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RENÉ GIRARD AND THOMAS AQUINAS IN DIALOGUE ON THE NATURAL-LAW PRECEPT TO SACRIFICE

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CROSS-POLLINATION between Christian theology and René Girard's mimetic theory has become a subject in its own right.[1] Since Girard's death in 2015, such studies have taken on a particular urgency[2] as the Franco-American literary and social theorist's multifaceted theory continues to attract dialogue partners from fields as diverse as neuroscience,[3] psychology,[4] and political theory.[5]

[1] See Mathias Moosbrugger, *Die Rehabilitierung des Opfers: Zum Dialog zwischen René Girard und Raymund Schwager um die Angemessenheit der Rede vom Opfer im christlichen Kontext*, Innsbrucker theologische Studien 88 (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2014); Nikolaus Wandinger, "Sacrifice as a Contested Concept between R. Schwager and R. Girard and Its Significance for Interreligious Dialogue," in *Mimetic Theory and World Religions*, ed. Wolfgang Palaver and Richard Schenk (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 2018), 229-57. While Girard remains the *paterfamilias* of mimetic theory (at least among Anglophone interpreters), an array of works (some of them critical) in various disciplines has appeared in the last four decades engaging the theory. The theory attracted broad interest early on, but engagement from theology, religious studies, biblical and literary studies predominated in the 1970s and 1980s; see the essays in *To Honor René Girard: Presented on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday by Colleagues, Students, Friends*, ed. A. Juilland (Saratoga, Calif.: Anma Libri, 1986). While mimetic theory no longer solely belongs to Girard, his work will be taken as characteristic of the theory.

[2] See Grant Kaplan, *René Girard, Unlikely Apologist: Mimetic Theory and Fundamental Theology* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016).

[3] Warren S. Brown, "Cognitive Neuroscience and Religion," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion*, ed. James Alison and Wolfgang Palaver (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 439-46.

[4] *Mimesis and Science: Empirical Research on Imitation and the Mimetic Theory of Culture and Religion*, ed. Scott Garrels (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 1-108.

[5] *The Sacred and the Political: Explorations on Mimesis, Violence and Religion*, ed. Elisabetta Brighi and Antonio Cerella (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); for an overview of mimetic theory's political implications, see Wolfgang Palaver, *René*

Shrugging off the relative comfort of remaining in one academic domain, Girard appreciated the value of dissimilar yet sympathetic interlocutors for his own work.[6] Theologians such as Raymund Schwager and Robert Daly took advantage of Girard's openness to both input and correction and likewise looked to him for insights in their own fields.[7] Direct dialogue between Girard and Thomas Aquinas similarly occasions a productive reevaluation of sacrifice in each one's thought, and also—perhaps surprisingly to some Girardian scholars—of natural law.[8]

In the *Summa theologiae* Thomas famously observes that offering sacrifice to God is "of the natural law" and rooted in a "natural inclination" to honor someone superior.[9] For mimetic theory, this on the surface is a problematic claim, especially if one turns a critical eye to the potentially destructive and violent orientations of sacrifice as they were understood in Thomas's own time and by the earlier Christian tradition.[10]

Girard's Mimetic Theory, trans. Gabriel Borrud (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 275-96.

[6] See René Girard, "Mimetische Theorie und Theologie," in *Vom Fluch und Segen der Südenböcke: Raymund Schwager zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Józef Niewiadomski and Wolfgang Palaver (Thaur: Kulturverlag, 1995), 15-29; English translation: "Mimetic Theory and Theology," in *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 33-45. Girard reiterates his debt to Schwager in his "Preface" (ibid., xi). See Moosbrugger, *Rehabilitierung*, 35-36.

[7] Schwager's engagement with Girard ranged from his work on the rehabilitation of sacrifice as a theological concept to proposals for using dramatic form in theology; see *Must There Be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, trans. Maria Assad (Leominister: Gracewing, 2000); German original: *Brauchen Wir einen Südenbock?* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1978). Robert J. Daly's engagement has primarily been through liturgics: *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (London: T & T Clark, 2009).

[8] I say "direct" dialogue, because in the dialogues between Girard and theologians (especially Catholic ones like Schwager) there is already evidence of indirect engagement with Thomism (broadly speaking) mediated by the latter's theological training. As a Jesuit priest, Schwager shows signs of a familiarity with Thomas's theology in his early work in fundamental theology (on an *analysis fidei*); see Moosbrugger, *Rehabilitierung*, 186-98.

[9] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1. Quotations from the *Summa theologiae* are taken from the translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Benzinger Bros., 1947). The Latin text comes from the Leonine edition: *Summae Theologiae: Opera omnia iussu impensaque Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, t. 4-12 (Rome, 1888-1906).

[10] For similar findings, see Richard Schenk, "*Verum sacrificium* as the Fullness and Limit of Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Sacramental Theology of Thomas Aquinas:

Our aim here is to get beneath the surface by means of a three-stage dialogue. The first section frames Thomas's treatment of sacrifice as a natural-law precept as an occasion to take soundings of Girard's work on sacrifice and mimetic desire. While Girard notably changed his overly negative view of sacrifice through dialogue with Raymund Schwager, elements of an excessively pessimistic anthropology persisted, especially with respect to knowledge; such pessimism is largely a consequence of a broader hermeneutic of suspicion employed (and cultivated) by Girard as he explores literature, myths, ethnographical studies, and the Bible searching for violence's roots in mimetic rivalry. In the second section, the theory is related to Thomas's thinking about sacrifice and the natural law. The anthropological pessimism that a Thomist initially detects can be better appreciated in the light of Girard's larger project. Such pessimism should not evoke suspicion of mimetic theory as such; rather, Girard's suspicion is part of a larger tactic meant to arouse a spiritual/moral conversion or heightened awareness in readers. His retelling of the origins of sacrifice and human civilization through the dark lens of mimetic desire is a heuristic meant to lead readers down a path of discovery.

The third section explores how Girard's heuristic invites readers of Thomas to reconsider the latter's thinking on sacrifice with suspicious eyes. Thomas's notion of sacrifice is reimagined in a broader narrative of mimetic desire's masking of violence in religious sacrifice and law. Even Thomas's personal sanctity does not banish the possibility of lurking violence, despite Girard's view that Christianity offers the only solution to mimetic rivalry thanks to Christ's revelation on the cross that the true meaning of sacrifice lies in self-giving. Girard's broader objective to defend truth by raising

Historical Context and Current Significance," in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life. Essays in Honor of Romanus Cessario, O.P.*, ed. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 169-207. See Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*, 114-15; Daly links the destructive element of sacrifice in Thomas's thought to his reliance on atonement theories of penal substitution, though he concedes that Thomas was far less reliant on such theories than many of his predecessors (notably Anselm of Canterbury), and certainly far less than Reformation theologians, both Catholic and Protestant.

the specter of a real social threat also prevents his hermeneutic of suspicion from dismissing Thomas outright and helps to soften some of the initial tensions between the two. Meanwhile, an appreciation of Thomas's own political realism regarding corruption and violence and his nuanced account of the development of sacrifice under the Old Law gives ample space to consider solutions to possible misinterpretations of Thomistic sacrifice and natural law. Adopting mimetic theory's implicit use of narrative as a metaphilosophical framework and exploring the status of sacrifice prior to original sin taps into divine revelation's larger (biblical) narrative. Combined with Thomas's anthropological framework of nature and grace (also biblically rooted) this exploration of prelapsarian sacrifice proves useful in clarifying sacrifice and the natural law in both thinkers.

I. Girard's Mimetic Theses and Thomas: First Impressions

Girard develops an account of the way in which religious sacrifice in archaic civilizations emerged from processes embedded in mimetic desires that are inherently ordered to interpersonal violence. At first glance, this account of sacrifice seems to be incompatible with Thomas's assertion that sacrifice is of the natural law. These desires paradoxically run against the good to which "nature" should be ordered, according to Thomas. This incompatibility is not diminished even when Girard argues that Christianity originally unveiled sacrificial violence by showing the playing out of interpersonal rivalries that culminate in the scapegoating of the innocent victim, Christ. Such a singular instance uproots sacrifice so completely that it looks as if a natural-law precept to sacrifice is barbarically retrograde for a Christian.

Once these impressions are aired, their different approaches to sacrifice and the natural law can be seen to be more compatible than first thought. However, seeing this requires a presentation of the main elements of Girard's mimetic theory and his larger purpose.

Throughout much of his career, Girard explored and developed three major theses: (1) human desires are imitative or "mimetic"—that is, structured largely by what we observe other people desiring; (2) the violent rivalries that these

mimetic desires cause would have destroyed our species save for humans' seemingly chance arrival at a dramatic resolution in communal scapegoating, which gave birth to ritual sacrifice, religion, and ultimately civilization; and (3) the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition is the principal source for revealing the truth about this veiled violence rooted in our mimetic desires and for proposing another superior model for humans to live by.[11] (1) remains the foundational "hypothesis" or insight of Girard's mimetic theory.[12]

A) Desire and Sacrifice Unveiled in Girard's Early Career

Girard's claim that desire is mimetic had its origin in his first book on modern European literature (largely novels and Shakespearean drama) and romantic desire.[13] Direct analysis of desire interested him much less than the dramatic and narrative forms that problematized romantic desire; for him, literature and later myths and the Bible captured the first metaphilosophical/preconceptual moments of humanity's coming to terms with desire's mimetic structuring. Girard

[11] Adapted from the "structural elements" outlined by Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley, 2005), 5-6.

[12] I hesitate to call (1) a "principle" because of Girard's self-confessed (but not always consistent) eschewal of systematic language adopted from academic philosophy. Girard prefers to call (1) a "hypothesis"; see *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, with J.-M. Oughourlian and G. Lefort, trans. S. Bann [books II and III] and M. Metteer [book I] (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 284. Girard's terminological choice is rhetorical as much as it is methodological, indicating his desire for closer conversation with the social and empirical sciences. Girard anticipated that his initial interlocutors would have had an immediate allergic reaction to any kind of language resembling a totalizing systematization of thought—a reaction for which Girard had sympathy but which he also thought could be overemphasized to the point of being willfully evasive of self-criticism and/or nihilistic; see Kirwan, *Discovering*, 97 (citing R. Girard, "Generative Scapegoating," in *Violent Origins*: *Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987], 73-145, at 111).

[13] *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1961); English translation: *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and the Other in Literary Structure,* trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966).

insisted that this first point of contact was very important for his entire approach.[14]

His next book, *Violence and the Sacred*, brought his insights about mimetic desires to anthropology, developing a general account of the origins of religion and civilization.[15] For Girard, it is sacrifice that gives rise to religion and provides the needed stability for civilization and political society to develop. In the near-universal presence of religious sacrifice in the history of human societies, however, he discovers that sacrifice's roots have actually been hidden in the violent competition that arose spontaneously through unseen, mimetic desires. This invisible character of our desires—that they imitate or mirror what other individuals desire in their object, thus being "mimetic"—invariably leads to interpersonal strife. Humans end up semiconsciously accumulating vast storehouses of anger and resentment toward each other when their mimetic desires are inevitably thwarted by others. The only thing that prevents an explosion into full-out war is the chance occurrence of a collective scapegoating murder that serves simultaneously to be a communal catharsis for the psychological distress experienced thanks to conflicting desires and to elevate the innocent scapegoat who becomes the source of sacred awe and gives birth to humans' religious awareness. The consequence of this murder leads to a type of bifurcation for primeval humans that gives birth to "the sacred and the profane"—and eventually to the religious and the political.[16] For most of history, Girard thinks, we have been in the dark about religion's violent origins, choosing instead to focus on its silver lining: its civilizing aspect.

B) The Violence within . . . and Everywhere: Toward a Theory of Social Behavior

While the general hypothesis that humans have a hidden, sinful past would not have particularly troubled Thomas,

[14] René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*, with Pierpaolo Antonello and João Cezar de Castro Rocha (London: Continuum, 2007), 147-48.

[15] Originally published as *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1972); English trans. by P. Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1977).

[16] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 39-67.

Girard's theses today strike a chord precisely for presenting a haunting story about our modern society's inability to escape its violent past. This unsettles twenty-first-century readers, and as Girard's work progressed he became more forthright in emphasizing the unsettling aspects and implications of mimetic theory. By initially exploring in his literary studies the themes of "subterranean" personal rivalry/revenge and mimetically structured desires, Girard applies a type of hermeneutics of suspicion to received anthropological accounts about archaic religion and sacrifice. *Violence and the Sacred* expands this into a general theory of social behavior, which serves as a goad (more generally) to the reader's imagination to examine his or her desires more carefully.

This led to a growing interest in Girard's work among psychologists and psychotherapists, and resulted in the extended dialogue that makes up his third book, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*.[17] Personal moral reform and transformation began to emerge as profound concerns for Girard; such a concern was shared by Thomas in his *Summa theologiae*, expressed in a rather different idiom.[18] For Girard, examining our desires becomes unsettling, and this realization spreads (like a virus) to almost all aspects of society. Violence is much more at home in modern life than we would like to think, and Girard continued to explore how and why this is so.

Girard's work has an almost hypnotic effect on readers, which makes the discovery of long-hidden, aboriginal violence all the more shocking.[19] Like a psychotherapist, Girard prompts his readers down a path of self-discovery by getting them to focus on mimetic desire. He presents various avenues for them to pursue these considerations, usually in narrative-forms from classical literature, mythology, the history of religions, and, later, the Bible. The path is meant to stimulate an analogous type of personal and collective

[17] Originally published *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde* (Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1978).

[18] Mark Jordan has argued that *Summa theologiae* is Thomas's example of moral pedagogy; see his *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 116-35.

[19] Girard inquired into psychotherapeutic hypnosis, and self-reports a critical reception of Freud's views on the subject (*Things Hidden*, 316-25).

discovery that our own individual desires are mimetic and the cause of our propensity to strife with others.

Seen from this angle, Girard's exploration of the history of religions and sacrifice comes close to a type of anthropological search for "original sin," an aspect that drew the attention of theologians to his thought. Girard initially faced some criticism for omitting original sin from his theory.[20] He later clarified that while he never denied it he did feel a need to reimagine it in distinctly anthropological terms. The search for sacrifice's dark origins is a story capable of reaching a far larger modern audience. When mimetic rivalry is identified as the determinative force in the development of religion and sacrifice, from which human laws get their basis—that is, their authority and intelligibility—the ambitious scope and relatability of the theory can be appreciated.

Mimetic theory's heuristic, however, runs the risk of encouraging an exaggerated suspicion, which could render it nihilistic and feeble. If the laws and structures of society are so tainted with the suspicion of violence and if they should be called into question, is there room for any kind of prohibitions and normative structures? Here Thomas's texts could provide useful. In particular, his treatment of the natural law in relation to sacrifice offers a case study for how theoretically identifying and categorizing the innate impulses found in the human person can provide the conceptual stability needed to prevent exaggerated interpretations of Girard's texts that might lead to overly negative anthropological and politically pessimistic conclusions. Thomas's thought reveals areas where Girard's paradoxical narrative about violence and the sacred becomes too spell-bound by human depravity and loses grip with reality.

[20] René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightening*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001), 7-8, 150. See Palaver, *Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 223-28. Much was done to clarify Girard's dependence on the Christian framework of original sin by Schwager; Schwager's defense of Girard came in response to widespread suspicion among German theologians that Girard's theory represented "an ontology of violence" (223). Dialogue with the Swiss Jesuit led Girard to embrace more consistently the doctrine of original sin and to clarify his position (*Things Hidden*, 165, 223).

C) Christ's Demythologization of Sacred Violence: Girard and Narrative

Before turning to this Thomistic intervention in the dialogue, it is worth highlighting how myths for Girard become important vehicles for transmitting the belief that the scapegoat-victim is "sacred" in the retelling of the initial murder. This helps us also to get a grip on the significance of Christianity in his thought. For Girard, *demythologization* is central to his view of what Christianity accomplished vis-à-vis mimetic violence. As part of this demythologization narrative, Girard begins by showing how the mythical scapegoat is mistakenly portrayed as the cause of violence, while it is simultaneously recognized as the one who delivered or saved the community during its mimetic crisis. In retelling the initial scapegoating, the myth in fact conceals the truth that the scapegoat was an innocent victim. Even the subsequent transferal of divine status to the victim continues to conceal this. Interpersonal rivalries remain, albeit subdued somewhat by the cathartic effects of the murder; their true cause is still not realized.[21]

While "violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred," religion in mimetic theory also offers a way to mitigate violence temporarily.[22] It cannot definitively stop the cycle of violence, because religion and the ritual sacrifices it demands cannot address mimetic desires directly. Through ritual sacrifice, religion helps control violent rivalries from destroying all human life, preventing random outbreaks of violence, which could undermine any fragile communal existence. This is the paradoxical good side to archaic sacrifice and myth.

In a third phase of Girard's thinking that begins with *Things Hidden*, he argues that Judeo-Christian religion and its Scriptures present a path for unmasking the violence rooted in religion and sacrifice through a type of demythologization.[23] Seeing Christ's cross as pivotal for unveiling mimetic violence, Girard initially argued that Christian theology's traditional identification of the crucifixion as Christ's

[21] *Violence and the Sacred*, 85-118.

[22] Ibid., 31.

[23] Girard, *Things Hidden*, book II.

sacrifice was itself compromised by unrealized violence within Christianity.[24] He claimed that the Letter to the Hebrews, in particular, with its setting of Christ's death in the practice of traditional sacrifice in the Old Testament did not free Christian readers from separating the sacrificial structures of mimetic desire and Christ's death, which actually reveals the futility of such desires and points to self-giving as the replacement of sacrifice.[25] Dialogue especially with Schwager was critical for helping Girard to rethink some of his more negative attributes of sacrifice, and especially Christian theology's tradition of Christ's sacrifice. By 1993 he amended his position.[26] The old form of sacrifice has been definitely put to rest with Christ, so that now sacrifice as a conscious imitation of Christ overcoming the violence of archaic sacrifice and mimetic rivalry plays a foundational part in Christianity and is still positive for the world today.[27]

In his 1999 book, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, Girard expressed his view that a type of "unveiling" (playing on the etymology of "revelation") of the scapegoat mechanism is also possible in political society. This is accomplished chiefly by the Decalogue which points out and prohibits directly specific types of action rooted in destructive mimetic desires and, par excellence, by Christ's sacrifice on the cross.[28] After 2001 and the events of 9/11, Girard expressed more reservations about the possibility for this unveiling to occur within politics itself. This has sometimes been referred to as his "apocalyptic" turn.[29] While extending many of the themes of *I See Satan Fall*, Girard expressed with more determination the conviction that increasing global and political crises are evidence of increased mimetic violence, despite developments in science and technology: evidence of Satan's power to

[24] Ibid., 180-85, 224-27.

[25] Ibid., 227-31.

[26] Rebecca Adams and René Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice: A Conversation with René Girard," *Religion & Literature* 25, no. 2 (1993): 9-33, esp. 28-29; Girard, *The One by Whom*, 71-72. See Wandinger, "Sacrifice as Contested Concept," 242-45.

[27] See Girard, *The One by Whom*, 126: "I still use the phrase 'sacrificial Christianity' because it links the cross with the events of our own time."

[28] Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, 137-53.

[29] See Michael Kirwan, "René Girard's Mimetic Theory: An 'Anti-political Theology'?" in *The Sacred and the Political*, 127-43, at 136. I agree with Kirwan that it is better termed Girard's "Pauline moment." See Girard, *The One by Whom*, 95-98.

harness collective mimetic desires for destruction. Paradoxically, the effort exerted for human survival as a species only continues to veil mimetic violence—but Christianity presents a solution.[30]

II. A Thomistic Critique of Mimetic Theory: Natural Inclination and Knowledge

A Thomistic intervention is useful for asking: what exactly is the content of the unveiling moment outlined in mimetic theory, where mimetic desire and sacrifice are finally seen for what they are? Is it some type of grasping of the natural law's first principle—"do good and avoid evil"? To explore this, we may assume mimetic theory's basic outline. If natural law according to a Thomistic reading functions as the measure of human acts thanks to the light of natural reason,[31] it seems that any grasp of the first principle or precept of the natural law—"do good and avoid evil"—could in itself be sufficient for unveiling the victim mechanism. Thomas thinks that this first principle functions in practical reasoning somewhat analogously to the principle of noncontradiction in speculative reasoning. At the same time, without it practical reasoning as well as natural-law theorizing cannot proceed; the principle "do good and avoid evil" itself offers little further content regarding the additional precepts of the natural law or any of its purported specifications.

While Thomas never ventures far into a phenomenological account of how humans first became cognizant of the primary precepts of the natural law, nonetheless he does give us clues into how he might have developed such an account. The clues lie in his identifying natural human inclinations as good loci for "demonstrating" (as in "a showing forth") of the precepts of the natural law and the right ordering among various precepts.[32] Among Thomas's medieval interlocutors, the

[30] See René Girard and Gianni Vattimo, *Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith: A Dialogue*, ed. Pierpaolo Antonello, trans. William McCuagic (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 42-43; originally published as *Verità o Fede Debole?* (Massa: Transeuropa, 2006).

[31] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

[32] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2: "secundum igitur ordinem inclinationum naturalium, est ordo praeceptorum legis naturae."

existence of a natural law was something more or less admitted; because of this, most of Thomas's attention is given to expounding what the natural is and how its precepts are ordered in a moral taxonomy.

The taxonomy itself is revealing. First in Thomas's taxonomy is the natural inclination of humans toward the good common to all substances, that is, to self-preservation "according to a thing's own nature." It follows from this, Thomas thinks, that whatever contributes to or takes away from the conservation of human "existence" (*esse*) and life pertains to the natural law. Second, there are biological inclinations to human goods that are shared along with animals: the generation of offspring. Third, there are inclinations to goods that uniquely belong to humans due to their rational nature:

> a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society; and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination.[33]

These inclinations and goods are said to be "proper" to all human beings. Because everyone exhibits these three types of inclinations (at least to some degree), Thomas also concludes that the natural law applies to everyone.[34] Thus, in these inclinations, humans discover certain universal ordering precepts for their life; these precepts make up the natural law.

However, because contingent matters are in play when humans exercise their practical reason, Thomas also thinks people will have various degrees of knowledge of the conclusions that start from the more general natural-law precepts.[35] This happens for a number of reasons. In the first

[33] Ibid.: "inest homini inclinatio ad bonum secundum naturam rationis, quae est sibi propria, sicut homo habet naturalem inclinationem ad hoc quod veritatem cognoscat de Deo, et ad hoc quod in societate vivat. Et secundum hoc, ad legem naturalem pertinent ea quae ad huiusmodi inclinationem spectant, utpote quod homo ignorantiam vitet, quod alios non offendat cum quibus debet conversari, et cetera huiusmodi quae ad hoc spectant."

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

[35] Ibid.: "We must say that the natural law, as to general principles, is the same for all, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge. But as to certain matters of detail, which are conclusions, as it were, of those general principles, it is the same for all in

instance, human acts do not deal with universal precepts, but with contingent realities; contingent action demands that when applying universal precepts one must adapt them to the particular circumstances, as perceived and understood by the individual. Thomas outlines two ways practical reasoning trying to reach a conclusion from the general precepts may fail or be defective: either (1) by a deficiency in a person's rectitude (or a lack of rectitude of intention) or (2) by a deficiency in knowledge of the contingent circumstances. In the case of (2), Thomas thinks that some people have developed a "corrupted reason" through engrained (morally) evil habits, strong passions that prevent them from seeing such vices, or by bad natural dispositions. He refers to a famous example from Julius Caesar that the Germans did not see theft as wrong. Thomas thought cases like this were few, but even so, he felt impelled to account for the existence of such widespread ignorance of a basic precept of natural law. Because the precept "not to steal another's property" is less universal than "do good and avoid evil," he hypothesizes that widespread ignorance of the former could be precisely due to it being a less universal precept. This ignorance, if not corrected, could over time lead to an entire nation being "blind" to certain immoral behaviors.

When placed in dialogue with mimetic theory, these instances of "corrupted reason"—what Thomas regards as a special case found relatively infrequently in some societies—are hypothesized by Girard as being nearly universal, at least when it comes to our desires. Admittedly, while Girard does not explicitly say that "corrupted reason is universal," his account of how mimetic desires remain undetected despite their overpowering influence and ubiquity leads to the conclusion that human reason is rendered deeply ineffectual, especially regarding self-knowledge or awareness. Mimetic theory's specter of self-deception casts an imposing doubt,

the majority of cases, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge; and yet in some few cases it may fail, both as to rectitude, by reason of certain obstacles (just as natures subject to generation and corruption fail in some few cases on account of some obstacle), and as to knowledge, since in some the reason is perverted by passion, or evil habit, or an evil disposition of nature; thus formerly, theft, although it is expressly contrary to the natural law, was not considered wrong among the Germans, as Julius Caesar relates."

even on previously held certainties, and echoes Descartes's subjective predicament to some extent. This leaves it vulnerable to a criticism of excessive subjectivism.

But the charge of subjectivism, which a Thomist might want to bring against Girard, misses the fact that mimetic theory's analysis of the desire on the level of the subject serves largely as a heuristic entry-point into the larger story of the genealogy of violence and sacrifice. In other words, Girard's analysis of desire on the individual level is meant to be more performative than descriptive; it is meant to get the audience to start to question their own desires, and to break the false notion of the self as the source of all one's desire. This is not to say that Girard has not put his finger on something important by highlighting desire's mimetic structure. (Thomas could acknowledge, after all, at the start of the *Summa contra gentiles* that "similarity is a cause of love"—a statement that has parallels with Girard's foundational insight.)[36] The chief point is that once desires are understood to be structured heavily by one's perception of goods in relation to another desiring person, a shift in how we consider our actions should take place. Not only are we responsible for what decisions we make about how to attain our desires, but we must also question the source of our desires and whether they will lead to an endless cycle of rivalry. Undoubtedly, by starting his enquiry from the desiring subject Girard limits the amount of categorical distinctions he can make about why human desires differ from animal desires; but this is more a result of his method. He is far less concerned to develop a taxonomy of desires than is Thomas. Instead, he wants to give readers access to a phenomenology of desire that both allows one to realize their mimetic character and arouses a type of suspicion about these desires.

At the same time, the distinction between animal and human desires is not unimportant for Girard; both animal and human desires have mimetic features. But he often describes animal desires to bring into greater relief the degree of violence human desires arouse. Animals tend not to let their mimetic desires drive them to self-destructive violence

[36] *ScG* I, c. 2: "similitudo causa est dilectionis." The Latin text of the *Summa contra gentiles* is taken from the edition of P. Marc et al. (Rome: Marietti, 1961). All translations from the *Summa contra gentiles* are mine.

on a large scale; humans, however, have done this and continue to do this. Girard reveals that it is our lack of suspicion about our desires that leads in part to catastrophe. Thus, he reinforces the need to look for the causes of rivalry induced by mimesis on the level of the person and in society's structures.

Thomas's account of the natural law begins conceptually from observations in the world; but he looks less to desires in themselves and more to the activities in the world and the substances that have desires. Thomas's approach is clearly more rooted in a metaphysics of substance; Girard makes no straightforward claim to be relating his analysis of desire to a metaphysical outlook. Both acknowledge the intelligibility of the world and the things found in it, but Thomas's starting point differs from Girard's. Most obviously, Thomas sees no need to address extensively a critical epistemology. While mimetic theory is not interested fundamentally in epistemology, in rehearsing a narrative that leads one to begin to raise suspicions about desires it relies on elements of a critical epistemology. Such critical stances are the assumed position for most of Girard's modern audience, particularly in the social sciences.

Thomas does not exclude the desiring subject as worthy of investigation, but his priority is elsewhere on practical reason. A classification of inclinations to the good within an account of practical reasoning is more useful for his larger exposition of sacred doctrine. Because of this, it is more pertinent for him to show both how practical reason's act of ordering is informed by the natural law (through a type of participation) and how this act renders the natural law intelligible upon reflection. These priorities are set in part by Thomas's larger metaphysical framework of showing how the natural law participates in the eternal law and is assisted by the divine law. While Girard does interesting things with the divine law (especially in his later writings), the absence of any framework parallel to eternal law-natural law (or to grace and nature) goes a long way to explaining his different approach to subjective desires.[37]

[37] See John Ranieri, "Reason and Revelation: An Important Distinction?" in Palaver and Schenk, eds., *Mimetic Theory and World Religions*, 63-86.

Starting from the individual, mimetic theory can make the explicit claim that human desires are constituted intersubjectively.[38] This means that I am not the sole source of my desires, but that they are shaped by my environment and especially by those around me. Intersubjective structure allows mimetic theory to move into a sphere of moral psychology and a theory of desire formation that Thomas's discussions of the natural law rarely touch. In some limited contexts, Thomas speaks about moral social psychology in relation to the natural law, but not with great depth.[39] The concerns of moral pedagogy are more central, as we see in his discussions of the moral virtues.

For mimetic theory then, the principle "do good and avoid evil" need not be denied, and it could even be consciously known by persons in deliberations. In most acts of deliberation, a direct appeal to this principle is unlikely, but its function as a first principle is essential for natural-law theorizing according to Thomas. Given that mimetic theory is not directly concerned with theorizing about the natural law, it is no surprise that direct discussion of it almost never occurs. This is not say that Girard denies the existence of the natural law: quite the contrary. In an interview published in 2001, he portrays the natural law as a kind of backstop protecting against ideologies that attempt to co-opt "the concern for victims" revealed decisively by Christianity and very much present in today's Western society through

> the virtually universal feeling of being victimized, which finally cannot help but contradict natural law and the whole law that governs human relations: if it is prohibited to prohibit, then I can desire what my neighbor has and disregard the Tenth Commandment. Once again one finds oneself caught up in conflict, without knowing why.[40]

Without a final appeal to natural law, a concern for victims can itself warp into an ideology used to justify paradoxically further violence.

[38] "Intersubjectivity," of course, is a foreign way of speaking to Thomas, but the idea is not all that far from the way the natural law participates in the eternal law, if one recalls that the eternal law is a way of considering divine wisdom; see *STh* I-II, q. 93, a. 1.

[39] His discussion of the divine law is more informative on the issue of moral formation in society than is his discussion of natural law; see *STh* I-II, q. 91, aa. 4-5.

[40] Girard, *The One by Whom*, 73.

Still, there is no direct discussion of a sole principle undergirding other so-called primary precepts of the natural law in mimetic theory. Girard, for instance, thinks the Decalogue had to be divinely revealed for these precepts to be known. The Decalogue precepts "reveal" and combat the hidden enslaving power of mimetic desires.[41] Because Girard thinks that such primary precepts are not discoverable by humans without divine revelation, it seems that the possibility of insights from a purported natural law—even if developed over a long period of time—would always be insufficient for unveiling and overturning the victim mechanism.

From this, one can appreciate the unique solution Christianity brings to the problem of mimetic desire for Girard. His presentation of human desire is so pessimistic that it would be hard to account for humans seeking goods (even if imperfect ones) outside of the Judeo-Christian sphere. Humans are incapable of extending their desires beyond what the people around them—those they are imitating—desire. On this score, it seems that desires prevent one from grasping (even intuitively) the good that embraces all—the good as such.[42] Girard lacks any extended account of human reason or ethical transformation independent of mimetic desire. By implication, any philosophical discourse about the common good outside the Judeo-Christian tradition and divine revelation is inherently defective, due to its inability to realize that mimetic violence lies at the heart of all politics and religion. In this sense, Girard is saying that philosophy can never really escape the negative, downward pull of politics, with its roots in mimetic desire. The chained cave-dwellers in Plato's myth of the cave in *The Republic* come to mind as evoking Girard's negative view of the natural state of humans in mimetic theory.

In Girard's own writings, it is difficult to see consistently why he has this negative view of politics and philosophy. Tensions often emerge in the way he describes the common good. At times, he says that the common good should be clearly knowable to human beings, but because of our mimetic desires we do not come to grasp the common good

[41] Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, 7-18.

[42] See *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

as common. The good is only seen as a good for me and through particular things: for example, food and shelter that are equally desired by others. Efficacious abstract rational reflection is almost ruled out by mimetic theory—perhaps not a priori, but due rather to the lack of evidence that such reflection was commonly communicated and/or effective at preventing violence from erupting. Humans, at least in primeval societies, were not able to distinguish (or have a critical distance from) their desires and their origins. People do not even see their desires as the common cause of their rivalries; instead, they perceive themselves as being in competition with others.

This difficulty should not be regarded as insurmountable in a dialogue with Thomism. It is important to recall Girard's central concerns. He principally wants to show how the psychology of human desire has shaped and shapes our reflection on religion, morality, and politics without claiming to enter directly into theology, moral philosophy, or political theory. The heuristic of mimetic desire arouses suspicion that leads us to reexamine these areas.

This last move of Girard, however, introduces another problem: must he not make an implicit appeal to some normative scheme that recognizes, at the very least, violence is bad, so as to arouse suspicion? Here Girard undoubtedly relies upon an implicit notion of common sense rooted in a concern for real matters that affect people lives. He sees this common sense acting as a bulwark against rationalism and the possibility that there can also be "illusions of reason." He speaks positively in this context of "the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas" as succeeding "for the most part . . . in getting at what really matters by applying a kind of Aristotelian and medieval common sense."[43] Girard values neo-Thomism for its defense of objective features of the world, but he also thinks it too weak. In the face of modern attacks against rationality that have developed into attacks on a social scale, neo-Thomism and Aristotelianism cannot sway the crowd. Definitions in philosophy taken on their own have no social character. Aristotle and people like him could pursue their intellectual pursuits thanks to aristocratic protection

[43] Girard, *The One by Whom*, 123.

that shielded them (to some extent) from sudden angry tides of popular opinion.

> They defended reason, but they didn't see the threats that hung over it. As a consequence, their conception of rationality was overly optimistic. We would be wiser, I think, to define rationality in terms of the threats it faces on a social level. In particular . . . the informative function of reason has no effect on the crowd, which is governed instead by the scapegoat mechanism. . . . Neither philosophy nor political science has anything to say about this. Here divine reason regains its rightful place. It is the coming of the Holy Spirit that defends innocent people against persecution.[44]

Thus, the biggest problem facing philosophy is its political precariousness. To define and defend rationality "in terms of the threats it faces on the social level" suggests the need to appeal to a larger audience than philosophers; hence, Girard's extension of mimetic desire as a heuristic for religion and politics by way of an origins-of-civilization narrative.

Girard's common sense gravitates around biological viability and assumes that humans need to prevent violence to preserve their life. In light of this, if one could restate mimetic theory's first principle of practical reason it might be "desire aright and avoid violence."[45] Girard remains skeptical that humans can desire aright on their own, given how their desires are mimetically structured and veil the violence they should be avoiding.

Mimetic theory's common sense biology of violence-avoidance harmonizes with a general Thomistic or Aristotelian account of the human's animal nature. Avoiding violent situations goes a long way toward preserving biological life, and so on the level of animal life a Thomist could easily recognize in mimetic theory something that functions as natural law, even though it could not be called "law" in Thomas's proper sense given that it does not yet relate to reason.[46] Nevertheless, the mimetic character of human desires and the reality of human embodiment mean that

[44] Ibid., 124.

[45] Notice how the second half—"avoid violence"—introduces the specter of a potential threat faced not only on the individual level (that is, violence to oneself), but critically also on the social level, were one not to desire aright. Violence implies some relation to another.

[46] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 2, ad 3.

violence continues to be perpetuated almost "naturally." Nonhuman animals also experience this "natural" violence, but, as already seen, Girard thinks violence among humans far exceeds the brutality of animals. Human desires are more mimetic than animal desires, leading the former into greater conflicts. Paradoxically, human reason does not check violence, in mimetic theory, but rather contributes to its escalation to a level never reached among animals.

In mimetic theory, the conceiving of the murder of one's rival is not the product of a practical syllogism: "Violence strikes men . . . never as a simple means to an end, but as an epiphany."[47] Yet, murder for Girard is not irrational *per se*. It is rationally structured because people judge a neighbor to be a rival over the objects of their desires, but they are not conscious that the cause of this rivalry comes from the imitation of their neighbor's desires. Humans end up deceiving themselves about their causal contribution to the events that precede the murder of a rival. And here lies Girard's main focus: in the transformation from an initial story of tragedy—where we think we are really guiltless of a murder due to circumstances beyond our control—to an historical account where responsibility and guilt are realized.

Girard thinks that trying to analyze the starting point of primitive human deliberation about the rival-murder fails to notice the determining trajectory of the desires themselves on deliberation. It is the similarity between two individuals, not their difference, that comes to be the cause of violent rivalry as long as the similarity of their desires is not acknowledged. Girard maintains that desire's intersubjective structuring is only veiled further by the philosopher's immediate concern to analyze monologically the reasoning processes that led to the murder—an analysis, he argues, that has parallels in the way juridical proceedings both mitigate (through discovery and sanction) and imitate (through punishment) acts of vengeance.[48] A larger shift in imagination is required, or, more precisely, a conversion.

In contrast, Thomas insists that the natural law must address practical reasoning, given that it applies to our

[47] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 152.

[48] Ibid., 23-24, 298.

"inclinations to the good according to the nature of reason."[49] In his categorization, Thomas lists inclinations to the good according to reason after inclinations that preserve animal life; it might seem that he thinks self-preservation trumps the inclination to seek the good according to reason in society. However, the inclination to live in society is itself rooted in the inclination to the good according to reason for Thomas. This points to another tension with mimetic theory: the question of the origin of society and religion.

A) Society's Origins

In the questions on natural law in the *Summa theologiae*, society's origin is rarely explored in an historical mode; Girard, by contrast, regularly explores it in this way, even if he does not claim to be acting as an historian as such. Mimetic theory maintains that an account of the origin of society must move from the mythical into the historical and social scientific. There was a time when society did not exist as such; the theory hypothesizes that society and religion emerged from mimetic rivalry. In contrast, Thomas's account of natural law takes it for granted that societies have been in existence since the creation of the first humans. Living in an epoch where little attention was paid to theorizing about biological evolution, Thomas had very little occasion to problematize the question of human society's origin as a biological or anthropological event, especially given the Genesis account; instead, he tends to analyze political communities taxonomically, considering their birth, growth, and decay or death.

For Thomas, biological dependencies require humans to live in a society. On this point, mimetic theory would likely agree. The major difference, however, lies in the orientation of the different inquiries with respect to man's sociability. Mimetic theory aims at a broadly genetic account of society that has a normative undercurrent. Thomas gives an explicitly normative and metaphysical account of how the natural law is ordered by natural inclinations that emerge from the innate *telos* of human nature, which drives the organic development

[49] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

of human society through the creation of positive laws that specify certain aspects of the natural law in response to the contingent circumstances of each human society or through the educational influence of the divine law. The origin of society in mimetic theory acts as a starting point of the story wherein it can structure (less explicitly) its normative account of desire and violence.

B) Does Mimetic Theory Contain the First Principle of Natural Law?

On the surface, it looks as if Girard's primeval man has only a very dim awareness of the natural law, if any. However, it would be an exaggeration to say that mimetic theory denies that the basic principle to "do good and avoid evil" is operational, even if it is not conceptualized as a precept in human practical reasoning. To insist on its presence in Girard's account would be to miss the point of his broader narrative strategy.[50]

A Thomist would want to push mimetic theory to clarify: how do acts of rivalry work on the level of human intention (or their acts' objects)? Girard does not introduce such distinctions. He sometimes asserts that they are secondary, and argues that focusing on them too much distracts us from the more primary insight—that we are often unaware of the mimetic character of our desires.[51] In this sense, Girard sees his theory as enacting a type of moral therapy or pedagogy. This explains his insistence on the centrality of mimetic desires, an insistence that on first reading seems reactionary

[50] Basic instincts of biological self-preservation are also functional and remain a dominant driving force according to mimetic theory. Do primeval humans ascend to a consideration of the common good shared by other humans? It seems one of the effects of mimetic rivalry is that any basis for sameness or similarity between rivals quickly becomes obscured. The higher-order question of why I desire the same thing that my rival desires does not enter into primeval minds, in mimetic theory. It is a question that only comes later, with the development of philosophical reflection; by the time this has occurred, society has developed and has masked the original structuring of mimetic desires. Whether Thomas's account of desire and inclination is subject to this critique may be questionable. Thomas does speak to the fact that desire is elicited from a person by the object (*STh* I-II, q. 8, aa. 2-3). What seems less clear is whether he ever envisioned the perception of another's desires as structuring human desires to the extent that mimetic theory insists.

[51] Girard, *Evolution and Conversion*, 260.

and exaggerated, but makes more sense when Girard's larger aims come into view.

III. Sacrifice to God in the Natural Law as Seen by Mimetic Theory

If sympathetic readings of mimetic theory by Thomists are possible and beneficial, the same might be said for sympathetic Girardian readings of Thomas on the natural-law precept to offer sacrifice to God. The second major thesis of mimetic theory is particularly useful in this area: the heuristic of mimetic desire as applied to social and political realities. It is worth noting briefly that even among readers interested in Thomas's account of natural law, scant attention is usually paid to the precept on sacrifice. In a recent article, Sean B. Cunningham has outlined two common misconceptions about "natural inclinations" and natural law that account for this neglect.[52] The first misconception is that natural inclinations in Thomas are only prerational, biological, or psychological "urges." The second is that the natural law pertains only to secular matters. By identifying these common misconceptions, Cunningham has helped clear the path for a more fruitful dialogue between mimetic theory and readers of Thomas. He also shows convincingly that in order for the first misconception to be corrected one needs to appreciate the fuller scope of natural inclinations in Thomas's thought; this extends especially to their teleological character.[53] By extension, Thomas's notion of natural law too should account for a teleological ordering.

The second common misconception that the natural law pertains (or at least should pertain) almost exclusively to "secular" matters hinges on—among other things—how one interprets Thomas's nature-grace distinction. Clarifying this with reference to the precept to offer sacrifice will be critical. Thomas's understanding of prelapsarian sacrifice to God

[52] Sean B. Cunningham, "Aquinas on the Natural Inclination of Man to Offer Sacrifice to God," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 86 (2012): 185-200, at 185-86.

[53] For an example of the first misconception, Cunningham singles out John Finnis's description of natural inclinations; see ibid., 186 n. 3 (citing Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 2d ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 91).

presents a useful dialogue partner with mimetic theory, which pushes us to consider the possibility of a radical difference between prelapsarian and postlapsarian sacrifice. From this narrative, the nonviolent meaning of sacrifice for Thomas becomes clearer. This meaning relies principally not on his generic account of sacrifice as a precept of the natural law, but rather on his theological understanding of Christ's sacrifice, from which it derives its fullest sense. This reveals a point of convergence with mimetic theory.

A) The Religious Setting of Sacrifice and the Natural Law in Thomas

Thomas's decision to relate sacrifice to the natural law in his *Summa theologiae* distinguishes sacrifice from the other acts of religion he treats.[54] The question on the virtue of religion in general, which starts the series (q. 81), already hints that certain acts of religion are dictates of natural reason.[55] Thomas does not, however, make any explicit connection between an act of religion and the natural law until the question on sacrifice. This may have to do with the fact that Thomas thinks sacrifice has existed universally among humans "at all times and among all nations."[56] It is worth pointing out that he expresses this view in the first article's *sed contra* without citing any authority; it is the commonly held view, or *endoxa*. It is Thomas's acceptance of sacrifice as something *commanded* positively by the natural law—and without the negative fallout from mimetic desires—that brings his account into most obvious tension with mimetic theory.

However, when Thomas's account of sacrifice is read more globally within his thought, some of this tension becomes resolvable. Falling within the broader matrix of the

[54] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 3. On the acts of religion, see *STh* II-II, qq. 82-91; q. 85 is on sacrifice.

[55] *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 2, ad 3: "de dictamine rationis naturalis est quod homo aliqua faciat ad reverentiam divinam."

[56] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1, sc. Compare the treatment of Robert Kilwardby on biblical versus nonbiblical religions by Richard Schenk, "The Ambivalence of Interreligious Historiography: Foreign and Domestic Narratives," in Palaver and Schenk, eds., *Mimetic Theory and World Religions*, 215-27. There is some favorable overlap between Kilwardby and Thomas on appreciating nonbiblical religion and sacrifice.

Secunda pars' treatment of particular moral matters,[57] religion is a moral virtue that Thomas situates under the cardinal virtue of justice. Due to this schematic, there is a tendency in the *Summa theologiae* to emphasize the obligatory aspects of religion; religion embraces acts whereby humans render to God what is due to him as creator and provident ruler of the universe.[58] Undoubtedly, there are shortcomings with this approach. Religion runs the risk of being seen more as an economic transaction or exchange between God and humans—as if we were on equal footing and God truly needed things from us. But there are also advantages. Religion as embedded in justice is much easier to appreciate as a social virtue and not just as a private affair. However, it is these social aspects that also potentially make it an object of critique for mimetic theory, if it veils interpersonal violence or even deep-seated violence against God.

The *Summa theologiae* identifies two main types of religious acts: internal and external. Internal acts have precedence in most instances. Of religion's internal acts, two hold precedence: devotion and prayer. Devotion is a special act of religion consisting in "the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God."[59] Devout persons voluntarily subject themselves "entirely" to God. Since the mind is a part of the whole person, it too is owed to God. The specific act of religion for the mind is prayer, where one "surrenders" the mind to God.[60] Because prayer involves handing over to God the loftiest human power (the intellect), Thomas thinks it surpasses all other acts of religion, both internal and external. This is so also because the mind orders all other acts of religion, including sacrifice.[61]

The fact that the mind orders acts of religion also explains why Thomas thinks the religious act of sacrifice is "of the natural law."[62] In contrast to mimetic theory's emphasis on

[57] *STh* II-II, prol.

[58] *STh* II-II, q. 81, aa. 2-3 and 5.

[59] *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1.

[60] *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 3, ad 3.

[61] *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 3, ad 1.

[62] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1: Thomas begins his explanation of sacrifice by rooting it in "natural reason."

subjective desire, Thomas's account of sacrifice gives pride of place to interior intellectual acts, making it markedly intellectualist, even though sacrifice is technically an external act of religion involving the offering of sensible objects to God. This intellectualist bent reflects the broader trajectory of his theological anthropology, which assumes the substantial unity of the human spirit and body and our reliance on external signs. For instance, Thomas extends "sacrifice" to the external acts of other virtues, provided such acts are devoted to God:

> the acts of the other virtues are directed to the reverence of God, as when a man gives alms of his own things for God's sake, or when a man subjects his own body to some affliction out of reverence for God; and in this way the acts also of other virtues may be called *sacrifices*.[63]

This extended sense of "sacrifice," however, is not its most proper sense. In the strict sense, "sacrifice" refers to "acts that are not deserving of praise save through being done out of reverence for God."[64] The lack of intrinsic praiseworthiness in acts of sacrifice *qua* acts indicates more clearly that God is the source of the goodness or "holiness" in the sacrifice, not the act itself; reverence is due to God alone.

Thomas's notion of "reverence" is noteworthy for its avoidance of a type of obligatory exchange or transaction. Instead, to reverence God has as its rationale that "we desire to cling to God in a spiritual fellowship; and consequently the act of any virtue assumes the character of a sacrifice through being done in order that we may cling to God in holy fellowship."[65] "Fellowship" (*societas*) with God is not an exclusive communion between two persons, but suggests additional social dimensions. In this way, one can appreciate how for Thomas sacrifice is principally semiotic and assumes

[63] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 3. This "extension" of sacrifice to the acts of other virtues is modeled on the *Summa*'s prior treatment of sanctity's similar capacity to extend not only to the person worshiping but also to the objects used in worship. This capacity is rooted principally in the mind's ordering to God: "it is by sanctity that the human mind applies itself and its acts to God" (*STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 8).

[64] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 3: "Sunt tamen quidam actus qui non habent ex alio laudem nisi quia fiunt propter reverentiam divinam."

[65] Ibid., ad 1: "hoc ipsum quod Deo quadam spirituali societate volumus inhaerere, ad divinam reverentiam pertinet. Et ideo cuiuscumque virtutis actus rationem sacrificii accipit ex hoc quod agitur ut sancta societate Deo inhaereamus."

communication with others; it signals God's singular goodness and holiness and expresses a desire to be in fellowship with God.

This aspect of Thomas's account, however, may have an unintended consequence. If religious actions not normally perceived as praiseworthy have the potential to be recognized as good or holy due to their being offered to God, does this mean that acts of violence done in sacrificial contexts become praiseworthy?[66] According to mimetic theory, the absence of intrinsic praiseworthiness in sacrificial acts *qua* acts raises the suspicion that Thomas's description of sacrifice actually has hidden roots in scapegoating. This suspicion is not entirely banished even if one focuses on Thomas's semiotic interpretation of sacrifice, which certainly does not require violent acts for signification. But it also does not explicitly rule them out; Thomas portrays the sacrificial act as a nonreflexive referent, that is, an act that *per se* attributes no moral praiseworthiness to the actor so that God alone is honored. As a signifier, sacrifice is quite malleable, perhaps too much so.

It is only in the context of sacrifice as an act of the "virtue" of religion that the actor's praiseworthiness comes into the frame.[67] However, even here, the content of sacrificial acts is left underdetermined;[68] the general precept to sacrifice does not determine the specific ways this is to be done. Sacrifices, Thomas says, are specified either by God or by humans themselves. Leaving aside the case of divinely instituted sacrifices, what is to ensure that humans will prevent violence from entering into their sacrificial practices?

Thomas's situating of sacrifice within a natural-law framework is helpful in responding to this objection. Given that sacrifice is "of the natural law," it would be internally inconsistent for sacrificial acts themselves to violate the

[66] John 16:9 already points to this as a distinct possibility: "They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God."

[67] *STh* II-II, q. 85, aa. 3 and 4.

[68] See *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1, ad 1; q. 85, a. 4: those not under the Law (pagans) were not bound to a specific determinate form of external sacrifice. Yet, Thomas thinks they were still bound to sacrifice "according to what was fitting among those whom they lived"—according to custom. On "custom," see *STh* I-II, q. 97, a. 3.

natural law. Would this rule out, for instance, human sacrifice? There is a strong case for this, given that exceptions to the prohibition to kill under the natural law are so few.[69] But what of Christ's sacrifice? Is this a human sacrifice? Thomas thinks not; Jesus lays down his life willingly. Only those who put him to death were guilty of sin, just as certain pagans "offered impious sacrifices by burning men for idols."[70] In the *Summa contra gentiles*, Thomas makes a more explicit appeal to a type of natural-law thinking when he criticizes pagan-idol sacrifices and their "damaging effects"; the pagans neglected worship of God and worshiped demons instead.[71]

B) Further Anthropological Dimensions in Thomas's Account of Sacrifice

Thomas also draws an explicit link between the external aspect of sacrifice—its dependence on the offering of sensible objects—and how he understands the entire sensible world as leading humans back to the invisible God; this also serves to downplay any worry that destructive tendencies might crop up in sacrificial practices. This link is brought out more clearly in the *Summa contra gentiles*, where Thomas emphasizes the role physical objects have in reminding humans of their dependence on God for existence and well-being.[72] Sensible sacrifice stimulates a sort of anamnesis regarding humanity's origins in God. This has the added effect—not drawn out explicitly by Thomas—of permitting persons a type of imaginative space to situate themselves in the world and to foster signs that make manifest the continuity between matter and spirit. External sacrifices unite

[69] See *STh* II-II, q. 64, a. 2 (on killing sinners) and a. 6 (on killing the innocent). These two articles are neuralgic in mimetic theory. Compare *Collationes in decem praeceptis*, a. 7: to murder is both against charity and "against nature." For the Latin text, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Les *Collationes in decem praeceptis* de saint Thomas d'Aquin. Édition critique avec introduction et notes," in *Recherches thomasiennes: Études revues et augmentées*, Bibliothèque thomiste 52 (Paris: Vrin, 2000), 65-117.

[70] *STh* III, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2 (my translation). Paradoxically, Thomas does not completely free Christ's sacrifice from a notion of pagan human sacrifice. He likens those who put Christ to death to idol worshipers offering human sacrifice. The context of this article does not force this comparison, but it is not overly out of place either, given the medieval context.

[71] *ScG* III, c. 120.

[72] *ScG* III, c. 119.

the inner sacrifices offered to God to the sensible world.[73] It is Thomas's anthropology and theory of knowledge that decisively intervene here: sensible sacrifice was provided by God, because humans naturally obtain their knowledge via the senses and have great difficulty moving beyond them.[74]

But what happens to the things offered in sacrifice? Thomas in the *Summa contra gentiles* states that sensible sacrifices were instituted and "offered to God," but does not elaborate further on what happens to the objects themselves; the examples of sensible things he adduces are acts like ablutions, prostrations, and genuflections that are offered to honor God. In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas devotes more attention to what happens to the physical objects when sacrificed, and he uses the different ways the objects are acted upon to draw a further distinction between sacrifices and oblations (*oblatio*). Taken generically, an oblation is anything offered to God out of honor, irrespective of what happens to the offering.[75] A gold coin left on an altar is an oblation, but so is a slaughtered lamb. However, not all oblations are sacrifices; according to a more specific sense, "sacrifices" are "destroyed in the worship of God as though being made into something holy."[76] If something is offered, writes Thomas, "with a view to its remaining entire and being deputed to the worship of God or to the use of His ministers, it will be an oblation and not a sacrifice." By distinguishing oblations and sacrifices, Thomas introduces the influential idea that what is essential to sacrifice is that the object offered in sacrifice must be acted upon.[77] In almost all his examples, the objects

[73] See *ScG* III, c. 120: "External sacrifice is representative of true, inner sacrifice, according to which the human mind offers itself to God." Through sacrifice's ability to bring into the sensible world the human person's spiritual offering, one can also appreciate how it links up potentially to an idea of the incarnation—wherein the God who is spirit becomes visible—and how it foreshadows the special role of the Eucharist in Christ's saving mission and of calling to mind his sacrifice on the cross.

[74] *ScG* III, c. 119. This discussion of the "appropriateness" (*convenienter*) of sensible sacrifice does not depend on any direct consideration of Christ's crucifixion.

[75] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 3.

[76] *STh* II-II, q. 86, a. 1: "si aliquid exhibeatur in cultum divinum quasi in aliquod sacrum quod inde fieri debeat consumendum, et oblatio est et sacrificium."

[77] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 3; Daly refers to this as "the Thomistic axiom" of sacrifice (*Sacrifice Unveiled*, 161). However, I take "Thomistic axiom" here in a sense different from that given by Daly.

sacrificed are destroyed or consumed: animals are "slain and burnt" or "bread is broken, eaten, and blessed";[78] "a man subjects his own body to some affliction.[79] The Old Testament is where Thomas gets most of these examples, and it is arguable that he simply inherits their destructive aspect without problematizing it much. A mimetic critique would highlight the paradox that sacrifice for Thomas includes a type of destruction of the object—in some instances, of biological life.

Not all of Thomas's examples of Old Testament sacrifice involve the total destruction of the object. In the question in the *Summa theologiae* on the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law, and in his *Commentary on Hebrews*, Thomas makes three further subdivisions within the genus of sacrifice, which he presents in descending order of importance.[80] Each subgroup is distinguished primarily by the different way the offering is acted upon, but also by the broader purpose of the sacrifice—its motivation. "Holocausts" (*holocausta*) are the only sacrifices that involve the complete "immolation" of the offering. Under the Old Law these offered the most honor to God, due to their exclusivity. Thomas likens holocausts to the perfect offerings of those who fulfill the evangelical councils.[81] "Sin-offerings" (*sacrificia pro peccato*) require half the offering to be destroyed and the other half to be given to the priests for their upkeep. These were made to mitigate God's punishment due to sin. "Peace-offerings" (*hostia pacifica*) are divided into thirds: one for immolation, one for the priests, and one for the suppliant. These were offered in thanksgiving for past blessings, to entreat future blessings, and to signify a trust in God's salvation. The categories are differentiated, but one can see how they share a common thread: all are united in their aim to honor and reverence God. The name of each type reflects the significance of the sacrifice. In this way, Thomas shows sensitivity to the manner in which even Old Testament sacrifices expressed human

[78] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 3.

[79] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 3.

[80] *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 3, ad 8-10; *Super Hebraeos 10*, lect. 1 (*Super Epistolas S. Pauli lectura,* vol. 2, ed. R. Cai [Rome: Marietti, 1953], no. 486).

[81] *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 3, ad 8.

needs: to honor God, to seek forgiveness, to adhere to God's plan for salvation.

Crucially, Thomas also viewed the Old Law sacrifices as pedagogical tools to keep the chosen people from falling back into idol worship.[82] In different places, he observes that God did not prescribe sacrifices to the Jewish people until they worshiped the idol of the golden calf.[83] For Thomas idol-sacrifices were ultimately reducible to a confused type of demon worship practiced at the time.[84] Rather than abolishing these external sacrifices altogether, the Old Law adopts the external form of the idol-sacrifice as a kind of quasi-neutral shell, wherein the true worship of the one God can germinate and grow. The Old Law serves as the watchful teacher ensuring that external sacrifices do not lead one astray into abandoning the truth of the one God. Thus, external sacrifices were meant to prevent people from falling back into idol worship through a kind of gradualism, or what today might be called a sort of proto-inculturalization.

This nuanced sense of development in Thomas's understanding of biblical sacrifice shows how a developmental narrative might equally be applied to his natural-law precept of sacrifice. Such an application is already germinal in his writings, given the fact that he believes the New Law of Christ fulfills both the Old Law and the natural law.[85] To explore this further would take us too far afield. For now, it is worth looking at how Thomas sees the New Law affecting the development of biblical sacrifice—since this will link up with Girard's own turn to Judeo-Christian Scripture for overturning mimetic violence and archaic scapegoating.

With the New Law, Thomas observes that sacrifice progresses. Firstly, it becomes more internalized;[86] external acts, once so central to the Old Law, were only ever meant to signify an "inner sacrifice."[87] Thomas sees this inner sacrifice fulfilling the universal obligation "to offer God a devout

[82] See *STh* I-II, q. 106, a. 3.
[83] *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 3, ad 8; *Super Heb. 10*, lect. 1 (Marietti ed., no. 488).
[84] For the clearest statement of this, see *ScG* III, c. 120.
[85] See *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 5; q. 106, a. 2; q. 107, a. 2.
[86] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 2; q. 85, a. 4.
[87] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 4: "sacrificium interius."

mind."[88] But where does this obligation come from? For Thomas, this is a less pressing question than it is for Girard, but it is safe to say that the natural-law precept to sacrifice is Thomas's way of expressing the basis of this obligation, which continues to exist even under the New Law. What the New Law does is clarify more precisely how the obligation is to be fulfilled. In a striking passage reflecting on Christ's repetition of Hosea 6:6 (Matt 12:7), "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," Thomas reinterprets "mercy" as one such specification of New Law sacrifice:

> We worship God by external sacrifices or gifts, not for His own profit, but for that of ourselves and our neighbor. For He needs not our sacrifices, but wishes them to be offered to Him, in order to arouse our devotion and to profit our neighbor. Hence mercy, whereby we supply others' defects is a sacrifice more acceptable to Him, as conducing more directly to our neighbor's well-being.[89]

With the obligation residing in the offering of a devout mind to God and mercy toward our neighbor, the importance of sacrifice's external form diminishes; the external form can vary according to different times, places, customs, and conditions.[90] Nevertheless, despite the variations, Thomas thinks the universal obligation rooted in the natural law extends to offering both inner and external sacrifice to God, even under the New Law.

C) Specific Difficulties in Thomas's Analogies for Sacrifice as a Natural-Law Precept

Some of the examples Thomas employs to illustrate the natural-law precept to sacrifice might suggest further tensions with mimetic theory. In the *Summa theologiae*, he insinuates that the dictate of natural reason to sacrifice derives from the natural human inclination of a lesser person to look to a superior person for aid and direction. He identifies the perception of individual indigence or "defect" as the specific source of this inclination:

[88] Ibid.: "omnes enim tenentur Deo devotam mentem offerre."
[89] *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 4, ad 1.
[90] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 4.

Natural reason tells man that he is subject to a higher being, on account of the defects which he perceives in himself, and in which he needs help and direction from someone above him: and whatever this superior being may be, it is known to all under the name of God. Now just as in natural things the lower are naturally subject to the higher, so too it is a dictate of natural reason in accordance with man's natural inclination that he should tender submission and honor, according to his mode, to that which is above man. Now the mode befitting to man is that he should employ sensible signs in order to signify anything, because he derives his knowledge from sensible things. Hence it is a dictate of natural reason that man should use certain sensibles, by offering them to God in sign of the submission and honor due to Him, like those who make certain offerings to their lords [*dominis suis*] in cognition of authority [*dominii*]. Now this is what we mean by a sacrifice, and consequently the offering of sacrifice is of the natural law.[91]

Thomas introduces two major analogies here: one from the order of nature and one from politics. He does not give a specific example of the first, but the deference offspring have for their parents comes close to the relationship between lower and higher he describes. The second works as a type of extension of the first, but also maps onto Thomas's medieval feudal society. These examples are meant to illustrate how an inclination leads "naturally" to people showing submission and honor to those above them. Thomas likely takes for granted that his audience would not object to the principle he is trying to highlight: natural submission of lesser to superior. Of course, any analogy can be nitpicked by objecting to incidental aspects that are not themselves central to the reality being compared. But, is there something in this second analogy that is substantively problematic for contemporary readers of Thomas? According to mimetic theory, there might be. Both of Thomas's analogies are difficult to translate into

[91] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1 (translation modified): "naturalis ratio dictat homini quod alicui superiori subdatur, propter defectus quos in seipso sentit, in quibus ab aliquo superiori eget adiuvari et dirigi. Et quidquid illud sit, hoc est quod apud omnes dicitur Deus. Sicut autem in rebus naturalibus naturaliter inferiora superioribus subduntur, ita etiam naturalis ratio dictat homini secundum naturalem inclinationem ut ei quod est supra hominem subiectionem et honorem exhibeat secundum suum modum. Est autem modus conveniens homini ut sensibilibus signis utatur ad aliqua exprimenda, quia ex sensibilibus cognitionem accipit. Et ideo ex naturali ratione procedit quod homo quibusdam sensibilibus rebus utatur offerens eas Deo, in signum debitae subiectionis et honoris, secundum similitudinem eorum qui dominis suis aliqua offerunt in recognitionem dominii. Hoc autem pertinet ad rationem sacrificii. Et ideo oblatio sacrificii pertinet ad ius naturale."

contemporary terms without becoming unhinged from their implicit assumption: the hierarchical ordering of nature and society. The first is relatively benign; it hinges on reasons why children ought to respect their parents and caregivers.[92] The second is more problematic.

To speak today of offering submission and honor to a political superior or to a "lord" in recognition of authority (literally, "lordship"/*dominium*) is anachronistic. Offering honors might be less problematic,[93] but offering "submission" (*subiectio*) would raise eyebrows in modern democratic societies. There is a further difficulty; in addition to "feudal overlord," another possible translation of *dominus* could be "master," that is, a slave-owner. Even if we confine ourselves to the translation "feudal overlord," Thomas's implicit acceptance of natural servitude or slavery—however common for his time—presents difficulties. To compare sacrifice to the showing of submission in a lord-serf or master-slave relationship would seem to indicate that there might be some violence still hidden in the way Thomas conceives of sacrifice—or so the mimetic theorist would contend.

The comparison of *dominium* eliciting natural submission to a *dominus* fails to clarify what such "submission" entails politically. Thomas's modern readers are forced to fill in the blank: feudal submission at its best could be a recognition of a *primus inter pares* or at its worst a form of serfdom: in either case, hierarchical feudalism as a political arrangement comes

[92] Showing "submission" or "honor" to "a superior" could be deemed problematic by contemporary society, if the basis for such an exhibition is solely the fact of a relationship. It is unreasonable, for instance, to expect a child to show honor to her willfully absentee father, even though her existence depends on him. Likewise, unfortunate and highly publicized cases of child-abuse can lead children (and adults) to be suspicious of teachers and those historically associated with helping and guiding youths; such suspicion is corrosive and inhibits expressions of honor toward such individuals. On the whole, however, these counter-examples to the first analogy can be more straightforwardly dealt with *as abuses* rather than as grounds for objection to the second analogy, which is taken from feudal society. I take the argument that children have no obligation to obey and show honor to committed and loving parents (even with their inevitable faults and shortcomings) to have little currency.

[93] Much depends on the current socio-political culture on the ground. For instance, the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom still awards yearly *honours* to outstanding citizens for their service; many of these are former politicians, and some are even elevated to peerages—a type of meritocratic aristocracy. The United States, with its revolutionary rejection of hereditary aristocracy, has no such equivalent; however, Canada does.

into tension with modern democratic values—individual rights and liberties, equality before the law, and the separation of powers.[94] Given that mimetic theory arises from and assumes (to a certain extent) a modern political landscape, it is unsurprising that its critique easily latches onto medieval hierarchy. A mimetic theorist would want to argue that any "submission" owed would have to be understood as limited, otherwise lords would begin to rival God (or, as it happened more concretely in history, the Church).

Thomas was not politically naïve in such matters. In his treatise *De Regno* he notes the frightful ease with which monarchies can devolve into tyrannies, and the havoc this brings.[95] The tyrannous regime is counted as the worst type and is so deplorable that Thomas thinks its subjects can justly depose a tyrant, in some instances. This realism about political corruption and the potential abuses of hierarchical authority places the political analogy in a fuller context. It also invites mimetic theory to adopt a more sympathetic critique. Thomas had no real occasion to problematize the issues flagged by mimetic theory in this analogy, and to expect the exact same concerns that one would nowadays have regarding political "submission" is unfair. Nevertheless, issues like natural servitude do flag deficiencies in Thomas's political and social ethics (as appreciated in hindsight) that potentially extend to how he characterizes sacrifice as being "of the natural law." Moreover, if the precept to sacrifice fails to be truly of the natural law, a more general concern about the viability of Thomas's entire natural-law theory is raised, given that he thinks a natural-law precept can never be changed or abolished.[96]

Girard's theory, however, shares a concern with Thomas's *Summa theologiae*, that is, moral transformation that is individually understood and lived.[97] With this in mind, one could point out that the emphasis of Thomas's analogy falls

[94] See Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 19-22.

[95] *De Regno* I, cc. 4 and 7 (*On Kingship*, trans. Gerard B. Phelan, rev. ed. I. T. Eschmann [Toronto: PIMS, 1949]).

[96] *STh* I-II, q. 94, aa. 5-6.

[97] On the morally transformative program of the New Law (as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount), see *STh* I-II, q. 108, a. 3, sed contra and corpus.

on *the showing of a sign* of submission and honor to a lord as identifying (imperfectly) the character of a sacrifice as something owed. If the focus of the analogy is narrowed, one could acknowledge that certain aspects of Thomas's understanding of social and political hierarchy, while problematic in hindsight, do not amount to a shipwreck for sacrifice. Incidentally, this allows one also to sidestep the corresponding claim that duties are owed "naturally" to lords by subjects. This would lessen the severity of Girard's criticism, even if the precise analogy is no longer a viable option for today's reader, given that its reliance on a hierarchical natural aristocracy leads to perceived problems in religion and politics. In the end, this is merely to acknowledge that the relationship between religion and politics has shifted since Thomas's time, and contemporary Thomists as well as Girardians can appreciate this.

On the theological level, the analogy unearths some different (but not unrelated) difficulties. God, it could be argued, is portrayed too anthropomorphically as the recipient of honor and submission. Of course, there is no divine need for sacrifice.[98] But the analogy to feudal lordship forces us to revisit the lord's implicit and reciprocal dependence on serfdom. This dependence runs the risk of being read back into the divine nature.

This analysis underscores the importance of distinguishing between Thomas's philosophical or rational conclusions and the means by which he tries to convey them more broadly to his audience—here, by means of an extended socio-political analogy. Mimetic theory helps one to appreciate the difference between these two methods, chiefly by virtue of the fact that Girard tends to take a less directly philosophical approach than Thomas, employing the heuristic tools of narrative instead of direct rational analysis. The reason for this, as noted earlier, is Girard's contention that his work needs to have socio-political currency by identifying social threats to truth as they arise from mimetic violence. The biggest threat to truth today, in his view, comes from the collective violence toward it, which he likens to a possessed crowd.[99]

[98] See *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 4, ad 1.

[99] Girard, *The One by Whom*, 123-24.

An unsympathetic mimetic critique would see Thomas principally as someone not yet awakened to the insight that at the root of the political order is an untruth told about human desires. Such a critique has limited value. A sympathetic critique, however, serves as a helpful dialogue partner, alerting one to the need to consider the use of images and historical narratives in contemporary society and in its self-understanding. That Thomas's naturalistic account in politics could be utilized, for instance, to defend or perpetuate violent and abusive institutions—slavery or serfdom, or ineffective and potentially tyranny-prone natural aristocracy—has to be addressed historically. It is not as if Thomas was a Pelagian; he affirms the need for grace to transform the believer and society. By situating the natural law and politics in the narrative of divine revelation, an account rooted in Thomas's texts can be developed that actually addresses objections that advocate a complete writing-off of the natural law altogether. This is, of course, an option, but one that might paradoxically threaten society with more violence than reform it.[100]

The fundamental tensions between (1) Thomas's optimistic anthropology that sees human desires as teleologically ordered to the common good and (2) mimetic theory's pessimistic insight into desires do not automatically disappear after Girard's broader meta-theoretical considerations about the threats to truth in society are taken into account; nevertheless, they do lessen the strain and should elicit sympathy from readers of Thomas. His theory of (gradual) human ethical perfectibility is a possible way to lessen this tension yet further. The Thomist can acknowledge that the earlier outcomes of human actions and societies were imperfect, just as children lack awareness of their own faults and are imperfect compared to mature adults; yet the story of the human capacity to learn must be seen in its entirety for these earlier outcomes to be judged fairly. This urges the Thomist to situate the notion of the natural law in a narrative of bottom-up development that tracks alongside an historical account of development in political societies. Adopting this bottom-up tactic—one which mimetic theory also deploys—

[100] Ibid., 73.

may help to bring out the permanent features of the natural law (as witnessed in history) while at the same time leaving the theory open for adjustment.[101]

D) A True Sacrifice? The Purpose of Sacrifice in the Light of Nature and Grace

To get behind the specification of sacrifice in human history and to move from these specific examples to a generic natural law, the question of sacrifice's purpose needs finally to be addressed. Here, Thomas's distinction between nature and grace comes to the fore. Sacrifice's functional purpose, as seen earlier, is as a signifier; it is analogous to speech. But to find sacrifice's more global purpose one must pinpoint the purpose for the signifying. It is here that Thomas makes explicit recourse to the theological tradition to shed light on the natural-law precept. Responding to the objection that because not every just person in the Bible sacrificed sacrifice is neither universal nor of the natural law, he speculates very briefly on whether Adam ever offered sacrifice to God:

> Adam, Isaac and other just men offered sacrifice to God in a manner befitting the times in which they lived, according to Gregory, who says (*Moral*. iv, 3) that in olden times original sin was remitted through the offering of sacrifices. Nor does scripture mention all the sacrifices of the just, but only those that have something special connected with them. Perhaps the reason why we read of no sacrifice being offered by Adam may be that, as the origin of sin is ascribed to him, the origin of sanctification ought not to be represented as typified in him. Isaac was a type of Christ, being himself offered in sacrifice; and so there was no need that he should be represented as offering a sacrifice.[102]

[101] Ibid., 113-26: certain aspects of Girard's critique of rationalism—its tendency to present closed-systems—are unobjectionable to Thomists.

[102] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1, ad 2: "Adam et Isaac, sicut et alii iusti, Deo sacrificium obtulerunt secundum sui temporis congruentiam, ut patet per Gregorium, qui dicit quod apud antiquos per sacrificiorum oblationes remittebatur pueris originale peccatum. Non tamen de omnibus iustorum sacrificiis fit mentio in Scriptura, sed solum de illis circa quae aliquid speciale accidit. Potest tamen esse ratio quare Adam non legitur sacrificium obtulisse, ne, quia in ipso notatur origo peccati, simul etiam in eo sanctificationis origo significaretur. Isaac vero significavit Christum inquantum ipse oblatus est in sacrificium. Unde non oportebat ut significaret quasi sacrificium offerens."

This passage leaves unanswered the question of whether Adam ever actually offered sacrifice to God before the fall. At the same time, its silence does not rule this possibility out. It clearly indicates that Thomas held favorably the view that Adam offered—at the very least—some postlapsarian sacrifice, though Scripture is silent on this. If Adam's sacrifices were exclusively postlasparian, then Gregory's view would hold that sacrifice "among the ancients" was for remitting original sin. However, if a prelapsarian sacrifice is entertained, then Gregory's traditional view cannot be sacrifice's entire purpose; Adam had no original sin to remit before the fall.

Thomas's appeal to a hermeneutical principle about how to interpret sacrifice in the Bible is also significant. Particular acts of sacrifice are recorded only to draw attention to special cases. This suggests that Thomas thought Scripture did not recount exhaustively every instance of sacrifice, even those performed by an important person. This lends support to the view that Adam might have offered prelapsarian sacrifices, even though the Bible never records this. But would not Adam's prelapsarian sacrifice surely be a special case worth noting? To this question, Thomas's hermeneutical method cannot say much, since he is beginning with the examples of sacrifice that already exist in the Bible. One might argue that, if the Bible is silent on prelapsarian sacrifice, perhaps we should not be too hasty to read sacrifice into the first two chapters of Genesis.

At the same time, Thomas's hermeneutical strategy illustrated here offers a further, indirect word on the matter; he identifies the centrality of the typological sense of Christ's sacrifice for understanding the purpose of all sacrifice. Assuming the traditional theme from the Letter to the Hebrews and developed in the Fathers that the sacrifices of the Old Testament point forward to Christ's sacrifice, Thomas reveals his deep thinking about sacrifice's purpose. This explain why the sacrifice of Isaac is singled out—it most clearly points to Christ: "Isaac vero significavit Christum."

By Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, the power that original sin had over humanity is destroyed, and the life of grace once lost is renewed. But does this mean that the global purpose of sacrifice was unknown before Christ? Strangely,

in the *Summa theologiae*'s questions on faith Thomas says that even before the incarnation (but after original sin), some people explicitly believed in the mystery of Christ's power to free humans from sin by his passion and resurrection; "otherwise, they would not have prefigured Christ's passion by certain sacrifices both before the law and under the law."[103] Certain "greater" people knew this prefiguration. For "lesser" people (presumably the vast majority) sacrifices existed under a veil; they believed their sacrifices were divinely established only with reference to Christ's future coming, not to his passion and resurrection, about which the lesser remained ignorant.

Thomas also holds the view—somewhat difficult to make sense of—that even if people offering a sacrifice are not aware of its signifying power, they still have an "implicit" understanding that they are signifying something to God. He even goes so far as to draw an analogy to implicit faith. An objection raises the point that "sacrifices are offered to God in order to signify something. But not everyone is capable of understanding these significations. Therefore not all are bound to offer sacrifices."[104] In reply, Thomas writes: "Though all do not know explicitly the power of the sacrifices [to signify something], they know it implicitly, even as they have implicit faith, as stated above."[105] This appeal to implicit faith and the knowledge of sacrifice's signifying power reveals that Thomas thought at least some individuals before the Old Law would have had to know that sacrifices prefigure Christ's passion, even if most remained unaware of this signification.

These brief passages are tantalizing when read in the light of mimetic theory, raising questions about how "natural" the precept to sacrifice to God is. For instance, if the belief in

[103] *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 7: "Post peccatum autem fuit explicite creditum mysterium Christi non solum quantum ad incarnationem, sed etiam quantum ad passionem et resurrectionem, quibus humanum genus a peccato et morte liberatur. Aliter enim non praefigurassent Christi passionem quibusdam sacrificiis et ante legem et sub lege. Quorum quidem sacrificiorum significatum explicite maiores cognoscebant, minores autem sub velamine illorum sacrificiorum, credentes ea divinitus esse disposita de Christo venturo, quodammodo habebant velatam cognitionem."

[104] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 4, obj. 2.

[105] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 4, ad 2: "quamvis non omnes sciant explicite virtutem sacrificiorum, sciunt tamen implicite, sicut et habent fidem implicitam, ut supra habitum est." On implicit faith, see *STh* II-II, q. 2, aa. 6-7.

Christ's coming to free humans from sin (in other words, belief in the incarnation) is indicated by sacrifices performed by humans even before the Old Law was given—believing these sacrifices to have been divinely established ("credentes ea divinitus esse disposita de Christo venturo")—it would seem that belief in Christ's coming was held "naturally" by them, presumably without them having received an explicit divine revelation. It would then follow that belief in Christ's coming in order to deliver humans from sin is "natural" and actually rooted in the natural law.[106]

[106] Thomas holds that "divine help" would be needed to formulate and understand this belief; see *Super Ioannem 15*, lect. 5 (*Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, ed. R. Cai, 6th edition [Rome: Marietti, 1972], no. 2047). The commentary passage speaks of the Jews requiring "divine help" to believe and understand "the words of the prophets" as foretelling the coming of Christ. Thomas in this discussion of the sin of disbelief indicates that Old Testament Messianism demanded Jews believe in the coming of the Christ "promised in the Law," but it did not require their belief in Christ's coming as the incarnate second person of the Trinity (ibid., [Marietti ed., 2049]). For my argument to hold, it is not necessary that Thomas held all individuals could come to believe "naturally" in God's incarnation; all that needs to be conceded is that Thomas kept open the possibility that some individuals could have come to this belief along the lines of a specification of the natural-law precept to offer God sacrifice. These individuals could be the "greater" Thomas refers to at *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 7. However, this argument is complicated somewhat by the way in which Thomas's distinction between "greater" and "lesser" individuals is developed; he seems to suggest the distinction tracks "greater" or "less" explicit knowledge of faith's content after the fact of the reception of divine revelation (*STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 6). If this is so, then a kind of "divine help" is already implicitly functional in Thomas's view that "greater" individuals come to an explicit awareness that sacrifices prefigure the passion of Christ, even before the Old Law. How they come by this awareness, Thomas does not explain; in fact, he does not query whether the historical origin of sacrifice (as an alpha point) is either natural or through divine assistance. In some places, Thomas says that humans before Abraham needed no "revelation" because everyone persisted "in the worship [*in cultu*] of the one God" (*STh* II-II, q. 174, a. 6); surely, this worship included sacrifice? If this is the case, then this passage has Thomas saying that sacrifice was practiced before Abraham without any divine revelation. The sacrifices of Cain and Abel would be an example. But perhaps some "divine help" was still needed by the pre-Abrahamic "greater" to know that sacrifice prefigured Christ. This view seems the most satisfactory, given what Thomas acknowledges: "revelation about Christ was made to many Gentiles" (*STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 7, ad 3 [my translation]). Girard affirms the need for divine intervention to unveil sacrifice's true purpose: "According to the Letter to the Romans, men may know that God exists, that the world was created, but they cannot foresee redemption by Christ since it depends on conversion. Thus the distance separating man from God can be bridged only through God's grace. Without grace

While this last statement may be overreaching, it could be qualified by saying that before the law lesser people's belief in Christ's coming may have been "quasi-natural"—that is, "natural" insofar as their sacrifice signified something owed to God, and "quasi" insofar as they looked to Christ's advent for deliverance after a type of perplexed reflection on the state of fallen humanity brought about by original sin and its divinely instituted punishment—a punishment that included ignorance of truths about God and of faith.[107] That humans suffer the *fomes* as punishment due to original sin is an indirect indicator that they (1) depend on God for assistance to address the defects they perceive in themselves and suffer and (2) owe sacrifice to God especially on account of this help. Suffering the *fomes* after all is not exactly "natural" for man according to Thomas; it is instituted as a divine punishment following original sin, wherein humanity's original preternatural endowments are also removed.[108] If the effects of the *fomes* lead natural reason to realize that humans depend on God for aid and direction, then this realization cannot be purely "natural." If the defects that Thomas speaks of are not due to the *fomes*, then it would make sense to ask if prelapsarian humans had similar defects, and if so, would they lead natural reason to make the same conclusion—that sacrifice is owed to God as a sign of honor to one who assists and guides humankind.

If Adam had defects before the fall, they would have been only with regard to his supernatural end;[109] if these are the "defects" that he senses in himself that move him to offer sacrifice, then sacrifice could have existed before the fall. But as seen before, Thomas never considers this explicitly. Prelapsarian sacrifice, if it did exist, would at its most essential be signifying honor to God by means of some sensible object.

Without Adam's fall there would also be no need for the crucifixion; thus, sacrifice would not need to prefigure Christ

there can be no redemption. . . . and only this grace can make us see the truth of Christianity" (Girard, *The One by Whom*, 94).

[107] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 1.

[108] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 6.

[109] *STh* I, q. 96, a. 3; while there would have been disparity among prelapsarian humans in body, knowledge, and holiness, Thomas explicitly denies that they would have possessed any defect (*defectus*) or sin "in either soul or in body" ("nullus esset defectus sive peccatum, sive circa animam sive circa corpus").

or his passion. However, because there has been a fall, postlapsarian sacrifice prefigures Christ. Assuming there was prelapsarian sacrifice, according to a mimetic critique postlapsarian sacrifice could have clouded (perhaps over time) whatever was left of the prelapsarian type of sacrifice with its direct signification of honor to God.[110] This rupture could be interpreted as original sin, the desire to be God's rival. Consequently, the origins of original sin become hidden, and the original purpose of prelapsarian sacrifice is lost.

Would prelapsarian sacrifice include the destruction of objects sacrificed to God, as Thomas's account indicates? This is where the internal logic of Thomas's *sacrifice* seems to break down somewhat, and where its negative and destructive element comes closest to the results predicted by mimetic theory. This destructive aspect of Thomas's notion of sacrifice needs purifying. By discussing the possibility of prelapsarian sacrifice, I have tried to show how this might be done. The mimetic critique indicates that the destructive aspect of Thomas's *sacrifice* has the possibility of being removed from the natural-law precept to offer sacrifice to God by emphasizing exclusively its semiotic function and its purpose in imitating, not my neighbor's desires, but Christ's (John 14:15). Yet, when this is done, how recognizable will these actions be as sacrifices?

Conclusion

Certain exaggerated elements of Girard's pessimistic anthropology hinder a straightforward comparison of his central insights with Thomistic sacrifice and natural law. Mimetic theory's cultivated suspicion of human desires and reason delivers little by way of categorizing normative, postlapsarian human actions; it also comes into tension initially with the teleological orientation of natural inclinations and the natural law in Thomas. Girard's heuristic ultimately guides his reader to divine revelation (and especially the Decalogue) for most, if not all, foundational moral norms.

[110] Thomas holds that there was a gradual decay in worship after the fall but before the law; see *STh* II-II, q. 174, a. 6.

This is part of a larger moral therapy to which Girard invites his readers, especially with a view toward a type of conversion where one realizes how "possessed" (as if demonically) one is by mimetic desires. This ultimate appeal to biblical revelation and Christianity is not seen as a weakness for Girard, because it reflects the true helplessness of the human condition—our universal fallenness. The move from sacrifice to divine law in the theory also mirrors how Girard portrays the history of this awareness—arising first among the Jewish people—that the revealed law in Scripture brings much needed stability, the mitigation of violence, and the possibility of reconciliation. But the danger of mimetic violence is only overthrown definitively with Christ's revelation of true sacrifice: the gifting of one's self out of love. Mimetic theory's anthropology, thus, is Judeo-Christian at its core, but theologically incomplete, which partially accounts for its exaggerations.

While mimetic theory has some functional notion of original sin, or at least affirms realities that are comparable to one of original sin's effects, the *fomes* or *lex peccatis*,[111] it shies away from treating original sin directly. It acknowledges the reality of original sin but prefers to leave the topic to theologians, yet not without critiquing their approach.[112] Because of this, there is also no real notion of a historical "fall" in mimetic theory's anthropology; still, it adamantly contends that humanity is manifestly "fallen." Without a historical fall, an imaginative limitation is identified, resulting in a reluctance to consider a prelapsarian state. The prelapsarian state, however, is vitally important for Thomas's theological anthropology; he uses it to clarify the normativity of human desires—which ones are good and which ones are evil—within a theological framework of nature and grace. While Girard affirms the need of the doctrine of original sin to make full sense of his theory, he leaves some large holes to be filled by eschewing a detailed distinction between natural and supernatural. He prefers to present a modified Augustinian vision of the world (and by extension, each person) being a stage for the battle between the rule of Satan and the

[111] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 6.

[112] Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, 7-8, 150. See Palaver, *Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 223-28.

rule of the Holy Spirit to play out. One or the other will win out, Girard thinks; there is no third way.[113]

Mimetic theory recommends to Thomists a heuristic method when discussing sacrifice and the natural law more generally. A fuller narrative of how people's awareness of the natural law develops from primary precepts to secondary precepts is desirable, and looking to the effects of the divine law on this development provides a useful model.[114]

Mimetic theory also identifies a negative aspect in Thomas's understanding of sacrifice, which, if not carefully addressed, could by extension make natural-law theory appear to be a tool for maintaining oppressive hierarchies and violent socio-religious practices. An outline was proposed above: rather than involving the destruction of an object offered to God, sacrifice under the natural law for Thomas involves a person communicating with God by means of acting on some external object which serves as a sign. In the prelapsarian state, one could speculate further what this might look like. Further clarification would be needed regarding the appropriate media for externally signifying honor to God. Would human speech suffice as an object offered, for instance? If so, how then would sacrifice be any different from prayer in Thomas's account?

Or perhaps the decision of how to signify honor and submission to God would have been left up to "the determination" of each person's good pleasure?[115] For post-lapsarian humans, an object offered in sacrifice—acted upon, but not violently destroyed—is a guiding ideal, but also one that cannot now be separated from Christ. In this vein, sacrifice for Thomas is rooted in historical revelation, and at the same time, it can be described as being of the natural law. Admittedly, tensions remain in this description, as highlighted above; but the path toward clarifying sacrifice for Thomas lies more in reason's encounter with a person (that is, Christ) than

[113] See Palaver and Schenk, "Introduction," in Palaver and Schenk, eds., *Mimetic Theory and World Religions*, viii-ix.

[114] See *STh* I-II, q. 91, aa. 4-5; q. 94, aa. 4-5.

[115] *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1, ad 3: "it is natural to man to signify his concepts, but the determination of the signs is left to him as he pleases" ("significare conceptus suos est homini naturale, sed determinatio signorum est secundum humanum placitum" [my translation]).

with its engagement with a theory of natural law or even of mimetic desire. In leaving open the question of its roots in revelation, mimetic theory also ends up with tensions that it cannot resolve on its own. In response, Girard gestures toward Christ—stirred on by his own rediscovery of faith. Thomas's theology unequivocally announces Christ as the way.[116]

[116] See *STh* III, q. 48, a. 3. I thank the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge for hosting this research, and especially Prof. Thomas D'Andrea and his research seminar. I am grateful to Drs. Harald Wydra, Mark Retter, and Jacob Sherman for their conversations on Girard. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Symposium Thomisticum (2016) in Paris organized by Prof. Fran O'Rourke. I thank the symposium's auditors who contributed useful comments; any shortcomings remain my own.

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AQUINAS ON *ESSE COMMUNE* AND THE FIRST MODE OF PARTICIPATION

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THOMAS AQUINAS'S commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus* divides participation into three modes and provides examples for each mode. The first mode of participation concerns something particular or less universal participating in a more universal notion, like an individual participating in a species or a species in a genus. The second mode involves a subject participating in a form or act, which is determined to the subject. Examples include a subject participating in its accidents and matter in form. The third mode regards an effect participating in its cause, especially when the effect is not equal to the power of its cause. This is exemplified by air participating in the light of the sun.[1] Aquinas makes the threefold distinction while expounding Boethius's axioms on the diversity of that-which-is (*id quod est*) and being (*esse*) and the participation of that-which-is in being. In another work, Aquinas holds that the relation between finite being (*ens*) and being (*esse*) is one of participation: being (*ens*), the participant, is that which finitely participates in *esse*, the *participatum*.[2] Aquinas goes on to say in his Boethian exposition that *esse* does not participate in something according to the first two modes. He explicitly states that *ens*, which he clarifies as most common,

[1] See *In De hebdo.*, c. 2 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 50 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1992], 271).

[2] See *Super De causis* (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino super librum de causis expositio*, ed. H. D. Saffrey [Fribourg and Louvain: Société philosophique de Fribourg, 1954], 47).

does not participate in *esse*, which is also most common, as the less common participates in the more common, but rather that it (*ens communissimum*) participates in being itself (*ipsum esse*) in the way that a *concretum* participates in an *abstractum*.[3]

Interpreters have struggled to understand exactly what Aquinas means by this type of participation between concrete and abstract and to determine which of the three modes of participation corresponds to the relation of participation between finite *ens* and *esse*. With regard to participated *esse*, John Wippel has noted that Aquinas speaks of participation in *esse* in three different ways: as participation in *esse commune* (the act of being considered in general), as participation in *actus essendi*, and as participation in *esse subsistens* (God).[4] In the end, Wippel holds that all three of these participations are cases of the third mode to the exclusion of the other two modes.[5] For Leo Elders, participation in *esse* is through the second and third modes.[6] Tomas Tyn also holds that *ens* participates in *esse*

[3] *In De hebdo*., c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271): "Set id quod est siue ens, quamuis sit communissimum, tamen concretiue dicitur, et ideo participat ipsum esse non per modum quo magis commune participatur a minus communi, set participat ipsum esse per modum quo concretum participat abstractum."

[4] John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 110-31.

[5] Ibid., 128: "However participation in *esse* may be understood by Thomas in a particular context—whether as participation in *esse commune*, or in a finite being's own *actus essendi*, or in *esse subsistens*—it seems to me that it should still be placed under this third division." Gavin Kerr also holds that the participation relationship between essence and *esse* is according to the third mode, with participated *esse* being the cause of essence. See his *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in "De Ente et Essentia"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 61-62: "What is brought into existence by *esse* in turn limits *esse* to a particular mode of existence, since the existence of any one individual signifies a particular way in which *esse* could be realised. It follows then that essence functions as a limiting principle of *esse*, and *esse* is in turn possessed individually by the essence that possesses it. Given then that *esse* causes the essence to exist and that the *essence* in turn limits the *esse* in which it participates, it follows that the participation relationship between essence and *esse* is according to the third mode outlined by Aquinas, that of cause-effect participation."

[6] See Leo Elders, *The Metaphysics of Being of Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1993), 228: "It should be noted that the created subject has being through a participation of [the second mode]: the relationship of the subject to its being is analogous to that of matter to form. Viewed

according to the second mode.[7] For Rudi te Velde, Aquinas has tacitly introduced a fourth mode to account for the participation between *ens* and *esse*.[8] Ralph McInerny seems to hold two different positions: participation of *ens* in *esse* is either according to the second mode[9] or is irreducible to any of the three modes.[10]

Even the modes of participation themselves have been interpreted in different ways. Louis-Bertrand Geiger sees the first two modes as examples of his distinction between participation by similitude (which concerns the essence) and participation by composition (which concerns being).[11] Cornelio Fabro, on the other hand, sees the first two modes—which he calls "formal-notional" (first mode) and "real" (second mode)—as cases of static-structural participation, while the third mode is interpreted as a dynamic-causal participation.[12] At the same time, Fabro holds that the first and most fundamental division of participation is between univocal-predicamental participation

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from the standpoint of created being (actus essendi), this being is a participation in God´s being in the third mode of participation." See also ibid., 228 n. 49: "[Aquinas] adds that a being does participate in being (*esse*) in the second mode of participation, in which a concrete subject participates in an (abstract) form. The third mode (added by St. Thomas) explains how the being of creatures participates in divine being."

[7] See Tomas Tyn, *Metafisica della sostanza* (Verona: Fede e cultura, 2009), 239.

[8] See Rudi te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1995), 79: "That which is participates in being, not the way the less universal participates in the more universal, but in the way the concrete is said to participate in the abstract. It seems to me that Thomas has tacitly introduced a new mode of participation here. The participation of the concrete in the abstract does not fall under any of the three modes mentioned earlier."

[9] See Ralph McInerny, *Boethius and Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 205: "The term *ens* ('being') is as universal as the infinitive, but because it signifies concretely, it can participate in the abstractly signified actuality, that is, in the second mode."

[10] See Ralph McInerny, *Being and Predication: Thomistic Interpretations* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 104.

[11] Louis-Bertrand Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (2d ed.; Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1953), 78-79.

[12] Cornelio Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation," *Review of Metaphysics* 27 (1974): 473: "Parallel to the division of static participation in its structural framework and dependent on it, is the division of dynamic participation as causality."

and analogical-transcendental participation.[13] Univocal-predicamental participations include those between an individual and its species, a species and its genus, a substance and its accidents, and matter and form. Analogical-transcendental participation concerns the participation of a substance in its act of being (*actus essendi*) and the participation between the creature (*ens per participationem*) and God the Creator (*esse per essentiam*).[14]

It should be noted that Aquinas provides at least two other divisions of participation in his works. One occurs in his commentary on the Letter to the Colossians in the context of distinguishing the first three orders of angels—seraphim, cherubim, and thrones. There Aquinas writes,

> For one thing can participate in another in three ways: one way, receiving the property of its nature; another way, insofar as it can receive it by way of cognitive intention; and another way insofar as it can somehow serve the power of a thing. The first is greater than the second, and the second [greater than] the third.[15]

Aquinas exemplifies this with a *medicus* who can participate in the art of medicine in various ways: receiving the art in himself, receiving knowledge of the art, or serving the art.[16] Another

[13] Ibid., 471: "The first and most fundamental division of participation is into transcendental and predicamental."

[14] Fabro even posits a third type of participation for supernatural participations: instead of an effect merely possessing a perfection that is similar to its cause, the effect really attains or touches its cause, the divine nature, through its operation (*attingere per operationem*). See Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Segni: EDIVI, 2005), 313.

[15] *Super Col.*, c. 1, lect. 4 (Aquinas, *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Colossenses lectura*, 42): "Tripliciter enim aliquid potest ab alio participare: uno modo, accipiendo proprietatem naturae eius; alio modo, ut recipiat ipsum per modum intentionis cognitivae; alio modo, ut deserviat aliqualiter eius virtuti, sicut aliquis medicinalem artem participat a medico vel quia accipit in se medicinae artem, vel accipit cognitionem artis medicinalis, vel quia deservit arti medicinae. Primum est maius secundo, et secundum tertio." The seraphim attain God as though on fire with God and having a divine property, the cherubim attain God by knowledge; the thrones serve God's power.

[16] Even though it goes beyond the scope of this article, I would venture that the three ways can be seen as belonging primarily to the second mode of participation, which relates a subject to a form: a doctor of medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathic

division of participation is found in *Quodlibet* II. After referring to the problematic of Boethius's *De hebdomadibus*, Aquinas says that something is participated in two ways: either insofar as it belongs to the participant's substance or insofar as it does not belong to the participant's essence.[17] Aquinas exemplifies the first way with a species that participates in a genus and the second way with a creature that participates in *esse*.

The three divisions provided by Aquinas evidence the flexibility of the notion of participation. His commentary on *De hebdomadibus* seems to divide participation according to what is participated, whether this is a universal notion, an actuating act, or a participated effect communicated by a cause. *Quodlibet* II considers whether or not what is participated belongs to the thing's essence. The commentary on Colossians seems to divide participation according to the greater or lesser degree of the participation in the same *participatum*.

The divergent Thomistic interpretations regarding the modes of participation and the unresolved problem of how *ens* participates in *esse* show that there is still plenty of work, both interpretative and speculative, to be done in this field. This article and the accompanying articles by Daniel De Haan and Gregory Doolan seek to contribute to the discussion and ask whether each of the three modes of participation, as distinguished by Aquinas in the commentary on *De hebdomadibus*, corresponds to a type of participation in *esse*, as distinguished by Wippel. In brief, the three articles ask:

[1] Do finite existents participate in *esse commune* according to the first mode of participation?
[2] Do finite substances participate in their *actus essendi* according to the second mode of participation?[18]

Medicine (D.O.) properly possesses the habit *in se*, a pharmacist has knowledge of the medical art, and a nurse (L.P.N.) serves the medical art. Each can be said to participate in the medical art, but according to varying intensive degrees.

[17] *Quodl.* II, q. 2, a. 1 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 25/2 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1996], 214-15).

[18] See Daniel De Haan, "Aquinas on *actus essendi* and the Second Mode of Participation," *The Thomist* 82 (2018): 573-609.

[3] Do created beings participate in (a likeness of) *esse subsistens* according to the third mode of participation?[19]

This article concerns the first question and attempts to determine whether or not the participation of finite existents in *esse commune* could be seen as an instantiation or case of the first mode. To this end, I will briefly present Aquinas's thought and Thomistic thought on participation in *esse commune*, and then summarize the objections of those who argue against participation in *esse commune* as an instantiation of the first mode of participation. I will present my solution to the question and also answer the objections raised. I will conclude by integrating my solution within a global consideration of the three modes of participation and their relation to being (*esse*).

I. Aquinas and Thomists on Participation in *Esse Commune*

When Aquinas speaks about the being that is common to all created things (*esse commune*), he usually distinguishes it from divine being. He makes this distinction because common being and divine being are similar in that they are without additions. They differ in that divine being cannot receive additions, while common being is open to receiving additions. An early text on *esse commune* is found in book I of Aquinas's *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, where he writes that there are four different ways of considering created *esse*:

> The *esse* of the creature can be considered in four ways: in the first, according to what is in its proper nature; in the second, as it is in our knowledge; in the third, as it is in God; in the fourth, commonly as abstracted [*abstrahit*] from all of these.[20]

[19] See Gregory Doolan, "Aquinas on *esse subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation," *The Thomist* 82 (2018): 611-42.

[20] I *Sent.*, d. 36, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2 (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis*, vol. 1, ed. P. Mandonnet [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929], 836): "Ad secundum dicendum, quod esse creaturae potest quadrupliciter considerari: primo modo, secundum quod est in propria natura; secundo modo, prout est in cognitione nostra; tertio modo, prout est in Deo; quarto modo communiter, prout abstrahit ab omnibus his."

If the fourth consideration corresponds to *esse commune* then it considers created *esse* not in a particular creature (first consideration), or as *esse intentionale* (second consideration), or as present in God virtually[21] as the ultimate cause of being (third consideration), but insofar as it is known abstractly by the human mind as common to creatures.

In *De ente et essentia*, Aquinas holds that *esse* is diverse in diverse things.[22] Divine *esse* is diverse from created *esse*, not through an addition, but through itself (*per seipsum*).[23] Created *esse* is diversified through an additional and diversifying principle, as stated in book II of the *Summa contra gentiles*, which is *praeter esse*.[24] I would argue that it is the creature's essence, as *principium essendi*, that intrinsically diversifies created *esse*; divine wisdom, however, would be the principle that extrinsically diversifies created *esse*. In book I of the *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas affirms that what is common to many is not outside the many except by reason alone. *Esse commune*, he concludes, is not something outside all existing things, save only for being in the intellect.[25] In the intellect, *esse commune* does not include any addition, nor does it exclude an addition.[26] Because *esse commune* is *esse sine additione*, it is similar to *esse divinum*, which also has nothing added to it. *Esse divinum*, however, is without addition because it precludes any addition; *esse commune* is without addition, yet it does not preclude additions.[27] For Aquinas it is clear: *esse commune* is not *esse divinum*.[28] The *esse* of creatures is individualized, specified or diversified through an addition; God's being, however, is distinguished from all other being, since his being

[21] *STh* I, q. 75, a. 5, ad 1.

[22] *De Ente et essentia*, c. 5 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 43 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1976], 378): "esse est diuersum in diversis."

[23] See my "Aquinas on the Ontological and Theological Foundation of the Transcendentals," in *Alpha Omega* 16 (2013): 46.

[24] *ScG* II, c. 52 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 13 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1918], 387).

[25] *ScG* I, c. 26 (Leon. ed., 13:81-82).

[26] *De Ente*, c. 5 (Leon. ed., 43:378).

[27] *STh* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 1.

[28] See *De Pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 6.

lacks additions, not only in thought (*in cogitatione*), but also in reality (*in rerum natura*). Not only is God's being without additions (*absque additione*), but it is also without the ability to receive addition (*absque receptibilitate additionis*).[29]

An important text for understanding the relationship between *esse commune* and God is found in Aquinas's commentary on Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus*. He begins by noting that *esse commune* is from God, the first being. Consequently, *esse commune* relates to God in a way different from all other existing beings, and this in three ways. First, while all other existing beings (*alia existentia*) depend on *esse commune*, God does not depend on *esse commune*. Instead, *esse commune* depends on God and is from him.[30] Second, all other existing things are contained under *esse commune*, but God is not. Instead, *esse commune* is contained under God's power, for the divine power extends to the being of creatures.[31] Third, all other existing things participate in *esse*, but God does not. Instead, created *esse* is like a participation of God and a likeness of God. *Esse commune* is said to have God in the sense that it is a participant (*participans*) of his likeness, while God does not have *esse* as a participant of *esse* itself.[32] The text approaches *esse commune* from three perspectives. From the causal perspective, *esse commune* depends on God. From the notional perspective, *esse commune* contains all existing creatures. From a participation perspective, *esse commune* itself is a participant of God's likeness.

[29] *ScG* I, c. 26.

[30] *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 2 (*In lbrum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, ed. C. Pera [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1950], 245 [no. 660]): "Primo quidem, quantum ad hoc quod alia existentia dependent ab esse communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune dependet a Deo."

[31] Ibid.: "Secundo, quantum ad hoc quod omnia existentia continentur sub ipso esse communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune continetur sub eius virtute, quia virtus divina plus extenditur quam ipsum esse creatum."

[32] Ibid.: "Tertio, quantum ad hoc quod omnia alia existentia participant eo quod est esse, non autem Deus, sed magis ipsum esse creatum est quaedam participatio Dei et similitudo ipsius; et hoc est quod dicit quod esse commune habet ipsum scilicet Deum, ut participans similitudinem eius, non autem ipse Deus habet esse, quasi participans ipso esse."

Aquinas's commentary on the *Book of Causes* refers several times to *esse commune* and also speaks about the individuation or diversification of *esse*. In his commentary on proposition 1, Aquinas speaks of an increasing universality of forms, from a creature's specific form to common being: "So if we take a man, his specific form is observed in the fact that he is rational. But the generic form is observed in the fact that he is living or animal. Finally there is that which is common to all, being [*esse*]."[33] This ascensional process from species (man), to genus (animal), to common being (*esse commune*) is noteworthy for the purpose of this article. With respect to proposition 3, Aquinas states that being, which is most common, is diffused into all things by the first cause.[34] His commentary on proposition 4 holds that what is common to all the distinct intelligences is first created being. Here, Aquinas refers to the author's understanding that being is more common than the other effects of God and is more simple, "for those things that are less common seem to be related to the more common by way of some addition."[35] Aquinas also notes the different historical understandings of being: the Platonists spoke of separate being; Dionysius spoke of the being that all existing things participate commonly; the author of the *Book of Causes* is speaking of being participated in the first grade of created being—that is, in the intelligence, being itself is prior to the *ratio* of intelligence.[36] Aquinas's commentary on proposition 9

[33] *Super De causis*, prop. 1 (Saffrey, ed., 6:1-4): "Si igitur accipiamus aliquem hominem, forma quidem specifica eius attenditur in hoc quod est rationalis, forma autem generis eius attenditur in hoc quod est vivum vel animal; ulterius autem id quod est omnibus commune est esse."

[34] *Super De causis*, prop. 3 (Saffrey, ed., 23:17-18): "esse enim quod est communissimum, diffunditur in omnia a causa prima."

[35] *Super De causis*, prop. 4 (Saffrey, ed., 29:3-8): "Et ex hoc concludit quod, propter illud quod dictum est, ipsum esse factum est superius omnibus rebus creatis, quia scilicet inter ceteros Dei effectus communius est, et est etiam vehementius unitum, id est magis simplex; nam ea quae sunt minus communia videntur se habere ad magis communia per modum additionis cuiusdam."

[36] Ibid. (Saffrey, ed., 29:8-15): "Videtur tamen non esse eius intentio ut loquatur de aliquo esse separato, sicut Platonici loquebantur, neque de esse participato communiter in omnibus existentibus, sicut loquitur Dionysius, sed de esse participato in primo gradu

distinguishes the common being of creatures from the divine being of the first cause: common being is individuated only by being received in something; divine being is individuated not by being limited through some recipient form, but by its very own purity through the fact that it is not received in anything.[37] Finally, in Proposition 18, Aquinas states that while being is common to all things, the perfection of life is not.[38]

In summary, for Aquinas, *esse commune* is not *esse divinum*, does not exist apart from its participants, is considered apart from things and *sine additione* by the mind, is able to receive additions, is individuated by being received in something, is common to all existent creatures, depends on God, and is from God.

When we turn to Thomistic thought on *esse commune*, we see that, with the exception of Wippel, Thomists have not inquired into the mode of participation that corresponds to participation in *esse commune*. Fabro, for example, holds that *esse commune* can be seen as the participated *actus essendi* in singular created existents and could be considered as the *actualitas essendi* that every created *ens* has due to the participated *esse* that it receives from God.[39] Joseph Owens concentrates more on how we know *esse commune* and suggests that univocally common natures are known by abstraction, while being is common according to analogical community and is known as an act through judgment. *Esse commune* is not a genus, but appears as a sort of super-genus to which one can ascend through the species and highest genera.[40] Although being is known through judgment, Owens holds that it is represented by an incomplex concept distinct from divine being. Te Velde

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entis creati, quod est esse superius. Et, quamvis esse superius sit et in intelligentia et in anima, tamen in ipsa intelligentia prius consideratur ipsum esse quam intelligentiae ratio."

[37] *Super De causis*, prop. 9 (Saffrey, ed., 64:8-65:3; 65:10-14).

[38] *Super Librum de causis*, prop. 18 (Marietti ed., 103 [no. 339]).

[39] Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 365.

[40] Joseph Owens, "Diversity and Community of Being in St. Thomas Aquinas," in *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1980), 101.

emphasizes that the term "common" expresses the "possibility of receiving a specific determination in contrast with 'subsistent', which denies the possibility of the divine being receiving any addition."[41] *Esse commune* "is considered without the determinate essence, but not without the relation of inherence, of belonging to a determinate essence which has being."[42] Lastly, John F. X. Knasas holds that *esse commune* is an abstraction produced by the human intellect and identifies *esse commune* with the perfection of being (*perfectio essendi*).[43] In the end, Thomistic interpretation of *esse commune* varies especially as regards the question how we know *esse commune*: Owens holds that we attain it through judgment, Knasas refers to it as an abstraction, Fabro seems to hold that it is obtained through resolution at the beginning of metaphysical reflection. The question, though, about the mode of participation that corresponds to *esse commune* remains largely unexplored, except by Wippel.

When dealing with Aquinas's thought on the participation of beings in *esse commune*, Wippel first establishes that what is common to many things does not exist as such apart from the many except in the order of thought. Just as the genus "animal" does not exist apart from Socrates and Plato and other animals except in the intellect, so *esse commune* does not exist "apart from individual existent things, except in the order of thought."[44] *Esse commune* does not actually subsist as such apart from individual existents; rather, every individual created existent may be viewed as only sharing in or participating in *esse*, with the consequence that the *esse* (act of being) which is intrinsic to it is only a partial sharing in the fullness of *esse commune* considered simply in itself.[45] In distinguishing *esse commune* from divine *esse*, Wippel holds that being in general

[41] te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 192.

[42] Ibid., 193-94.

[43] John F. X. Knasas, *Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 242.

[44] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 111.

[45] Ibid., 116.

(*esse commune*) is neutral with respect to additions.[46] Because *esse commune* depends on God, Wippel suggests placing the participating of beings in *esse commune* under the third mode of participation. He writes:

> [I]n saying that *esse commune* depends on God, Thomas has commented that it falls under God's power. I take him to mean by this that every individual existent exists only insofar as it is caused by God. Moreover, created *esse* has also now been described as a likeness of God. Hence, in participating in the *esse* which is efficiently communicated to it by God, the creature may also be said to participate in some way in God, that is, in his likeness. God is its exemplar cause as well as its efficient cause and its final cause.[47]

In the order of discovery, the metaphysician moves from the discovery of individual beings participating in *esse commune* to the caused character of such beings, and then to the existence of their unparticipated source (*esse subsistens*).[48] Wippel holds that when Thomas refers to participation in *esse commune* he means that

> each finite being merely shares in, without possessing in its fullness, the perfection signified by the term *esse*. Every such entity exists only insofar as it possesses its particular act of being. To say that it participates in *esse commune*—the act of being viewed in general—is not to imply that that there is some kind of subsisting universal *esse commune* of which each particular entity's *esse* (act of being) would simply be a piece or a part. *Esse commune* does not exist as such apart from individual existents, except in the order of thought.[49]

II. Objections

When Wippel takes up the question of how the participation of beings in *esse* fits into the threefold division of participation, he presents four objections against seeing it in terms of the first mode of participation.

[46] Ibid., 112.
[47] Ibid., 116.
[48] Ibid., 117. See Doolan, "Aquinas on *esse subsistens*," (641-42).
[49] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 121.

The first objection holds that the first mode of participation "belongs to the logical or intentional order, and does not entail real distinction between the participant and that in which it participates."[50] However, the participation of beings in *esse* clearly does entail a real distinction. Therefore, it seems that participation in *esse commune* is not according to the first mode, which does not entail real distinction.

Wippel's second objection runs as follows. In the first mode of participation, what is said of something by participation can also be predicated of it substantially. For example, I can say both that "man participates in animal" and "man is an animal." *Esse*, however, cannot be predicated of the creature substantially or essentially.[51] Therefore, it seems that participation in *esse commune* is not according to the first mode, which predicates substantially.

The third objection refers to question 2, article 1 of Aquinas's second quodlibetal question, which distinguishes between two forms of participation: (1) what is participated may be included within the very essence (*substantia*) of the participant; (2) what is participated is not included within the essence of the participant. A species that participates in its genus is an instance of the first form; participation in *esse* is an instance of the second. According to Wippel, this distinction implies that participation in *esse* differs from the first form or the first mode, in which the *participatum* is included in the essence of the *participans*. Therefore, it seems that participation in *esse commune* is not according to the first mode, in which the participated is included within the very essence or substance of the participant.

[50] Ibid., 103: "We may immediately conclude from the above that the participation of beings in *esse* cannot be reduced to the first kind of participation singled out by Aquinas, whereby a less universal notion of concept participates in one that is more general or universal."

[51] Ibid., 105: "In other words, man is said to participate in animal in the way a species participates in its genus. But because animal is included within the nature or essence of man, animal may be predicated of man substantially as well. Thomas would deny, of couse, that *esse* is predicated of any creature in this way, i.e., substantially or essentially."

A final objection from Wippel notes that the first mode of participation allows for univocal predication of the participated perfection. This is not true of *esse*, for it can only be predicated analogically of whatever participates in it. Therefore, it seems that participation in *esse commune* is not according to the first mode.

Another possible objection to my proposal, to which I want to respond immediately, could refer to Aquinas's text that states that *ens* (which is most common) does not participate in *esse* (which is also most common) in the way that the less common participates in the more common (i.e., the first mode of participation), but rather in the way that a concrete participates in an abstract.[52] I would respond that the qualification that *ens* is considered as most common is important and this would open up that possibility that Aquinas is speaking about the relation of participation between *ens commune* and *esse commune* and not the participation of a finite being (*ens*) in *esse commune*, which, I will argue, can be seen as an instance of the first mode of a particular participating in something common by way of reason.

III. Solution

The key to resolving our question hinges on identifying the distinguishing characteristic of the *participatum* of the first mode of participation. I would argue that this characteristic is not univocity, which seems to be the position of Wippel and the source of his objections, but rather notional commonness. If notional commonness, whether univocal or analogical, is the proper characteristic of the first mode, then this allows participation in *esse commune* to be seen as an instantiation of the first mode of participation.

In his commentary on *De hebdomadibus*, Aquinas provides two examples of the first mode of participation: species participate in their genus ("man" participates in "animal") and

[52] *In De hebdo.*, c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271): "Set id quod est siue ens, quamis sit communissimum, tamen concretiue dicitur, et ideo participat ipsum esse, non per modum quo magis commune participatur a minus communi, set participat imprum esse per modum quo concretum participat abstractum."

individuals participate in their species ("Socrates" participates in "man"). The text reads as follows:

> And, therefore, when something receives in a particular way that which pertains to another in a universal way, it is said to participate [in] that, as man is said to participate [in] animal, because it does not have the *ratio* of animal according to its total commonality; and, for the same reason, Socrates participates [in] man.[53]

According to the first mode of participation, a participated universal (*participatum*) is received into a particular or less universal participant (*participans*); in turn, what is particular or less universal (*participans*) is said to be contained under what is more universal (*participatum*). The species "man," for example, is contained under the *communitas* of the genus "animal" and is compared to the *communitas* of "animal" as a part is compared to a whole (*totum*).[54]

Now, Aquinas holds that what is common is twofold: common according to reason (e.g., a genus) or common in reality (e.g., the essence of the Trinity).[55] What is common according to reason is contracted and determined through the addition of something; what is common in reality remains undivided and it is not necessary that it be determined by some addition.

The *participata* of the first mode of participation correspond to what is "common according to reason": a participated genus, which is common, is specified by the addition of differences and determined by the species;[56] a participated species, which is

[53] *In De hebdo.*, c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271): "Et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet uniuersaliter, dicitur participare illud, sicut homo dicitur participare animal quia non habet rationem animalis secundum totam communitatem; et eadem ratione Sortes participat hominem."

[54] See *STh* II-II, q. 58, a. 5 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 9 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1888], 13). That which is more universal can also be considered as a part, since what is less common contains, in its *ratio*, not only the more common, but other things as well—as the species "man" is not only animal, but is also rational. See *STh* I, q. 85, a. 3, ad 2 (Leon. ed., 5:337).

[55] I *Sent.*, d. 25, q. 1, a. 3 (Mandonnet, ed., 1:608). See also I *Sent.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4 (Mandonnet ed., 1:790).

[56] II *Sent.*, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 3.

common, is individuated by matter considered under determined dimensions.[57] The individual is designated with respect to its species through matter determined by dimensions, whereas the species is designated with respect to the genus through the constitutive difference, which is taken from the form of the thing.[58] When a difference is added to a genus it is added not as though it were an essence distinct from the genus, but as though it were contained implicitly in the genus, as the determinate is contained in the indeterminate.[59]

In my proposal to consider the first mode of participation beyond the univocal examples of genus and species, it is important to see that, for Aquinas, the division of something common according to reason is twofold: a univocal genus is divided into species, but what is analogically common is divided according to *prius* and *posterius*.[60] For example, the participation of horse and ox in the univocal *ratio* of animal is *aequaliter*, while the participation of substance and accident in the analogical *ratio* of *ens* is according to *prius* and *posterius*.[61] What is univocal is divided by contrary differences or by matter; what is analogical is divided according to diverse modes. *Ens*,

[57] For a discussion of indeterminate and determinate dimensions, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 351-75.

[58] *De Ente*, c. 2 (Leon. ed., 43:371): "designatio indiuidui respectu speciei est per materiam determinatam dimensionibus, designatio autem speciei respectu generis est per differentiam constitutiuam, quae ex forma rei sumitur".

[59] VII *Metaphys.*, lect. 12 (*In duodecim libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, ed. M.-R. Cathala and R. Spiazzi [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1950], 374 [no. 1549]): "Unde cum differentia additur generi, non additur quasi aliqua diversa essentia a genere, sed quasi in genere implicite contenta, sicut determinatum continetur in indeterminato."

[60] *De Malo*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 1 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia* vol. 23 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1982], 159): "Duplex est diuisio: una qua diuiditur genus uniuocum in suas species, que ex equo participant genus, sicut animal in bouem et equm; alia est diuisio communis analogi in ea de quibus dicitur secundum prius et posterius; sicut ens diuiditur per substantiam et accidens, et per potentiam et actum; et in talibus ratio communis perfecte saluatur in uno; in aliis autem secundum quid et per posterius." See also VII *Metaphys.*, lect. 14 (Marietti, ed., 383 [no. 1593]).

[61] I *Sent.*, pro., q. 1, a. 1, arg. 2. In the case of creatures and the Creator, there is no participation in a third *ratio*, since the creature imitates the *ens primum* from which it receives *esse*.

for example, is divided according to the ten categories, which are modes of being.

In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas confirms that when a univocal genus is divided into its species, the parts of the division are on par (*ex aequo*) according to the *ratio* of the genus; yet considered according to their nature as things, one species can surpass another in rank (*principalior*) and be more perfect than another, as man with respect to other animals. When we consider the species that belong to a genus, we see that their formal generic identity implies a real specific hierarchy, by which the animal species do not all have the same ontological density.[62] As Aquinas writes in the disputed questions *De malo*: "All animals are equally animals, however, they are not equal animals, but rather one animal is greater and more perfect than another."[63] A dog and a mouse are both equally animals, yet they are not equal animals as a dog is more perfect than a mouse. The univocal formal generic identity of the participants does not do away with hierarchical real specific diversity in the concrete actuation or realization of the generic perfection.

When we are dealing with a division of what is analogically common, that which is common is predicated of many things according to *prius* and *posterius*; here, nothing hinders one ranking higher than another, even according to the common notion, as substance is more principally and more perfectly called a being (*ens*) than is an accident.[64] That which is univocally common demands notional or intentional identity, but allows for real diversity. That which is analogically common allows for both notional diversity and real diversity (*secundum*

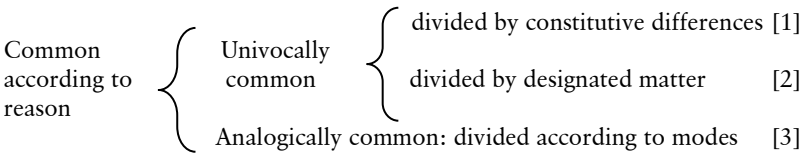
[62] See Alain Contat, "L'ermeneutica del Vaticano II e la metafisica della partecipazione," in *Alpha Omega* 17 (2014): 503.

[63] *De Malo*, q. 2, a. 9, ad 16 (Leon. ed., 23:56): "omnia animalia sunt aequaliter animalia, non tamen sunt aequalia animalia, set unum animal est altero maius et perfectius."

[64] *STh* I-II, q. 61, a. 1, ad 1 (Leon. ed., 6:394): "Sed quando est divisio alicuius analogi, quod dicitur de pluribus secundum prius et posterius; tunc nihil prohibet unum esse principalius altero, etiam secundum communem rationem; sicut substantia principalius dicitur ens quam accidens."

intentionem et secundum esse), that is, it is not necessary that there be parity of the analogues according to the notion or according to being.[65]

Aquinas distinguishes, then, between univocal community and analogical community. Unlike the univocal participation of species and genera, the analogical participation of *ens* is not said to be "equal"; this is because a substance and being-in-act (*ens actu*) more perfectly realize the *ratio* of *ens* than do an accident and being-in-potency (*ens potentia*).[66] To summarize, we have three instances of something common according to reason being divided in three different ways:



Aquinas's texts on the participation of the species in a genus present an interesting problem. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he denies that there is a relation of participation between species and genus, while in his *Summa contra gentiles*, he affirms the existence of such a relation. In the commentary he writes:

> A genus is not predicated of its species by participation but essentially; for man is an animal essentially and not merely something participating in animal, because man is truly an animal.[67]

However, in the earlier *Summa contra gentiles* he writes:

> Whatever is predicated univocally of several things belongs by participation to each of the things of which it is predicated: for the species is said to participate in the genus, and the individual the species.[68]

[65] I *Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1 (Mandonnet, ed., 1:492).

[66] II *Sent*., d. 42, q. 1, a. 3 (Mandonnet, ed., 2:1057).

[67] VII *Metaphys*., lect. 3 (Marietti ed., 329 [no. 1328]): "Genus autem non praedicatur de speciebus per participationem, sed per essentiam. Homo enim est animal essentialiter, non solum aliquid animalis participans. Homo enim est quod verum est animal."

In his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus*, Aquinas has resolved the question in favor of both theses. In fact, he argues that, according to Aristotle, who holds that man truly is that which is animal, nothing prevents what is said by participation from being predicated substantially.[69] We can say either "the species 'man' participates in the genus 'animal'" (predication by participation) or "a man is an animal" (essential predication).

Although Fabro restricts this first mode of participation to the univocal participations of species and genus,[70] he articulates three key insights into the first mode that contribute to our discussion about what is characteristic to the first mode of participation. First, he points out that the *communitas* of the *participatum* can be of two types: if it refers to the extensive order of predication, the genus "animal" has a greater extension than the species "man" since it can be predicated of more things than man; if it refers to the intensive order of perfection, then the genus "animal" is seen to contain a variety of more or less (*magis et minus*) perfect species.[71] "Man" and "ox" both participate in "animal" and are animals, but a man, from an ontological perspective, is a more perfect animal than is an ox. Participation in *esse commune*, I argue, can be seen both extensively, insofar as *esse* is most common in an abstract way, and intensively, insofar as creatures participate in *esse commune* according to different degrees. An individual man, who participates in *esse commune*, is a more perfect being (*ens*) than an individual ox, which also participates in *esse commune*.

Second, the logical participations of the species in a genus and of individuals in a species express a universal formality in a particular way.[72] Participated humanity, for example, is formally

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[68] *ScG* I, c. 32 (Leon. ed., 13:97): "Omne quod de pluribus praedicatur univoce, secundum participationem cuilibet eorum convenit de quo praedicatur: nam species participare dicitur genus, et individuum species."

[69] *In De hebdo.*, c. 3 (Leon. ed., 50:276): "Secundum sententiam Aristotelis, qui posuit quod homo uere est id quod est animal . . . nichil prohibit id quod per participationem dicitur etiam substantialiter praedicari."

[70] Fabro, *La nozione metafísica*, 143.

[71] Ibid., 148.

[72] Ibid., 152.

identical in all men, but really multiplied in each individual human being.[73] From a formal perspective, all men are equally men, and the human nature present in one is not different from the human nature in another; but from a metaphysical perspective, the individuation of the species manifests more or less perfect modes of being, that is, the species appears like an ontological "totality" which is manifested in its inferiors according to more or less perfect modes of being.[74] So, Fabro concludes, "While the individuals are identical in the specific order (= *idem essentialiter*), they really differ from one another in the actuation of the species (= *differunt substantialiter*)."[75] Predicamental or univocal participation, according to Fabro, sees individuals that participate in a species and species that participate in a genus as diverse real actuations of the virtual perfection contained in the species or genus.[76] Transcendental or analogical participation, I would argue, sees particular existents as diverse real actuations of virtual perfection contained in *esse commune*.

Third, after considering the notional extension and ontological intensity involved in logical predicamental participation, Fabro relates logical participation to a corresponding real composition: the conceptual parts (genus and difference) of the definition are not themselves the real parts (matter and form) of the substantial essence, but the conceptual parts do indicate the real parts and proportionately and indirectly correspond to these real parts.[77] If we apply this idea of proportional correspondence between the first and second modes of

[73] Ibid., 153.

[74] See ibid., 172-73. See also *ScG* I, c. 32 (Leon. ed., 13:97).

[75] Fabro, *La nozione metafísica*, 174.

[76] Ibid., 176. See also ibid., 179: "The species is said to participate in the genus, and the individual in the species not only insofar as there are other species that 'communicate' in the same generic *ratio*, and other individuals 'communicate' in the same specific *ratio* and that, therefore, they have the same definition, but also, and consequently, by the fact that among the many formal virtualities of the genus, each species only realizes one of them, and among the multiple modes of being of which a species is susceptible, each individual only realizes one of them, to the exclusion of the others."

[77] Ibid., 149.

participation to *esse commune*, we see that the participation of a particular existent in *esse commune* refers proportionately to a real composition, proper to the second mode of participation, between essence (*potentia essendi*) and being (*actus essendi*) in the creature.

As a possible textual confirmation of my proposal, which considers participation in *esse commune* as an instance of the first mode of participation, I note that when Aquinas himself deals with *esse commune* he does so by speaking about species and genus. For example, in the *Summa theologiae*[78] he notes how we consider the genus "animal" *sine additione,* for it does not include or exclude the addition of "rational," and how we consider *esse commune* as *esse sine additione*, for it does not include or exclude additions. A second textual argument in favor of seeing participation in *esse commune* as a case of the first mode of participation could be a later passage in the *Summa*, where Aquinas writes: "Just as this man participates in human nature, so does any created *ens* participate, if I may so speak, in the nature of being, because God alone is his *esse*."[79] If *natura essendi* is considered as *esse commune*, then we have a clear comparison between an individual participating in human nature (species) and a created *ens* or finite existent participating in the nature of being (*esse commune*).

Therefore, instead of holding that the first mode of participation is proper only to univocal participations or participations within the essence, we should see it primarily as dealing with the division of something common according to reason which is participated in by inferiors: (1) the *individuation* of the species by the addition of determinate matter, (2) the *specification* of the genus by the addition of constitutive differences, (3) the *diversification* of *esse commune* according to modes of being by the addition of a limiting essence. This, I believe, is in accord with Aquinas's text in *De ente et essentia*, which distinguishes the three ways of multiplying something: by

[78] *STh* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 1.

[79] *STh* I, q. 45, a. 5, ad 1 (Leon. ed., 4:470): "Sed sicut hic homo participat humanam naturam, its quodcumque ens creatum participat, ut ita dixerim, naturam essendi: quia solus Deus est suum esse."

adding a difference; by the reception of a form in matter; and by the distinction between what is separate and what is received in something.[80]

Taking all of the above into consideration, we see that the first mode of participation has the following five characteristics. First, it concerns the relation of participation between a particular and a universal notion or between a less universal notion and a more universal notion. Second, the participated universal does not exist apart from its participating inferiors, except in the mind. Third, the participations of the first mode refer to or are founded on participations of the second mode, which, I believe, can in turn be referred to the third mode (i.e., to their cause). Fourth, the participated universal virtually contains its inferiors. Fifth, the participated universal is considered *sine additione*, yet is able to receive an addition and requires additions in order to exist in reality. Participation in *esse commune* bears all five of these characteristics. First, a finite existent is considered as a particular participating in *esse commune,* which is an analogical and universal notion. Second, *esse commune* does not exist apart from its inferiors, except in the mind. Third, the participation of individual finite existents in *esse commune* is founded on their possession of *actus essendi* according to the second mode of participation. Fourth, *esse commune* virtually contains its inferiors. Fifth, *esse commune* is considered *sine additione*, yet is able to receive the addition of specifying essences, and requires a specifying essence to exist in reality.

IV. Response to Objections

To the first objection, I respond that the participations of the first mode do not include a real distinction, but do refer to the real compositions of the second mode. In material beings, the logical composition of species and genus refers proportionately to the real composition of form and matter.[81] And so, when we

[80] See *De Ente*, c. 4.

[81] In spiritual beings, the logical composition of species and genus refers to both the composition of accidents (intellect and will) and substance and the real composition of essence and the act of being.

affirm that finite existents participate in *esse commune* according to the first mode of participation, we refer in some way to the real composition of essence (*potentia essendi*) and *esse* (*actus essendi*) proper to the second mode of participation. The first mode concerns the participation of something in a common notion; the second mode concerns the participation of something in an act.

To the second, I respond that the combination of "predication by participation" and "substantial predication" is definitely a characteristic of univocal participation according to the first mode. But this characteristic does not necessarily exclude something similar happening at the analogical level. For example, at the univocal level, I can say both "Socrates, an individual, participates in man, a species" and "Socrates is a man." And at the analogical level, I can say both "Socrates, a particular existent, participates in common being (*esse commune*)" and "Socrates is (*Socrates est*)" or "Socrates is a being (*ens*)."

To the third, I respond that both forms of participation distinguished in *Quodlibet* II can be included under the first mode and the second mode of participation. For example, in the second mode, the participation of matter in form is an example of the first form (participation within the essence), while the participation of substance in its accidents is an example of the second form (participation outside the essence). Similarly, in the first mode, we can have an instance of the *participatum* belonging to the essence (species or genus) and an instance of the *participatum* being outside the essence (*esse commune*).

To the fourth, I respond that the first mode should not be limited to univocal predication but can include what is analogically common, which is divided up and participated in by its inferiors.

V. INTEGRATION

This last section attempts to integrate my solution into a broader consideration of all three modes and the respective participations in *esse*. I acknowledge that what follows goes

beyond the text of Aquinas, but I hope that it is faithful to the spirit of his metaphysics.

The *participatum* of the second mode, an actuating act, can be considered, by way of reason, as common to many subjects and this common consideration gives rise to the first mode of participation. The first mode is distinct from the second because unlike the second mode, which considers a subject existing outside the mind participating in a form or act which also exists outside the mind, the first mode concerns the participation of something (an individual or a species) in a notion, be this a univocally universal notion or an analogically common notion. The third mode of participation, I posit, arises when the *participatum* of the second mode is considered in relation to its cause.

The first mode will involve the rational division of a common notion, either univocal or analogical, into its parts. The particular or less universal *participans* is rationally and virtually contained under the notion of the more universal *participatum*. Participation, in the first mode, is understood as the reception and presence of a universal or common *participatum* in a particular *participans*. This first mode of participation will refer in some way to the real compositions proper to the second mode of participation.

The second mode involves a real distinction/composition of a subject and a form or correlative act. In this case, the subject (*participans*) is in some way actuated by the *participatum*, but the *participans* also limits or determines the act (*participatum*) to itself. Participation, in the second mode, is understood as possession of a form, act, or perfection, but this is not a total or exclusive possession by the *participans*. This second mode of participation—because it involves a real composition between a participant and that which is participated—opens up to referring the *participatum* in some way to its cause according to the third mode of participation.

The third mode sees a *participans* as receiving a participated effect from its cause and involves a real separation between the extrinsic cause and the participated effect which is communicated to the participant. Aquinas provides the example of air (the participant) receiving light (the participated effect) from

the sun (the cause). The relationship between the participated light communicated by the sun to the air and the light within the sun (*claritate qua est in sole*) is one of causal participation. The relation between the participated effect and the cause should be understood according to the notions (*rationes*) of the three extrinsic causalities: as the *dependence* of the participated effect on its efficient cause which communicates the actuating act; as the *likeness* of the participated effect to its exemplar cause which determines the imitating act; and, when we are dealing with an intelligent analogical agent cause, as the *ordering* of the effect to its final cause, which orders and attracts the composite of *participans* and *participatum* to assimilate itself, through its proper operation, to its ultimate cause.

If the notional *participatum* is seen as rationally common to its inferiors, then we have an instance of the first mode of participation. If the actuating *participatum* is seen as really limited or determined in a receiving subject, then we have an instance of the second mode of participation. If the effected *participatum* is referred to its extrinsic cause, then we have an instance of the third mode of participation. In this third case, the cause may be or possess the perfection in its fullness, and, as cause, efficiently communicates the *participatum* to the *participans*, exemplarily determines the *participatum*, and, in some cases, teleologically draws the *participans*, which has the participated effect, to itself in an assimilative way in accord with the nature and proper operation of the *participans*.

The three modes of participation build upon each other and bring out the relation between that which has or receives something in a particular way (*aliquid particulariter*) and that which belongs to another in a universal way (*id quod ad alterum pertinent uniuersaliter*). In the first mode, the participated universal is limited insofar as it is individuated, specified, or diversified, and this universal notion is abstracted or apprehended by the intellect and does not subsist outside of the participants. In the second mode, the participated act is limited insofar as it is determined to the receiving subject. In the third mode, the participated act or perfection is sometimes seen as

finite in comparison to its cause, which, in the case of analogical causality, has the perfection in a simple and infinite way.

Seeing participation in *esse commune* as a case of the first mode provides us with an important interpretative key to Aquinas's texts and thought. My contribution invites Thomists to go beyond the stated examples of the first mode, which are cases of univocal participation, and explore how analogical participation could be compatible with the first mode of participation. I believe that this solution of distinguishing univocal participation and analogical participation is applicable to all three modes of participation. My proposal is exemplified in the following chart.

Type of predication	Mode of participation	Exemplification
Univocal	First	The individual "Secretariat" participates in the species "horse" (individuated by designated matter) and in the genus "animal" (specified by a difference)
	Second	The prime matter of Secretariat participates in and is actuated by the substantial form of horse; The subject "Secretariat" participates in and is actuated by the accidental form of the quality "chestnut"
	Third	*Per accidens* univocal causality: Having been generated by Bold Ruler, Secretariat participates in a univocal likeness of the substantial form of Bold Ruler, its univocal cause[82]
Analogical	First	The particular existent "Secretariat" participates in the perfection of *esse commune* according to the mode of its equine nature
	Second	The substance "Secretariat" participates in and is actuated by its *actus essendi* according to the measure of its essence

[82] For a brief consideration of the influence of the equivocal (universal) causality of the sun, see my "The Method of *resolutio* and the Structure of the Five Ways," in *Alpha Omega* 15 (2012): 347-50.

	Third	The creature "Secretariat" receives participated *esse* from its cause, God, who is *esse subsistens*; this participated *esse* is a likeness of *esse subsistens*, the analogical cause, and is measured by the divine exemplar idea of Secretariat;[83] lastly, the creature "Secretariat," which has participated *esse*, is ordered to its proper operation and ultimate end by God, the Supreme Good[84]

This synoptic view of participation highlights once again how the three modes differ from, yet complement, each other.

In the first mode, the *participatum* is a univocal universal or analogical common considered abstractly and apart from its participating inferiors by the human mind. At the univocal level, the species is individuated through the addition of matter; the genus is specified through the addition of a difference. In material beings, there is a proportional correspondence between these univocal participations and the real compositions of the second mode (subject-accidents; matter-form). At an analogical level, *esse commune* is diversified through the addition of a limiting essence or according to the mode of the particular existent's nature. Similar analogical considerations can be made for *vivere commune* (in which particular living creatures participate) and *intelligere commune* (in which particular human beings and angels participate). The diversification of *esse commune* refers to the real composition of essence and *actus essendi* and the second mode of participation of a finite substance in *actus essendi*. The diversification of common perfections such as *vivere* and *intelligere* are also accounted for by the way an essence specifies *actus essendi*. In this case, *vivere* is the being of the living thing (*esse viventium*) and is measured

[83] See Doolan, "Aquinas on *esse subsistens*," (639 n. 79).

[84] Alain Contat, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*, Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa," in *Espíritu* 61 (2012): 66-67: "If the causality of God is therefore threefold, like the vestige that it leaves in finite *ens*, the relation of participation is, on the other hand, fundamentally one, since one is the participated act of being by means of which Subsistent *Esse* creates, models, and finalizes *ens*."

by the correlative essence. And this gives rise to the analogically diverse and finite modes of life: vegetative life, animal life, human life, angelic life.

In the second mode of participation, the *participatum* (an act or perfection) is seen to actuate a *participans* (considered as a potency in relation to the participated act). At the univocal level, prime matter is a pure potency that is actuated and determined by the substantial form it receives, while the subject is an actuated potency (second matter) that is subsequently actuated, perfected, and determined by additional accidental forms. At an analogical level, the substance (the primary categorial mode of *ens*) is actuated by its *actus essendi* according to the specifying measure of its correlative essence. This composition of first-actuating act and specifying-limiting potency (which is *bonum secundum quid*) is teleologically ordered to its end, which it attains through its proper operation (and thus becomes *bonum simpliciter*). The finite being's *actus essendi*, while remaining *fixum et quietum*, flourishes or expands in *operari* (*esse in actu*), and this expansion is specified and mediated by the being's substantial form, operative powers (accidental forms), and habits.[85]

In the third mode, the *participatum* of the second mode is considered as an effect and is related to its univocal or analogical cause.[86] Participation according to univocal causality focuses on the substantial form or being-in-act of the generated thing, while participation according to analogical causality focuses on the *actus essendi* of the created thing. Considered according to the notion of efficient causality, the participated substantial form of that which is being generated ontologically

[85] See ibid., 57-58. After the fundamental composition of essence (*potentia essendi*) and being (*actus essendi*), Contat identifies three successive levels of participation in *esse*: the substantial essence as specifying potency participates in *esse-in-actu substantiale*; the substantial essence as a being-in-act participates in *esse-in-actu accidentale,* mediated by the accidental forms; finally, the supposit-in-act (first act) participates in *operari* (second act), mediated by the supposit's operative powers and habits.

[86] I am leaving aside for now the question of equivocal causality and the third mode of participation.

depends on its univocal cause, while the form of that which has been generated no longer ontologically depends on its univocal cause, but does retain a univocal likeness to its univocal cause. The participated being (*actus essendi*) of the creature is seen to depend on the Creator, who also is said to conserve the participated being of the creature. Considered according to the notion of exemplar causality, the *participatum* is able to be related according to its likeness to its univocal or analogical cause. For example, the generated horse bears a univocal (specific) likeness to its generator and has an analogical likeness to its Creator. Considered according to the notion of final causality, the operating effect is ordered, both intrinsically by its being and nature and extrinsically by its cause, through its proper operation, to its ultimate end.[87] At a univocal level, we see that the form determines the act of being and orders the finite being to a corresponding proper operation. For example, the horse Secretariat is ordered to the swift transport of human beings and material things over long distances in certain climates. Brute animals, like horses, are *indirectly* and not *directly* ordered to God; and as a species they are ordered to rational animals,[88] which are *immediately* ordered to God.[89] Human beings, however, are naturally ordered to the beatific vision of God's essence,[90] but are not sufficiently,[91] conveniently,[92] or proportionately[93] ordered, by their nature, to the beatific vision.

At the beginning of this article, I referred to the variety of divergent interpretations concerning the division and application of the notion of participation in metaphysics. My article

[87] See *ScG* III, c. 67.

[88] See *ScG* III, c. 112.

[89] See *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 3.

[90] See Aquinas, *Super Boet. De Trin.*, q. 6, a. 4, ad 5: "Quamvis enim homo naturaliter inclinetur in finem ultimum, non tamen potest naturaliter illum consequi, sed solum per gratiam, et hoc est propter eminentiam illius finis" ("For even though man is naturally inclined to the ultimate end, he cannot reach it naturally, but only by grace, and this is on account of the eminence of that end").

[91] See *De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 5.

[92] See *ScG* III, c. 150.

[93] See *STh* I-II, q. 62, a. 1.

and the accompanying articles by Daniel De Haan and Gregory Doolan attempt to contribute to the discussion by showing the correlation between Aquinas's three modes of participation and the three ways Aquinas presents *esse*: as *esse commune*, as *actus essendi*, and as *esse subsistens*. In my opinion, the examples of the modes of participation provided by Aquinas in his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus* are not exhaustive, but rather are an invitation to the reader to explore and determine what is characteristic of each mode of participation. If the characteristic of the first mode is univocal predication, then my proposal does not work. If, however, the characteristic is that the *participatum* is a notion that is common to many with a foundation in reality, then the distinction between univocal commonness and analogical commonness allows us to see participation in *esse commune* as an instantiation of the first mode of participation.[94]

[94] This article was originally presented on the panel "Aquinas and 'the Arabs' International Working Group I," chaired by Richard Taylor, at the 2014 American Catholic Philosophical Association Conference. It was developed in collaboration with Daniel De Haan and Gregory Doolan, who investigated and respectively presented Aquinas's thought on the second and third modes of participation in relation to *actus essendi* and *esse subsistens*.

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AQUINAS ON *ACTUS ESSENDI* AND THE SECOND MODE OF PARTICIPATION

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IN HIS commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus*, Thomas Aquinas distinguishes three modes of participation.[1] This article proposes an answer to the following question: Do finite beings participate in their *actus essendi* according to the second of these three modes of participation? I approach this question through an investigation of the criteria that identify and demarcate each of Aquinas's three modes of participation.

In section I, I detail the criterial problem for identifying and demarcating Aquinas's three modes of participation. In section II, I address at length John Wippel's five arguments that purport to show that Aquinas's second mode of participation excludes the participation of *ens* in *esse*. In section III, I propose my answer to the criterial problem, which supports my claim, contrary to Wippel, that the second mode of participation includes the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi*. I do not provide a textual analysis of Aquinas's account of the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi*, since I have little to add to Wippel's perspicuous treatment of this topic. My aim is more modest. I intend to challenge and correct Wippel's taxonomy of the three modes of participation. Said otherwise, I accept the substance of his

[1] See *In De hebdo.*, c. 2 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 50 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1992], 271, ll. 74–85). For an overview of the three modes of participation, see John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 96-110; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 11-15, 76-82; Stephen L. Brock, "Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on *esse:* Thomas Aquinas and the *De hebdomadibus*," *Nova et Vetera* (Eng. ed.) 5 (2007): 465-94, at 478-88.

interpretation of the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi*. What I reject is his taxonomy of Aquinas's three modes of participation, which restrictively forces Aquinas's diverse orders of *ens-esse* participation to fit the mold of the third mode of participation, and so excludes from the second mode of participation the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi*.

Many readers of Aquinas have proposed interpretations of his doctrine of participation that touch upon the question of the participation of *ens* in *esse*. Here my focus is on the interpretation of John Wippel presented in his magisterial study, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Wippel's extended scholarly treatment of participation negotiates its way through a variety of primary texts taken from the corpus of Aquinas, and engages in an illuminating way various contemporary interpretations of Aquinas's doctrine of participation.

It is important to distinguish the general question about the participation of *ens* in *esse* from more specific questions about the participation of *ens* in *esse commune*, *actus essendi*, and *esse subsistens*. Because Wippel's answer to the general question maintains that the participation of *ens* in *esse* is the exclusive prerogative of Aquinas's third mode of participation, Wippel's answers to the more specific questions look exclusively to the way these types of participation are diverse manifestations of the third mode of participation. Consequently, Wippel denies the significance of any connection between Aquinas's second mode of participation and his view that *ens* participates in its *actus essendi*. But in order to address this issue, we must first be clear about the criteria that identify and demarcate any one mode of participation from the others. My examination of Wippel's interpretation of the three modes of participation in section II establishes that he has not articulated any principled criteria for identifying and demarcating the second mode of participation from the others. The absence of such criteria reveals that there are no cogent reasons to support Wippel's claim that *ens* does not participate in its *actus essendi* according to the second mode of participation. In short, the aim of section II is to refute Wippel's arguments in support of his answer to the general question.

Once this refutation has been secured, section III provides arguments to establish that when it comes to the specific question of the participation of an *ens* in its *actus essendi*, this specific case of *ens* participating in *esse* belongs to the second mode of participation.

I. THE CRITERIAL PROBLEM FOR THE THREE MODES OF PARTICIPATION

Aquinas identifies the participation of *ens* in *esse* as an instance of the concrete participating in the abstract, but he does not explicitly say to which one (or more) of the three modes of participation it belongs.[2] Though he does not explain the division of the three modes, he does provide examples of each, as follows:

Mode of participation	Examples
First mode	Particular participates in a universal Species participates in a genus
Second mode	Subject participates in an accidental form Matter participates in its substantial form
Third mode	An effect participates in its cause

Aquinas does not present any criteria to showcase the principled characteristics for each of the three modes of participation. Are these three modes intended by Aquinas to exhaust the modes of participation? The question merits investigation, but for reasons of space I shall take for granted that these three modes, overtly identified by Aquinas in his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus*, are in some sense Aquinas's canonical three modes of participation. All other orders or cases of participation identified by Aquinas can be analyzed in terms of these three modes of participation. But even if we grant that Aquinas intends these three modes to exhaust all the forms of participation, this concession alone does not settle what

[2] To be clear, the participation of *ens* in *esse* does not discriminate between the participation in *esse commune*, *actus essendi*, or *esse subsistens*.

criteria distinguish the three modes of participation from each other. Aquinas does not provide us with any explicit criteria, and his examples are inadequate in themselves for resolving the criterial question. He presents *illustrations* of distinct modes of participation, not the *criteria* that distinguish them. That said, his examples do exhibit intuitive differences that distinguish each of these three modes, and most interpretations of Aquinas's three modes rest upon tracking these intuitive differences. But intuitions are not criteria. So what are the distinct criteria or principled characteristics of these modes of participation that these intuitions seem to be tracking? This brings us to the *criterial problem* concerning the three modes of participation.

The examples Aquinas provides to illustrate each of the three modes of participation are well chosen, for each encapsulates a significant philosophical doctrine. Indeed, anyone who reads extensively in Aquinas will be familiar with a host of passages where he treats at length his philosophical views on particulars and universals, species and genera, *concreta* and *abstracta*, matter and form, subject and accidental form, cause and effect. In order to establish criteria for distinguishing these three modes of participation, we must uncover the intrinsic unity implicit in Aquinas's examples by considering the philosophical significance of that which *identifies* and *demarcates* each mode of participation. The criteria we are looking for must both identify and unite the examples Aquinas provides for each mode of participation and provide principled grounds for demarcating whether orders of participation are included or excluded by any one of these three modes. For example, what is it about matter's participation in form and a subject's participation in accidental forms that unites them in the second mode and demarcates them from the participation of an effect in its cause of the third mode? I shall employ these two conditions—namely, identity and demarcation—to evaluate Wippel's proposal in section II and to guide my own tentative proposal in section III.

Wippel and Rudi te Velde have advanced ways (albeit rather cursory ways) to classify these three modes of participation. Both contend that the first mode consists of a logical or intentional form of participation insofar as

"particulars," "species," and "genera" are logical notions.[3] The second and third modes pertain to ontological forms of participation because form and matter, subject and accidental forms, cause and effect all involve real entities. In short, the first mode is logical and the second and third modes are ontological. Because any detailed examination of this classification goes beyond the aims of the present study, I will take it for granted here, recognizing that the matter requires further investigation.

In addition to this logical and ontological division, Wippel provides arguments for why the participation of *ens* in *esse* is not captured by the second mode, but he does not present any principled criteria for distinguishing all three modes of participation. Before examining Wippel's arguments, we must address another exegetical difference between his approach and my own. Wippel and te Velde seem to take for granted both that Aquinas's examples of the three modes of participation exhaust the applicable instances of each of the three modes of participation and that all three modes are mutually exclusive. I argue, on the contrary, that Aquinas's examples as such fail to provide any criteria for distinguishing the three modes of participation, and therefore do not exhaust the applicable instances for each mode. Furthermore, I presume the three modes to be complementary. The alternative assumptions of Wippel and te Velde lead both of them to conclude that the participation of *ens* in *esse* is excluded by the examples of matter and form, subject and accidental form, which are typical of the second mode. I reject this conclusion because their arguments fail to provide any criteria for showing why the participation of *ens* in *esse* is incompatible with the second mode. I present my own proposal for principled criteria in section III.

[3] "Since in each of these instances we are dealing with the fact that one intelligible content shares in another without exhausting it, we may describe it as a case of participation; but since we are only dealing with intelligible contents, the participation is logical or intentional, not real or ontological" (Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 97). Cf. idem, 97-98, 103; te Velde, *Participation*, 11-13, 76-83; Gregory T. Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 196-98.

II. Wippel on the Second Mode of Participation

We may distinguish three theses concerning the diverse cases of *ens-esse* participation. The first thesis contends that the first mode of participation includes the participation of *ens* in *esse*, the second thesis contends that the second mode includes this participation, and the third thesis contends that the third mode includes it.

Wippel rejects the first and second theses but defends the third. Wippel's primary concern, however, is simply to clarify the way *ens* participates in *esse*. According to Wippel, since *ens-esse* participation consists in a real distinction, the litmus test for the relevant mode of participation requires a "real distinction between the participant and that in which it participates."[4] Of course, this means the logical form of participation of the first mode fails to pass this litmus test; hence, Wippel rejects the first thesis.

> What, then, of the second general kind of participation, wherein a subject participates in its accidents, or a given instance of matter participates in substantial form? This, too, evidently involves real participation and real diversity between the participating subject and the participated perfection, that is, between substance and accident, or between prime matter and substantial form. Nonetheless, it seems clear enough that, for Aquinas, participation of beings in being (*esse*) cannot be reduced to this kind of participation any more than to the first kind.[5]

Wippel therefore grants that the second mode consists of a real or ontological form of participation wherein there is a real distinction between the participator and the participated perfection. However, despite these similarities with the participation of *ens* in *esse*, he rejects the possibility that *ens-esse* participation is an instance of the second mode because he denies that the participation in *esse* is reducible to the second mode.

Wippel provides five arguments for rejecting the second thesis, namely, that the second mode of participation includes *ens-esse* participation. My critical evaluation of each of these arguments focuses on whether or not they provide

[4] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 103.
[5] Ibid.

any criterion for uniting the second mode of participation and demarcating it from the other modes, and thereby establish grounds for rejecting the thesis that the participation of *ens* in *esse* is an instance of this second mode. In each case, I show that Wippel fails to provide any criterion for the second mode, in part because he focuses too much on the examples and omits considering what underlying criterion might identify and unify Aquinas's examples.

A) Fundamentality of Participation in "esse" Criterion

Wippel's first argument concerns the *fundamentality* of the participation in *esse*, which he avers the second mode cannot capture. Aquinas's overt illustrations of the second mode include subject-accident and matter-form participation. Wippel claims that because *ens-esse* participation is metaphysically more fundamental than these two orders of participation, it is therefore not reducible to the second mode:

> First of all, in order for a subject to participate in its accidents, Aquinas has noted that the subject itself must exist. And it exists only insofar as it participates in *esse*. Participation in *esse* is clearly more fundamental than that of a substance in its accidents. The same may be said of participation of matter in form. Indeed, according to Aquinas, if a matter-form composite is to exist, it must participate in *esse*.[6]

Wippel's argument rests on Aquinas's doctrine that *ens-esse* participation is more fundamental than subject-accident and matter-form participation. While Wippel is certainly correct that this is Aquinas's doctrine, the fundamentality of *ens-esse* participation is immaterial to the point at hand, for Aquinas never suggests that fundamentality is relevant to understanding what is essential to the second mode of participation. So why should we accept that the fundamentality of

[6] Ibid., 103. In defense of his view that concrete-abstract participation is a fourth mode of participation, te Velde gestures towards a sort of fundamentality argument, and cites with approval Wippel's fundamentality argument; see te Velde, *Participation*, 79-80, and 79 n. 31. Since te Velde's version of the fundamentality argument is no more than a sketch and overtly relies on Wippel, I will focus my attention on Wippel's version of the argument. It is noteworthy, however, that Wippel rejects te Velde's suggestion that concrete-abstract participation is a fourth mode of participation; see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 109 n. 40.

ens-esse participation provides a criterion for excluding a form of participation from the second mode? Wippel does not provide any argument for this contention, he simply assumes this to be the case.

It may be possible to shed light on the nature of *ens-esse* participation and the second mode by considering Aquinas's arguments concerning what *esse* itself cannot participate in. All parties agree that Aquinas explicitly rejects the application of the first and second modes to understanding the way *esse* participates in something else. This is the issue Aquinas is actually addressing when he introduces the three modes of participation in his commentary on *De hebdomadibus*.[7] It is also true that both orders of participation—namely, *ens-esse* participation and the participation of *esse* in something else[8]—pertain to more fundamental orders of participation than subject-accident and matter-form participation. But the reasons Aquinas provides for denying the application of the second mode to *esse*'s participation in something else say nothing about the fundamentality of the participation of *ens* in *esse* or of the participation of *esse* in something. Rather, Aquinas's argument builds upon his doctrine that *esse* is signified abstractly and is the most common. Since the second mode and its two examples of subject-accident and matter-form participation do not pertain to the participation of something abstract and most common in something else, the second mode is inapplicable to the participation of *esse* in something else. But if the fundamentality criterion is significant for Aquinas's understanding of the second mode—as Wippel's argument requires—then why does Aquinas ignore this caveat about the second mode and provide other reasons—namely, reasons based on his examples of that mode—for rejecting its application to that in which *esse* itself can participate?

The answer, I contend, is because the fundamentality criterion is irrelevant to the nature of the second mode.

[7] See *In De hebdo*., c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:270-71, ll. 36-113)

[8] For interpretations of Aquinas's view on the participation of *esse* in something, see Brock, "Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on *esse*," 478-84, esp. 482-84; Gregory Doolan, "Aquinas on *esse subsistens* and the Third Mode of Participation," *The Thomist* 82 (2018): 611-42.

There is no explicit or implicit evidence or even implicit auxiliary evidence from other relevant doctrines of Aquinas that supports the central claim of Wippel's argument from fundamentality. This argument is rooted in an unsupported assumption that because *ens-esse* participation is more fundamental than the examples of the second mode, it is therefore irreducible to that mode. As we have seen, there is no exegetical or philosophical justification for this irreducibility contention in Aquinas. Wippel's argument from fundamentality rests on extrinsic features of the two examples Aquinas provides, and these extra-textual doctrines of Aquinas are not grounded in philosophical principles that unite the two examples, nor do they illuminate in a principled way how to include or exclude other illustrations of the second mode. Consequently, Wippel's first reason for rejecting *ens-esse* participation as an instance of the second mode fails.

Maybe I have misunderstood Wippel's argument from fundamentality. Thus far I have interpreted Wippel as claiming that *ens-esse* participation is irreducible to the second mode because it is more fundamental than the two orders of participation that Aquinas provides as examples of that mode. Regarding why matter-form participation as an instance of the second mode rules out *ens-esse* participation, Wippel says the following: "The same may be said of participation of matter in form. Indeed, according to Aquinas, if a matter-form composite is to exist, it must participate in *esse*."[9] Read in another way, Wippel's criterion can be formulated as follows: If one order of participation grounds the existence of another order of participation, then the order of participation that grounds another is not reducible to the second mode. Accordingly, because the existence of any composite from matter-form participation is grounded in its participation in *esse*, the order of *ens-esse* participation is irreducible to the second mode.

This argument would give us Wippel's conclusion and show that *ens-esse* participation is not an instance of the second mode; however, it would do so at the expense of excluding one of Aquinas's own examples for the second mode. This is because the participation of a hylomorphic

[9] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 103.

subject in its accidental forms—one of Aquinas's examples of the second mode—is itself grounded in the existence of a composite of matter that participates in substantial form—his other example. And according to this version of the fundamentality argument, based on grounding orders of participation, the second mode does not include orders of participation that ground other orders of participation. Hence, the order of matter-form participation, like *ens-esse* participation, cannot be included in the second mode. But Aquinas does include matter-form participation among his examples of the second mode. Since this consequence is absurd insofar as it is contrary to Aquinas's expressed view and would undermine the intrinsic unity of the second mode, we must reject the central contention of the argument from grounding in existence.

What if we soften this argument by restricting the grounding claim to only one order of participation, namely, *ens-esse* participation? This restriction would not be completely unmotivated insofar as all parties, though they disagree over whether *ens-esse* participation belongs to the second mode, at least agree that *ens-esse* participation is the most fundamental order of participation. But the justification for this restriction with respect to the criterion for the second mode runs into all the same troubles as the earlier argument from fundamentality: it is extraneously imposed on the text, it does not illuminate in a principled way what unites Aquinas's two examples of the second mode, and it does not clarify why Aquinas rejects the application of the second mode to the participation of *esse* in something else.

In short, the line of argumentation put forth thus far merely asserts the falsity of the thesis that *ens-esse* participation is an instance of the second mode. At best, the arguments based on the fundamentality criterion either contradict Aquinas's account of the second mode or beg the question.

B) "Tertium quid" Criterion

Wippel's second argument against the thesis that *ens-esse* participation is an instance of the second mode is based on

what I shall call the *tertium quid criterion*, which focuses on a feature of matter-form participation.

> Moreover, in the case where matter is said to participate in form, a third thing (*res*) or a *tertium quid* results, that is, the essence of the material thing which includes both its form and its matter. However, as Aquinas brings out on other occasions—for instance, in his considerably later and very full discussion of participation in *Quodlibet* 2, q. 2, a. 1 of Advent 1269—it is not in this way that essence and *esse* (act of being) unite in a creature. No *tertium quid* results from their union.[10]

As with the argument from fundamentality, Wippel's argument from the *tertium quid* criterion does not focus on intrinsic features that unite Aquinas's examples of the second mode of participation—namely, matter-form and subject-accident participation—but instead draws attention to the ways Aquinas's examples of the second mode are different from *ens-esse* participation. Wippel's argument rests its case on Aquinas's doctrine that a matter-form composite results in a *tertium quid*, a third thing (*res*), but an *essentia-esse* composite does not. He concludes that because the union of matter and form results in a *tertium quid*, but the union of *essentia* and *esse* does not, *ens* cannot participate in *esse* according to the second mode.

The first difficulty with this argument is the aforementioned point that it fails to hit upon what is essential to the second mode. More problematic, however, is the way Wippel's focus on the *tertium quid* criterion applies only to Aquinas's example of matter's participation in form. Wippel's application of this criterion does indeed exclude *ens-esse* participation from the second mode, but the same argument entails that Aquinas's example of subject-accident participation is likewise excluded. The argument from the *tertium quid* criterion seems to be as follows: Every order of participation that does not result in a *tertium quid* is excluded from the second mode of participation; *ens-esse* participation does not result in a *tertium quid*; hence, *ens-esse* participation is excluded from the second mode. The difficulty is that the union of a subject with its accidents does not bring about a *tertium quid*, and according to the

[10] Ibid., 103-4.

same argument this would entail, contrary to Aquinas, that the second mode excludes subject-accident participation.[11]

Consequently, Wippel's second argument for rejecting the thesis that the second mode includes *ens-esse* participation fails in much the same way as the first argument. It neither adequately identifies any criteria that unite the examples Aquinas does use for the second mode nor explains why that mode includes or excludes *ens-esse* participation.

C) Specification Criterion

Wippel's third reason for rejecting *ens-esse* participation as an instance of the second mode is based on the way a participating subject is essentially specified by participating in some act principle. This might be called the *specification criterion*.

[11] Two additional points are noteworthy. The first pertains to Wippel's extratextual notion, *tertium quid*, introduced in Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 103-4. In the passage Wippel cites from *Quodlibet* II, q. 2, a. 1, Aquinas speaks of a *res tertia*, not a *tertium quid*. The second concerns forestalling a possible objection. Someone might contend, contrary to my view, that for Aquinas the composition of a subject with its accidents, like the composition of matter and form, also results in a *res tertia* (or *tertium quid*). This is not Aquinas's view. Significantly, in the very passage to which Wippel appeals in order to show that Aquinas denies that the composition of *essentia* and *esse* results in a *res tertia,* Aquinas explicitly denies that the composition of a substance (i.e., a subject) and its accident results in a *res tertia*. "Therefore, to the first it must be said that sometimes a third thing results from those which are joined together; as the humanity by which a man is a man is constituted from soul and body so a man is composed of soul and body. Sometimes, however, a third thing does not result from those which are joined together but a kind of composite intelligible notion results, as when the notions 'man' and 'white' go to make up the intelligible notion 'white man.' And in such things something is composed of itself and another, just as a white thing is composed of that which is white and whiteness" ("Ad primum ergo dicendum quod aliquando ex hiis que simul iunguntur relinquitur aliqua res tercia, sicuti ex anima et corpore constituitur humanitas, que est homo, unde homo componitur ex anima et corpore; aliquando autem ex hiis que simul iunguntur non resultat res tercia, set resultat quedam ratio composita, sicut ratio hominis albi resoluitur in rationem hominis et in rationem albi, et in talibus aliquid componitur ex se ipso et alia, sicut album componitur ex eo quod est album et ex albedine") (*Quodlibetal Questions* I and II, trans. Sandra Edwards [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983], 80; *Quodl*. II, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1 [Leon. ed., 25/2:215, ll. 77-87]).

In the case of matter-form union, specification of the kind of being enjoyed by the composite essence, human being or canine being, for instance, is determined by the act principle within the essence, that is, by the substantial form. But in the composition of essence and *esse* within any finite entity, the specification or determination of the kind of being comes not from the side of the act principle—the *actus essendi*—but from the side of the potency principle, that is, from the essence. This is not surprising, of course, since the essence principle itself either is or at least includes a substantial form. While the form is an act principle within the line of essence, in the line of *esse* that same form, either in itself in the case of a separate substance or together with its matter in the case of a composite entity, is in potency with respect to its act of being.[12]

This argument is superior to Wippel's first two arguments insofar as it identifies a philosophical doctrine that unites in a principled way Aquinas's two examples of the second mode and it provides a principled explanation for why *ens-esse* participation is not reducible to the second mode. The specification criterion seems to be as follows: Every participant's essential or quidditative character is specified or determined by the act principle in which it participates. If an order of participation meets this criterion it is included in the second mode; if it fails to meet this criterion, it is excluded from the second mode. Wippel is quite right that, for Aquinas, this criterion identifies something common to both subject-accident and matter-form participation. The essential character of the accidental determination of the subject is specified by the act of its accidental form. Likewise, the substantial quiddity or essence of the matter-form composite is specified by the act of the substantial form. By contrast, it is the potency principle of the *essence*, not the act principle of the *esse*, that provides the essential specification in the order of *ens-esse* participation. Hence, the specification criterion does exclude *ens-esse* participation.[13]

[12] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 104-5.

[13] There is another way to understand Wippel's argument from the specification criterion; however, it is more problematic. One might think the argument rests on the distinct orders of specification found in the essential or predicamental orders in contrast to the existential or transcendental orders. In the essential or predicamental order, specification comes from the act principle, but in the existential or transcendental order it is the potency principle that specifies. If this is what Wippel's argument from the specification criterion of the second mode amounts to, it is an accurate distinction, but a mistaken and irrelevant criterion.

This criterion does capture what unites Aquinas's examples of the second mode. How does it fare with respect to demarcating the second mode from the other two modes of participation? Two difficulties arise. To see why, however, requires some explanation of Wippel's commitment to the thesis that the third mode includes *ens-esse* participation. Wippel writes:

> I have rather suggested that it [i.e., *ens-esse* participation] should fall under the third major division, that whereby an effect participates in its cause, especially when the cause is of a higher order than the effect. However participation in *esse* may be understood by Thomas in a particular context—whether as participation in *esse commune*, or in a finite being's own *actus essendi*, or in *esse subsistens*—it seems to me that it should still be placed under this third division.[14]

Wippel contends that all orders of *ens-esse* participation—including *essentia-actus essendi* participation—fall under the third mode, which pertains to the way effects participate in their causes. And because *essentia-actus essendi* participation is an instance of potency-act participation, Wippel's understanding of *ens-esse* participation entails that the effect-cause participation of the third mode also includes potency-act participation. It is this last entailment that introduces difficulties for Wippel's specification criterion of the second mode meeting the demarcation condition.

One difficulty is the way Wippel's commitment to understanding *ens-esse* participation as belonging to the third mode problematically entails that that mode must shoulder the weight of combining potency-act participation with effect-cause participation. For reasons that will be made clear in section III, this is a problem independent of Wippel's specification criterion. But even if we concede this problematic combination, another difficulty remains. Wip-

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Even if it does unite the two examples of the second mode and exclude *ens-esse* participation, as a criterion for the second mode it proves too much. If the second mode includes every instance of participation that falls within the essential or predicamental order, then it will also include the paradigmatic cases of the first and third modes, a consequence that clearly fails to meet the demarcation condition. Hence, this weaker version of the argument from the specification criterion should be rejected.

[14] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 128.

pel's view forces the third mode to handle potency-act participation on its own model of effect-cause participation, and this undermines what otherwise grounded the demarcation of the third mode from the specification criterion of the second mode. In short, while one might hold either that all orders of *ens-esse* participation belong exclusively to the third mode or the specification criterion for the second mode, they are incompossible. Yet Wippel's view requires that we endorse both.

This incompatibility requires a brief explanation. In order for Wippel's specification criterion to be successful, it must both identify what is intrinsic to the second mode and demarcate the second mode from the first and third modes. What Wippel needs, in particular, is for the specification criterion to demarcate the second from the third mode, so that he can preserve his view that the second mode excludes *ens-esse* participation, but that the third mode includes it. The specification criterion requires that participants be *essentially* specified by participating in some act principle. In order to distinguish the second mode of participation from the third mode, the latter needs to exclude the specification criterion. Consequently, the third mode requires—if there is an act principle in cases of causal participation, and Wippel's view forces us to say there is—that it is the cause that is the act principle that is *essentially specified* by its effect, which must be the potency principle. However, Wippel and Gregory Doolan have argued that it is more accurate to say that effects participate in a *likeness* of their cause.[15] If we revise my initial formulation of the third mode's requirement to include the *actuality* and the *likeness* caveats, we get the following: Any effect that participates in

[15] In brief, in effect-cause participation the participant, an effect, participates in a likeness of the cause, a likeness that the participant receives from the cause. Wippel's view is committed to locating all orders of *ens-esse* participation within the third mode and requires that the specification criterion of the second mode demarcate it from the third mode. In order to meet the demarcation condition, Wippel must maintain that if the likeness of the cause participated in by the effect is an act, it *cannot* specify the essential characteristics of the effect-participant. In other words, no effect-participant can be essentially specified by any received *actual likeness* of a cause that the effect-participant participates in. See Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 110-23 (esp. 116-22); Doolan, "Aquinas on *esse subsistens*," For a different interpretation of the way an effect participates in its cause, see Brock, "Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on *esse*," 481-83.

an actuality that is the likeness of its cause—especially higher-order causes—must *essentially specify* the nature of the actual likeness of the cause. This formulation excludes the specification criterion of the second mode, which suggests that it can meet the demarcation condition, but it does so at the cost of undermining Aquinas's own account of the third mode.

The first difficulty with this view is that, even though Wippel's specification criterion for the second mode might demarcate it from the merely logical order of participation of the first mode,[16] the specification criterion in fact fails to demarcate the second from the third mode. If we consider the paradigm cases of effect-cause participation, we see that they consist of effects that are specified by the likeness of their causes, where if anything is an act principle it is the likeness of the cause not the effect.[17] Effects do not ordinarily specify the essence of the likeness of their causes. Indeed, this is shown in the example Aquinas provides for the third mode, namely, the air's participation in the light from the sun. In itself, the air is only potentially illuminated; it is the sun's actual light that causally specifies an actual likeness by virtue of which the air becomes illuminated. Clearly, Wippel's specification criterion of the second mode applies equally to Aquinas's example of the third mode and paradigm cases of effect-cause participation. So Wippel's specification criterion is not unique to the second mode; it applies to the third mode as well. This equivalence of applicability entails that Wippel's specification criterion fails to demarcate between the second and third modes, and so we cannot accept it as the criterion of the second mode. Someone could still endorse Wippel's specification criterion at the cost of collapsing Aquinas's distinction between the second and third modes, but this route is not open to Wippel, for two reasons. First and foremost, he aims to preserve Aquinas's distinction among the three modes of participation, not reject it. Second, in order to locate *ens-*

[16] This is because the first mode involves a logical act and not an ontological act.

[17] I say "if anything," because I argue in section III that we should distinguish potency-act participation from effect-cause participation.

esse participation exclusively within the third mode and not in the second mode, Wippel needs to keep these modes distinct, which the specification criterion cannot do. Hence, Wippel's third argument against the thesis that the second mode does not include *ens-esse* participation fails.

A second difficulty concerns a subtler inconsistency in Wippel's argument. Wippel applies the specification criterion to the second mode to exclude *ens-esse* participation from that mode. But, as we have seen, the specification criterion is equally applicable to the third mode, which Wippel maintains includes *ens-esse* participation. The trouble is, if paradigm cases of the third mode, like the air's participation in an actual likeness of the light of the sun, are excluded by the specification criterion, then according to Wippel's argument this provides grounds for excluding *ens-esse* participation—or at least *essentia-actus essendi* participation—from the third mode. In short: either Wippel inconsistently holds that the second mode's specification criterion excludes *ens-esse* participation and yet contends that the third mode's specification criterion does not exclude it, thereby making an unprincipled exception; or, Wippel's specification criterion reveals that both the second and third modes exclude *ens-esse* participation, in which case Wippel incorrectly defends its inclusion in the third mode. Given the aforementioned first difficulty, we can reject the second horn of the dilemma, since the specification criterion fails as a criterion for any one of Aquinas's three modes of participation. I contend we must accept the first horn of the dilemma, which gives us one more reason for rejecting Wippel's third argument. Since Wippel inconsistently applies the specification criterion with respect to which mode of participation includes *ens-esse* participation, his third argument, from the specification criterion, does not establish a principled reason for excluding *ens-esse* participation from the second mode. In sum, despite its initial plausibility, Wippel's third argument fails. Furthermore, these two difficulties provide sufficient grounds for rejecting the relevance of the specification

criterion for distinguishing Aquinas's three modes of participation.[18]

D) Univocal Participation Criterion

Wippel's fourth argument against the inclusion of *ens-esse* participation in the second mode is also an argument against its inclusion in the first mode, and so concerns a feature shared by the first and second modes that purports to exclude *ens-esse* participation from both.[19]

> In comparing participation in *esse* with the first two major kinds singled out by Aquinas in his Commentary on the *De Hebdomadibus*, we should also note that each of the other kinds allows for univocal predication of the participated perfection. According to Aquinas, this is not true of *esse*. It can only be predicated analogically of whatever participates in it.[20]

Wippel's contention seems to be that the first two modes of participation permit or are consistent with univocal predications of participated perfections, but since *ens-esse* participation is exclusively analogical, the first and second modes do not include it.

The first difficulty with this argument is that this univocity criterion does not distinguish the first mode from the second mode. Perhaps this can be overcome by stipu-

[18] Someone might try to save the specification criterion of the second mode by revising the thesis that *ens-esse* participation belongs exclusively to the third mode so that it is no longer incompatible with the second mode's specification criterion. Consider this revised thesis: The third mode only includes orders of potency-act participation that meet the specification criterion. According to the revised thesis, the third mode's effect-cause participation only includes a very restrictive version of potency-act participation, namely, a version that pertains to *essentia-actus essendi* participation but excludes both matter-form and substance-accident participation. While this revised thesis is compatible with the specification criterion of the second mode, it achieves this compatibility at the cost of begging the question, for there is no independent reason to endorse the arbitrary restrictions of this revised thesis.

[19] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 106-7. Just before this fourth argument from the univocity criterion, Wippel presents an argument against the view that *ens-esse* participation belongs to the first mode based upon predication by essence or substantiality and by participation; this argument falls outside the scope of this article. See ibid., 105-6.

[20] Ibid., 106.

lating that the first mode concerns logical univocal orders of participation and the second mode pertains to ontological univocal orders of participation. But even this added distinction will not save Wippel's argument, for it is far from obvious that the third mode does not also *permit* univocal orders of participation and that univocal orders of participation are unique to the first and second modes. Furthermore, there are good reasons to think the first and second modes also *permit* analogical orders of participation and so they are not restricted to univocal orders of participation. Wippel's argument here seems to require this implausible restriction, and not mere permission. Let us examine these two issues.

Wippel provides some evidence for the claim that the first mode permits univocal predication, but none for the second mode. With respect to the first mode he notes that in book I, chapter 32 of the *Summa contra gentiles*—a text that establishes that nothing can be predicated univocally of both God and anything else—Aquinas identifies univocal predication with participation in species or genera. Wippel then concludes that these cases of participation in Aquinas "are also paradigms for univocal predication."[21]

It is unclear if Wippel finds "paradigms for univocal predication" in both the first and the second modes, or just the first mode, on which he focuses here. The latter claim seems less contentious than the former, but in either case Wippel seems to be saying more than is implied by the text. Aquinas does not suggest that the first mode is the paradigmatic mode of participation for univocal predication. A more tempered reading would be: The predication of genera and species are "paradigms for univocal predication" and they are *also* the examples Aquinas provides in his cursory presentation of the first mode.

If, however, Wippel is making the stronger claim—that both the first and second modes are "paradigms for univocal predication"—then I think he is doubly mistaken. I find it doubtful that Wippel intends this stronger claim, since he only provides a brief argument for the first, weaker claim. Nevertheless, let us suppose someone endorses this stronger claim, since its refutation will be instructive. First, let us

[21] Ibid., 106.

grant the following: In the case of the first mode, Socrates' participation in the species, human, is predicated univocally of Socrates. We also find that univocal predication is *permitted* in the case of the second mode—for example, the univocal predication of red where the accidental form of red is participated in by the book and the barn. Given my more tempered reading of the first mode, it seems at least logically possible for someone to argue that the first mode is not exclusively concerned with univocal orders of participation, and there might be instances of this mode of participation not concerned with univocal genera and species, but with analogical notions like act and potency; necessity and possibility; unity, truth, and goodness; or, more to the point, *ens commune* and *esse commune*.[22]

More significant for our purposes is that the second mode clearly neither requires univocal predication nor excludes analogical predication. A few illustrations will be sufficient. First, metaphysical discourse about "substantial forms," "accidental forms," "substances," and "accidents" involves analogical predications. "Accidental form" need not be a univocal genus, it can function as an analogical notion that is predicated intercategorically of qualities, quantities, relations, and so forth. Indeed, Wippel has shown this is the case in his learned treatment of Aquinas's account of the quasi-definitions of the quiddities of substance and accidents.[23] Likewise, "substantial form" can be predicated of both material substances and immaterial substances, which do not share in a univocal genus of substance, but, as Doolan has shown, participate in a common analogical genus of substance.[24] In this metaphysical discourse "substantial form" and "accidental form" need not be univocal genera, but can function as analogical notions participated in by intercategorically diverse subjects.

[22] On this issue, see Jason Mitchell, "Aquinas on *esse commune* and the First Mode of Participation," *The Thomist* 82 (2018): 543-72.

[23] Cf. Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought* 208; 228-37.

[24] Cf. Gregory T. Doolan, "Substance as a Metaphysical Genus," in *The Science of Being as Being: Metaphysical Investigations*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 99-128.

Furthermore, in this context Wippel concentrates on the way the first mode (and perhaps the second mode) involves univocal predications; he does not mention the third mode of participation. But the third mode also *permits* univocal predication in each of the four orders of causality, and Wippel's fourth argument requires that univocal orders of participation are restricted to the first two modes of participation and excluded by the third. One example from efficient causality will be sufficient. Consider two pots containing hot water which both participate in the heat of fire *qua* the efficient cause of heating. This efficient cause of heating the water can be predicated univocally in both instances of participation, for it is univocally the same kind of heat from the same fire that heats both pots of water. In short, the three modes of participation are not distinguished according to univocal or analogical predication, for all three modes *permit* univocal predications and none of them obviously *excludes* analogical predications.

In sum, Wippel seems to contend that at least the first mode, and maybe the second, are paradigms for univocal predication. At best this could mean they both permit univocal predication, and if this is all he means to say, then he is undoubtedly correct. But he needs a stronger *exclusion* criterion for both modes of participation in order for his argument to stand that neither of these two modes of participation includes *ens-esse* participation. Not only does Wippel not provide arguments to support this stronger exclusion criterion, but the univocal participation criterion fails to show that the first and second modes exclude analogical orders of participation, such as the participation of *ens* in *esse*. Indeed, Aquinas's philosophy is replete with examples of the second mode involving analogical orders of participation. Consequently, Wippel's argument from univocal participation does not support any principled argument against the inclusion of *ens-esse* participation in either the first or the second mode, and furthermore it does not provide any criterion for demarcating the second from the third mode.

E) Concrete Participation in the Abstract Criterion

After using the aforementioned arguments to rule out the applicability of the first and second modes to *ens-esse* participation, Wippel turns to the third mode.

> [O]ne may still wonder how Thomas's view of the participation of beings in *esse* can be fitted into his threefold division of participation. Since it is not reducible either to logical participation or to the kind of real participation whereby matter participates in form or a subject participates in its accidents, what remains? As we have seen above, in his Commentary on the *De Hebdomadibus* Thomas notes that being (*ens*) participates in *esse* in the way something concrete participates in something abstract. However, he has not identified participation of the concrete in the abstract with any of the three divisions. Hence it seems that the only possible remaining member of that division is that wherein an effect participates in its cause, and especially if it is not equal to the power of its cause.[25]

Wippel's positive argument for identifying *ens-esse* participation with the third mode of participation rests on a process of elimination. He takes for granted that Aquinas has distinguished three modes of participation, one of which includes *ens-esse* participation. Since he has provided numerous arguments against the inclusion of *ens-esse* participation within the first and second modes, he concludes that the third mode includes concrete-abstract participation, and thereby includes *ens-esse* participation as well. Since we have shown that none of Wippel's arguments for rejecting the inclusion of *ens-esse* participation in the second mode succeed, his argument from the process of elimination does not establish that *ens-esse* participation is only captured by the third mode. Consequently, there is no reason to accept his identification of *ens-esse* and concrete-abstract participation with the third mode. Furthermore, there are additional difficulties with Wippel's claims in this last quotation that are worth flagging.

The first concerns his claim that Aquinas does not identify concrete-abstract participation with any of the three modes of participation. It is true that Aquinas does not explicitly make any such identification, but this silence is

[25] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 109.

hardly a denial of the applicability of concrete-abstract participation to any of the three modes. In his commentary on *De hebdomadibus*, Aquinas introduces concrete-abstract participation before distinguishing the three modes of participation. In the latter context Aquinas is treating *not* which mode of participation is involved in *ens-esse* participation, but which is relevant to *esse*'s participation in something else. Aquinas does not rule out the second mode because it excludes concrete-abstract participation, but because it excludes that the subject of participation can be something abstract that participates in something else. There is, if anything, an implicit acknowledgement by Aquinas that the second mode includes cases of concrete-abstract participation. This is because it is only insofar as *a runner* or a *white thing* or even *Socrates* participates in *concreta* like *white* or *run*—instances of the second mode's subject-accident participation—that we can also say *a runner* or a *white thing* or even *Socrates* participates in *abstracta*, like *whiteness* or *to run*—which, along with *esse*, are Aquinas's own examples of *abstracta* that are participated in.[26] A similar account could be given for the first mode, whereby because Socrates participates in human being (*homo*), we can also say he has or participates in humanity (*humanitas*).[27] Hence, contrary to Wippel, Aquinas does not exclude concrete-abstract participation from the first and second modes. Indeed, it is just as natural to think that concrete-abstract participation is captured by the first and second modes as it is to think that it is captured by the third. This is made clear with Aquinas's own examples of concrete-abstract participation, like the *runner* in *to run* or the *white thing* in *whiteness*, neither of which is as easily assimilated into effect-cause participation of the third mode as they are into the aforementioned account of the second mode's subject-accident participation. Even if we concede to Wippel that the third mode includes concrete-abstract participation, what we have said thus far is enough to show that concrete-abstract participation does

[26] "Aliud autem significamus per hoc quod dicimus esse et aliud per id quod dicimus id quod est, sicut et aliud significamus cum dicimus currere et aliud per hoc quod dicitur currens. Nam currere et esse significatur in abstracto sicut et albedo; set quod est, id est ens et currens, significatur in concreto uelud album" (*In De hebdo.*, c. 2 [Leon. ed., 50:270-71, ll. 39-45]).

[27] *ScG* I, c. 32.

not provide a criterion for distinguishing any of the three modes of participation, because all three modes of participation permit this order of participation.[28] Consequently, any argument attempting to show that the first or second mode exclude *ens-esse* participation on the basis of concrete-abstract participation is headed down the wrong track.

F) Summary of Wippel on the Second Mode of Participation

Thus far I have rejected the prospects for establishing any criteria for the three modes of participation via the fundamentality criterion, the *tertium quid* criterion, the specification criterion, the univocal participation criterion, and the concrete-abstract participation criterion.[29] This critical investigation reveals that there is no reason to hold from the outset that *ens-esse* participation—in any of its forms—exclusively falls under the third mode.[30] This opens

[28] Above I drew attention to the view of te Velde who interprets Aquinas's concrete-abstract participation as an additional fourth mode of participation that stands alongside the three modes Aquinas overtly distinguishes. A cogent argument against this interpretation is based on the absence of evidence, argument, and motivation for postulating such a fourth mode. Additionally, it is worth pointing out here that showing how concrete-abstract participation can be analyzed in terms of the second mode (or the first and third), as I have just done, provides positive evidence against the suggestion of te Velde that "The participation of the concrete in the abstract does not fall under any of the three modes mentioned earlier" (te Velde, *Participation*, 79).

[29] See Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 108-9 for a clear summation of his objections to locating *ens-esse* participation within either the first mode or the second mode.

[30] Brock does not address Wippel's arguments, but he does point out similar problems with Wippel's view of the second mode. Brock writes: "I think it is also important to keep in mind that here Thomas is taking the participation of matter in form and of subject in accident as one single type of participation, not two. Wippel judges that since participation in *esse* differs from each of those, it does not fall under this type. But it seems to me that if Thomas can treat those two as one, this is because there are aspects common to them. And in fact these aspects also belong to the participation of substances in *esse*" (Brock, "Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on *esse*," 486). Brock does not attempt to establish principled criteria for the second mode; however, he does point out three aspects that subject-accident, matter-form, and *ens-esse* participation have in common: first, the way a common *ratio*—an accident, substantial form, or *esse*—is determined to some participant; second, the "relation of potency to act that obtains between participant and

up exegetical space to explore whether each one of the three modes of participation might include any of the ways in which Aquinas describes the participation of *ens* in *esse*, such as in *esse commune*, *actus essendi,* or *esse subsistens*.

III. The Criteria for Aquinas's Three Modes of Participation: A Proposal

In this final section, I propose a tentative account of the criteria for identifying and demarcating Aquinas's three modes of participation. In the previous section I established, contrary to Wippel and others, that both univocal and analogical orders of participation as well as concrete-abstract participation show up in all three modes of participation. This is why past efforts to employ these orders to provide criteria for identifying or demarcating Aquinas's three modes of participation have failed. What has proved to be insightful, however, is the aforementioned principled distinction employed by Wippel and others that demarcates logical and ontological modes of participation.[31] I take this distinction for granted. The first mode concerns logical modes of participation; the second and third modes pertain to ontological modes of participation. This distinction allows us to set aside the first mode and concentrate on the criteria that identify and demarcate the two ontological modes of participation. I begin with a sketch of my proposed criteria, explain my reasons for holding them, anticipate and respond to a few objections, and conclude by noting how these criteria bear upon the question: Does the second mode of participation pertain to the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi*?

A) Criteria for Identifying and Demarcating Aquinas's Three Modes of Participation

I submit that the principled criteria for identifying and demarcating these two ontological modes of participation

participated"; third, the "participated nature's inherence in the participant" (ibid., 487). The first and third aspects are common to all three modes of participation, but, as I argue in section III, the second aspect is unique to the second mode.

[31] See above, n. 3.

are rooted in Aquinas's distinction between potency-act and effect-cause. The second mode concerns ontological modes of participation that essentially involve potency-act participation, whereas effect-cause participation is proprietary to the third mode. The first test is to see how well these criteria fare with Aquinas's examples of the second and third modes. Clearly, Aquinas attributes potency-act participation to both matter-form and subject-accident participation, and these are his two examples of the second mode.[32] As for the third mode, Aquinas explicitly states that it concerns effect-cause participation. Hence, there is *prima facie* evidence to support these criteria: the ontological potency-act participation criterion unites Aquinas's two examples of the second mode and the ontological causality criterion of the third mode clearly captures Aquinas illustration of effect-cause participation.

In order to determine what bearing these criteria have on *ens-esse* participation, we must consider which mode of *ens-esse* participation is relevant. Aquinas distinguishes various meanings of *esse*, from *esse commune* to *actus essendi* and *esse subsistens*.[33] The conceit of the three articles published together here is to address the ways in which the first mode concerns *esse commune*, the second mode addresses *actus essendi*, and the third mode bears on *esse subsistens*. My effort is concerned with the second mode and the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi*. I presume that if anything is an instance of ontological potency-act participation it is the way that, in creatures, an *ens*, *id quod est, suppositum*, or even *essentia* participates in its *actus essendi*. Consequently, if the potency-act participation criterion reveals the true nature of the second mode, then the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi* turns out to be an instance of the second mode.

So far I have averred that these criteria pass the first test insofar as they provide a principled way to identify Aquinas's three modes of participation. The second test is

[32] See Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 107-8 and 306-12. For especially clear texts in Aquinas, see *ScG* II, c. 53; *De substantiis separatis*, c. 8; *Q. D. De Spiritualibus*, a. 1; *Q. D. De Anima,* a. 6.

[33] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 127-28.

whether they also demarcate the second from the third mode. I think they do; however, the clarity of this contrast between potency-act participation and effect-cause participation is obfuscated when we dive into the complex and nuanced details of the subtle ways Aquinas himself interweaves cause and effect with potency and act. Before taking up, albeit briefly, some of these difficulties, we must consider why these criteria, and the potency-act participation criterion of the second mode in particular, provide the most plausible interpretation of Aquinas's three modes of participation.

It is important to distinguish two claims that are being made here. The first, more ambitious claim is that the criteria I have set forth are the criteria Aquinas himself employed to identify and demarcate the three modes of participation. A second, less ambitious claim is that Aquinas employed some intuitive, but perhaps not systematically worked out, criteria for identifying and demarcating the three modes of participation, and the criteria I have presented provide the most intuitive way of doing so, even if they do not hold up to systematic scrutiny. The test for the more ambitious claim requires meeting both of the aforementioned criterial conditions of identity and demarcation, but the less ambitious claim is met by simply providing a *prima facie* account of the identity of each of the three modes of participation that does not establish any criterial way to demarcate each of them. Let us take up this less ambitious task before moving on to the more ambitious one.

B) Wippel on Potency-Act Participation

In section II, I concluded that interpreters of Aquinas's three modes of participation should free themselves of Wippel's hermeneutical lens which restricts all forms of *ens-esse* participation to the third mode. Abandoning this hermeneutical restriction opens up interpretative space and allows us to re-examine how Aquinas's diverse orders of *ens-esse* participation might show up in all three modes of participation. It also invites us to reread Wippel's own work and see other aspects of his account of participation in Aquinas in a new light.

In his detailed presentation of Aquinas's doctrine of participation and its bearing upon *ens-esse* participation, Wippel draws attention to the importance of potency-act participation for understanding the latter, which he concludes falls under the third mode.[34] I have shown that Wippel's arguments for this conclusion are unconvincing; however, I think we should largely endorse his interpretation of Aquinas's understanding of the significance of potency-act participation for *ens-esse* participation. This also shows up in his presentation of Aquinas's principle that unreceived act is unlimited and its corollary concerning the limitation of act by potency, and in his treatment of matter-form composition and participation.[35] How should we reread these magisterial presentations of Aquinas's metaphysical thought with our less restrictive hermeneutical framework for understanding Aquinas's three modes of participation? What new insights emerge when we approach Wippel's own presentation afresh?

I quote Wippel at length, because his own clear account of Aquinas's doctrine of potency-act participation ironically provides us with more than adequate grounds for holding, *pace* Wippel, that what unites the second mode and so also reveals its inclusion of the participation of *ens* in its *actus essendi* is the potency-act participation criterion.

> Before leaving this general discussion of Aquinas's understanding of participation, reference should be made to another aspect of his theory. Participation evidently entails distinction and composition in the participant of a receiving and participating principle, and of that which is received and participated. This has already emerged from our analysis of Aquinas's Commentary on the *De Hebdomadibus*, and is reinforced by his discussion in *Quodlibet* 2. But in cases of real or ontological participation, the participating principle or subject is related to the participated perfection as potency to act. The participated perfection is the act of the principle or subject which receives it as its corresponding potential principle. As Aquinas explains in *ST* I, q. 75, a. 5, ad 1: "A potency, however, since it receives act, must be proportioned to its act. But received acts, which proceed from the first and infinite act and are certain participations of it, are diverse."
>
> Very frequently Aquinas also applies this thinking to the participation of beings in *esse*. That essence is related to the act of being (*esse*) as

[34] Ibid., 107-8.

[35] Ibid., 303-5ff.

potency to act in every finite being is a position he defends from his earliest writings, and even in contexts where he is not using the language of participation. . . . *The importance of this conjoining of the potency-act relationship between essence and esse with the metaphysics of participation can hardly be overstated.* Without this, the intrinsic and essential unity of a participating being would not be assured. One may recall the following text from *SCG* II, c. 53: "Everything which participates in something is related to that which is participated as potency to act."[36]

If the act-potency relationship applies to the participation of beings in *esse*, it also holds in other instances of real participation. According to Aquinas, matter participates in form and is related to it as potency to act. A substance participates in its accidents and is related to them as a receiving potency to its received albeit secondary acts. But most important for our purposes is Aquinas's repeated application of this to participation in *esse*. As he puts it in his even later *De substantiis separatis:* "Everything which is has *esse*. Therefore, in everything apart from the first, there is both *esse* itself as act, and the substance of the thing which has *esse* as the potency which receives this act which is *esse*."[37]

What is significant here are the illustrations of potency-act participation from Aquinas to which Wippel turns in order to clarify its bearing upon *ens-esse* participation. Wippel does not consider and so does not provide arguments against the possibility that the second mode pertains to potency-act participation. But given his detailed accounts of the way Aquinas frequently unites and illustrates the participation of *ens-esse*, matter-form, subject-accidents with the real or ontological potency-act participation and the principle that unreceived act is unlimited—discussions that largely occur without Aquinas or Wippel making any reference to causality—implicitly reveals or perhaps betrays a unified doctrine. This provides at least *prima facie* evidence that supports my interpretation of the potency-act participation criterion for the second mode.

It is no coincidence that when Aquinas—as well as Wippel interpreting Aquinas—addresses the participation of *ens* or *essentia* in its *actus essendi* he often explains it by appealing, not to effect-cause participation, but to analogous cases of potency-act participation, such as matter-form and subject-accident participation. It is therefore surprising that

[36] Ibid., 107; emphasis added.

[37] Ibid., 108. The reference to *De substantiis separatis* is to c. 8 (Leon. ed., 40D:55, ll. 183-87).

Wippel does not regard the second mode as relevant to capturing *ens-esse* participation. This seems to me to reflect an inconsistency: Wippel rejects the relevance of the second mode to *ens-esse* participation, but in other contexts he employs Aquinas's examples from the second mode to clarify *ens-esse* participation, while largely ignoring the third mode's effect-cause participation in his explication of the participation of *ens* in *actus essendi*. This inconsistency vanishes, however, if we abandon Wippel's restrictive hermeneutical lens and endorse the interpretation I am defending, namely, that it is the potency-act participation criterion that identifies the second mode. Endorsing this line of interpretation also helps us make sense of the way Wippel, who carefully tracks the relevant texts from Aquinas, treats together such analogous cases of potency-act participation as matter-form, subject-accident, and *ens-esse* participation, all without any mention of effect-cause participation.

It is revealing to consider a section of Wippel's authoritative exegesis on these very issues, offered apart from his treatment of the three modes of participation. In his treatment of Aquinas's metaphysical approach to the distinction and composition of matter and form, Wippel draws upon his earlier account of participation of *ens* in *esse* and potency-act participation to illuminate Aquinas's views on matter-form participation.[38] In this context Wippel freely draws upon the very examples Aquinas attributes to the second mode, examples Wippel runs together with *ens-esse* participation. Significantly, not once in the main text within these pages does his exegesis mention causality and its relevance to these doctrines.[39] In other words, Wippel himself provides us with a clear and self-contained exegesis of a wide sweep of texts, chronologically organized in the perspicuous style so many of us admire and attempt to

[38] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 303-12

[39] In a footnote Wippel tangentially mentions God as first cause and creatures as caused; see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 305 n. 36. Of course, the introduction of causality would not be a problem because the interpretation I am defending contends that while potency-act and effect-cause participation are distinct, they are deeply interdependent.

emulate, that demonstrates the way potency-act participation illuminates and unifies a range of texts in Aquinas concerning *ens-esse* participation, matter-form participation, and subject-accident participation, without requiring the introduction of effect-cause participation to make these doctrines intelligible.[40] To put it another way: There are of course any number of names or labels that we can give to this doctrine. Given the arguments of this article, I think it is safe to christen it "the second mode of participation."

The argument I have made here is abductive in nature and only goes so far as to satisfy the aforementioned weaker ambition of showing that the potency-act participation criterion of the second mode identifies and unifies Aquinas's many treatments of analogous cases of potency-act participation. This abductive argument does not settle the demarcation test. A more systematic version of this argument would chronologically present a hermeneutically sensitive chart that analyzed every instance of participation used by Aquinas, and coordinated its use with the diverse orders of participation mentioned here, in order to see if there is a correlation between potency-act participation and *ens-esse*, matter-form, and subject-accident participation, in contrast to effect-cause participation. Clearly, such an ambitious project is beyond the aims of this study. Based on the thoroughness of Wippel's own scholarly treatment of these topics, my hypothesis is that the conclusions of my abductive argument will be correct.

C) Can the Potency-Act Participation Criterion Meet the Demarcation Test?

What about the demarcation test and the more ambitious project? There are a few obvious objections to my contention that the potency-act participation criterion demarcates the second mode from the effect-cause participation criterion of the third mode, and vice-versa. One might object that these criteria fail to meet the demarcation test in much the same way that I argued that Wippel's specification

[40] For texts in Aquinas, see n. 32. W. Norris Clarke, "The Meaning of Participation in St. Thomas," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 26 (1952): 147-57.

criterion fails to do. It seems that these criteria do not take account of the fact that effect-cause participation applies no less to the second mode insofar as matter-form participation pertains to both potency and act as well as material causality and formal causality. Hence, my account of the criteria for the second and third modes fails to pass the demarcation test.

Given the limitations of space, my response to this objection will be brief and far from decisive. First, the objection confounds the important contrast Aristotelians like Aquinas make between form and matter as act and potency with respect to each other, from the way form and matter function as confluent principles or intrinsic causes whose conjoint effect is a composite hylomorphic substance.[41] It is in virtue of the unified potency-act composition of the former that form and matter can be construed causally with respect to the composite whole. Strictly speaking, a substantial form is not the formal cause of matter, but the actuality of matter; it is the formal cause of the composite substance. Likewise, matter is not the material cause of the substantial form, but the potentiality for form; it is the material cause of the composite substance.[42]

[41] Aquinas sometimes distinguishes principles from causes in such a way that intrinsic causes, like formal and material causes, are called principles, but extrinsic causes, like efficient and final causes, are not principles. See *De principiis naturae*, c. 3 (Leon. ed., 43:42, ll. 42-66).

[42] There are exceptional cases where one finds Aquinas speaking loosely in terms of the form being the formal cause of matter, but I take this to be a shorthand for the more perspicuous distinctions I just mentioned (see VII *Metaphys*., lect. 17). In most cases where Aquinas speaks in this loose way he is in fact discussing the way the essence, nature, or quiddity that is composed of substantial form and common matter functions as a formal cause. "The nature of the species, therefore, which is constituted of form and common matter, is related as a formal cause to the individual which participates in such a nature, and to this extent it is said that the parts which are placed in the definition pertain to the formal cause" ("Natura igitur speciei constituta ex forma et materia communi, se habet ut formalis respectu individui quod participat talem naturam; et pro tanto hic dicitur quod partes quae ponuntur in definitione, pertinent ad causam formalem" [II *Phys*., lect. 5]) (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlkel [Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1999], 95; *In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis exposition*, ed. P. M. Maggiolo [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1954], no. 179; see also no. 184). This construal of form as *forma totius* as a formal cause is perfectly

Second, my interpretation of the second mode's potency-act participation criterion and the third mode's effect-cause participation criterion does not entail that causal participation is irrelevant to potency-act participation or vice-versa. On the contrary, a complete investigation of the various orders of potency-act participation ultimately leads to an investigation concerning the kinds of causes upon which the former modes of participation ultimately depend.

Third, it is important to recognize that the potency-act participation criterion for the second mode and the effect-cause participation criterion for the third mode depend upon Aquinas's own distinction between potency-act and effect-cause. I am presuming that the latter distinction is a matter of some consequence for Aquinas and that the demarcation of these two doctrines is sufficient to justify the distinction between these two orders of participation and so also the demarcation between the second and third modes. Aquinas's doctrine of act and potency obviously crisscrosses and intersects with cause and effect in sundry ways. But the doctrines are distinct; they are not identical, equivalent, convertible, or synonymous with each other.

There is evidence in favor of this presumption. The two doctrines are not extensionally equivalent. The distinction of act and potency divides the whole of being; it is Aquinas's fundamental metaphysical disjunctive. Indeed, act and potency are ubiquitous and more fundamental within the metaphysics of Aquinas than is his relatively less pervasive but still centrally important doctrine of causality. For Aquinas, God is both pure act of subsistent existence and uncaused first cause of all created being, but God need not be first cause or creator to be God. Additionally, Aquinas applies the doctrine of act and potency in his division of the

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consistent with my claim that substantial form as *forma partis* is not *stricto sensu* the formal cause of matter, but the actuality of matter. See Armand Maurer, "Form and Essence in the Philosophy of St. Thomas," *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951): 165-76; repr. in Armand Maurer, *Being and Knowing: Studies in Thomas Aquinas and Later Medieval Philosophers* (Toronto: PIMS, 1990), 3-18. I thank Brian Carl for his comments and textual references to passages where Aquinas suggests, contrary to my contention, that form is a formal cause of matter.

twelve modes of causality; there are potential and actual causes as well as potential and actual effects.[43]

Additional support for this presumptive distinction comes from considering an objection from the other angle, namely, that potency-act participation in fact bleeds over into effect-cause participation. In the *Summa contra gentiles*, book II, chapter 53, Aquinas unequivocally states, "Everything that participates in something is related to that which is participated as potency to act."[44] He concludes this same chapter by drawing a connection between efficient causality and actuality. This occurs in the context of treating the composition of *substantia* and *esse* in all creatures. The next chapter proceeds to address the way act and potency apply to both form and matter as well as *esse* and *substantia* or essence. In short, according to this objection, it seems that potency-act participation applies as much to efficient causality as it does to *ens* and *esse*, matter and form, and so my proposed criteria for the second and third modes fail to pass the demarcation test.

But Aquinas's universal claim is not an objection to the proposed criteria. In Aquinas's metaphysics it is knowledge of potency-act composition that leads us to causality. For example, form and matter composition as act and potency in the *Physics* brings us to the four causes; again, act and potency in *esse* and *essentia* composition highlight the reason for distinguishing the efficient causation of existence from that of the agent causation of form. In other words, there is a clear Aristotelian pedagogy concerning the order of knowledge in Aquinas's approach to these metaphysical doctrines. Our knowledge begins with the conceptual distinctions that pertain to the first mode's logical modes of participation. Once we learn to appreciate the difference between conceptual and real distinctions, we can also transition into the ontological modes of participation, beginning with an analysis of the second mode's intrinsic compositional modes of participation that orbit potency-act

[43] See V *Metaphys*., lect. 3 (Marietti ed., 216 [no. 790]; *De principiis naturae*, c. 5 (Leon. ed., 43:46, ll. 56-68).

[44] "Omne participans aliquid comparatur ad ipsum quod participatur ut potentia ad actum" (*ScG* II, c. 53 [Marietti ed., 174 (no. 1285)]).

participation—e.g., subject-accident, matter-form, *ens-esse*—and then to the third mode's extrinsic causal modes of participation that ultimately take us to the ways all creatures participate in the divine first cause.

Clearly, the distinction between potency-act and effect-cause is real for Aquinas, even if they are deeply interdependent doctrines. Both when he is commenting on Aristotle's treatments of these topics and when he is presenting his own views on the matter, we find him more often than not treating matters related to potency and act in different contexts from—even if adjacent to—those pertaining to causality. Of course, there are significant passages where they all come together, which is precisely what we should expect; they are distinct but interdependent doctrines.

Whatever principled criteria can be provided for distinguishing potency and act from causality—and it might well turn out that they are *per se nota*—will provide sufficient grounds to justify the principled criteria that I contend demarcate the second mode of participation from the third. If I am correct on this front, then we get the following schema for identifying and demarcating the three modes of participation:

First mode – logical modes of participation
Second mode – ontological, potency-act modes of participation
Third mode – ontological, effect-cause modes of participation

Perhaps some will be unmoved by my insistence, without a more thorough examination of the evidence, that Aquinas's potency-act doctrine is sufficiently distinct from effect-cause to justify their application as criteria for demarcating the second mode from the third. Indeed, without an extensive exegetical examination that decisively demonstrates my interpretation, my proposal can be no more than tentative.

Before concluding, it is worth noting that a no-less-controversial alternative line of defense is available. One might attempt to argue that Aquinas's references to and examples of causality for the third mode concern the *extrinsic causality* of efficient and final causes, in contrast to the *intrinsic compositional causality* of formal and material causes that are connected to the second mode's example of

matter-form participation.[45] Even if this is correct, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic causality alone provides insufficient criteria; but if we combine them with my initial proposal, we get the following revised schema:

First mode*	– logical modes of participation
Second mode*	– ontological, potency-act [and intrinsic compositional causal] modes of participation
Third mode*	– ontological, effect-cause [and extrinsic] modes of participation

CONCLUSION

The initial question of this article was, Do finite beings participate in their *actus essendi* according to the second mode of participation? Wippel concludes that they do not. In section II, I argued that all of Wippel's arguments in support of this conclusion fail, and that the underlying problem with his arguments is that he does not provide any principled criteria for identifying and demarcating Aquinas's three modes of participation. In section III, I defended my own proposed criteria and argued that the potency-act participation criterion meets the demands of the criterial problem. If my proposal is correct, then the participation of *ens* in *actus essendi*, which is a clear instance of potency-act participation, does belong to the second mode of participation. In short, finite beings do participate in their *actus essendi* according to the second mode of participation.

In conclusion, I wish to note one limitation of and one advantage to my proposed criteria for Aquinas's three modes of participation. The obvious limitation to my proposal is that I have not submitted my interpretation to the same level of rigorous scrutiny that I gave Wippel's interpretation. I have relied on an abductive argument and Aquinas's more basic distinction between potency and act and causality to justify the distinction between the potency-act participation criterion of the second mode of participation and the effect-cause participation criterion of the third mode of participation. Settling such issues decisively

[45] See *De principiis naturae*, c. 3 (Leon. ed., 43:42, ll. 42-51).

will require a more extended investigation. The advantage of my proposal is that it allows other interpreters of Aquinas to look beyond his examples from the commentary on *De hebdomadibus* to the principled criteria that unite them. Accordingly, these criteria for the three modes of participation enable exegetes to read other texts of Aquinas and identify and demarcate which mode (or modes, for they often intersect) of participation is being deployed in a given passage. Taken together, we can therefore test the truth of my principled criteria by applying them to Aquinas's many remarks on participation to see whether they stand up to systematic exegetical scrutiny.[46]

[46] I would like to thank Jason Mitchell and Gregory Doolan for inviting me to join them in this three-part study on Aquinas's metaphysics of participation and for their detailed feedback on my numerous drafts of this article. I must also thank Richard Taylor for organizing a satellite session for us at the 2014 ACPA on this topic, and for the helpful comments and feedback I received then or since from Brian Carl, John Wippel, Marilyn McCord Adams, Turner Nevitt, Brandon Dahm, Andrew Davison, and an anonymous reviewer.

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AQUINAS ON *ESSE SUBSISTENS* AND THE THIRD MODE OF PARTICIPATION

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ACCORDING TO Thomas Aquinas, God alone is, by his very essence, *esse*—the act of existing. All other beings merely *have,* or participate, *esse*.[1] Since Thomas speaks of *esse* in different respects, a question arises regarding what, precisely, participation in *esse* entails.[2] Considering this question, John F. Wippel has observed that sometimes the *esse* that Thomas presents as participated in is *esse commune*, indicating that finite beings have merely a share in—and are not identical

[1] On both points, see, e.g., *ScG* II, c. 52 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 13 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1918], 388); *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 5 (*Quaestiones disputatae,* vol. 2, 8th rev. ed., ed. M. Pession [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1949], 49); *STh* I, q. 3, a. 4 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 4 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1888], 42); *De spir. creat.*, a. 1 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 24/2 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 2000], 13-14, ll. 376-400).

[2] See John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), chap. 4. An earlier version of this chapter originally appeared as "Thomas Aquinas and Participation," in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy,* ed. John F. Wippel, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 17 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 109, 117-58.

In this article I will follow the customary English use of the verb "to participate" as an intransitive verb together with the preposition "in" and an indirect object ("*x* participates in *y*"). It should be noted, however, that Thomas customarily employs the Latin *"participare"* as a transitive verb with a direct object. See, e.g. *De spir. creat.*, a. 1: "[I]n quolibet creato aliud est natura rei quae participat esse" (Leon. ed., 24/2:13-14, ll. 376-400).

with—the full perfection signified by the term *esse*.[3] At other times, he presents a created being's own particular, intrinsic act of existing (*actus essendi*) as participated.[4] And, at still other times, the *esse* Thomas seems to present as participated is *esse subsistens:* the self-subsisting *esse* that he identifies as God.[5] I say "seems to present" because of Thomas's own reluctance to speak of *esse subsistens* as participated. For a complete understanding of his metaphysics of participation, one must address not only the role of *esse* considered in each of these three respects but also the reason for Thomas's aforementioned reluctance.

To begin, we should note that although Thomas avoids speaking directly of a "participation *in*" *esse subsistens*,[6] he does at times speak of things as participating either *in* or *of* the First Being (*primum ens*) and the First Act (*actus primus*).[7] And since Thomas identifies this First—namely, God—with *esse subsis-*

[3] To be precise, the full perfection of *finite*, or created, *esse*. Thus, *esse commune* is the common notion of the *actus essendi* principle found in individual created beings. On a created being's participation in *esse commune*, see Jason Mitchell, "Aquinas on *esse commune* and the First Mode of Participation," *The Thomist* 82 (2018): 543-72; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 109-24. Wippel draws our attention in particular to *STh* I, q. 45, a. 5, ad 1 (Leon. ed., 4:469-70), where Thomas talks about the *natura essendi* in which created beings participate and with which he contrasts God as *suum esse*. Wippel concludes regarding the *natura essendi* mentioned in this text that "It must, therefore, refer to *esse commune*" (*Metaphysical Thought,* 110). As I will indicate below (n. 45), I have a somewhat different reading of *natura essendi*.

[4] On a created being's participation in its own *actus essendi*, see Daniel D. De Haan, "Aquinas on *actus essendi* and the Second Mode of Participation," *The Thomist* 82 (2018): 573-609; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 118-21; *De substantiis*, c. 8 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 40D [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1968], 55, ll. 225-28).

[5] Regarding a created being's participation in *esse subsistens*, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 109, 116-24.

[6] As evidenced by the following sort of search string on the *Index Thomisticus*: *(esse *3 subsistens) *20 =participare* (http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/it/index.age). The closest I have found Thomas come to speaking of created beings participating (in) *esse subsistens* occurs in the context of an *objectio*: *De Malo,* q. 16, a. 3, obj. 6 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 23 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1982], 292, ll. 40-48).

[7] See, e.g., *ScG* I, c. 22 (Leon. ed., 13:68-69); *STh* I, q. 75, a. 5, ad 1 (Leon. ed., 5:202); *De substantiis*, c. 8 (Leon. ed., 40D:55, ll. 219-25).

tens, we could thus read him as indirectly acknowledging a participation in such *esse*.[8] With that said, more commonly Thomas indicates that beings do *not* participate in the being who is *esse subsistens*. He tells us, for example, that God's essence remains *un*participated (*imparticipata*) and *un*participable (*imparticipabilis*).[9] Why, then, is Thomas willing on occasion to speak of created beings as participating in the First Being? The answer rests in his view that even though such beings do not and cannot share in God's essence, they can and do share in a *likeness* (*similitudo*) of that essence. Hence, when Thomas speaks in terms of participation in regard to God, he more commonly does so by adding the important qualification that it is a participation in the *likeness* of God—in the likeness of the divine essence that is *esse subsistens*.

As I will show in this article, if we wish to understand how *esse subsistens* or its likeness could be participated, we need to consider this question in light of a distinction Thomas draws in his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus* between three modes of participation. The third of these modes is that of an effect participating in its cause; it is according to this mode, I will argue, that Thomas sees God as in some sense participated. As an entry point to considering this mode of participation, I will start with a simple question: what is the "likeness" to which Thomas refers when he speaks of a participation in God's likeness? Answering this question will not only clarify how finite beings can be said in a sense to participate in God (even though his nature is unparticipated), but it will also shed further light on participation in *esse* considered according to those other two respects noted above: *esse* taken as the intrinsic *actus*

[8] At other times, Thomas will speak of all things as participating in God's goodness. Since he identifies God's goodness with his essence, which in turn he identifies with God's *esse,* such statements could also be read as acknowledgments of a participation of beings in *esse subsistens*. See, e.g., *ScG* II, c. 32 (Leon. ed., 13:345).

[9] See, e.g., *In De div. nom.*, c. 2, lect. 3 (*In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus exposition*, ed. C. Pera, P. Caramello, C. Mazzantini [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1950], 51-52 [nos. 158-59]); *In De div. nom.*, c. 11, lect. 4 (Pera et al., eds., 347 [no. 934]).

essendi of an individual created being and *esse* taken as *esse commune,* the common notion of created *actus essendi*.

To this end, this article will consist of four parts. The first part will examine why Thomas at times presents *esse subsistens* as unparticipated and unparticipable, as well as why he concludes that created beings nevertheless do participate in a likeness of that *esse*. The second part will begin to address both what this likeness is and what it means for created beings to participate in it. The third part will then consider how Thomas's account of such participation fits into the structure of participation that he presents in his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus,* with a focus on the third mode of participation identified there—that of an effect in its cause.[10] Finally, in the fourth part I will offer some concluding thoughts.

I. THE UNPARTICIPABILITY OF *ESSE SUBSISTENS*

With but one exception, the terms *imparticipatus, imparticipabilis,* and their variants occur in Thomas's commentary on *De divinis nominibus* (~1266) of Pseudo-Dionysius (hereafter Dionysius).[11] Thomas's use of this terminology in this work can be explained by a couple of

[10] For Thomas's presentation of the three modes of participation identified in that work, see *In De hebdo*., c. 2 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 50 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1992], 271, ll. 74-85). For an overview and analysis of these three modes, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 96-110; Stephen L. Brock, "Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on *esse:* Thomas Aquinas and the *De hebdomadibus,*" *Nova et Vetera*, Eng. ed., 5 (2007): 465-93. For a detailed consideration of the first mode, see Mitchell, "Aquinas on *esse commune*"; for a detailed consideration of the second mode, see DeHaan, "Aquinas on *actus essendi*."

[11] Index Thomisticus search string: *impartic**. The exception is in *De substantiis,* c. 1 when discussing Plato's account of the One (Leon. ed., 40D:42-43, ll. 124-33).

My dating of Thomas's works follows Jean-Pierre Torrell's *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin,* vol. 1, *Sa personne et son œuvre*, nouvelle édition profondément remaniée (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2015). Torrell notes in this updated edition of his own work that the dating of the commentary on *De divinis nominibus* remained uncertain for a long time, but he confidently states that "The final work of R.-A. Gauthier helps dispense with the doubts and situate it during the stay in Rome after March 1266" (Torrell, *Initiation*, 460; all translations of Torrell are mine). See ibid., 216 n. 13 for more details.

reasons. Dionysius himself makes use of it in order to express God's transcendent nature.[12] At other times, however, Dionysius does not make use of it, and Thomas independently employs these terms in his commentary for clarification, lest the reader be led to an erroneous interpretation.[13]

The fact that the precise terminology of "unparticipated" and "unparticipable" is limited almost entirely to this work should not lead us to conclude that Thomas employs it here merely in his role as commentator. He employs the notion of imparticipability (if not the word) in other works, where he makes it clear that created beings do not participate in God. Thus in the *Summa contra gentiles*, when considering Dionysius's statement that "the *esse* of all things is the super-essential divinity," Thomas cautions against what he describes as the "distorted understanding" (*intellectus perversus*) that some have offered of such authoritative texts.[14] We are told that some authors have taken this saying of Dionysius to mean that God is the formal *esse* of all things. As Thomas explains, this reading is not consonant with the very words of Dionysius's statement.[15] Yet he offers more than mere interpretation of authority to conclude that God is not the formal *esse* of all things. He also provides a number of arguments along the lines of *reductiones ad absurda*. Two of these are worthy of noting here in brief. In one argument he shows that if God were the formal *esse* of all

[12] See, e.g., *In De div. nom.*, c. 2, lect. 5 (Pera et al., eds., 50 [no. 51]). In his commentary, Thomas relied upon John the Saracen's translation of *De divinis nominibus*. For the Latin editions employed in the Marietti edition, see Pera et al., eds., ix.

[13] See, e.g., *In De div. nom.*, c. 2, lect. 1 (Pera et al., eds., 39 [no. 117]); c. 2, lect. 4 (Pera et al., eds., 56-57 [no. 178]).

[14] *ScG* I, c. 26 (Leon. ed., 13:82). All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[15] Thomas points out, moreover, that the distorted reading of this statement is excluded elsewhere by Dionysius, for example in *De divinis nominibus*, c. 2 when it is noted that "In God himself 'there is neither contact [*tactus*] nor any commingling [*commixtio*] with other things, in the manner of a point with a line or the shape of a seal with wax" (*ScG* I, c. 26 [Leon. ed., 13:82]). For Thomas's consideration of these lines in his commentary on the *Divine Names*, see *In De div. nom.*, c. 2, lect. 3 (Pera et al., eds., 52 [no. 165]).

beings, everything would be absolutely one (*simpliciter esse unum*), having the one *esse* of God. Hence, there would be no distinction among them—a distinction Thomas takes as evident.[16]

In another argument, Thomas identifies four factors that had led some thinkers to the erroneous conclusion that God is the formal *esse* of all things. The third of these factors, we are told, entails a confusion regarding the divine simplicity. As he explains, some thinkers noted the simplicity of *esse* in created beings and followed a mistaken resolutive process of reasoning, leading them to conclude that because God is simple, his *esse* must be that of creatures. But creaturely *esse,* Thomas responds, is simple only as that which is most formal *within* a being; yet, insofar as it *is* within a being, it enters into composition. Hence, such *esse* is simple only in a qualified sense. The mistake such thinkers made, then, is that they confused this qualified simplicity of creaturely *esse* with God's absolute simplicity, and hence they erroneously concluded that God's *esse* is the formal *esse* of all things. Thomas's implication is that from their view follows the absurdity that God himself is not absolutely simple, but instead enters into composition with his created effects.[17]

If we consider this chapter from the *Summa contra gentiles* as a whole, we find that even though Thomas does not explicitly present his considerations in terms of God's imparticipability, the conclusion is the same: God is not the formal *esse* of all things because his nature is unparticipated. The phrasing of the question in terms of God as formal *esse* presents the same issue as does the phrasing in terms of the imparticipability of his *esse;* the former does so from the perspective of cause in relation to effect, whereas the latter does so from that of effect in relation to cause. Either way, the implication is the same: God is not the formal *esse* of all things because those things do not, and cannot, participate directly and immediately in God's *esse*. If they did so, either there would be

[16] *ScG* I, c. 26 (Leon. ed., 13:81). This argument is the second offered in this chapter.

[17] *ScG* I, c. 26 (Leon. ed., 13:82).

no diversity of beings (a conclusion that is contrary to experience) or God would not be simple (a conclusion that is contrary to reason).

It is for these reasons that we find Thomas carefully noting in the *Summa theologiae* (again referencing Dionysius) that the First Act "is participated by things, not as a part, but according to the diffusion of the procession of it."[18] Earlier in the *Prima pars,* when he considers whether God is present in all things, Thomas tells us that God is indeed in all things—but not as part of their essence, nor as an accident; instead he is present in them as an agent is present in its effect.[19] This observation regarding God's presence provides us with an important frame of reference for considering not only Thomas's general account of how created beings participate in *esse,* but also his particular account of how they are related to *esse subsistens*. In his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus,* Thomas provides an etymology of the verb *participare,* noting that "to participate is, as it were, to take a part [*partem capere*]."[20] From what we have seen, however, Thomas also holds that no "part" of God's nature, as such, can be taken: his *esse* is not the *esse* of creatures. Hence, *esse subsistens* remains, in that sense, unparticipated.

Why, then, does Thomas on occasion speak of beings as participating of the First Being, or of the First Act, if the divine nature as such is in itself incommunicable? The answer is that he considers God's nature to be participated in another way, namely, "according to a participation of a likeness [*similitudinis*]."[21] Elsewhere, he accounts for such participation in the following way: "Since God is *Ipsum Esse,* to the degree that any given thing *is,* to that degree does it participate in a likeness of

[18] *STh* I, q. 75, a. 5, ad 1 (Leon. ed., 5:202): "Unde participatur a rebus, non sicut pars, sed secundum diffusionem processionis ipsius."

[19] *STh* I, q. 8, a. 1 (Leon. ed., 4:82).

[20] *In De hebdo.*, c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 68-71): "Est autem participare quasi partem capere."

[21] *STh* I, c. 13, a. 9, ad 1 (Leon. ed., 4:159): "Natura divina non est communicabilis, nisi secundum similitudinis participationem."

God."[22] With this clarification, Thomas offers a twofold solution to the problems posed by the language of participation with respect to the divine. On the one hand, he affirms the causal connection between God and creatures in the line of formal causality; on the other, he avoids the pitfall of pantheism. It is a solution he finds in the writings of Dionysius, and it is one that he makes his own: presenting a divine likeness "mediating," as it were, between creature and God, thereby preserving the unparticipatedness of the divine essence.[23]

The basis for this Dionysian solution, however, is not original to the Areopagite, but instead has its roots in the thought of prior Neoplatonists. Beginning with Iamblichus, the Platonic two-term structure of participant (μετέχον) and participated (μετεχόμενον) is developed into a three-term structure to include the unparticipated (ἀμέθεκτον).[24] The participated is now treated as a perfection that is immanent to, or present in, the participant; the source of that perfection is treated as unparticipated because of its transcendence. This new, threefold structure is developed in greater detail by Proclus, who presents a number of participatory schemas in which the participated are identified as hypostases, or subsistent entities, mediating between participants and the unpartici-

[22] *STh* I, c. 14, a. 9, ad 2 (Leon. ed., 4:181): "Cum Deus sit ipsum esse, intantum unumquodque est, inquantum participat de Dei similitudine.

[23] See, e.g., *In De div. nom.*, c. 2, lect. 3 (Pera et al., eds., 51-52 [nos. 158-59]). On the role of similitude in participation for both Dionysius and Aquinas, see Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), 41-48.

[24] Regarding Iamblichus's contribution to later Neoplatonism, see John Dillon, "Iamblichus of Chalcis and His School," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 358-74; *Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition: Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism,* ed. Eugene Afonasin, John M. Dillon, and John Finamore, vol. 13 in *Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Texts and Contexts,* ed. Robert M. Berchman and John F. Finamore (Boston: Brill, 2012).

Regarding Iamblichus's introduction of the notion of the ἀμέθεκτον, see Carlos Steel, "Proclus," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson, vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 645.

pated.[25] Thus, Thomas inherits the basic outlines of this three-term Procline structure through the thought of Dionysius.

This double influence of Proclus and Dionysius on Thomas is perhaps most apparent in his commentary on the *Liber de causis,* in which he makes use of both of them to interpret and correct the positions of the unknown Arabic author of that work.[26] Moreover, Thomas further employs the teachings of Dionysius there as a corrective of Proclus—notably, to show that the Procline hierarchy of perfections cannot, in fact, be a hierarchy of subsistent entities distinct from the First Cause. Since God is *esse* itself, God himself is the very essence of goodness, life, wisdom, power, and so forth.[27] With the foregoing in mind, it is clear that the participated likeness of the divine essence is not some subsistent intermediary between God and creature. To discern precisely what this likeness is, we need to consider more closely Thomas's adoption of the Dionysian threefold distinction between participant (*participans*), participation (*participatio*), and principle of participation (*principium participationis*).[28]

[25] For Proclus on participant, participated, and unparticipated, see E. R. Dodds, trans., *Proclus, The Elements of Theology*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), esp. props. 23-24 (26-29); 63 (60-61); 81 (76-77); 99 (88-89); 140 (124-25). Proclus presents this tripartite structure as having to do with participation not only as it concerns forms, but as it concerns souls and henads as well. For an overview of this structure, see Leo Sweeney, S.J., "The Origin of Participant and Participated Perfections in Proclus's *Elements of Theology,*" in *Wisdom in Depth: Essays in Honor of Henri Renard, S.J.,* ed. Vincent F. Daves, S.J. et al. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966), 235-55.

[26] On Thomas's use of both Proclus and Dionysius to interpret the *Liber de causis,* see Vincent A. Guagliardo, Charles R. Hess, and Richard C. Taylor, trans. and eds., *Commentary on the Book of Causes* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), xii-xiii.

[27] *Super De causis*, prop. 3 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino super librum de causis expositio* ed. H. D. Saffrey [Fribourg and Louvain: Société Philosophique, 1954], 20:5-21). For further examples of such correctives, see O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 119-25.

[28] I *Sent.*, d. 34, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4 (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis,* vol. 1, ed. P. Mandonnet [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929], 801).

II. The Likeness of the Divine Essence

Thomas presents the interrelationship of the three aforementioned notions in a revealing statement from his work *De substantiis separatis:* "Everything that participates something," he explains, "receives *that which* it participates from that *from which* it participates, and in this respect that *from which* it participates is its cause: as air has participated light from the sun, which is the cause of its illumination."[29] Wippel has observed that "This text is interesting because it makes three points: (1) something may participate (in) something (accusative case); (2) it then participates in that *from* something (ablative case); (3) the source is identified as the cause which accounts for the presence of the participated perfection in the participant."[30]

If we keep these distinctions in mind and examine Thomas's use of the word "participation" (*participatio*) throughout his writings, what we discover is that he commonly employs it in a manner that the term is not employed in English. As with English nouns ending with the suffix *-tion*, Latin nouns with the suffix *-tio* can have either an active or a passive sense. [31] For example, the term "collection" (*collatio*) can refer to either the *act* of collecting (the gathering together of like items, such as coins or stamps), or the *result* of that act (such as the group of coins or stamps possessed by the collector). Thomas himself draws such a distinction when considering the term *creatio,* observing that the active sense of the term refers to God's productive act whereas the passive sense refers to the relation that creatures have to their creator—a relation that is *in* the creature.[32]

[29] *De substantiis,* c. 3 (Leon. ed., 40:46, ll. 11-15): "Omne autem participans aliquid accipit id quod participat ab eo a quo participat, et quantum ad hoc id a quo participat est causa ipsius: sicut aer habet lumen participatum a sole, quae est causa illuminationis ipsius" (emphasis in translation added).

[30] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 120-21.

[31] On the use of this suffix in English, see the Oxford English Dictionary: "-tion, suffix". OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxycu.wrlc.org/view/Entry/202348?redirectedFrom=-tion (accessed June 09, 2017).

[32] See, e.g., *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 3 (Pession, ed., 43).

The term "participation" in English is commonly employed in an active sense to refer to the structure whereby a participant is actively related to and dependent upon some higher causal source.[33] By contrast, Thomas's frequent (but not exclusive) usage of the Latin term *participatio* is according to a passive sense, referring not to the activity of participating but rather to the *effect* of that activity: the participated perfection. For example, referencing Dionysius, Thomas explains that "among participants, the more something is composed (I do not mean by a material composition but rather by the reception of more participations [*plurium participationum*]) the nobler it is since it is made like God in so many more ways."[34]

Taken in this passive sense, the term *participatio* functions for Thomas as something of a synonym for *participatum*—that which is participated.[35] We thus find, for example, Thomas noting of accidents in general that "although an accident is not a participant [*participans*], it is nevertheless a participation

[33] See, e.g., W. Norris Clarke, "The Meaning of Participation in St. Thomas," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 26 (1952): 147-57, esp. 152: "The term, participation, therefore, is a condensed technical way of expressing the complexus of relations involved in any structure of dependence [*i.e.*, the active depend*ing*] of a lower multiplicity on a higher source for similarity of nature." Cornelio Fabro expresses a similar view ("The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation," trans. B. M. Bonansea, *Review of Metaphysics* 27, Commemorative Issue Thomas Aquinas 1224-1274 [1974]: 453-54). Sweeney refers to this active sense of participation as the "process of participation" ("Participant and Participated Perfections," 237-40). For other examples of scholarly use of this active sense of "participation" in English, see Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), esp. ix-xiv; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* esp. 96-110.

[34] *De Verit.*, q. 20, a. 2, ad 3 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 22/2 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1972], 576, ll. 183-97): "[I]n participantibus autem quanto aliquid est magis compositum, non dico compositione materiali sed per receptionem plurium participationum, tanto est nobilius, quia tanto in pluribus Deo similatur."

[35] We find a similar identification between *participatio* and *participatum* in Albert the Great, for example in his own commentary on *De divinis nominibus* (*Super Dionysium De divinis nominibus* c. 4, § 73 [*Alberti Magni opera omnia. Editio digitalis,* vol. 37/1 [1972], 183:45-49]). Thomas would have been very familiar with Albert's commentary, having copied out by hand Albert's course on this text by Dionysius. See Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas,* 216.

[*participatio*]."[36] As regards created *esse,* Thomas tells us "the *esse* of each thing is a certain participation [*quaedam participatio*] of the divine *esse*," noting elsewhere that "among all other participations, *esse* is prior."[37] In considering Thomas's use of the term *participatio* in a given text, then, we need to be careful to acknowledge this passive sense when it occurs; if we fail to acknowledge it, then we might well lose sight of the intrinsic perfecting principle to which Thomas is drawing our attention. With that said, in English the passive sense of "participation" is uncommon and even awkward to the ear. For this reason, in what follows I will continue to employ the term according to the familiar active sense and will highlight Thomas's passive sense by leaving the Latin *participatio* untranslated.

With the foregoing in mind, let us return to the question asked at the outset of this article: When Thomas speaks of created beings as participating in the likeness (*similitudo*) of God, what exactly is this "likeness"? We have already seen that he rejects the Procline doctrine of subsistent intermediaries between the participant and its principle. We might wonder, then, whether his reference to the divine likeness is a reference, in some respect, to the *principium participationis*, that is, to God. In fact, in certain contexts Thomas does speak of the divine essence as itself being the likeness of all things;[38] he also speaks of the divine ideas in the mind of God as the likenesses of things.[39] Still, such likeness (or likenesses) cannot be the sort to which Thomas is referring when he speaks of a participation in the "likeness" of the divine essence, for, as we have already

[36] *De Verit.*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 3 (Leon. ed., 22/1:115, ll. 118-21): "Quamvis accidens non sit participans, est tamen ipsa participatio.

[37] *Comp. theol.* I, c. 135 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 42 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1979], 133, ll. 14-18); I *Sent.*, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3, s.c. 1 (Mandonnet, ed., 1:199). Cf. *De Verit.*, q. 21, a. 5 (Leon. ed., 22/3:606, ll. 141-48).

[38] Notably, in his considerations of God's knowledge. See, e.g., *De Verit.*, q. 2, a. 9, ad 4 (Leon. ed., 22/1:74, ll. 248-57).

[39] See, e.g., *De Verit.*, q. 3, a. 1 (Leon. ed., 22/1:97-102). Regarding the position that the divine ideas for Thomas are unparticipated, see my *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 228-33.

seen, Thomas considers that essence as such to be unparticipated. Thus, it seems that as regards *esse* the likeness of God to which he is referring in these contexts is in some respect the *esse* of created beings. And, in fact, Thomas at times tells us as much, explaining that "created *esse* is a certain *participatio* of God and a likeness of him."[40]

Still, this answer does not fully resolve our question, because Thomas presents both *actus essendi*, an intrinsic principle within any finite being, and *esse commune*, the common notion of created *actus essendi*, as created. Which does he consider to be the likeness of God in which creatures participate—the former, the latter, or perhaps both?

To answer these questions, it is helpful to turn again to Thomas's commentary on the *Divine Names*. Thomas explains that the Unparticipated Principle referred to in chapter 11 is the cause of *participationes* and participants, and for that reason Dionysius calls it the "Substantifier" (*substantificator*) of both.[41] Going beyond the text at hand, Thomas next identifies the different ways that *participationes* can be considered:

> *Participationes* themselves can be considered in three ways. (1) In one way, they can be considered according to themselves (*secundum se*) insofar as they abstract from both universality and particularity, as is indicated when we speak of "Per Se Life." (2) In another way, they can be considered in a universal, as when we speak of "Life as a Whole," or "Universal Life." (3) In a third way, they can be considered in a particular, inasmuch as "life" is said of this or that [living] thing.
>
> Similarly, participants can be considered in two ways: (a) In one way in a universal, as when "Living Thing" (*vivens*) is said universally, or totally; and (b) in another way in a particular, as when *this* or *that* is called "a living thing."[42]

[40] *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 2 (Pera et al., eds., 245 [no. 660]): "[I]psum esse creatum est quaedam participatio Dei et similitudo Ipsius." See also *ScG* I, c. 75 (Leon. ed., 13:215).

[41] *In De div. nom.*, c. 11, lect. 4 (Pera et al., eds., 347 [no. 934]).

[42] Ibid. (Pera et al., eds., 347 [nos. 935-36]): "Participationes autem ipsae tripliciter considerari possunt: uno modo secundum se, prout abstrahunt et ab universalitate et a particularitate, sicut signatur cum dicitur: per se vita; alio modo considerantur in universali, sicut dicitur vita totalis vel universalis; tertio modo in particulari, secundum quod vita dicitur huius vel illius rei. Similiter et participantia dupliciter considerari

As Thomas explains, God is the cause of both *participationes* and participants in all of the above noted respects. Having drawn these two sets of distinctions, he then applies the foregoing threefold distinction regarding *participationes* to a consideration of *esse*, explaining that God is the cause (1) of *esse* considered per se and absolutely, (2) of universal *esse*, and (3) of particular *esse*.[43]

What is striking about this text is that Thomas is here implicitly applying to created *esse* an Avicennian distinction he adopts elsewhere regarding created essence—namely, as considered in the individual, the mind, or taken absolutely.[44] Viewed from this perspective, the particular *esse* to which Thomas refers here is the intrinsic *actus essendi* principle of an individual; universal *esse* is *esse commune,* the common notion of created *actus essendi*; and Per Se *Esse* refers to created *esse* taken absolutely, abstracting (as it were) from the prior two.[45] And Thomas presents *esse* considered in each of these three respects as a *participatio*, precisely because each entails a consideration of created *esse* rather than of *esse subsistens.*

possunt: uno modo in universali, ut si dicatur vivens universale vel totale; alio modo, in particulari, ut si dicatur hoc vel illud vivens."

[43] Ibid. (Pera et al., eds., 347 [no. 937]).

[44] See, e.g., *Quodl.* VIII, q. 1, a. 1 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 25/1 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1996], 51-53). This text will be considered in more detail below. See also *De Ente et essentia,* c. 3 in *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 43 (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1976; 374:26-72).

For the original distinction in Avicenna, see *Metaphysics* V, chs. 1-2 in *Avicenna Latinus: Liber de Philosophia Prima sive Scientia Divina I-IV,* ed. S. Van Riet (Louvain/Leiden: Peeters/Brill, 1980; 228-245).

[45] Thus, at least in this text, we find Thomas identifying Per Se *Esse* as a fourth respect in which *esse* can be considered—namely in addition to the three respects brought out by Wippel: *esse commune, actus essendi,* and *esse subsistens.* From my research, in no work other than his Commentary on the *De divinis nominibus* does he use the expression "Per Se *Esse*" to express this notion of *esse* taken absolutely (his most common uses of this phrasing are to refer either to God as subsisting *esse* or to the *ratio* of substance). With that said, I see the notion of Per Se *Esse* as present in his language of *natura essendi* noted above (see n. 3); the choice of the modifier *natura* there seems to indicate that Thomas is not talking in that text about *esse* as a one-in-many universal (*esse commune*) but about the "common nature" of *esse*, abstracting from both its universal and particular conditions.

Moreover, created *esse* taken in each of these respects is a *likeness* of *esse subsistens*.

In addition to identifying these three considerations of created *esse*, Thomas presents an order among them. Continuing on with his commentary on this passage, he addresses Dionysius's account of the order of processions from God. Thomas explains the following:

> And God is the cause of all of these. And this is what [Dionysius] says, that the *Good* (in other words God), (1′) *first is said to be the Substantifier of those things*, namely of Per Se Life, Per Se *Esse* and so forth, insofar as it is considered per se and absolutely; (2′) *next, of the whole of them*, the same of Universal *Esse* [i.e., *esse commune*] and the like; (3′) *next of the particulars themselves*, as of a particular *esse* [i.e., an individual's intrinsic *actus essendi*] or of a particular life; (a′) *next of the totality of the participants themselves*, of the universal Living Thing and the universal Existing Thing (*existentis universalis*) [i.e., *ens commune*]; (b′) *next particularly of the participants themselves,* as of *this* or of *that* being (*ens*) or living thing.[46]

If we follow this presentation and focus on *esse* as a *participatio*, we find no mere random listing. There is an order to the list: *esse commune* is prior to *actus essendi,* and Per Se *Esse* is prior to both. It is important to realize that this ordering is not according to the order of time or even according to the order of reality; rather, it is according to what Thomas presents as the order of "consideration" (*consideratio*).[47] Although he does not

[46] *In De div. nom.*, c. 11, lect. 4 (Pera et al., eds., 347 [no. 937]): "Et horum omnium Deus causa est; et hoc est quod dicit quod *bonus*, idest Deus *primo* quidem *dicitur esse substantificator ipsorum*, scilicet per se vitae et per se esse et huiusmodi, prout per se et absolute consideratur; *postea, totorum ipsorum*, idem universalis esse et similium; *postea particularium ipsorum*, ut particularis esse vel particularis vitae; *postea totaliter participantium ipsis*, viventis universalis et existentis universalis; *postea particulariter ipsis participantium*, ut huius vel illius entis aut viventis." Italics indicate quotations from Dionysius.

[47] To speak of an "order of consideration" can itself be misleading, suggesting temporal moments of considering (first thinking of *this*, then later on of *that*). Granting that such moments do occur in our consideration of things, I believe Thomas is clearly *not* referring to such temporal cognitive steps when he presents a given "order of consideration." Rather, when he presents such an order, he is indicating that the *ratio,* or notion, of the posterior members presupposes the *ratio* of the prior (or, at least, of the first in the order)—and this is the case regardless of whether we reflect successively

say as much in this text, I would argue that for Thomas, according to the order of reality, a being's participation in its own *actus essendi* is first.

This reading is supported by another text in which Thomas presents the foregoing Dionysian ordering of processions from God. In *Quodlibet* VIII, he addresses the Augustinian-inspired question of whether the number six is the Creator.[48] He again draws a connection (this time explicitly) between Avicenna's threefold consideration of a nature and Dionysius's ordering of processions from God. Regarding the latter, he offers an abbreviated presentation of the same list that appears in his commentary on the *Divine Names:*

> Just as the intellect of an artisan is related to works of art, so too the divine intellect is related to all creatures. Hence, (1) the first consideration of every single created nature is inasmuch as it is in the divine intellect; (2) the second consideration is of the nature itself [taken] absolutely; (3) the third, inasmuch as it is in things themselves or in an angelic mind; (4) the fourth, according to the being (*esse*) that it has in the human intellect.
>
> And, thus, Dionysius in *De divininis nominibus* assigns this order: (1′) that "the first over all" is the very "Substantifier" of things, God; (2′) "afterwards" God's gifts themselves, which are bestowed upon creatures, [gifts] considered both universally and particularly—such as "Per Se Beauty," "Per Se Life"—which he says is "a gift from God providing," i.e., the very nature of life. (3′) Next are the participants themselves universally and particularly considered, which are things (*res*) in which the nature has *esse*.[49]

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upon the members in that order, or even whether we explicitly parse out and identify all of the members. It is true, for example, that temporally we first encounter and consider individual humans, such as Socrates, before we reflect on their humanity and then subsequently consider the species *man* or consider human nature taken absolutely. But, as Thomas indicates, a consideration of *man* taken either as the individual Socrates or as a species presupposes the *ratio* of human nature taken absolutely. And this is what Thomas means when he says that a nature taken absolutely is "prior in consideration."

[48] For a helpful commentary on Thomas's treatment of this topic in *Quodlibet* VIII, see Kevin White, "Creation, Numbers, and Natures," in *Medieval Masters: Essays in Memory of Msgr. E. A. Synan*, ed. R. E. Houser (Houston, Tex.: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1999), 179-90.

[49] *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 1, a. 1 (Leon. ed., 25/1:52, ll. 85-101): "Sicut autem se habet intellectus artificis ad artificiata, ita se habet intellectus divinus ad omnes creaturas. Unde uniuscuiusque naturae creatae prima consideratio est secundum quod est in intellectu divino; secunda vero consideratio est ipsius naturae absolutae; tertia secundum quod est in rebus ipsis vel in mente angelica; quarta secundum esse quod

Thomas's presentation of this Dionysian ordering, here in the context entirely of his own thought and not in a commentary, is revealing. As he presents the Dionysian Per Se gifts, Thomas is clear that they are *bestowed* upon creatures—in other words, produced *in* them. Thus, a gift such as Per Se *Esse*, although prior in consideration to the universal and particular, does not exist apart from them. For this reason, it cannot be participated by beings except inasmuch as it is *in* the universal and the particular. I would add to this observation what Thomas notes elsewhere regarding *esse commune*, namely, that since it is a universal, it is apart from existing things only in the intellect.[50] Hence, *esse commune*—the common notion of created *actus essendi*—is participated by an actually existing finite being only inasmuch as that being's own individual *actus essendi* is present in it as an inherent *participatio*.

Thus, according to the order of reality, an individual's participation in its own *actus essendi* is prior to its participation in both Per Se *esse* and *esse commune*. It is true that for each of these three considerations, *esse* is a likeness of God in which a created being participates, but if it were not for the creature's participation in its own inherent *esse*, it could not be like God at all. We find then that Thomas's account of participation in a likeness of God refers us back to the individual's participation in its own intrinsic *actus essendi*.[51] Nevertheless, participation by similitude cannot, for Thomas, simply be reduced to the composition within a being of its essence and its *actus essendi*, for the language of similitude draws our attention beyond the

habet in intellectu humano. Et ideo Dionysius XI capitulo De divinis nominibus hunc ordinem assignat quod *primo super omnia* est ipse *substantificator* rerum Deus, *postea* vero ipsa dona Dei quae creaturis exhibentur, et universaliter et particulariter considerata, ut '*per se pulchritudinem*', '*per se vitam*', quam dicit esse *donum ex Deo proveniens*, id est ipsam naturam vitae, deinde ipsa participantia universaliter et particulariter considerata, quae sunt res in quibus natura esse habet."

[50] *ScG* I, c. 26 (Leon. ed., 13:81-82).

[51] And thus, it refers us back to the second of the three modes of participation Thomas presents in his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus*. Regarding this mode of participation, see below, 629-31. See also De Haan, "Aquinas on *actus essendi*."

internal structure of the created being to consider its relation to the very principle of that likeness.

As Thomas explains, likeness follows from agreement and communication of form.[52] Moreover, he tells us that "every participated likeness leads to its principle."[53] Hence, within a being that participates *esse,* the inherent participated likeness that is the being's own *actus essendi* points beyond itself to its source—a source that is both its exemplar and efficient cause. Having acknowledged this, we can now consider how Thomas's account of participation in the likeness of *esse subsistens* fits into the structure of participation presented in his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus.*

III. The Third Mode of Participation: Effect in Cause

The context for Thomas's treatment of participation in his commentary on Boethius is his consideration of Boethius's axiom that "*esse* and *that-which-is* are diverse" (*diuersum est esse et id quod est*). Thomas is careful to note that as Boethius initially presents this axiom he is not drawing a distinction between realities (*ad res*) but rather between notions, or intentions (*rationes seu intentiones*). Hence, Thomas begins his analysis of the text by offering his own logical, or conceptual, consideration of this distinction, namely, as regards the signification of these terms. Whereas *esse* signifies in the abstract, *that-which-is* does so in the concrete. Offering a point of comparison, Thomas notes that in a similar way *running* (*currere*) signifies in the abstract whereas *someone-who-runs* (*currens*) does so in the concrete. We do not say of *running* that

[52] *STh* I, q. 4, a. 3 (Leon. ed., 4:53): "Cum similitudo attendatur secundum convenientiam vel communicationem in forma, multiplex est similitudo, secundum multos modos communicandi in forma."

The formal agreement here is of *esse*, which though not a form properly speaking is nevertheless described by Thomas as formal with respect to all that is in a thing (*STh* I, q. 8, a. 1 [Leon. ed., 4:82]). Thomas is careful to note that the likeness of creatures to God is according to analogy only (*STh* I, q. 4, a. 3, ad 3 [Leon. ed., 4:54]).

[53] *Super Ioan.*, c. 5, lect. 6 (*Super evangelium s. Ioannis lectura*, ed. Raphaelis Cai [rev. 5th ed.; Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952], 155 [no. 820]): "Cum ergo omnis similitudo participata ducat in suum principium . . .".

"it runs" because it is not itself the subject of *running;* rather, we say of *someone-who-runs* that "he is running" precisely because the runner is the subject of *running.* Similarly, we do not say that *esse* itself "is" because *esse* does not signify as the subject of existing (*essendi*); rather, *that-which-is,* or *being* (*ens*), is the subject of *esse.*[54]

It is at this point in his commentary that Thomas introduces the language of participation, adding that we can say "he runs" of *someone-who-runs* not only because the runner is the subject of *running* but because he participates in it. Similarly, Thomas explains, we can say that a being (*ens*), or *that-which-is,* "is" because it participates in an act of existing (*actus essendi*). And considering Boethius's somewhat cryptic statement that "*esse* itself as yet is not" (*ipsum enim esse nondum est*), Thomas clarifies that this assertion is meant to indicate yet again that *esse* is not attributed to itself as the subject of existing. Instead, he adds, *esse* is attributed to *that-which-is* because *that-which-is* subsists in itself by receiving the very act of existing.[55] Thomas's reference to *actus essendi* here indicates his view that the initially identified conceptual distinction between *esse* and *that-which-is* in fact has a metaphysical underpinning, one that he will bring out in his treatment of Boethius's next stated axiom:

[54] *In De hebdo.* c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271-72, ll. 36-54): "Dicit ergo primo quod *diuersum est esse et id quod est,* que quidem diuersitas non est hic referenda ad res de quibus adhuc non loquitur, set ad ipsas rationes seu intentiones. Aliud autem significamus per hoc quod dicimus esse et aliud per id quod dicimus id quod est, sicut et alidu significamus cum dicimus currere et aliud per hoc quod dicitur currens. Nam currere et esse significatur in abstracto sicut et albedo; set quod est, id est ens et currens, significatur in concreto uelud album.

"Deinde cum dicit: *Ipsum enim esse* etc., manifestat predictam diuersitatem tribus modis.

"Quorum primus est quia ipsum esse non significatur sicut subiectum essendi, sicut nec currere significatur sicut subiectum cursus. Vnde sicut non possumus dicere quod ipsum currere currat, ita non possumus dicere quod ipsum esse sit; set id quod est significatur sicut subiectum essendi, uelud id quod currit significatur sicut subiectum currendi."

[55] *In De hebdo.* c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 68-71).

"*What-is* [*quod est*] can participate in something, but *esse* itself in no way participates in anything."[56]

It is at this point that Thomas provides us with the etymology of the verb *participare* noted earlier, namely, that "to participate is, as it were, 'to take a part' [*partem capere*]." Going beyond this etymology, he offers us the following account of participation: "When something receives in a particular way what belongs to another in a universal way, it is said to participate in that."[57] He then proceeds to identify three modes of participation to which this account applies: (1) as *man* participates in *animal*, and Socrates participates in *man;* (2) as a subject participates in an accident, and as matter participates in form; and (3) as an effect participates in its cause, "especially," we are told, "when it is not equal to the power of its cause." Thomas provides as an example of this third mode air participating in the light of the sun because, he explains, air does not receive light in it with the same brightness (*claritas*) by which light is in the sun.[58]

Considering the first mode of participation, we find that Thomas's examples concern conceptual relations, such as that of individual to species and species to genus.[59] As he explains, there is participation here because in each example some *ratio*—intelligible content—is possessed by the participant, but not according to the full universality (*tota communitas*) of that

[56] *In De hebdo.*, c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:270, ll. 4-5): "Quod est participare aliquo potest, set ipsum esse nullo modo aliquo participat."

[57] Ibid. (Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 68-71): "Et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet uniuersaliter, dicitur participare illud."

[58] Ibid. (Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 74-87): "sicut homo dicitur participare animal quia non habet rationem animalis secundum totam communitatem; et eadem ratione Socrates participat hominem. Similiter etiam subiectum participat accidens, et materia formam, quia forma substancialis uel accidentalis, que de sui ratione communis est, determinatur ad hoc uel ad illud subiectum. Et similiter etiam effectus dicitur participare suam causam, et precipue quando non adequat uirtutem sue cause; puta, si dicamus quod aer participat lucem solis quia non recipit eam in ea claritate qua est in sole."

[59] Thomas makes this conceptual character of the first mode of participation clear later in his *De hebdomadibus* commentary when he notes, "Set in alio participationis modo, quo scilicet species participat genus" (*In De hebdo.*, c. 3 [Leon 50:276, ll. 55-56]).

ratio. Thus, this first mode has traditionally been interpreted as a logical, or conceptual, participation rather than as a real one.[60] By contrast, the second mode of participation is presented as ontological, or real; for as is indicated by Thomas's examples of participation in accidental and substantial form, here the participant receives a form according to the order of reality, resulting in a real composition between the receiver and some received perfection. Finally, as regards the third mode of participation—that of an effect in its cause—we are again presented with a mode of real rather than merely conceptual participation. This reading becomes clear if we consider Thomas's account elsewhere of a cause as something from which the existence (*esse*) of another follows.[61] This third mode of participation is real, then, not simply because the participant is really distinct from its cause, but because it is also really *dependent* upon that cause for its received perfection, as is evidenced from Thomas's example of air as dependent upon the light of the sun for its illumination.[62]

[60] For the Latin text, see n. 58 above. On the logical character of this first mode of participation, see Mitchell, "Aquinas on *esse commune,*" 561-64; Cornelio Fabro *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino,* reprinted from the 3d ed. (Turin: SEI, 1963) as vol. 3 in *Opere Complete* (Segni: EDIVI, 2005), 33-34, 143-44, 146-48; Louis B. Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de s. Thomas d'Aquin,* 2d ed. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1953), 48-49; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 76-82; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 96-97; Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas,* 196-98.

[61] X *Phys.*, lect. 1 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 2 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1884], 86, l. 15): "Necesse est autem quatuor esse causas. Quia cum causa sit ad quam sequitur esse alterius."

[62] It should be noted that shortly after Thomas enumerates these three modes of participation, he seems to identify a further, unenumerated, mode of participation: that of the concrete in the abstract. As we have seen, earlier in the text he had indicated that a *concretum* such as *someone-who-runs* participates in an *abstractum* such as *running* (Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 43-52). Thomas now notes the following as regards the relation of *ens* to *esse:* "But that-which-is, or being [*ens*], although it is most common, nevertheless is said concretely. And therefore it participates in *ipsum esse*—not in the manner in which the more common is participated by the less common—but rather it participates in *ipsum esse* in the manner according to which the concrete participates in the abstract" ("Set id quod est siue ens, quamuis sit communissimum, tamen concretiue dicitur, et ideo participat ipsum esse, non per modum quo magis commune participatur

Having identified these three modes of participation in his commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus*, Thomas notes the following: "Setting aside this third mode of participating, it is impossible that, according to the first two modes, *ipsum esse* participates in anything."[63] Since *ipsum esse* is something abstract (*quiddam abstractum*), he explains, it cannot participate in something according to the second, compositional, mode of participation. Similarly, since *ipsum esse* is most common (*communissimum*), it cannot participate in something according

a minus communi, set participat ipsum esse per modum quo concretum participat abstractum") (*In De hebdo.*, c. 2 [Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 92-102).

The distinction he draws here between what we may term "particular-in-universal participation" and "concrete-in-abstract participation" prompts te Velde to observe that "It seems to me that Thomas has tacitly introduced a new mode of participation here," a point he thinks is frequently overlooked by scholars (*Participation and Substantiality,* 79). More recently, Brock has taken a similar view, identifying Thomas's presentation of concrete-in-abstract participation as a fourth mode ("Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle," 479-80). Ralph McInerny also acknowledges, in one work, that Thomas does seem to be presenting a fourth mode ("Boethius and St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Being and Predication: Thomistic Interpretations*, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 16 [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986], 104). In a slightly later work, however, McInerny concludes that "The term *ens* ('being') is as universal as the infinitive, but because it signifies concretely, it can participate in the abstractly signified actuality, that is, in the second mode" (*Boethius and Aquinas* [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990], 205). Wippel, by contrast, concludes that the participation of *ens* in *esse* belongs to the third mode of participation (*Metaphysical Thought,* 128).

On this question of whether Thomas identifies a fourth mode of participation, I would agree in part with the reading of te Velde and Brock. Thomas clearly draws a contrast between concrete-in-abstract participation and particular-in-universal participation. With that said, I would argue that this seeming "fourth mode" is not a distinctive mode because it shares something in common with the first: they are both logical, or conceptual, participations. This is not to deny that for Thomas *ens* participates in *esse* according to the order of reality. Rather, it is to acknowledge his observation that the initial distinction Boethius draws between *ens* and *esse* is a conceptual one, which Thomas presents in terms of the signification of terms rather than inner metaphysical principles. As I maintain below, however, I see Thomas as presenting the participation of *ens* in *esse* according to all of the above-identified modes of participation (see n. 83 below).

[63] *In De hebdo*. c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 85-87): "Pretermisso autem hoc tercio modo participandi, impossibile est quod secundum duos primos modos ipsum esse participet aliquid."

to the first mode of participation whereby a more particular notion participates in a more universal one; rather, according to this first mode, all else participates in *it*.[64] It is for these reasons, we are told, that Boethius asserts of *ipsum esse* that it in no way participates in anything. Then, concluding his treatment of the Boethian axiom at hand, Thomas notes the following:

> For this is evident: *that-which-is-not* cannot participate in anything; hence it follows that "a *participation*" belongs to something "when it already is" [*cum iam est*]. But "something is" from the fact that "it receives *esse*" itself, as has been said. Thus, it remains that *that-which-is* can participate in something, but *esse* itself cannot participate in anything.[65]

We see, then, that Thomas has no hesitation in adopting Boethius's axiom here. Moreover, as he expresses this axiom, it is an unqualified assertion: *esse* itself does not participate in *anything*. And yet, we have seen, in his analysis of the axiom he has set aside consideration of the third mode of participation, namely, that of an effect in its cause. Indeed, the only arguments that he offers against *esse* participating in something concern the first two modes of participation. Is it possible, then, that *esse* itself participates something according to the third mode, namely, as an effect in its cause? This would seem to be the implication of this text.[66]

Unfortunately, Thomas offers little in this commentary to inform us of his view on this point, precisely because he does

[64] Presumably, he is referring here to *esse* taken as *esse commune*.

[65] *In De hebdo*. c. 2 (Leon. ed., 50:271, ll. 106-13): "Manifestum est enim quod id quod non est non potest aliquo participare, unde consequens est quod *participatio* conueniat alicui *cum iam est*; set ex hoc *aliquid est* quod *suscipit* ipsum *esse* sicut dictum est. Vnde relinquitur quod id quod est aliquid possit participare, ipsum autem esse non possit aliquid participare." This text offers further support for treating the Latin term *participatio* according to the passive sense, as I have presented it here: *esse* itself does not participate, but rather is a participated perfection received by the participant, thereby causing the participant, *that-which-is*, to be.

[66] This is Brock's reading ("Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle," esp. 480-82): "The implication is that according to the last mode, even *esse* itself could be said to participate in something" (480); ibid., 482.

"set aside" treatment of the third mode.[67] But what he sets aside there, he takes up in other texts where he makes clear how created *esse* is related participatively to God as its cause. And lest we have doubt that he has in mind the third mode of participation in these cases, he offers as an analogy time and again that of air participating in the light of the sun. Thus, for example, in the *Summa theologiae*, when considering God's conservation of his effects in being (*esse*), Thomas observes that every creature is related to God as air is to the sun illuminating it. We are told that the sun shines by its own nature whereas air is made luminous only by participating in light from the sun—"nevertheless," Thomas emphasizes, "*not* by participating in the nature of the sun." In a similar way, he explains, God is being by his own nature (*ens per essentiam suam*) because he is his very *esse*, whereas every creature is a being participatively (*ens participative*), precisely because its essence is not its *esse*.[68]

Thomas's example of the air's illumination reveals a number of elements regarding the third mode of participation. First, it illustrates something about the participant: that it is dependent in the order of efficient causality upon some principle (the sun) to receive a *participatio* (light). Second, the example illustrates something about that very *participatio,* namely, that it is present *in* the participant (the air) and that it depends upon its efficient causal principle to sustain it there. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Thomas does not speak of the *participatio* (the

[67] Thomas implicitly returns to the third mode of participation in c. 4 of his commentary on the *De hebdomadibus,* but it is in the context of considering the caused goodness of creatures rather than considering *esse* as such. Moreover, he makes no explicit reference to this mode either *as* a mode of participation or even by using the language of participation (Leon. ed., 50:279-80, ll. 111-60).

[68] *STh* I, q. 104, a. 1 (Leon. ed., 5:464): "Sic autem se habet omnis creatura ad Deum, sicut aer ad solem illuminantem. Sicut enim sol est lucens per suam naturam, aer autem fit luminosus participando lumen a sole, non tamen participando naturam solis; ita solus Deus est ens per essentiam suam, quia eius essentia est suum esse; omnis autem creatura est ens participative, non quod sua essentia sit eius esse."

Some other examples of texts in which Thomas compares the creature's participation in *esse* to air participating in the light of the sun are *De substantiis,* c. 3 (Leon. ed., 40:46, ll. 11-15) quoted in n. 29 above; and *De Ente*, c. 4 (Leon. ed., 43:377, ll. 127-66).

received light) as itself participating in its cause; rather, what participates in the cause is the receiver (the air as illuminated) by means of that which it receives (light). Third, it illustrates in turn something about that principle itself, namely, that it has the participated perfection by its very nature (light in the sun) and, moreover, that the nature of the principle remains unparticipated by the participant.[69] To these observations regarding this text, we should add what Thomas tells us elsewhere about light as it is present in the air, namely, that it is a likeness (*similitudo*) of the sun's brightness.[70]

This example of the illumination of air by the sun thus provides us with a clearer sense of what Thomas sees entailed with the third mode of participation: The effect, by means of an inherent *participatio*, participates in a likeness of its cause, not in the nature of that cause. That nature remains in itself unparticipated. Why, then, does Thomas present this third mode in his *De hebdomadibus* commentary, with the unqualified wording that "an effect is said to participate [in] its cause" rather than in a *likeness* of the cause? Here, I think an important distinction needs to be made regarding the causality at work in this third mode of participation, which entails both formal and efficient causality. According to the order of formal causality, the participated cause is the exemplar of its effect and, as such, is extrinsic to its effect, just as the sun is extrinsic to the air it illuminates. The nature of the cause thus remains in itself unparticipated; instead, the effect participates that nature according to a likeness, just as air participates in a likeness of the sun through the light that it receives.

With Thomas's language of reception, we also see that the participated cause in the third mode of participation is not simply an exemplar of the effect—it is an efficient cause as well. Indeed, without the productive act of an efficient cause, there

[69] Elsewhere, Thomas identifies light as an active quality following from the substantial form of the sun. See II *Sent.*, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3 (Mandonnet, ed., 2:331-37); *STh* I, q. 67, a. 3 (Leon. ed., 5:164-65); *Sententia libri De anima* II, lect. 14, nn. 1-3 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 45/1 [Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1984], 126-30, ll. 199-387).

[70] *ScG* III, c. 47 (Leon. ed., 14:128).

can be no exemplar causality at all: if the sun did not efficiently shine upon the air, the air could not receive a likeness to the sun's exemplary nature.[71] And it is according to the order of efficient causality that Thomas will speak in an unqualified way of an effect participating in its cause. As he explains elsewhere, every effect participates something of the *power* of its cause. For effects are precontained within the cause in a causal way (*causaliter*).[72] Thus, when presenting the third mode of participation in his *De hebdomadibus* commentary, after noting that it entails an effect participating in its cause, he adds "especially when it is not equal to the power of its cause."[73] The effect not only receives in a particular way what the cause has (or is) in a universal way, but it depends upon the cause for its continued possession of that perfection. It is for this reason that the effect can be said to participate in its cause—not in the very nature of the cause, but rather in its causal power.

According to Thomas, as it is with participation in the light of the sun, so it is *mutatis mutandis* with participation in *esse:* The created being, as participant, is dependent in the order of efficient causality upon God as its principle, namely, for its *actus essendi* to be both received and sustained as a *participatio.* In the order of formal causality, this *participatio* is present *in* the participant and is the likeness *of* its efficient cause. Thomas does not, therefore, identify the created being's *esse* as participating in its cause according to the third mode, but rather the being itself, which participates in its cause *by means of* its received *esse*.[74] And that cause, which is also the exemplar of

[71] On the relation between efficient and exemplar causality, see my *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas,* 33-43.

[72] *Super De causis,* prop. 3 (Saffrey, ed., 21:24-25): "Effectus autem omnis participat aliquid virtute suae causae." *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 2 (Pera et al., eds., 246 [no. 662]); *De substantiis,* c. 14 (Leon. ed., 40:65, ll. 74-77).

[73] See n. 58 above.

[74] As noted above (see n. 66), Brock reads Thomas as holding that not only does created *ens* participate in its cause according to this third mode, but so too does created *esse.* With that said, I believe the difference in our readings is mostly terminological, namely, regarding what counts as a *participans* and a *participatio* for Thomas. Substantively, I am in agreement with Brock: For Thomas, created *esse* must be caused and "what the cause must be is clear: It must be the very first cause, the divinity"

the participant, remains in its nature unparticipated *esse subsistens*. Thus, we see that at times Thomas will be clear that finite beings do not participate *in* God but rather in his likeness. Nevertheless, inasmuch as finite beings receive this inherent likeness to God (namely, their own intrinsic *actus essendi*) in a particular way from God as the universal, efficient cause of finite *esse,* they can be said to participate *in* their cause—namely, in the causal power of God's creative and preserving act. They have in a particular way by participation what the cause, God, is universally in his essence.

Given this reading, I share sympathies with aspects of Louis B. Geiger's interpretation of Thomas's doctrine of participation. Geiger notably identifies the third mode of participation with what he himself terms "participation by similitude." He sees this third mode as one of two (real) participatory systems in Thomas's thought. The second system is what he terms "participation by composition," which he identifies with Thomas's second mode of participation from the *De hebdomadibus* commentary, illustrated with the examples of subject-accident and matter-form compositions. As Geiger explains, for Thomas participation always entails limitation of some perfection on the side of the participant. In participation by composition, this limitation is accounted for by the composition itself. Regarding so-called participation by similitude, he acknowledges that it too for Thomas can, and does, involve composition on the side of the participant, but Geiger insists that here the limitation is prior to the composition.[75] If an effect is produced by its cause, he argues, the effect cannot receive the very thing that makes it to be before it even exists. Hence, Geiger maintains, the

("Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle," 482). My point is simply that created *esse* does not receive or limit anything but, rather, is itself received and limited. Indeed, as Thomas indicates time and again, *esse* is simple; but, he identifies a participant (*participans*) as always composed, namely, of potency and act (see, e.g., *De substantiis,* c. 3 [Leon. ed., 40:46, ll. 26-30]). Thus, properly speaking, the received *actus essendi* of a finite being, as a simple act principle, does not participate in anything. Indeed, as far as I can tell, Thomas never speaks of it in this way. Rather, he calls it "a *participatio*."

[75] Geiger, *La Participation,* 29-30.

limitation of the effect must precede its composition.[76] And he concludes that for Thomas participation in *esse* follows the system of participation by similitude as so outlined.

Geiger makes clear that his analysis is not meant to deny the Thomistic doctrine that in finite beings there is a composition of two really distinct principles, with essence as the proper principle of the limitation of *esse*. But he insists that if we wish to avoid an infinite regress of limiting compositions, this limitation of *esse* cannot be due simply to essence as such since the essence does not exist prior to its *actus essendi*. For this reason, Geiger concludes that we must appeal here to a prior participation: the participation of similitude (which he also terms "participation by formal hierarchy"), according to which participants share in a greater or lesser likeness of the First Perfection. As he explains, "The essence that participates *in* existence is itself a participation *of* the First Perfection, of which it conveys only a limited and fragmentary aspect."[77]

On this last point, I would argue, Geiger's language betrays a flaw in his interpretation of participation by similitude for Thomas. In speaking of essence as a "participation *of* the First Perfection," Geiger is employing the term "participation" in the passive sense. In this basic respect, his usage of the term is indeed true to Thomas's own use of *participatio*, which as I have noted Thomas commonly employs in the passive sense. Where Geiger departs from Thomas, however, is in referring at all to created essence as a *participatio.* Thomas himself never refers to it in this way—and for good reason. For him, a *participatio* is received and enters into composition with the recipient.[78] But, as even Geiger himself acknowledges, the essence principle of a created being is not received.[79]

[76] Ibid., 48-52.

[77] Ibid., 60-61 n. 3: "Ce serait aller à l'infini dans la série des compositions sans rien expliquer. Il faut faire appel à la participation par hiérarchie formelle: l'essence qui participe à l'existence est elle-même une participation de la Perfection Première, dont elle ne dit qu'un aspect limité et fragmentaire."

[78] I *Sent.*, d. 17, q. 2, a. 2, s.c. 2 (Mandonnet, ed., 1:414). My research for this article on Thomas's use of the term *participatio* has thus caused me to depart not only from Geiger's treatment of essence as a *participatio,* but also from my own earlier,

Geiger's use of the term "*participatio*" thus reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of participation by similitude—a misunderstanding first pointed out by Cornelio Fabro. Whereas Geiger sees this mode of participation as prior to composition, Fabro shows that for Thomas similitude in general (and hence participation *by* similitude in particular) always presupposes composition.[80] Thus, for example, we find Thomas noting in his commentary on the *Sentences* that things can be similar in one of two ways: in one way, because they participate in a single form in the manner that two white things participate in whiteness, namely, each with its own inherent accident that is

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qualified acceptance of Geiger's language for talking about a created essence in this way. See my *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas,* 239-41.

[79] A clear contradiction thus results in Geiger's presentation due to the tension between his desire on the one hand to account for a prior limitation of created essence (a desire with which I am sympathetic) and on the other to offer that account in terms of the language of participation (the point I find problematic). This tension can be resolved, I would argue, by accounting for the prior limitation of created essence with Thomas's doctrine of the exemplarism of the divine ideas rather than with reference to participation by similitude in the manner that Geiger presents it. For Thomas the divine ideas that function as exemplars are ideas of singular things that God in fact creates at some point in time. Thomas presents these ideas as exercising a causal role for created essences in the order of formal causality, but as I have argued elsewhere he does *not* present them as participated. An individual creature such as Socrates does not participate in the divine idea of Socrates because the assimilation here of effect to cause is a perfect one: Socrates is exactly as God has intended him to be. Thus, it is not the divine ideas that are participable; rather, as Thomas makes clear, it is the divine essence as such that is participable since *it* can be imitated to varying degrees by creatures. By contrast, as he presents it, the divine ideas are God's *knowledge* of these "participabilities" of the divine essence. God thus "first" knows himself along with all the limited ways in which the likeness of his essence is participable, and only "then" creates things that are like both his essence (to a limited degree) and his intention (with a perfect likeness). It is with Thomas's doctrine of the divine ideas, then, that we successfully find the prior limitation Geiger is looking for—but note that it is not a limitation that is prior according to a metaphysical participation as Geiger claims; rather, it is a limitation that is prior in the *intentional order* of God's knowledge. See my *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas,* 228-43.

[80] See, e.g., Fabro, *La nozione*, 28-29; *Partecipazione e causalità*, 2d ed., vol. 19 in *Opere Complete* (Segni: EDIVI, 2010), 56-57. For a consideration of Fabro's criticism of Geiger on this point, see Jason A. Mitchell, *Being and Participation: The Method and Structure of Metaphysical Reflection according to Cornelio Fabro* (Rome: Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, 2012), 1:448-49, 752.

the same in kind. As he explains, this sort of similitude requires that the similar things be composed of two intrinsic principles: one by which they are similar and another by which they are different. Thus, this manner of similitude corresponds to the second mode of participation from the *De hebdomadibus* commentary, which Geiger has termed "participation by composition." Thomas himself concludes here that, according to this manner of similitude, nothing can be similar to, agree with, or conform to God.[81]

Thomas then explains that the second manner of similitude occurs when one thing has a form participatively and imitates what the other has essentially. Thus, he notes, a white body would be said to be similar to a Separated Whiteness and a fiery mixed body similar to Fire Itself (if such separated entities in fact existed). It is according to this second manner of similarity, Thomas concludes, that there *can* be a similitude of a created being to God. Moreover, he clarifies that this manner of similarity "posits a composition in one and simplicity in the other."[82] This second manner of similitude, then, corresponds with the third mode of participation from the *De hebdomadibus* commentary, which Geiger has termed "participation by similitude." Contrary to Geiger's position, however, as Thomas himself presents such participation here, this mode *presupposes* composition on the part of the participant—namely, a composition between the participant and the participated likeness whereby the created being is like God.

Conclusion

In looking at Thomas's account of participation and *esse*, we have seen that he considers *esse subsistens*—which God is by his

[81] That is, because of God's simplicity. See I *Sent*., d. 48, q. 1, a. 1 (Mandonnet, ed., 1:1080).

[82] Ibid. "Vel ex eo quod unum quod participative habet formam, imitatur illud quod essentialiter habet. Sicut si corpus album diceretur simile albedini separatae, vel corpus mixtum igneitate ipsi igni. Et talis similitudo quae ponit compositionem in uno et simplicitatem in alio, potest esse creaturae ad Deum participantis bonitatem vel sapientiam, vel aliquid hujusmodi, quorum unumquodque in Deo est essentia ejus."

essence—to be in itself unparticipated and unparticipable according to the order of formal causality. Instead, created beings can and do participate in the likeness of *esse subsistens*, namely, inasmuch as they participate in their own intrinsic *actus essendi* and, thereby, participate as well in *esse commune* and Per Se *esse*. Thus, God's nature is the exemplar, or extrinsic, formal cause of all that participates in its likeness. I have highlighted how, for Thomas, this is an instance of the third mode of participation identified in the *De hebdomadibus* commentary, where Thomas speaks of an effect participating in its cause. As I have argued, it is important to note that this unqualified language of an effect participating in its cause is meant to indicate a participating in the *power* of that cause rather than in its very nature. For Thomas, created beings participate in God's causal power to receive and sustain their *esse*.

It is important to note, however, that as regards participation in *esse,* this third mode of participation does not occur to the exclusion of the other two modes identified in that work. As we have seen, for Thomas, participation by similitude necessarily presupposes a composition in the participant. Regarding *esse*, this composition in created beings is the composition of the really distinct principles of essence and *actus essendi*, thus entailing participation according to the second mode. And, prior to our realization that created beings must participate in *esse* according to these two modes is the recognition that they participate in *esse commune,* the common notion of (created) existence—a conceptual participation according to the first mode identified by Thomas.[83] But whereas recognition of

[83] Here I depart from Wippel, who argues that participation in *esse* cannot be reduced to either the first or the second mode of participation. According to his reading, it cannot be reduced to the first (or conceptual) mode of participation because participation in *esse* is real. And it cannot be reduced to the second mode because the composition of essence and *actus essendi* in finite beings is fundamentally different from Thomas's examples of form-matter, subject-accident. Wippel highlights two points here: (1) with the essence-*esse* composition, the composition does not result in a *tertium quid;* (2) the participated perfection is a transcendental-analogical perfection rather than a predicamental-univocal one (*Metaphysical Thought,* 108-9).

participation in *esse commune* may be first in the order of discovery and consideration, in the order of reality participation in the likeness of *esse subsistens* must be first. For it is only inasmuch as God produces things in his likeness that there is any mode of participation at all. [84]

With that said, I wholeheartedly agree with Wippel's concern not to *reduce* participation in *esse* to either of these two modes; as I have indicated I think all three are at work. Regarding the first mode, I would note that even though participation in *esse* is ultimately real, we have a conceptual understanding of *esse* as *esse commune* and recognize that no individual being is the common *notion* of existing (a fact we can acknowledge even prior to acknowledging the real distinction between essence and *actus essendi* in finite beings). Moreover, not only do individual beings participate in *esse commune,* but *ens commune* does as well—not as the particular in the universal—but rather as the concrete in the abstract. Whether we wish to identify this as a fourth mode of participation for Thomas as some have done (see n. 62 above), or a mode similar to the first mode of participation, I would argue that, as he presents it, concrete-in-abstract participation is *like* the first mode of participation in its logical, or conceptual, character (albeit with clear metaphysical implications). Finally, regarding the second mode, I would argue that it admits of analogicity (as is already suggested with the two different sorts of compositions Thomas identifies as examples: matter-form, subject-accident) and that the essence-*esse* composition in finite beings is in fact the prime analogate of participation by composition.

For similar readings of Thomas, see Mitchell, "Aquinas on *esse commune,*" and De Haan, "Aquinas on *actus essendi.*" See also Brock, "Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on *Esse,*" 484-88.

[84] This article was originally presented as a paper at the 2014 American Catholic Philosophical Association Conference on the satellite panel "Aquinas and the Three Modes of Participation in Being," sponsored by Richard Taylor and the "Aquinas and 'the Arabs' International Working Group." I would like to dedicate it to Marilyn McCord Adams, who attended this panel and who passed away in March 2017, during the writing of this article. My thanks go to her for her supportiveness on this project and on other endeavors over the years.

My thanks also go to David Twetten, Andrew Davison, Kevin White, Michele Averchi, and Jonathan Buttaci for their comments on earlier drafts of this article; to my research assistants, Taylor Abels and Diego Espinoza, for their work tracking down sources and proofing my writing; to the two blind reviewers of the draft submitted to *The Thomist;* and, of course, to Fr. Jason Mitchell and Daniel De Haan for their collaboration on both the aforementioned panel as well as the subsequent articles that have come out of it.

BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas Aquinas's "Summa contra Gentiles": A Guide and Commentary. By BRIAN DAVIES, O.P. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xviii + 485. $105.00 (cloth), $45.00 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-19-045653-5 (cloth), 978-0-19-045654-2 (paper).

In this *Guide*, Brian Davies aims to write a book that is "introductory, if also comprehensive." In this, he has succeeded marvelously. Of all the books on Thomas that seek to be both expository and philosophical, this is among the most readable. It is grounded in a careful reading of Thomas's own text, yet it brings to bear the most important debates in contemporary philosophy of religion as well as the best of contemporary philosophical writing on Aquinas. It moves with ease between exposition of the text and the raising of probing questions. It also provides illustrative examples in portions of the text where they are most useful, for example, in the notoriously forbidding argument from motion. This is the work of a masterful scholar and teacher who has spent years thinking deeply about the texts of Aquinas.

Before turning to a lengthy and detailed exposition of the text itself, Davies supplies, in an opening chapter, background on Thomas's life, work, and the setting of the *Summa contra gentiles*, a work whose purpose and structure have puzzled commentators for centuries. Davies notes that the structure and style of the *Summa contra gentiles* are distinct among Thomas's texts. It is not a commentary, although it contains passages in which Thomas strives to show that his interpretation conforms to the text of Aristotle, nor is it organized according to the disputed-question model, although the listing of objections and responses occurs at important points in the text. The order of proceeding is quite different from that in the later *Summa theologiae*, in which Thomas adopts the method of theological *scientia* throughout and makes only a brief and passing reference to the philosophical sciences. By contrast, in the *Summa contra gentiles* he begins by dividing his treatment according to the "twofold mode of truth in what we confess about divine things," with the first three books being devoted to that portion of divine truth accessible to reason, and the fourth to the segment that exceeds reason's capacity. Davies speaks of the first three books as an "extended essay in natural theology" in which reason operates "without dependence on purportedly divine revelation" (7, 15). Like almost everyone now writing on the *Summa contra gentiles*, Davies dismisses the longstanding tradition that envisioned this work as Thomas's response to the

request from Dominican superiors for a book able to be deployed by Dominican missionaries working in Spain and useful in countering Islam.

Davies ends up calling it a "somewhat apologetic work" with three main purposes: "to reflect at length concerning what reason can tell us about God . . . to note ways in which what reason tells us about God harmonizes with what revelation teaches, and . . . to defend the articles of faith against charges of irrationality" (15, 13). That description works reasonably well, although it leaves out some of the peculiar structural features of the work, features that bear upon how we ought to understand Thomas's own self-understanding: that is, how he understood his task in bringing together the two great sources of wisdom, philosophy and theology.

I mentioned above that Davies not only provides a clear exposition of the arguments with consideration of some of the puzzles in the arguments themselves, but that he also takes up relevant contemporary literature. Especially helpful is his use of the writings of Peter Geach and Herbert McCabe, members of what might be called the Wittgensteinian school of Thomism, distinguished by its care with language—with its logical structure, of course, but especially with the grammatical subtlety of ordinary language. For example, in his consideration of the objection that natural theology should be avoided altogether, Davies examines a set of objections: that it offends against piety; that the very notion of God is incoherent (Hume); and that God is not an existent among existents, nor is God an object, and thus that there is no object of inquiry or argument (D. Z. Phillips). Conceding Phillips's point, he goes on to stress Aquinas's negative theology, an approach to God that befits his transcendence and the limits of human language: "What [Aquinas] is doing, and what he says he is doing, is *denying* something of God" (66). He adds, "God *is* terribly mysterious and *is* vastly different from the things with which we are acquainted in day-to-day life" (67). In response to Alvin Plantinga's famous repudiation of the idea that God is identical to properties, he notes that Aquinas and Plantinga have drastically different understandings of what a property is. Similarly, in the exposition of Thomas's account of the goodness of God, Davies notes that he is discussing "God and goodness without claiming that God is a good thing of some kind" (98). He concludes that "there is something seriously wrong with criticisms . . . based on the idea that God is . . . a morally good person who needs to be defended accordingly" (ibid.).

Davies aims to do more than simply show that some common objections to Aquinas's positions are ill-formulated or wrongheaded. He is also interested in showing the plausibility of Thomas's views. The discussion, for example, of how Thomas can hold to a hylomorphic account of soul and body while maintaining the immateriality and postmortem survivability of the intellectual soul is representative. His discussion of materialist accounts of thinking ends with questions: "In what sense can any brain state be thought to be numerically identical with any thought?" (194). Can it be the case that "my [recognition] that bats are mammals is the same as process X in my brain" (ibid.)? He wonders

skeptically, "The same what?" (ibid.). After sorting through materialist and dualist suppositions and their criticisms of Aquinas, he writes:

> One can concede that there are mental events not reducible to physical ones without arguing that people are essentially immaterial. If you look around you, you will find people to be physical things because they have bodies. And if you find them to be that, then you will be agreeing with Aquinas. So you will not suppose that people are purely immaterial things. On the other hand you may think that there is more to people than can be described in an empirical account of them. And if you think that, then you might suppose that people are pretty unique in that they operate at both a material and an immaterial level, which Aquinas also takes to be the case. (Ibid.)

Despite its obvious strengths, there are places where Davies's commentary could profit from greater familiarity with the traditional disputes surrounding the *Summa contra gentiles*. For example, among mid- to late-twentieth-century commentators, one of the dominant debates concerns whether Thomas is in fact faithful to the division of the work according to the twofold mode of truth. There is a set of topics in the third book concerning divine law, sin, and the precepts and the counsels. Aquinas here examines an array of topics, including grace, predestination, reprobation, and election. These are, as Davies notes, biblical notions. Indeed, as Davies also notes, Aquinas focuses upon apparently conflicting biblical texts. What is indeed odd is the focus on Scripture in the first place, in the very segment of the work purportedly devoted to matters proper to reason. Davies is aware of the peculiarities but does not raise the broad issue.

It is interesting that Davies does take up the question, in the consideration of the Trinity in the fourth book, whether Aquinas is right to speak about God, as he does in the first three books, without including the peculiarly Christian understanding of God as triune. The objection is that the truth of the Trinity becomes a kind of "appendage." Davies responds quite reasonably that the consideration of God without explicit attention to the Trinity in no way discounts the creedal truths concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He adds that the separate consideration arises "from his distinction between truths of reason and truths of faith" (320). (It is important to note that a similar objection has been raised about the later, more explicitly theological *Summa theologiae*, not because it postpones consideration of the Trinity but because it delays until the final part any consideration of the Incarnation.) In a way, the objection concerning the Trinity is the opposite of the one that has bothered commentators concerning the questionable material in the third book, where the objection is that Aquinas tries to smuggle into the realm of rational philosophy things that are clearly matters of faith.

On the basis of these issues the question is raised, How does Thomas understand the relationship between the first three books and the fourth? It will, I

hope, not be taken as churlish to suggest that more can and should be said about these matters. As I mentioned above, Davies's three purposes work reasonably well. Yet, the segregation of matters of reason and matters of faith omits from consideration the overarching structure of the entire book, which follows an *exitus-reditus* pattern, beginning with God, turning to created things, and then returning to God. As Anton Pegis once suggested, the specific doctrines concerning God and creation that Thomas advances in the first three books transform the traditional question about wisdom and beatitude, the explicitly stated foci of the *Summa contra gentiles*. The question is no longer just about the ultimate good and its achievement but about "the relationship of the universe to God and of man to beatitude in a world of divine initiative." Thus, in the first three books, Thomas's intent is to open the natural and the rational to the offer of grace.

On this reading, Aquinas's reworking of the philosophical tradition in the first three books sets up the dramatic encounter between God and human persons that he depicts in the fourth, particularly the Incarnation but also the sacraments and the Resurrection. Consider the following set of conclusions that Thomas seeks to establish in the first three books: God knows and cares for singulars. The entire created order is radically, although not arbitrarily, dependent on the free creative activity of God. The temporal beginning of the universe can neither be established nor refuted by philosophy. No natural intellectual process is sufficient to bring about human blessedness. Human nature is unable to achieve beatitude apart from divine assistance. God has sovereign and providential authority over the whole of creation, an authority that allows him to intervene in the created order at any moment in time and history.

In fact, it is in the examination of these issues that Thomas is likely to turn to a version of the disputed question, offering objections and then responding to them in detail. This is also where he sometimes turns to expositions of the text of Aristotle and his interpreters. Perhaps the most striking example of the latter occurs at the end of book III, chapter 48, on how man's ultimate felicity does not come in this life, which is near the very end of a lengthy set of *via negativa* arguments, beginning in chapter 26, concerning human beatitude. He writes,

> For these and like reasons, Alexander and Averroes claimed that man's ultimate felicity does not consist in the human knowledge which comes through the speculative sciences, but through a connection with a separate substance, which they believed to be possible for man in this life. But, since Aristotle saw that there is no other knowledge for man in this life than through the speculative sciences, he maintained that man does not achieve perfect felicity, but only a limited kind.

It is instructive to note that these questions were also at the center of debates in the Arabic tradition of philosophy, whose principal interlocutors occupied

much of Thomas's philosophical attention throughout his career, especially early on, up to and including the writing of the *Summa contra gentiles*. The key questions in that tradition concern the temporal versus eternal existence of the cosmos; the nature of God's relationship to and knowledge of the universe; and the nature of the human soul, its union with the body, its ultimate end, whether it can achieve the good on its own powers, and the postmortem status of both the individual soul and the body.

The emphasis in these sections of the text on the dialectical give-and-take of objections and responses and on the role of authoritative sources highlights the significance of these topics for the overall structure and purpose of the *Summa contra gentiles*, not just for the unity of faith and reason but also for how we are to understand the procession of creatures from God and their return to God. The way those debates inform both the philosophical content and the peculiar structure of the *Summa contra gentiles* may well contain clues as to the historical setting of the work and its purpose.

These questions are crucial to how we are to understand the peculiar setting, intent, and structure of the *Summa contra gentiles*. But they are not the focus of Davies's book, to which there is no rival among expositors of the arguments of the *Summa contra gentiles*. By way of conclusion, I want to reiterate what I said at the outset. This book merits the careful attention of scholars and students. Brian Davies combines virtues rarely combined in the lives and work of professional philosophers: a devotion to reading texts whole, careful analysis of specific arguments, a mastery of the relevant contemporary literature in philosophy of religion, and a knack for illustrative examples.

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Action & Character according to Aristotle: The Logic of the Moral Life. By KEVIN L. FLANNERY, S.J. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013. Pp. xxxii + 314. $75.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8132-2160-1.

Kevin Flannery's recent book is a significant contribution to our understanding of Aristotle's theory of action as the foundation for his ethical thought. While it is surely of interest to Aristotle scholars, I would argue that those working in contemporary virtue ethics would also benefit from a close study of it. Flannery argues in meticulous detail that the central moves Aristotle makes in his ethical treatises are grounded in his account of the internal

structure of particular human actions. In so doing, Flannery demonstrates how and why Aristotle conceived of ethical theory as having its proper foundation in philosophical psychology and action theory.

Flannery begins by stressing the centrality of Aristotle's conviction that the perception of singulars is the coin of the practical realm. This explains why ethics is not a proper science—that is, why it cannot yield proper syllogisms from which we could construct a specifically practical *epistêmê*. And yet this perception is distinctive of rational life. Aristotle likens it to the perception of a particular triangle in a geometrical proof, which is an object not of the senses but of the intellect. Flannery suggests that Aristotle adopts the language of perception in order to pick out a unique mode of presentation of the particular to the intellect: for "it is through perception by means of sight that we recognize the form present in each individual" (*Top*. 2.7.113a31-32).

If ethics is not a proper science, then what sense can we make of the practical syllogism? Flannery insists that any legitimate account must explain how the realm of thought and knowledge, which is general, and the realm of action, which is particular, interact with each other. In his rich discussion of this problem, two points stand out. First, one can only move from knowledge to action through desire, which moves one toward a particular object. Second, knowledge and action are unified by the principle that underlies all reasoning and intelligibility: the principle of noncontradiction. Flannery notes that Aristotle understands this principle as grounded in the perceptual order, since it is only at the level of particulars that it is impossible for something to both be and not be a certain way, in a certain respect, at a certain time. He concludes that the "subject matter" of philosophical psychology is singulars, and therefore, when properly conducted, it must begin with an analysis of particular human acts, rather than universal propositions about acts.

The purpose of chapter 2 is to show that the structure of action is a determination of the broader genus of motion. Here Flannery demonstrates that for Aristotle an act gets its species (its form as an instance of a general kind) from its end. He stresses that for Aristotle an end cannot be cut off from its object. For instance, teaching is the actualization of the one who can teach in the one who learns; the action is fundamentally a movement toward an object that provides a limit and measure of its success or failure. To remove the object—to say that in teaching the teacher learns—results in a violation of the principle of noncontradiction. Flannery concludes that the distinction between agent and patient, subject and object, is fundamentally grounded in the principle of noncontradiction, such that the bipolar structure of human action is demanded by it. This in turn shows that the nature of particular acts is not solely determined by the subject; the object upon which the subject acts also makes a contribution to its intelligibility.

Chapter 3 shows that the rationally articulate internal structure of action is the necessary foundation for Aristotle's account of the degrees of personal responsibility. For Aristotle, an action is voluntary to the extent that is it

unforced and in accordance with the knowledge characteristic of the exercise of will (*boulesis*); it is through the exercise of it that man becomes "the sovereign principle of his act" (74). It is crucial to Aristotle's account that some elements of a person's action can be forced (and to that extent, nonvoluntary) while others can be free, and that some elements of a person's action can be known (and therefore voluntary) while others can be unknown. In order to make sense of this, Flannery notes that we need to distinguish between the particular act itself and its distinguishable internal elements. This internal articulation is also crucial to the explanation of various character types; for instance, the self-controlled man—the one who listens to reason against desire—is not entirely free, for he has to force himself to resist himself.

Chapter 4 continues to show ways that agents can be ignorant of the different constituents of their actions while still acting voluntarily to some degree. Much of the discussion focuses on "willful error" (*hamartia*) and negligence more broadly. Flannery goes through all seven constituents of action to show why they must make up a unity in order for a particular action to be an instance of a more general kind. He also discusses the ways these constituents admit of truth, and how there can be a lack of correspondence between our thoughts about them and what we actually do. It is because the essential constituents of action are "beings of reason" that an agent's knowledge of them is central to Aristotle's account of the voluntary. For "in the realm of human action, reason—as manifest especially in the constituents—is everything; it can change the nature of an act" (138).

Chapter 5 is the hinge of the entire book and marks the transition from action theory to ethics proper. To make this transition, we must see how the ends of particular acts connect to larger ends: crafts, sciences, the polis, and human life generally. To do that, we need to be able to identify "lines of intelligibility" between particular actions and "larger systems of intelligibility" (140). Flannery draws a distinction between lines of intelligibility that are *per se* and *per accidens*. Knowledge of the end of a particular act is crucial to its *per se* intelligibility, but some aspects of the pursuit of that end might be *per accidens* since they do not serve it. This is possible because action takes place in the perceptual realm of particulars, which is messy and includes much that is not essential to the intelligibility of action.

Crucial to Flannery's analysis is that knowledge is what settles the *per se* intelligible. Consider the end given to man by nature, his true good. He is ordered to this good whether he knows this good or not. The *phronimos* knows it, and this is essential to establishing the *per se* lines of intelligibility between his particular act and this final end: he sees the good for man in his particular act. The vicious man is oriented toward the same good by nature *per se*, but he perceives and pursues the merely apparent good through his actions *per accidens*. That is, the end he pursues in his particular act does not correspond to his final end, his true good.

In chapter 6, Flannery turns his attention to the wider context of the polis. He points out that, for Aristotle, actions are not fully intelligible outside the broader moral context in which they come to be, which is the human political community in which they are pursued and realized, since this is the linguistic-social context in which objects of particular acts are both supplied and pursued. Flannery explores this through a careful discussion of the difference between doing and making, and the corresponding distinction between the knowledge of *techne* and *phronesis*.

Take a craft, such as shoemaking. We need shoes for life in the city; without this need, the craft of shoemaking would lose its practical intelligibility. Moreover, the shoemaker must understand that he is making a shoe throughout his shoemaking; therefore the form of the shoe is always present to him in a way similar to that in which happiness is always present to the one who is living well. For the practically wise, it is in making that the maker pursues the good (living well), but this requires that he see his making in light of its contribution to the city. Indeed, the agent's moral understanding of what he does, which is the understanding characteristic of *praxis*, embraces all the things that he does. Any act that involves a break of intelligibility from the end that specifies it to the end of human nature as such cannot be a good human act. So, the directive and productive knowledge characteristic of voluntary acts must contain within itself practical wisdom if the action can be truthfully described as an instance of living well—that is, if it deserves unqualified praise.

In chapter 7, Flannery turns to an account of the truth to which the *phronimos* is disposed: *practical truth*, or "the truth bound up with getting to things" (229). He argues that this truth is attained when the calculating part (*to logistikon*) is well regulated according to its proper virtue, but this requires correct desire, or moral virtue. The practical intellect is operating well (achieving practical truth) when what it affirms is in accordance with right desire. One secures practical truth insofar as one aims at the virtuous mean through reason, rather than insofar as one is successful in securing it. Flannery argues that even for the *phronimos*, things can go wrong in ways that are outside of his voluntary control, and that such mistakes in performance are not errors of practical wisdom. A wise general may still lose the battle.

The final chapter brings this analysis to bear on an understanding of Aristotelian character types. To return to the principle of noncontradiction, Flannery notes that it is not possible to apply and not apply "I want X" to the same object, in the same respect, at the same time. And yet people do want contrary things. The *akratic*, for instance, both wants (sensually) and does not want (rationally) the fourth drink. In these cases, we have to posit distinct parts of the soul that direct us toward contrary ends. What is distinctive of the soul of the *phronimos* is its unity; the *phronimos* is directed to one thing, the good of human nature. All other character types are, to a greater or lesser extent, disunified, or at odds with themselves. To be disunified, Flannery argues, is to be caught up in a practical contradiction. If we were not by nature ordered to

one thing—the true human good—and if the principle of noncontradiction did not hold true of the realm of particular actions, such practical contradiction would not be intelligible.

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Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge. By THERESE SCARPELLI CORY. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xi + 241. $103.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-1-107-04292-6.

"Know thyself." This inscription on the Temple of Apollo helped inspire the birth of philosophy in Greece. And yet it is no small irony that Loxias's command was issued at the notoriously ambiguous Delphic oracle, for self-knowledge is both easy and difficult, ready at hand and obscure. In a relatively short but remarkably dense book, Therese Cory has given us a meticulous examination of how St. Thomas Aquinas handles the paradox of self-knowledge. This thorough collection and study of the manifold contexts in which St. Thomas treats the matter—and of contemporary scholarship on the same—deepens our understanding of the subtlety of his teaching. Indeed, contrary to modern mythology, in which "premodern thinkers are supposed to have nothing interesting to say about human subjectivity" (215), Cory argues that St. Thomas's approach is "sophisticated and compelling" (7) and "could be fruitfully placed into dialogue with contemporary inquiry" (220). In addition, Cory admirably bucks the trend of "methodological segregation" (8), wherein the history of ideas and real philosophizing do not belong in a single volume, as the book is divided into two parts: a historical study of the background, context, and development of St. Thomas's understanding of self-knowledge (encompassing the first two chapters), and then an engagement with the particular problems surrounding self-knowledge, aided by St. Thomas's approach (in the remaining six chapters).

The historical chapters begin with the obvious sources of the medieval debates about self-knowledge—St. Augustine and Aristotle—but then delves into St. Thomas's contemporaries, including not only Sts. Albert and Bonaventure but also William of Auvergne and Jean de la Rochelle. The medieval debate was shaped by the Augustinian notion that self-knowledge is natural and by the Aristotelian notion that self-knowledge is dependent on knowledge of the world outside the self, a pair of notions that, though "not necessarily in competition" (18), often were treated as such. Augustine himself

proposed two ways in which the mind naturally knows itself, which Cory calls, respectively, "permanent dispositional or habitual" ("weak") and "peripheral, pre-conscious" ("strong") self-knowledge (21-22). The latter (which Cory strangely describes as "supraconscious" [26]) was endorsed by most medievals, even the youthful St. Thomas, though he quickly became critical of it. Aristotle's influence exerted itself most in understanding how active or explicit self-knowledge occurs, with his claim that "the intellect is intelligible like other intelligibles," that is, through a species (27).

In the second chapter, summarizing St. Thomas's account of self-knowledge, Cory argues that St. Thomas reformed the medieval debate so as to focus on *what* things the soul knows about itself, and how the soul's being the form of a certain kind of body determines its mode of self-knowledge. Studying the former allows St. Thomas to balance one's certainty of immediate and privileged self-access against one's experience of a large dose of self-opacity. While distinguishing three phases in the maturation of his insights about self-knowledge, Cory shows the importance of the distinction between the ordinary man's prephilosophic knowledge of the reality of the self/soul and the philosopher's deeper knowledge of exactly what the human soul is, as expressed in its definition. Saint Thomas agrees with his contemporaries that the former kind of knowledge of the self as an existing fact occurs either habitually (through the "soul's essential self-presence" [63]), or actually (through attending to one's activities, from sensing to understanding to willing). In addition, however, St. Thomas makes the "radical claim at the time" that all kinds of self-knowledge presuppose knowing extramental objects, so self-knowledge cannot be "natural" in the sense of innate (ibid.). Because of the human intellect's natural state as pure potency relative to the knowable, even the prephilosophic knowledge of the self requires that the intellect learn about the external world in order for the intellect to have any shape at all whereby it itself could be grasped. Saint Thomas's account turns out to be "governed by a single guiding insight: Self-knowledge hinges on intellectual actualization" (60).

The first two chapters of the second part center on how self-knowledge through one's own acts simultaneously limits how well one knows oneself and nevertheless secures first-person immediacy. Chapter 3 presents St. Thomas's "quasi-phenomenological reflection on the content of actual self-awareness," whereas chapter 4 presents his analysis of the "mode of actual self-awareness" (69). Cory points out that he most often employs the verb *percipere* in describing our experience of self-knowledge, a relatively generic cognitive term that nonetheless suggests that St. Thomas detects a kinship between self-knowledge and sensation, specifically with respect to nondiscursivity and the concrete presence of the object known. The simplicity and immediacy of such an experience is the basis for the universality of basic self-knowledge, and allows "the proverbial Man on the Street to use the first-person pronoun in conversation" (73). Here Cory offers a relatively brief but helpful discussion of St. Thomas's explanation of indistinct versus distinct cognition—a topic she

rightly notes is largely neglected in scholarship, to the detriment (I would argue) of understanding the origin of modern epistemology. We know *that* something is before (sometimes long before) we know *what* it is. Nevertheless, as Cory shows, St. Thomas is careful to explain that even to know *that* it is requires a certain element of "essential content" (77). So the *esse* versus *essentia* distinction here is not cut and dried, and this applies to self-knowledge as well: Perceiving that I am, or that I have a soul, or even just that I am thinking, includes knowing what I, my soul, and thought are in some rudimentary but nevertheless accurate way. Indeed, such indistinct but sure knowledge serves as a foundation for any progress toward quidditative knowledge, and the more of my operations I feel out, the more distinct this knowledge becomes; conversely, the indistinct knowledge of my own acts "lies at the root of moral self-ignorance" (88)—a recurring claim about which I wish the author had said more.

In the fourth chapter, Cory shows how the requirement that self-knowledge occur only though the intelligible species of an extramental object does not in any way "filter" the self, such that it would always be "more remote than my experiences of other things" (92). Rather, she shows that St. Thomas considers self-knowledge to be both direct and immediate, and in that sense intuitive: I do not merely grasp myself through an effect-to-cause argument, or even through something like the recognition of the signified in its sign or representation; rather, the intelligible species directly illuminates the mind to itself, because it "gives the intellect a specifying form or 'shape' that the intellect, as a sheer potency for intelligible form, lacks" (110). Indeed, Cory argues, "self-awareness surpasses even sensation in its immediacy," insofar as it "involves a *more intimate union* of knower and known" (109); since in this case the knower simply *is* the known, "there is no distance between the intellect and itself" (111).

Chapter 5 squarely faces the disputed question of what exactly habitual self-awareness is, according to St. Thomas, given his certainty that self-awareness depends on awareness of external objects. Cory concludes that this habit is neither acquired nor innate, but somehow "belongs to the soul's very essence . . . the mind's very self-presence pre-dating all cognitive acts," though it does not become actual or conscious except through reflection (116). This quality of the soul nevertheless should not be interpreted as an "inchoate or subconscious self-awareness" (122) but as the self's "subjective familiarity" (119)—meaning not a familiarity based on memory but a disposition that prevents one from being encountered "as something strange and new" (129), even in one's first act of self-awareness. Saint Thomas's understanding of habitual self-knowledge befits the human mind both as "naturally poised on the cusp of cognizing itself" and as a content-free pure potency, which together reflect "the status of the human soul, existing on the horizon of the physical and the intellectual" (133).

The puzzle about whether there is always some sort of implicit self-awareness in a mental act is the subject of the sixth and longest chapter. Cory convincingly shows that St. Thomas answers this question in the affirmative. While in many

texts he explains why explicit self-awareness must be transitory, in others he makes the case that there is an underlying self-awareness built into the nature of any cognitive act. Thus, while a lack of attention to the self does not necessarily imply a lack of *awareness* of the self, conversely, Cory notes, neither does focused attention to oneself or one's inner operations ever occur without a simultaneous, though implicit, awareness of the extramental object. Knowledge and the knowable are essentially correlative and so "are co-manifested in relation to each other in every intellectual act" (136). Given the absence of the expression "implicit cognition" in St. Thomas, Cory is careful to show how this language captures his teaching: This is not a distinct intellectual operation "that trails alongside an attentive operation" (137), but what is actually manifested in a cognitive act must be "more than just the precise object of attention" (138), since St. Thomas regularly alludes to examples of "participated attention" and "implicit cognition." In the former, a part is known when a whole is known (e.g., part of a line or of a proposition). Cory insists the part is not cognized "merely habitually," so it is cognized "actually" (139)—though I wonder whether saying it is cognized *virtually* might be less misleading since a part always has some aspect of potency relative to the whole. Implicit cognition, however, is an unarticulated awareness of the formal aspect under which the principal object of attention is considered, and St. Thomas speaks of this in most considerations of human cognition. Thus, to explain self-awareness he follows two approaches, one through how light is concomitantly seen when we look upon a color, and the other through the implications of the identity of the knower and known. Cory notes that both approaches entail that "no intellectual operation is completely devoid of self-awareness" (160) and insightfully notes that they are "two partial accounts that complete each other" insofar as they "depict, respectively, the contributions of the agent and possible intellects in implicit self-awareness" (161)—the former emphasizing "thinking as an activity that I perform," and the latter "the experience of thinking as a passive reception of insight" (162). However, the light account is inadequate to explain explicit self-awareness, whereas the identity account works nicely, showing that the intellect, in knowing the extramental, becomes an intelligible in its own right and therefore ready to be (subsequently) an object of explicit attention.

Cory's discussion of explicit self-awareness at the end of chapter 6 is briefer, centering on problems one could have with St. Thomas's account. Her resolutions explicate the different ways of attending to a single act of knowing the external world, how the intellect in some sense takes on the form of its object, and (challenging some recent scholarship) how explicit self-awareness is not a "higher-order act parasitical on" (168) awareness of the extramental object, nor a quasi-Cartesian turning away from it. Rather, the structure of the act of knowing oneself as thinking "is exactly like that of any act of thinking about many under a single unifying aspect" (ibid.). Toward the end of the chapter, Cory synthesizes several points of comparison she had made with the

early moderns, describing St. Thomas as "defending a unique middle position" between Descartes and Hume that avoids the excesses of each (170). The Cartesian bare Ego is "abstract and remote" and non-first-personal, and "would make little sense" (171) to St. Thomas, who spoke not of the esoteric-sounding Self or Ego, but of the composite human individual.

Chapter 7 develops the arduous movement from prephilosophical but explicit self-awareness to epistemic knowledge of the essence of the human soul as intellectual. Parallel to the order of knowing in self-awareness, this inquiry is based on our insider's view of these operations and proceeds through our grasp of the essence of the extramental intelligible as such to the essence of the intellect itself. In particular, recognizing the immateriality of the former ultimately implies the same of the latter, providing "*the clinching step* in attaining quidditative self-knowledge" wherein we can define the human soul "from below" as the highest form in the order of souls (183). Cory's discussion of verificational judgment in assessing the soul's definition is intriguing here: We should understand St. Thomas's requirement of a "resolution to first principles" (188) to refer to "a simple every-day insight into the necessity of the part-whole and affirmation-negation relationships among the propositions in an argument" (190), drawing this conclusion from the three axioms St. Thomas usually gives when discussing *per se nota* principles. Applying this to the quidditative study of the soul, Cory infers that, although St. Thomas sometimes distinguishes the apprehension and verification of the essence of the soul, these are not "two separate kinds of knowledge, but two stages in the acquisition of the science of the soul" (193).

The final chapter is a speculative application of St. Thomas's notions to "the psychological phenomena associated with selfhood" (199). Cory first explores the universal clarity of the distinction of the self and the "other," calling this "subject-viewpoint." Following chapter 6, Cory proposes that the correlativity of the knower and the known means that every object known is known under the aspect of "not-me" (203), as distinct from myself as the "backdrop" of cognition (204). Does this mean that not even the first grasp of being can occur without a negation? (Saint Thomas's discussions of difference, division, and otherness as essentially posterior modes of cognizing reality may pose a challenge for Cory's interpretation here.) Related to these phenomena, Cory reflects on the first-person character of the knowing subject, in which the object is characterized as "it"; the intellect itself can have no "outside vantage point" from which to contemplate itself as other, thanks to its immateriality and simplicity. Lastly, Cory considers St. Thomas's explanation of the asymmetry between time and thought to show that the person's consistent and stable sense of self over time is based on implicit self-awareness, since it presents "the experience of a single trans-temporal subject anchoring past and present acts" (213).

At risk of seeming ungrateful, I will offer two small criticisms of this book. First, taken in isolation, some things Cory says in chapter 6, in pressing her

claim for the reciprocal and symmetrical manifestations of object and knower, seem to blur the order of knowledge; a certain asymmetry cannot be overcome, since the implicit awareness of the self in contemplating the external object is necessarily prior to the implicit awareness of the latter when contemplating the former. More significant, I think, is Cory's omission of the role of the *sensus communis* in the beginnings of self-knowledge. The reader could easily get the idea that the intellect alone bends back upon sensation, and that the inner senses have no contribution here. Cory is no doubt trying to focus on the deeper self-knowledge available only to the rational animal, but I suspect that extended consideration of the common sense would reveal both a greater sophistication in St. Thomas's teaching and even illuminate the mechanism underlying implicit (intellectual) self-awareness.

That being said, Cory's impressive work is a substantial step forward in the study of St. Thomas's epistemology of self-knowledge, and of several aspects of his epistemology in general. Still more importantly, by elaborating St. Thomas's teaching, the contemporary philosopher of psychology now has available a perspective that is both ingenious and novel (albeit old) from which to meditate on modern puzzles about the self. In other words, as Cory points out in her introduction, her investigation of St. Thomas is not limited to the historical excavation of a medieval theory but engages living philosophy as well.

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Analogies of Transcendence: An Essay on Nature, Grace, and Modernity. By STEPHEN M. FIELDS, S.J. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 294. $69.95 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8132-2855-6.

While the ship of "pure nature" still floats in some theological tidewaters, Stephen Fields's *Analogies of Transcendence* offers reason to hope that it will never sail again on the open seas. That, to put it bluntly, is the polemical point of this book: that there is no such thing as "pure nature" and that there never was (149). But *Analogies of Transcendence* is more than a polemic against a view that, in the judgment of this reviewer, is a theological fiction and a distortion of the teaching of the Angelic Doctor—among the deleterious consequences of which are that it effectively keeps transcendence from shining through nature,

eo ipso deprives the latter of its inherently symbolic character, and clears the way for ever more parking lots and flat-roofed strip malls. The world thus produced, according to the strict terms of this theory, would not even qualify as "profane"—as that domain whose existence is defined by its proximity and ordering to the "temple" (*pro-fanum*). All of that—in short, the modern secular world—is the dark, disenchanted background against which Fields proposes a richer, more Baroque, and more adequate theology of the interplay between nature and grace.

The book consists of three parts (divided into seven chapters), an afterword, and an appendix. The first part offers a historical overview of various models of nature and grace. Chapter 1 presents the problematic theory of "pure nature." This theory, according to Fields, originated in a one-sided interpretation of the more aporetic and dynamic thought of the Angelic Doctor, became an explicit theory by the time of Cajetan and Sylvester of Ferrara in the sixteenth century, and thence came to dominate the interpretation of Thomas for centuries—precisely the time needed for the secular to be born—until it was called into question by, among others, Henri de Lubac (19). After problematizing the Neo-Scholastic ossification of the genuinely dynamic, even playful, relation between nature and grace, chapter 2 examines a number of "attempted reunions," specifically, those of Johann Adam Möhler, Max Seckler, Maurice Blondel, Karl Rahner, and, somewhat surprisingly, even G. W. F. Hegel, who is appreciated for his philosophy of art, so much so that Fields finds in him, *mutatis mutandis*, an exponent of "an analogy of beauty" (52), though he is perhaps too readily identified here with Romanticism (49 and 186).

Fields begins with Möhler's *Symbolik,* which he takes to provide a Romantic account of doctrines as "intrinsically symbolic," that is to say, as representing "a divine surplus of meaning that transcends their finite symbolic form" (46-47). Fields's reading of Möhler is initially somewhat jarring because *Symbolik* is a fairly straightforward exposition of various Christian confessions (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, etc.), and is therefore somewhat misleadingly translated into English as *Symbolism*. There is some justification for reading *Symbolik* this way, at least if one reads it in light of Möhler's earlier and more obviously Romantic *Unity in the Church*. But it is nevertheless somewhat worrisome. For, granting that no human word or concept can fully signify divine realities, are doctrines not more than symbols? In response to such concerns, Fields assures us that "they import real knowledge," because while "their form consists of historically conditioned concepts and images, the finitude of this form implicitly carries the immanence of the Spirit's activity" (47-48). And so, by analogy, one might speak of the glory of doctrine in the way that Paul speaks of the glory

contained in earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7), as a further specification of the way that nature "dynamically mediates the radiance of grace" (52).

The core of this substantial chapter, however, is Fields's reception of the thought of Seckler (b. 1927), an emeritus Tübingen theologian, who undertakes a more rigorous and systematic treatment of the concept of natural desire in Thomas than we find, say, in de Lubac. Indeed, Fields avows with Edward Schillebeeckx, who likewise commends Seckler, that the latter "surpasses everything [on the subject] that we have hitherto been offered" (57). Specifically, what Fields appreciates is Seckler's understanding of "the instinct of faith" as a kind of "*a priori* predisposition" through which grace is already operative, "moving the human heart (mind and will) to apprehend the objective value of revelation" (58). Fields is well aware of the concern this could elicit: "Does Seckler's position exact grace and so undermine its gratuity?" (59). Indeed, does Seckler's position entail that human beings have a natural claim to the beatific vision (60), so that grace is, in effect, no longer grace? Not only is this an understandable concern; it is precisely the concern expressed by Pius XII in *Humani Generis*. After all, what would grace be if not gratuitous? And for advocates of pure nature, it is a concern that is taken to justify their own theory that intellectual natures are *not* ordered by nature to the beatific vision but to purely natural ends proportionate to them. For how else can one defend divine freedom and the graciousness of that divine assistance without which nature could never attain what is utterly beyond it?

As understandable as such concerns may be, Fields ably demonstrates that they are misplaced. For what the advocates of pure nature fail to appreciate is that the orders of nature and grace, creation and redemption, while distinct, are ultimately comprised within a *single* economy that is initiated with creation—a creation that is created in Christ to be redeemed by Christ, the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8), from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). Does this mean that divine freedom is compromised? By no means, no more than divine freedom could be constrained by divine election. For God freely chooses to bestow grace on a world that he knows will fall from the beginning: "The free intention to create in light of its consequences embraces, therefore, the gratuity to redeem (and vice versa)" (60; see also 71). Thus, Fields says, "Redemption and creation are reciprocally entailed. If it seems from human nature's having one supernatural end that grace is exacted, this is an appearance, not the reality" (60).

Like a good field marshal, Fields enlists other heroes in his campaign, such as Blondel, whose penetrating analysis of the will (specifically, of the willed will and the willing will) shows the supernatural to be the transcendent goal of action, "[arising] immanently from the recognition of action's impotence to consummate humanity's destiny" (64). In short, the will that arises *within*

nature points inevitably *beyond* it (ibid.). And so, by way of a demonstration of the will's dynamic openness and inevitable inconclusiveness, Blondel leads us like a philosophical Virgil to the paradoxical mystery that *humanity is made for what transcends it*. As Fields tersely puts it, "as created, humanity is, in itself, a religious vocation: an obediential potential . . . for union with God in grace. Dynamically open, nature struggles in 'a perpetual dissatisfaction,' whose solution is more practical than speculative" (65, quoting James Le Grys). The solution, in other words, is less a matter of the intellect than it is a matter of the will (as it was for Augustine), specifically, of the surrender of the will to that grace that is mysteriously given from the foundation of the world.

But, again, we face the question: is grace not thus constrained? Has it not been turned into a static reality, a standing reserve, a possession, an *opus operatum* that can be doled out cheaply, against which Dietrich Bonhoeffer bore prophetic witness? Have we not again offended against divine sovereignty? The answer to such legitimate questions is perhaps best given by another: Is a father constrained to give his child a gift that will satisfy the child's longing for it? No; the only constraint one can speak of here is that of love, which is a free necessity. Likewise, to say that nature longs for a gift is not to say that nature can envision it (1 Cor 2:9), much less lay claim to it—no more than Adam, who longed for a helpmate, could have envisioned or demanded Eve, even though she is "flesh from his flesh." She is rather, we might say, at once novel and connatural to him. So it is with the union of nature and grace, which is freely given in response to nature's deepest longing (see 65).

Another enlisted hero is Rahner, who does with the intellect what Blondel did with the will, showing that the former, rather than reaching finality in any finite thing, terminates in absolute being as the condition for the possibility of any comprehension whatsoever, being "the infinite horizon against which all finite objects can be known" (67). Thus, though infinite and *transcendent*, absolute being is in some sense *immanent* to the intellect and "pre-apprehended" by it, whether one is aware of it or not. And so, for Rahner, God qua absolute being can be said to be the implicit first principle and sine qua non of knowledge. But since all natural knowledge of God occurs within the order of grace (the notion of "pure nature" being an abstraction from the one and only economy of salvation), "the pre-apprehended horizon of infinite being" is at the same time a kind of predisposition and implicit desire for grace, indeed, as Fields puts it, "an implicit offer of grace" (ibid.).

Yet, notwithstanding the usefulness of Rahner's "supernatural existential," Fields finds his account of nature ultimately too thin—to the point that "nature can be lost in grace like a thimble of water in a glass of wine" (71). In other words, Fields finds Rahner too close to the opposing error—not that of

separating the orders of nature and grace, but of confusing them, concluding, "it is hard to see how, despite its Thomist provenance, the supernatural existential retains, any more than Barth, a robust notion of nature" (72). "To avoid this problem," Fields then adds, anticipating the rest of the book, "we need to find a conceptual framework that protects nature's dignity in its co-operation with grace" (ibid.; see 250). And so, guided no longer by solutions centered on nature's inherent dynamism (in Blondel, de Lubac, Seckler, and Rahner) but now by Fields's rich aesthetic sensibility, which enables him to see nature as a "poetic artifact" and thus grace *in* nature as "grace's intrinsic symbol" (72), we cross the threshold from the "attempted reunions" of chapter 2 to some "recent weddings" in chapter 3.

Building on the work of their philosophical and theological predecessors, the heroes of this chapter are John Paul II and Benedict XVI, each of whom "seizes on the harmonious interpenetration of" nature and grace and leads us deeper into the paradoxical mystery that "nature realizes its own autonomy only when it mediates a higher synthesis" (74). This, we might say, is the book's core insight: that nature is *itself* and comes into *its own* insofar as it is a sign, symbol, and embodiment—an analogy(!)—of the grace that *exceeds* it. The same is true, we might add, at the noetic level of faith and reason: finite reason comes into *its own* inasmuch as it admits, is illuminated by, and becomes a transparency—an analogy—of the Logos that *transcends* it. This is not to deny that rational natures are susceptible to curving in upon themselves in sin, thereby foreclosing the possibility of their full actualization in paradoxically transcending themselves. But the fallenness of rational natures is no excuse to wallow in immanence; for "reason 'yearns for the infinite riches' beyond it" (75, quoting *Fides et Ratio*), this being an obscure sign, as it were, of faith within reason, calling it out of itself and into its proper depths. Indeed, following John Paul II, the call to faith is in some sense immanent to reason, coming ultimately from the Logos, who enlightens everyone who comes into the world (John 1:9).

But if this is true of the noetic relationship between faith and reason, then it applies equally to the relationship between nature and grace, which is its ontic correlate. We might summarize as follows: just as faith is in some sense in reason in the form of a quasi-religious yearning that calls reason unto itself by calling it beyond itself, so too grace is in some sense in nature, calling it unto itself by calling it beyond itself. Such is the "higher synthesis," so ancient and so new, messier but truer than any so-called pure nature, that Fields has in view—a synthesis that overcomes the dialectic of grace and pure nature by helping us to see that grace, while transcending nature, is nevertheless "ingredient in nature, which it originates, stimulates, and completes" (74-75). Thus, for Fields, John Paul II takes us one step further than his predecessors "by evolving within the

church's magisterium various strains of thought developed in philosophy and theology since the early nineteenth century" (77-78), he points the way to a deeper healing of "the post-Baroque breach between nature and grace" (80). What is more, he shows us how this "higher synthesis" applies to the mystery of human freedom, which is achieved precisely through the Eucharist. As Fields puts it, in reference to the future pope's homily at a Eucharistic congress in 1976, in freely giving ourselves to Christ, who gives us his divine freedom, "we give ourselves over to the selves whom we are able to become" (88). Here we have what amounts to a Catholic charter of human freedom. By entering into this marvelous exchange of divine and human freedom in Christ, "we attain freedom's twin goals: horizontal and vertical transcendence" (89), becoming through Christ (by grace) the persons we (by nature) were created to be (90).

Fields then turns to Benedict XVI, who continues this essentially analogical line of thinking about nature and grace. This is evident from the pontiff's rejection in *Deus Caritas Est* of Anders Nygren's equivocal understanding of eros and agape. For "God's redeeming activity is the prime analogate of both loves. In the incarnate Word, eros and charity are perfectly conjoined" (90). By the same token, Benedict refuses any opposition between justice and charity that would make the state all about justice (understood as absolute in itself) and leave love to charitable NGOs. For "justice is . . . a sign of love and a means to love" (94) and is therefore implicitly ordered to love. Indeed, as the pope puts it in *Spe Salvi,* in the end "only something infinite will suffice" (101). Here, again, therefore, the final word with regard to nature and grace (as well as such related couplets as reason and faith, human and divine freedom, eros and agape, justice and charity, state and church) is analogy, whereby the former term in each pair is a sign, a token, a symbol—in short, an *analogy!*—of transcendence. All of this goes to explain the plural form in Fields's title.

Having examined the thought of the two recent pontiffs, Fields returns at the conclusion of part 1 to the question of the Church's position concerning "pure nature." Admittedly, "it would be stretching the point to claim that either pope decisively rejects the theory of pure nature. Nonetheless, the thought of both shows sufficient congruence with themes running through recent efforts to reunite nature and grace that, combined with their debt to Blondel, they seem to signal a turn away from it" (101-2). Accordingly, building on the thought of Möhler, Blondel, de Lubac, Seckler, Rahner, and the two pontiffs, the rest of the book is Fields's attempt to construct a more viable "sacramental" model—an analogical model—of the relation between nature and grace, affirming both "nature's dynamic relation to the transcendent source that grounds it" (105) and "nature as grace's intrinsic symbol" (106).

The last two parts of the book are in some ways, like the first, a series of vignettes, and here again Seckler and Rahner are significant—Seckler for his reading of Thomas (110-14) and Rahner for his theology of the *Realsymbol* (114-28). For his part, Seckler helps us to see that for Thomas "one and the

same grace both calls and justifies" (referring to *STh* I-II, q. 113, a. 8, ad 2) and "that prevenient and sanctifying grace are integrally distinct, not equivocally disjoined" (111). Indeed, following Seckler, we are led to see that "in the wedding of divine and human freedom, grace perfects the form of human nature that it has, from the outset, prepared to be perfected," and that in turn, "nature serves as the substratum of grace's analogy" (111-12). Again, analogy obtains: for while nature is "squarely [lodged] . . . within the graced order," so much so as to be grace's analogy, the two are nevertheless "appropriately differentiated within their unity" (113). As for Rahner, we find that his understanding of the *Realsymbol*—for example, the way that matter (the body) incarnates and symbolizes form (the soul)—"advances our understanding of the sacramental relation between nature and grace," showing that each signifies the other and that they constitute a unity-in-difference with one another, indeed, that "neither can obtain in history without the other" (118-19). In brief, as Fields finely puts it, "grace consummates the nature that incarnates it" (123). Thus Rahner, too, helps "us to understand the analogous relations between creation and redemption and between prevenient and sanctifying grace," for both originate in the freedom of the one God, who has eternally ordained that human nature would be restored by grace to the supernatural end for which it was created (121).

There is much more that could be said about this wonderful and highly instructive book. Although it is a kind of patchwork of material and may therefore disappoint those looking for a more systematic treatise, it nevertheless admirably succeeds in helping us to think better, which is to say, analogically, about nature and grace. Moreover, it helps us better to appreciate the striking relevance of analogy as a genuinely Catholic *Denkform* to any number of theological topics: from the analogy between realized and future eschatology (128-34); to the analogy between church and state (130-34), whereby, somewhat surprisingly, Fields defends John Courtney Murray against David L. Schindler; to theological aesthetics in chapter 5, where Fields draws on Hans Urs von Balthasar (and Pseudo-Dionysius), as well as on the art of Matthias Grünewald and Georges Rouault, in order to affirm an "analogous analogy" of beauty (169-80); to the metaphysical speculation of chapter 8 on the topic of emergence, in which Fields grounds the self-transcending movement of creatures, and their own novelty, in that prior self-transcendence whereby the infinite transcends itself to become the immanent core of spontaneously creative finite substances (188-89); to, finally, the analogy between Christianity and other religions in chapter 7, whereby Christianity figures as the prime analogate of religious experience (241). From this brief review alone, it should be clear how much consideration this book deserves. One thinks here especially of the need for a more analogical relation between church and state, corresponding to the reality of the relation between nature and grace within the one order of creation-and-redemption, rather than their strict secular separation, that is, at the end of the day, as artificial as the theory of pure nature from which it is derived; and of the need in interreligious dialogue to recognize similarities

without abandoning the analogical ordering of all religions to the *vera religio*, and thereby to avoid the Scylla of religious pluralism and the Charybdis of religious fundamentalism. But given the richness of the book and how much Fields is trying to do in each chapter, it is also a book that, like any work of art, takes time to digest and appreciate.

In conclusion, I would simply note two things, one trivial, the other more substantial. First, though it is not mentioned, a quotation attributed to Basil (154) is presumably a quotation from Wisdom 13:5 (cf. Rom 1:20). Second, the book would in my view have been even stronger (though, of course, also longer) had it also worked through the contribution of another Jesuit—one who had more to say about the importance of analogy to Catholic theology than arguably any Catholic thinker hitherto, and whose dynamic formula of the analogy of being in terms of God in-and-beyond creation, transcendence in-and-beyond immanence, grace in-and-beyond nature, and so on, could have provided even further support for the argument the book advances. I mean, of course, Erich Przywara, who stands in the background of the thought of Balthasar and Rahner, though he is ultimately more Thomistic than either of them; who like none other, except perhaps Blondel, cracked open the immanence of nature, reason, and philosophy—like an oyster—to grace, faith, and theology; and who saw the analogy between the orders of nature and grace as a unity-in-difference between Acts 17:28 and 2 Pet 1:4. And yet, what is so wonderful about Fields's book is that he seems to have come independently to the same conclusion: that analogy remains not only a fundamental but also a wide-ranging principle of Catholic theology.

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