas asserts strongly that the good of the people must be the ruler's chief concern. This concern for their virtue does not lead the ruler to zeal and enthusiasm after the fashion of the Taliban's Ministry for Vice, but more humbly in recognition of his own limited abilities to effect good in his regime.[35] Aquinas seems to have situated his ruler in a profoundly moral yet also realistic space, one between caricatures of Augustinian quietism and Aristotelian perfectionism.

As we approach book II, we note that a critical institution has not been discussed: the Church. A modern reader might wonder at this absence, and indeed fear that Aquinas's stress on the difficulty of politics is meant to point toward the necessity of a politically active Church. Yet in considering how the Church arises in *De regno*, we will note that Aquinas does not assert the authority of the Church, but its responsibility and necessity as the keeper of something that he has articulated in book I (7-11): revelation and the promise of God to man. This

[35] Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 8-12.

corresponds with his emphasis in book I on the nobility and difficulty of politics, and his focus therein not on the role of the Church in directing politics to spiritual ends, but rather in directing politics toward its own ends.

Aquinas states, in chapter 1 of book II, that the duty of the king must be discerned from "the pattern of the regime of nature." How, he asks, is the king's "particular" government aligned with that of God's "universal" government? In chapter 2, he begins to answer this question by distinguishing two aspects of God's works in the universe: creation and governance. The latter "more properly pertains to the office of a king," for even founding kings only order what God has created. Kingly rule in the world is thus only analogous to divine rule of the cosmos in a limited sense. There is no hint of the "divine right of kings" theory here.

Having distinguished between creation and governance, Aquinas turns in chapter 3 to governance: "It must first be considered, however, that to govern is to lead that which is governed fittingly to its proper end." Aquinas explains that there are two kinds of ends: extrinsic and intrinsic. Human beings have each of these, and a governor for each. The king is the governor of man's intrinsic end, to be a flourishing human being. Aquinas then explains that the king cannot govern man toward his extrinsic end, heavenly beatitude with God, because that end cannot "be attained by virtue of human nature," (II.3.108). The government that tends to man's final end is the Church, which has access to something beyond human nature. Just as in chapters 1 and 2 Aquinas argues for limited government on the basis of the doctrine of creation, so here he argues for it on the basis of salvation: the king cannot save the world. The sum effect of chapters 1-3 is to limit political authority, as did book I.

To illustrate these teachings, Aquinas closes chapter 3 with a discussion of civil religion. What concerns him is that "spiritual things" and "earthly things" be distinguished, and so he explains how they came to be seen as distinct.

Aquinas speaks first of the "priesthood of the gentiles," the pagan peoples who preceded Christianity, including the Romans and Greeks (II.3.111). This priesthood had a directly earthly and temporal function, for it served the acquisition of temporal goods. An essentially political organ, it was governed by kings. Aquinas here emphasizes that such cults were instituted by human beings for natural needs, yet he admits that they promoted the earthly aims of political societies. This charitable interpretation contrasts with Augustine, who sees only idolatry in such orders.[36]

Aquinas then turns to priests under the "Old Law" that God gave to the ancient Hebrews. While the Old Law was divinely instituted to secure the peace and prosperity of the Hebrews, Aquinas argues that with this law the community was also directed to goods they could attain by their own reason. In this respect the priesthood of Moses was indeed earthly, and so its priests were also subject to the Hebrew rulers.[37]

As went the Old Law, though, so went its modes of governance. For "in the New Law there is a higher priesthood by which men are carried to celestial goods" (II.3.111). The New Law is the gospel given through Jesus Christ, and heralds a new end beyond man's natural end: beatitude. Instead of the Christian priests serving the earthly needs of the city, they grant men access to an end beyond the earthly one. The king and priests consequently no longer directly serve the same ends, but temporal and spiritual ones, respectively. Religion cannot be used merely to serve political ends. Christianity cannot be a civil religion.

In a letter from a Christian theologian instructing a Christian king, we might be surprised to see such a sympathetic treatment of pagan civil religion. Aquinas acknowledges persuasive arguments to justify what we now call civil religion or civil

[36] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, vol. 5, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Columbia, Mo.: University of Columbia Press, 1999), 47-50.

[37] Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 114, a. 10, obj. 1; and Douglas Kries, "Thomas Aquinas and the Politics of Moses," *Review of Politics* 52 (1990): 84-104.

theology. But Christianity cannot be a civil religion, he argues, and politics must change to reflect this. Simply put, Christianity proposes a distinction in the person's ends. Man's natural and supernatural ends are not the same, and while there are many cities of man, there is only one city of God. Human beings belong not only to a political community, but to an ecclesial community as well.[38] We see this in book I, chapters 7-12: the person's final desire to attain to the good is realized in celestial beatitude, beyond immanent existence.[39] The State and the Church are not directed toward the same goals: their work can be complementary, but it cannot be the same, as is the case with civil religion. And yet this distinction is the basis for civil religion and liberalism: civil religion treats political and religious authority as distinct so that politics can dominate religion; and liberalism takes their distinction to be grounds for their separation.

We see why Christianity establishes a new priesthood separate from the political order: the political power will have a vested interest in maintaining older forms of religion, by denying either the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual, or the superiority of the spiritual end to the temporal. Thus for Aquinas the supra-political basis of Christianity must be emphasized. But if Christianity cannot be a civil religion, then can it be a theocracy? One might think so from the end of Aquinas' history of civil religion: "But in the new law there is a higher priesthood by which men are guided to heavenly goods. Consequently, in the law of Christ, kings ought to be subject to priests" (II.3.111.). Leonard Boyle argues, however, that this passage is no paean to theocracy. He notes that Aquinas has already established the legitimacy of kings in the political sphere, and further that the office of the spiritual authority is distinct: it is an external end added (or rather distinguished)

[38] Robert Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 31.

[39] Mary Nichols, "Aristotle's Science of the Best Regime [Response to Robert Bartlett]," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 152-55.

later. For Boyle, Aquinas's purpose is not to argue for the primacy of the spiritual over the political, but to circumscribe the temporal in such a way that the spiritual can indeed have its own autonomy. The authority that this gives the religious over the political authority, Boyle further argues, is limited. For it does not extend to direct power over all political authority, but only indirect power, insofar as political governance touches upon religious authority. Boyle argues that this claim corresponds to what Aquinas argues in his commentary on the *Sentences*.[40]

Boyle's interpretation complements what we have seen in the text. In book I, Aquinas takes politics to be noble, with a value of its own, and in book II he argues that the king must govern his subjects to their intrinsic ends. Aquinas further cautions in his treatment of civil religion against blurring the distinction between religion and politics, which has Christianity as its source.

This interpretation would not make Aquinas an advocate for theocracy. Indeed, he seems more concerned to distinguish the spiritual from the temporal than to assert spiritual power over the temporal realm. And even if he does seem to endorse an indirect check of the spiritual over the temporal, this is not a move to instrumentalize politics for the benefit of religion, any more than he would allow an instrumentalization of religion for the benefit of politics. As we noted earlier, the most theological aspect of *De regno*, the promise of eternal reward, does not undermine but affirms politics.

Aquinas rules out civil religion on Christian terms, and seems no less opposed to theocracy. Yet precisely because of the difficulties of employing Christianity as a civil religion, ersatz alternatives will remain attractive, as Aquinas himself notes. Indeed, a long tradition beginning with Machiavelli and Hobbes, and ambivalently regarded by Rousseau, seeks to turn the clock back to a pre-Christian civil religion.

[40] Boyle, "*De Regno* and the Two Powers," 3-5.

## III. Aquinas in Dialogue

With Aquinas's thoughts on civil religion in mind, we may attempt to give voice to religion in Beiner's dialogue between civil religion, liberalism, and theocracy. It should be noted that Rousseau and Aquinas agree on a great deal. The relationship between religion and politics is a central question for both. Quotidian politics is noble, as we saw for Aquinas in *De regno*, and as hardly need be said for Rousseau. Moreover, their typologies of civil religion are remarkably similar. For both, history places a decisive role in shaping the availability of civil religions. But where for Rousseau history offers the alluring possibility of reuniting religion and politics, for Aquinas history discloses their distinction.

Rousseau sees two fundamental forms of civil religion: the this-worldly "Religion of Citizen" and the other-worldly "Religion of Man" (IV.8.15).[41] Rousseau includes Roman paganism and Judaism in the former category. The "Religion of Man" includes the "pure and simple Religion of the Gospel." Rousseau objects to resurrections of "this-worldly" civil religion, including the proposals of Machiavelli and Hobbes. Both thinkers seek to get behind Christianity, and thus deny the distinction between politics and religion.

Yet Rousseau's objections to Hobbes and Machiavelli are deeply indebted to Christianity: Rousseau finds unsatisfying the moral particularism of pre-Christian civil religions advocated by Machiavelli and Hobbes, and seems drawn to Christianity's universalism.[42] While he opposes "phony cosmopolitanism," he also regards pagan civil religions as too particularistic. Nationalist pagan religion is tribal and intolerant, "warmongering and bloodthirsty," which for Rousseau rules out Machiavelli's hopes for a pagan renaissance. Such paganism easily becomes "exclusive and tyrannical," and "breathes only murder and

[41] References to Rousseau refer to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978).

[42] Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau," 635.

massacre" in "killing whoever does not accept its Gods." Rousseau further denies that we can "get behind" Christianity in reclaiming a Jewish or pagan civil religion, as "the spirit of Christianity has come to pervade everything," (IV.8.11). *Pace* Hobbes, Rousseau argues that trying to "tame" Christianity cannot re-unite the "two heads of the eagle."[43]

Rousseau displays his sympathy for moral universalism in his discussion of "the Religion of man or Christianity . . . of the Gospel," which he distinguishes from Christianity of the European churches (IV.8.20). Calling it "saintly, sublime, genuine Religion," Rousseau laments that this creed could not be "more contrary to the social spirit," as it "preaches nothing but servitude and dependence." He concludes that "a society of true christians would no longer be a society of men," (IV.8.21-2).

Aquinas agrees with Rousseau both that pre-Christian political religions served a purpose and that with Christianity they have become impossible. While he does not offer a sustained analysis of these ancient political religions, Aquinas concurs that they served but temporal ends, and were not aware of the temporal/spiritual distinction. Thus he groups the Jewish and pagan civil religions together, as does Rousseau. Aquinas's distinction between creation and governance, further, would rule out the "creation" of civil religions for the purposes of political control.

Finally, Aquinas and Rousseau agree that Christianity bears a distinctive relationship toward politics. However, considerably different accounts of Christianity lead them to this conclusion. While Rousseau maintains that there are two main forms of civil religion, he also notes a hybrid of the two:

> There is a third, more bizarre sort of Religion which, by giving men two legislations, two chiefs, two fatherlands, subjects them to contradictory duties and prevents their being at once devout and Citizens. Such is the Religion of the Lamas, such is that of the Japanese, such is Roman Christianity. One may

[43] Ibid., 635.

call it the religion of the Priest. It results in a sort of mixed and unsociable right which has no name. (IV.8.16)

This "religion of the priest" is the worst of both worlds for Rousseau: an amalgam of other- and this-worldliness that corrupts the morality of pure Christianity and subverts the power of the state. Whereas the Christianity of the Gospel is decidedly other-worldly, "limited to the purely internal cult of the Supreme God and the eternal duties of morality," this "Roman Christianity" meddles in this-worldly affairs in the name of its other-worldliness. But unlike a pagan civil religion, it does not support the state, but divides and undermines it. A civil religion that divides loyalties between "two fatherlands" is worse than useless. Rousseau is therefore quick to dismiss it. Priestly Christianity "is so manifestly bad that it is a waste of time to amuse oneself demonstrating that it is" (IV.8.17).

Aquinas, not surprisingly, sees Christianity differently. He rejects these critiques of Christianity, and would find question-begging Rousseau's attempt to distinguish Christianity "of the Gospel" from Christianity "of the Priest." It is important to see that Rousseau's distinction only makes sense under the assumption that the gospel leads to escapism and quietism. Rousseau also assumes a radical dualism between Jesus' Kingdom and the Church, such that he denies any kind of earthly religious authority. Again, this interpretation is tendentious at best.

As we noted, Aquinas agrees with Rousseau that Christianity cannot serve as a civil religion. Moreover, he emphasizes the importance of quotidian politics. For these reasons, Aquinas introduces Christianity into politics tentatively and dialectically. If we rehearse the unfolding of Aquinas's regime in *De regno*, we note that he presents it in such a way as to preserve its integrity: as a worthy activity through which human beings attain vital goods, *pace* hyper-Augustinians like de Maistre who see politics as the domain of sin, and *pace* Rousseau, who claims that the Christian meekly accepts whatever politics is forced upon him. It is only after Aquinas's discussion of politics that

Christian revelation arises in *De regno*. When Aquinas does invoke revelation, moreover, he does not propose a concrete relationship between the Church and State. He distinguishes the ends of these authorities rather than orders them. We may recall, after all, that his purpose in treating on civil religion was "that spiritual things might be distinguished from earthly things" (II.3.109).

We might find this surprising. In fact, Aquinas's refusal to make Christianity a civil religion is of a piece with his defense of politics as noble. Aquinas does not weaken man's political nature to increase his devotion to the Church, but strengthens it to ensure that man flourishes politically. His theology of politics calls attention to this natural end first to distinguish it from the grace-given end to which man must attend, and so ensure that the state attends to man's natural end. The *polis* that fosters the natural desire for the good in men is the *polis* that cultivates a predisposition in them toward the source of good, God.[44]

Many modern conversations about politics and religion begin with the question of "Church and State," or the institutional problem of the State having a rival for power. This problem takes the form of contest over the proper relation between those powers, which powers are essentially abstractions from human activity as reified in institutions. The intractability of this conflict, moreover, is what leads both modern civil religion and theocracy to the conclusion that politics or religion must instrumentalize the other. This intractability is also what leads liberalism to "bracket" nonpolitical ends of persons. Liberalism, civil religion, and theocracy all seek a permanent and lasting resolution to this contest. On the model of Hobbes's geometric aspirations for politics, modern thinkers from Locke to Rawls have sought an eternal settlement to this dispute, one that will secure politics from religion indefinitely.[45]

[44] Robert Kraynak, *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 88-96.

[45] Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, trans. Marc A. LePain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 113-23.

Aquinas, however, refuses to choose between religion and politics. He does not see them as locked in a tragic struggle out of which only one can emerge in its full integrity. Rather, he views the human person as the coordinating third term of politics and religion.[46] In *De regno*, the problem of "Church and State" arises, not as the proper coordination of or contest between two institutions, but as the question of the integrity of human activity, which Aquinas sees as possible only in view of knowledge of all human ends. Thus stated, the problem turns out to be distinctly practical and dynamic. In urging us to distinguish the political from the spiritual, and to be cautious about their practical relation, Aquinas has provided principles for making determinations in particular situations. In giving us principles rather than programs, he has acknowledged that politics is not applied metaphysics. Rather, it must be learned and negotiated practically. Since the point of politics is happiness, communities must discover what that happiness is, and then what sort of regime fits its pursuit. As they grow in knowledge of that happiness, or as they regress, for that matter, so must their communal structures, including in their relation to the Church. Aquinas therefore envisions the coordination of politics and religion to be effected through prudence, not the divine law of theocrats or the philosophical necessity of moderns.

Rousseau cares deeply about the human person, as evidenced by his desire to see "man" and "citizen" reunited. Yet he does not see a way beyond the conditions of his time. Perhaps this is because he seeks to elaborate a neat institutional solution, one that is necessarily chimerical. He seems poised to leave us in the tragic situation of the necessity and unavailability of civil religion. Aquinas, however, finds a way around this. He is no liberal, to be sure. Yet he would prefer liberalism to civil

[46] By "person" I intend "the end of the person," which is to say Aquinas's theological anthropology, not the twentieth-century "personalism" that invoked Kant in the interpretation of Aquinas. See Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1947).

religion, for at least liberalism does not instrumentalize religion, or at least it does not necessarily do so. Indeed, we see here that Christianity and liberalism espouse a commitment to distinguishing political from religious ends. While liberalism aims to protect political life from confessional controversy, and Christianity to protect religion from political entanglements, at their best liberalism and Christianity can acknowledge that such differentiation is good for both politics and religion. To be sure, not all theories and practices of liberalism are equal in this regard: much depends upon how liberal theorists and polities conceive of and protect transpolitical ends.[47]

Yet this, I believe, is where we find room in Aquinas's *De regno* for pluralism. Religious pluralism and its political ramifications occasioned in part the rise of classical liberalism. Can Aquinas speak to that problem? I think so. To be clear, we are not speaking of "principled toleration," that is, the claim of a State to be neutral on controversial matters.[48] Instead, a State might abstain from suppressing or rejecting an activity because to do so would be imprudent, which we might call "prudential tolerance." Let me lay out three considerations.

First, we should recall that in *De regno* Aquinas guards carefully the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual. Yet close fusions between "Church" and "State" could blur distinctions of the greatest necessity, as when a State does not understand its proper role or a Church arrogates direct political authority. Thus Aquinas might prefer liberal tolerance to government support of religion when the latter might indeed blur the temporal/spiritual distinction. To be sure, as we noted

[47] The possibility of rapprochement between Christianity and liberal democracy is a vast and fraught subject, with attitudes ranging from Maritain's hopes for a democratic character in *Man and the State* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998) to D.C. Schindler's description of modern freedom as having a "diabolical character" in his *Freedom from Reality: The Diabolical Character of Modern Liberty* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).

[48] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 215-16.

above, liberal theory and practice vary widely in terms of what is understood by the end of politics and what surpasses it.

Second, we might consider the historical character of Aquinas's argument in *De regno*. In his view, for much of human history the Christian regime was impossible to instantiate, because Christian truths were not known. Thus Aquinas thinks of human history as the story of human communities coming to know and conforming to those truths. This history, then, is a kind of education. At each stage, the city achieves a certain level of perfection because the rulers and citizens orient their activity toward a certain truth. To the extent that they share that truth, they can assume it in their political activity, and clarify its basis and explore its implications. Toleration would then be necessary to the extent that pushing the boundaries of this truth would be in part constitutive of political discourse. Yet it is also true that to the extent that citizens share this truth and actively seek to embody it, they would expand truth's practical ambit in their community. On this reading, toleration would be a "moving target," as it were, a kind of exploration to move the truths of political discourse further. If this seems far-fetched, we might consider what Aquinas says in the *Summa*:

> The purpose of human law is to lead men to virtue, not suddenly, but gradually. Wherefore it does not lay upon the multitude of imperfect men the burdens of those who are already virtuous, viz. that they should abstain from all evil. Otherwise these imperfect ones, being unable to bear such precepts, would break out into yet greater evils.[49]

In an era like our own, in which religious truths are questioned, Aquinas might think that we have returned to an earlier state of community, one in which we cannot agree on the final ends of society. In such a case, we can only reassert the nobility of politics and the distinction between religion and politics.

Finally, and most speculatively, Aquinas nowhere discusses the use of coercion for the purposes of faith in *De regno*. The

[49] *STh* I-II, q. 96, a. 2, ad 3.

lack of any overt reference cannot demonstrate that Aquinas foreswears coercive measures in *De regno*. After all, in other works he does advocate for coercion in religious matters.[50] We thus cannot exclude that Aquinas had such coercion in mind, or that he might have meant to add it later. That said, the abjuration of force would be complementary with the explicit arguments of *De regno*. For we have seen Aquinas claim that the tasks of the Church and regime must be clearly distinguished. We have also seen him elaborate an education of our king and his citizens characterized by reason and persuasion rather than by force. The need for the Church to present itself as a disinterested teacher and prophet, and to prove its temporal power to be truly indirect, may rule out appeals to force. Moreover, Aquinas seems to be ambivalent (at least in I.1-6) about the ability of the regime to cultivate basic moral virtues in its citizens, let along enforce the higher dictates of the Church. Thus, if Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae* indeed justifies such coercion in the name of religion, we find in *De regno* the possibility of a Thomistic politics without such coercion.

Aquinas's account in *De regno* is admittedly not the neat picture of civil religion, liberalism, or theocracy. Rather than stipulating institutional arrangements for all time, he seeks to set up a dialogue between religion and politics that will have to be worked out in history. He wants a dynamic relationship that will respond to the needs and self-understanding of the people in a community. This is a messy arrangement, but Aquinas is comfortable with that. As Beiner argues, such tensions are generally the most fruitful points in a thinker's thought.[51]

## CONCLUSION

Many of liberalism's most sympathetic critics have urged liberal thinkers, and particularly Enlightenment liberals, to take stock of the human person's "taste for the infinite," as

[50] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8.

[51] Beiner, *Civil Religion*, 410-11.

Tocqueville called it, or the desire to cultivate that in us which transcends politics.[52] Similarly, while Aquinas could not have known modern liberalism, he urges us to see the human person beyond politics and religion, the whole that both ought to serve. He encourages us to abandon pretensions to eternal institutional arrangements. The human person develops over time and in practice. So must human institutions.

So what would Aquinas have said to President Obama in 2016? Liberalism in our era must contend with religious challenges to its authority, resurrecting the specter of theocracy. Aquinas would encourage a leader like President Obama to call forth religious voices that can be liberalism's dialogue partners. Liberalism can remind Christianity of the dignity and difficulty of quotidian politics. Christianity in turn can remind liberalism of the need to avoid instrumentalizing religion for the sake of politics, lest it become civil religion. And they remind each other of the need to differentiate politics and religion clearly.

No less importantly, Aquinas's vision of the regime opens up the possibility that a community grow in truth together. While the liberal vision encourages us to devise political authority on noncontroversial grounds, Aquinas would ask: can we continue to grow in that common ground? If so, Western leaders might have to reconsider the relationship between religious faith and political liberalism. For where liberalism places a "ne plus ultra," Christianity might invite a dialogue to deepen commonly held beliefs.

Can modern political communities grow as Aquinas envisions? Perhaps we cannot answer that question now. But it is worth asking.[53]

[52] Aaron Herold, "Tocqueville on Religion, the Enlightenment, and the Democratic Soul," *American Political Science Review* 109 (2015): 523-34, at 523.

[53] The author thanks for their kind help J. Budziszewski; Thomas D'Andrea; Andrea Bianchini, S.J.; Michael Breidenbach; Russell Hittinger; Joseph Koterski, S.J.; Michael Mohr, S.J.; Paul Rogers; and Kevin Stuart.

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# HOW THEOLOGY JUDGES THE PRINCIPLES OF OTHER SCIENCES

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IN HIS TREATMENT of the nature of *sacra doctrina* in the first question of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas makes a claim regarding the relationship of *sacra doctrina* to other, lesser forms of knowledge that is familiar to every Thomist: that *sacra doctrina* does not prove, but judges, the principles of other sciences. The text, which is a response to an objection, runs in full as follows:

> The principles of other sciences either are evident and cannot be proved, or are proved by natural reason through some other science. But the knowledge proper to this science comes through revelation and not through natural reason. Therefore it has no concern to prove the principles of other sciences, but only to judge of them. Whatsoever is found in other sciences contrary to any truth of this science must be condemned as false: 'Destroying counsels and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God' (2 Cor. 10:4, 5)."[1]

What generally draws the attention of commentators here is the harmony between all forms of knowledge, and the superior place of *sacra doctrina*.[2] Very little attention is given to the

[1] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2. Translations from the *Summa* are taken from the translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947).

[2] Most of the attention that is given to the article focuses on the *conclusio*, which is a justification of identifying *sacra doctrina* as wisdom, and the response to the third objection, which distinguishes theological wisdom from the wisdom that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some of the commentaries that do address the response to the second objection will be cited below. Examples of well-known commentaries that do not

specific claim that *sacra doctrina* judges the principles of other sciences. Yet on its face this is a critically important claim. Any Thomist will be, as was Aquinas himself, committed to the appropriate autonomy of any science. It is profoundly un-Thomistic to think that a theologian, just as a theologian, is an expert in philosophy, physics, psychology, or politics, for example. But if the sciences are indeed in important ways autonomous, claims regarding their relationship to a superior science must invite attention. Moreover, the expression "to judge the principles of another science" is an unusual one in Aquinas,[3] which means that its meaning here may not be immediately evident from other passages.

In what follows I will first give some basic exegesis of this passage, then examine various proposed interpretations of it. I will then present my own proposal for understanding this passage, making use of a comparison Aquinas draws between *sacra doctrina* and metaphysics, and then giving some tentative examples of how the relationship plays itself out.

## I. Exegesis of *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2

To determine the meaning of the expression "to judge the principles of another science" we need to look more carefully at the text, and its context. These provide us with five points that need to be incorporated into any explanation.

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address this point at all include those of Cajetan, the Salmanticenses, Louis Billot, Gerald Van Ackeren, the Blackfriars edition of the *Summa*, and Jean-Pierre Torrell. One modern commentator whose reading of this text has some similarity with mine is Michel Corbin, *Le chemin de la théologie chez Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974); see esp. 761-69.

[3] So far as I have found, it occurs only here. *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, ad 1, on the virtue of wisdom, speaks of judging another science in light of its first principles. *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 1, on the gift of wisdom, speaks of wisdom judging everything in its genus. The word *iudicare* is absent from the treatment of the division of the sciences in Aquinas's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, as it is from the discussion of wisdom in the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Both of those texts speak of wisdom as ruling and ordering, but not as judging, other sciences.

*A) "Sacra doctrina"*

First, that which judges is *sacra doctrina,* the nature of which is the subject of the whole of question 1 of the *Prima pars*. It is both a science and a wisdom, and includes everything from the acceptance of the articles of faith, which are its principles, to their uttermost ramifications in theological conclusions.

It follows that the judgments made by *sacra doctrina* need not be made solely in terms of the infallibly known principles of faith. They can also be made on the basis of theological claims which are not dogmatically defined. For example, it is perfectly legitimate to appeal to a common theological opinion on original sin to make a judgment about the science of evolutionary biology.[4] The decisiveness of the judgment will depend in part on the degree of surety with which the theological opinion is held. Such theological truths may not be known infallibly, but insofar as they are known at all they have a proper role in judging the claims of other sciences.

*B) Intellectual Work*

Second, the judgment we are talking about here requires real intellectual work on the part of the Christian. *Sacra doctrina* is a science, and science, being a movement from principles to conclusions, requires the effort of the knower to make that movement.[5] This point is verified in what Aquinas says immediately following the text we are considering: in the response to objection 3 he distinguishes judgment by inclination from

[4] The science of evolutionary biology typically regards death as an inevitable part of the nature of corporeal beings; the Christian knows through dogma that death came into the world because of sin. Whether death can still in some sense be called "natural" (e.g., it could be proper to human nature as created, if the original freedom from death is regarded as a "preternatural" gift) and the nature of the transmission of the effects of sin are matters of theological discussion, and those theological conclusions invariably touch on the subject that evolutionary biology treats (see below).

[5] Thus we distinguish understanding (*intellectus*), which apprehends what it knows all at once (*statim*) from science (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*), which know through the movement of the reason's inquiry (*per inquisitionem rationis*); see *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 2; *STh* I, q. 79, a. 8.

judgment by knowledge acquired through study, and says that it is the latter that is in question here. The person of simple faith, who accepts the articles of faith and can even be said to have a kind of connatural knowledge of divine things, can certainly make judgments on the basis of what he knows in this way, but what Aquinas has in view here is the judgment made by the Christian who has reasoned through the ramifications of his faith—who has the s*cientia* of *sacra doctrina.*

*C) The Principles of Other Sciences*

Third, it is not just any claims of another science that are judged, but its principles. Aquinas certainly does think that *sacra doctrina* is able to judge the conclusions of other sciences,[6] but here he is drawing attention to a judgment concerning principles. For example, the science of psychology may come to the conclusion that a certain amount of rebellion on the part of a teenager is appropriate, on the basis of the principle that if the teenager is to become an adult, he must differentiate from his parents. Strictly following what Aquinas says here, it is not only the conclusion (appropriateness of rebellion) that stands under the judgment of *sacra doctrina*, but the principle (maturation through differentiation).

The extraordinary character of this claim is evident when one considers that the principles of a science make it to be what it is. Aquinas is saying that *sacra doctrina* can judge the very nature of another science.

*D) Judging, not Proving*

Fourth, *sacra doctrina* does not *prove* the principles of another science, but *judges* them. Both verbs deserve some attention. By saying that *sacra doctrina* does not prove the principles of another science, Aquinas is excluding the idea that the relationship of *sacra doctrina* and another science is one of subalternation, wherein the principles of another science would

[6] See below, section II.A.

be known—or proved—as the conclusions of *sacra doctrina*. *Sacra doctrina* stands above all other sciences, but that does not mean that their principles are, in the strict demonstrative sense, derived from it.[7] *Sacra doctrina* does not prove the principles of political science, or metaphysics, or psychology, or biology, or anything else. To put it another way, no Christian can claim, just on the basis of his faith, to know another science.

The mention of "judging" evokes Aquinas's doctrine of "the way of judgment." Later in the *Prima pars* Aquinas distinguishes the "way of inquiry or discovery" from the "way of judgment."[8] The former discovers new knowledge by deduction from first principles, while the latter analyzes this knowledge in light of those principles. If that is what Aquinas would have us understand here, it would mean that *sacra doctrina* would be able to consider the conclusions of different sciences in light of the highest principles that lie behind those conclusions. For example, the biologist makes various claims about living beings, and the practitioner of *sacra doctrina* is able to consider these in light of its higher knowledge of the origin of life. As we will see, this relationship among sciences is pertinent to Aquinas's meaning here, but it cannot be the full explanation, for, as already noted, he does not say that *sacra doctrina* judges the conclusions of other sciences, but their principles. What exactly judgment consists of therefore remains to be seen.[9]

[7] The same can be said about metaphysics, which stands above all other philosophical sciences but does not subalternate any of them. A subalternating science is always higher than a subalternated science, but a science can be higher without being subalternating. For a list of sciences Aquinas does explicitly regard as subalternated and subalternating, see Denis J. M. Bradley, "*Ephemerides thomisticae analyticae:* Metaphysics and Ethics in Stump's *Aquinas*," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 616. On whether *sacra doctrina* itself can rightly be called subalternated to the *scientia Dei et beatorum*, see M. V. Dougherty, "On the Alleged Subalternate Character of *sacra doctrina* in Aquinas," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 77 (2003): 101-10.

[8] *STh* I, q. 79, a. 8.

[9] In any science one may consider three things: the conclusions, the first principles it has in common with other sciences (common principles), and the first principles that are peculiar to it (proper principles). In *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, ad 1, Aquinas says that wisdom (here, philosophical wisdom) judges all other sciences "not only as to conclusions, but

*E) A Relation among Speculative Sciences*

Fifth, Aquinas is talking here specifically about the relationship between *sacra doctrina* and other speculative sciences. This is harder to see, and requires a consideration of the context. Articles 5 and 6 of question 1 of the *Prima pars* form a pair, in that they both deal with the relationship between *sacra doctrina* and other sciences. Article 5 asks whether *sacra doctrina* is nobler than other sciences, article 6 asks whether it is properly called wisdom. Article 5 distinguishes three ways in which one science can be said to be nobler than another.[10] The first two pertain to speculative sciences: greater nobility means greater certitude and a more worthy subject. That *sacra doctrina* is the highest of all sciences because it treats of the highest possible subject (most worthy) in the highest possible way (with the greatest certitude) is hardly surprising; for the Christian, such a claim is really self-evident. On the other hand, one practical science is said to be nobler than another on the grounds of its greater finality. This indicates a proper order among sciences. The architect's science is nobler than the stonecutter's not because a well-designed building is worthier than a well-cut stone, but because the stonecutter's work is undertaken for the sake of the architect's work: the former is ordered to the latter.

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also as to first principles," by which he means common principles (cf. I *Sent.*, pro., q. 1, a. 2). Later in the same question, Aquinas says that "Judgment of anything should be based on that thing's proper principles," and goes on to explain: "difference is based not on common but on proper principles. Consequently, even in speculative matters, there is one science of dialectics, which inquires about all matters; whereas demonstrative sciences, which pronounce judgment, differ according to their different objects." The idea that *sacra doctrina* judges the common principles of all other sciences emerges from its comparison to metaphysics, as we will see later; but there is no reason to restrict the "*principia*" of our principal text to common principles. My argument is that Aquinas envisions *sacra doctrina* making a determination about a science's proper principles, without proving those principles as the conclusion of what it properly knows.

[10] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 5: "One speculative science is said to be nobler than another, either by reason of its greater certitude, or by reason of the higher worth of its subject-matter. . . . Of the practical sciences, that one is nobler which is ordained to a further purpose."

Turning to article 6, Aquinas asks whether *sacra doctrina* is wisdom. There are two key features of wisdom that he evokes here: one is that the wise man arranges and judges, the other is that he does so in light of a higher principle.[11] The body of the article deals with the second aspect of wisdom, and verifies that *sacra doctrina* is rightly called wisdom because it is the knowledge of the highest of all principles.[12] The replies to the second and third objections deal rather with the "arranging and judging" aspect of wisdom. The reply to the second objection says, again, that *sacra doctrina* judges the principles of other sciences, and the reply to the third objection says that this judgment occurs by way of knowledge, not inclination.

In short, article 5 specifies a way in which *sacra doctrina* orders the practical sciences, namely, in terms of its greater finality. Article 6 does not speak of the distinction between speculative and practical sciences,[13] and there is no reason to suppose that what Aquinas says here is limited to the practical sciences. Rather, it is reasonable to suppose that article 6 has in view the relationship between two speculative sciences, or at least that it does not exclude them.

In sum, we learn from this context not only that *sacra doctrina* is higher than other sciences, but also that its relationship to them is one of ordering and judging. For practical

[11] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6: "It is the part of a wise man to arrange and to judge, and since lesser matters should be judged in the light of some higher principle, he is said to be wise in any one order who considers the highest principle in that order."

[12] Ibid.: "In the order of building, he who plans the form of the house is called wise and architect, in opposition to the inferior laborers who trim the wood and make ready the stones: 'As a wise architect, I have laid the foundation' (1 Corinthians 3:10). Again, in the order of all human life, the prudent man is called wise, inasmuch as he directs his acts to a fitting end: 'Wisdom is prudence to a man' (Proverbs 10:23). Therefore he who considers absolutely the highest cause of the whole universe, namely God, is most of all called wise. Hence wisdom is said to be the knowledge of divine things, as Augustine says (De Trin. xii, 14). But sacred doctrine essentially treats of God viewed as the highest cause—not only so far as He can be known through creatures just as philosophers knew Him—'That which is known of God is manifest in them' (Romans 1:19)—but also as far as He is known to Himself alone and revealed to others. Hence sacred doctrine is especially called wisdom."

[13] We recall that in article 4 Aquinas describes *sacra doctrina* as both speculative and practical.

sciences this will happen by way of ordering to the proper ultimate end; for speculative sciences this will happen by way of a judgment concerning their principles, made possible by the acquired habit that is the science of *sacra doctrina*.

## II. Proposed Readings of Aquinas: Examples

In light of this analysis, we may evaluate a variety of interpretations of Aquinas on this point. All of them are faithful to genuine Thomistic thought; but each in some way falls short of a full interpretation of the passage in question.

### *A) Trumping Other Truth-Claims*

A common interpretation of this passage focuses on the last sentence, "Whatsoever is found in other sciences contrary to any truth of this science must be condemned as false," and goes something like this. There are things that the Christian can judge as false simply because they contradict things that are known to be true in the faith.[14] The Christian can judge abortion to be wrong just because it is a violation of the commandment "Thou shalt not murder." If philosophical ethics, or political science, or some other science claims that abortion is morally acceptable, the Christian can legitimately declare that that science, as so construed, is wrong. Again, if someone were to claim, on the basis of political science, that the sovereignty of nations means that no one has the right to emigrate from one country to another, the Christian can respond that this must be false, because it runs counter to the

[14] See Domingo Báñez, *Scolastica commentaria in I Partem Summae*, q. 1, ed. Luis Urbano, Biblioteca de tomistas españoles, vol. 8 (Madrid, 1934), 46: "it pertains to [theology] to judge of the principles of other sciences, whether they are repugnant to what has been revealed by God, or not" ("sed pertinent ad eam judicare de principiis aliarum scientiarum, an repugnant revelatis a Deo, vel non"). See also Stephen L. Brock, *The Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas: A Sketch* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), chap. 1, text at notes 46 and 47; cf. Andreas Speer, "The Division of Metaphysical Discourses: Boethius, Thomas Aquinas, and Meister Eckhart," in Kent Emery, Jr., Russell Friedman, and Andreas Speer, eds., *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages: A Tribute to Stephen F. Brown* (Leiden: Brill , 2011), 105-6.

scriptural revelation of universal brotherhood and the care for refugees, and the Church's proclamation of a right of people to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families.[15] A famous example of this in Aquinas's day would have been the claim of Aristotelian science that the world is eternal. Aquinas says that the philosopher cannot disprove this. The man of faith, however, knows it to be false, because he knows that the world was created by God in time.[16] In sum, the knowledge the Christian has in faith allows him to judge the claims of even the most sophisticated practitioners of another science, if those claims run counter to the faith.

So far as it goes, this interpretation is true—but insufficient. The kind of quick judgment involved in such examples requires hardly any work on the Christian's part. All one has to do is recognize the opposition between two truth-claims and acknowledge that one of them is part of the faith. Such a judgment is legitimate—and Aquinas makes precisely this point in other passages[17]—but it does not seem to require anything like the rational activity that he has in view here. Moreover, these are examples of conclusions, not principles.[18] It is

[15] Pope John XXIII, encyclical *Pacem in Terris* 106: "among man's personal rights we must include his right to enter a country in which he hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for himself and his dependents." See also Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, "Migration and the Social Doctrine of the Church."

[16] See, e.g., *STh* I, q. 46, a. 2.

[17] *ScG* I, c. 7; *Expositio in symbolorum apostolorum*, prol.; *De rationibus fidei*, c. 2

[18] "In response 2 of the same article, Aquinas insists that the highest wisdom may 'judge' the adequacy of the conclusions of inferior disciplines for their truthfulness or falsity" (Thomas Joseph White, O.P., "The Precarity of Wisdom: Modern Dominican Theology, Perspectivalism, and the Tasks of Reconstruction," in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life*, ed. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010], 103); "The judgment exercised by theology simply approves the conformity of another science's conclusions with revealed truth" (Kieran Conley, O.S.B., *A Theology of Wisdom: A Study in St. Thomas* [Dubuque, Iowa.: The Priory Press, 1963], 102. It should be said that although I think the position of these authors, as an exegesis of the passage in question, is too limited, their evident concern—that *sacra doctrina* cannot substitute for the genuine hard work of knowing the truth available in another discipline—is very much on target. Cf. Bernard McGinn, *Thomas Aquinas's "Summa*

perfectly fair to say that the Christian can judge that abortion and euthanasia are intrinsically evil acts and that any political theory that supports them must be opposed. But the claim that there is a right to abortion or to euthanasia is not a principle (typically), but a conclusion, one derived from, for example, a certain conception of individual rights. As truth-claims they are false, and the Christian knows them to be false, and knows this precisely on the basis of his faith[19]—but if Aquinas is really talking about principles, this is not the sort of thing that he seems to have in mind.

This interpretation also suffers from being confined to instances of conflict with those claims of *sacra doctrina* that can be regarded as clear and certain dogmas. It is easy to see how judgment, understood in this way, would apply to the issue of abortion; but what about an issue such as immigration?[20] Christians know the command to "Love thy neighbor," but this by itself does not lead to a decisive judgment about most political claims concerning the right to emigrate. Such claims

*Theologiae": A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 59: "sacred teaching . . . judges the first principles and conclusions of the other sciences." McGinn refers to a judgment concerning "first principles," as opposed to the simple "principles" presented in the text; he may have in mind a comparison between this function of *sacra doctrina* and the function of metaphysics as wisdom to establish the first principles common to all philosophical sciences. As we will see below, such a comparison to metaphysics, while helpful, does not get at the extraordinary claim being made here about *sacra doctrina*.

[19] They may also be known to be false on the basis of reason; the two are not mutually exclusive.

[20] One has to be careful to distinguish between political claims that are the conclusions of political *science* and those that are really statements of public policy, and therefore are exercises of political *prudence*. The claim that abortion is intrinsically evil, or that there is a right to emigrate, is a claim of political science; but what public policy ought to be pursued as a result is typically a matter of political prudence. The former fall under the judgment of *sacra doctrina*; the latter do not. Venturing into this area can be confusing, but I have chosen to do so because it presents striking examples of Christian expectations regarding the relationship of sciences. On the one hand, we often see Christians asserting that they know some specific, properly political truth just on the basis of their faith; on the other hand, we often see Christians insisting with some vehemence that there is no clear ramification of the faith with respect to a particular political question, and therefore that the faith cannot provide a judgment. Neither position reflects the subtlety of Aquinas's teaching here.

are commonly regarded as debatable, matters on which reasonable people may differ.[21] It seems to follow that *sacra doctrina* has no judgment to give in such cases. But that is unduly to restrict the scope of its operation. In some instances, all that is required is more effort: a proposed truth may not conflict with the obvious dogmas of the faith, but someone who seriously thinks through the ramifications of *sacra doctrina* may be able to see that the proposal is untenable. In other instances, a genuine plurality of positions is permissible: the pursuit of *sacra doctrina* may indeed lead to a variety of legitimate theological opinions. Nevertheless, the question addressed by the lower science is still able to be judged in light of the theological opinions—and if one or more of the opinions is in fact more probable than the others, then that difference also provides a ground for judgment. A judgment based on an article of faith is more certain and known more generally than one based on a theological opinion, but even a theological opinion can be relatively certain, and the ground for some kind of judgment about other sciences.

### *B) The Negative Imperium of "sacra doctrina"*

The most obvious examples of the kind of interpretation just mentioned are snap judgments that something cannot be true because it conflicts with revelation. Bruce Marshall offers a particularly refined version of the same.[22]

*Sacra doctrina* is, as Aquinas says in article 5, more certain than other sciences.[23] The theologian's right to make judgments

[21] See, e.g., E. Christian Brugger, "Render unto Caesar: A Catholic Ethic on Conscientious Voting," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 12 (2005): 154-77.

[22] Bruce D. Marshall, "*Quid scit una uetula*: Aquinas on the Nature of Theology," in Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, eds., *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 1-35, esp. 20-25.

[23] The judgment made by *sacra doctrina* about other sciences is justified because it is higher than them in terms of its certitude. This is, as we have seen, one of the grounds that Aquinas mentions in article 5 for identifying one science as higher than another. Comparisons are difficult because the situation of *sacra doctrina* is unique. Perhaps there is a way that metaphysics can be called more certain than physics, but fundamentally they both appeal to human knowledge in the natural light of reason.

about other sciences is therefore indispensable, but it is also significantly limited. Theology is higher than philosophy, but this does not mean that the theologian can ordinarily settle disputed questions in philosophy. As Marshall puts it:

> [Sacred doctrine] rightly rejects as false any belief, in any area, which is contrary to Christian teaching. But save in matters which have a logically close tie to the articles of Christian faith, it cannot provide reasons for beliefs or enable us to decide between competing alternatives. *Sacra doctrina* thus has only a limited stake in the arguments of the philosophers. Where philosophers (or scientists) hold competing positions among which, as is very often the case, theology has no way to decide, it is best for theologians imply not to become entangled with such disputes.[24]

Clearly, this view urges a kind of humility upon the theologian. Faced with a challenging claim of another science, his instinct might be to make a snap judgment about it from the superior standpoint of *sacra doctrina*, but in fact his first responsibility is to discern whether that claim really does conflict with the truth of the faith. Frequently, he will have to admit that he cannot be sure about the conflict, and therefore will have to refrain from making a judgment. But it also follows in this view—and this is the point that Marshall emphasizes—that no science that is lower than *sacra doctrina* can properly be said to be autonomous:

> Aquinas's basic teaching on the universal epistemic primacy of sacred doctrine seems clear enough. Theology does not attempt to settle the competing claims of worldly wisdom, so long as they are compatible with Christian teaching.

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*Sacra doctrina* is God's own knowledge of himself, communicated to us through the light of faith, and therefore is fundamentally more certain than any other human science.

[24] Marshall, "*Quid scit una uetula,*" 21. For textual verification, Marshall quotes the *prooemium* of Aquinas's response to the Dominican master John of Vercelli, who asked Aquinas to weigh in on a variety of disputed philosophical questions. "Aquinas felt bound in obedience to reply right away, but he protests at the outset that 'many of these questions belong not to the doctrine of the faith, but to the dogmas of the philosophers. It does a great deal of harm, however, either to assert or deny claims which make no contribution to the teaching of piety, as though they pertained to sacred doctrine'" (ibid., quoting Aquinas, *Responsio de 43 articulis ad magistrum Ioannem de Vercellis*, prooemium)

But the wisdom we have from God judges all our claims to be wise, rejecting whatever contradicts the wisdom from above. Yet this teaching has been widely ignored, and often implicitly repudiated, in modern Thomism. . . . [Some] Thomists assume that philosophy's autonomously established results have to be capable of inclusion in a harmonious Christian view of the world. According to Aquinas, though, we can only be sure that philosophy's results will fit into a Christian view of the world if Christian teaching has the epistemic right to judge, and if need be to reject, even the most thoroughly certified philosophical claim. For Aquinas philosophy is evidently not autonomous, but is always subject to correction from another quarter.[25]

If the theologian is called to be humble, so too is the philosopher or other scientist. The integrity of his science means that it knows what it knows on the basis of its own principles, which are not derived from revelation, but it always must be ready to receive the thunderbolt of a judgment from revelation. My own interpretation, as will be seen below, does not so much attenuate the autonomy of the lower sciences as require that the one making the judgment needs to possess both sciences.

The objections raised against the previous interpretation apply here as well, but with somewhat less force. Marshall acknowledges that the judgment in view does not strictly depend on any labor of *sacra doctrina*, but neither is it reduced to what any believer (or nonbeliever, for that matter) can see as the plain sense of Christianity's truth-claims. Most properly, the judgment belongs to the Christian who, by faith and sacramental grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, has a connaturality with divine things, and thus can make judgments about what is in harmony with them and what is not.[26] Again, Marshall does not highlight the fact that Aquinas refers here to the principles of other sciences, but neither does he restrict the judgment of *sacra doctrina* to conclusions; he refers more generically to the "beliefs" one finds in other sciences, which include both

[25] Marshall, "*Quid scit una uetula,*" 23.

[26] "The holy teaching of the Parisian master is a partial and incomplete attempt to catch up, by the laborious path of learning and argument acquired by study, to the wisdom the unlettered charwoman already possesses as a free gift from God" (Marshall, "*Quid scit una uetula,*" 25).

principles and conclusions. Finally, whether Marshall sets an undue restriction upon the scope of the judgments of *sacra doctrina* is ambiguous. On the one hand, he has no use for a constant intervention of the theologian into disputes proper to the philosopher; on the other hand, to privilege the insights of the simple old woman (the *uetula*) suggests that her judgment, which she possesses by the gift of God, that something is incompatible with the truth of God is a signal to the theologian that perhaps he will be able to make a similar judgment through his study.

### *C) Choosing among Independently Established Principles*

A different construal of Aquinas's meaning is that the knowledge of *sacra doctrina* can incline one to a judgment about claims regarding what the principles of another *scientia* are. Although the Christian just as a Christian can make no claims to expertise in any particular science, his knowledge of truth in faith can, in some instances, allow him to judge between competing claims regarding the principles of a science.[27] For

[27] Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio* 76: "Revelation clearly proposes certain truths which might never have been discovered by reason unaided, although they are not of themselves inaccessible to reason. Among these truths is the notion of a free and personal God who is the Creator of the world, a truth which has been so crucial for the development of philosophical thinking, especially the philosophy of being. There is also the reality of sin, as it appears in the light of faith, which helps to shape an adequate philosophical formulation of the problem of evil. The notion of the person as a spiritual being is another of faith's specific contributions: the Christian proclamation of human dignity, equality and freedom has undoubtedly influenced modern philosophical thought. In more recent times, there has been the discovery that history as event—so central to Christian Revelation—is important for philosophy as well. It is no accident that this has become pivotal for a philosophy of history which stakes its claim as a new chapter in the human search for truth. . . . In speculating on these questions, philosophers have not become theologians, since they have not sought to understand and expound the truths of faith on the basis of Revelation. They have continued working on their own terrain and with their own purely rational method, yet extending their research to new aspects of truth. It could be said that a good part of modern and contemporary philosophy would not exist without this stimulus of the word of God." The pope does not identify the various theses enumerated here as principles, but that is in fact how they function. His point is not that faith knows that, for example, there is a

example, the Christian just as a Christian cannot claim to be a psychologist. But when confronted with competing claims about psychology, he will occasionally find that he can make judgments about what must not be true. Behaviorism may have useful things to teach about human action and how to condition the person to act in good ways, but insofar as it is based on the principle that the spiritual soul is not relevant to human well-being, that human beings are sufficiently understood in terms of body-based responses to stimuli, the Christian has every right to judge that it is faulty, and that it does not express the whole truth of the person.

There could even be a more positive judgment on the part of *sacra doctrina*: when there are different proposals concerning the proper principles of a lower science, and one of the proposals coheres well with what is known in the faith, the practitioner of *sacra doctrina* may in fact make a tentative judgment approving that particular proposal.[28] Thus we find that Christians can be favorably inclined to theories of "intelligent design" because they have an obvious coherence with what the faith knows of the creative and providential God. We can see the same thing throughout the Christian tradition: for example, the patristic approbation of Plato because there seemed to be such harmony between his doctrine and revelation.[29] Such a judgment is tentative, not certain, for there may be multiple construals of the principles of the lower science

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free and personal God, and therefore philosophy must acknowledge that fact as well; it is rather that faith's knowledge of this free and personal God influences the properly philosophical discipline of ontology.

[28] See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*: "Sacred theology judges, however, of the other sciences, and this in two ways. It judges negatively because "whatever is found in other sciences contrary to any truth of this science must be condemned as false." Thus many hypotheses that have not been scientifically proved, from the very fact that they are contrary to divine revelation are repudiated by theology. But it positively approves of a certain proposition of metaphysics or of natural philosophy or of ethics, according as it is otherwise revealed, or at least is in conformity with revelation. Thus it approves of propositions about the immortality of the soul or the foundation of moral obligation or the distinction between virtuous, pleasant, and useful good."

[29] See, e.g., Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 59; Augustine, *City of God* 8.5-9.

that could harmonize well with what is known in *sacra doctrina*. The expertise that allows one to make a certain judgment on the science as a whole is that of the practitioner of that science—in the example above, the biologist—not that of the Christian as such.

This interpretation of Aquinas's text is more plausible than the first because it does center on judgment concerning principles, not just any truth-claims. Where it falters, and perhaps falls short of the name of wisdom, is that its judgments are, as in the former case, too much of a simple transposition of something known in faith to the field of a lower science. In other words, the judgment is made without a thorough thinking-through of *sacra doctrina*. According to Aquinas's text, it is *sacra doctrina*, not the articles of faith simply, that is able to judge the principles of other sciences. Of course, the articles of faith are the principles of *sacra doctrina*, and so one could say that any judgment is ultimately traceable to them. But *sacra doctrina* is a science, and therefore cannot simply be equated with the content of the faith, which is more akin to *intellectus* than to *scientia*. It is the person who thinks through the faith, not the person who simply accepts the faith, who is in view here. And it is not clear that this interpretation really takes account of that fact. The example of "intelligent design" is telling: such theories can appeal to the person of faith (especially one who is aware of the history of Darwinian-inspired attacks on Christianity), but, as more than a few Thomistic scholars have noted, the doctrines of creation and providence do not entail a reliance on the "god of the gaps."[30]

[30] "It would seem that Intelligent Design Theory is grounded on the Cosmogonical Fallacy. Many who oppose the standard Darwinian account of biological evolution identify creation with divine intervention into nature. . . . This insistence that creation must mean that God has periodically produced new and distinct forms of life is to confuse the fact of creation with the manner or mode of the development of natural beings in the universe. This is the Cosmogonical Fallacy. . . . A Thomist might agree with [Michael] Behe's epistemological claim that no current or foreseeable future attempt at explanation for certain biological complexities is satisfactory. Yet, a Thomist will reject Behe's ontological claim that no such explanation can ever be given in terms of the operation of nature. This ontological claim depends on a 'god of the gaps' understanding of divine agency and such an understanding of God's action is

### *D) "Sacra doctrina" as an Architectonic Science*

A different sort of interpretation is that *sacra doctrina* is an architectonic science with respect to its subordinates.[31] Marshall gives a helpful explanation of this in terms of stonecutting and architecture:

> Stonecutting has its own goals and methods, which the architect is normally willing to leave to the mason. But if the architect's well-designed edifice crumbles because the stones would not bear the load, he rightly judges that the mason, whatever his protests that the stones were flawless, needs to produce a different result. The architect may, indeed, help him figure out how.[32]

The wise man, the architect, is willing to recognize the proper autonomy of the stonecutter; he acknowledges that being an architect does not give him the knowledge proper to the stonecutter. However, his knowledge of the whole allows him to make the judgment that when there is a conflict between him

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cosmogonically fallacious" (Michael W. Tkacz, "Thomas Aquinas vs. the Intelligent Designers," paper prepared for the Gonzaga Socratic Club, Gonzaga University). The divergence between Intelligent Design theorists and Thomists has been frequently noted in popular publications (see, e.g., Michael W. Tkacz, "Aquinas vs. Intelligent Design, *Catholic Answers*, Sept. 30, 2011; Mark Shea, "Intelligent Design vs. the Argument from Design," *National Catholic Register* blog post, Nov. 15, 2013; Francis Beckwith, "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Inadequacy of Intelligent Design," *Patheos* blog post, April 5, 2011). For more scholarly treatments, see William E. Carroll, "At the Mercy of Chance? Evolution and the Catholic Tradition," *Revue des questions scientifiques* 177 (2006): 179-204; and Marie I. George, "What Would Thomas Aquinas Say about Intelligent Design?" *New Blackfriars* 94 (2013): 676-700.

[31] See III *Sent*., d. 14, q. 1, a. 3, qcla. 4 s.c. 2: "The knowledge of Christ was regulative, and as it were architectonic, with respect to all human sciences."

[32] Marshall, "*Quid scit una uetula*," 23. See *In Boet. De Trin.*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1: "the function of wisdom is to order, and therefore this highest science [N.B. in this case not *sacra doctrina*, but natural theology], which orders and rules all others, is called wisdom; just as in mechanical arts we call those men wise who direct others, as the architects." Although the architect's right of judgment is, as I say below, proper within an order of practical sciences, Marshall does not intend the comparison to imply that *sacra doctrina* governs in the way of a practical rather than a speculative science. What he seems to mean is that architecture and *sacra doctrina* are both higher sciences (with respect to stonecutting and philosophy, respectively), but on different bases; architecture has a greater finality, while *sacra doctrina* has a greater certitude. But no matter the basis, the right of judgment is the same.

and the stonecutter—when his design should work, and yet when produced by the mason it doesn't—his higher knowledge is right, and there must be something wrong with the stonecutter's craft. So too the practitioner of *sacra doctrina* acknowledges that he does not, as theologian, know any particular lower science. But when the two touch on each other, any conflict signals to the practitioner of *sacra doctrina* that something must be amiss in the structure of the lower science.

It is not difficult to see how judgment takes place along these lines when the two sciences in question are practical. In such a case, the architectonic science has a greater finality, and therefore the judgment about the appropriate activity of a lower science follows not only from what is proper to its principles but also from the needs of a science that is more final. A stonecutter has many options for cutting stones well; the selection of the appropriate option is determined by the needs of the building being designed by the architect. For another example, we may consider the relationship between civil science and military science.[33] A general knows various ways in which he may conduct a war; the selection of the appropriate way is determined not by (or, not solely by) the military science itself but by the civil science toward which it is ordered. So too, *sacra doctrina* will not tell political science what its principles are, but because it knows the greater good, the greater end of the human person in beatitude, it can order political science—for example, helping it to determine how to pursue the good of the human community in light of the ultimate end of the person. Such examples are clearly what Aquinas evokes when he describes the way in which one practical science is higher than another in article 5.

The applicability of this solution to the relationship between two sciences on grounds other than finality is less evident. In the situation of an architect and a stonecutter both practicing their craft in a common project, and the failure of a stone to function as it should in the architect's design, it seems just as likely that the architect (though his science is higher than the

[33] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 5.

other, in the sense of having a nobler subject) is at fault, that although the stone is perfectly well cut it fails because there is a flaw in the architect's design. Such would be the case between any two related sciences that have their own proper principles and that are not subalternated to each other. Therefore we do not yet have an explanation for how the speculative science of *sacra doctrina* judges the principles of any other science.

## III. Comparison with Metaphysics

Having thus seen the limitations of these interpretations of Aquinas, it makes sense to look to metaphysics for a possible enlightening comparison to this function of *sacra doctrina*: after all, metaphysics is a speculative science;[34] it does not subalternate any other sciences, but it is higher than any other philosophical science; and it rightly goes by the name of "wisdom." There is one way in which *sacra doctrina* is like metaphysics, [35] and another in which it is unlike, and both are helpful for understanding what I think Aquinas is proposing.

[34] It must be noted that Aquinas describes metaphysics (*In Metaphys.*, proem.) as architectonic with respect to other sciences, for it has to do with the final cause of the universe, toward which all other philosophical sciences are ultimately ordered.

[35] I *Metaphys.*, lect. 2, lays out six ways in which someone is said to be wise, and how each of these can be said of the metaphysician. (1) That man is wise who has knowledge of all things in the highest degree. The metaphysician has this because he has the most universal knowledge. (2) The wise man knows difficult things beyond the reach of ordinary men. Universals are most removed from sensibles, and in this sense are the hardest things to know; and the metaphysician considers universals. (3) The wise man is more certain. The most certain science is that to which the fewest things have been added. Thus metaphysics, the science of being, is more certain than physics, the science of mobile being—and all other sciences as well. (4) The wise man is better able to teach. He teaches best who knows the causes; and this is what metaphysics considers. (5) That science is closest to wisdom that is known for its own sake. This certainly applies to the science of first causes. (6) That science is closest to wisdom that is more basic, or nobler, than other sciences. "That science which considers the final cause, or that for the sake of which particular things are done, is related to the other sciences as a chief or master science is to a subordinate or ancillary one." And metaphysics considers the final cause (and the first cause, for the first cause is the final cause). Only the last quality pertains to the ordering of the sciences, and it really has to do with practical sciences.

*A) Similarity: Proving Common Principles and Manifesting Their Truth*

There are a variety of texts that talk about the relationship of metaphysics and other sciences. Metaphysics is said to "explain" (*notificare*) the principles of natural science,[36] or the common notions used by all sciences.[37] It "declares" the truth of first principles.[38] It "bestows" principles on other sciences,[39] and judges those sciences in light of their ultimate first principles.[40] Since it considers the final cause of the universe, its end has greater finality than that of the other sciences, and thus governs them.[41] I would venture to summarize Aquinas's teaching on this point as follows. Demonstration takes place by way of both proper principles and common notions, and since metaphysics is the most universal of the sciences, it can certainly be regarded as the source of the common notions the sciences use, though not of their proper principles. Since metaphysics considers these things most directly, and manifests them most clearly, one could say that metaphysics exercises a regulative role over the other sciences—but again, with respect to their common notions, not their proper principles.

This is helpful for understanding how *sacra doctrina* might function. Metaphysics is in its own right a science, which is to say that it gives a reasoned explanation for the truths that it holds, such as the principles of identity and noncontradiction, the notion of causality, and so on. *Sacra doctrina* is also a science. It includes both the things revealed by God and the reasoned examination of the intelligibility of those things, and all of this is available to other sciences. *Sacra doctrina* will not prove the principles of, say, biology. But because it considers things that are pertinent to biology in a higher light and in a higher way—for example, the reality and harmony of creation,

[36] *In Boet. De Trin.,* q. 5, a. 1, ad 9.
[37] VI *Nic. Ethic.*, lect. 5.
[38] Ibid.
[39] *In Boet de Trin.,* q. 6, a. 1.
[40] *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, ad 1.
[41] *ScG* I, c. 1; I *Metaphys.*, lect. 2

as well as its teleology—it manifests truths that, while they are not sufficient for biology, are part of what biology uses as its principles.[42]

*B) Contrast: Penetrating to Particulars*

Turning to the point of contrast, Aquinas gives us reason to say that *sacra doctrina* is more specific than metaphysics in what it can contribute. In the prologue to book 1 of his commentary on the *Sentences*, in a question on the unity of *sacra doctrina*, he says,

> this science is highest and derives its efficacy from the light of divine inspiration itself and, while remaining one and undivided, considers diverse things, and not just universally, like metaphysics, which considers all things insofar as they are beings, without descending to proper knowledge of moral matters or of natural things. Since the notion of being is diversified in diverse things metaphysics is insufficient for specific knowledge of them. But the divine light, remaining one in itself, is efficacious to make them manifest.[43]

He goes on, in a response to an objection, to say, "The divine light, from the certitude of which this science proceeds, is efficacious in making manifest the many things which are treated in the different sciences of philosophy which proceed from conceptions of these things to knowledge."[44] The truth manifested by *sacra doctrina* is not limited to common principles, but extends to particulars. Aquinas does not give an example of what he means here, but he does refer to the beginning of Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy*, which speaks of everything illuminated by the divine light leading back to divine unity.

One might think that Aquinas is adverting to the fact that revelation includes particulars as well as general principles, and

[42] Note that this is certainly an advance upon the view I objected to at the beginning, that the judgment that *sacra doctrina* provides is the simple comparison of the things known in faith to the things claimed in other sciences. Here we see that the judgment is dependent precisely on the science of *sacra doctrina*, the reasoned account it gives of things in the light of faith.

[43] I *Sent.*, pro., q. 1, a. 2.

[44] Ibid., ad 1.

that these particulars can be known with certitude just because they are revealed. But his language here suggests that he is emphasizing not the fact that certain particulars are revealed, but that the divine light illuminates them. In the *Summa* he incorporates particular revealed facts into the science of *sacra doctrina* as examples to be followed (e.g., what the Old Testament patriarchs did can provide a moral exemplar, which is a proper subject for *sacra doctrina*) and as attestations of the authority of the one through whom the revelation comes.[45] Combining this with the teaching of the *Sentences* commentary, we might say that the particular things known in *sacra doctrina* are seen as suffused with a divine light, which creates an intrinsic connection with everything else known in *sacra doctrina*. For example, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is one of the preeminent particulars of the Old Testament. On the basis of question 1 of the *Summa* alone, we might think that its significance is that it exemplifies the moral truth that one must have faith in God's promise. No doubt it does mean this. But the teaching of the *Sentences* commentary suggests that it is not simply a moral object lesson, but a revelation, a manifestation of the divine light in a particular event—which is therefore not simply a particular instance of a general rule, but a paradigmatic, exemplary manifestation of a truth.

## IV. How *Sacra Doctrina* Judges the Principles of Other Sciences: A Proposal

Several points are obvious from the foregoing. If the theologian is to judge the principles of another science, he must be able to think through both *sacra doctrina* and the other science. The process of judgment requires both elements. If the theologian judges another science solely on the basis of knowing *sacra doctrina*, then either he is judging only the conclusions of that other science, or the other science derives its principles from *sacra doctrina*. If his judgment is made on the basis solely of his knowledge of the other science, then *sacra doctrina* has

[45] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2.

no role to play.[46] All of these situations are possible, but none of them give an adequate interpretation of our text.

The situation we are trying to envisage here is one in which both *sacra doctrina* and another science are given their due, and in which *sacra doctrina* has a decisive influence on the very structure of the other science without that science deriving its principles from *sacra doctrina*. We are to imagine this judgment regarding, say, philosophy as the work of one single person who is both a theologian and a philosopher—or, perhaps, as the joint effort of a group of people, some of whom are theologians and others of whom are philosophers.[47] The theologians cannot just preach to the philosophers; they must be receptive to the truly philosophical work of the philosophers, but also raise questions and offer insights that come from their theology, the consideration of which may allow the philosophers to reformulate and refine their philosophy. Snap judgments—the immediate and decisive judgment about a truth-claim made by the philosophers on the basis of some clear and obvious principle of faith—are not what are called for here. Instead, we may expect a lengthy deliberative process, driven by an ever-deepening understanding of revelation.

In the remainder of this article I will give three examples of what it might mean to think through both what is proper to a science in its own right and the ramifications of the faith. I must begin, however, with a caveat. If I am correct in my interpretation of Aquinas on this point, what is required for judging the principles of another science is twofold: knowledge of *sacra doctrina* and knowledge of that other science. As a theologian, I have some expertise in the former. But unless I have a thoroughgoing knowledge of another science, unless I have mastery and wisdom in that science, I am hampered in my

[46] Some construals of "Christian philosophy" seem to adopt this view. Philosophy is judged solely on the basis of philosophical principles, though the individual philosopher may in fact have a stronger grasp of these principles by virtue of his faith.

[47] A glance at the difference between the medieval and the modern university makes it clear why I highlight the possibility of a communal project. In Aquinas's day, it was possible for one person to have mastery of *sacra doctrina* and a variety of other disciplines. It is not so possible today.

ability to come to meaningful judgments about its principles. Aquinas wants judgment to be made about the principles of, for example, psychology by someone who is both a theologian and a psychologist. The three examples I give below pertain to psychology, political science, and evolutionary biology. I am neither a psychologist, nor a political scientist, nor an evolutionary biologist—and therefore my conclusions about the principles of those sciences are only tentative. But they may be suggestive.

We know in *sacra doctrina* the perfection of the humanity of Jesus Christ. *That* that humanity is suffused with the grace of union is a dogmatic fact—but what that implies about the knowledge, the virtues, and the passions of Christ is the work of *sacra doctrina* in the form of theological reasoning. Now, if we turn to the lower science of human psychology, we can see that there is an overlap with Christology: psychology is, for example, keenly interested in the passions of the soul, and *sacra doctrina* has things to say about the passions of the perfect humanity of Christ, including those of his soul. This does not mean that one becomes a psychologist by thinking about the humanity of Christ; the principles of psychology are surely learned by observation and induction, by a broader knowledge of the human constitution, and such-like. What I am suggesting is that in considering the humanity of Christ, the theologian has a guide to help him consider not only the truth about particular claims regarding human psychology but also the very parameters of that science—its basic principles. We can expect an interplay between the claims of these two sciences, leading to the most adequate formulation of psychology (and, it follows, improving the perspicacity of the knowledge of human psychology that the theologian imports to help him understand his own science).

For another example, one might look at the relationship between political science and what *sacra doctrina* says about the kingdom of God. It is certainly not the case that the Christian, simply as Christian, knows and understands the principles of the science of politics: there is no relationship of subalternation here. But the Christian does have a knowledge of the human

good that comes to him from revelation, and if he reflects on it in the way of *sacra doctrina* he will come to have a sense of its ramifications for the political good. This goes to the level of the fundamental principles of politics. Take for example the controverted question of whether the State ought to be confessionally Christian or whether instead it ought to have as its ideal modern pluralism. This is not an easy matter to discern—and again, it is not obvious that the Christian must hold for the former option, as one might expect from a simple transposition (e.g., concluding from the fact that God is the source of authority for the State that the State ought to adhere explicitly to divine, natural, and ecclesiastical law). Certainly the Christian will hold that the political good is less final than the transcendental good of man, but he will have to think deeply about what God wants for the political order—as well as what the natural laws of human community allow to be possible or impossible, desirable or undesirable.

For a final example, consider the relationship between *sacra doctrina* and evolutionary biology as they pertain to human origins and original sin. There are, no doubt, Christians who will argue that any biological theory that asserts that there are multiple origins to the human race must be false because it conflicts with the biblical story of Adam and Eve. This would be the simple transposition of something known through revelation into another science—which is, again, the most common reading of Aquinas in our text. It is noteworthy that Pope Pius XII, dealing with this very question in the encyclical *Humani generis*, did not take this approach. To be sure, he attacked the biological theory of polygenism, but his chief argument was "it is in no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Teaching Authority of the Church propose with regard to *original sin*."[48] The pope implicitly acknowledged that biology has no concern with the literal historical veracity of the biblical account of creation. Instead, he said that there is something that we know as part of *sacra*

[48] Pius XII, *Humani generis* 37 (emphasis added).

*doctrina,* namely, the truth of original sin, that does govern what we can say in biology, and will properly affect our approbation or disapprobation of proposed biological theories. He even leaves open the possibility that if a theory of polygenism could be constructed that would not run afoul of what we know of original sin, that theory would not necessarily be judged false. What do we know of original sin? Dogmatically, we can say that it is that by which sin entered the world, and with sin death; that its effect was not only on Adam, but on all his posterity; and that this effect is not simply a matter of imitation—in the words of the Council of Trent, it has been "transfused into all."[49] Theologically, one might go further. The Thomist will, for example, insist theologically that we are not talking here about actual sin—the phenomenological fact that all of us commit personal sins, and that these have a profound deleterious effect on our world—but about the sin of Adam that establishes for us the condition into which we come into the world. Original sin exists today because, whatever exactly the sin of Adam was, and however exactly its effects are passed on to us, we come into the world with a wounded nature. Furthermore, the Thomist will say that the wound of that nature, as it pertains to death, is not the loss of a natural created condition of immortality, but rather the loss of the preternatural gift of freedom from death. These are things pertinent to evolutionary biology. For example, the biologist considers death and decay as natural qualities of composite beings, and the Thomist does not disagree; perhaps Adam and Eve and their descendants would never have died if they had not sinned, but this could only have been a supernatural gift (which is of course beyond the reckoning of the biologist). But the Thomist and the biologist can have a mutually informative conversation about how the propagation of a nature is connected to the biological processes of generation and the development of a species.

These examples seem to me to illuminate some ways in which the theologian can judge the principles of other sciences.

[49] Council of Trent, "Decree concerning Original Sin," canon 3.

This is not an easy task, for it involves a serious thinking-through of both *sacra doctrina* and the other sciences. There are only very limited ways in which the person of simple faith can engage in such a judgment. But the result is a true harmony of the sciences, ordered by *sacra doctrina* without any violation of the autonomy of each.

# BOOK REVIEWS

*The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology*. By THOMAS JOSEPH WHITE, O.P. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015. Pp. xiv + 534. $65.00 (cloth), $34.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8132-2745-0 (cloth), 978-0-8132-3009-2 (paper).

Thomas Joseph White's substantial volume sets forth ambitious goals in ten chapters framed with substantial introductory and concluding discussions. The introduction clarifies that "this is a Thomistic study in Christology that seeks to understand in a speculative fashion what it means to say that God became a man and that this man who is God died by crucifixion and rose from the dead for the salvation of the human race" (4). The study is framed in response to concerns and challenges posed by historical-critical biblical scholarship, Kantian philosophy, and the influence of these two on modern Catholic and Protestant theology, particularly through the influence of Karl Barth. In the face of these concerns and challenges, White affirms that "Christology has an irreducible ontological dimension that is essential to its integrity as a science" (5). This fundamental thesis courses through the veins of each chapter, with the particular juxtapositions and arguments of these chapters constituting the work's aim just as much as the overall thesis.

The book begins with an introduction ("The Biblical Ontology of Christ") calibrated to frame the enterprise of scientific Christology in biblically rooted ontological or metaphysical claims. This framing reveals much about White's argument and interpretation of Thomistic Christology. Stated otherwise, this work details a Chalcedonian grammar of the Incarnation as expounded by Thomas Aquinas and in response to modern Christological and theological concerns in order to defend Scholastic Christology's "perennial importance for a right understanding of central mysteries of the New Testament" (22). By emphasizing on "perennial importance" White shows his understanding of the nature of theological truths against some modern interpretations, and therefore he offers further impetus for addressing questions raised by modern Christologies through the resources of Scholastic Christology.

The real question of the prolegomenon, "Is a Modern Thomistic Christology Possible?" is not whether but how it is possible. Here, White considers the defining features of modern Christologies, the defining features of Thomistic Christology, and how the latter can speak with and to the former.

White identifies two foundations for modern Christologies: historical-critical biblical scholarship and Immanuel Kant's critique of classical metaphysics. With respect to the first, the central question posed concerns the relationship between the "historical Jesus" and the "Christ of theological reflection." Friedrich Schleiermacher and Barth offer two differing responses to this modern question. "Schleiermacher correlates post-Enlightenment studies of the history of Jesus with a decidedly post-Chalcedonian stance of interpretation regarding classical (pre-modern) Christological ontology" (35), all of which leads him to focus entirely on "the original religious consciousness and sentiments of the founder of Christianity in their unalloyed beauty" (36). In so doing, Schleiermacher prioritizes retrieval of the historical Jesus over the subsequent adulterations of this religious consciousness by ecclesiastical pronouncements and theological reflection. Barth, in contrast, minimizes or undermines historical reconstructions of Jesus as inherently problematic and as unreliable, purely human speculation distracting from the proper object of faith. In White's presentation, Schleiermacher and Barth thus represent divergent and even opposite responses to the promise and challenge of historical-critical biblical scholarship. Both fundamentally fail insofar as they cannot methodologically integrate analysis of the historical Jesus and the Christ of theological reflection.

With respect to the Kantian critiques of classical metaphysics, White summarizes the problems of Schleiermacher and Barth as follows:

> Schleiermacher rejects metaphysics and resorts to consciousness, while Barth rejects human metaphysics and resorts to a sort of revealed Christological metaphysics. But Barth's strategy, seemingly designed to avoid falling into Schleiermachian reductionism, ends up (ironically) being an application of human categories after all, and (even more ironically) these turn out to be categories of consciousness. One can avoid these problems by accepting the possibility of a natural capacity in human beings for metaphysical reflection, so long as this metaphysics is endowed with a sense of analogy, so that divine things are not reduced to human ones. (50)

At the heart of White's project lies this reinvigoration of "a natural capacity in human beings for metaphysical reflection" rooted in an analogy of being. This approach intends to balance "an ontology of the hypostatic union and an anthropological theology that focuses upon the human actions of Christ" (67).

The bulk of the study falls within two parts: first, "The Mystery of the Incarnation," and second, "The Mystery of the Redemption." The former opens with a chapter on "the ontology of the hypostatic union," establishing the ontological foundations for a classical single-subject Christology in order to counter a Nestorian character prevalent in modern Christologies and derived largely from Karl Rahner. This is not to claim that Rahner violates Chalcedonian affirmations of a single subject in Christ, but rather to argue

"that Rahner locates the ontological union of God and man in Christ in the same place where Nestorianism typically locates it: uniquely in the spiritual operations of the man Jesus, particularly as they are conformed by divine indwelling to the mystery of God in himself" (76). After tracing central aspects of Thomas Aquinas's articulations of the hypostatic union against thirteenth-century traces of Nestorianism, White turns to Rahner as well as to Schleiermacher, John Hick, Jacques Dupuis, and Jon Sobrino. As a means of acknowledging legitimate concerns proposed by these thinkers within the larger framework of a Chalcedonian Christology, White stresses "that the human conscious activity of Jesus (while not *constitutive*) is in fact *indicative* or *expressive* of his hypostatic identity as the Son" (122).

Chapter 2, "The Human Nature and Grace of Christ," elaborates upon the ontology of the hypostatic union by engaging Rahner and Marie-Dominique Chenu. This chapter develops the interplay of Christology and theological anthropology. "If nature is not *historically and existentially* separable from the mystery of God's gracious action in history," White argues, "it is nevertheless distinguishable and can even be appealed to *precisely as a way toward understanding* the goodness of the mystery of life in Christ" (130). In this way, White resists conflating Christology and theological anthropology, while arguing for the utility or even necessity of recognizing, at least in the abstract, a notion of pure nature. This grounds a discourse of hierarchically ordered natural ends according to which humanity remains open to what transcends it.

White resumes consideration of analogy in chapter 3, "The Likeness of the Human and Divine Natures," engaging Barth and Eberhard Jüngel as challengers to a Thomistic *analogia entis*. Jüngel assists in "[framing] the debate between Thomists and Barthians" (173). White argues that Barth misconstrues Aquinas on analogy in significant and unfortunate ways, largely because Thomas's presentation of analogy and analogical causality answers the theological questions posed by Barth better than does Barth's own *analogia fidei*. Thomistic analogical causality provides "crucial resources by which to respond to Kantian criticisms of Christianity in ways that Barthian thought does not" (180) in part because "Barth and Barthians tend to import wholesale Kantian *philosophical presuppositions* into their theology without sufficient justification" (194).

Chapter 4, "Why Christology Presupposes Natural Theology," weaves together affirmations of analogical causality and "of a natural capacity in human beings for metaphysical reflection" (50). White rightly specifies Thomistic analogy as both ontological and propositional, with the propositional depending upon the ontological. Building upon analogical causality in response to Barthian uses of the analogy of faith, White argues "that the natural human capacity to think analogically about God in his unity and existence as the cause of the world—with the help of concepts drawn from creation—is a necessary epistemological presupposition for any scriptural or dogmatic account of the incarnate Word" (224). Without this natural human

capacity, White argues that the proper reception of revelation would be impossible.

The final chapter of part 1 ("The Necessity of the Beatific Vision in the Earthly Christ") highlights crucial distinctions from the long tradition of Chalcedonian Christological reflection to counter Jean Galot and Thomas Weinandy on Christ's knowledge. Against such contemporary criticisms or denials of Christ's beatific knowledge, White first develops a Thomistic response focused on Christ's two wills and instrumental causality, together with a distinction between mode and nature. These points require, as a necessary condition, the perfection of Christ's human knowledge so that his human will could remain "subordinated to" and "expressive of" the divine will (256). Recognizing the force of modern Christological emphases, White extends what Thomas explicitly argues and writes: "The will of God is present in the person of the Son in a unique way. The Son subsists eternally, having in himself the unique divine will. However, he also has this divine will in a filial mode, since all that he has (even as God) is received eternally through the begetting of the Father and stands in relation to the Father as its principle and source" (264-65). White elaborates Thomas in order to ground aspects of Barth's Christological insight in a classical Trinitarian metaphysics.

Part 2 turns to redemption in conversation with modern "kenotic" Christologies and crafts "a plausible Thomistic alternative" (277). Chapter 6, "The Obedience of the Son," counters Barth with elements of classical (Athanasian) Trinitarianism. White reads Barth as reducing the Son's personhood to a constitutive obedience, a reduction entailing logical problems for Trinitarianism and compromising the Son's freedom to choose to become incarnate for human redemption (300). The Thomistic alternative holds that the Son's "passive historical submission and his self-determined human actions find their perfect, transcendent exemplar in his filial manner of being as the Son, at once eternally receptive of the divine life he receives from the Father, and active (in this same divine life) in all things" (304).

The following chapter ("Did God Abandon Jesus? The Dereliction on the Cross") rules out several kenotic approaches by taking despair and separation from God to entail sin, thus allowing for these to be eliminated on biblical grounds. Integrating modern and patristic biblical interpretation, White argues for Christ's cry as a prayer of desire conveying desire in agony and (merely) metaphorical despair. "In this way, the happiness of being united in will with the Father could coexist with extreme agony in Christ, such that the two experiences were objectively distinct but subjectively (and therefore experientially) inseparable" (330). For White, affirmation of Christ's perfect "knowledge present throughout his passion necessarily *augmented* his desire for our salvation *even as it simultaneously augmented his agony*" (337). In other words, what modern kenotic Christologies hope to achieve through denial of Christ's beatific knowledge and emphasis on dereliction can be more richly achieved through a Thomistic framework.

Chapter 8, "The Death of Christ and the Mystery of the Cross," recalls the challenges of historical-critical biblical scholarship and Kantian metaphysics as underlying modern kenotic Christologies. "The modern kenotic tradition," White notes, "has sought to solve modern Christological conundrums, but it has thereby also introduced soteriological problems into modern Christology that would seem to require correction" (376). White's irenic corrective reaffirms "an ontology of the divine names (of classical attributes of the divinity)" (347) applied to Christ's divine nature. Kenotic Christologies tend to focus myopically on "the human character of the event of Christ's suffering and death" (368), and this diminishes the soteriological depth of the event. Expanding the focus to include ontological considerations of Christ's divine nature reinforces the Passion's depth insofar as "Christ can choose to redeem the world freely in love only because he knows of the value of his sacrifice, and its meaning. His act of free self-offering requires that he know that he has been sent by the Father for our salvation, but it also requires that he know who he himself is who is making the offering" (356).

White addresses a central theme of kenotic Christologies in chapter 9, "Did Christ Descend into Hell? The Mystery of Holy Saturday." White delves into this mystery in conversation with Hans Urs von Balthasar and the variety of concerns animating Balthasar's thought, including universal salvation, ecumenism, and Trinitarian theology. White approves Balthasar's approach insofar as it acknowledges the historical reality of Holy Saturday but fears that Balthasar strays problematically far from presentations in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Throughout this chapter, White recognizes a host of difficulties—for example, questions regarding limbo—and ends with a clear encapsulation of his larger point: "God can reveal to us in particularly intensive ways his own goodness and intrinsically immutable love through the drama of his own *human* suffering, death, and descent into hell" (420).

The final chapter ("The Ontology of the Resurrection") first reminds readers of a bifurcation in modern Christologies in that they "[tend] to reduce Christology to a form of idealized anthropology" or to reflect a "theological assimilation of all natural forms of knowledge into Christology" (438). White proposes to balance "philosophical anthropology and theological realism regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (439), in the process combatting denials of any intermediate state between one's natural death and resurrection as well as highlighting the central Thomistic categories of exemplary and instrumental efficient causality. These Thomistic causal categories provide a robust vocabulary and ontological basis for maintaining that "the story of the resurrection is a story of the redemption of our physical world and not the story of the creation of a wholly other, alternative world" (454).

A lengthy conclusion ("The Promise of Thomism") offers a fitting culmination to this study by resuming central themes developed throughout the chapters while also stressing the nature and importance of Christology as a science (in conversation with and in response to Edward Schillebeeckx). White

offers a concise summary: "the study of Christology is not first and foremost historical (even if it habitually makes use of detailed historical knowledge and argumentation). Rather, the study of theology in general and Christology in particular, is structural or essential. Christology studies the structure of a mystery: the mystery of the incarnation, the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ, his grace and its effects, and the eschatological hope arising from his person and activity" (468-69).

These brief remarks do no justice to White's arguments with respect to their complexity or to the thinkers and sources they engage. Nor do they constitute even an adequate summary. But they hopefully do convey the general contours of an ambitious project. Offering substantive yet concise evaluation of such an ambitious project also proves difficult. What should be said, at minimum, is that White largely achieves the aims he sets for the project. This is not to suggest that the individual analyses are beyond criticism. Exception could be taken to the interpretation of key figures and even to the foundational framing in terms of Kantian metaphysics and engagements with Barth and those influenced one way or another by him. Focusing more than in passing on such issues risks missing the point of the study in that White's true aim rests little, if at all, with the exposition itself of early modern or contemporary figures and more with reiterating, articulating, and developing the vital core of a Thomistic Christology in an idiom conversant with and hopefully persuasive to modern Christologies otherwise suspicious of classical metaphysics, natural theology, and the standard affirmations of Scholastic Christology. All the more impressive is that White accomplishes this while making serious and occasionally sustained use of modern biblical scholarship as a vehicle facilitating the translation of Thomistic Christological commitments rather than as their opponent. Students and scholars of Thomas Aquinas, Scholastic Christology, modern theology, kenotic Christologies, and many others will find much of enduring value in this impressive monograph.

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*The Practice of Catholic Theology: A Modest Proposal*. By PAUL J. GRIFFITHS. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. Pp. xiii + 142. $29.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8132-2890-7.

Paul Griffiths's *The Practice of Catholic Theology* steps into the battlefields over Catholic theology with "a modest proposal" that will be of interest both

to those just learning to be and to those already practiced in Catholic theology. With characteristic clarity, originality, and compactness, he gives dozens of very helpful "how-to" (xi) tips on practicing Catholic theology. He also develops a concept of Catholic theology that is, in at least one crucial way, explicitly a "minority" proposal. I highly recommend the many helpful tips to all, those learning to practice as well as those practiced in Catholic theology. But I will also offer a reading of his minority proposal that registers some minor dissents on the way—all presuming, of course, that I have read him correctly.

Griffiths's book began as an invited lecture on "theological disagreement" at the 2014 annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America (published in the CTSA Proceedings). There Griffiths identified three tasks that belong to the work of Catholic theology: discovery (under the authority of Catholic bishops, obviously including the bishop of Rome), interpretation, and perhaps most importantly, speculation. He then argued that, by not making such episcopal discovery an explicit part of its mission, the CTSA (in contrast to the Academy of Catholic Theology) was promoting a kind of disagreement that undercut the disagreements over interpretation and speculation essential to Catholic theology. Needless to say, the talk was intended to be and is controversial.

That 2014 talk is now located "in a broader consideration of what theology is and how it should be learned and performed" (xi). The earlier claim about the episcopal establishment of church doctrine is legible in the book (132-34), but not the particular polemical edge of the published talk—although Griffiths persuasively insists that the practice of Catholic theology always involves *agon* (struggle) and periodically antagonism (argumentative polemic) (125-29). To use an analogy that Griffiths does not, his earlier polemic is a kind of rhetorical "just war" and therefore presumes a range of conditions and ends, lest it be confused nowadays with a kind of "total war." Griffiths's range of conditions and ends is here organized as a series of forty-one brief, readable sections, averaging about three and one-half pages, each a nugget of insight and information. Here I merely take the reader through what I read as the book's three main movements, raising some questions on the way.

Griffiths's first movement unpacks a "stipulative definition . . . of theology" as a species of "reasoned discourse" (2). It is generically "reasoned discourse about god (or the gods)" and specifically Christian "reasoned discourse about the god who is the triune LORD, the god of Israel who became incarnate as Jesus the Christ" (ibid.). Theology, both generically and specifically, aims at "cognitive intimacy" with what or whom (in the case of Catholic theology) it is about (ibid.). This might sound to incipient practitioners like a relatively traditional Catholic distinction between natural and revealed theology. But it is not identical to Vatican I's distinction between a twofold object of knowledge distinct in principle and object. Griffiths does not, of course, deny such a distinction in its appropriate context, although this is not the only time

some will wish for more comparison of his positions with precursor traditions—in Griffiths's terms, more "interpretation."

In any case, getting a grip on this opening distinction requires keeping in mind the book's dedication and summary conclusion. Griffiths's dedication offers the book not only "to the church of Jesus Christ, which subsists in the Catholic church" and "to the LORD" but also "to those who think and write about the LORD in the church's service" *and* "to those who think and write about the LORD outside the church" (v). And his summary coda emphasizes that theology has "a doubly open field"—"open . . . to anyone who wishes to perform it by gaining the necessary knowledge and skill . . . [and] open . . . to learning whatever can be learned from those who perform theology extra-ecclesially" (134). Griffiths is helpful shifting a more typical question "What can Catholic theology learn from others?" to "What can Catholics and non-Catholics contribute to Catholic theology?" How can this be done?

The generic and specific forms of theology share "reasoned discourse," along with its aim at "cognitive intimacy." Griffiths unpacks each element of his stipulation, including "discourse" (3-6), "theology as discourse" (7-14), and the LORD (15-18), which as "a name . . . does the same work as the Hebrew tetragrammaton" (2). But Griffiths also sharply distinguishes cognitive intimacy about the gods, god, or the LORD from "fleshly or affective intimacy" (20)—like the difference between theology and confession, or between "the offering of a description" and "the offering of a caress" (22). This "deflates theology" (23)—and, it seems to me, "reasoned discourse" more generically. But it also means that "Catholic theology, in the full and proper sense, may, therefore, be done by those who are themselves not Catholic—so Catholics ought to think, even though many of them do not" (25). In still other words, "the LORD may have revealed things about the LORD's self to non-Catholic (and non-Christian) communities which remain hidden from Catholics (it's Catholic doctrine to affirm this of Jews)" (27). Furthermore, the theology of the people of Israel "is the interlocutor of most importance for Catholics, more even, than the theology done by non-Catholic Christians" (29). Catholic theology can be practiced by those who love the LORD. But it can also be practiced by demons and the otherwise indifferent (42-43), and the morally depraved in small or large ways (44-48). Griffiths knows that "so understanding the word 'theology' is a minority view within the Catholic tradition" (42). Other "stipulative [definitions]," Griffiths admits, are possible, and they "lead elsewhere" (3).

Does this mean Griffiths's argument is based on mere "stipulation"? I do not think so. His stipulation forces us to ask for the role of "definitions" in the practice of Catholic theology. As he puts it, "If metaphor is language's dreamwork, stipulative definition is language's (and therefore thought's) engine and pilot" (ibid.). So where does Griffiths's stipulation lead? Here I skip a number of helpful tips this stipulative definition enables Griffiths to make (about various kinds of theology and Catholic theology) in order to

move to what I would call his second and third movements, after the unpacking of his stipulative definition of "theology": a discussion of "theologians," defined simply as those with "the necessary know-how (a matter of intellectual skill) coupled with sufficient knowledge-that (a matter of fluency produced by wide and deep reading in the tradition's archive)" (41). "Knowledge-that" is embodied in "the Catholic archive." Some sections of the archive are nontextual, but the archive is primarily, Griffiths argues, textual (i.e., Scriptural, conciliar, magisterial, canonical, liturgical, and other resources). Griffiths devotes about a quarter of the book (54-91) to taking the reader through this archive. Yet it admittedly "is impossible for any individual" to "be conversant with and responsive to the preserved archive in its entirety" (55). The texts of theologians are included at the end, as befits the deflation of theology: *doctores ecclesiae* and more contemporary readings "mostly . . . from a perspective at odds with the one adopted here" (135-42). For example, canonical Scripture is central and fundamental to the Catholic archive, although Griffiths is careful to note that Scripture "has no place in paradise and will have none in heaven" (57) and that even now in our fallen world, "no natural language" (including Hebrew, Greek, or Latin) is "more intimate with what the LORD has said than any other" (59). This is an explicit critique of much Jewish and Protestant theology, as well as an implicit critique of Catholic theology's (and the magisterium's) long promotion of the Vulgate—unless we "interpret" that promotion as bound to passing pastoral circumstances. But, again, more "interpretation" would help learners, but the learned as well. Griffiths's brief section on "magisterial texts" (71-73) notes ways they are essential, even though they are not always easy to identify and "aren't beyond error, sometimes widespread and deep-going" (71). But I find the recommendation or requirement that theologians "should kiss the textual body of local episcopal teaching" an unnecessary step beyond cognitive intimacy (72). Griffths's remarks on canon law (78-81) and liturgy (81-87) are splendid case studies of how "faith-filled and baptized Catholic [theologians]" and "those doing Catholic theology from outside the church" will approach the same archive differently but in mutually illuminating ways (80).

Addressing such issues requires not only "knowledge-that" of the archive but also (in what I would describe as a third movement of his argument) knowledge-how. Theologians' know-how in using the archive is generic and specific. The generic skills are those like fluency in Christian theological discourse, the ability to recognize and generate theological questions, to make distinctions, and to argue one's case. The theologically more specific skills are (as Griffiths's argued in his CTSA talk) the discovery of settled matters, interpretive questioning of such matters, and speculation about unsettled issues using theology's generic skills (91-94). These skills are mutually required not like a ladder but more like a "feedback loop" or a "multi-linked helix" (93), including "intellectual imagination" (95-96).

It seems to me that Griffiths's case for Catholic theology as a doubly open intellectual enterprise climaxes when he turns to unpacking "fluency in the grammar of Christian theology . . . [, which is] the first and essential tool of [the] trade" (97). Section 27 on "fluency" is the longest of the book, but the discussion of fluency includes several other sections. I here abstract and contrast two elements of this fluency. One of the key grammatical rules for fluency (or what Griffiths also calls a "mnemonic" for such a rule) is, quoting a maxim from Bonaventure, "every kind of cognition is theology's slave" (101)—a maxim important enough for Griffiths to also include it in the book's dedication (v). This maxim "at least" means "theology provides an interpretive frame for [other reasoned discourses] which they cannot provide for [theology] or for themselves"—"an unframeable frame" (100, 101). This strikes me (as I think it would also strike Thomas Aquinas) as a good "grammatical" rule, a good case of reasoned discourse about reasoned discourse. It also makes clear one sense in which non-Catholics can do Catholic theology: by learning such grammatical rules and how they apply to specific cases, even cases when Catholic theology claims to provide an unframeable frame for what the non-Catholic student of Catholic theology takes as "frameable."

Fluency (Griffiths says) also includes learning "to enter and occupy the phenomenological attitude toward what they [those, whether Catholic or not, doing Catholic theology] read"—that is, they "learn . . . to look closely at what's ordinarily transparent and unremarked" in the archive (106). Here fluency includes more than knowing the grammar of reasoned discourse. It includes probing the archive, seeking out the "unremarked." A key example of the execution of the phenomenological attitude is Aquinas's discussion of fear in *STh* II-II, q. 19, a. 11 (109-16). Although Griffiths does not make this point, it seems to me that the phenomenological attitude, practiced by Catholics or non-Catholics within the grammar of Catholic faith, could lead to novel insights and even reforms of Catholic reasoned discourse—opening the possibility of non-Catholics' as well as Catholics' proposing such reforms.

If I am right to read Griffiths's proposal in three movements, I think this book is an unrivaled contribution to arguments in and over Catholic theology. Such arguments can now be taken as arguments over "the practice of Catholic theology"—over one or more of his threefold movement—as a whole or in its many details. In view of the many sorts of pietism in pulpit and pew, I am generally sympathetic to Griffiths's unrelenting focus on "reasoned discourse" about the LORD, allowing all God's creatures (Catholics and not) to contribute to the practice, even as Griffiths "deflates" theology, and, more generally, reasoned discourse. I doubt this will persuade most of those in "Catholic Studies" to call what they are doing "Catholic theology," but what is primarily at stake in this book is how Catholic theology should take them, not how they take themselves. And I would relish Griffiths's further theology of the Trinitarian Word as a context for our reasoned discourse in general and

in Catholic theology in particular. But that must surely be for another time and place. It is more than enough to have given some new footing to our arguments over Catholic theology.

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*Priestly Celibacy: Theological Foundations*. By GARY SELIN. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. Pp. xxi + 210. $29.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8132-2841-9.

Is the "law of celibacy" only an ecclesiastical tradition, or might it also be an apostolic tradition? Does this long-standing discipline chiefly serve a practical purpose, or does it have theological roots attached to the nature of the priesthood? Do the theological arguments advanced to support it depend on flawed and obsolete theories, or has there been a doctrinal development that supplies a positive and convincing rationale? Is the celibate vocation of secular priests the same as or different from the vocation to chastity in the consecrated life?

In *Priestly Celibacy: Theological Foundations,* Fr. Gary Selin addresses these questions and opts for the second alternative in each instance. He presents the case for "continence-celibacy" as an apostolic tradition whose theological roots reveal it to be profoundly suitable to the nature of the priesthood, above all to the episcopate. He shows how the Second Vatican Council's theological arguments concerning the Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological dimensions of priestly celibacy have been developed into a solid, positive rationale. Given this new context, he is able to discover how celibacy, as a charism, is integral, though not essential, to the priesthood, and how it is ordered, not only to personal asceticism, but also to priestly ministry and in particular to the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Selin successfully establishes his thesis that the reasons for observing priestly celibacy are doctrinal and not merely pragmatic or disciplinary. He documents a development that shifts attention from the doctrinal reasons given in the past—ritual purity and the superiority of consecrated celibacy to the married state—to those that highlight the imitation of Christ's own celibate condition, the newness of his priesthood, and his role as the Bridegroom who sacrifices his life for the Church. This project is in some ways related to the task of defending the Church's practice of reserving priestly ordination to men. It requires retracing the history of the tradition with the

help of contemporary scholarship, evaluating inadequate and incomplete explanations, and formulating theological arguments of fittingness that are fully evangelical and supported by the analogy of faith.

In treating the biblical foundations of priestly celibacy, Selin distinguishes texts that portray virginity or celibacy as a Christian ideal for everyone (Matt 19:11-12; 1 Cor 7:25-40; and Matt 22:30-32) from those that seem to require continence of the Church's ministers—bishops (1 Tim 3:2), presbyters (Titus 1:6), and deacons (1 Tim 3:12). He draws on Ignace de la Potterie's theory that "man (or husband) of one wife" in the Pastoral Letters is a technical expression referring to the early Church's practice of ordaining mature married men with the expectation that they would thereafter be bound by perfect and perpetual continence. The scholarly study of "continence-celibacy" in the patristic era (e.g., the work of Christian Cochini, Alfons Stickler, Stefan Heid, and Roman Cholij—building on the earlier thesis of Gustav Bickell) favors this interpretation and offers new grounds for discovering the antiquity, and possible apostolic authority, of clerical celibacy. A growing consensus has gradually replaced the view that the Church imposed the discipline of celibacy on the clergy at a much later date. Selin's summary of the historical evidence will help make the origins of the practice better known, and it corrects the impression that the argument from ritual purity is indebted to non-Christian influence. Selin gives a brief account of the subsequent history and theology of celibacy in the Latin Church, leading up to the Funk-Bickell debate and the seminal work of other nineteenth-century scholars such as Johann Adam Möhler, Blessed John Henry Newman, and Matthias Scheeben. He points out, however, that the reasons given to justify clerical celibacy in the early twentieth century were often merely pragmatic (e.g., freedom from distractions and worldly concerns), or defensive and apparently negative (ritual purity, superiority to marriage).

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council on priestly celibacy (especially *Optatam Totius* 10 and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 16) draws more fully on the New Testament and introduces the three positive dimensions—Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological—that have been developed by the post-conciliar magisterium. Instead of featuring the appeal to ritual purity and the superiority of the celibate life to marriage, the magisterium directs attention to the person and example of Jesus, the "newness" of Christian virginity and celibacy, and their potential for dynamic association with Christ's own priestly ministry and for spiritual "fruitfulness" or paternity. Selin takes the reader through this development, document by document, with special attention to Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus,* Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis,* and the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

Selin then recapitulates the arguments for the suitability of priestly celibacy in a systematic treatment (necessarily quite repetitious) of the threefold scheme. The *Christological dimension* focuses on a configuration to and following of Christ—in his consecration, or manner of life, as well as in his

mission and priestly ministry. Celibacy is identified as a divine gift or *charism* that accompanies and supports the priest's call to radical discipleship and his mission to act *in persona Christi capitis Ecclesiae*. According to Selin, episcopal celibacy (which remains an obligation in the Eastern Churches) is the preeminent manifestation of this charism. The *ecclesiological dimension* follows from the priest's configuration to Christ in his relationship to the Church. A nuptial-ecclesiological understanding of his priestly service to the Church finds expression in his offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The rehabilitated ritual-purity argument is now situated in the context of the New Covenant and Christ's loving self-gift to the Church as her Bridegroom (Eph 5:25) and the spiritual Father of her offspring. It is recast as the "purity of nuptial love for the Church" rather than "purity from personal sexual defilement" (150). In his lengthy section on the ecclesiological dimension, Selin makes good use of the Christological motifs (especially Christ the Bridegroom and the sacrifice of the New Covenant) that the magisterium has used for the defense of a male-only priesthood. He extends this speculative section still further by examining the motif of spiritual paternity as a manly expression of pastoral charity. The *eschatological dimension* of ministerial celibacy is elaborated in light of New Testament sources (Matt 22:30; 1 Cor 7:31; Luke 18:28-30) and in terms of "the *priest's union with Christ through liturgical and intercessory prayer*" (154). Priestly celibacy is a vivid sign of faith in the resurrection of the dead. In this third chapter, on the three dimensions of priestly celibacy, Selin draws together a number of important themes and suggests several fruitful avenues for further investigation.

The fourth chapter presents constructive proposals for a "Eucharistic-Eschatological" theology of priestly celibacy focused on mediation and for a theology, inspired by Pope Benedict XVI's formulation in *Sacramentum Caritatis* 24, that links the Eucharist and pastoral charity. Overall, Selin makes the case that there is much to be gained from a deeper exploration of the doctrine that accompanies the discipline of priestly continence and celibacy, and he marks out many paths that such an exploration might pursue. Probably because the book began as a doctoral dissertation on the tradition and theology of priestly celibacy in the Latin Church, the author deliberately leaves to one side such related questions as the practice of the Christian East, the admission of married clergy from other ecclesial communions to holy orders in the Catholic Church, and the present discussion of whether continence is required of married men ordained to the diaconate.

Selin treats only briefly the significance of the fact that both East and West require celibacy of bishops. This is surely related, however, to the ascetical dimension of clerical celibacy, something common to priestly celibacy and the vocation to consecrated life. The practice of drawing bishops from religious institutes (in the West) or monasteries (in the East) highlights the importance of fostering and maintaining institutes of consecrated life wherever married men are ordained as priests of the second order. It is worth noting that the

council also treated virginity and celibacy in the consecrated life as a charism. Moreover, it also chose to replace the traditional rationale for the vowed life—the progressive renunciation of goods, as worked out by St. Thomas Aquinas (*STh* II-II, q. 186), which is mentioned only in passing—with a Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological elaboration of its value (*Lumen Gentium* 43-44; *Perfectae Caritatis* 12-14). Because the council fathers were concerned with both women and men religious, including those in holy orders, they did not attempt to specify differences between virginity and celibacy in the consecrated life and in the priesthood.

As Selin points out, the new approach does not so much abandon the argument from ritual purity as resituate it in a new and more comprehensive context. Perhaps the same can be said of the argument from the objective superiority of consecrated virginity or celibacy to marriage. While many suppose that this cannot and should not be sustained, given the council's robust teaching on the universal call to holiness and the goodness of sacramental marriage (*Lumen Gentium* 39-40; *Gaudium et Spes* 37-52), the argument is, in fact, mentioned in *Optatam Totius* 10, and footnote 23 of that paragraph cites the section of *Sacra Virginitas* (1954) in which Pius XII says that this has been dogmatically defined. Pope Saint John Paul II, on several occasions (*Familiaris Consortio* 6; *Mulieris Dignitatem* 22; *Vita Consecrata* 18, 32 and 105), continued to appeal to this argument as it pertains to the consecrated life.

It is interesting to learn from Selin's book that theologians in the decades prior to the council (Joseph Lecuyer, Wilhelm Bertrams, Odo Casel) had associated the celibate bishop or priest with the figure of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church (as had Bonaventure). The nuptial-ecclesiological argument in *Inter Insigniores* (1976), then, is not a novelty, hastily constructed to bar women from priestly ordination, but was already in place. A related question, the tradition of regarding the bishop as "bridegroom" of his diocese (or the "friend of the bridegroom," the "friend" leading the Church to Christ), needs to be explored further. Archbishop Charles J. Brown has begun this project in his thesis on *The Development of the Concept of the Spousal Relationship between Bishop and Local Church in the West to the Ninth Century* (Sant'Anselmo, 2008).

*The Charism of Priestly Celibacy: Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Reflections*, edited by John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2012) would be a good companion for Selin's book. In particular, the chapters on biblical foundations (Mary Healy), the origin and practice of priestly celibacy in the early Church (Joseph Lienhard, S.J., who has reservations about Cochini's and Heid's claims), and the virginity of Jesus the priest (Archbishop Allen Vigneron) provide a valuable and vigorous complement to his study. Aidan Nichols, in an appendix to his text *Holy Order* (Dublin: Veritas, 1990), offers important insights into some consequences Eastern practice has for the concept of the priesthood.

*Priestly Celibacy* makes a significant contribution to the theology of priestly celibacy in the Latin Church. It demonstrates that celibacy can no longer be regarded simply as a matter of discipline, enforced by law, that the Church has the power to change. It is necessary, rather, to appreciate its character as a charism, a gift of the Holy Spirit, intrinsically related to the ministerial priesthood and to the Eucharist.

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*A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies*. By EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2016. Pp. xxii + 248. $28.00 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8028-7320-0.

In each of these six essays, Edward Oakes nobly endeavors to resolve a seemingly intractable dispute. He contends that "antinomies" beset each side of each dispute and then strives towards a higher viewpoint that integrates the truths of competing theses without correlative drawbacks. Methodologically, Oakes offers a well-rounded approach, employing a wide variety of resources. He grounds his claims in Scripture in light of recent scholarly advances and canvasses various theological and secular usages of salient words ("grace," "sin," "justification," "righteousness," etc.). He traces key, sometimes rival, theological traditions. He employs literature, history, widely acknowledged scientific findings, and words of saints. In each essay, he develops his thesis systematically upon these foundations, following such luminaries as John Henry Newman, Matthias Scheeben, Karl Barth, and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Of course, it is common to seek the middle between extremes. Success requires accurate identification of "thesis" and "antithesis." Precision and wisdom must work hand in hand for this task and for the construction of viable alternative syntheses. To evaluate Oakes's achievement, I highlight two chapters and touch on others, noting features running through the essays.

Chapter 1, "Nature and Grace," constitutes a remarkable effort to achieve balance between the concerns in a significant dispute. Henri de Lubac claimed that there is an innate desire for the beatific vision, while certain twentieth-century Thomists claimed that the innate desire is for a naturally attainable happiness. Lawrence Feingold's noteworthy dissertation/book (*The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* [2001, 2010]) rekindled this discussion. Oakes recognizes that the slogans "extrinsicist" and "intrinsicist" are clumsy: no extrinsicist severs creation from

Christ, and no intrinsicist makes eternal life something God "owes" (7). Still, Oakes indicates, one can "veer" toward views that the slogans indicate, some stressing the continuity of nature and grace in the one will of God to deify and others stressing the discontinuity between man's sinful state and God's saving initiative (12). Oakes appreciates the extrinsicist desire to preserve the gratuity of grace and the loftiness of our calling. Still, he submits, the denial of a natural desire for grace, if it "becomes too one-sided," cannot cope with Paul's teaching that creation "does indeed 'groan'" (23). Oakes briefly conducts the reader through "two sets" of texts in Aquinas's corpus, each supportive of either extreme. As Oakes makes clear, at stake is not simply Aquinas's text but the truth of things.

Following Andrew Swafford's lead, Oakes alights on Scheeben as providing principles for a resolution. The move is surprising: of all people, Scheeben starkly distinguished nature and grace. Notwithstanding, Scheeben agreed with de Lubac that people are moved not by arguments from natural reason but by the manifestation of faith's supernatural beauty. More, Scheeben proposed that grace and nature enjoy a "nuptial union," an image more intimate than that of a second story topping off a perfectly good first story. Scheeben grounded this marital imagery in the effect of the Incarnation, whereby the human race is caught up in the hypostatic prerogatives of Christ. Accordingly, just as it is right that "this man, who is the Son," receives an abundance of grace, so it is right that those who through baptism are stamped with Christ's character and brought into his sonship receive sanctifying graces. Distinction is in service of union.

This sketch should indicate the valiant nature of Oakes's undertaking. Perhaps the project succeeds; it does have weaknesses. First, Oakes presents the "extrinsicist" tradition as regarding the relationship between *sinful* man and grace. This description fails to identify the issue; primordially at stake is the relationship of man qua man, considered as such and apart from sin, to grace. This slip and others signal imprecision in Oakes's account. There is a delightful character to his broad brushstrokes, but this breadth is coupled with the risk of eclectic incompletion. Second, Oakes reads innate desire as synonymous with natural and as opposed to elicited (27); by contrast, Feingold demonstrates that some natural desires are elicited. What Feingold means by "innate desire" is a desire or inclination ever present and also unconditional; elicited desires, even if natural, are not necessarily always present and are not necessarily unconditional. Third, Oakes denies (30) that Aquinas entertained the notion of *debitum naturae*, although recent scholarship has demonstrated the opposite.

Of course, more important is whether Oakes's employment of Scheeben (Swafford's work cannot be addressed here) succeeds in moving toward the reconciliation of positions dubbed extreme. First, it remains a question whether all positions dubbed "extrinsicist" constitute an errant extreme. Oakes does not demonstrate this but takes it as a starting point. Not all theses,

however, are susceptible of dialectical treatment: "God is a Trinity" is not a one-sided, half-true and half-misleading statement. Second, it remains unclear exactly how Scheeben's account alters any fundamental claims of the best accounts of the thesis that an innate desire must be for an end naturally attainable. I suggest that Scheeben proposes a deeper foundation for this very thesis with his analogy: As the humanity of Christ subsists as the *Son's* humanity and thus deserves a plenitude of sanctifying graces, so the human race, as incorporated into Christ, is entitled to a share in sanctifying graces. Crucially, the first part of this analogy regards *two* graces, that of union and the habit of grace. As Scheeben would acknowledge, human nature is in obediential potency to both graces. Presupposing the grace of union as actual, one can conclude that the assumed humanity must have an abundance of the habit of grace. Similarly, the incorporation of this or that person into Christ is a grace upon which other graces follow: baptism mediates this incorporation (on this, Oakes is taciturn), conferring a character that links the baptized with Christ and thus entitles him to a share in the habit of grace. Even granting Scheeben's analogy, an outstanding issue remains, namely, the obediential potency of human nature for grace. Third, concerning this, Scheeben's project shows that one can articulate the relevance of grace on the premise that nature as such has a connatural end and thus would not be necessarily tragic were grace not offered. God touches the depths of the real man through graces: there is no juxtaposition of two realms, but the human substance, capable of grace, is really actualized by grace. Contradictorily, de Lubac argues that unless nature is necessarily tragic without grace, it has no true aptitude for grace. De Lubac excludes limbo, against Scheeben's principles but to Oakes's approval. Fourth, deftly navigating between Michel Baius and Pelagius, Oakes concludes that the nature with which we are conceived is that which God could have created without grace. This eye-catching conclusion follows from Scheeben's principles (see Scheeben, *Natur und Gnade* [Mainz, 1861], 251). But the foregoing considerations suggest that Oakes's synthesis may not have hit the mark. Fifth, woven into Scheeben's proposal is the affirmation of nonappropriated Trinitarian relations *ad extra*. Regarding this affirmation, some juries are still out.

Chapter 2, "Sin and Justification," contains Oakes's most involved use of Scripture scholarship. He follows the New Perspective on Paul, which replaces psychological interpretations (Augustine, Luther) with a functional one. According to the latter, the aim of the doctrine of justification by faith is "to ensure Gentile inclusion in the people of God" (64). Oakes later returns to this corporate theme via Balthasar and Pope Benedict XVI. Oakes also countenances dogmatic tensions, especially that between forensic and imparted notions of justification. Claiming antinomic features of both sides, he views dogmatic stances as entailing church-dividing *hardenings*. Leaning on Newman's masterful *Lectures on Justification*, he claims that forensic readings imply an unacceptable view of God as either unable or unwilling to render

sinners holy. This critique, Newman's most incisive, is irrefutable. Positively, Oakes claims that the forensic side rightly seeks to avoid pride and foster humility. Unmentioned are other crucial concerns: consolation from terror, assurance of salvation, a way to "disinterested love," and so on. Astutely, Oakes calls proponents of imparted justification to address the issue of humility versus pride. Here, however, his strategy runs aground: "Only the infusion of justifying grace tells us how much we continue to depend on God's forensic decree that we are innocent even though we know we are guilty" (74). This statement, having a family resemblance with Girolamo Seripando's rejected theory of *duplex iustitia*, is problematic. Trent dogmatically declared that the newly baptized are innocent and immaculate (Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion* [DS], 1515); that all justified persons are "truly called just and . . . are just" (DS 1529); that observance of God's commandments, which is necessary for salvation (DS 1570), is for them possible (DS 1536); and that they can avoid all mortal sins (DS 1537). Of course, the justified are often guilty of venial sins, which in essence are distinct from mortal sins (DS 1920), and they suffer from concupiscence, which however is not sin (DS 1515). In contradiction, Lutherans generally teach that every man—justified or unjustified—sins in every work, that all sins are damnable, that obedience to the commandments is not necessary for salvation, and that of all sins concupiscence ranks the worst. On these points, Oakes is silent.

Oakes also submits that the one problem Lutherans had with a central decree of Trent (DS 1529) was the connection of justifying grace with cooperation. He rightly points out that one must not forget Trent's exclusion of our merit from justification: God is the efficient cause and Christ the meritorious cause. Unfortunately, Oakes gives no explicit attention to another critical issue, the identity of the formal cause of justification. Trent taught the formal cause to be the very justice that is from God and infused into the human person, rendering him truly holy. The formal cause was the very point upon which Seripando's suggestion faltered and with which Newman never fully grappled. Further, in the discussion of merit, Oakes omits to cite Trent's dispositive canon 32 and chapter 16 (DS 1582, 1545-50). Before concluding, the chapter appeals against individualism to the notions of communal participation in sin and Christ's assumption of guilt. These appeals (woven throughout the essays) call for but do not receive distinctions. First, Christ did not assume guilt (DS 261, 294, 496, 543) but its consequence. What would it say about God had he transferred guilt to the innocent? Second, while influenced by the community, sin has its fundamental root in individual free choice (John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 16, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 77 [1985]: 217).

Space precludes detailed treatment of other chapters, although each shares the strengths and weaknesses of the first two. Chapter 3 works to reconcile evolution with original sin. Oakes presents a rich protology (another theme woven throughout) and nobly strives to defend a carefully defined mono-

genism. As with recent accounts of protology, further distinctions are needed. Is the world created "in the humanity" of Christ? Does a protological account deny Adam's commission of a primal sin? Does protology recognize nature (in us) as prior to grace in the order of substance (grace being the further actualization of nature)? Further, I do not find that Oakes affirms the following teachings: original sin involves true although not personal guilt (DS 1515), is transmitted by propagation (1513), renders one worthy of damnation (DS 858), and is a *sine qua non* reason that real human beings suffer death (DS 1511f). Whereas one may legitimately argue for the salvation of nonbaptized deceased infants, Oakes's sustained mockery of Augustine and of the notion of baptism as "celestial insurance" inhibits his adequate appropriation of doctrines authoritatively independent of Augustine.

Chapter 4 defends the simultaneous truths of divine omnipotence and human freedom against the pessimism of Augustine (and Calvin). With Barth, Oakes holds omnipotence to work for universal salvation, although he follows Balthasar in denying any systematic certainty of result. Oakes's reading of predestination as "a *retrospective* doctrine" (146) seems to dodge the issue. One wishes that merit were addressed here.

Chapter 5, "Experience and Divinization," may be the strongest. Oakes highlights a crucial question: If something, X, is never experienced, of what relevance is it? So, if grace is not experienced, of what relevance is it? Of course, Oakes knows full well that the experience of grace is not to be taken in a crude way. Moreover, he wisely critiques Cartesian solipsism and the sentimental displacement of the act of "converting" with the amorphous "conversion experience" (197). Oakes's Ignatian spirit comes to the fore here, with sound direction concerning discernment of spirits (consolations and desolations, each judged according to the state of the soul) nicely correlated with postmodern philosophy (presences and absences). Above all, Christian experience must be based on self-denial. The section on divinization is not as well developed, although Oakes offers an edifying vindication of Cyril of Alexandria: the Son divinizes man by undergoing all human experiences.

Chapter 6 seeks common ground with Protestantism on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. This doctrine regards an unmerited blessing and thus highlights the character of grace as pure gift. Oakes creatively draws on Scotus's notion of predestination and suggests its convergence with Barth's notion of the same. The strategy of highlighting divine causality is effective, albeit limited, for it does not address the product of that causality. The product is, first, a plenitude of sanctifying grace—the formal cause of justification. The secondary product is meritorious activity, which involves the cooperation (which Oakes, as a Jesuit, rightly wants to uphold) and also the coredeeming activity of Mary. This twofold product is the heart of the Catholic-Protestant dispute.

In short, these essays exemplify a fruitful way of doing theology. They attempt to identify weaknesses of extreme positions and pursue resolutions to

disputes. Still, precision and adequate dogmatic foundations are required for this task and for viable alternative proposals. On these two points, the actual achievements of these essays fall short. The collection can be helpful in graduate courses on anthropology, provided that the inadequacies are addressed.

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*Freedom and Self-Creation: Anselmian Libertarianism*. By KATHERIN A. ROGERS. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. 248. $74.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-19-874397-2.

Katherin Rogers is no stranger to the topic of Anselm and his account of free choice. Her previous book *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 2008) was dedicated to an exposition of Anselm's account of the will. While the earlier book did bring Anselm's view into dialogue with some contemporary arguments and positions, its main focus was Anselm as an historical figure and understanding his views. The present book takes an "Anselmian" position, one grounded in Anselm's original arguments but that is Rogers's own, stated in contemporary terms and in response to contemporary debates. She calls it "Anselmian" so as to make explicit its historical roots, its presuppositions, and its entailments. Importantly, Rogers wants to recognize and use, rather than sweep under the rug, "Anselm's own theist perspective" (3). This is important because it makes explicit the way Anselm's views are connected to his theism. Rogers points out that all the positions on free will—libertarian, compatibilist, and determinist—have their own grounding intuitions and presuppositions, analogous to Anselm's theism, and that those need to be outed so that the discussion is as complete as possible. "Intuitions" grounding those views "may be," as she puts it, "significantly colored by their background worldview" (6). This is true not just for Anselm and other theists but also for thinkers like Daniel Dennett, who frames the questions of whether and what sort of free will we have around the question, "Why do we want free will?" A theist and an Epicurean will answer that question differently. The point is that as philosophers puzzle over narrowly drawn questions, they are motivated by but not transparent about the intuitions that drive them toward defending or critiquing a position on a more minor issue. Further, Rogers argues that since so many arguments about free choice use the conceit of a "controller," it is simply clearer and easier to use the notion of an omnipotent, omniscient God performing this function

rather than an imagined figure, and thus to make the point incompatibilists like to make more effectively. (Rogers does not argue that elaborate sci-fi creations about mad-scientist controllers are distractions from the issue we actually care about, but she might have.) Rogers also makes the important point that contemporary discussions tend to blur the distinction between "*Should we hold you* responsible?" and "*Are you* responsible?" If there is no way your responsibility can be truly assessed, then the questions become elided. Bringing in God as "an ideal observer" can help distinguish these questions: while we may not be able to know, God could. It is important as a way of pointing out (though Rogers does not quite put it this way) that what we *really* want to know is, *are we* responsible? And I take it she wants to try to answer that question instead of just moving to the pragmatic question.

The book is divided into two basic parts: chapters 1 through 4 explain the basic elements of the Anselmian view, and chapters 5 through 8 defend the Anselmian view from contemporary objections to libertarianism. Rogers defends the Anselmian view against the objections Alfred Mele makes against "internalism," views that "[focus] on the structure of the immediate choice" (33). She argues that the Anselmian view succeeds against this kind of criticism better than Robert Kane's version of libertarianism. She takes on Harry Frankfurt's compatibilism, which attempts to show that we can be responsible even without being able (ultimately) to choose otherwise. She devotes two chapters to what she calls the "luck" problem of libertarianism. If the agent's choice is undetermined when he might have chosen otherwise and nothing in his past or character dictates that choice, then it seems the choice is a matter of luck. David Hume makes this sort of argument, though Rogers responds to Mele, Peter van Inwagen, and those who have made and criticized libertarian attempts to ground free choice in probability or possible world theories. The last chapter takes up what Rogers calls "the tracing problem." The tracing problem emerges out of the tracing thesis, that is, that we are responsible for choices that emerge out of our settled character where we could not really have chosen otherwise. We are responsible because those choices can be traced back to a choice at which there was a real option to do otherwise in the past. The objection is that I cannot be responsible for my settled character unless that choice (or choices) in the past that formed it was made with the knowledge that this would be a character-forming choice.

Throughout, Rogers defends a truly libertarian account of freedom in which we as agents are able to "participate in our own creation by making ourselves better *on our own*" (24). Anselm argues that if everything, including our basic desires and inclinations, is given to us by God, and if we must, as Aristotle argued, desire our own happiness as our end, then the choices we make are as a matter of morality and merit attributable to the creator, not the individual creature, who merely enacts his or her natural inclination. In response, Anselm argues that we have to be responsible and that *we* can only be held responsible if choices are really *from us*, that is, if we contribute

something new. Critics of libertarianism have argued that the notion of self-creation in libertarianism is incoherent. What is unique about Anselm's position is that he can avoid this criticism, because he does not hold that we create ourselves out of whole cloth; rather, everything about us is given (not self-created). Free choice emerges because God gives the creature two wills, or *affectiones*, one for justice and one for benefit (*commodum*), which can conflict. The choice between those two wills is, then, really *a se*, from us, even though what we choose with and what we choose between have been given. With this, Anselm achieves strong libertarian freedom without having to posit any "*sui generis* powers." Rogers calls this kind of libertarianism "parsimonious agent-causation." Aseity is for Anselm real but limited in two senses. First, we choose out of the inclinations we do not create but find ourselves with; second, our free choice is negative, i.e., *not to abandon* one of those wills or inclinations.

This is the kind of libertarianism Rogers defends as "Anselmian." She does not commit to the particular two *affectiones*—for justice and benefit—given in Anselm, arguing only that the options must be "morally significant" and that "the mechanics of a free choice could be the same on other views of what constitutes morally better and worse choices" (87). Nonetheless, it is something like Anselm's "will for justice" that Rogers explains as making choices morally salient. Her explanation of the desire for justice uses Frankfurt's notion of "a second-order desire," "a desire about what basic desires for benefit should be embraced . . . and restrained" (89). Thus per Rogers, "the desire for justice is a second-order desire about how to regulate our first-order desires" (118). Rogers, of course, does not follow Frankfurt into compatibilism. While Frankfurt makes freedom and responsibility hang on whether one has second-order desires even if those second-order desires have been causally determined, Rogers insists that the choice between justice and benefit as neither internally nor externally constrained is the necessary condition for true freedom. Nonetheless, Rogers reads Anselm as a eudaimonist, arguing that the "over-arching life goal . . . is to flourish as a human agent" (73). This seems to me to read too much Aristotle (whom Anselm never read) into Anselm. Anselm, while admitting that the desire for benefit is omnipresent, also says that our purpose is to love the supreme Good, and not as or for our benefit. But this is a debate about how to interpret Anselm; Rogers's Anselmian position is libertarian and eudaimonist. Though I am not sure she can pull this off, Rogers's way of explicating free choice as operating at the meta-level is appealing: choosing to keep righteousness (or not) means asking ourselves, given who we are, do we choose to continue or to veer in a different direction? That other direction has to be part of us as original equipment as well, but the crossroads moment occurs when those two inclinations conflict, and we must choose between them.

The virtues of the Anselmian position Rogers elucidates are many. First, it both allows for self-creation, giving true freedom and, thus, dignity to the

human condition, while also making freedom limited to the choice of whether or not to continue to will. Moreover, this account of free will allows for responsibility even in imperfect human agents (contra Mele, whose standards for autonomy take a great deal of the choices we make out of the realm of that for which we can be held responsible). Rogers gives a convincing response to Frankfurt's counterexamples, which attempt to show that we can be responsible without having libertarian freedom. The counterexamples focus on scenarios in which the person chooses to do what they would be coerced or manipulated into doing if they did not (thus they were not able to "do otherwise," yet we still count them as responsible for their choice). Rogers argues that the issue is not external deeds but internal acts of will; thus my choice to stay in the room I do not know is locked is unproblematically free. Rogers also manages to marry an account of libertarian freedom to a theory of virtue ethics. The fairly rare but pivotal *a se* choices become the foundations for virtues (or vices). When acting out of a formed virtue or vice, I do not experience a true conflict or open options about whether to continue in this vein. Thus in some sense, it is not possible that I will act differently. But I can be held morally responsible for those acts because those virtuous or vicious acts depend on previous *a se* choices (she calls this "the tracing thesis"). Her account, in addition, allows for degrees of responsibility and responds to the criticism of libertarianism that it makes those free choices unintelligible or random since they by definition do not spring from preexisting character; responsibility for a libertarian is "not . . . the character that led to the choice, but the character *produced by* the choice" (175). Moreover, Rogers makes a convincing case that locating the freedom in the moment of choice rather than preceding it (over against Kane) better preserves its moral character. Insofar as Kane and others attempt to build libertarian free choices on probability, they "[play] into the critic's claim that libertarian choice involves responsibility-denying luck" (193). Thus, "probability talk . . . is better abandoned" (ibid.).

All of this is packaged in the kind of argument, examples, jargon, and abbreviations that are the norm among analytic philosophers. Some readers (this one included) may find this distracting and even at times a trivializing of the importance and depth of the points being made. And there are times where it seems like a waste to give a good argument against a position or example that is a mere puzzle rather than a meaningful contribution to the discussion. But Rogers makes a strong case for the "Anselmian" view of freedom, and one can only hope that philosophers working on the issue of free choice consult it and take the "Anselmian" position seriously.

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*Why Only Us: Language and Evolution*. By ROBERT C. BERWICK and NOAM CHOMSKY. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2016. Pp. vii + 215. $22.95 (cloth), $15.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-262-03424-1 (cloth), 978-0-262-53349-2 (paper).

What, if anything, distinguishes *Homo sapiens,* made in the image and likeness of God, from all the other animal species in creation? Today, this is a highly disputed question that comes with a plethora of often contradictory answers from biologists, philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and many others. However, for Robert C. Berwick, a professor of computational linguistics, and Noam Chomsky, an institute professor and internationally renowned linguist, both at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the specific difference that defines our species is clear: human language, properly understood, is what uniquely separates us from the other animals.

In this relatively short but fascinating book, Berwick and Chomsky provide philosophers and theologians—indeed, basically any nonspecialist who is not familiar with evolutionary theory or linguistics—with an overview of contemporary biolinguistics, which is the study of language as an object in the biological world. It is a summary of what we know about the nature and the evolutionary history of human language, written by two of the world's foremost practitioners in the field.

First, for Berwick and Chomsky, human language, rightly understood, is the product of an evolved biological capacity that gives human beings "the ability to construct a digitally infinite array of hierarchically structured expressions with determinate interpretations" (110). This ability can be reduced to a basic compositional operation that they call "Merge." It is an operation that takes two linguistic objects as arguments—say, the words "read" and "books"—and returns a combination of the two as a new linguistic object, for example, the phrase "read books." Merge can then recursively build on this new object, yielding more and more complex hierarchical representations, such as the sentence "he read books."

To illustrate the hierarchical structure of language made possible by Merge, consider the sentence "Peter is too angry to eat." It has two possible meanings. First, most obviously, it could mean that Peter is too angry to eat anything. However, it could also mean that Peter is too angry *for me to eat him*! The same linear sequence of words has two meanings depending on how it is hierarchically understood.

According to Berwick and Chomsky, Merge is the specific difference that distinguishes human language from the other vocal communication systems found in the animal kingdom. Animals may be able to produce linear left-to-right vocal representations, but none are able to generate a hierarchically structured communication system akin to human language. Even the celebrity chimpanzee named Nim "never progressed to the point of producing embedded, clearly hierarchically structured sentences, which every normal

child by age three or four can do" (145). (Incidentally, in my own view—and I cannot defend this claim here—this ability to understand and to generate hierarchical language is a sign of the immateriality of our intellects.)

The authors also make the striking claim that the architecture of human language reveals that it evolved, not as an external tool for communication between individuals but as an internal mental tool that allows an individual to conceptualize and to imagine his world. Speaking a language came only after thinking in a language. As evidence for this, they point to studies that showed that the internal hierarchical structure of language carries no information about the left-to-right order of phrases, words, or other linguistic elements. A language is spoken vocally or signed manually in an order that is imposed, not by its inherent structure but by the demands of the specific mode of externalization, whether by the production of sound or the movement of hands. This would not have been the case if language had evolved first and primarily as an external tool for human communication.

Finally, Berwick and Chomsky propose a narrative for the evolution of human language. Based on numerous paleontological and genomic studies, they think that the capacity for Merge appeared more than 60,000 years ago in Africa, in a single hominid—a historical Adam or Eve?—who acquired a genetic mutation that altered his or her brain structure in such a way that it was then capable of Merge. Hypothetically, they propose that the formation of a nerve bundle ring linking important regions in the human brain associated with language could have been this change. Individuals who acquired this novel genetic and anatomical trait would have had a selective fitness advantage over their nonmutant peers because they would now have been able to plan, to infer, and to reason, actions they were not able to do before. In support of this claim, the authors describe several empirical studies, including one that reveals that children who have not yet acquired language cannot integrate and use the information that a particular wall is blue. Evolutionarily, the acquisition of language would have then triggered the great leap forward that gave rise to other historical signs of human symbolic behavior, including jewelry and art.

Going beyond the subject matter of this book, we know that God created *Homo sapiens* through an evolutionary process. Therefore, a major challenge in contemporary Catholic philosophy and theology involves reimagining an authentic anthropology that takes our evolved history into account. This will only be accomplished, in my view, when we are able to properly conceive of the *imago Dei* not only as a rational animal but also as a speaking biped. This book is essential reading for anyone who wishes to undertake this task.

A word about the text itself: This book is better understood as a collection of four somewhat independently written essays rather than a monograph of four coherent chapters. There is much repetition in the narrative, and the flow of the presentation leaves much to be desired. I should also acknowledge that the claims presented in this text are not uncontroversial. There are linguists

and evolutionary biologists who would challenge even the basic premises of the book. Nonetheless, it remains a seminal contribution that is accessible to the nonspecialist who wants to understand how God, the Creator, gave his image the capacity to name "all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals of the field" (Gen 2:20).

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*Gift & Communion: John Paul II's Theology of the Body*. By JAROSŁAW KUPCZAK, O.P. Translated by AGATA ROTTKAMP, JUSTYNA PAWLAK, and OREST PAWLAK. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014. Pp. xxiv + 230. $65.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8132-2595-1.

Kupczak is the director of the Center of Research on the Thought of John Paul II at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow. *Gift & Communion* was originally published in 2006 in Polish, the native language of the author and the language in which John Paul II's theology of the body was originally penned.

The author's purpose is to provide an assessment of John Paul II's theology of the body in light of the larger Catholic theological tradition. Kupczak succeeds in his goal of showing that the theology of the body makes significant contributions to Christian ethics, the theology of marriage and family, and theological anthropology. He situates John Paul II's theology of the body in the context of the pope's other philosophical and theological writings and thought, and he explores the breadth and depth of the theology of the body to provide evidence for the significance of this work as an important stage in the development of Catholic theology.

The book is divided into five chapters with an introduction and some final remarks, and includes a foreword by Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus. The introduction provides a brief overview of the structure of the book as well as the structure of the theology of the body. Kupczak overviews some of the praise that the theology of the body has received, and asks why this theology has not been more widely treated in scholarship or made more widely available on a popular level in homilies, sermons, and retreats. Answering this question, he notes the need for an instruction manual to help navigate the difficult texts of the theology of the body. The complexity of the theology of the body stems from the language in

which John Paul II's reflections were written and the method he employed in his reflections, a method that includes "a phenomenological description of human experience and subjectivity," a "constant dialogue with Western philosophical and theological traditions, as well as with contemporary achievements in biblical exegesis, philosophy, and theology," a "'philosophical exegesis'" of Scripture, and a lack of "sufficient scientific" apparatus like "footnotes, explanations, [and] references" (xx-xxi, partly quoting Marian Grabowski). *Gift & Communion* is offered as a guide to deal with these complexities and to make the theology of the body more accessible.

The first chapter presents the theological method of the theology of the body, focusing on two terms that John Paul II used to describe this method: "adequate anthropology" and "hermeneutics." Kupczak shows that the method of John Paul II's theological anthropology is opposed to René Descartes's method of understanding man. After briefly explaining Cartesian dualism, he describes how John Paul II sought to overcome this reductionistic vision of the human person by crafting an adequate anthropology. Key to this adequate anthropology is biblical revelation. John Paul II interpreted biblical texts with the assistance of insights from modern philosophy in order to search for elements of essentially human experiences that differentiate man from the rest of the natural world. This philosophical exegesis weds accurate observations from phenomenology and metaphysics. Opposing Descartes, John Paul II explained that man's corporeality is important for his growth in self-consciousness, yet the pope also rejected biological reductionism in his theology of the body. Kupczak relates the adequate anthropology of the theology of the body to the insights in John Paul II's (Karol Wojtyła's) work *Love and Responsibility*, and he situates the pope's philosophical and theological anthropology in relation to the writings of other Polish philosophers and theologians. The second part of the first chapter focuses on the hermeneutical dimension of the theology of the body, with attention to what John Paul II called the "hermeneutics of the gift," which is a manner of reading the biblical text attentive to the way the text reveals man's subjectivity and his capacity to be gift. Kupczak reflects on modern hermeneutics, notes the importance that John Paul II placed on human experience in interpreting the biblical text, and ends the first chapter by highlighting the similarities between John Paul II's hermeneutics and Paul Ricoeur's theory of symbols. This opening chapter serves as a helpful introduction to the method employed by John Paul II in his theology of the body.

Drawing on the principles discussed in the first chapter, the second chapter treats the theology of the body according to three stages in human history that the pontiff delineated: the time of original innocence, the historical existence of humanity after original sin, and humanity's eschatological existence in the resurrection. These three stages of human existence are the basis of John Paul II's theology of the body and of what Kupczak calls the pope's "three-dimensional vision of man" (75-76). He focuses on how John Paul II

"considers the human body both in the structure of the personal subject and within the web of interpersonal relations" (41), emphasizing again John Paul's decisively anti-Cartesian approach to the body. Kupczak explains the spousal and parental meanings of the body and covers key concepts from the first part of the theology of the body, such as original nakedness, original union, the communion of persons, the experience of shame, the ethos of the redemption of the body, and eschatological virginity. Although the analysis in this chapter is good, the author could have organized his own text according to the structural headings that John Paul II himself used to organize this foundational part of the theology of the body. The last section of chapter 2 examines a topic from the second major part of the theology of the body, the sacramentality of the body in the context of the sacramentality of marriage. In a brief few pages, Kupczak explains how John Paul II presented the union in one flesh of husband and wife as both the primordial sacrament of God's love for man and the sacrament of redemption of Christ's union with the Church. These important concepts from the latter part of the theology of the body might have been treated more adequately in an expanded separate chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses precisely on the terms "gift" and "communion" in the philosophical and theological thought of John Paul II, covering the development of John Paul II's (Karol Wojtyła's) philosophical anthropology and ethics, and influences on his thought. In this central chapter, Kupczak effectively argues that "the two terms 'gift' and 'communion' are the main pillars of the papal theology of the body" (xxii). He provides a brief introduction to the philosophical and theological history of these words. He then covers the development of the philosophical concept of "gift" in Wojtyła's thought, and notes the importance of the Second Vatican Council in John Paul II's development of the concept of the "communion of persons." He then shows how, subsequent to Vatican II, Wojtyła applied these concepts to his theology of marriage and family, the Trinity, creation, and the body. He also illustrates how John Paul II applied the terms "gift" and "communion" to the three stages in human history that were discussed in chapter 2. Chapter 3 ends with a section that could easily have been left out, in which the author points out some perspectives for future research that would apply "gift" and "communion" in the areas of anthropology, ecclesiology, and ecumenism.

The fourth chapter delves into John Paul II's treatment of the theological truth that man is created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). Although this chapter contains some repetition and could have been organized more effectively, it highlights some of John Paul II's key insights into the *imago Dei*, central to which are the concepts of gift and communion. Kupczak first notes that the Second Vatican Council renewed the concept of *imago Dei* in Catholic theology, and then he shows how John Paul II committed himself to furthering this renewal. He gives an overview of John Paul II's philosophical exegesis of the Genesis creation narratives that is present in the first part of the theology of the body, highlighting the pope's emphasis on the communal

dimension of *imago Dei* and the person as gift, a theme emphasized by Vatican II. Kupczak then explains how John Paul II presented the human body as participating in the communion of persons by which humanity images the communion of the Trinity. He notes how a spiritual view of *imago Dei* as residing in man's soul has dominated Christian theology throughout history, and that John Paul II was trying to emphasize that the body has a place in our understanding of the image of God. The pope maintained that the image of God in both its individual and communal dimensions remains in man after original sin, and that "the marital *communio personarum* remains a sign of the mystery of the Trinity" (157). Kupczak explains how the entire first part of the theology of the body is Christocentric, structured around three statements that Jesus makes regarding the three stages of human existence: prelapsarian (Matt 19:3-8; Mark 10:2-9), postlapsarian (Matt 5:27-29), and eschatological (Matt 22:24-30; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40). As this point is key to understanding the theology of the body, the author should have discussed it earlier in the book. Kupczak provides a helpful discussion of John Paul II's vision of the eschatological fulfillment of humanity, and he closes the chapter with a discussion of the synthetic character of the pontiff's theology of *imago Dei*, which he says contains both structural and relational elements. Kupczak reiterates how important are the reflections of John Paul II on the communal dimension of *imago Dei*, as this theme has received little attention throughout Christian history. He closes by pointing out the important task of deepening and developing an understanding of the communal dimension of the image of God.

The final chapter explores the psychological, philosophical, and theological sources of John Paul II's understanding of "the language of the body," a key aspect of the sexual ethic presented in the theology of the body. Kupczak begins by overviewing the understanding of nonverbal communication or body language in philosophy and psychology. He then covers the sources of the concept of "the language of the body" in the philosophical writings of Karol Wojtyła that preceded the theology of the body. Kupczak explains "the language in the body" as it appeared in the Wednesday audiences on the theology of the body when John Paul II undertook his philosophical exegesis of the Song of Songs and the Book of Tobit. Among other points, the author notes John Paul II's emphasis on the objective language of true love that should be communicated through the body by husband and wife in the marital embrace, and the fact that the words of the wedding vows "are rooted in the truth of the language of the body of man and woman who have been united by love" (197-98). Kupczak ends chapter 5 by explaining how John Paul II used "the language of the body" in his treatment of Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. The author summarizes the main points of the ethical argument found in *Humanae Vitae* and then shows how John Paul II interpreted these points in the final part of the theology of the body to explain that the moral norm for the conjugal act is speaking "the language of the

body" in truth. Kupczak succeeds in illustrating the theological depth and richness of John Paul II's concept of "the language of the body."

In his final remarks, Kupczak notes that John Paul II roots his theology of the body in Scripture and that, in his "postliberal" philosophical exegesis, the pope relates biblical texts and symbols to modern man's experience without reducing the meaning of the text to contemporary expectations and culture. Kupczak sees the theological hermeneutics of John Paul II as a compromise between Rudolf Bultmann's demythologization of the Bible and Karl Barth's prioritization of the theological meaning of the biblical text. In the process of briefly reviewing what he sought to accomplish in each chapter of *Gift & Communion*, Kupczak highlights John Paul II's indebtedness to the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the centrality of Scripture in theology. The author could also have mentioned the connection between John Paul II's theology of the body and the council's goal of proclaiming the faith to modern man in a manner in which he can more readily understand it. Kupczak notes the ongoing debates over the relationship of John Paul II and Vatican II, but points out that the theology of the body represents a clear connection between the council and John Paul II's pontificate. He concludes by noting the potential of the theology of the body to address issues of marital and sexual ethics, the role of women and the challenges of feminism, and the theology of marriage and family. He expresses the hope that *Gift & Communion* will be helpful in promoting such discussions.

Kupczak has succeeded in providing a scholarly guide to understanding more fully the insights contained in John Paul II's theology of the body. However, this is not an introductory text. The length of the chapters and the depth of his treatment make this book of interest mainly to scholars who already have some familiarity with the theology of the body. Certain chapters could have been organized better, and the book would serve more effectively as an instruction manual if the author had followed at least some of the structure and headings that John Paul II himself used to organize the theology of the body; this is especially true for chapter 2. These organizational issues notwithstanding, *Gift & Communion* should serve to promote renewed scholarly interest in the profound insights contained in the theology of the body.

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*Aquinas's Theory of Perception: An Analytic Reconstruction*. By ANTHONY J. LISSKA. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xviii + 353. $99.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-19-877790-8.

At the beginning of this monograph, Anthony Lisska quotes Dorothea Frede's observation that "the *vis cogitativa* is, for Aquinas, 'an embarrassment'" (4). In the remainder of this very helpful book, Lisska provides a sustained rebuttal to Frede's statement by arguing that the *vis cogitativa* is crucial to Aquinas's overall theory of perception because it "is the faculty by which human perceivers are aware of individuals as individuals of a natural kind" (4). In the course of this argument, Lisska makes an important contribution to our understanding of Aquinas's philosophy of mind, beginning with a detailed analysis of his understanding of sensation and ending with a description of how phantasms work with the agent and possible intellects. Because the *vis cogitativa* plays an important role in how we come to perceive objects as individual objects, which can later be abstracted, Lisska carefully walks the reader through each step of the process of sensation, perception, and abstraction, with a special emphasis on Aquinas's understanding of the inner senses.

In pursuing his analysis, Lisska engages with two sets of conversation partners. First, among contemporary philosophers, he is primarily engaged with other analytical Thomists and at times affirms and at times corrects the work of Robert Pasnau, John Haldane, Eleonore Stump, and Anthony Kenny, among others. Part of his disagreement with some of these contemporary Thomists is methodological, as he argues that Aquinas offers a more robust account of sensation and the inner senses in his commentary on *De anima* than the more commonly preferred *Summa theologiae*, which offers an abbreviated account of his philosophy of mind since it is focused on theological issues. In engaging his second set of interlocutors, Lisska demon-strates his concern with the negative impact the British Empiricists (Hume, Locke, Berkeley, et al.) have had upon contemporary philosophies of mind and sees Aquinas's theories of sensation and cognition as a helpful antidote to the philosophical cul-de-sacs into which their approaches to sensation have led us.

In his first chapter, Lisska raises the fundamental question of the book, which is how Aquinas understands our ability to be aware of individuals as individuals rather than as a bundle of sensations. As Lisska is describing this problem, he also argues for the importance of Aquinas's metaphysics for understanding his overall philosophy of mind, especially perception, adopting Haldane's maxim "that there is 'no epistemology without ontology'" (11). Additionally, Lisska provides his methodological case for the superiority of the commentary on *De anima* over the *Summa theologiae* with regard to understanding Aquinas's theory of perception, arguing that the *Summa theologiae* focuses on the intellect and will and so does not contain a full account of perception, because the theological commitments of the *Summa*

limit Aquinas's need to treat perception (23-27). This is not to say that Lisska ignores the *Summa*, but rather that he finds the commentary on *De anima* to provide a fuller account of perception, one that can help us better to interpret the *Summa* on perception or to fill in blanks that the *Summa* leaves in Aquinas's overall theory of perception.

In his next two chapters, Lisska provides his understanding of the metaphysical framework in which Aquinas's theory of perception operates. In the second chapter, he gives an account of Aquinas's theory of intentionality, arguing in six propositions that Aquinas is both an ontological and epistemological realist, that "*esse intentionale* is the cognitive content of an act of awareness" and is dependent upon the ontological status of the knower, and that Aquinas is an externalist in his philosophy of mind (37). Lisska points out that the foundation of Aquinas's philosophy of mind is his distinction between act and potency, so that our senses and intellects must be properly disposed to receive forms. In the third chapter, Lisska puts Aquinas's philosophy of mind in conversation with "both traditional and contemporary" philosophers (64), arguing that Aquinas is a (qualified) empiricist, not because his theory is "in any sense structurally identical to or coextensive with much British or American empiricism" (65), but rather because he adopts a structured mental act that always begins with sense experience. In fact, Lisska claims that Aquinas "transcends the limits of classical empiricism yet avoids the pitfalls of Cartesian innate ideas" (ibid.), a claim that, in many ways, Lisska spends the rest of the book defending. He also argues that not only is Aquinas a direct realist in matters of perception, but that he considered representationalist understandings of perception to be nonviable, so any reading of Aquinas's texts that appears to lean in representationalist directions needs to be reread in light of his direct realism.

Having described Aquinas's metaphysical and epistemological framework, Lisska turns in the fourth chapter to the epistemological dispositions that are required for perception. Again, here the act/potency distinction plays an important role as Lisska describes how sense faculties must be properly disposed to receive sensation. In analyzing these dispositions, he breaks them into what he calls "Disposition-1," which "is the state in which any given potential knower finds herself when she has the ability or capacity to know" (98), and "Disposition-2/Actuality-1," which is when one has acquired a piece of knowledge, ability, or skill but may or may not be using it at the moment. Human senses, according to Lisska, are under normal circumstances in the state of "Disposition-2/Actuality-1," as they "are structurally innate to the human perceiver" (113). That is, humans are naturally disposed to see colors, hear sounds, smell scents, and so on. We do not need to acquire these dispositions in the same way that we acquire a language; we are just born with them. Lisska also affirms a distinction between sensation and perception, where sensation is our awareness of proper and common sensibles and where perception is "awareness on the sense level of an individual as an individual" (117).

In the next three chapters, Lisska discusses the objects and faculties of our sensory powers and other preconditions necessary for sensation. He pays special attention to the need for all sensation to take place through a medium and provides a helpful discussion of the role of the diaphanous medium and its actualization by light in vision. There is no unmediated sensation for Aquinas, as objects need a medium by which their forms move from the object to actualize the sense faculty. Lisska argues, then, that there are three necessary preconditions for sensation to take place: (1) an "object" to sense, (2) a "medium," and (3) a "properly disposed sense faculty" (167).

Those preconditions are necessary but not sufficient for sensation, as Lisska argues in his eighth chapter, which focuses on the *sensus communis* as the first of the internal senses. "The *sensus communis*," Lisska claims, "is the structural root or source for the workings of the external sensorium" (205). It is at this level that humans move from sensing individual colors and sounds to a unified awareness of an object. The *sensus communis* discriminates among different sense data and creates relations between proper sensibles. The *sensus communis* does not, however, use phantasms, which are used by the other three internal senses (imagination, memory, and the *vis cogitativa*), a topic that Lisska takes up in his ninth chapter.

The first nine chapters provide a theoretical background for the main point of Lisska's work, the role in Aquinas's philosophy of mind of the *vis cogitativa*, which Lisska argues allows us to perceive individuals as individuals of a natural kind rather than as just a collection of unrelated sensations. Humans have a need to be able to perceive objects as individuals of a natural kind—a red apple from a red tomato instead of just a round red object—and this is the task of the *vis cogitativa*. We know things as concrete wholes, and so our consciousness of an object is of an entire thing rather than just a collection of sensations. The *vis cogitativa*, in this understanding, gives us some "thing" to think about (262).

Lisska concludes his book with two extended chapters on the role of phantasms in the inner senses. He argues that because of many faulty translations, scholars have often conflated phantasms with images, whereas Aquinas never equates the two. This is especially problematic because equating the two would make him a representationalist (289). Rather, "phantasms dwell within . . . as traces of actual sensation" (III *De Anima*, lect. 6 [669], as quoted on 299) and are connected to the *vis imaginativa*, *vis cogitativa*, and *vis memorativa*. Lisska carefully analyzes the different ways that phantasms operate in these three powers, especially their role in both the *vis cogitativa* and the agent and possible intellects.

Overall, the book is an important contribution to the ongoing discussion of Aquinas's philosophy of mind. Lisska's argument for the role of the *vis cogitativa* in allowing us to perceive individuals as individuals is compelling. Two methodological concerns, however, may trouble the reader. First, for a book that attempts to offer such a comprehensive view of Aquinas on

sensation and the inner senses, and to make the case primarily based upon Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, it is curious how infrequently Lisska engages with Aquinas's other Aristotelian commentaries on the topic, namely, those on *De sensu* and *De memoria*. While ignoring these texts does not necessarily weaken Lisska's argument, one wonders if engaging with them would have strengthened it. Aquinas, after all, took the time to write those two commentaries because he realized, as he explains in his prologue to his commentary on *De sensu*, that *De anima* deals with the soul as an immaterial reality while *De sensu* deals with the soul as it works in a body, which is certainly the case for human cognition. A second concern derives from a rather inexplicable use by Lisska of the *Supplementum* to the *Summa theologiae* to make his case. I counted at least eight instances where he references the *Supplementum* to bolster his argument. I am perplexed as to why he would use the *Supplementum* instead of cross-referencing the *Supplementum* to parallel passages in the *Sentences* commentary or other works. This does not necessarily vitiate the overall claims of the book, but others may want to investigate those parallel passages to determine their overall impact on Lisska's argument.

While philosophers may have their own concerns with Lisska's argument, there are also theological issues. Early in his argument, Lisska mentions that when it comes to Aquinas's cognitive theory, "Aquinas had God hovering in the background" (10). There is a sense in which God is hovering in the background throughout the whole work, bracketed from the argument. Lisska argues that because faculties are oriented toward their objects, Aquinas's theory of sensation has affinities with modern evolutionary theories of human sensation, as theorized by James Gibson. At one level, this seems like good philosophical practice, as Lisska has written a book that explores Aquinas's contribution to our understanding of the philosophy of mind. But one wonders if Lisska's attempt to limit Aquinas's teleology is sufficiently able to account for his overall philosophy of mind. Can we truly understand why humans have the ability to have both sense knowledge and abstraction outside of the ultimate *telos* of the human mind, God? Lisska, to his credit, briefly points to Stump's suggestion that the purpose of our senses is better to understand creation as it is ordered to God (190), but otherwise ignores the question of the ultimate purpose of human cognition, including sensation.

Lisska's work can stand on its own philosophically, but it can also serve as an important handmaid to the work of theologians, who should continue his work by moving God to the foreground, as Aquinas would, and further develop Lisska's insights in a theological direction.

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