GOD'S INVOLVEMENT IN CREATURELY ACTION: PHYSICAL PREMOTION, ARISTOTELIAN PREMOTION, OR A DIMENSION OF CREATION-CONSERVATION?

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T HE QUESTION OF how two agents—creaturely and divine—can bring about one action has been a theo-logical conundrum for ages.[1] Thomas Aquinas famously states in the *Summa contra gentiles*—and history tells us that this is certainly an understatement—that "*some* people . . . seem to find it difficult to understand that natural effects are attributed to God and a natural agent."[2] Indeed, a no less reverent mind than Luis de Molina,[3] to give just one historical example, was troubled by Aquinas's teaching in the *Summa theologiae* that "one action does not proceed from two agents of one order, but nothing hinders one and the same action from proceeding from a primary and secondary agent."[4]

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[1] In this article, I will use the term "action" (*actio*) in a broad sense, not restricted to human action. In this broader sense, one could alternatively also speak of an operation (*operatio*). So, for the purpose of this article, I will use "action" and "operation" interchangeably. Since my aim is to explain how two agents can produce one action, the focus will be furthermore on transeunt rather than immanent action.

[2] *ScG* III, c. 70; emphasis added. Unless stated otherwise, all translations from the Latin are mine.

[3] Luis de Molina, *Concordia* XIV, 13, 26. For an English translation of the relevant passage, see https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/translat/molina26.htm. For a discussion of further, contemporary objections, see Simon Maria Kopf, *Reframing Providence: New Perspectives from Aquinas on the Divine Action Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 124-28 and 138-42.

[4] *STh* I, q. 105, a. 5, ad 2.

Drawing a distinction between primary and secondary causation, as suggested by the quotation above, is the Thomistic stock response to questions regarding God's involvement in creaturely action. But despite being the trademark of a Thomistic approach, the distinction is less clear-cut and straightforward than often assumed. Indeed, the history of interpreting Aquinas is rich in Thomistic ways of spelling out this distinction.

The objective of this article is to explore Aquinas's view on God's involvement in creaturely action by looking specifically at his doctrine of divine application. What sort of action does God perform in creaturely action? The aim is to find an interpretation that provides a rich enough toolkit to account for Aquinas's express teaching, but that does not multiply ontological entities beyond necessity.

To this end, I will first establish, in section I, the minimal textual basis for a discussion of God's activity in creaturely action. In section II, I shall discuss three interpretations of Aquinas: first Robert Matava's recent contribution, then two most influential expositions of the Thomistic account in the twentieth century, namely, the interpretations advanced by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Bernard Lonergan. Matava presents a minimalist approach; Garrigou-Lagrange defends the Thomistic standard view; and Lonergan arguably holds a middle position. Finally, in section III, I will delineate the differences in the metaphysics of creaturely action. I will argue that Aristotelian physical premotion provides a substantive alternative to the traditional account of physical premotion—an alternative that holds that divine application is motion and therefore does not reduce the *divina applicatio* to a dimension of creation-conservation.

I. THE TEACHING OF THOMAS AQUINAS

The central question for this section is as follows: Is God's primary causality restricted to the creation and conservation *of* creaturely action or does God also act *in* creaturely action? To

argue that Aquinas teaches a divine action *in* creaturely action, I turn to his doctrine of divine application.[5]

A) *The Doctrine of Divine Application*

The doctrine of divine application states in its most fundamental form that God not only (a) creates and (b) conserves creaturely powers in being but also (c) applies these powers to act. The assertion of a divine application is therefore evidence that, for Aquinas, God's involvement in creatures' actions goes beyond their (a) creation and (b) conservation in being.

1. *Summa contra gentiles*

As Bernard McGinn and Bernard Lonergan have elaborated,[6] the doctrine of divine application first appears in the *Summa contra gentiles*. In his exposition of God's agency in creaturely action,[7] Aquinas suggests distinguishing between the *agent* and its *power*: the thing itself that acts (*rem ipsam quae agit*) and the power by which it acts (*virtutem qua agit*). Each agent, then, acts by virtue of its power.[8]

The basic statement, which, I take it,[9] receives further plausibility and support from contemporary discussions concerning dispositionalism and powers ontology, is relatively clear in

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[5] This section draws heavily and at times verbatim on my exposition of the doctrine of divine application in Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 133-38.

[6] Bernard McGinn, "The Development of the Thought of Thomas Aquinas: On the Reconciliation of Divine Providence and Contingent Action," *The Thomist* 39 (1975): 741-52; Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 75-93.

[7] *ScG* III, c. 67 and c. 70.

[8] *ScG* III, c. 70.

[9] For a discussion of powers in the context of, and their relevance for, Scholasticism, see Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm: Editiones Scholasticae, 2014), 45-79; see also Simon Maria Kopf, "Teleology, Providence, and Powers," in *Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics and the Theology of Nature*, ed. William M. R. Simpson, Robert C. Koons, and James Orr (London: Routledge, 2022), 383-407.

Aquinas. An agent (*agens*) brings about an action (*actio*) by virtue of its power (*virtus*). Causation, then, is the manifestation of these powers. In the case of creatures, however, the agent *is not* its power.[10] The difference between God and creatures is that creaturely agents *have* powers, while God *is* power. In Scholastic terms, God alone is power by his essence. Unlike God, creatures are not their powers, but derive their powers from God. This is where the doctrine of divine application comes into play. The power of creaturely agents is derived from the power of God. Because Aquinas distinguishes between the agent and its power, he can say that both the proximate creaturely cause and God wholly and immediately cause one and the same effect, because the agent ultimately acts by virtue of the divine power. Its own power is a derived power—a power caused, conserved, and applied to action by God.[11] Aquinas writes:

> The power of the inferior agent, however, depends on the power of the superior agent, inasmuch as the superior agent [a] gives the power itself [dat virtutem ipsam] to the inferior agent through which it acts; and [b] conserves it [conservat eam], and also [c] applies it to act [applicat eam ad agendum].[12]

In other words, creatures *are* agents but *have* powers. God (a) gives them creaturely powers and (b) conserves these powers in being but also (c) applies them to act. Creaturely causation is therefore a form of "caused causation."[13] God and creatures can both wholly and immediately cause one and the same action because creaturely agents act by virtue of God's power. Whereas God acts by an immediacy of power, the creature as proximate

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[10] A creature is not its power because it is not its essence—that whereby a thing is what it is—at least not in the sense that it is an essence that does not receive existence. A creature has an essence; it has an essence from another, namely, from God. Aquinas makes a distinction between the essence (*essentia*), power (*virtus*), and operation (*operatio*), or action, of creaturely agents: if the essence of an agent is from another (at least in the sense that it receives existence), then the power and operation of that agent must be from another, too (II *Sent.*, d. 37, q. 2, a. 2). See Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 131.

[11] *ScG* III, c. 70.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 88.

cause acts by an immediacy of supposit, the acting subject or individual substance.[14]

2. *De potentia Dei*

The doctrine of divine application finds its most detailed expression in the disputed questions *De potentia*. It becomes apparent there that when Aquinas says "applying the power to act" he does not mean the creation or conservation of the power, but rather God's moving the power to act. Aquinas states:

> But since no thing moves or acts of itself unless it is an unmoved mover; in the third mode one thing is said to be the cause of another's action to the extent that [c] it moves it to act [movet eam ad agendum]; by this is not to be understood [a] the bestowal [collatio] or [b] conservation of the active power, but [c] the application of the power to action [applicatio virtutis ad actionem].[15]

The account Aquinas presents in *De potentia* has a four-part structure. Ignacio Silva has called the first two elements the "founding moments" of God's activity in creaturely action; the second two elements he has termed "dynamic moments."[16]

On the one hand, God (a) creates and (b) conserves all creaturely powers in being. By virtue of these activities, God bestows on all creatures the powers by which they act. God's creation and conservation of powers are thus the first and second moments of God's founding activity.[17]

On the other hand, God also (c) moves and applies these powers to act. The example Aquinas uses to illustrate this appli-

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[14] *ScG* III, c. 70; on the distinction of supposit and power, see also *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7; *STh* I, q. 36, a. 3, ad 1 and ad 4; "in each action two things must be considered, namely, [1] the supposit that acts [suppositum agens], and [2] the power by which it acts [virtutem qua agit]" (*STh* I, q. 36, a. 3, ad 1).

[15] *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7.

[16] Ignacio Silva, "Divine Action and Thomism: Why Thomas Aquinas's Thought Is Attractive Today," *Acta Philosophica* 25 (2016): 71-74; Ignacio Silva, *Providence and Science in a World of Contingency: Thomas Aquinas' Metaphysics of Divine Action* (London: Routledge, 2022), 122-34.

[17] *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7.

cation is a human person moving a sharp knife, thereby ap-
plying the sharpness of the knife to act, namely, to the act of
cutting. In this sense, the human person is the cause of the
cutting of the knife. The knife in turn relies on the power of
another to perform its action. Similarly, creaturely agents
depend on the power of God to perform their action.
Creaturely agents can act by their powers only if God applies
them to act. This is the third moment, and the first dynamic
moment, of God's activity in creaturely action.[18]

The second dynamic moment is God's (d) instrumental
application of creaturely powers. Every effect, insofar as it is,
participates in being as such (*esse*). But being as such is an effect
that only God can cause, on Aquinas's view.[19] Every creaturely
agent producing an effect must therefore participate as instru-
mental cause in God's activity. Rudi te Velde comments:

Thomas attributes a double operation to the instrumental cause, one in virtue
of its own power and another in virtue of the participation in the power of the
principal cause. . . . [Therefore,] the second cause has a double operation, one
in virtue of its own nature and another in virtue of the immanence of the
power of the first cause.[20]

Instrumental causation here means that a principal cause makes
use of the powers of the instrument beyond what the instrument
could achieve on its own account and through its own powers.
The defining feature of an instrumental cause is thus that the
effect is disproportionate to its nature.[21] To use Aquinas's

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.; for further explication of this point, see John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas
on Creatures as Causes of *Esse*," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 40 (2000):
197-213; and Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*
(Leiden: Brill, 1995), 160-83.

[20] Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 173; see also *STh* III, q. 62, a. 1, ad 2.

[21] By implication, then, the effect of the third element of God's agency in creaturely
action, namely, applying and moving the creaturely power to act in the quadripartite
structure, would appear to be proportionate to the creaturely cause. Gloria Frost
elaborates the difference thus: "The core of Aquinas's views on instrumental causality
can be summarized in three key theses: (1) *Dual action thesis*: Instruments have a
twofold action, one of which is proper to the instrument according to its own inherent
forms and another action which goes beyond that which the instrument's own native

example, when sculpting wood to make an artifact, the craftsman applies the power of the axe to act, but in a way that goes beyond the capacity of the axe. It is not merely by the applied sharpness of the axe that the craftsman produces the artifact, but more importantly by his own power. In short, since God is the only cause of being as such, but every effect in a way participates in being, God is the principal agent of every secondary cause.[22] "So, therefore, God is the cause of every action, inasmuch as any agent is an instrument of the divine power operating."[23] Such instrumental causation is the fourth moment, and second dynamic moment, of God's activity in creaturely action. Aquinas summarizes the position as follows:

In this manner, therefore, God is the cause of any action inasmuch as he [a] gives the power to act [dat virtutem agendi], and inasmuch as he [b] conserves it [conservat eam], and inasmuch as he [c] applies it to action [applicat actioni], and inasmuch as [d] every other power acts by virtue of his power.[24]

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powers can achieve. (2) *Moved mover thesis*: The instrument operates toward this second action (i.e. the one which is beyond its own power) only in so far as it is moved by the principal cause. (3) *Borrowed power thesis*: Through being moved, the instrument receives a transitory power from the principal cause which enables it to work toward the second action" (Gloria Frost, *Aquinas on Efficient Causation and Causal Powers* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022], 208). By contrast, the characteristics of causes that depend on another efficient cause to perform their action, though not in an instrumental sense where the effect is disproportionate to the cause, as in the case of the fourth element of God's action in creaturely action, she describes thus: "(1) Correlative . . . causes are each of a different nature. (2) Each cause supplies a different type of power which is required for the production of the effect. (3) One nature and its power is greater than the other nature and its power. The greater cause's power has a more universal scope than the lesser cause's power. (3) The less perfect cause depends on the more perfect one to exercise its power in the production of the effect" (ibid., 218). The difference is here, as she points out, that the end for which the agent acts is its own. Thus, unlike in cases of instrumental causation, the effect is in a sense proportionate to the power of the agent, even though the agent depends on the power of another to perform its action. See ibid., 207-27.

[22] *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

In passing, it should be noted that when talking about the fourth moment of God's action, Aquinas speaks again of motion:

For the instrument is in a manner the cause of the effect of the principal cause, not through its own form or power, but to the extent that it participates somewhat in the power of the principal cause through its motion [per motum eius], just as the axe is not the cause of the thing crafted through its own form or power, but through the power of the craftsman by which it is moved [movetur] and in which it somehow participates.[25]

Thus, Aquinas reaches again the conclusion that God acts immediately in creaturely action, namely, by an immediacy of power; the proximate creaturely cause, however, has an immediacy of supposit to its effect.[26]

3. *Summa theologiae*

In the *Summa theologiae* Aquinas expresses the doctrine of divine application in terms of form. Employing the four traditional kinds of causes—final, efficient, formal, and material—Aquinas points out that end, agent, and form are all principles of action: the end as that which moves the agent; the agent as that which moves; and the form, or the power grounded in the form, as that which the agent applies to action.[27] "God not only [a] gives forms [dat formas] to things, but also [b] conserves them [conservat eas] in being, and [c] applies them to act [applicat eas ad agendum], and is the end of all actions."[28] Aquinas then reiterates that if there are many ordered agents (multa agentia ordinata), the second agent always acts in virtue of the first, that is to say, in the power of the first (in virtute). The reason for this, he argues, is "because the first agent moves the second agent to act [primum agens movet secundum ad agendum]."[29] Secondary causes always act in the power of the

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] *STh* I, q. 105, a. 5.
[28] Ibid., ad 3.
[29] *STh* I, q. 105, a. 5.

first cause, and this means, says Aquinas, that God moves secondary causes to act. This is the doctrine of divine application.

This brief exposition suffices to show that Aquinas teaches a divine action *in* creaturely action.[30] The doctrine of divine application states in its most fundamental form that God not only (a) creates and (b) conserves in being creaturely powers, but also (c) applies and moves them to act. God's involvement in creaturely action goes beyond creation and conservation, as God also applies and moves the created and conserved powers to act. And, according to the more detailed quadripartite structure presented in *De potentia*, God applies these powers to act (c) according to or (d) beyond the nature of the creatures' own powers. In both cases, Aquinas expresses the divine application of creaturely powers in terms of motion: God moves and applies creaturely powers to act. In short, Aquinas teaches a divine application and motion of all powers of creatures to act, both in accordance with and beyond their nature. By these created, conserved, and applied powers, then, creaturely agents can act; however, these powers are nonetheless intrinsic, since they are grounded in the (substantial) form of the creature.

II. THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF AQUINAS'S
DOCTRINE OF APPLICATION

Having laid a textual foundation with the information above, I shall now turn to three interpretations of Aquinas's doctrine of divine application. In my exposition, I will start with a minimalist approach, addressing the question of whether divine application might be reducible to God's creative act. I will then show why motion, as the reduction of potency to act, is essential for every creaturely action according to the traditional Thomistic account. On this basis, I will finally discuss a third interpretation that seeks to steer a middle course, one that acknowledges the need for divine motion but denies an additional uncreated motion to account for it.

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[30] For more details on the doctrine of divine application, see Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 128-46.

A) Robert Matava: Application as a Dimension of Creation-Conservation

In his 2016 monograph on the controversy *de auxiliis*, Robert Matava has challenged the standard interpretation of divine application in terms of motion.[31] His interesting take provides a helpful way into the difficulties of interpreting Aquinas. Matava suggests that the *applicatio* in Aquinas is best understood as a dimension of creation-conservation. Matava proposes viewing Aquinas's application as an instance and mode of creation.[32] He says:

The idea of application, as an extension or implication of creation, reveals how thoroughgoing a claim the doctrine of creation is: God's causation of a thing is total. Things depend on God *all the way down*, inclusive of their operations. The claim that God applies creatures to action . . . is perhaps the most radical claim of creation.[33]

Similarly to Aquinas's express teaching that conservation is the continuation of the act of creation,[34] Matava submits that application should be understood as another mode and extended dimension of creation. He suggests that one ought to interpret divine application, like conservation, in terms of *creation*. For

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[31] Robert J. Matava, *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Bánez, Physical Premotion and the Controversy de Auxiliis Revisited* (Boston: Brill, 2016). Strictly speaking, Matava's thesis concerns specifically God's involvement in human action. His claim is "that Thomas understands God's movement of the human free-choice capacity {liber arbitrium} as an instance of God's creative causality" (ibid., 242). In this way, Matava seeks to remove, or circumvent, the traditional point of disagreement between the opposing parties in the controversy *de auxiliis*: the theory of physical premotion. For our purposes, I am only interested in his take on the doctrine of divine application. As an interpretation of Aquinas's *applicatio*, to be sure, his thesis is also a general one concerning all creaturely operation.

[32] Matava speaks of conservation and application as "instances of God's creative causality" (ibid., 250), as an "extension of their dependence on him in being" (ibid., 254); motion in this context he interprets as an "instance of God's creative causality" (ibid., 248) and application as a "mode of his creative causality" (ibid., 255).

[33] Ibid., 255.

[34] *STh* I, q. 104, a. 1, ad 4. Matava comments: "Aquinas's claim that conservation is the same reality as creation, just understood in a broader sense, may also be extended to God's application of creatures" (Matava, *Divine Causality*, 253).

Matava, both conservation and application are dimensions of the one divine creative act: "Divine application just is God's creative causality at work in the operations of creatures."[35]

What are we to make of Matava's take? For a start, there is an important textual difference between conservation and application. While Aquinas *does* say that conservation is the continuation of creation, he does *not* say that application is a dimension of creation.[36] But, admittedly, neither does he speak

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[35] Matava, *Divine Causality*, 237. Matava explains: "This does not mean that application should be reductively collapsed into creation (or conservation) any more than conservation should be reductively collapsed into creation. But the purpose of distinguishing application from creation and conservation is not to affirm a difference in divine action, but rather to deny that the actual operation of creatures, while distinct from God, is independent of him" (ibid., 236-37). Clearly, for Aquinas, the creaturely operation is not independent of God, nor does the distinction of different moments of one divine action constitute a multitude of actions in God, for every action is his essence (see Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 143-46). But the point in question is whether, and in what sense, divine application goes beyond creation-conservation. Matava suggests not, at least not as divine motion: "Divine causality can only be parsed into distinct 'modes' from a creaturely perspective. That is because time is the prism which refracts the clear light of God's *esse*-communicating action into the spectrum of creation, conservation and application. Whereas creation marks the beginning of time, conservation and application are only intelligible within the context of time. Conservation is the holding in being, through a duration, of what existed before, while application is the motion (change) of an existing being, and change implies before and after. Thus, time allows a principled distinction to be made between creation in the strict sense . . . and a broader understanding of God's creative causality as conservation and application. The crucial point, however, is that despite these distinctions, what God is up to in each case is fundamentally the same: He is making to-be" (Matava, *Divine Causality*, 249-50).

[36] I cannot here engage in any detail with the textual arguments Matava presents in favor of his interpretation, which by and large, and despite good effort, fail to convince me in the end. What I wish to mention here, in passing, is the fact that the aim of Aquinas's simile of light/color in the air, it seems to me, is to illustrate the difference between causes of being and causes of becoming. This is, in my opinion, the reason why similar examples come up in his discussion of creation, conservation, and application; concluding from this that application is essentially creation-conservation seems to me, without further evidence, to be a stretch. The texts in question are *De Pot.*, q. 3, a 7, ad 7; *STh* I, q. 8, a. 1; q. 104, a. 1, ad 4; q. 105, a. 5. In *STh* I, q. 105, a. 5, the context of the simile is clearly conservation. In *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7, the simile illustrates instrumental causation. Lonergan comments: "Now the favorite illustration of the *esse incompletum* of a form or an idea appears to be *color in aere*. Heat is not merely in the fire and in the object heated: it is also in the intervening space *per modum naturae completae*; the air is really heated. But a color is in the object, and it is in the eye or

of "physical premotion," as the traditional Thomistic interpretation has it. Both are *interpretations* of Aquinas.

The main difficulty with Matava's interpretation, as he himself acknowledges,[37] is that Aquinas explicitly and repeatedly speaks of "motion" when explicating his doctrine of divine application. But creation—and arguably at least in some respect conservation as well—is not motion or change:[38] "creatio non est mutatio."[39] Matava therefore advises reducing "the question of change" to "the question about the *being* of change." On his view, application is reducible to creation because the "change" implied by the doctrine of divine application is not change itself but the very *being* of change. "Motion," then, in this context means creaturely participation in God's creative making to be.[40]

In the context of divine application, 'motion' is best understood as a mode of creation. If motion obtains within the created order, then God, as the universal provider of being, must cause it. In this way, God can be said to 'move' creatures to act. But strictly speaking, God does not cause the changing *as such* of things; rather, he causes the *being* as such of things, and change by derivation, as a logical consequence of his causing the being of things. God's 'changing' is his making change *to be*.[41]

So, Aquinas *says* motion, but does *not mean* motion. Motion cannot really be ascribed to God's action, unless perhaps metaphorically. Matava reduces application to the act of creation. What God does is create things: he gives being to everything, and only in virtue of giving being does God bring about change in the world. In a sense, Matava grants that application is motion, metaphorically speaking, but only because he interprets both motion and application as a dimension of creation-

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sense of vision, but the intervening air is not colored; hence the *species coloris in aere* is *per modum naturae incompletae*, it is *sola intentio*" (Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 290 n. 104). In *STh* I, q. 104, a. 1, ad 4 and in *STh* I, q. 8, a. 1 the context is again conservation.

[37] See Matava, *Divine Causality*, 246-47.

[38] *STh* I, q. 104, a. 1, ad 4.

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

[40] Matava, *Divine Causality*, 251.

[41] Ibid., 276.

conservation: "Thomas understands divine motion as a kind of broadly creative act."[42]

In summary, Matava concedes that Aquinas speaks of motion when explicating divine application. Nevertheless, Matava holds that application is ultimately not motion but an instance and mode of creation. According to his reading, "Aquinas appropriates the concept of motion to talk about God's operation in the operations of creatures,"[43] but in using the motion idiom he does not really refer to motion: "I think that in the final analysis, 'motion' in these contexts is simply a way of referring to God's creative causality."[44]

B) Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.: Physical Premotion

The Dominican Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange was a well-known proponent of the Thomistic theory of physical pre-motion (*praemotio physica*) mentioned above. I will turn to him for the exposition of the traditional (Dominican) Thomistic interpretation.

The apparent point of agreement between Matava and Garrigou-Lagrange is that not only creaturely *being* but also *action* must depend on God:

Just as the participated and limited *being* of creatures depends upon the causality of the first Being, who is the self-subsisting Being, so also does their *action*: for there is no reality that can be excluded from His controlling influence.[45]

The notion that both the being and action of all creatures must depend on God appears to be a consensus between the two, for Matava says, as quoted above, that "things depend on God *all the way down*, inclusive of their operations." Their fundamental point of disagreement concerns the question of how to

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[42] Ibid., 262-63.

[43] Ibid., 275.

[44] Ibid., 247.

[45] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. (London: Herder, 1939), 240-41; emphasis added.

safeguard this dependence of creaturely action, or operation, on God. In contrast to Matava, Garrigou-Lagrange claims that creation-conservation can only safeguard the subordination of creaturely causes *in being*, but not *in action*.[46] He states:

Without physical premotion we cannot safeguard in God the primacy of causality or the subordination of secondary causes in their very action. . . . Subordination of causes in their action consists in this, that the first cause moves and applies secondary causes to act, and that the secondary causes act only because they are moved by the primary cause.[47]

Contrary to Matava, Garrigou-Lagrange insists that the motion of which Aquinas speaks must be real.[48] What is needed in every creaturely action is so-called physical premotion. The concept of physical premotion is another interpretation of Aquinas, an invention by later Thomists in response to, and excluding, rival theological traditions. Three elements need to be considered for

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[46] Ibid., 298-99; see also *STh* I-II, q. 9, a 4. What is in question here is the very causality of creaturely agents. On the one hand, if each and every action of secondary causes were created *ex nihilo*, then they would be deprived of genuine causality. On the other hand, if there is no divine motion, but merely creation and conservation of creaturely powers, then the creaturely powers in potency to act will never be actualized. A motion must actualize the creaturely power in potency, must reduce potency to act, for creaturely powers cannot actualize themselves. If therefore divine application were merely creation-conservation, this would safeguard the subordination in being, but not in action: "Now just as the *being* of the creature is really dependent upon the divine creative action, so also is the *action* of the creature really dependent upon the divine action that is called motion" (Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 258; emphasis added).

[47] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 295-96.

[48] "The Thomists use the world 'premotion'," says Garrigou-Lagrange, "solely for the purpose of showing that the motion of which they speak is truly a motion that applies the secondary cause to act" (ibid., 247). Thus, application as the third moment of God's action in and through creaturely action is really a motion. While he would presumably acknowledge that God, in a sense, causes the "*being* of change," if the being of things changing rather than a hypostatization of change is meant here, this appears, based on God's creation and conservation, to be part of the fourth moment of God's activity, namely, God's instrumental causation. Garrigou-Lagrange uses the following analogy to express this: "this apple tree is the proper cause of this particular fruit, although God is the proper cause of the being of this same fruit" (ibid., 281).

the present purpose: (1) the attribute "physical," (2) the prefix "pre-", and, most of all, (3) the meaning of "motion."[49]

First, "physical premotion" denotes a motion pertaining to efficient, not to final, causality. The qualification "physical" sets the motion in question in contrast to so-called moral motion. Thus, it is a matter of the exercise of the act (physical), not the specification of the act (moral). Second, the prefix "pre-" expresses a priority of the motion in causality, not a priority in time. If there were no priority in causality, then a given action physically premoved would be divided up between divine and creaturely agents, like two persons pulling a boat. This would necessarily amount to a zero-sum game: the more God acts, the less the creature acts, and vice versa. In other words, the prefix "pre-" denotes the subordination of creaturely causality to God, the universal primary cause.[50]

Third, Garrigou-Lagrange vigorously defends the reality of the divine application as a *motion*, for two principal reasons, both mentioned in the quotation above. The first reason is, on the part of God, the priority of divine causation.[51] Everything, including creaturely actions, must depend upon, and be subordinated to, God as first cause and mover, whose causation

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[49] The importance of the controversial topic of predetermination to the theory of physical premotion, as presented by Garrigou-Lagrange, must be acknowledged (as a fourth element), but for the present purpose of comparing three interpretations of Aquinas's theory of divine application we may focus on the understanding of motion. Garrigou-Lagrange comments: "Therefore the Thomists use the expression 'predetermining physical premotion' only for the purpose of excluding the theories of simultaneous concurrence and indifferent premotion. If these theories had not been proposed . . . the Thomists would have been satisfied to speak about divine motion as St. Thomas did, for every motion as such is premotion, and every divine motion, as divine motion, cannot receive a determination or perfection that is not virtually included in the divine causality. We always come back to the same inevitable dilemma: 'God determining or determined'" (ibid., 250). This latter claim has been contested, among others, by Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 118-22.

[50] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 260-66 and 282.

[51] "Just as water does not heat unless it is heated, so every secondary cause . . . acts only if it is premoved by God, the very first cause. If it were otherwise, then this something of reality in the transition to act, which is required for the performance of . . . actions, would be withdrawn from God's universal causality that includes everything of reality and goodness external to Himself" (ibid., 260).

extends to everything. On the part of creatures there is a second reason that corresponds to the first, namely, that powers in potency to act need to be reduced to act, as the Scholastic axiom has it. These two reasons together establish the subordination of creaturely action to divine action.[52]

In more detail, on the part of creatures, the argument states that creaturely powers are in potency to act (*posse agere*), and in order actually to act (*actu agere*) they must be moved to act: "these powers, created and preserved in being by God, need to be moved as to receive the complement of causality."[53] Creaturely powers are powers in potency to act that need actualization, need to be moved to act by God—and this is what is called "divine application". Divine application is the physical premotion of every creaturely action:

> Every cause that is not of itself actually in act,[54] but only in potentiality to act, needs to be physically premoved to act. . . . To refuse to admit this . . . is to say that the greater comes from the less, the more perfect from the less perfect; for actually to act is a greater perfection than being able to act. If, therefore, the faculty to act were not moved, it would always remain in a state of potency and would never act.[55]

In other words, if the actualization of the creaturely powers in potency to act is not effected by God, then neither is there a priority of divine causality, nor can the reduction of the creaturely powers from potency to act be explained.

The specific characteristic of physical premotion is that, to account for the actualization of creaturely powers, the traditional Thomistic view posits not only (1) God's uncreated action and (2) the action of the creature but also (3) a physical premotion distinct from both (1) and (2). A defining feature of physical premotion as presented by Garrigou-Lagrange is that it is a "*created* motion received in the operative potency of the creature so as to cause it to pass into act."[56] He states:

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[52] Ibid., 295-300.
[53] Ibid., 257.
[54] I.e., always in act, but never in potency.
[55] Ibid., 296.
[56] Ibid., 251; emphasis added.

It is motion that is passively received in the secondary cause so as to induce it to act. . . . This motion . . . is really distinct both from [1] God's uncreated action upon which it depends, and from [2] the [created] act to which it is directed.[57]

According to the traditional theory of physical premotion as presented by Garrigou-Lagrange, we have to distinguish between three really distinct entities: (1) a divine active motion, (2) the creaturely action, and (3) a passive motion received by the creature from God to move and apply the creaturely power to act. On this view, divine application is therefore a created passive motion distinct from both the uncreated action, or active motion, of God and the creaturely action. As Garrigou-Lagrange shortly after reiterates:

We must not, therefore, confuse [3] the divine motion that is passively received in the secondary cause, either with [1] the divine active motion which is God Himself, or with [2] the action produced by the secondary cause.[58]

In summary, Garrigou-Lagrange presents and defends the traditional Thomistic theory of physical premotion. He insists, *pace* Matava, that divine application must be motion in the strict sense, physical premotion properly speaking; a metaphorical interpretation of the motion idiom he holds to be philosophically unacceptable, as it can neither safeguard the priority of divine causation regarding creaturely action nor explain the actualization of the creaturely powers in potency to act. Hence, he contends that divine application in Aquinas means physical premotion—a created motion that is really distinct from both God's creative action and the creaturely action. Such *praemotio physica*, because it is historically commonly associated with the Dominican Domingo Báñez, is sometimes labelled "Báñezian premotion."

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[57] Ibid., 256; the original reads "salutary" instead of "created" act.
[58] Ibid., 259.

C) Bernard Lonergan, S.J.: Aristotelian Premotion

In his watershed publications on operative grace, the Jesuit Bernard Lonergan objects to the theory of physical premotion defended, among others, by Garrigou-Lagrange, and develops an alternative approach. In contrast to the opposed theory of (what he calls) Báñezian (physical) premotion, Lonergan terms his interpretation of Aquinas's doctrine of divine application "Aristotelian premotion."[59] In order to avoid controversy over whether the version of physical premotion under discussion is in fact Báñez's position, I will drop the qualifier "Báñezian" and simply speak of "physical premotion" when referring to the discussed position.

Unlike Matava, Lonergan and Garrigou-Lagrange agree that divine application is essentially motion, a reduction of potency to act.[60] Both are thus in agreement that agent and patient (and their active and passive potencies, respectively) are necessary but insufficient conditions for actual motion. As Lonergan puts it, given the existence of mover and moved in absence of actual motion, what accounts for the occurrence of actual motion must

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[59] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*. Lonergan's approach is notably in opposition not only to the Dominican Thomistic approach but also to the traditional Jesuit solution of the controversy *de auxiliis*: Molina's—or, for that matter, Suarez's—*concursus simultaneus*. Lonergan rejects both the notions of *praemotio physica* and *concursus simultaneus* for the same reason: "St Thomas posits three *actiones* but only two products; Durandus maintained that if there are only two products, there are only two *actiones*; both Molina and Bañez were out to discover a third product that they might have a third *actio*, and the former posited a *concursus simultaneus*, the latter a *concursus praevius*. . . . The root of the whole trouble is that they take it for granted that a third *actio* postulates a third product" (ibid., 449). Thus, Lonergan states elsewhere that "neither Molinism nor Bannezianism is an interpretation of Aquinas" (Bernard Lonergan, review of *De Deo in operatione naturae vel voluntatis operante* by E. Iglesias, *Theological Studies* 7 [1946]: 609).

[60] *STh* I, q. 2, a. 3: "for to move is nothing other than to bring something out from potency to act [movere enim nihil aliud est quam educere aliquid de potentia in actum]." Texts cited in addition to those mentioned above are in particular passages from *STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 1 and a. 9.

be something in addition to mover and moved—and this additional condition we call "physical premotion."[61]

The disagreement between Lonergan and Garrigou-Lagrange concerns the nature of such premotion. Divine application is, Lonergan argues, Aristotelian rather than traditional physical premotion.[62] By "Aristotelian premotion" Lonergan refers to Aristotle's teaching "that the transition of a situation from a state of rest to a state of activity presupposes a previous motion of some kind or other."[63] Lonergan comments on the relevant passage in the *Physics* (8.2):

In proving the eternity of the world, Aristotle points out that the existence of the mover and the moved is not sufficient to account for the actuality of a motion. If mover and moved exist, motion is merely possible. For actual motion it is further necessary that they be *in such a situation, mutual relation, or disposition*, that the one can act on the other. . . . Bringing them together is the premotion.[64]

On Lonergan's view, as the italicized passage in the quotation indicates, it is not so much the agent in potency to act that is lacking actuality but rather the objective temporal situation: although both the agent and the patient (including their active and passive potencies, respectively) are present, first there is no motion, then there is motion. Therefore, Aristotelian premotion, as conceived by Lonergan, concerns and is meant to explain not so much creaturely action as such but rather creaturely action *in time*, namely, the fact that *first* there is no motion, *then* there is motion. What explains the difference is premotion. Lonergan says that for this reason premotion is

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[61] "Granted the existence of mover and moved, of *potentia activa* and *potentia passiva*; and, at the same time, granted the absence of actual motion; then the emergence of actual motion cannot be accounted for by the mere continuance of the existence of mover and moved. They already were existing and *ex hypothesi* no motion took place. When, then, motion does take place, a new factor is introduced. This introduction of a new factor is the premotion" (Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 378).

[62] "Though St Thomas does not posit a real difference between *posse agere* and *actu agere*, nonetheless he always maintains the well-known Aristotelian doctrine of physical premotion" (ibid., 277).

[63] Ibid., 285.

[64] Ibid., 277; emphasis added.

tempore prius, while the traditional version of physical pre-
motion, as seen above, denies such a priority in time, main-
taining instead that premotion can only be *natura prius*. Yet, if
the prefix "pre-" in "premotion" is here understood as a pri-
ority in time, this again raises the question of the subordination
of secondary causes to the primary cause, not only in being but
also in action, that Garrigou-Lagrange links with a priority of
motion in causality—a question I will address below. At this
point, it is important to note that according to the Aristotelian
premotion view it is the temporal difference in what Lonergan
calls the "objective situation" that needs explanation.[65]

Take as an example a water-soluble pill and a glass of water.
The existence of a pill and a glass of water on a table does not
account for the actual dissolution of the medicine; they merely
provide the potency—the passive and active powers of
manifestation partners which do not, and cannot, co-manifest
unless certain manifestation conditions are met. The pill
dissolves in water if and only if the mover and the moved have
the right mutual relation, disposition, and proximity—that is, in
this instance, if the water has the power to dissolve the pill, the
pill has the disposition of water solubility, no other relevant
powers interfere, and finally, if one puts the pill into the water.
"The existence of mover and moved does not suffice for more
than the possibility of motion," says Lonergan; "for actual
motion they must be in the right situation, disposition,
relation."[66] Aristotelian premotion and thus divine application
refer, according to Lonergan, to this right situation, mutual
relation, disposition, and proximity—in short, to the right
conditions for the powers to co-manifest.[67]

Lonergan's textual argument for Aristotelian premotion is as
follows.[68] He argues that what Aquinas must have had in mind
when developing his doctrine of divine application is
Aristotelian premotion. For not only does Aquinas use in a
parallel passage in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* the term

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[65] Ibid., 73-75 and 253.
[66] Ibid., 291 n. 108.
[67] Ibid., 79 and 277.
[68] Ibid., 280-85; see also ibid., 75-79.

applicatio—which shows that he used *applicatio* in this sense at least once[69]—but more importantly, he apparently deduces application from the Aristotelian cosmic scheme.[70] For example, in *De potentia* he states:

And *because* an inferior nature acting does not act unless being moved, in that such inferior [natures] are changed in changing; the heaven, however, changes without being changed, and nevertheless it is not moving unless being moved, and so it does not end until we come to God: *it follows by necessity that* God is the cause of the action of each thing by moving and applying the power to act [ut movens et applicans virtutem ad agendum].[71]

The premise of the argument is that every motion must eventually be traced back to God, the first unmoved mover; the conclusion reached is that God moves and applies all creaturely powers to act. For this reason, Lonergan infers: "Since God is said to apply all things because he is first mover (in the Aristotelian sense), therefore application cannot be anything but physical premotion (in the Aristotelian sense)."[72]

The specific characteristic of Lonergan's proposal is that while application *is* Aristotelian premotion, divine application is not *simply* Aristotelian premotion. As Lonergan points out, there is an essential difference between Aquinas's and Aristotle's God, which differentiates Aquinas's divine application from

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[69] IX *Metaphys.*, lect. 4.

[70] Aquinas, when he first introduces *applicatio* as a technical term in the *Summa contra gentiles*, writes in support of his claim that God is the cause of the operation of every agent: "Whatever applies the active power to act, is said to be the cause of this action. . . . But every application of a power to operation is principally and firstly from God. For operative powers are applied to their proper operations through some motion. . . . But the first principle of . . . motion is God. For he is the first mover, wholly immobile. . . . Every operation, therefore, must be attributed to God as the first and principal agent" (*ScG* III, c. 67). In this passage Aquinas employs the term *applicatio* to express the fact that God as first mover is the cause of creaturely action in moving creaturely powers to act. For, on the Aristotelian scheme, all creaturely powers must be moved by God, the first mover: "operative powers," as we read, "are [and must be] applied to their proper operations through some motion." God as the first mover is the first principle of motion, wherefore he is the first and principal agent of motion in secondary causes.

[71] *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7; emphasis added.

[72] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 281.

Aristotelian premotion. For Lonergan, this specific difference ultimately boils down to God's providence in this context.[73] For Aquinas, God is not simply first mover, the cause of all motion; rather, God is a providential God. Lonergan explains the difference thus:

> God is the cause of each particular motion inasmuch as his mind plans and his will intends the endless premotions that makes up the dynamic pattern of the universe. . . . It is not enough that things be kept moving by the moving heavens; the order of the universe has to be maintained, and that is due not to the heavens but to divine providence.[74]

In this passage, Lonergan argues that divine application is Aristotelian premotion embedded in Aquinas's doctrine of divine providence.[75] Because God is an intellectual and volitional agent, he intends and wills premotions. Put differently, God loves and cares about his creation, wherefore his moving of creatures is ultimately providential guidance. Divine application, then, is providentially guided premotion. Thus, what the doctrine of divine application adds to Aristotelian premotion is that God knows, wills, and providentially guides these motions. For Lonergan, therefore, premotion is the particular relation, disposition, and proximity between mover and moved that is needed for the actualization of creaturely power. He points out that Aquinas calls the plan of the divine ordering of all things to their ends "providence"; the dispositions and order of secondary causes executing this plan, however, he calls "fate."[76] Fate in this specific sense, then, is a form of premotion, on Lonergan's interpretation. Premotion refers to the individual disposition; fate, by contrast, means the totality of these dispositions of all secondary causes executing the providential order. And these premotions as intended by God are divine application.[77]

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[73] Ibid., 86.
[74] Ibid., 286-87.
[75] For Aquinas's approach to providence, see Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 99-235.
[76] See *STh* I, q. 22 and q. 116.
[77] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 296; see also ibid., 79-86 and 285-96.

Application is the causal certitude of providence terminating in the right disposition, relation, proximity between the mover and the moved: without it motion cannot take place now; with it motion automatically results. But . . . fate is simply the dynamic pattern of such relations—the pattern through which the design of the divine artisan unfolds in natural and human history; again, without fate things cannot act, with it they do. Thus, fate and application . . . reduce to the divine plan.[78]

In summary, Lonergan argues that Aquinas, in his doctrine of divine application, appropriates the Aristotelian concept of pre-motion to express the fact that God moves all powers to act through a divinely intended and willed motion—a motion notably resulting from, and being part of, the totality of secondary causes executing his providential order, by a form of "caused causation." Application is thus divinely intended premotion. Ultimately, therefore, as the quotation above shows, Lonergan suggests "reducing" application (and fate) to providence as God's ordering of all creatures to their due ends.[79]

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[78] Ibid., 86. It is worth noting that fate is also the interpretive key Lonergan proposes for the much-debated passage in *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7: "But that which is done by God in a natural thing, by which it may actually act, is [there] as an intention only [intentio sola], having a certain incomplete being [habens esse quoddam incompletum], in the mode colors are in the air, and the power of art is in the instrument of the artisan." While traditional Thomists like Garrigou-Lagrange take this passage as a proof-text for physical premotion (Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 253) and Matava sees it as an expression of God's creative act (Matava, *Divine Causality*, 262-63), Lonergan reasons that with "fate" Aquinas had developed a "concept of some real participation of the divine design that was distinct from the natural forms of things, that was impressed upon them as they entered into the dynamic order of events. Thus, the much disputed *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7m, really presents nothing new; it asserts that, besides the natural form permanent in any given natural object, actual activity postulates some *virtus artis, intentio, esse incompletum* from the universal principle of being" (Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 85). He goes on to say: "Thus the *intentio* of *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7m, emerges into the clear light of day and proves to be but another aspect of the application mentioned in the body of the same article. . . . The *intentio* is fate, and fate is simply the dynamic pattern of such relations—the pattern through which the design of the divine artisan unfolds in natural and human history; again, without fate things cannot act, with it they do" (ibid., 86; see also ibid., 291-96).

[79] This would explain why the doctrine of application first appears in the *Summa contra gentiles*: "once St Thomas had grasped a theory of providence compatible with Aristotelian terrestrial contingency, he began at once to argue that the creature's causation was caused not merely because of creation and of conservation but also because of application" (Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 89).

In light of the above discussion, and without proposing to "reduce" divine application to the divine providential plan—for the former is rather the central element of Aquinas's doctrine of providence that makes it more than a mere upholding or conserving of creation—I would nonetheless like to suggest that divine application is a motion, a divine ordering and bringing together of secondary causes into the right mutual relation, disposition, and proximity for motion and creaturely action to occur. This view dovetails well with Aquinas's doctrine of providence, which provides the context for the *divina applicatio*. For Aquinas, apart from extraordinary miracles, secondary causes are the executors of providence,[80] the latter being defined as "the reason [or plan] of the order of things to an end" (ratio ordinis rerum in finem),[81] and hence an essential element of God's government, or the "execution of this order" (executio huius ordinis).[82] And these causes act by virtue of their powers grounded in their (substantial) form—powers caused by God as primary cause, by creating and conserving them in being, as well as by applying them to act, and doing so instrumentally.[83] Such causal powers tend to manifest themselves, but they manifest, or co-manifest, only if certain manifestation conditions are met. As Daniel De Haan observes, "hylomorphic substances *can only* realize and exercise their powers within hylomorphic systems comprised of the ongoing dynamic commerce of co-manifesting active and passive power[] partners of powerful particulars."[84] This is because in real-world scenarios, "substances are *always* dynamically nested within a complex

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[80] *STh* I, q. 22, a. 3, ad 2; see also *ScG* III, cc. 72, 76-77, 79, 96; *STh* I, q. 116, a. 2.

[81] *STh* I, q. 22, a. 1.

[82] *STh* I, q. 22, a. 3.

[83] For more details, see Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 103-46.

[84] Daniel De Haan, "*Nihil dat quod non habet*: Thomistic Naturalism contra Supernaturalism on the Origin of Species," in *Thomistic Evolution*, ed. Nicanor Austriaco (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming), quoted here from the draft manuscript. Similarly, Frost observes: "Aquinas recognizes that efficient causes do not operate in isolation from each other. . . . Each natural efficient cause and its patient is plugged into a network of other efficient causes" (Frost, *Aquinas on Efficient Causation*, 192; for a discussion of what this network of causes looks like in Aquinas, see ibid., 191-227).

matrix of co-manifesting active and passive powers with other substances."[85] And for Aquinas, God's providence consists precisely in the ordering of all created things to their due ends (ordinare res in finem).[86] For this reason, divine application would appear to be the divine ordering or moving of secondary causes that enables secondary causation, or the manifestation of their intrinsic powers, by bringing them into the right mutual relation, disposition, and proximity.

III. The Metaphysics of Creaturely Action

Thus far I have argued, in section I, that Aquinas teaches a divine application and motion of creaturely powers to act, and suggested, in section II, that there might be a middle ground between (a) rendering Aquinas's motion idiom as metaphorical talk and (b) positing a third entity distinct from God's uncreated action and a creature's created action. On my proposed reading,[87] Lonergan acknowledges the need for a divine motion of creaturely powers to act, neither seeking to reduce application to creation-conservation nor viewing premotion as an additional uncreated motion. In this third section, I will specify the conditions under which Aristotelian premotion can provide such a middle ground. To this end, I draw attention to a few implications of Lonergan's position for the metaphysics of creaturely action.

Before doing so, however, we first need to clarify further the relation between motion and action. With Garrigou-Lagrange and Lonergan, I have suggested that divine application is really motion. For Aquinas, motion as the reduction of potency to act is an incomplete act. Motion, as understood by Aquinas, is an imperfect act of a thing in potency to a further act. Motion is thus a certain middle position between being only in potency and only in act, respectively: what undergoes motion is in act, and not simply in potency, although it was in potency in the prior state, but it is currently not yet fully actualized; rather, it

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[85] De Haan, "*Nihil dat quod non habet*."
[86] *STh* I, q. 22, a. 4.

has a potency and an order to further act, as a future end state.[88] Aquinas explains:

> So the imperfect act, therefore, has the character [*ratio*] of motion, both insofar as it is compared, as potency, to further act, and insofar as it is compared, as act, to something more imperfect. Hence, it is neither the potency of a thing existing in potency nor is it the act of a thing existing in act, but it is the act of a thing existing in potency.[89]

Agents cause their effects *through action*. Action is the exercise or manifestation of the agent's power. Thus, as we have seen, all agents act by virtue of their powers. And typically, creaturely agents act *by causing motion*, which the patient, the subject being moved, undergoes. While action and passion are the same motion for Aquinas—that is, it is one and the same motion that the agent causes and the patient undergoes—they are not identical, since "action" refers to the motion as depending on, and arising from, the agent, and "passion" refers to the motion as depending on, and existing in, the patient.[90] For this reason, Aquinas points out that motion is, as action, *arising from the agent* but, as passion, *existing in the patient*.[91] Thus, the motion caused by the agent which the patient undergoes is located *in the patient*. Gloria Frost succinctly summarizes Aquinas's view as follows:

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[87] Commentators disagree on the ultimate import of Lonergan's thesis. For two opposed readings, see Matava, *Divine Causality*, 213-41, esp. 235-39; and Matthew Lamb, "The Mystery of Divine Predestination: Its Intelligibility according to Lonergan," in *Thomism and Predestination: Principles and Disputations*, ed. Steven A. Long, Roger W. Nutt, and Thomas Joseph White (Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press, 2016), 214-25. While Matava argues that the "inadequacy of Lonergan's proposal stems from its attempt to explain the divine causation of human free choices in terms of 'Aristotelian premotion' arranged by God according to the pattern of fate, rather than understanding God's action in terms of creation" (Matava, *Divine Causality*, 214), Lamb says that "Lonergan most certainly does see application as a further differentiation within the context of creation and conservation" (Lamb, "The Mystery of Divine Predestination," 219).

[88] III *Phys.*, lect. 2; for more details, see Frost, *Aquinas on Efficient Causation*, 21 and 153-88.

[89] III *Phys.*, lect. 2.

[90] Frost, *Aquinas on Efficient Causation*, 21.

[91] III *Phys.*, lect. 5.

(1) a single actuality [i.e., motion] fulfills and completes both an agent's active potentiality [i.e., power] and its patient's passive potentiality;

(2) this actuality [i.e., motion] exists in the patient—the fulfillment of an agent's active potentiality [i.e., power] is not an actuality existing in it [i.e., the agent];

(3) there are two different ways in which an actuality [i.e., motion] can fulfill and complete a potentiality: by *existing in it* or *arising from it*. Active potentiality [i.e., power] is fulfilled in the latter way.[92]

With these preliminary notes in view, we can now proceed to the differences concerning action.

A) *The Real Distinction between "posse agere" and "actu agere"*

There are two fundamental points of disagreement between Lonergan and Garrigou-Lagrange, which I will state simply in what follows, in order to make the fundamental assumptions explicit, while not defending them in any detail. The first concerns the real distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere*. Lonergan writes: "we agree with the [traditional] synthesis of premotion . . ., but we think the explanation of the transition from rest to activity found in *In VIII Phys.*, lect. 2, to be more germane to St Thomas than their distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere*."[93]

Let us start with the terminology. As I mentioned in the section dealing with Garrigou-Lagrange, "*posse agere* means that a given agent is able to act yet not actually acting. *Actu agere* means that the agent is not merely able to act but actually acting."[94] To give an example, I have, right now, the ability to speak German, but only if I say "Ich spreche Deutsch" do I actually speak German. Because *posse agere* refers to a potency to act, in absence of its actualization, *posse agere* and *actu agere* are contradictory statements. They do not allow for a middle. For example, assuming the existence of Peter, the two statements "Peter can act but is not actually acting" (*posse agere*) and

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[92] Frost, *Aquinas on Efficient Causation*, 171.

[93] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 315; the original reads "Bannezian" instead of "traditional."

[94] Ibid., 253.

"Peter is actually acting" (*actu agere*) cannot both be true at the same time, and, given Peter's power to act, neither can they both be false—the truth of one statement, that Peter is acting, implies the falsity of the other, that Peter is not acting, and *vice versa*. Since contradictory statements cannot be verified in the same situation, there must, Lonergan reasons, as mentioned above, be a real difference in what he calls the "objective situation" between *posse agere* and *actu agere*.[95] The question is, does this imply a real difference in the agent *qua* agent? Lonergan writes:

> Why is a real distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere* so easily foisted on St Thomas? Because *Peter can act but is not acting* and *Peter is actually acting* are contradictory propositions. Therefore, there must be an objective real difference involved by the transition from the truth of one proposition to the truth of the other. That is perfectly true. What is overlooked is that the emergence of the effect does supply such a real difference in the objective field.[96]

Lonergan argues that the real difference between *posse agere* and *actu agere* lies not (a) in the agent *qua* agent but (b) in the objective situation. For example, the difference between God not creating and God creating is not a change in God, but simply his creation, or the being of creatures, as the effect of his creative act. The question is, does this also apply to creaturely agents and their actions? As seen above, action is the exercise of an agent's power. Agents act by virtue of their powers, and creaturely agents do so typically by causing motion. The motion caused by the agent arises from the agent but is located and exists in the patient. Thus, Lonergan argues, it is first and foremost the effect in the situation that makes the difference between the capacity to act and the actual action. For Lonergan, the real difference of action thus resides in the effect caused by the agent, or in the motion existing in the patient acted upon and undergoing the motion, and not in the agent as such. He denies that the real difference lies in the creaturely agent *qua*

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 266-67.

agent.[97] On his view, change, or motion, takes place in the effect, not in the cause. Action does not imply a real change in the agent.[98] On Aquinas's account, Lonergan says, there is "one and the same *actus* actuating both the active and passive potency of the mover and the passive potency of the moved; and this one and the same *actus* is not in the mover but from the mover and in the moved [(ut ab agente in aliud procedens)]."[99]

Against this view, one could object with Steven Long that Aristotelian premotion is insufficient because what is at stake is not agency *qua* agency but *creaturely* agency; and creaturely powers in potency to act need to be actualized precisely because, unlike God, a creaturely agent *is not* its power, *is not* its action.[100] To this one may reply that Lonergan's analysis, if correct, applies not only to agents *qua* agents but primarily to creaturely agents, namely, specifically to agents *in time*, which is to say, if the agency involves succession (before and after). In fact, Aristotelian premotion is needed only in the *agens in tempore*:[101] "Recall the nature of premotion: it is a condition of activity in the *agens in tempore*. If there is action now and not before, then there is some reason for the difference. That reason is the premotion."[102] So, "the necessity of premotion is the necessity of an explanation of temporal difference."[103] The question is, then, does the transition between *posse agere* and *actu agere* imply a change, or motion, in the *agent* (mover) or in the *patient* (moved)? Garrigou-Lagrange's version of physical premotion would seem to imply change in the agent, at least in certain cases; Aristotelian premotion asserts a change only in the patient. According to the latter concept, premotion is not needed for causation as such, but only for causation in time. On this view, the agent as agent needs no actualization other than

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[97] Ibid., 253.

[98] See ibid., 67-73 and 254-77.

[99] Ibid., 264.

[100] Steven A. Long, "St. Thomas Aquinas, Divine Causality, and the Mystery of Predestination," in Long, Nutt, and White, eds., *Thomism and Predestination*, 67-73.

[101] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 276, 311, 378 (esp. n. 158), 397.

[102] Ibid., 397.

[103] Ibid., 379.

to be brought into the right mutual relation, disposition, and proximity with the patient.[104] That is to say, in creatures, the exercise of a power (action), needs a premotion to account for the actualization of the power in potency to act, but this increase in actuality is accounted for not by a further created passive motion received in the agent, but rather by God's bringing the manifestation partners into the right mutual relation, disposition, and proximity. Creaturely agents could not act, could not cause any effect by virtue of their powers, if their powers were not applied to act by God in this manner; they need to be physically premoved, but in the Aristotelian sense, embedded in the doctrine of providence.

A further unresolved issue concerns the fact that this middle ground presupposes, as mentioned above, that Aristotelian premotion is premotion in time, which raises the question of how it can safeguard the primacy of divine action. One way of addressing this issue is to say that Aristotelian premotion is not *merely* a priority of motion in causation but also a priority in time. In other words, secondary causation, as "caused causation," cannot but be subordinate to God's primary causation, all the way down to each and every manifestation of creaturely powers, or creaturely action. What Lonergan's proposal adds is that the moving to act of these creaturely powers, if and insofar as these powers manifest in time, has a temporal dimension too. This dimension should not, in my opinion, be set against the subordination of the motion of secondary causes in causation. Divine application is a *divine* action that goes beyond the creation and conservation of creaturely powers, and consists in the ordering of these secondary causes to their end, by respectively ordering them to each other in the *temporal* execution of the providential order. Yet, this providential order itself, as the *divina ratio* in God, is not temporal, although the execution is, but, as we shall see below, even the execution is in an active way in God, essentially depending on his creation, conservation, and application. Thus, the priority of divine application is in causation, and not simply in time, although the Aristotelian pre-

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[104] Ibid., 74-75.

motions through which providence is executed temporally may have a priority in time, if abstracted from the divine guidance.

In summary, the thesis that there is no real distinction be-tween *posse agere* and *actu agere* in the creaturely agent *qua* agent, but that the real difference is only in the objective situa-tion, is a first noteworthy and indeed controversial presupposi-tion of Lonergan's middle course, thus questioning one of the fundamental assumptions of the traditional version of physical premotion.[105]

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[105] Here is a brief summary of Lonergan's own reasoning. His view entails two claims: (a) That there is a real difference between *posse agere* and *actu agere* in the objective situation is, I think, a relatively straightforward claim. If, for example, Peter is not only able to walk but is actually walking, then the difference between the two states of Peter having the capacity to walk but not actually walking and Peter actually walking is—at least—the effect: for instance, Peter's arriving in time for dinner. (b) It is the second claim that is controversial: there is no real distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere* in the agent *qua* agent. Here two cases need to be distinguished: (1) God and (2) creatures. (b-1) At least in the case of God, Lonergan's assumption is plausible, at least on a classical theistic picture; the difference between God creating and God not creating is his creation, the effect of God's act of creation, not a change in God the agent. In other words, if one wishes to use that terminology, in God as an agent there is no real distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere* first because there is no potentiality in God, and second because divine action does not add anything to God's actuality. Lonergan reasons that if God is the unmoved mover, then agency *qua* agency cannot imply that every mover be moved; that can only be a characteristic of creaturely agency. Hence, the assumption that there is a real distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere* in the agent *qua* agent cannot be a universal principle (ibid., 253-54). In other words, "to posit a real distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere* in the agent implies *omne movens movetur*. That clearly denies any *motor immobilis* and so the possibility of any motion" (ibid., 265). On this point, there is agreement with the traditional Thomistic interpretation: "Metaphysically, the only difference between God causing X, and God not causing X, is not a change *in God*, but rather *the being of the creature*" (Long, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 60; see also ibid., 68-69). (b-2) So the controversial question is whether there is a real distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere* in the creaturely agent—and thus above and beyond "the emergence of the effect . . . in the objective field" (Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 260) discussed above. According to Lonergan (ibid., 254-61), three possible scenarios need to be considered: (i) The emergence of an *actio* might involve a real change in the subject. (ii) The presence of an *actio* might involve a composition in the subject. (iii) The disappearance of an *actio* might involve a real change in the subject. Against option (i) Lonergan invokes Aquinas's statement in *De potentia* (q. 7, a. 8; as translated in Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 259) that "there cannot be motion in *(the being related) to something*, because . . . there is no movement as regards action except metaphorically and

B) *Physical Premotion Is Not a Third Product*

A second and related point of disagreement concerns the claim, seen in our discussion of Garrigou-Lagrange, that physical premotion is a created motion really distinct from both God's uncreated action and the creaturely action. Lonergan says:

Suppose Peter to stand sword in hand and then to lunge forward in such a way that the sword pierces Paul's heart. In this process there are only two products: [1] the motion of the sword and [2] the piercing of Paul's heart. But while the products are only two, the causations are three: [i] Peter causes the motion of the sword; [ii] the sword pierces the heart of Paul; and, in the third place, [iii] Peter causes the causation of the sword, for he applies it to the act of piercing and he does so according to the precepts of the art of killing. The sword is strictly an instrument, its very causation is caused.[106]

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improperly; . . . which would not be the case if relation or action signified something remaining in the subject." Against option (ii) Lonergan cites a passage in *De potentia* (q. 7, a. 8; as translated in Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 259) where Aquinas states that "neither does action (enter into composition) with the agent." Against option (iii) Lonergan puts forward that Aquinas states in *De potentia* (q. 7, a. 9, ad 7; as translated in Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 258) with regard to action that "there is nothing to prevent an accident of this kind from ceasing to be without (involving) a change of that (subject) in which it is." If these options appear unconvincing, Lonergan argues (*Grace and Freedom*, 267), one can conclude that *actio* is the difference between *posse agere* and *actu agere*, as mentioned above: "one and the same *actus* [is] actuating both the active potency of the mover and the passive potency of the moved; and this one and the same *actus* is not in the mover but from the mover and in the moved" (ibid., 264). He comments elsewhere: "The fallacy . . . lies in affirming that the real difference between *potentia agendi* and *ipsum agere* is a reality added to the agent as agent; in fact, that reality is the effect, added to the patient as patient (*motus est in mobili, actio est in passo*), and predicated of the agent as agent only by extrinsic denomination" (Lonergan, review of *De Deo in operatione naturae*, 607). According to Lonergan, Aristotle's and Aquinas's mature theories of action are, despite their difference in terminology, essentially identical: "on the Aristotelian view action is a relation of dependence in the effect; on the Thomist view action is a formal content attributed to the cause as causing [(*ut ab agente in aliud procedens*)]. . . . [But] both philosophers keenly realized that causation must not be thought to involve any real change in the cause as cause; . . . the objective difference between *posse agere* and *actu agere* is attained without any change emerging in the cause as such" (Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 72).

   [106] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 87-88.

As outlined above, there seems to be general agreement between traditional physical premotion and Aristotelian premotion theorists that there are three actions (here in the quotation called "causations") involved, namely, (i) God's action, (ii) the creature's action, and (iii) God's action *in* creaturely action; but there is disagreement between the two camps as to whether, to account for these three actions, we need two or three "products."[107] A second important implication of Lonergan's view is that, while Garrigou-Lagrange needs physical premotion as (3) an additional created entity distinct from both (1) the divine uncreated action and (2) the creaturely created action, Aristotelian premotion works without postulating such a *tertium quid* (or third "product," as Lonergan calls it in the quotation). In this regard, Matava agrees with Lonergan that divine application must not be understood as a created reality.[108]

On Matava's view, God causes only the creaturely agent (creation and conservation) and thus the "*being* of change" (application); on Lonergan's view, by contrast, God causes not only the creaturely agent (creation and conservation) but also the creaturely effect (application), by bringing the creaturely agents into the right mutual relation, disposition, and proximity (Aristotelian premotion); and likewise, on Garrigou-Lagrange's view, God causes not only the creaturely agent (creation and conservation) but also the creaturely effect (application), but this time by causing another entity or effect, a third product, really distinct from both God's action and the creaturely action (traditional physical premotion).

The disagreement may be illustrated with the above example of Peter killing Paul, by using a sword instrumentally. On the one hand, three actions can be identified in this event: (i) Peter moves the sword, (ii) the sword pierces Paul, and (iii) Peter kills Paul. While both camps agree on the analysis of the first two actions, they disagree about how to account for the third action. Rather than postulating a third product, namely, a physical premotion distinct from both of the other actions, as defenders

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[107] Ibid., 304.
[108] Matava, *Divine Causality*, 240.

of traditional physical premotion would have it, Aristotelian premotion theorists say that one cause, Peter, operates in the operation of another cause, the sword. There is no need to have a third product, although a third action emerges from these two products, because of the (instrumental) subordination of the latter to the former.

If the transition from *posse agere* to *actu agere* does not imply a change in the agent *qua* agent but only in the patient, motion arising from the agent and existing in the patient, then creaturely agents in potency to act can be reduced to act by bringing them into the right relation, disposition, and proximity with the patient. What accounts for God's activity in creaturely action, then, is not a third product but the concept of "caused causation."[109] Divine application is a form of caused causation that explains the actualization not of the agent as agent, but of the effect, that is, the motion arising from the agent and existing in the patient, through the manifestation conditions of the respective manifestation partners.[110]

One of the main difficulties with Garrigou-Lagrange's physical premotion is that as a *created* motion it does not, and cannot, have the universal and transcendent nature of God's uncreated action. Only divine primary causation extends to all secondary causes (universal divine action) and is the cause of their very causal modality, causing them, as ultimate primary cause, to be either necessary or contingent. As such, only divine primary causation is, even as an irresistible form of causation, compatible with contingent secondary causes. That is, only divine primary causation can cause not only a specific effect but also its causal modality, including a contingent effect, with causal certitude (transcendent divine action).[111] But since physical premotion in the traditional sense is a created reality, it necessarily has creaturely attributes.

Although Matava is skeptical about the details of the first point discussed above, he wholeheartedly agrees with and en-

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[109] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 88.
[110] Ibid., 86-90; see also ibid., 79-82.
[111] On God's universal and transcendent causation, see Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 164-178.

dorses the second one, as previously mentioned, namely, that premotion must not be a created reality. In fact, he turns the same argument that Lonergan advances against traditional physical premotion against Lonergan himself.[112] Matava objects that, on an Aristotelian premotion approach, creaturely action is also necessitated by created antecedents: God infallibly wills creaturely actions, including contingent ones, *by created means*. But a created entity does not, and cannot, have, as we have seen, the universal and transcendent nature of uncreated divine action, which is essential on Aquinas's account of providence. That is to say, the objection states that Lonergan's Aristotelian premotion is liable to the same objection as traditional physical premotion because even fate is a created reality, namely, the total order of the dispositions of secondary causes.[113] Thus, Matava objects not only that Aristotelian premotions are created secondary causes but also that "the whole providentially ordered set of Aristotelian premotions [is] itself a created [reality]."[114] Therefore, mistakenly, "transcendence is implicitly ascribed to a created reality."[115]

To this objection, one can reply that Aquinas's doctrine of divine providence is based on an understanding of God as transcendent cause:

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[112] Matava, *Divine Causality*, 239-41.

[113] Ibid., 214-15 and 232-33; see also ibid., 228-35.

[114] Ibid., 235; the original reads "antecedent to choice" instead of "reality." Matava's first argument concerning Aristotelian premotions is as follows: (1) "Aristotelian premotions are created realities." (2) But "divine transcendence cannot be ascribed to any created reality." (3) Therefore, divine transcendence cannot be ascribed to Aristotelian premotions (ibid., 231). A second argument concerning fate, rather than isolated Aristotelian premotions, goes is follows: (1) "[T]he arrangement of the whole set of Aristotelian premotions . . . is nothing other than fate." (2) "[T]he whole providentially arranged set of secondary causes antecedent to [creaturely action] *as an arranged set* is itself a created [reality]." (3) Therefore, fate is a created reality. (4) But divine transcendence cannot be ascribed to any created reality. (4) Therefore, divine transcendence cannot be attributed to fate (ibid., 232). In both cases, the argument then continues: Only a cause with the attribute of divine transcendence can cause all secondary causes, including contingent ones, with infallible certitude. Therefore, neither Aristotelian premotion nor fate can cause all secondary causes, including contingent ones, with infallible certitude.

[115] Ibid., 233.

God alone has the property of transcendence. . . . He exercises control through the created antecedents—true enough; but that is not the infallible, the irresistible, the efficacious, which has its ground not in the creature but in the uncreated, which has its moment not in time but in the cooperation of eternal uncreated action with created and temporal action.[116]

Put differently, it is the universal and transcendent divine *ordering* of secondary causes that exhibits these specifically divine characteristics, including transcendent causation, not the secondary causes thus executing providence—whereby (and this is essential) "the order 'impressed'" on secondary causes, or rather on the antecedents to their action, as the objection goes, must not be taken to be itself "a created effect of God."[117] On the one hand, the *impressio Dei* is arguably the divine giving of natures.[118] As John Wippel observes, "what ultimately causes the form of a natural agent is also responsible for that agent's inclination to its given end."[119] Edward Feser concurs: "The act of ordering a natural cause to its typical effect just is the imparting to it of a certain nature or substantial form."[120] On the other hand, the fact that fate, as the divine providential ordering of creatures as existing in, or "impressed on," creatures executing this order, is *in* created things does not entail that it *is* a created reality, as the objection insinuates.[121] As Aquinas maintains, "fate is in created causes themselves, *inasmuch as they are ordered by God to producing effects*."[122] Therefore, fate is *in* things only in a *passive* way. This is because government, even if executed through secondary causes, is always *actively in God*. Fate is not simply a created reality, even though the execution of providence is mediated through created

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[116] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 117-18.

[117] Matava, *Divine Causality*, 233.

[118] For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 221-25.

[119] John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 484-85.

[120] Edward Feser, "Between Aristotle and William Paley: Aquinas's Fifth Way," *Nova et vetera* (Eng. ed.) 11 (2013): 736.

[121] See note 114, above.

[122] *STh* I, q. 116, a. 2.

realities.[123] On Aquinas's view, this divine providential ordering is, in the form of the eternal *ratio*, immediate and immanent to God, with all the relevant divine characteristics, while the temporal execution of this divine ordering can be, and is for the most part, mediated through secondary causes. Yet these secondary causes are ordered the way they are because of, and in accordance with, a divine reality, namely, the *ratio* of the divine ordering immediate and immanent to God.[124]

God's creation bestows on creatures their natures and powers by which they act; conservation as the first effect of divine government preserves these powers in being; finally, application moves these intrinsic powers grounded in their (substantial) form or nature to action. What makes this action of application transcendent is not the secondary causes and their powers and dispositions, not even in their totality, but the divine ordering of them, which can be neither separated from nor reduced to God's creation-conservation. Hence, to the extent that the divine ordering of secondary causes is, as the eternal *divina ratio*, a *divine* action, the divine application in terms of Aristotelian premotion is, *as divinely ordered* Aristotelian premotions and unlike physical premotion in the traditional sense, a *divine* reality, not a created one, and thus universal and transcendent. The execution of this divine ordering in time requires, at least as far as secondary causes are concerned, that the intrinsic powers of these secondary causes executing providence are not only created and conserved but also applied and moved to action by God. And just as creation and conservation are universal and transcendent actions of God, so, too, is divine application—the moving of the intrinsic powers of secondary causes to action, by bringing them, by an uncreated universal and transcendent divine action, into the right mutual relation, disposition, and proximity.

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[123] *STh* I, q. 23, a. 2; q. 116, a. 2; see also *STh* I, q. 116, a. 3.
[124] See Kopf, *Reframing Providence*, 108-20.

CONCLUSION

This article has addressed the question of how two agents—divine and creaturely—can bring about one action. More specifically, the question discussed in this article has been whether, on Aquinas's influential account, God's involvement in creaturely action should be viewed as physical premotion, Aristotelian premotion, or a dimension of creation-conservation.

In section I, I have argued that Aquinas teaches a divine activity in creaturely action. According to his doctrine of divine application, God not only (a) creates and (b) conserves in being creaturely powers but also (c) applies them to act. Moreover, I have shown how, at least textually, motion, understood as the reduction of creaturely powers to act, is deeply embedded in Aquinas's account of primary and secondary causation. The exact relation between such motion and the concept of agency, however, which I have treated in sections II and III, is controversial.

Matava's minimalist approach rightly emphasizes the importance of grounding God's action in a robust theology of creation; but grounding is not reducing. Garrigou-Lagrange objects that without physical premotion one can neither explain the actualization of creaturely powers in potency nor safeguard the subordination of secondary causes in acting rather than merely in being. But positing physical premotion as a third and created entity, Matava replies with Lonergan, is problematic, for as created motion it cannot have the universal and transcendent nature that God's uncreated action has, and, they would add, it is also unnecessary. Lonergan, by contrast, suggests linking application with providence. Viewing application as a divinely ordered motion brought about by God's universal and transcendent causality through creaturely secondary causes, I have suggested, appears *prima facie* to be a more holistic concept than positing a *tertium quid*. I have also identified and discussed some of the conditions of this middle ground.

A significant advantage of the Aristotelian premotion interpretation is that it most carefully pays attention to providence, which is the context of Aquinas's treatment of

divine application—that God providentially guides and cares for his creation. On this view, it is not so much physical premotion as a distinct created entity that safeguards God's providence, but rather the fact that, as uncreated universal and transcendent cause, God providentially guides the entire order of secondary causes by ordering them in such a manner towards each other that the respective manifestation conditions of their intrinsic powers are met, which explains how God works *in* creaturely actions by applying their powers to action.[125]

CLEAVING THE NATURAL LAW AT ITS JOINTS

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I SHALL PROCEED in this article by using the method recommended by John Henry Newman, of first considering what one should hold about a topic in relation to what is antecedently plausible to expect, and only afterwards looking directly at the evidence.[1] The topic is this: What does St. Thomas Aquinas argue for, and how should we understand his claims, in his famous article on natural law—article 2 of question 94 of the *Prima secundae*?

The topic is well-worn, but perhaps Newman's method can yield new insights. In particular, by adopting Newman's method, I intend to bring to the interpretation of that text assumptions proper to the philosophical tradition in which St. Thomas worked, and only assumptions of that kind. My target for this project is the deep and highly influential exegesis of this text by Germain Grisez.[2] That exegesis, which does not begin from "antecedent probabilities," has been thought by some to introduce premises that are Cartesian or Kantian, and alien to an Aristotelian approach to practical reasoning.[3] Whether that

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[1] On this method, taken from Richard Whately's treatise on rhetoric, see Michael Pakaluk, "A Philosopher," in Juan Velez, ed., *A Guide to John Henry Newman: His Life and Thought* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 220-26.

[2] See Germain Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2," *Natural Law Forum* 10 (1965): 168-201.

[3] See for example Fulvio Di Blasi, "The Role of God in the New Natural Law Theory," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 13 (2013): 35-45; and Matthew B.

claim is correct or not, the aim of this article is to establish an alternative interpretation securely situated within a classical framework, suitable to the requirements of a classical theory of natural law.[4] Within a classical framework, we are led to construe the natural law as a natural kind, and to see article 2 of question 94 as setting the bases for both the unity of this kind, and for discerning the natural articulations within it. One might say that its chief concern is, to borrow Plato's phrase (*Phaedrus* 265e), how to cleave this natural kind at its joints.

I. ANTECEDENT PROBABILITIES

We begin with the relevant antecedent probabilities. Suppose someone were a moral theologian in the Christian and Aristotelian traditions who faced the following difficulty. He believed that the moral life consists primarily of acquiring the virtues and exercising them, on the broad grounds that beatitude is our last end; that beatitude is union with God; and that we cannot become united with God, who is good, unless we too become good, and this is what it is to acquire and exercise the virtues.[5] However, he also believed that the moral life could be construed as an ordered or lawful life, on the broad grounds that to acquire and exercise the virtues means acting "in accordance with reason," in Aristotle's formula (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7.1098a7), which he understood as generally implying that, for any particular virtuous action, an ordering or mode of regulation (Greek, *taxis*; Latin, *ordinatio*) can be found, such that that virtuous action can be understood by its doer as satisfying, conforming to, or realizing that mode of regulation. Also, since he tended to construe reason as a power of grasping universals, and anyway he was disposed to conceive of

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O'Brien, "Elizabeth Anscombe and the New Natural Lawyers on Intentional Action," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 13 (2013): 47-56.

[4] On which see Michael Pakaluk, "On What a Theory of Natural Law Is Supposed to Be," *Revista persona y derecho* (the law review of the University of Navarre) 82 (2020):167-200, https://doi.org/10.15581/011.82.007.

[5] One may regard Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, book III, as a standard presentation of this commonly held classical view.

individual actors as situated at least implicitly in communities, he regarded these regulations or regulating precepts as capable of being generalized and somehow systematized into something resembling a body of law.[6]

Moreover, as an Aristotelian, he would be disposed to think of any domain in the manner of a genus as at first undifferentiated: the universal precedes the specific (see *Physics* 1.1). Therefore, he would think of human "virtue"—"the perfection of a power" (cf. *De caelo* 1.11)—at first as a single, unified, integrated perfection of a correspondingly unified power which is the intellectual soul. Accordingly, he would be disposed to refer to a good person as if through a single trait, such as simply "virtuous" (Latin, *virtuosus*; Greek, *epieikes*), serious (*studiosus*, *spoudaios*), or chastened (*temperatus*, *sôphrôn*).[7] But then, similarly, he would think of order or lawfulness at first as a unified expression of a consistent, rational mode of regulation among members belonging to or conceived of as belonging to the same community, that is, that there would also be a single trait or way of acting, "righteousness" (in the manner of a *iustus*, or *nomimos* and *dikaios*), which involved following "moral order" or "law" (see *Nic. Ethic.* 5.1.1129b11-27). If that community were the distributed community of oneself with any human being one happens to encounter, considered as human—one's "neighbor"—then there would be an "order" or "law" for that natural community also.[8]

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[6] In the Aristotelian tradition, in which statesmanship is construed as analogous to an art (see *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.9), one would not be disposed to conceive of the systematization of law merely as a hierarchy of generalizations. Rather, it would also involve setting down rankings and giving priorities, setting out and delimiting the boundaries of subsidiary powers or domains of judgment in which genuine discretion operated, and giving description of due operations and processes. Law is not a formalism.

[7] As reflected indeed in Aristotle's language in *Nic. Ethic.* 1.7.10908a16-18, where he is clearly disposed initially to regard virtue as a single power.

[8] "Friendship seems to be present by nature . . . especially among human beings . . . one may observe, even in one's travels, that every human being is akin to every other and a friend" (*Nic. Ethic.* 8.9.1155a18-22), in the translation of Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books VIII and IX*, Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

If he looked at things in this way, how would he proceed in an investigation into this moral or "natural" law? Of course, he would first define and discuss the genus, law. Next, he would ask what "diversity" there is in the genus, marking out the "natural law" from other broad kinds of law. For him, an investigation of diversity would properly be posed as a "one versus many" question: Is there one law only, or are there many laws? And what he meant in asking this would be whether there is only one "body" of law, as we would say, or many "bodies" of law. If many, he would still continue to think of law as unified, as in a *codex* or *corpus* of law, but it would have a fundamental articulation.

Having now articulated the genus, "law in general," into (let us say) eternal, natural, human, and divine bodies of law, then, when in his investigation he came to inquire into natural law in particular, the question would arise once again: Does it have diversity? And, once again, he would ask this as a "one versus many" question. But *of what* would he be asking, whether it was one or many? Not *law* in this case—if he believed that there were not "bodies" of law, too, within natural law, perhaps precisely because of the presumed "naturalness" of natural law—but something else.

The reason he would proceed in this way in his investigation is that as a follower of Aristotle he would regard it as good method in general, in discussing any topic, first to discover that which gives unity to the discussion (i.e., why he was engaged after all in a single discussion, of single topic), by correctly stating the genus that constitutes that topic, and only after that to look for articulation, structure, diversity, or classification within that unity. Diversification into species would indeed be the standard and clearest manner of diversification; and yet other sorts of structure might be appropriate to the topic. Having done these things, he would next go on to raise difficulties (*dubitationes*, *aporiai*) in connection with that topic, and then resolve them (giving *solutiones*, *luseis*), making use of his definition of the genus and his claims about that genus's articulation to do so, thereby showing the coherence of his

account, precisely in its serviceability in yielding clarity and insight, especially any insight it gives into causes and principles.[9]

Since, as has been said, he regards, on the one hand, the virtues, and, on the other hand, the regulating work of practical reason—or law—as coordinated throughout, then, when he began to look for structure within natural law, it might be thought that the first place he would go for a model would be the traditional doctrine of the cardinal virtues.[10] At least, he would consider that others would be initially disposed to take them as a model. After all, the cardinal virtues seem to be virtues by nature and rooted in human nature, and acting virtuously seems to be somehow a matter of following nature. Does the articulation of the natural law correspond, then, to the articulation of the virtues? Virtues are perfections of a power; therefore, they are habits. Since they qualify powers in the manner of a habit, and are "in" them as a quality is in a subject, they therefore are differentiated as is the power. Since active power is properly differentiated into four powers—practical reason, will, irascibility, and concupiscence—then, as there are four qualifications of active power, there are four basic or cardinal virtues.[11]

But is natural law, after all, a habit? To be sure, like any law it is a *mode of regulation*, as that is of the essence of law. But must a mode of regulation be a habit? In his investigation into the natural law, then, the first thing he would need to do would be to clarify whether the natural law is a habit. If it is not, then it would not be diversified simply according to some mode of diversification of the human soul. Habits are so diversified; but presumably a mode of regulation would need to be dealt with differently.

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[9] Most investigations in the *Nicomachean Ethics* follow this order. See Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 235-38.

[10] The roots of the doctrine of cardinal virtues are in Plato's *Republic* and Cicero's *De officiis*, but something like that doctrine is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics* too.

[11] For the differentiation and enumeration of the virtues in an Aristotelian framework, see Michael Pakaluk, "The Unity of the *Nicomachean Ethics*," in Jon Miller, ed., *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 23-44.

II. NATURAL LAW AS A NATURAL KIND

Let us pause and take stock. Up to this point, we have looked at this question of the diversity within natural law from the point of view of what Newman called "antecedent probabilities." We have asked, given that someone was a Christian moral theologian working in the Aristotelian tradition, how is it likely that he would approach the question? Now, without putting aside antecedent probabilities but rather allowing ourselves to be guided by them, let us turn directly to evidence itself, and in particular, the texts of St. Thomas—without doubt a Christian moral theologian working in the Aristotelian tradition. What do we find when we look at his examination of law and natural law (*STh* I-II, qq. 90-94)? We find indeed that his first concern, in his discussion of the body of natural law in article 1 of question 94, is to examine whether the natural law is a habit.

Looking at the text itself, what would we say his reasons are for doing so? What motives does he reveal there? As in many texts of St. Thomas, he aims to accomplish two things at once in this article. First, negatively, he wishes to rule out that natural law is a habit, although he concedes that we adhere to it habitually. Second, positively, he wishes to insist that the regulation or *ordinatio* which is natural law consists more precisely of "precepts" (*praecepta*). His reasoning is that the natural law is a work of human reason which, like other works of reason, such as the propositions we articulate in doing philosophy, show a complexity and a repeatable form. (It is a familiar theme in St. Thomas that human reason must articulate truths even about simple things in complex formulations.) Prior to this point in the "Treatise on Law," he had favored the word *ordinatio* for the content of law, as that is the more general term and would cover the eternal law of God also, which would be simple and would not consist of precepts showing complexity, except metaphorically. But now, in ruling out that the natural law is a habit, he makes it clear that natural law as something human is formulated as a precept. Therefore, it is no more a habit than any utterance is a habit. Henceforward, then, the question of

"one versus many" within natural law must become a question of diversity of precepts. Is there one precept, or many?

That is indeed how St. Thomas introduces the very next article.[12] We can say that article 2 of question 94 is ostensibly devoted to distinguishing and perhaps even numbering the precepts that properly are to count as constituting the natural law. This seems a promising if provisional result—a first fruit of approaching the article initially through antecedent probabilities that are classical and Aristotelian in character, serving to confirm the value of that approach.

We are immediately met by a difficulty, however. Let us state it so as to put it aside for now; we will return to it later. We know from elsewhere in the *Summa* that St. Thomas regards the Decalogue as giving the precepts of the natural law: "The precepts of the decalogue are the first principles of the Law: and the natural reason assents to them at once, as to principles that are most evident" (*STh* II-II, q. 122, a. 1).[13] If article 2 of question 94 is about the distinction and perhaps even enumeration of the precepts of natural law, then why, if he is interested in distinguishing and perhaps enumeration, does he not at any point answer the question posed in the article by saying that there are ten precepts? Perhaps it would be enough if in this article he merely gives the basis for that later enumeration? It is a long article, after all, as it stands. Moreover, we know that St. Thomas, like Aristotle, prefers to leave a discussion in an unfinished state, to be completed later, if it is appropriate to do so—and he does after all devote question 100 of the *Prima secundae* and question 122 of the *Secunda secundae* to completing this task. Therefore, the omission would be understandable enough on his terms. So tentatively we put the difficulty aside and proceed with this rough, anticipated resolution.

When we go on to consider article 2 of question 94, we see that, just like the preceding article, it accomplishes two things at once: something positive and something negative. Positively, it

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[12] "Videtur quod lex naturalis non contineat plura praecepta, sed unum tantum."

[13] All translations from the *Summa* are taken from the English Dominican Fathers translation (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), unless otherwise noted.

sets down the proper bases for diversifying the natural law. Negatively, it rejects various attempts to map parts of natural law onto parts ("potential" parts) of human nature, which arguably is an equally important task.

Let us consider the negative point first. For this, objection 2 turns out to be crucial, which proceeds on the premise that "natural law is consequent to the nature of a man" ("lex naturalis consequitur hominis naturam"). The objection puts forward precisely a claim about the mapping of natural law to parts of the human soul. Note St. Thomas's reply: the objection is correct only in the sense that the active powers of the human soul "are relevant to the natural law insofar as they are regulated by reason" ("secundum quod regulantur ratione, pertinent ad legem naturalem"). But this is just to say: only insofar as someone has acquired the virtues of those powers. Therefore, we can say that by his exposition in the *corpus* of this article, not simply does St. Thomas intend to sideline powers of the soul as bases for diversifying precepts of the natural law, but also he clears the way for his account of the virtues to be the primary way of investigating the regulation of the natural law over those powers of the soul. The reply to objection 2 points us forward to the *Secunda secundae*.

This point deserves a little more attention. In the *Prima secundae* St. Thomas is, after all, simply setting out the components of an account of the ethical life, whereas it is in the *Secunda secundae* that he gives that account. Those components include acts, habits (good habits being the virtues), law, and grace. He therefore in the *Secunda secundae* has a choice—as he effectively says in his prologue to that part—of either making law subordinate to an account of virtue or construing virtue as being in service to the law. Clearly, he does the former;[14] and he brings in what earlier he had circumscribed as "the natural law" solely under the virtue of justice, and specifically as the precepts associated with the virtue of justice (q. 122). In sum, in putting aside the idea that "the natural law" should be divided up on

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[14] His plan, he says, is to take everything else as having been reduced to the virtues ("tota materia morali ad considerationem virtutum reducta").

the plan of, so to speak, "what makes the parts of the soul good," he also paves the way for assigning that role to the virtues and therefore makes it possible to construe law teleologically, as directed toward the genuine human good.[15] The argument of article 2 of question 94, therefore, needs to be a project of limitation and containment, so that natural law can be somehow encompassed within an account of the virtues, not vice versa.

Another difficulty presents itself. Saint Thomas really is like that supposititious moral theologian in the Aristotelian tradition we considered, in that he holds, following Aristotle, that virtuous actions are "in accordance with reason," and that this entails more precisely that a virtuous person acts "as reason ordains" or "as reason stipulates."[16] One might suppose that, in this regulating aspect, where practical reason is at work ordering, systematizing, planning, prioritizing, and putting our actions in proper proportion, every act of every virtue should be regarded as prescribed by natural law. Saint Thomas concedes that this is true in an important respect (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 3). Nonetheless, if the field of virtuous action and the field of natural law were coextensive, then neither could encompass the other. One needs, then, to find some stricter, more limited sense of "the natural law," which picks out a privileged set of precepts. Therefore, a complete statement of the purpose of article 2 would be that it aims to give the bases, first, for including precepts within this stricter class, and, second, for distinguishing and enumerating precepts within this stricter class.

It is important to observe that, for a truly *natural* law, these bases of delimiting, distinguishing, and enumerating must themselves be "by nature" or "natural." They cannot be a matter of convention or human choice, not even a choice, for example, of some elegant mode of classification which

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[15] On the importance of this teleological conception of natural law, see Michael Pakaluk, "Two Conceptions of Natural Law," *Divinitas: Revista internazionale di ricerca e di critica teologica* n.s. 62 (2019): 321-38.

[16] Aristotle's language is *hôs ho logos taxêi* or *legei*; see *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.12.1119b18, 4.4.1125b35, 5.1.1138b20.

accomplishes some admirable purpose. What one identifies cannot be merely a highly suitable or fitting classification, as even the "highly suitable" still has a tincture of convention. One might say that the delimitation, distinctions, and number of precepts must be "already there" by nature—as when, if we look in a zoo and someone asks how many types of primates are contained in the zoo, and how many of each type, the answer is "already there," because a primate and kinds of primates are *natural kinds*. No further choice is needed: simply give the natural kinds appropriately, and the answers fall out.

When one puts the matter this way, one sees how astonishing is St. Thomas's view of the Decalogue, that these commandments are the first principles of law which "natural reason" (*ratio naturalis*) assents to immediately. When he holds that the Decalogue is the natural law, what he is claiming is that on Sinai God simply indicated again, in divine law, precepts that already stood distinct and complete on their own to natural reason as natural entities. On such a view, there would be nothing conventional or arbitrary, and certainly nothing partisan or sectarian, about the two tablets and ten precepts; they are two and ten "by nature." Kronecker's famous dictum, "God created the natural numbers, and everything else is the work of man," gives the spirit of this view.[17] The Decalogue is given by nature, and all the rest (such as the *Corpus iuris civilis*) is the work of man, in cooperation with nature.

Not that Kronecker's maxim can be simply transposed to the Decalogue, since St. Thomas thinks that there are other precepts, also true "by nature," which however are not properly included in "the natural law." One example he gives is "Rise up before the hoary head," which one might construe as, "Show respect for your elders" (*STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1; q. 100, a. 11).[18] Such a precept is based on the natural authority, mentioned by

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[17] More precisely, "Die ganzen Zahlen hat der liebe Gott gemacht, alles andere ist Menschenwerk," spoken in a lecture before the Berliner Naturforscher-Versammlung in 1886, according to the memorial essay, "Leopold Kronecker," by H. Weber in *Jahresbericht der Deutschen Mathematiker-Vereinigung*, 1891/92, band 2 (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1893): 19, http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN37721857X_0002.

[18] The full precept is "coram cano capite consurge, et honora personam senis."

Aristotle and recognized by St. Thomas, that a markedly older person has over any younger person, not necessarily a relative. Greater age and, therefore, greater experience and the occasion to have acquired greater virtue, including a claim to direct with authority towards the common good, is something that is found in someone by nature. It is not like political office, also deserving of honor, but which for instance could be held by a young and unworthy person, perhaps acquired by conquest or (as in a classical democracy) attained by lot. The honor due to a holder of political office, such as honor paid to this-and-such person, and not to the city or to God as the source of all authority, is in part a matter of convention.[19]

Precepts such as "Rise up before the hoary head," although matters of natural law, are not properly included in "the natural law" because they are not in the natural course of things evident to everyone. That we should honor our mother and father is evident to everyone; that we should rise up before the hoary head is not. At least, that is the claim. By "the natural course of things" in this context one means what human beings come to know simply by making their way through life to maturity in the natural setting of a human being, which is to be at work within a family placed in political society.[20]

It is necessary to speak here of what one comes to know "in the natural course of things" because that is the way to characterize what is known "by nature." On St. Thomas's view, human beings, with respect to their speculative reason, are regarded as teleologically aiming to acquire concepts and form them into true statements expressive of knowledge about the world. What everyone acquires in this way, unless there are serious impediments, counts as our natural endowment towards knowledge, not conceived of as "innate ideas" but as what one is designed in God's providence to acquire, given the human condition, unless something impedes: this is "natural reason."

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[19] It can be solely by convention that this-and-such person is "placed in a position of dignity" ("aliquis ex hoc quod est in dignitate constitutus" [*STh* II-II, q. 102, a. 1, ad 2]).

[20] In *De regno*, St. Thomas uses the curious phrase "a province or a city" ("provincia vel civitas") to indicate political society (e.g., I, c. 3); sometimes too when he has a Roman example in mind he calls it a "republic" (e.g., I, c. 5).

Again, one must consider precisely what everyone comes to know in this way, because everything about the natural law is by nature, including its promulgation, and this natural endowment would be how it is promulgated to everyone.

Therefore, the first thing that St. Thomas must do to clarify the natural articulation of natural law is to provide a basis for distinguishing those precepts naturally known to everyone from those naturally known only to those with special insight ("the wise"). Special insight involves being able to draw inferences more extensively, having available the relevant supporting premises, understanding the correct definitions of commonly used terms, and knowing the definitions of what we call "technical terms." Why cannot an angel be circumscriptively in a place? "Circumscriptively" is a technical term derived ultimately from Aristotle's notion of place; it means, roughly, to be such that every point on the surface on one body is within the boundary of the surface of what would be a cavity in another body, if it were surrounded by another body, and, being so, not to be anywhere else.[21] The term, then, applies only to bodies. But the correct definition of "angel" is an immaterial intelligence composed solely of essence and existence: lacking matter, then, an angel cannot be or have a body. Therefore, the claim, made of any angel and any place, that the angel is circumscriptively contained in that place, must be false. Anyone who has studied St. Thomas's treatise on angels would see immediately that, given the correct meanings of the terms, the claim is false, involving a contradiction.[22] But we do not in the ordinary course of things acquire that sort of knowledge of

[21] A "place" is "the innermost boundary of what contains it" (Aristotle, *Phys.* 4.4.212a20). To be in a place circumscriptively, however, is to be "kept" there in the sense that the place controls ("measures") where something is; it is to be measured in the same way that the place is measured ("commensuretur loco" [*STh* I, q. 52, a. 2]).

[22] "So, then, it is evident [Sic igitur patet] that to be in a place appertains quite differently to a body, to an angel, and to God. For a body is in a place in a circumscribed fashion, since it is measured by the place. An angel, however, is not there in a circumscribed fashion, since he is not measured by the place, but definitively, because he is in a place in such a manner that he is not in another" (*STh* I, q. 52, a. 2). Note "it is evident": after the "substance" of angels has been clarified (*STh* I, q. 50), then this implication becomes obvious.

angels. Yet the claim that there are immaterial intelligences composed solely of essence and existence serves, nevertheless, as the "principle" of a science of angels, which goes on to show that such beings grasp universals simply, are arranged in a hierarchical ordering, and act upon things by those things' being in them rather than the reverse.

The precept, "Rise up before the hoary head," can be dealt with in a similar way. A markedly older person has a natural authority over a younger. Justice requires rendering to each his due. Everyone should wish to be just. Honor is due to those with authority over us. Visible honor is due to those who visibly have authority over us. A markedly older person has a visible authority over a younger. Standing up is a natural, visible sign of honor, and remaining seated upon the entrance of someone visibly deserving of honor is a natural, visible sign of disrespect. Therefore, it is obvious that a younger person ought not to remain seated but should stand upon the entrance of a markedly older person. More can be said to fill in the reasoning. But anyone who has studied St. Thomas's account of justice and Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* would see immediately that the precept is sound. However, in the ordinary course of things we do not acquire that sort of refinement of justice, as shown by the fact that presumably very few would find it surprising if a young person did remain seated upon the entrance of a markedly older person and needed to be instructed on the point.[23]

This distinction, between that which is evident to all and that which is evident only to "the wise," that is, those with the relevant understanding, which is not acquired in the natural course of things for a human being—and certainly not by a young person—serves then to mark off those precepts based in nature that belong to "the natural law" strictly (*absolute* is St. Thomas's term [*STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1]), on the grounds that they are promulgated to all (i.e., because they are evident in the

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[23] Note that this example of St. Thomas is deftly chosen because it concerns the proper behavior of a young person who has not become old enough to have come to sense, "in the ordinary course of things," how *others* ought to behave towards *him* as older.

natural course of things to all) from those which, although they can be maintained to belong to natural rather than human law, are better counted as derivative or secondary precepts of natural law.

III. What Unifies the Natural Kind

Now that this field of precepts within "the natural law" has been delimited, it would follow to explain what unites them all, as being naturally evident to everyone. Since St. Thomas believes the Decalogue gives the relevant class of precepts, his question, materially, is what unites the precepts of the Decalogue. I believe we tend not even to ask this question, as we do not see that it is a difficulty. The tradition that there are ten and the story of Mt. Sinai provides, for us, enough of an account of their being grouped together. Perhaps, too, because we have ten fingers we presume that ten of something taken together makes sense as being the largest easily memorized group. But such conventions would not of course unite the precepts of the Decalogue as constituting as it were a natural kind. Obviously that we take their number to be ten does not imply that they have anything in common by nature. For St. Thomas, their unity as being naturally evident to all involves their all ruling out salient practical contradictions involving goods naturally known to all. Contradictions have the prospect of being evidently and obviously "wrong," because nothing is so clear as the incompatibility of a proposition with its contradictory opposite; and these will be obviously "wrong" to all, if the propositions contain terms which in the ordinary course of things are grasped by all.

The following *proviso* needs to be kept in mind as regards structure within what counts as law. Structure broadly is a consequence of what St. Thomas calls *determinatio*. *Determinatio* is frequently a matter of mere specification. A more general precept gives in a general way a class of acts that are prohibited, and, if the class is divisible into species, then comprehended under this law would be specific precepts, one for each of the species, each prohibiting acts within that

species.[24] When this happens, the more general law is as it were primary relative to any of the more specific precepts, which are secondary and regarded as derived from, comprehended by, and unified as falling under the more general precept. Thus, to find a natural unity of the precepts of the Decalogue, it would suffice to identify a naturally evident precept that is primary relative to them, such that they are appropriately regarded as *determinationes* of that precept. This is why St. Thomas begins his next discussion (a new paragraph in the Dominican Fathers translation) saying, "Now a certain order is to be found in those things that are apprehended universally." We might have thought that any precept obvious to everyone would be on the same footing as any other precept. But one stands higher than they and therefore unites them.

This is how St. Thomas looks at what he calls "the first precept of law" ("primum praeceptum legis"). It is naturally known to all; it rules out practical contradictions; the precepts of the Decalogue are *determinationes* of it; and, if those precepts consist of terms that are also naturally known to all, and only those precepts are, then his work is over and he has shown that they compose a natural kind suitably called "the natural law"—not that this work is completed in article 2 of question 94, but only that, as we have put it, the sufficient bases for this task would have been suitably set down there.

Hence the elegance of his beginning his discussion of this basis by turning to the claim from metaphysics that "being" is what first falls under our apprehension. Surely the principle that nothing can both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect is by nature evident to anyone, for whom anything else is evident at all. For St. Thomas it is the most evident speculative principle: in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, to which he refers here, he follows Aristotle in calling this

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[24] Lawyerly language typically aims to give the species exhaustively, for practical purposes. To take a chance example, from the D.C. Code, "A person commits the offense of assault on a public vehicle inspection officer if that person *assaults*, *impedes*, *intimidates*, or *interferes with* a public vehicle inspection officer *while that officer is engaged in* or *on account of the performance of* his or her official duties" (§ 22–404.02; emphasis added). Even "his or her" works in this way.

principle "firmest and most certain" ("firmissimum sive certissimum"), about which one cannot err ("non possit aliquis mentiri, sive errare"), and "self-evident" ("non est suppositum, sed oportet per se esse notum" [IV *Metaphys.*, lect. 6]). Because of the convertibility of being and goodness, the corresponding practical principle has a similar status. What this means for his purposes here is that, so to speak, the *logical form* of propositions being thrown into the form of a contradiction, a practical as much as a theoretical contradiction, would in no way detract from their being obvious to anyone, but just the opposite. Also, these principles must be highest and most basic in their respective domains. Hence, the practical principle provides a basis for claiming that no other precepts besides those that fall directly under it constitute the natural law, because other precepts could be brought in only if there were some precept even higher than this, which could unite all of them as if different branches under that other precept.

In sum, because we can be assured that this practical precept is indeed most basic and highest, we can be assured that solely those precepts falling under it compose a natural kind suitably called "natural law." That this precept depends upon the *ratio* of good provides the basis, at least, for an extended argument that the Decalogue is an exhaustive presentation of the natural law, which is what was needed.

We can begin to see that there are really three steps in the *corpus* of article 2 of question 94:[25] (i) to pick out a class of precepts evident to everyone; (ii) to argue that one of these is most basic in such a way that its determinations would count as the natural law and nothing else does; and then (iii) to give the bases for such determinations, while not giving the determinations proper, as this task will be completed in those other articles and questions that consider the Decalogue.

Two incidental observations seem pertinent as regards the second step before we go on to the third. First, St. Thomas does not give "the first indemonstrable principle" here in the same way that Aristotle gives it or in the way that St. Thomas himself

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[25] Corresponding to the three paragraphs in the Dominican Fathers' translation.

gives it in the *Metaphysics* commentary. The principle there is given as "it is impossible for the same thing at the same time to belong and not to belong, in the same respect" ("impossibile eidem simul inesse et non inesse idem: sed addendum est, et secundum idem" [IV *Metaphys.*, lect. 6]). That is, it is presented as a principle about being. But here it is given as a normative principle about our practices of affirmation and denial: "nothing is to be affirmed and denied at the same time" ("non est simul affirmare et negare"), namely, in the same respect. Surely St. Thomas does this in order to set up better an analogy between this principle and what he regards as the corresponding first principle of practical reason. And yet that he does so draws attention to another characteristic of his method and exposition in the *Summa theologiae*, namely, that when he can show or suggest something relevant in passing, he does so, while still retaining the simplicity and economy of exposition character- istic of the work. Here, what he shows in passing is how unobjectionable and natural we find it to derive practical precepts from natural inclinations. All of us have a natural inclination to know;[26] therefore, truth is a good for us, as the good of the intellect; therefore, it is due to us; therefore, it is due to us not to assert anything false; but a contradiction would contain something false; therefore, a contradiction is not to be asserted. That we embrace this precept, as a practical precept about assertion, is shown not simply in our avoiding contra- dictions but also, for example, in our felt shame when we are convicted of embracing one. Saint Thomas could easily have set aside a whole paragraph to draw attention to this point, but he merely shows it in passing, presumably because the *corpus* is already longer than usual, and, besides, that point would be a digression from the three-step argument to which we have drawn attention and which he is pursuing with his usual economy.

Second, he does not give the corresponding practical precept in the same way as the speculative precept, although he could

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[26] See, for example, I *Metaphys.*, lect. 1: "quaelibet res naturalem inclinationem habet ad suam propriam operationem. . . . Propria autem operatio hominis inquantum homo, est intelligere."

have. He could have given the practical precept as "nothing is to be pursued (viz., as good) and avoided (viz., as not good) at the same time," namely, in the same respect. But he gives it, of course, as "good is to be pursued and bad is to be avoided." As given in this form, the speculative analogue would be something like "truth is to be affirmed and falsehood is to be denied," or "affirm the true; deny the false." Why should he break the strict analogy and give the two principles in such different forms?

One possible reason is that we do not in fact ever act against, by denying, an evident principle of speculative reason, but we do act against the natural law frequently. No one, for instance, is ever put in a position such that he finds it expedient to affirm that the part is greater than the whole. Or if, in our geometrical demonstrations (to use St. Thomas's other example), we found that what we had said implies that things equal to the same thing are not equal to each other, we would never deny that principle, or hold to our result nonetheless, but we would invariably go back and withdraw something in our reasoning. On the other hand, people will murder when it is expedient despite a precept not to murder, and they will typically not regard themselves as required to "correct" the violation of the precept later, insofar as they can, by seeking corrective justice for themselves. That is to say, the authority of the evident speculative principle considered as an affirmation is so great that to render the fundamental speculative precept as, in effect, "do not contradict yourself," is sufficient to direct someone to withdraw something other than that precept in case of a contradiction. But the practical precept, although evident, because of our fallen nature must still be recommended in the form of recommending the relevant good to be pursued, as if one were insisting, "regard that person's life correctly as a good," that is, do not destroy it as bad, and regard his murder as bad.

Another possible reason is that, as he has in mind the Decalogue as the natural kind which is "the precepts of the natural law," and he is aware that some precepts there are given positively and others are given negatively, he does not want to render the fundamental practical precept in such a way as to

suggest that it solely rules out some types of action in the manner of a side-constraint. He wants to leave it open that it can positively enjoin others (while admittedly continuing to rule out contrary actions, e.g., neglecting to honor one's parents): yet if he had rendered it in the form, "do not pursue and avoid the same thing at the same time in the same respect," it would be open to being misconstrued as merely a principle of consistency.

IV. ARTICULATIONS WITHIN THE NATURAL KIND

Let us proceed to the third step of his argument. We are taking St. Thomas here to be arguing for the existence of natural goods, corresponding to natural inclinations, which serve as the "content" of the precepts of the natural law, just as the very first practical principle had given its "form." Therefore, to conclude our discussion, we need to consider what goods he introduces here, and how they contribute to his task, and then we need to consider why he wants to bring in, as it seems, an "order" of natural inclinations, and what that order is. Again, we wish to continue to take the Decalogue, according to St. Thomas's own statements, as a natural kind, consisting exhaustively of those precepts evident to all, which make up "the natural law" considered strictly (*absolute*). Again, we understand that St. Thomas's task is simply to say enough to establish that the goods referred to in those precepts, which are the "content" of those precepts, are naturally known by all—as only in this way can the precepts, too, be naturally known by all.

As a preliminary point, we must consider that St. Thomas regards all the precepts of the Decalogue as precepts specifically of justice (see *STh* II-II, q. 122). However, as is clear from his discussion of *ius* or "right," he follows Aristotle in regarding the virtue of justice as a matter of firmly willing what is "right" (Greek, *to dikaion*), and *ius* is always a matter of the assignment or exchange of goods as between at least two persons (see *Nic. Ethic.* 5.1). Here is a good, brief expression of this view:

the right in a work of justice, besides its relation to the agent, is set up by its relation to others [constituitur per comparationem ad alium]. Because a man's work is said to be just when it is related to some other by way of some kind of equality [respondet secundum aliquam aequalitatem alteri], for instance the payment of the wage due for a service rendered. (*STh* II-II, q. 57, a. 1)

Therefore, any account of a precept which is a matter of justice grasped by nature must give an account of our recognizing both persons and things (possessions, belongings) as good: the persons being those to whom the things are somehow adjusted in relation to some standard of equality.[27] For example, the precept "Do not steal" is based on the notion of right as between two persons as regards their belongings, namely, that one person's being benefitted by a loss sustained by another in what he owns is not "right," because not equal, unless he compensates that other person, ideally by an antecedently agreed upon reciprocation of a distinct good, which the other is pleased to accept in exchange, as equal to what he gave up—that is, in a "voluntary commutative exchange"—or, failing that, by restitution for theft in an "involuntary commutative exchange." Special cases of imposing an uncompensated loss on another would be murder and adultery: murder, because it takes away the life of the person whose good is contributed to by possessions—it takes away the subject of goods rather than the goods—and adultery, because it takes away or attacks a person, not a thing, who belongs to another. Special cases of *ius* would be those involving somehow making use of goods to attain an equalization insofar as it is possible, not to others at arm's length in the market but to those responsible for one's existence, nurture, and education, such as one's parents and, ultimately, God.

We can make an inventory, then, and say that if St. Thomas wishes to make it plausible that the precepts of the Decalogue are naturally known to all, he needs to make it plausible, or say enough to make it plausible, that, as other persons in a rela-

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[27] In the legal not philosophical tradition it was customary to trace the view that there is a natural law back to Aristotle's distinction in *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.7 between natural and legal right. A good example would be John Fortescue, *De laudibus legum angliae* (1616), chap. 16, "The Law of Nature in All Countries Is the Same."

tionship of *ius*, God, parents, and other persons are naturally grasped as goods by all; also, that a spouse as a partner in procreation is naturally grasped as a good by all; and, finally, that "material possessions" necessary for life are grasped as goods by all. He could have done this by drawing up such an inventory and checking it off, so to speak, dealing with each person or class of persons and each class of goods one-by-one, and arguing that each is comprehended by what he calls "natural reason." In effect, he does this in question 122 of the *Secunda secundae*. But here he takes a different approach.

Why does he do so? To see this, suppose that the third step of his argument in the *corpus* of article 2 of question 94 (which is the same as the last paragraph of the *corpus* in the Dominican Fathers translation) were removed from its context and presented on its own. How would one be disposed to interpret it? Because we will need to consider it in detail, let us excerpt this familiar text:

Quia vero bonum habet rationem finis, malum autem rationem contrarii, inde est quod omnia illa ad quae homo habet naturalem inclinationem, ratio naturaliter apprehendit ut bona, et per consequens ut opere prosequenda, et contraria eorum ut mala et vitanda.	Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance.
Secundum igitur ordinem inclinationum naturalium, est ordo praeceptorum legis naturae.	Wherefore according to the order of natural inclinations, is the order of the precepts of the natural law.
Inest enim primo inclinatio homini ad bonum secundum naturam in qua communicat cum omnibus substantiis, prout scilicet quaelibet substantia appetit conservationem sui esse secundum suam naturam. Et secundum hanc inclinationem, pertinent ad legem naturalem ea per quae vita hominis conservatur, et contrarium impeditur.	Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature: and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law.
Secundo inest homini inclinatio ad aliqua magis specialia, secundum	Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more

naturam in qua communicat cum ceteris animalibus. Et secundum hoc, dicuntur ea esse de lege naturali quae natura omnia animalia docuit, ut est coniunctio maris et feminae, et educatio liberorum, et similia.

specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, "which nature has taught to all animals" [*Pandect. Just. I, tit. i], such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth.

Tertio modo 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.

Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has 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.

To interpret this passage correctly, we need to ask what "according to the order of the natural inclinations" means ("secundum ordinem inclinationum naturalium"). Does it mean according to the order given by the words in the passage, "first," "second," "third" (*primo, secundo, tertio*), or does it mean according to the order corresponding to each natural inclination? Does it mean the order in which the natural inclinations are placed, or does it mean the order to which each natural inclination gives rise? Does it mean an order imposed on the inclinations, or an order which each inclination imposes? In short, is the genitive objective, as it gives the things which are ordered (the inclinations), or is it subjective, as it gives the things (inclinations) to which order belongs or is properly attributed?[28]

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[28] The former in this alternative corresponds roughly to (a) *Ordnung*, *Gliederung*, *Abstufung*, *Rangfolge*, under "*Ordo*" in the online *Thomas-Lexikon*, while the latter corresponds roughly to (b) *Hinordnung*, *Beziehung* (compiled by Ludwig Schütz, the online edition of which was prepared by Enrique Alarcón, Pamplona, University of Navarre, 2006).

The proper way to answer this question is to see how St. Thomas uses the ordinal terms, "first," "second," "third" elsewhere, and to see whether he speaks of an order belonging to an inclination elsewhere. If he typically uses the ordinal terms to indicate an order in some full or important sense, then this tips in favor of the first interpretation, but if he often uses those terms simply to make a series of points, the order of which is not itself important to his argument, or only incidentally relevant, then this tips in favor of the second. Also, if he separately speaks elsewhere of, say, an order of self-preservation, an order of procreation, or a rational order, then this tips in favor of the second interpretation, but, if not, then the first interpretation should be taken to prevail.

As regards the ordinal terms, they are ubiquitous. Each question in the *Summa* is preceded by a prologue that lists the articles to be discussed under that question, and the articles are always given by those ordinal terms. Question 94 of the *Prima secundae*, for instance, lists six: *primo*, *secundo*, *tertio*, *quarto*, *quinto*, and *sexto*. [29] Sometimes the order of the articles is important for the unfolding of a topic within a question, but often it is not. Importance would be shown mainly by dependence: does a later article depend on the preceding articles? Dependence would be indicated by phrases such as "it has been stated above" or "which we said" ("dictum est supra," "quae diximus"), referring to an earlier article in the question. In fact, every article after the first in question 94 refers to an earlier article; thus, in this case, the order is important. But most questions do not have this strong order of dependence. Consider the very first question in the *Prima secundae*. It consists of eight articles, but only three refer back in their *corpora* to an earlier article (aa. 3, 5, 7). In any case, because the ordering of articles is ubiquitous, no one would want to say that the ordering is universally important, and certainly not that that ordering had precedence over the content of the articles, or should in general govern the interpretation of the articles. We should prefer to say, and we do say, that it is St. Thomas's

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[29] This fact will be invisible to those who read the *Summa* solely in translation.

characteristic way of *listing* the articles he plans to discuss, although we would admit that often the list gives the articles in an expedient or even, for some articles, a pedagogically necessary order of exposition.

Lists within the *corpora* of articles are also not uncommon, using the same ordinal terms. These terms are often used even when the order of things that are distinguished and listed is not relevant to the discussion. These listings are so common as themselves to count as practically speaking ubiquitous. Among the articles of the *Prima secundae* alone, for instance, St. Thomas gives ninety-five such lists extending at least to three items (up to "in the third place," *tertio*). Consider this handful of examples drawn simply from the questions on law:

"Besides the natural and the human law it was necessary for the directing of human conduct to have a Divine law. And this for four reasons" (q. 91, a. 4). Then he gives *primo* through *quarto*, but it turns out that the order of these reasons is not important.

"Now the perfection and imperfection of these two laws [Old and New] is to be taken in connection with three conditions pertaining to law, as stated above" (q. 91, a. 5). He uses *primo* through *tertio* to give the conditions—directing to the common good, according to an order of justice, and inducing men to observe its commandments (actually omitting one of the four)—but the order of these conditions is unimportant.

In q. 95, a. 3, he discusses Isidore's "description of the quality of positive law." Isidore gives nine qualities. In the *corpus*, St. Thomas says these can be reduced to three. He lists the three using *primo* through *tertio*, but again their order is clearly not important.

Sometimes an order is given simply to vindicate the reasonability of a distinction. For example, to vindicate the distinction among the first three precepts of the Decalogue, St. Thomas says, "Now man owes three things to the head of the community: first, fidelity; secondly, reverence; thirdly, service" (q. 100, a. 5). These are given with *primo* through *tertio*. And yet that these things owed fall in this order proves not to be important for his discussion. Rather, that there is an order at all, in the sense merely that they can be listed, supports a claim of distinction. They are distinguished through being placed on a

list: it is not that they are distinguished first and independently, and then placed on a list.

Clearly, St. Thomas often uses ordinal terms simply to make a series of points, the order of which is not itself important to his argument, or only incidentally relevant. Therefore, from the mere fact that he uses *primo* through *tertio* at this point in his discussion, to list what he regards as the natural inclinations, we are not justified in presuming that by the "order of natural inclinations" he means the order that is given or constituted by this list.

Obviously, his list of three natural inclinations does follow an order. But strikingly it is not a teleological but a formal order. That is, although the third inclination is "proper" to human beings (viz., it is distinctive of them and therefore, surely, indicative of their purpose or "function" [Greek, *ergon*]), the first two inclinations are not presented as leading to it, in the service of it, giving way to it in cases of conflict, or for the sake of it. Rather, St. Thomas is clearly assuming a definition such as "a human being is an individual substance of embodied rational nature," and then considering the three forms implicit in the definition—substance, animal, rational—in order, from most to least extensive.

It is clear why he uses a formal ordering. He had earlier explained *per se nota* propositions as obvious given the definition of a human being, or of an angel, as the case may be. Now he has in view propositions of the form, "Conservation of life is good for a man," "Procreation is good for a man," and "Acting in accordance with reason is good for a man," as obviously true, given that someone knows what a man is, and therefore understands what a man is naturally inclined towards, that is, what counts as his goal or end, given such a form. If, in contrast, St. Thomas were relying on a teleological not a formal ordering, he would have needed to engage the doctrine of *De anima* and explain why there is not a fourth, vegetative, inclination, corresponding to the vegetative power of the human soul. Such a teleological approach would bring his list of the inclinations rather close to the list of the four powers of the soul on which the theory of the cardinal virtues relies, and, as

we have seen, he is intent on establishing the independence of an investigation of ethics through law from the theory of the virtues.

On the other hand, the notion of "according to the order of" something as meaning, *according to the order produced or called forth by that thing*, is common in St. Thomas.

First of all, we should note that the phrase, simply, "order of" (*ordo* + genitive) is used as much in the subjective sense by St. Thomas as the objective, that is, as much to indicate the order called forth by something as something that is itself ordered. For example, the "order of justice" is the order imposed by the virtue of justice, not the order in which the virtue of justice is placed (*STh* I, q. 21, a. 4). The "order of God's wisdom and justice" is the order effected by those traits in God, not the ordering of the trait of wisdom relative to the trait of justice (*STh* I, q. 25, a. 5). The "order of generation," also referred to by St. Thomas as the "pathway of generation" (*via generationis*), is a characteristic mode of the origination of something within nature (*STh* I, q. 77, a. 4). The "order of a universal cause," just like the "order of divine governance," must from the nature of the case be the order effected by a universal cause or by that governance (*STh* I, q. 103, a. 7). Again, to say that indigestion occurs "apart from [*praeter*] the order of the nutritive power," according to St. Thomas, is to say that, because of some impediment, indigestion is a phenomenon distinct from the typical result of digestion, effected by that power, and not properly attributed to it. It is unnecessary to multiply examples further. Therefore, we see that it should be at least an open question whether in St. Thomas the phrase "order of" an inclination means the order produced by an inclination or the order of that inclination to something else.[30]

Second, an *inclinatio* clearly generates an ordering according to St. Thomas. This is clear in the case of self-love, which corresponds to the first of the three *inclinationes* listed in article

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[30] Likewise, when it is a genitive plural that occurs after *ordo*, it is an open question whether the plural is meant distributively or collectively—that is, whether it signifies the orders produced by those inclinations, one by one, or the ordering among those inclinations, considered together.

2 of question 94. For example, St. Thomas says that to kill oneself is illicit

> because everything naturally loves itself, the result being that everything naturally keeps itself in being, and resists corruptions so far as it can. Wherefore suicide is contrary to the inclination of nature [contra inclinationem naturalem], and to charity whereby every man should love himself. Hence suicide is always a mortal sin, as being contrary to the natural law [contra naturalem legem] and to charity. (*STh* II-II, q. 64, a. 5)

This same inclination makes a showing two articles later, in St. Thomas's discussion of killing in self-defense: "it is natural to everything to keep itself in 'being,' as far as possible" ("cum hoc sit cuilibet naturale quod se conservet in esse quantum potest"). And yet there an order of self-love is introduced, as indicated by the comparative construction, *plus . . . quam*: "one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's" ("quia plus tenetur homo vitae suae providere quam vitae alienae") (*STh* II-II, q. 64, a. 7). Of course, this is what is known as the "order of love" elsewhere,[31] which St. Thomas regards as subsumed into an "order of charity."

In his account of the order of love, St. Thomas completely follows Aristotle, who in the *Nicomachean Ethics* holds that, as a rule, we ought to love more and prefer those who are closer to us, and this in a structured, not an unstructured or vague way (Aristotle, *Nic. Ethic.* 9.8; see IX *Nic. Ethic.*, lect. 8). Saint Thomas considers the view that the virtue of charity overrides this order, such that we ought to love everyone equally, presumably as God does. He rejects this view decisively: "intensity [intensio] of love arises from the union of lover and beloved . . . in matters pertaining to nature we should love our kindred most, in matters concerning relations between citizens, we should prefer our fellow-citizens, and on the battlefield our fellow-soldiers" (*STh* II-II, q. 26, a. 8). The *sed contra* of the article even gives the fourth commandment as proof that "we ought to love more specially [specialius] those who are united to

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[31] When St. Thomas on various occasions quotes St. Augustine, "virtus est ordo amoris," he means that a virtue can be conceived of as love, in the manner of a *principium*, placing things into order (cf., e.g., *STh* II-II, q. 62, a. 2, ad 3).

us by ties of blood." In the *corpus* of the next article, St. Thomas continues the theme, now arguing that in most respects we should prefer our children over our parents: "a man loves more that which is more closely connected with him, in which way a man's children are more lovable to him than his father." And so on. All of this is to say that the entirety of question 26 of the *Secunda secundae* gives an account of the relevant order that springs from the natural *inclinatio* underlying self-preservation and self-love. Charity complements but does not negate this order.

The same natural inclination extends to how we administer our possessions. Thus, an objection considered by St. Thomas concerning the virtue of liberality contends that liberality is not a virtue, because

it is a natural inclination for one to provide for oneself more than for others: and yet it pertains to the liberal man to do the contrary, since, according to the Philosopher (Ethic. iv, 1), "it is the mark of a liberal man not to look to himself, so that he leaves for himself the lesser things." (*STh* II-II, q. 117, a. 1, obj. 1)

In reply, St. Thomas says (again following Aristotle, *Nic. Ethic.* 9.8) that a liberal man cares more about himself than others, to be sure, in spiritual goods, and in any case "it does not belong to the liberal man even in temporal things to attend so much to others as to lose sight of himself and those belonging to him," (*STh* II-II, q. 117, a. 1, ad 1). It follows, therefore, that someone who did not regard possessions as goods at all would indeed be acting contrary to the natural inclination and contrary to virtue.

Obviously, then, for St. Thomas, natural law precepts about honoring one's mother and father, preserving one's own life and after that the lives of one's neighbor (which rules out murder), and appropriately acquiring and conserving material wealth (which rules out theft), are all assignable to an order of love, the *principium* of which is the natural inclination of self-preservation.

The order to which the inclination of procreation gives rise is similarly indicated in St. Thomas's discussion of the species of lust, "simple fornication, adultery, incest, seduction, rape, and

the vice against nature" (*STh* II-II, q. 154, a. 1). Corresponding to each species, for St. Thomas, there would be a negative precept of the natural law, ruling out acts of that kind: do not fornicate, do not commit adultery, and so on. And these fall within a scale, from less to more grave, although the scale is not a simple one, with nonreproductive acts being most grave in point of being contrary to nature, and adultery in contrast being the most grave in point of being contrary to the right ordering, in reason, of that inclination towards marriage for procreation (*STh* II-II, q. 154, a. 12). Saint Thomas's comments on simple fornication are worth citing here amply:

we must take note that every sin committed directly against the life of a human being [contra vitam hominis] is a mortal sin. Now simple fornication implies an inordinateness that tends to injure the life of the offspring to be born of this union. For we find in all animals where the upbringing of the offspring needs care of both male and female, that these come together not indeterminately, but the male with a certain female, whether one or several; such is the case with all birds: while, on the other hand, among those animals, where the female alone suffices for the offspring's upbringing, the union is indeterminate, as in the case of dogs and like animals. Now it is evident that the upbringing of a human child requires not only the mother's care for his nourishment, but much more the care of his father as guide and guardian, and under whom he progresses in goods both internal and external. For this reason it is against the nature of a human being [contra naturam hominis] that couplings be unsettled; rather, it is required that a man should be united to a determinate woman and should abide with her a long time or even for a whole lifetime. Hence it is that in the human race the male has a natural solicitude for the certainty of offspring, because on him devolves the upbringing of the child: and this certainly would cease if the union of sexes were indeterminate. This union with a certain definite woman is called matrimony; that is why it is said to belong to the natural law [ideo dicitur esse de iure naturali]. (*STh* II-II, q. 154, a. 2; translation slightly modified)

The natural law precept enjoining matrimony and child raising over a lifetime would of course extend to and imply other supporting practices, of lesser importance, mixed with conventions specific to cultures, such as rites of passage, coming of age, courtship, seclusion of a newly married couple, rights of establishing a household, and so on. This is to say, this entire order consisting of practices directed towards marriage, and negative precepts ruling out acts outside this order, is to be

construed according to St. Thomas as an expression in rational beings of the *inclinatio* toward reproduction. The species of lust most clearly contrary to this order, as mentioned, is from one point of view acts against nature and from another point of view adultery:

[By committing adultery] a man is guilty of a twofold offense against chastity and the good of human procreation. First, by accession to a woman who is not joined to him in marriage, which is contrary to the good of the upbringing of his own children. Secondly, by accession to a woman who is united to another in marriage, and thus he hinders the good of another's children. (*STh* II-II, q. 154, a. 8)

In the reply to the second objection he also comments: "Matrimony is especially ordered towards [ordinatum ad] the good of human offspring. . . . But adultery is especially contrary to matrimony, insofar as it violates matrimonial faith, which each spouse owes to the other" (translation mine).

So far we have looked at the order of love traceable to the *inclinatio* of self-love, and the order of human life related to procreation, traceable to the *inclinatio* of reproduction. In each case we see that the *inclinatio* implies an order of acts, practices, and precepts. But what do we say about the third *inclinatio* mentioned by St. Thomas? What is its order? What delineated structure of preferences and practices may be attributed to it?

The scope of this inclination is comprehensive, according to St. Thomas, since it extends somehow to every act of virtue considered as such:

since the rational soul is the proper form of man, there is in every man a natural inclination to act according to reason: and this is to act according to virtue. Consequently, considered thus, all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law: since each one's reason naturally dictates to him to act virtuously. (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 3)

Thus, whatever order there is among the virtues or as expressed by a virtue is attributable to this order. An example of order among virtues would be, for instance, that debts should be repaid to a friend (justice) before new gifts are given to a

stranger (liberality); or, again, how the moral virtues are ordered to contemplation (*STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 2).

But then too the domain corresponding to this inclination shows a characteristic ordering towards God and knowledge of the truth, and also toward the common good of political society. So, for example, as "the intention of magnificence is the production of a great work," therefore "no end of human works is so great as the honor of God: wherefore magnificence does a great work especially in reference to the Divine honor" (*STh* II-II, q. 134, a. 2, ad 3). Again, fortitude is ordered towards "defending the common good by a just fight" (*STh* II-II, q. 123, a. 5). Again, contemplation is ordered towards contemplation of God: "The ultimate perfection of the human intellect is the divine truth: and other truths perfect the intellect in relation to the divine truth" (*STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4, ad 4).

That is why "religion" considered as a moral not a theological virtue ends up being a focal point of the order found in the virtues:

due worship is paid to God, in so far as certain acts whereby God is worshiped, such as the offering of sacrifices and so forth, are done out of reverence for God. Hence it is evident that God is related to religion not as matter or object, but as end: and consequently religion is not a theological virtue whose object is the last end, but a moral virtue which is properly about things referred to the end. (*STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 5)

That is why, for St. Thomas, the most conspicuous acts of religion—setting aside time for divine things as in a Sabbath, and offering sacrifice—pertain to the natural law considered strictly:

It is a dictate of natural reason that man should use certain sensibles, by offering them to God in sign of the subjection and honor due to Him, like those who make certain offerings to their lord in recognition of his authority. Now this is what we mean by a sacrifice, and consequently the offering of sacrifice is of the natural law. (*STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1)

Now it is a point of natural law that man should make an offering in God's honor out of the things he has received from God. (*STh* II-II, q. 86, a. 4)

Of course, that the commandment about the Sabbath gives a particular day in commemoration of something in the past is something superadded, but that God as the source of blessings is to be specially and commonly honored belongs to "the" natural law (*STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 7, ad 5).

In the *Summa*, St. Thomas tends to take the social nature of human beings, as rational animals, for granted. It is something presupposed rather than argued for. However, in his commentary on the books of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (IX *Nic. Ethic.*, lect. 11), and also in the opening of *De regno*, St. Thomas affirms that as rational beings we have an inclination to live with others, even beyond our need to do so to acquire necessities and requisite skills. In *De regno* he draws the additional inference that this order implies the order of government (I *De regno*, c. 1).

To summarize this discussion of the meaning of *inclinatio* in article 2 of question 94 of the *Prima secundae*: after finding that St. Thomas often uses ordinal terms simply to list a series of points, we found that elsewhere he refers to an order of self-love, an order of procreation, and a rational order (of the virtues directed toward God), and, therefore, when St. Thomas says, "according to the order of natural inclinations, is the order of the precepts of the natural law," it is most reasonable to take him to be referring to these three orders, to which the three mentioned natural *inclinationes* give rise.

CONCLUSION

We asked how the Decalogue could plausibly be construed as a natural kind. Why should we count it as containing "the natural law," when the phrase "natural law" is taken strictly to mean what is patently obvious to everyone, simply by the endowment of "natural reason"? The "form" of these ten precepts, as we saw, is given by the practical principle of noncontradiction, in either its positive or its negative form. This "form," as we argued, for St. Thomas is as clear and as naturally known as anything at all in the domain of practice. The "content" is given by goods that are naturally known to all. But

how can we have confidence that they are naturally known to all? Because they are centrally embedded, and focal points, in three orders of practice and of precept, which figure in everyone's life—the orders of self-love, procreation, and virtuous sociability under God. A precept of "the" natural law must furthermore present starkly an obvious practical contradiction as regards what is due (*debitum*) by right (*ius*) to another person, and it is precisely characteristic of each order that it involves our relationship to other persons.

Thus, as regards the third order:

The precept to honor the Sabbath, that is, honor God by due sacrifice, rules out a patent practical contradiction, which would arise from not rendering what is due to the first source of all goods. (According to St. Thomas, the preceding two commandments, against idolatry and irreverence, are meant to clear the way for this precept and should be regarded as grouped with this.)

The precept to honor one's parents mainly rules out the patent practical contradiction—a fundamental failure too of a right relationship to society—which would arise from not rendering what is due to the proximate source of one's life and most important goods.

The precept to avoid false witness rules out a practical contradiction which would arise, as regards living together in society (which our use of speech signifies), if we were to use language actually to undermine social relations. (Presumably, this precept is placed after precepts against murder, theft, and adultery, because these would be the most serious charges one could bring in giving false witness.)

As regards the first order:

The precepts against murder and theft rule out the patent practical contradiction that arises in violating the life and property of others, while reasonably preferring one's own.

As regards the second order:

The precept against adultery rules out the practical contradiction that arises from naturally striving for procreation, but taking little care for one's own offspring, that of others, and marital faith.

As regards all three:

The precepts against covetousness rule out a practical contradiction that would arise from giving space to adventitious inclinations which are contrary to the natural inclinations.

We do not of course find here, so far, anything approaching a demonstration that each of the precepts of the Decalogue is deservedly assigned to the putative natural kind, "the natural law"—the case seems weakest for the precepts against covetousness[32]—or that there is no other precept, equally patent to everyone, not in the Decalogue, which has as good a claim to count as belonging to such a natural kind.[33] However, that the goods adverted to in the precepts are central, available to everyone, and patent, given the three orders, and that they enter into claims of right—this does seem to be established. We said that presumably this last paragraph of the *corpus* is meant only to give the *bases* for such a demonstration. The rest of the work, one can plausibly maintain, is largely carried out, insofar as the simple and concise manner of the *Summa* allows, in question 100 of the *Prima secundae*, and question 122 of the *Secunda secundae*.

In article 2 of question 94, then, St. Thomas "cleaves the natural law at its joints" by identifying the most patent goods in each of three orders within human society, and the most egregious violations of right therein, obvious (he believes) to all, thereby setting up his two subsequent investigations of the Decalogue as presenting a natural kind of precepts, constituting "the natural law."

What are some upshots of this article, if its argument is correct, not simply as an interpretation of St. Thomas, but also as an account of what the natural law truly is, or should reasonably be regarded as being? One upshot, of course, is that the so-called New Natural Law has misconstrued the natural law by presenting it as seven or eight egoistic premises

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[32] Saint Thomas does give such a demonstration in *STh* II-II, q. 122, by holding that the Decalogue rules out patent injustices involving act, word, and thought (or desire), but the only injustices we can be said to desire involve a desire for material goods, or a desire for intercourse.

[33] Saint Thomas in passing mentions some precepts like this, such as "love God" and "love your neighbor as yourself," and "harm no one."

concerning putative "basic goods," putatively all income-mensurable.[34] Another upshot is that we are helped to see better the role the Decalogue played for centuries in the Anglo-American legal tradition, where it was regarded uncon-troversially as a common foundation rather than a partisan imposition.

Possibly, however, its main upshot is to provide a basis for astute social criticism, which correctly relates the moral and political orders. It would provide an interesting and it seems novel basis for criticism of what is called "liberalism."

Suppose it is true, as St. Thomas believes, that law-like "orders" within human society, as shown in our practices and in the character of our recourse to fundamental principles (perhaps framed in the language of "rights"), are fundamentally three in number. Suppose furthermore that as these orders spring from natural inclinations notably distinct "in form," it is always open for us to regard each as separable from the others, or to view only one of them as truly "counting," for the purposes of public law. (Taking only one to "count" would be a matter of our identifying with just one aspect of our nature, as if it were our whole nature.) On these suppositions, it seems, we have a means for construing what has troubled many observers under the heading of "the rise of commercial society" or "the effects of the market." Could it actually be the case, for instance, that voluntary exchanges with a view to common self-improvement, of themselves, tend to undermine civil society and the family? On the argument of this article, this question should be reformulated as: Should we expect that one of these orders will tend to undermine the other two? This would be unlikely, especially if this system or "order" were taken within a particular society as governed by the whole of the Decalogue, and not simply by those precepts of the Decalogue most relevant to it.[35]

On the other hand, suppose one were to detach, from this system or "order" directed to common self-improvement, that

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[34] John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

[35] Note that the fifth and sixth commandments largely correspond to commercial society's triad of "life, liberty, and property." And yet the differences are significant.

other system or "order" corresponding to the inclination to procreate. Posit, let us say, an ideology of social contract which ignores the family and presumes that independent adult men, solely, contract into political society. Perhaps next posit a "right" to contraception, based too on such an ideology, which then tears from society any principled, public acknowledgement of the natural inclination for procreation.

As a next step, suppose additionally that these developments have taken place in a deliberately "laïque" society, that is, in a society in which any remedy through public appeal to the most fundamental order of creation as deriving from God is ruled out, too, on principle.

In sum, posit principled, public contradictions to two of the three systems or "orders" which are meant to be pursued by all of us in common, presumably as naturally harmonized, in political society. The result would be a distortion, a kind of cancer, publicly manifested, in institutions and laws too, not simply in culture, of this one aspect of our nature—thus "commercial society," as something to be deplored. It would not be surprising if intuitively, in response to a sensed disorder, various contrary ideologies were counterpoised, in an attempt to remedy the problem—such as socialism as a remedy to what seems a pursuit of private interest in isolation; global climate ideology favored by some as a damper upon a seemingly distended *libido* for ever increasing development and wealth; or even simply a liberal ideology of "equality," which insists that everyone should care for everyone else equally, but which denies the claim of local authorities and loves.

Natural law thus construed arguably provides a timely basis for an analysis of social pathologies—which one cannot properly assess and adjudge, if one's focus is solely on happiness properly understood and the virtues.

SOME RECENT ARGUMENTS FOR CHRIST'S EARTHLY BEATIFIC VISION AND AQUINAS'S OWN ARGUMENT IN *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* III, QQ. 9 AND 34

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THAT CHRIST HAS ALWAYS enjoyed the beatific vision is a crucial part of the Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas. However, since around the middle of the twentieth century, Christ's possession of this vision prior to his entry into the next life has been much disputed by Catholic theologians. Some followers of Aquinas have offered further arguments in favor of his conclusion, in addition to the argument he himself advanced in the *Summa theologiae*. These newer arguments include one from Christ's self-consciousness, put forward by Thomas Joseph White, O.P., in his collection of essays, *The Incarnate Lord*.[1] As White acknowledges, the argument is not to be found in Aquinas's writings but is based on his principles.[2] Moreover, in my monograph, *Did the Saviour See the Father?*, while responding to each of the objections normally put against the earthly Christ's beatific vision, I make my own positive argument for Aquinas's conclusion, based on Christ's teaching role.[3]

In this article, I shall address the question of the value to be accorded to such additions to Aquinas's own argument on the point. In order to make this assessment, it is first of all necessary

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[1] Thomas Joseph White, O.P., *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 236-74.

[2] Ibid., 238-39.

[3] Simon Francis Gaine, O.P., *Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

to be clear about the character and weight of Aquinas's own argument; this will occupy much of the article. All of this I undertake in response to a different overall assessment of these arguments—Aquinas's, White's, and my own—put forward by Joshua Lim in a recent article in *The Thomist*.[4]

While genuinely appreciative of the content of the contributions made by White and me, Lim counsels theologians not to lose sight of Aquinas's own argument in the *Summa theologiae*. Lim holds that, while Aquinas's argument has the advantage over ours of establishing that Christ enjoyed the beatific vision *from the very moment of conception*, our work can be repurposed for showing how Christ's blessed knowledge then relates to his earthly self-consciousness and teaching needs. After setting out Lim's general position in a little more detail, I shall respond in two ways. First, I shall make some observations on his presentation of Aquinas's argument in the *Summa*, asking whether it can in fact bear all the weight he attributes to it. Second, in the light of my own interpretation of Aquinas's argument, I shall make some observations on the relationship of the more recent arguments to it, suggesting that they can play a more central role in arguing for the earthly Christ's beatific knowledge than Lim allows.

Lim notes that in more recent times not only have there been critics of Aquinas on the issue of Christ's beatific vision, but there have also been defenders of his conclusion. However, many Thomists, he says, "typically give the argument of the *Summa theologiae* a polite nod before hurrying on to more apparently relevant ones."[5] He says that White and I "try to go beyond [Aquinas's] teaching by establishing the necessity of Christ's beatific vision with respect either to his earthly consciousness or to his earthly teaching."[6] Lim takes these starting-points to "detract from Thomas's own argument, which is the more fundamental, based on the humanity of Christ as such . . . Christ's

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[4] Joshua Lim, "The Necessity of Beatific Knowledge in Christ's Humanity: A Re-Reading of *Summa Theologiae* III, Q. 9," *The Thomist* 86 (2022): 515-42.

[5] Ibid., 518.

[6] Ibid., 526.

humanity as the head and instrumental source of all grace."[7]
Lim's "re-reading" of the *Summa's* question on Christ's
knowledge in general (*STh* III, q. 9) is intended "to ensure that
Thomas's own argument, which offers a more fundamental
account of the necessity of that vision, is not too hastily passed
over,"[8] either by critics or by supporters of Aquinas's conclusion.
The relevant advantage of Aquinas's more fundamental argument
in the *Summa*, according to Lim, is that it "goes well beyond
establishing the *earthly* necessity of Christ's beatific vision" by
entailing the necessity of his vision "*from the moment of
conception.*"[9] Lim charges that "recent critics have overlooked
this aspect of Thomas's argument . . . on account not of a
shortcoming in the argument itself but rather of a failure on the
part of Thomas's critics to notice the unique role that he accords
to Christ's humanity in salvation."[10] As for the recent arguments
advanced in favor of Aquinas's conclusion, Lim holds that, once
"we have grasped the necessity of Christ's beatific vision from the
moment of conception, it becomes possible and even necessary
to investigate further how this relates to Christ's earthly trans-
mission of knowledge or his self-consciousness. It is here that the
works of White and Gaine, among others, play an important role
for contemporary Catholic theology."[11] In other words, once the
necessity of Christ's beatific vision from conception has been
established by Aquinas's own argument, my work and that of
White can be employed in a secondary way to show how that
vision relates to the earthly Christ's self-consciousness (White)
and teaching (Gaine). Before commenting on the relationship of
these arguments to that of Aquinas, I shall first make some
observations on Lim's construal of Aquinas's argument in the
Summa.

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[7] Ibid., 520.
[8] Ibid., 521.
[9] Ibid., 529.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 542.

I. RE-READING AQUINAS'S ARGUMENT

Lim rightly takes Aquinas to argue for Christ's perfection in grace and knowledge on a soteriological basis as necessary for the redemption of the human race.[12] He rightly sees Aquinas's argument as drawing both on his faith in Christ as the source of grace and truth (John 1:16) and on the philosophical principle of the "causality of the maximum."[13] According to the former, Aquinas held that Christ is the universal source of grace for all other humans (and intellectual creatures);[14] according to the latter principle, he held that "it is only the maximum in any genus that can be a universal cause in that genus."[15] Aquinas concludes from these premises that, in order for Christ to be the universal source of grace, it was necessary that he possess grace pre-eminently as maximum in the genus such that he be the cause of it in others. Furthermore, Lim holds that, if there were a time at which Christ did not have the fullness of grace such that he was head of the Church, he would not be the "immovable source of grace."[16] Were he "movable," Lim asserts, Christ could only have been a "dispositive cause" of grace, presumably because he was not in fact first in the genus. It seems that, if Christ had received grace or its fullness only at a moment subsequent to conception,

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[12] For the soteriological basis of Aquinas's approach, see further the excellent article by Joshua Lim, "The Principle of Perfection in Thirteenth-Century Accounts of Christ's Human Knowledge," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 24 (2022): 352-79. For the soteriological basis of the more recent arguments, see Simon Francis Gaine, O.P., "*Must* an Incarnate Divine Person Enjoy the Beatific Vision?," in *Thomas Aquinas and the Crisis of Christology*, ed. Michael A. Dauphinais, Andrew Hofer, O.P., and Roger Nutt (Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2021), 126-38.

[13] Aquinas draws the principle from Aristotle; see II *Metaphys*. lect., 2. On the principle and its applications in Christology, see John Emery, O.P., "*A Christology of Communication: Christ's Charity according to Thomas Aquinas* (Fribourg, Switzerland: unpublished Ph.D., 2017).

[14] For Lim on Aquinas's understanding that Christ is the cause of angelic grace, see "Beatific Knowledge in Christ's Humanity," 533, 537, 541. See also Simon Francis Gaine, O.P., "Was Adam's Grace Christ's Grace?," *Angelicum* 99 (2022): 635-53.

[15] Lim, "Beatific Knowledge in Christ's Humanity," 532. It should be noted that by genus is meant in this case not a class subdivided into species but a set of things sharing in a varied way some common feature.

[16] Ibid., 534.

he himself would not have been "immovable" in respect of grace, but someone who was initially without grace or at least grew in grace towards its fullness, and thus not its maximal cause.

For Lim, the same argument holds for the beatific vision as for grace. Indeed, he says that Christ's possession of the "maximum" grace "includes the beatific vision."[17] Now Lim is aware that Aquinas's argument in article 2 of question 9, while concluding that Christ must possess this vision "most excellently" (*excellentissime*)[18] so as to cause it in others, has been subject to scrutiny by more recent theologians. They have charged, for example, that it does not establish whether Christ's possession of the vision must occur prior to his entry into the next life.[19] But, according to Lim, the moment that Christ receives the beatific vision is directly entailed by its preeminence, where Christ's vision is immovable or "immobile."

Lim says that "Thomas's argument in the *Compendium theologiae* brings out this point more explicitly than does the *Summa*."[20] So for his crucial move Lim relies more on the text of the *Compendium* than on that of the *Summa*. He says that Aquinas concludes in the *Compendium* that it was necessary for Christ to possess the beatific vision *from conception*, insofar as his humanity is the "immovable and preeminent principle of salvation."[21] In other words, for Christ the head to be the universal principle of the genus of those who are blessed with glory of intellect, his human intellect must have had the perfection of beatific knowledge from the first moment of his humanity's existence. Lim holds that, should Christ not have possessed the perfection of blessed knowledge from conception, his humanity would no longer be a universal principle in this respect, but

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Aquinas seems to prefer not to say that Christ has the vision "maximally," perhaps in this case because he holds that there could always be, by God's absolute power, a higher degree of the beatific vision such that no act of vision is strictly maximal for every possible world. See *STh* III, q. 10, a. 4, ad 3. Christ's beatific vision is preeminent and most excellent in the order God has in fact willed.

[19] Lim, "Beatific Knowledge in Christ's Humanity," 523.

[20] Ibid., 539. The text is *Comp. theol.*, I, c. 216.

[21] Lim, "Beatific Knowledge in Christ's Humanity," 533.

would require another principle prior and superior to it in the genus. Lim supposes that, on Aquinas's account, if Christ were to have received his preeminent vision at a moment later than conception, he would have progressed towards the vision and not been "immovable" in respect to it. Without that immovable perfection, his beatific vision would have lacked universal influence as first in the genus. Lim concludes that "it is necessary that Christ possess the beatific knowledge of the divine essence from the moment the human nature is assumed to the Word, that is, from the moment of conception."[22]

For Lim, then, the causal universality of Christ's beatific vision directly entails its presence from conception, and Aquinas's argument thus guarantees the presence of the beatific vision in Christ for the entirety of his human existence and not simply for one part of it. There was thus no reason for Aquinas to argue specifically for the presence of beatific knowledge during Christ's earthly ministry, as do White and I, because he had already established that it must have been present from conception.[23] While Lim in this way recommends Aquinas's own more powerful argument to Aquinas's critics, he suggests that the arguments advanced by White and me can be repurposed to relate Christ's beatific vision to his self-consciousness of identify and mission and his teaching.[24]

In response to Lim, let us first clarify why Christ should have needed grace and the beatific vision at conception in order to be their "immovable" and universal cause. Lim is appealing to the principle of the causality of the maximum as including the claim that the first in the genus must always be immovable. However, for Aquinas the principle applies not only in cases where the first in the genus is immovable but also in cases where it is not. Aquinas distinguishes the principle in two basic forms, one where the first in the genus is a univocal cause and the other where it is

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[22] Ibid., 540.
[23] Ibid., 529.
[24] Ibid., 542.

more an equivocal or analogous cause,[25] and he gives stock physical examples of each.[26] In the univocal version, all members of the genus, including the first, share the same relevant feature. Aquinas's example is the element of fire, which is maximally hot, through which everything else in the genus is hot. In the equivocal or analogous version, the first in the genus does not share the same univocal feature in common with what comes subsequent to it. Aquinas's example is the sun, which is an equivocal cause of all the earthly things it heats, without, he says, being hot itself.[27] Although he uses his examples flexibly, sometimes using the example of fire to illustrate the general principle when treating an analogous cause and sometimes the example of the sun to illustrate the maximality of a univocal cause,[28] he makes a definite distinction between the principle's two forms.

On occasion Aquinas links the principle with the tracing back of changes to an "immobile" or unchanging source of change. Where the first cause is equivocal or analogous, it is always immobile. Thus the sun is immobile in respect of heat as the equivocal cause of all earthly heating. In proving the existence of God, moreover, Aquinas argues from all change in the universe to conclude to the source of all such change in an Unmoved Mover, an analogous cause that is "immobile" in every way.[29] Similarly, as regards the particular change of being cleansed from sin, Aquinas says that Christ, the source of such cleansing, did not himself need to be cleansed, "just as in every genus of change the first mover is immobile as regards that change, and the first source of alteration is itself unalterable" ("sicut et in quolibet genere motus primum movens est immobile secundum illum

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[25] On the different kinds of causality involved, see Christopher A. Decaen, "An Inductive Study of the Notion of Equivocal Causality in St. Thomas," *The Thomist* 79 (2015): 213-63.

[26] Lim, "Beatific Knowledge in Christ's Humanity," 533 n. 45, rightly holds that one need not accept the validity of a particular example given by Aquinas to accept the general principle.

[27] II *Metaphys*. lect., 2; I *Sent*., d. 8, q. 1, a. 2. When Aquinas elsewhere describes the sun as "hot," he uses the word equivocally. See Decaen, "Equivocal Causality in St. Thomas," 218.

[28] E.g., *STh* I, q. 2, a. 2; III, q. 7, a. 9.

[29] *STh* I, q. 2, a. 2; q. 9.

motum, sicut primum alterans est inalterabile").[30] Here Christ can hardly be identified as a univocal cause since he does not share with us the feature of being cleansed from sin. Likewise, Christ's eternal natural divine sonship is the cause of our filial adoption in time and not univocal with it.[31]

As for the univocal version of the principle, Aquinas appears more flexible with regard to the first member's immovability. Sometimes he treats the first in the genus as immobile, but at other times he does not. Thus, while an equivocal or analogous cause is necessarily immobile, a univocal cause need not be immobile. For example, in the case of the glorification of the body, an effect Christ shares univocally with all those who rise to everlasting life, Christ's body was not glorified from conception. It is in the context of identifying Christ's resurrection as the univocal efficient cause of all other resurrection by explicit appeal to the principle that "that which is first in whatever genus is the cause of all that comes after it"[32] that Aquinas treats Christ's resurrected body in respect of its glory as the exemplar cause of the glorified bodies of the saints in heaven.[33]

In the case of Christ's rising itself, we have an example of something Aquinas places first in its genus but that was brought about subsequent to Christ's conception; nevertheless, he has no trouble regarding the change involved in Christ's rising as the cause of all other resurrection. Christ is not "immobile" in respect of his rising from the dead. Now it may be conceded that it could make no sense at all for resurrection to take place without Christ first being dead, ruling out resurrection at conception as a genuine possibility, since Christ can scarcely have been dead before he was conceived. However, that is not the case for the glorification of the body itself. It would have involved no contradiction for God to cause Christ to be glorified in body at the moment of conception.[34] However, despite this bodily glory being bestowed only subsequently to conception, that is, at

[30] *STh* III, q. 4, a. 6, ad 2. Cf. III, q. 22, a. 4.

[31] III *Sent.*, d. 1, q. 2, a. 2, s.c. 2.

[32] *STh* III, q. 56, a. 1. See also IV *Sent.*, d. 43, q. 1, a. 2.

[33] *STh* III, q. 56, a. 1, ad 3.

[34] See *STh* III, q. 14, aa. 1-2.

Christ's resurrection, Aquinas seems to have no trouble effec-
tively treating it as first in the genus of bodily glory and the cause
of all other bodily glory, just as he treats Christ's rising as first
cause of all other resurrection. A univocal cause, then, need not
be immobile. This does not mean, however, that such a cause can
never be immobile in respect of its genus, just that it need not be.

In the case of the habit of grace, the act of beatific vision, and
the light of glory that elevates the intellect to its act, we have
further examples of univocal effects that Christ shares with all
others in each genus. Since Christ's habitual grace and glory of
soul are effects that are univocal with all that follows in each
genus, there is no absolute necessity that he possess them
immovably from conception, just as it was not necessary for him
so to possess bodily glory. But in each case Aquinas treats grace
and glory of soul as in fact possessed from conception such that
Christ is actually "immobile" in these respects. Aquinas evidently
has reasons of "fittingness" (*convenientia*) for understanding why
the univocal effects of Christ's resurrection and glory of body
come where they do in God's plan of salvation, that is, on the
third day after his passion, and it seems that he must have
supposed corresponding reasons for the presence of grace and
glory of soul, that is, the beatific vision, at Christ's conception.
After all, he concludes in the *Compendium* that "it was *fitting*
that Christ, the author of human salvation, possess the full vision
of God from the beginning of his Incarnation, and not arrive at
it through a succession of time as other holy people arrive at it."[35]
Thus, we may conclude that the principle that the first in the
genus must be "immobile" applies in respect of glory of soul
fittingly rather than by absolute necessity. We should note,
though, that while Lim quotes Aquinas's passage from the
Compendium in order to fill out the argument from the *Summa*,
he does not in his own text advert to the element of fittingness in
the *Compendium's* argument.

However, it is not clear to me that Aquinas's argument in the
Summa is precisely the same as his argument in the *Compendium*.
As Lim is aware, Aquinas does not argue at any point in question

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[35] *Comp. theol.*, I, c. 216.

9 of the *Tertia pars* that the beatific vision was present from conception, and this is why Lim turns back to the *Compendium* for this crucial detail. However, that Aquinas did not touch on the exact moment Christ received the beatific vision in question 9 was in fact intentional, because he evidently planned to treat it in question 34 on the perfection of the child conceived, to which, again, Lim does not advert. The purpose of article 2 of question 9 is only to argue for Christ's beatific knowledge, not for when it was first bestowed, and this is partly why recent critics have been able to point out that its content does not establish that the vision was given for his earthly lifetime.

What then is Aquinas's argument in the *Summa* for Christ possessing the beatific vision *from conception*? It is not, as Lim supposes, that this timing was required for Christ to be the cause of all else in the genus. Rather, the conclusion of question 34, article 4 is argued from the fact that it was "not fitting" that Christ should receive his immeasurable habitual grace at his conception without its act. There are three distinct elements to this argument, and we shall comment on each in turn: first, the immeasurability or infinity of Christ's habitual grace; second, the identity of the act that is fitting to that immeasurable grace; third, the presupposition that Christ's habitual grace was received at conception.

Regarding the first element, Aquinas is saying that it is the infinity of Christ's grace rather than his grace per se that makes it unfitting for it to be without its act. In other words, Aquinas would concede that, if Christ's grace had been only finite according to some measure, then it need not have been unfitting for it to be unaccompanied by its act. Habitual grace without its act may have been fitting in those circumstances, had they obtained. However, Aquinas has, when treating Christ's coassumption of grace, already established that nothing was in fact lacking to Christ's habitual grace such that it "was conferred on Christ's soul as to a certain universal principle of sanctification in human nature."[36] Given this infinity of his habitual grace, linked to him

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[36] *STh* III q. 7, a. 11.

being first in its genus, it is certainly fitting, according to Aquinas, that this grace be accompanied by its act.

What, though, is it about an act that would make it fitting to this immeasurable grace? Aquinas refers back to his previous articles where he argued that Christ had free will and had merited from conception. He had appealed to the fact that infants are sanctified in baptism without their own act of faith but according to the faith of their parents or the Church, while adults are sanctified according to their own act. He treats the latter sanctification as the more perfect, not only because what is done "of itself" (*per se*) is more perfect than what is done through another, but also because an act is more perfect than the habit from which it proceeds.[37] Hence he held that, in matters of sanctification, an act is more perfect than its habit alone. In the case then of Christ's sanctification, which is the most perfect in the order of habitual grace such that he is the sanctifier of others, it follows that he had a meritorious movement of free will towards God, that is, a meritorious act proceeding from charity, at the first moment he received grace. It is this that Aquinas presupposes when he begins his response in article 4 by saying that it was not fitting that Christ's habitual grace be without its act.

But what kind of act exactly belongs to an immeasurable habit of grace? Here we come to the second element of Aquinas's argument, the identity of the act, where Aquinas argues that this act is the act of beatific vision, and here again his appeal is to the abundance of habitual grace Christ enjoyed. Aquinas notes that those "pilgrims" who possess grace in this life have it according to a lower measure than those "comprehensors" who have arrived at the vision of God in the next life. Christ, however, enjoyed a greater grace than all of these (the principle of his pre-eminent headship is at work), so his grace too, which is fittingly ever in act, is always accompanied by the act of beatific vision.

Aquinas is not arguing simply that Christ was given the beatific vision at some unspecified point, but, *because habitual grace was given at conception*, the act of beatific vision that accompanied it

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[37] *STh* III, q. 34, a. 3. See also q. 34, a. 2.

did so fittingly *from conception*.[38] Here we turn to the third element in Aquinas's argument, which he takes from article 1 in the same question, where he made the argument that Christ was sanctified by grace at conception. Without that key part of the argument, one might suppose that all Aquinas can conclude here is that Christ enjoyed the act of beatific knowledge from whatever moment he received habitual grace. Christ's position in the genus of grace allows Aquinas to conclude this much. In other words, Christ would have been head of the Body from the moment he received habitual grace, whenever that moment was. We turn back now to article 1 to see how Aquinas argues that this sanctification was in fact bestowed at conception. According to Lim, it follows necessarily from Christ's position as first in the genus and cause of all other grace that he possessed the same perfection immovably from conception. But is that how Aquinas in fact argues in the *Summa*?

He begins his response in article 1 by saying that "the abundance of grace sanctifying the soul of Christ was derived from the union with the Word itself." This soul was animating Christ's body and assumed to the Word at the moment of conception. This was important for Aquinas because he holds that the intellectual soul normally only arrives after the embryonic body has undergone sufficient formation. Since Christ's body was formed immediately by the power of the Holy Spirit and not over time by the limited power of male sperm, it could bear an intellectual soul from the very moment of conception.[39] Aquinas's argument then is simply that, since the hypostatic union took place at the child's conception, habitual grace was derived from the hypostatic union, sanctifying the soul at that same moment.[40] This reflects the fact that, when previously treating the coassumption of grace, Aquinas had responded to the opinion that the habit of grace was somehow a disposition for the hypostatic union by replying that for a number of reasons it was not. Rather, habitual grace *followed* the union, though "not by

[38] *STh* III, q. 34, a. 4.
[39] *STh* III, q. 33, aa. 1-2.
[40] *STh* III, q. 34, a. 1.

order of time but of nature and intellect."[41] But if habitual grace was derived from the grace of union *in a nontemporal fashion*, Aquinas can easily count it as present from the moment of the union itself. It is because this grace was bestowed at that moment, and because it was unfitting that such an abundant grace be without the act of beatific vision, that Aquinas can conclude in article 4 that Christ beheld the divine essence from the same moment of conception. What Aquinas does not do in the *Summa* is single out the moment of conception because Christ's maximum of habitual grace required that he was from that moment the universal cause of grace. Thus, while Lim says that the "recent critics" overlook this aspect of Aquinas's argument, I do not think that they can be blamed for not noticing an element of argumentation in the *Summa* that is just not there. Should Lim need to claim that it is in principle part of the *Summa's* argument, he may need to "go beyond" Aquinas, as he says White and I do,[42] in order to make his case. I realize that Lim may have a rejoinder here, but it seems to me that he is asking Aquinas's argument to bear more weight than it can or was meant to.

II. The Value of More Recent Arguments

Having commented on Lim's construal of Aquinas's argument, I want to move on to the relation of the more recent arguments, such as mine and White's, to Aquinas's own argument. Do they have value in arguing for the fact of Christ's earthly beatific vision or must they be repurposed for a secondary exploration of the relation of his blessed knowledge to his self-consciousness and teaching? It seems to me that Lim is correct in thinking that their contribution should be assessed in relation to the value of Aquinas's argument. However, what is at stake here is the character and weight of Aquinas's argument. As we have seen, Lim supposes that Aquinas's argument about the moment of conception is sufficient to give a definitive answer to the critics who have overlooked it. However, I suggest that the mark of

[41] *STh* III, q. 7, a. 13.
[42] Lim, "Beatific Knowledge in Christ's Humanity," 526.

fittingness rather than necessity in both the *Compendium* and the *Summa* means that neither argument nor both of them combined can prove to Aquinas's critics that it was absolutely necessary for Christ to have enjoyed beatific knowledge from conception. In fact, this mark of fittingness in Aquinas's approach instead allows the possibility of critics proposing alternative views of when it was fitting for Christ to be blessed with the beatific vision. I suggest that it is in this more open context that the contribution of more recent arguments for the earthly Christ's beatific knowledge must be located.

We should note that Aquinas did not in his own day face a challenge or objection proposing alternative moments in which Christ received the beatific vision. Aquinas's approach to theology was in part shaped by the objections put to his own teaching, and in his time there was a consensus among theologians that Christ always enjoyed the beatific vision. Hence there was no pressing reason for him to develop his particular argument in the *Summa* further than he did. More recently, however, and consistent with the nonnecessary character of Aquinas's argument to conception, most critics have effectively proposed that Christ's beatific vision was received more proximately in time to the glory of his body.

That theologians can ask such questions about what timing was fitting for the presence of Christ's glory of soul has more fundamentally as its context the fact that Aquinas treats his beatific knowledge, as well as his habitual grace, as perfections "coassumed in the union" (*STh* III, qq. 7-15) rather than as "consequences of the union" (*STh* III, qq. 16-26).[43] In previous works, Aquinas seems to have supposed that habitual grace and the beatific vision followed from the hypostatic union by an absolute necessity, and so would have followed necessarily at the moment of conception.[44] Had he still held that view when he wrote the *Summa*, he would presumably have treated both under "consequences of the union," where he includes consequences

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[43] On this distinction, see Gaine, "*Must an Incarnate Divine Person Enjoy the Beatific Vision?*," 135-38.

[44] III *Sent.*, d. 13, proem.

that follow by absolute necessity from what is assumed in the union (e.g., Christ's unity of personal being), as well as others that also follow more broadly from what is coassumed.[45] However, his decision to include under things freely coassumed not only defects but also perfections, such as grace and knowledge, indicates that he now held that these followed the union not by metaphysical necessity but by free coassumption for the sake of our salvation. Might God then not have freely caused these coassumed perfections to be derived from the union at some moment subsequent to conception, as Aquinas's critics would hold?

Something not entirely dissimilar to this happened, it seems, with regard to the glorification of Christ's body at his resurrection, which was then the cause of all other resurrection. When treating of what was coassumed in the union, Aquinas is clear that the Word "could have assumed human nature without defects," but voluntarily coassumed such things as bodily mortality for our salvation.[46] It is thus that Aquinas can explore reasons why Christ coassumed at conception such mortality rather than the glory of the body, which he received only at the resurrection. In the case of the resurrection itself, it is clear that his rising did not cause our rising to take place immediately upon his. When treating his resurrection as the cause of ours, Aquinas fields the objection that Christ's rising cannot be the cause of ours, because our resurrection did not take place immediately at his resurrection, when an effect should follow immediately on a sufficient cause. Aquinas responds that "Christ's resurrection is the cause of our resurrection through the power of the united Word."[47] Thus the effect need not take place immediately upon its cause, but the Word wills when the effect should take place according to God's plan, where we share in this life in Christ's passion first and *then* arrive to participate bodily in his resurrection in the next life. This suggests the possibility that, given that Christ's habitual grace is caused by the hypostatic union, God could in principle dispose the effect of grace to follow its

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[45] See Gaine, "*Must* an Incarnate Divine Person Enjoy the Beatific Vision?," 137.
[46] *STh* III, q. 14, a. 2.
[47] *STh* III, q. 56, a. 1, ad 1.

cause at some point subsequent to Christ's conception. More-
over, God could likewise dispose things so that the act of beatific
vision followed from the hypostatic union at a point subsequent
to Christ's conception or to the bestowal of habitual grace.

I am not aware of any critic of Aquinas in this debate who has
claimed that habitual grace was granted at some point later than
conception. At the same time, we cannot rule out the possibility
that God could create a world in which habitual grace would be
fittingly granted to an incarnate divine person at a point
subsequent to that person's first moment of created existence.
But, as regards the world God has in fact created, Aquinas's critics
have proposed no advantage to Christ being unsanctified (as
distinct from sinful as well as from sanctified) until some later
point after conception. Such a delay might in fact be unfitting as
conducive to thoughts of adoptionism or some form of
Pelagianism. What critics of Aquinas normally do is locate the
timing of Christ's beatific vision at a point more proximate to his
entry into the next world.[48] It is true that one critic, Thomas G.
Weinandy, O.F.M.Cap., has presented an argument, based on
Christ's non-Nestorian constitution, that militates against Christ
ever enjoying the beatific vision, even in heaven.[49] Most of
Aquinas's critics, however, would accept that Christ's headship
and universal causality require that he enjoy this specific vision at

[48] Critics might appeal to St. John Paul II, *Insegnamenti de Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. 11/4
(Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), 1783, who during the General Audience
on December 7, 1988 said in his catechesis on Christ's final words before dying that his
soul then "entered into the fullness of the beatific vision" ("entra nella pienezza della
visione beatifica"). That this does not exclude Christ's earlier vision is suggested by the
fact of previous papal teaching, for example, in Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 75, that
Christ enjoyed it from conception. For St. John Paul, Christ's entry into the *fullness* of
vision seems to have meant, in the context of catechesis on Christ's suffering and death,
that from the point of death his vision no longer allowed for the possibility of suffering
as it had done prior to death. Cf. the knowledge of God on the Cross prior to death taught
by St. John Paul, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 26, which was interpreted as the beatific vision
by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notificatio de operibus P. Jon Sobrino,
S. I.*, 5, 8.

[49] Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap., "Jesus' Filial Vision of the Father," *Pro Ecclesia*
17 (2004): 189-201; "The Beatific Vision and the Incarnate Son: Furthering the
Discussion," *The Thomist* 70 (2006): 605-15. For a reply, see Gaine, *Did the Saviour See
the Father?*, 43-46.

some point. They generally conceive of Christ as a pilgrim who received the grace of faith at his conception (or this is at least implied), and then fittingly received glory of soul as a comprehensor on his entry into the next life.[50] Their position also involves new or renewed objections to Aquinas's conclusion that Christ was always a comprehensor, claiming that his alleged faith, limited knowledge, freedom of will, and suffering all excluded the beatific vision from his earthly life.

It seems to me that, just as Aquinas's theology was partly shaped by objections, so should be the Thomism of his followers, and that Lim, White, and I are in agreement on this. But while Lim thinks that a restatement of Aquinas's own argument is a sufficient and definitive response to the newer views proposed by Aquinas's critics, White and I have perceived the need to meet their new and renewed objections with new arguments, and I suggest that this response presupposes a more accurate assessment of what Aquinas's own argument from fittingness and those of his critics entail. Our arguments are then more closely inserted into the debate about the timing of Christ's vision than Lim allows. They do not simply relate Christ's beatific vision, as established necessarily from conception by Aquinas's argument, to Christ's subsequent self-consciousness and teaching, but themselves contribute directly to the ongoing debate on the moment at which Christ's soul was blessed with glory.

White makes his contribution within the context of his wider project, brought together in the various essays of *The Incarnate Lord*, which makes a retrieval of Aquinas's contribution in the context of current Christology as shaped by such influential figures as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Karl Barth. White's project is not restricted to the *ressourcement* of the mere outline of a Chalcedonian Christology, but portrays its details more robustly in Thomistic fashion. One example of this is White's argument for Christ's earthly beatific vision as opposed to faith. This he says "is not an argument Aquinas makes explicitly . . . but is a conclusion that can be derived from his

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[50] For arguments against the possibility of a third way for Christ between faith and vision, see Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father?*, 119-23.

Christological principles."[51] In *Did the Saviour See the Father?*, beginning with the portrayal of Christ in Scripture as a teacher of divine truth, I work in turn through each objection typically made more recently against Christ's earthly beatific vision, including his alleged faith, thereby attempting to build up a positive argument to help Catholic theologians approach a moral certitude about Christ's vision on earth.

All this leads us to seek further clarity about why theologians can conclude, with Aquinas, that the beatific vision in fact followed the hypostatic union nontemporally at the very moment that union became a reality.[52] Just as no critic of Aquinas (except, it seems, Weinandy) denies that Christ was granted the beatific vision at some point, no one in the debate, not even those who argue for his vision while on earth, proposes that it was granted at a particular moment during the course of his earthly life (e.g., his baptism). Again, we should not suppose that God is unable to create a world where an incarnate divine person is fittingly granted the beatific vision at some such point. Nevertheless, as regards the order God has in fact willed, those who have argued for Christ's earthly beatific vision normally trace it back to conception and find no reason to locate it later than this. Lim, however, is concerned that the more recent arguments point to the presence of the beatific vision only at some point later during Christ's earthly life. Nevertheless, the vision's presence from conception is not entirely irrelevant to the current debate and our arguments.

Since White argues from the starting-point of Christ's consciousness of his identity and mission, Lim seems to take his argument to secure Christ's beatific vision only from whatever moment Christ was conscious of such things. He may also suppose that, despite the presence of Christ's intellectual soul from conception, White may allow that he could only be conscious of such things after sufficient development of his

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[51] White, *Incarnate Lord*, 238-39.

[52] It should be noted that this timing has the support of the papal magisterium. See, for example, Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 75, which was quoted in 2006 by the CDF, *Notificatio*, 5, 8.

physical and mental life. In that case it might be fitting for the beatific vision to be given only at a time when sufficient development was finally taking place. However, it is surely the case that, if the vision were given with the presence of the intellectual soul at conception, Christ would in that beatific way have knowledge of his identity and mission from the very same moment, prior to however it might subsequently be expressed in other ways. I take it that this is what White would say, given that there seems to be no reason to delay the bestowal of the beatific vision to a later point in Christ's development, on the understanding that such development can hardly be required for the soul to receive this vision. Catholics hold that a soul without its body is able to enjoy the beatific vision, and so a soul can surely receive the beatific vision from the very beginning of life, prior to the ongoing development of its embryonic body in the womb.

As with White, Lim takes my argument in *Did the Saviour See the Father?* to be good for Christ's earthly life but not from its very beginning. Since it begins from Christ's teaching in the Gospel, it involves establishing his beatific vision only for the time of his public teaching ministry, on the basis of the utility of the vision for teaching about divine realities. However, my argument did also respond to a recent critic's argument against Christ's possession of the beatific vision specifically from conception, as well as attempting to make positive sense of the utility of Christ's vision in the womb.

The objection came from Gerald O'Collins, S.J., another critic of Aquinas's position on Christ's earthly beatific vision. In his influential Christology textbook, he argues from the premise that, although the human mind is not to be reduced to the brain, our mental life is dependent on the functioning of the brain. From this he concludes that the single-cell embryonic Christ could not have supported such an advanced knowledge as the beatific vision.[53] I responded that, since the act of beatific vision is a purely immaterial act, exercised in the next life even by souls separated from their bodies, it is not dependent on the brain, the

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[53] Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 267.

bodily imagination, or its content. While O'Collins seems to suppose that Christ's brain could not have supported the beatific vision until it had developed somewhat, in fact the material brain, however much it develops, can contribute nothing of itself to the immaterial vision of God.[54] Its developed functioning may support further expressions of Christ's knowledge but not the act of vision itself, which can thus be present from conception.

Moreover, beyond responding to O'Collins's objection, my argument considered what the beatific vision can contribute in a positive way to the embryonic Christ. Aquinas holds, on the basis of St. Paul's transient entry into the third heaven, that he fleetingly experienced knowledge of the divine essence. His resulting abstraction from the senses explains what he reports about not knowing whether he was in the body or not (2 Cor 12:3). This then raises the question of why a beatified Christ did not experience the same abstraction throughout his earthly life. Here I pointed out how Bernard Lonergan, S.J., perceived a radical difference between Paul, who was caught up suddenly from his life of natural knowledge through the senses, and Christ, who enjoyed the beatific vision from conception, even before he could acquire knowledge naturally.[55] According to Lonergan, Christ's natural knowledge developed within the context of his fundamental vision of God, which Lonergan identifies as the integrating factor within Christ's overall human consciousness.[56] By agreeing with Lonergan at this point, I interpreted Christ's vision from conception as providing a horizon within which all his other knowledge, including his judgments about the world around him, could be nurtured without any tension, but rather with an ordered harmony among his different kinds of knowledge, whether natural or supernatural. To this extent my argument recognizes a utility to the beatific vision's presence from the very beginning of Christ's human existence. Of course,

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[54] Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father?*, 144-46.

[55] Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *The Incarnate Word* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 578-79.

[56] Ibid., 696-703. On Lonergan's contribution to the question of Christ's beatific knowledge, see Jeremy D. Wilkins, *Before Truth: Lonergan, Aquinas, and the Problem of Wisdom* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 324-51.

this timing cannot bear the same weight that Lim attributes to it, given that Christ's immobility in this respect is not absolutely required to guarantee his first place in the genus of glory. However, my argument does not entirely neglect Christ's vision from conception.

CONCLUSION

Lim astutely recognizes that my argument is a distinct argument from the one put forward by Aquinas. Some colleagues have assumed otherwise. One eminent Catholic theologian even told me he would not need to read my book because he already knew and had taught Aquinas's argument. It seems to me, however, that Lim is being too optimistic in supposing that Aquinas's argument alone can resolve today's debate about the timing of Christ's beatific vision. In fact, the nature of Aquinas's argument creates space for other arguments to join the fray on his side.

THOMAS OSBORNE ON
THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE VIRTUES

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THOMAS M. OSBORNE, JR.'s recent book *Thomas Aquinas on Virtue*[1] admirably summarizes Thomas's understanding of the virtues, both infused and acquired, as expressed in his entire *opera omnia*, from the *Commentary on the Sentences* through the *Summa theologiae*. Osborne writes,

in order to fully understand one of Thomas's texts on a variety of issues, we must attend to a text's historical context and place in his wider account of virtue. A partial approach obscures his dialectical method and can cause confusion about the main lines of his teaching. (216)

Osborne's book places the discussion of the virtues in dialogue with both authors who were contemporaries of Thomas, like Albert and Bonaventure, and earlier authors, like the Stoics, Aristotle, and Augustine. Thomas's teaching on virtue is a challenging topic in part because he addressed it in a wide variety of works such as the *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, the *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, the *Summa contra gentiles*, the *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Summa theologiae*. Osborne's work brings together all these sources and more, offering an interpretation and harmonization of Thomas's writings on virtue, as well as putting this teaching in dialogue with contemporary virtue ethics.

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[1] New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. viii + 233 (hard). $99.99. ISBN: 978-1-316-51174-9.

In the first chapter, Osborne explores the definition of virtue. Aristotle defined virtue as "a voluntary habit consisting in a mean relative to us, determined by reason, and as the wise human will determine it." Following Augustine of Hippo, Peter Lombard defines a virtue as a "good quality of mind, by which we live rightly, which no one uses badly, which God alone works in a human" (10). This definition was widespread in the thirteenth-century commentaries on the *Sentences*. It is not clear, at first glance, how these two definitions of virtue are to be understood. Thomas adopts the Augustinian definition but ends up transforming it by harmonizing it with Aristotelian insights. His treatment of virtue is open to new insights derived from the recent rediscovery of a more complete Aristotle, but Thomas is also careful to write in such a way that readers more familiar with Lombard's Augustinian discussion of virtue appreciate the compatibility of Aristotelian and Augustinian definitions. According to Osborne, it is best to understand Thomas as defining virtue as a good operative habit, but Osborne notes how Thomas puts this definition in harmony with the more common definition from Lombard held by most theologians in the thirteenth century. Osborne also notes that defining virtue as a good operative habit may lead to misunderstandings for us today. Many contemporary understandings of the term regard "habit" as an animal reflex or unreflective conditioning. Thomas, by contrast, situates virtue as a habit that arises from choice, and if the habit is good, it is perfective of human nature—it is not a mere extension of animal instinct.

In the second chapter, Osborne focuses on the distinction between intellectual and moral virtue. It is important in this context to distinguish skills from virtues. Skills can be used for good or bad purposes. The skill of a surgeon can heal or harm. The skilled surgeon may or may not be virtuous. By contrast, the virtues cannot be put to bad purposes. Skills focus on external production (*factio*) rather than immanent activity (*actio*). Osborne argues that Thomas makes use of the Aristotelian defi-nition of virtue to show that moral virtues, but not intellectual virtues, perfectly fulfill the nature of virtue. Intellectual virtues enable good intellectual acts, but they do not make their agents

good. Only the moral virtues both enable good acts and make their agents good. In other words, intellectual virtues do not make their agents good *as human beings*. Someone may be good as a mathematician, yet, because she may fail to achieve the goal of human life, her intellectual virtue does not make her good qua human. But are there not courageous people who also fail to achieve their ultimate end? Following Aristotle, Thomas would argue that the "courage" of the evil soldier is faux courage, a simulacrum of the real thing, because acts of daring done by an evil agent are not conducive to that agent's happiness. Osborne reminds readers that happiness is understood by Thomas not as mere preference satisfaction (as a contemporary economist or psychologist might understand the term) but as authentic human flourishing (as an Aristotelian might understand the term). Osborne's account could have been supplemented with a treatment of these "faux" virtues, such as cunning as a simulacrum of practical wisdom.

In the third chapter, the author tackles the historical divide between Stoics who view the virtuous person as free of passions, and Aristotelians who view the virtuous person as having passions shaped by reason. Although Thomas does not neglect the philosophical reasons for the Aristotelian position, his Christology also shapes his answer. He held, of course, that Jesus was sinless and had all the virtues. Since Jesus showed the passions of sadness (John 11:35) and anger (Matt 21:12-17), Augustine did not view perfect virtue as requiring complete freedom from the passions. Thomas agrees that the perfect God-man, Jesus of Nazareth, experienced passions properly governed by reason rather than a complete absence of passion. Moreover, Osborne notes that according to Thomas even a virtuous person such as St. Paul experienced disordered passions (89). In addition to drawing on Aristotle and theological resources, Thomas adopts the four cardinal virtues following Stoic authorities as the architectonic principle of ordering the virtues in the *Secunda secundae*. Nor, argues Osborne, can we ignore neo-Platonic sources in Thomas's teaching on the virtues. Aquinas adopts from neo-Platonists the idea that development of virtue leads to

contemplation of the highest things (though a similar teaching is also found in book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.)

Chapter 4 explores the distinction between natural and supernatural virtue. Thomas, argues Osborne, was perhaps the first to advocate for the doctrine that practical wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance come in both infused and acquired forms. The acquired and infused virtues differ not only in terms of efficient cause (infused virtues are given as gifts by God's grace; acquired virtues are gained through repeated human action) but also in terms of ultimate end. The infused forms of these virtues have a different mean than the acquired because the infused forms have a supernatural end (perfect happiness as a gift of God's grace) while the acquired have a natural end (imperfect happiness as achievable through human action). Human beings can gain the infused virtues because of the obediential potency that they enjoy to be recipients of God's grace. This difference of ultimate end makes a practical difference. For example, the mean for infused temperance will be stricter than the mean for natural temperance. The mean of infused temperance requires more fasting than the mean of natural temperance. Osborne points out that, "whereas the acquired moral virtue makes the agent and the act good with respect to human nature, theological virtues make them good in the order of grace. The infused virtues are related to grace in the way that the acquired virtues are related to the natural light of reason" (130). In the tradition, the discussion of acquired and infused virtues is made more complex later by the introduction of acquired faith, hope, and love. But this teaching is not found in Thomas.

Chapter 5 moves into the contemporary discussion of virtue ethics. Prompted by Elizabeth Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy" and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, contemporary philosophers have sought to create an ethics of virtue as an alternative to a deontological ethic of rules or a consequentialist ethic of the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Osborne argues that advocates of modern virtue ethics—not so much Anscombe and MacIntyre as later writers such as Julia Annas and Michael Thompson—depart from the thought of Aquinas in significant ways. Thomas does not consider virtue alone as the

basis of his ethics. He does not explain the goodness of acts in terms of virtues, but rather explains the goodness of virtues in terms of acts which are themselves evaluated as in accordance with reason's judgment of their fittingness for contributing to the final end of perfect happiness. Just as an ethic of rules alone can devolve into sterile legalism, so an ethic of virtue alone risks becoming moral relativism despite the demurrals of writers like Martha Nussbaum in her essay "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach." Virtue ethics, as it is often understood, cannot provide a full account of the ethical life. Thomas's approach integrates an account of happiness, law and grace, and passions considered not only in terms of contemporary empirical science, but in terms of human nature. An historically accurate account of Thomas's ethics is incomplete without his account of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Osborne's *Thomas Aquinas on Virtue* provides a judicious and comprehensive account of Thomas's teaching. It will be of great use to professors and graduate students seeking to understand the whole of this doctrine which is expressed in so many different works in Thomas's *opera omnia*. It will be, I believe, a standard source for coming to grips with a central topic in Thomas's thought on the virtues.

MERE THEOLOGICAL GARB? A REPLY TO THOMAS OSBORNE, JR.'S *THOMAS AQUINAS ON VIRTUE*

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I
T HAS BECOME commonplace today for any work on the virtues to indicate the relatively recent reawakening of interest in the subject, beginning with Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Alasdair MacIntyre. Of course, contemporary virtue ethics as an Anglophone analytic project of practical philosophy has moved in many varied directions since the publication of *After Virtue* in 1981. Few scholars, though, have realized how instrumental Thomas Aquinas's thought has been in this revival. Some of the movement's central philosophers explicitly utilized Aquinas. For example, in 1973-74 Peter Geach, Elizabeth Anscombe's husband, delivered a text called *The Virtues*, which focused on a critical yet friendly engagement with Aquinas's understanding of virtue. And Philippa Foot herself reminisced in 1977 that "it was reading Aquinas on the individual virtues that first made me suspicious of contemporary theories about the relation between 'fact' and 'value.'"[1] The reading of Aquinas has continued to be counseled, even within a largely (but not completely) neo-Aristotelian philosophical revival. Terence Irwin endorses Aquinas at the very outset of his neo-Aristotelian three-volume *The Development of Ethics*, writing that "Aquinas offers the best statement of the Aristotelian approach to moral philosophy and of Aristotelian naturalism. The best way to examine this

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[1] Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), xiii.

approach and this naturalist position is to reflect on Aquinas'
version of them."[2] Such acclaim has even led some to enshrine
Aquinas, albeit perhaps hastily, among the forerunners of the
contemporary virtue ethic revival.

It is in this context that one ought best to receive Thomas M.
Osborne, Jr.'s latest book.[3] Osborne has performed a significant
service for those who would join the great minds that have
returned to Aquinas's account of virtue. This service lies in
offering, not an updating of the Angelic Doctor's account of
virtue for contemporary perspectives, but a way back into
Aquinas's mind. This means engaging Aquinas's account of
virtue on its own terms and in its own historical context. That
such a service is necessary is, in some ways, a conclusion evident
only to those who have made the journey. (One could, how-
ever, glimpse an example of the need for it in Peter Geach's
unfortunate rejection of Aquinas's account of the unity of the
virtues.) Moreover, if Irwin is correct, then one must conclude
that Osborne has also provided us with a clear-headed account
of one of Aristotle's best interpreters.

The book is organized into six chapters, with an introduction
and a conclusion. But the real pattern of the book is a march
through Aquinas's treatment of "virtue in general" as presented
in questions 55-67 of the *Prima secundae* of the *Summa theolo-
giae*. One would be wrong, however, to think of this as merely a
commentatorial approach. The book offers intriguing glimpses
into how Aquinas considers the same issue from multiple
approaches, as parallel passages are explored. Osborne is careful
to consider these texts chronologically, thereby revealing any
significant or even unexplained alterations in Aquinas's re-
sponse and reasoning. The reader is especially introduced to the
philosophical sources Aquinas engaged with as he moves
through his account. "The goal of this book," the Introduction
states, "is to help the reader to learn from Thomas despite the

[2] Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study*, vol. 1:
From Socrates to the Reformation. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.
   [3] *Thomas Aquinas on Virtue*. By Thomas M. Osborne, Jr. New York: Cambridge
University Press, 2022. Pp. viii + 233 (hard). $99.99. ISBN: 978-1-316-51174-9.

differences between his texts themselves and the contemporary reader's tendency to hold background assumptions that make it difficult to assimilate what the various texts contain" (9). The method used to achieve this end is getting to know "the relevant texts, as well as . . . the philosophical and historical contexts" (ibid.).

The first chapter is devoted to question 55, on the definition of virtue. However, as its subsections require one to work through concepts like *habitus*, one theme of this chapter is a revisiting in several strategic places of Aquinas's earlier tract on *habitus*. Since *habitus* are grounded in powers of the soul, Osborne considers not only Aquinas's understanding of habits and the difference between this and our own understanding, but also a helpful discussion of *potentia* as both potency and power (19). Aquinas's understanding of virtue requires a healthy anthropology, and so is grounded in its own form of ethical naturalism. After working through the distinction of powers, and their operative character, Osborne concludes the chapter by specifying that virtue is a good operative habit gained by cultivation or even, in some cases, caused by God. Unsurprisingly, Osborne does not shy away from introducing Aquinas's Augustinian-Lombardic definition of virtue which could include this theological element.

Once the nature of virtue is defined, Aquinas, following Aristotle, immediately distinguishes intellectual and moral virtues. The second chapter largely corresponds to working through the sources and discussions taken up in questions 56-58. The first move must be to demonstrate that virtues are necessary in both the intellect and the appetites. In so doing, Osborne not only considers historical sources, but gives an illuminating consideration of later Thomistic disputes (i.e., Medina, Capreolus, Cajetan) arising from the relevant sections under consideration (49-51). Beginning then with question 57, Osborne attends to the nature of both speculative and practical intellectual virtue. Of course, it is the virtue of prudence that emerges with some singular importance for one's active life and hence requires special attention in morals. The chapter

concludes with a section on prudence's relation to moral virtue (58). The chapter contains many interesting discussions which we cannot cover here adequately. The most common inter-locutor, however, is Aquinas's other texts, which are presented in a timely and interesting style, permitting more and newer questions to arise than a straightforward reading of the *Prima secundae* would have suggested.

The third chapter centers around the division of the moral virtues based on questions 59-61. Central to the chapter is an engagement with the Peripatetic and Stoic notions of passion and Aquinas's appropriation of an Aristotelian approach. The moral virtues are distinguished between those that concern passions (e.g., fortitude and temperance) and those that concern operation (e.g., justice). Osborne brings forward detailed ques-tions evoked by Aquinas's presentation of the moral virtues, especially around his curious justification for Aristotle's state-ment regarding eleven fundamental virtues (106-8). On the heels of that discussion, Aquinas takes up a Platonic division passed down through both Stoics and early Christian writers, namely, the cardinal virtues (61). Osborne's treatment of this is a fine example of how the book contains serious consideration not only of remote sources, but also of Aquinas's immediate predecessors, such as the latter's debate whether the cardinal virtues are "general conditions" or constitute individual habits. The final section takes serious account of an oft-neglected passage: Aquinas's invocation of the neo-Platonic idea of virtues as political, purgative, purged, and exemplary virtue.

The fourth chapter considers both the infused and the theological virtues. Consequently, it treats of Aquinas's view of both the relation of the supernatural to the natural, and the relation of acquired and infused virtue. While nowhere does the book feel artificially confined to philosophical considerations, here the theological concerns are especially front and center. Sanctifying grace, our need for it and its work in various facets of life, a treatment of faith, hope and charity (q. 62), all drive this point home. The second half of the chapter considers the relationship between acquired and infused virtues (q. 63). By

considering various philosophical approaches to efficient causality in relation to virtue (144-47), Osborne shows how Aquinas's Aristotelian notion of causation entails a diverse causation of the same virtues, infused and acquired. The fundamental difference between these kinds of virtues is found in their objects and rules according to their diverse ends (150-53). The question of whether acquired and infused temperance constitute one single virtue or separate virtues in the agent does not provoke undue speculation (153). I will return to Osborne's general tack in such cases, a clear and positive facet of the book.

In a single chapter (chap. 5), the book deals with diverse properties of virtue, focusing on questions 64-67. Each sub-section here refers to a separate question and they are perhaps the most straightforward of the book. First is the mean of virtue as it relates to the various kinds of virtues (q. 64). The connection among the virtues gets the longest treatment understandably since here arises a critical point of interpretation. Aquinas often writes of various sorts of virtues as imperfect or perfect. Osborne rightly stresses the need to read Aquinas's statements in their contexts. Virtue is called perfect or imperfect depending on a standard. Virtue without charity can never be said to be perfect without serious qualification. By ignoring or underestimating this theological demand, some philosophical authors have misrepresented Aquinas's account of virtue. This has ramifications not only for supernatural life, but also for how Aquinas thinks of natural, human goodness. Osborne writes, "Given the effects of original sin, it is impossible to be naturally good without healing grace" (178). The chapter's final two sections address the inequality among the virtues (q. 66) and the duration of virtue even in the next life (q. 67). This final section reminds us, writes Osborne, "that the *Summa Theologiae* is after all a work of theology, even if it includes and depends on philosophy" (190).

Having carefully completed an examination of Aquinas's treatment of virtue in general, the book closes with a turn toward contemporary philosophical thought. It treats contemporary virtue ethics, the role of virtue in Aquinas's

ethics, and contemporary science and naturalism. Osborne notes the complaints of scholars who argue that Aquinas's account of virtue substantially differs from the modern project of contemporary virtue ethics. This raises the question of what role virtue does play in Aquinas's ethic. Osborne suggests that virtue has an organizing role in his ethic because it is entailed in the definition of the human good. The operation of virtue constitutes the ways human nature can be perfected, but virtue is not the whole story in that perfection. The final section concludes with a consideration of the ambiguous term "naturalism" and the way contemporary science can (or cannot) be compatible with Aquinas's understanding. As Osborne states, Aquinas's account of virtue depends broadly on an account of human nature "that has not been shown to be incompatible with what we know through contemporary sciences but also has not been shown to be obviously true by them" (208).

The book concludes with a brief summary of each chapter and the underscoring of its mission: "in order to fully understand one of Thomas's texts on a variety of issues . . . we must attend to a text's historical context and place in his wider account of virtue" (216).

The book is in general well-conceived, well-executed, and well-produced. On the whole, I cannot imagine someone interested in a thorough understanding of Aquinas's approach to virtue being anything but pleased. However, it bears repeating that the book is not so much an attempt to bring Aquinas into the twenty-first century as it is an attempt to bring us back to his contextualized understanding in the thirteenth. Indeed, that voyage is necessary if one is to make the way forward. However, it is not an expedition without risk. First, because Aquinas's account is enshrouded in Scholastic language, the reader should be prepared to wade into Scholastic terminology. No author could define this terminology at every turn; as a result, true beginners may find it difficult. Second, in an attempt to name Aquinas's historical sources, it is very possible to omit some or ignore the conduit through which that source became accessible to him. There were times I missed

some of my favorites. Still, nowhere does the book claim to be exhaustive. Philosophical sources seem to get the lion's share of the attention. So, there is certainly much more to be taken into account before a full historical backdrop can be articulated.

Much of my own curiosity centered on how the book would handle passages that have led to divergent readings. On this score, the book is very even handed. Presentations on contentious passages are typically limited to what is clear from the various texts. Osborne usually covers potential interpretations, and perhaps gives the briefest hint of his own understanding. Indeed, in the conclusion he warns readers not to attempt to cull from passages answers to our own questions, questions Aquinas never answered and in whose text we can find no reasonable way to settle. Instead, we are encouraged to develop Aquinas's points in our own manner, just as he did with those of his predecessors. Each of these qualities repeatedly appears in the book; Osborne has the virtue of being a careful guide.

The monograph certainly engages in a holistic manner with the entirety of Aquinas's rationale. Even if especially attentive to philosophical fonts, it never attempts to eschew the theological sources or their import. Therefore, the book cannot be called— happily from my perspective—simply a work of philosophy. Nor does it outright pretend to be. Nevertheless, at times I sensed a tension about how much the philosopher can claim Aquinas for his discipline. Often it seemed that Aquinas was presented as merely accepting ancient authorities, including philosophers (2). To be fair, the book treats the relationship between theology and philosophy in Aquinas, especially early on, and states more than once that Aquinas was primarily a theologian (3-4). But while doing that it also asserts that "in doing theology [Thomas] practiced and developed a philosophy" (4). In fact, for me the book serves as evidence that this statement is not as precise as it could be. While one can certainly point to philosophical influences in Aquinas's work on virtue, and while he seriously engages with these philosophical sources and takes them up at times, very often his own theological commitments entail that he alters what he received

from those philosophical fonts. This is true even when those terms of reference on their face seem quite "philosophical." One might think, for example, of how the Christian doctrine of creation alters Aquinas's understanding of nature. Is the result in such cases still a philosophical idea? Is the result a rationally argued theology or a disguised philosophy in mere theological robes? Moreover, there is a second concern here. Whose account of philosophy are we employing: that of a thirteenth-century theologian or that of a denizen of our twenty-first century intellectual environs? To what extent, if at all, would Aquinas have recognized his own work as philosophical? It is not clear that there is scholarly agreement on such questions.[4]

In closing, I wish to be completely clear: I do not raise doubts regarding the execution of this book. Instead, I have a minor concern about how we characterize a work so finely executed. Osborne's work beneficially situates itself at the (perhaps for us somewhat ambiguous) crossroads of philosophical and theological scholarship on virtue. That is to say, it is thoroughly Thomistic.

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[4] Contrast, for example, Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Portrait*, trans. Joseph G. Trabbic and Roger W. Nutt (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press; 2016), esp. 47-48; and Jan A. Aertsen, "Aquinas's Philosophy in Its Historical Setting," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleanore Stump (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. 34-35.

THOMAS AQUINAS ON VIRTUE:
DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

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I AM GRATEFUL for the opportunity these reviews provide for reflecting on issues that extend beyond my book's narrower claims about Thomas's understanding of virtue. While his discussions of virtue remain important for anyone wishing to teach and think more deeply about virtue, there is widespread disagreement over how to further Thomas's work, and how to understand it in our present cultural and intellectual context. Our understanding of the future possibilities for Thomistic ethics depends on broader notions about the nature of philosophy and theology, as well as their relationship to historical methods and intellectual history.

As Justin Anderson rightly notes, my book does not provide an adequate account of what philosophy is, how it is related to theology, and how it differs from philosophy as practiced in contemporary philosophy departments. I suggest that Thomas's philosophy, especially as contained in the *Summa theologiae*, is simply the part of natural knowledge, scientific in the Aristotelian sense, that is needed for theology, and that this natural knowledge might be supplemented with what we have learned from the contemporary sciences. Moreover, new editions of historically significant texts allow us better to understand Thomas's philosophical and theological achievements. Finally, Thomas's account of virtue could be enriched through responding to new problems and incorporating aspects of non-Western traditions of philosophical enquiry, such as Confucianism. Thomas's philosophical ethics serves his Catholic theology,

which, unlike merely human knowledge, receives its principles from a revelation that concluded before the death of the last apostle.

Thomas's philosophy serves theology simply because of the way in which the scientific habit of knowing about God through revelation, which for Thomas is theology, depends on natural human scientific knowledge, which is what Thomas describes as philosophy. Most of Thomas's work aims to develop in the reader a scientific habit of knowing true conclusions by means of principles that are better known at least to us. Aristotle provides a way of organizing the different sciences and learning the relevant speculative sciences of nature and of being in general, as well as the three moral sciences of ethics, household studies, and politics. Studying Thomas's texts is not like studying medieval literature or even works of medieval popular devotion. His arguments and claims are formed within a particular context, but their relevance is not limited to the context. We can still evaluate the validity of his arguments and the accuracy of his principles that are derived from reason, experience, or sacred Scripture.

Thomistic philosophy may have more to learn from interaction with relevant contemporary science than from contemporary philosophy or, more broadly, contemporary ways of thinking. Contemporary philosophy is largely compartmentalized and has little influence on the practice of science or on the general culture. Engagement with contemporary philosophy is necessary to make Thomas's account of virtue relevant to current academic discussions, and may be helpful for developing further conceptual precision. However, in itself, this work is culturally and intellectually secondary when compared to engagement with the contemporary sciences.

While contemporary sciences have some relevance to the speculative philosophy that Thomas uses in the *Summa theologiae* and may contribute to the study of human action, we should not expect them to overturn or reverse what we find in Thomas's works. As Thomas notes, in the speculative study of nature we start only with a confused universal.[1] We first know

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[1] I *Phys.*, lect. 1 (Leonine ed., 2:5-6); *STh* I, q. 85, a. 3.

that a man is approaching us before we can determine who the man is. Unlike in mathematics, in philosophy we do not know what is better known in itself, but must start with what is better known to us.[2] Much hard work in philosophy consists in arriving at the nondemonstrative grasp of definitions and principles. We first know that the sun is darkened before we can begin an inquiry that leads to the definition of a solar eclipse, which is needed for the habit of scientific knowledge.[3] Since Aristotle's time, human knowledge has increased not only in its knowledge of conclusions and definitions, but also, in some cases, in the grasp of its principles. However, such growth does not mean that we can bypass the works of Aristotle or Thomas.

The difference between Thomas and his predecessors such as Aristotle and Augustine is arguably not between different complete systems, but rather a greater precision in the understanding of demonstrations and their principles. For example, Aristotle correctly saw how the potency of prime matter addresses problems presented by Parmenides, but he did not clearly see how another kind of potency explains the relationship between a nature or suppositum and its own act of existence. Thomas deepens and extends the inquiry that Aristotle began. Similarly, what we describe as Thomas's philosophy can be understood as a type of knowledge that can be extended or deepened even if its basic contours are correct.

In his major works, Thomas uses Aristotle's texts insofar as they help him to understand what is relevant to theology. For instance, in his account of cognition, he is concerned with the way in which form is received without matter. The study of sense organs would be to him a valuable philosophical inquiry, but it is not relevant to his theological concerns. Contemporary science has taught us much about the structure of sense organs and the brain. Aristotle and Thomas would describe these achievements as ultimately part of the genus of physical science, which is the

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[2] II *De anima*, c. 3 (Leonine ed., 45/1:77-78).
[3] Cf. I *Post Anal*., lect. 4 (Leonine ed., 1*2:21-22).

same discipline that considers matter and form. However, particular discoveries are much more likely to be mistaken than are general principles, such as those about matter and form. Furthermore, as a theologian Thomas is primarily concerned with those parts of Aristotelian philosophy that are about the soul, and not the structure of the sense organs or the brain. He writes, "It pertains to theology to consider the nature of man on the part of the soul, but not on the part of the body, except according to the relationship which the soul has to the body."[4] Consequently, especially in his theological works Thomas is concerned with precisely those areas of knowledge that are not directly studied by our contemporary science.

Thomas believed that the study of Aristotle and other philosophers was necessary for acquiring the intellectual habits that theology requires. We might think that contemporary Catholics should absorb contemporary philosophy and science in the same way that Thomas incorporated Aristotle's newly available texts. However, this view is a faulty description of what Thomas was doing. While it is true that Thomas had access to previously unavailable texts from Aristotle, as well as from the Aristotelian tradition of later neo-Platonists and Arabic thinkers, he did not study these texts simply because they were newly available. He engaged in a pre-existing philosophical tradition that had been available in Greek and Arabic but not in Latin. He embraced Aristotelianism to the extent that he considered much of what Aristotle said to be true or at least plausible, and that the acquisition of knowledge occurred as Aristotle described. If we believe that Aristotle and his followers present a viable account of knowledge and its basic principles, then we can understand and evaluate Thomas's arguments and claims as part of this tradition. Thomas studied Aristotle because he believed that Aristotle and his successors would help him acquire scientific knowledge. The texts he studied were new, but he did not learn from them because they were new.

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[4] "Naturam autem hominis considerare pertinent ad theologum ex parte animae, non autem ex parte corporis, nisi secundum habitudinem quam habet corpus ad anima" (*STh* I, q. 75, in principe).

In a special way Thomas's account of ethics is even less dependent than his natural philosophy on those areas in which his philosophy is surpassed by the discoveries of contemporary science. First, as Aristotle noted, at least part of the study of ethics is inexact and requires only a general account of the soul and its powers.[5] Second, ethics, unlike the speculative sciences, begins with very general propositions and then applies them to more particular actions.[6] Third, ethics deals with properly human actions, which come from the intellect and the will.[7] The bodily organs are relevant to ethics, since in this life the intellect and will rely on sense organs. Moreover, many virtues belong to powers whose operations are bodily. Some writers have attempted to show how contemporary psychology, neuroscience, and even cognitive science might enrich the Thomistic account of virtue and human action.[8] Thomas knew little about the brain. His account of the humors and their influence on the bodily nature needs to be replaced. Similarly, even though our contemporary psychological sciences contain numerous empirical and conceptual difficulties, we have descriptions of psychological conditions that are far more precise, albeit tentatively so, than those that were available to Thomas. However, we should note that these more relevant sciences often involve or incorporate conceptual confusion that make it difficult to address the truth and adequacy of their claims.[9]

If there is a radical discontinuity between contemporary science and Thomas's general theses in Aristotelian science, and

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[5] I *Ethic.*, c. 19 (Leonine ed., 47/1:67-69).

[6] I *Ethic.*, c. 3 (Leonine ed., 47/1:11).

[7] *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 2

[8] See for instance, Craig Steven Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychosocial Sciences* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006); Daniel De Haan, "Hylomorphism, New Mechanisms, and Explanations in Biology, Neuroscience, and Psychology," in *Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives on Contemporary Science*, ed. William M. R. Simpson, Robert C. Koons, Nicholas J. Teh (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 293-326.

[9] M. R. Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

if contemporary science provides a comprehensive account of natural phenomena, then Thomists would have to reject many of Thomas's basic positions, including his hylomorphism and his understanding of natural inclination. When interpreting and evaluating Thomas's own arguments, we would pay less attention to these rejected theses. However, many Thomists deny that there is a radical discontinuity between Aristotelian science and our own, and they argue for the enduring truth of his general principles in physics and metaphysics.[10] This continuity from an Aristotelian perspective is unsurprising, since Aristotle and his followers think that the more general principles, although less informative, are more certain. For instance, many still defend the very general view that there are three principles of change, namely, form, matter, and privation, even though everyone now rejects Aristotle's account of the heavenly bodies. Thomas himself, although he accepted what were then the best accounts of heavenly motion, noticed that these accounts were not full of scientific demonstrations.[11] The later discoveries did not falsify Thomas's general principles. For a Thomist, Thomas's account of hylomorphism has a different kind of explanatory value than his account of the heavenly bodies. Hylomorphism is central and more certain, albeit imprecise and less informative.

The stability of Thomas's general principles historically may have contributed to complacency regarding advances in science. However, we should not blame those who were faced with the daunting task of incorporating the many and varied developments of early modern science. It was difficult to evaluate the plausibility of various claims and the wider conceptual schema with which they were associated.[12] The history of Thomism and

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[10] William A. Wallace, "Causality, Analogy, and Scientific Growth," in idem, *From a Realist Point of View: Essays on the Philosophy of Science* (Washington, D.C.: University of America Press, 1979), 201-51; James A. Weisheipl, "Medieval Natural Philosophy and Modern Science," in idem, *Nature and Motion in the Middle Ages*, ed. William E. Carroll (Washington, D..C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 261-76.

[11] II *De Caelo*, lect. 17 (Leonine ed., 3:186-87). For discussion, see Weisheipl, "Medieval Natural Philosophy and Modern Science," 269.

[12] It can be instructive to consult Salvator Roselli, *Summa Philosophica*, vols. 2-4 (Madrid: Cano, 1788).

Scholastic philosophy illustrates how limited engagement with modern science has contributed to marginalization. The inability to consider advances in scientific knowledge has historically contributed to the decline of Aristotelian philosophy. While these advances may be less relevant to theologians and philosophers, the question of relevance itself needs further discussion.

The failure to incorporate contemporary scientific thought should not be seen as a complete philosophical failure that justifies disregarding the Thomistic tradition when studying Thomas. Whether Scholasticism collapsed due to external pressures or internal difficulties depends, in part, on whether basic Scholastic and Thomistic views were correct. The politically motivated destruction of religious houses and theological faculties, accompanied by the abandonment of Scholastic philosophy, completed the divorce between philosophy and science and the rejection of Scholasticism by the academic establishment. Scholastic philosophy and theology arguably collapsed in the eighteenth century not because of internal difficulties, but due to ecclesiastical, political, and cultural changes. We now inherit this historical context, which includes (1) a canon of philosophy that includes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries only figures outside of Scholasticism, (2) a separation of philosophy from science, and (3) the relegation of religious truths to personal preference. To understand what Thomas can teach us, we need to consider both his context and our own, without attempting to provide purely historical explanations of knowledge and argumentation.

While avoiding historicism, we should recognize that Thomas's thought developed in a particular philosophical and historical context, and that this context often helps us understand what Thomas is saying. One motivation for writing my book was the difficulty of correcting, in articles, what seemed to be a fragmented interpretation of Thomas's account of virtue resulting from isolated readings of texts, detached from each other and their historical context. Similarly, Justin Anderson, in his book *Virtue and Grace in Thomas Aquinas*, shows that Thomas

was able to develop an account of infused and acquired virtue only after earlier thinkers had more precisely delineated the relationship between the natural and the supernatural.[13] Interestingly, Anderson notes that the texts and historical context made available through twentieth-century research do not substantially improve our understanding of Thomas's views compared to the Thomists from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. However, they do correct misinterpretations of Thomas in the twentieth century and provide insight into the way Thomas develops his philosophy and theology as part of a tradition that extends back centuries before him and continues for many centuries afterward. In my recent book, I attempted to demonstrate how reading Thomas without considering the later Thomists is akin to reading Aristotle without Thomas and other late ancient and Arabic commentaries. Excellent textual and philosophical work can be done by reading authors in isolation, but it is limited without the interpretive tradition that guides the reader to important issues and connections between them.

Contemporary Thomists have an advantage over their early modern predecessors in having access to critical editions of Thomas's texts, as well as texts by authors who preceded him. Few profound disagreements in the study of Thomas turn on the text of a critical edition. However, comparing Thomas to these earlier sources, now available, can help us understand why he chooses the definitions or arguments he does. Although historical studies do not provide insight into the quality and nature of his arguments or whether his distinctions are justified, they do tell us why he might be concerned with developing his thought on one issue rather than another or what he meant by a particular term. For example, contemporary scholars might wonder why Thomas dedicates so little effort to differentiating between the operations of acquired and infused moral virtue. The historical context explains that he was among the first to make this distinction at

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[13] Justin M. Anderson, *Virtue and Grace in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 65-107.

all. Contemporary scholars often grapple with questions and difficulties that arose only after Thomas's time.

Since the end of the twentieth century, some Anglophone scholars have neglected historical scholarship in their presentation of Thomas's views. But we should read the earlier historians even if the historians themselves have philosophical and theological views that are outdated or unjustified. For example, Henri Bouillard's philosophical speculations make his theological conclusions irrelevant to most contemporary philosophers. But Anderson shows his real contribution to our historical knowledge of Thomas's development concerning grace, which in turn sheds light on how Bernard Lonergan traces Thomas's theological growth.[14] Similarly, Marie-Dominique Chenu's religious and political views now have mostly historical interest. But his work on the historical background to Thomas's understanding of theology as a science is necessary for understanding the context of Thomas's own views. Gregory Hrynkiw shows that even Chenu's understanding of the issues in Thomas would been enriched by a more careful reading of Thomas de Vio Cajetan.[15] Historical investigation of philosophical concepts and arguments should address the soundness of the distinctions and the strength of the arguments, and consider how they have been received and developed by a tradition of thought.

If we accept Thomas's general principles and account of knowledge, we should use our understanding of Thomas himself as an aid to greater understanding. In moral philosophy and theology, this growth needs to occur in at least three ways. First, we need to consider subject matter that would have been at least nearly unthinkable to Thomas. Second, we should reply to contemporary theological critics of Thomism. Third, we should address non-Western traditions of philosophical speculation.

Christopher Kaczor is a good model for attempting to extend Thomas's thought to the study of contemporary topics. For

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[14] Ibid., 96-98, 105-7.

[15] Gregory Hrynkiw, *Cajetan on Sacred* Doctrine (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 19-36.

example, in his book *Disputes in Bioethics: Abortion, Euthanasia, and Other Controversies* he considers material that would come under the consideration of particular acts in the *Secunda secundae*.[16] Although Thomas's organization of the material around the virtues retains its relevance, Thomas does not discuss artificially produced embryos and respirators. Moral problems that involve these issues cannot be resolved merely by appealing to Thomas's own texts.

Anderson correctly points to a lacuna in my book, in that I do not consider adequately contemporary theology. In part this is due to my own professional specialization, and in part it is due to my suspicion that contemporary theology fails as theology in that it does not focus on the way in which its conclusions demonstratively or plausibly follow from its principles. For example, twentieth-century theological debates over the natural desire for God often did not address the possible meanings of "natural" or "desire," and they rarely considered whether Thomas's arguments are demonstrative or plausible.[17] Everyone agreed that Thomas thinks that there is one supernatural ultimate end for adult humans. The real question is over the relationship of this end to connatural ends, whether the arguments for the order to this end are plausible or demonstrative, and whether the premises can be adequately known through natural reason. It seems to me that Anderson and a few other theologians are rectifying what has been a grave lacuna in contemporary theology.

There is a further difficulty in that much contemporary theology seems more like language studies or rhetoric than a serious form of inquiry concerning God. In the sixteenth-century theologians, and especially Jesuit theologians, were able to resist a humanistic project of replacing Scholastic theology with the study of biblical languages and the Fathers.[18] This project was

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[16] Christopher Kaczor, *Disputes in Bioethics: Abortion, Euthanasia, and Other Controversies* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020).

[17] See my "Natura Pura: Two Recent Works," *Nova et vetera* (Eng. ed.) 11 (2013): 265-79.

[18] Thomas M. Osborne Jr., "The Early Jesuits and Scholastic Theology," in *Ignatius of Loyola and Thomas Aquinas: A Jesuit Ressourcement*, ed. Justin M. Anderson, Matthew

revived in the twentieth century, and has had the predicted results.

Contemporary theology and contemporary applied ethics share many difficulties inherited from their location in the culture of advanced modernity. Perhaps the greatest difficulty for Thomas's account of the virtues is not the theoretical challenges of contemporary science or philosophy, but the difficulty of thinking about virtuous action in light of our current practices and institutions. Alasdair MacIntyre has argued convincingly that the most severe problems for a neo-Aristotelian ethics is the contemporary lack of understanding what it means for a good to be common.[19] On his account, the failure is not so much in philosophy as in the practices of modernity. In modern societies the individual good is often understood prior to and apart from the common good. Consequently, it is impossible to understand the way in which virtue makes someone good as a member of the political community. If MacIntyre is right, Thomas's account of the virtues will be convincing to the extent that our contemporary institutions are healthy. From MacIntyre's perspective, our social practices are deeply disordered. For MacIntyre, philosophy and practice are intrinsically connected. A shift to a sounder philosophy would in some way accompany or be preceded by a shift to healthier practices.

The link between philosophy and social practice suggests that it might be helpful to look at philosophical notions that arose in premodern societies outside the West, such as premodern China. MacIntyre has argued that there is incommensurability between the Aristotelian and Confucian traditions of the virtues.[20] In

Levering, and Aaron Pidel (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming).

[19] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 166-205.

[20] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues," in *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 104-22.

particular, he states that the Confucian virtue of propriety (*li*) seems to have no corresponding Western analog. Nevertheless, it appears to be central to premodern Chinese culture and thought. Many philosophers have criticized MacIntyre's claim about this incommensurability, sometimes as if they think that incommensurability implies two sealed traditions that prevent meaningful discussion.[21] But for MacIntyre, the incommensurability of traditions only means that they cannot easily be compared and evaluated from some shared standpoint.[22] If MacIntyre is correct, Thomists and Confucians should attempt to consider some broader approach that could incorporate what has been understood by members of the incommensurable traditions. We can see in my book how traditions can interact with each other.

During the past twenty to thirty years there has been not only a dialogue between experts on Confucianism and virtue ethics, but more particularly between the thought of Confucius and that of Aristotle.[23] Considerations of Thomas in light of Confucianism have shown possible directions for research. Lee H. Yearley wrote one of the earliest works in this genre, which was a comparison of the virtue of courage in the thought of Thomas and Mencius (ca. 372-289 B.C.), who was one of the most important early Confucians.[24] More recently, Catherine Hudak Klancer wrote a monograph on the common good as understood by Thomas and Zhu Xi (1130-1200), who was perhaps the most influential founder of neo-Confucianism.[25] Such inquiries might shed light on ethics.

Perhaps because early Chinese writers do not have an understanding of revelation comparable to that possessed by

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[21] For an example and references to the literature, see May Sim, *Remastering Morals with Aristotle and Confucius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49-71.

[22] Christopher Stephen Lutz, "Tradition as a Fragile Practice: Some Implications of Alasdair MacIntyre's Theory of Rationality for the Study of Philosophy," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 88 (2014): 619-40.

[23] In addition to Sim, *Remastering Morals*, see also Jiyuan Yu, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[24] Lee. H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1990).

[25] Catherine Hudak Klancer, *Embracing Our Complexity: Thomas Aquinas and Zhu Xi on Power and the Common Good* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2015).

Jews, Christians, and Muslims, many contemporary scholars have described Chinese thought as "naturalistic" in that it is not religious. It is unclear that Chinese philosophy is more friendly to contemporary naturalism than it is to Thomism. Jiyuan Yu finds a close similarity between the role of God in Aristotle's ethics and the role of Heaven in Confucian ethics.[26] Other scholars have argued that the common ascription of contemporary naturalism to Chinese thought and Confucianism in particular is unjustified.[27] Their discovery of Chinese naturalism may tell us more about Western scholars and those influenced by them than about Chinese thought.

Despite possible similarities between the traditions, it is difficult to translate the terminology of one tradition so that it can be understood in another. For instance, the neo-Confucian tradition seems to recognize the cardinal virtues of humaneness (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), ritual propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and sometimes trustworthiness (*xin*).[28] It is unclear how these virtues map on to the virtues that are described by Aristotle and Thomas, although wisdom (*zhi*) might more or less correspond to prudence (*prudentia/phronesis*).[29] It seems to me that there are also important similarities between Thomas's account of justice and the virtue of humaneness (*ren*). For example, humaneness, like particular justice, can regulate the relationships between individuals, and, like general or legal justice, it can inform other virtues. Once Western philosophers have a solid grasp of Thomas's account of virtue, it may be helpful for them to learn from neo-Confucians about the possibility of incorporating these virtues into Thomas's schema of virtues.

Despite the project's appeal, it remains unclear how Thomistic ethics can be developed through contact with non-Western

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[26] Yu, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle*, 180-85.

[27] Joshua R. Brown and Alexus McLeod, *Transcendence and Non-Naturalism in Early Chinese Thought* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

[28] Stephen C. Angle and Justin Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction* (Malden, Mass., and Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 160-67.

[29] Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas*, 36-44.

philosophy, and the potential fruitfulness of such a project is uncertain. If MacIntyre's assertion about the incommensurability of traditions holds true, it would require conceptual innovation to devise a framework that could incorporate both traditions. Furthermore, cooperation between groups of scholars would be necessary, as it is nearly impossible for one philosopher to master both traditions. Acquiring expertise in Thomas's ethics alone is challenging, as it requires linguistic and historical skills that most philosophers currently lack. The difficulties faced by Western students of Confucianism, particularly neo-Confucianism, are even more significant. While there are communities in the West, outside elite academic circles, that are influenced by classical languages and traditional religions, members of such communities are unlikely to have knowledge of classical Chinese. Understanding the thought of either Thomas or the neo-Confucians demands even more effort for individuals formed entirely within contemporary ideologies. Mastering both is nearly impossible. However, the difficulty of the task need not make it unfruitful.

Aristotle gave a very preliminary and general account of moral philosophy. Thomas gives a more complete and precise account alongside his theology in the *Secunda pars* of the *Summa theologiae*. For example, when discussing human action, he relies heavily on Aristotle's division between willing the end, deliberation, and willing the means, but he adds precision by incorporating many other acts of the intellect and the will. Similarly, when discussing the virtues, he includes what he finds to be true in Aristotle, but he adds precision and completeness by incorporating material from Stoics and neo-Platonists. Later Thomists added to what Thomas wrote, and it is plausible that today we can add to their achievements.

Human knowledge is necessary for theology. We would expect any advances in basic themes in ethics to have an influence on theological ethics. On the other hand, theology is a distinctive discipline that is based on the deposit of faith, which has been complete for almost two thousand years. Scholastic theology is a tradition of knowing that improves through considering more precise questions. Advances in theology will probably follow

either from conceptual precisions or through attempts to address new moral issues. Progress in theology cannot be achieved apart from progress in philosophy, and in our current context Scholastic philosophy.

As human knowledge grows, we should expect that philosophical progress might become even more complex and arduous than it was in the different historical contexts of Thomas and Aristotle. Much general knowledge has been acquired, but there is perhaps infinite scope for development. My hope is that there will be more Thomists who are able to understand the Thomistic tradition and consider in its light the fruits of historical research, the discoveries of contemporary science, and newly available (for us) premodern traditions.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Quest for the Historical Christ: "Scientia Christi" and the Modern Study of Jesus. By ANTHONY GIAMBRONE, O.P. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022. Pp. xi + 448. $34.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8132-3487-8.

In this sprawling and broadly erudite collection of fifteen articles and two appendices (published individually between 2015 and 2021), Anthony Giambrone provides a series of prolegomena to an authentically biblical Christology, emulating the commitment to "historically informed exegetical rigor" and "the truths of the Catholic faith" of his Dominican forbear Marie-Joseph Lagrange (4). These essays represent "a personal search" and "an exegete's reasoned leap of faith" over Lessing's "broad ugly ditch" (1-2). The chapters are arranged in three groups of five: part I, "Historical Foundations"; part II, "Theological Perspectives"; and part III, "Jesus and the Scriptures." Overall, I find parts I and II, as well as chapter 15 and both appendices, to be of a high quality, but Chapters 11-14 to be comparatively weak.

Chapter 1, "*Vera et sincera de Iesu*," deals with the background, interpretation, and reception of *Dei Verbum* 19, Vatican II's solemn statement on the historicity, apostolicity, and veracity of the four Gospels. Giambrone explains how curial politics and the April 1964 issuance of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* (which laid the groundwork for *Dei Verbum* 19) provided the occasion for proactive biblical scholars such as Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., to undermine the council's teaching on the historicity of the Gospels even before the dogmatic constitution was promulgated (20-27). By way of broader context, Giambrone highlights the roles that three Protestant scholars have played in the study of the Gospels in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rudolf Bultmann's influential claim that the Gospels are not biographies has given way to Richard Burridge's demonstration of their affinity to ancient *bioi*, and Richard Bauckham's case for the presence of eyewitness testimony in the early transmission of Jesus tradition "invites us to recover the occluded teaching of Vatican II" (47).

In chapter 2, "The German Roots of Historical Jesus Research," Giambrone aims to "critically distance future scholarship" from the agenda and legacy of Albert Schweitzer's self-promoting *Quest of the Historical Jesus* (51). Via an illuminative historical sketch, Giambrone argues that the "Three Quests" framework promoted by "neo-Schweitzerians," such as N. T. Wright, is "no

longer convincing" and is in fact distortive—for example, in the way it reduces Bultmann's "massive midcentury movement" to a mere "interlude" (58). Reading Lagrange's *Le sens du christianisme d'après l'exégèse allemande* (1917) as a "minority report," Giambrone ably demonstrates that the whole course of modern historical-Jesus research, with its various currents and countercurrents, flows from the Radical Reformation (62-71).

Chapter 3, "The 'Lying Historians' and Luke 1-2," reevaluates Luke's infancy narrative in relation to "ancient genre theory" (75), Luke's express intention to provide "a reliable and well-researched *diegesis* [i.e., narrative]" (78), and indirect evidence for his possible use of Judean sources (82-83). In order to understand ancient historiography as the ancients themselves did, "we must reconceive [it] as an aesthetical and ethical enterprise" (86). The strategy of "rationalistic demythologization" was available to Luke, but he chose not to employ it (90).

Chapter 4, "Memorializing Miracles in the World of the Gospels," aims to stimulate a "rapprochement between memory and material culture" in the study of Gospel traditions (92). After discussing votive offerings, healing shrines, and narrative memory (93-97), Giambrone examines the "pick up your mat" healings in John 5:1-15 and Mark 2:1-12, suggesting that the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem and Simon Peter's house in Capernaum must have served as *lieux de mémoire* in the early transmission of Jesus tradition (98). The former may originally have been a "Jewish variant" of the widespread Asclepius-Serapis healing shrines (99-100), while the latter had a long "cultic afterlife" as an ecclesial edifice (103). Giambrone offers no comment as to why Matthew has completely removed Peter's house from his account of the healing (9:1-8).

Chapter 5, "Eyewitness Historiography and the Resurrection," treats the role of eyewitness testimony in Luke-Acts vis-à-vis the canons and conventions of Greek historiography. The resurrection of Jesus, which "holds massive centrality for the entire story" (124), "posed a considerable historiographical problem" for Luke (120). While Jesus' ministry and execution were public events ("not done in a corner"), the resurrection was more of "a private event" (124), to which there were a limited number of witnesses (Acts 10:40-42). Giambrone places Paul's "unearthly" post-ascension vision of "the exalted Lord" and his "status as a mystic in Luke's presentation" over against "Peter's more earth-bound form of witness" (134-36). This point might have been more carefully nuanced. Peter, who was present at the ascension, likewise testifies publicly to Jesus as the exalted Lord and glorified servant (Acts 2:29-36; 3:13-14; 5:31-32), and Luke presents Peter as very much the mystic (10:9-21; 11:5-12; 12:6-11).

Part II opens with chapter 6, "Spirit and Power," Giambrone's historical diagnosis of how modern biblical criticism lost its way. The Enlightenment's "rejection of all miracles" resulted in the eclipse of the *res* and in a truncated mode of rationality in biblical scholarship and historical-Jesus research (142-47, 154). Lessing's axiom—"contingent historical truths can never become the proof for necessary truths of reason"—is the spade with which he dug his ditch.

The emptying out of the literal-historical sense of Scripture *is* the ditch. For Lessing, "the *sensus litteralis* is nontheological space; the recorded *gesta* are religiously irrelevant deeds" (149). In order to restore a more robust use of human rationality to biblical scholarship, Giambrone turns to Newman's "illative sense" as the via media between Kierkegaard's leap and Lessing's rationalism (152-53). Furthermore, because modernity's epistemological individualism, with its distaste for eyewitness testimony, has infected biblical hermeneutics, we must recover "the social character of knowledge" (156).

Next, seizing upon Newman's statement that "miracles are but a branch of the evidences," whereas "prophecy . . . is a growing evidence," Giambrone advocates strongly for "prophecy rather than signs" (157-59). When Scripture confronts us with "the raw miracle of Jesus' resurrection," this tilts the matter "to the Kierkegaardian side" and requires us to "make the jump or walk away" (159). The fact that Jesus prophesied his own resurrection provides "new evidence in its favor," whereas its character as "sign" is a "stumbling block" (ibid.). "Yet for those exegetes who have the historical mind of Christ and whose eyes are opened," Giambrone concludes, "the ditches dug by doubters are only 'difficulties,' crossed lightly with a bound made easy by grace" (ibid.).

This last part strikes me as somewhat lopsided. Rather than pitting prophecy against signs, we ought to disclose their interrelation. Whatever Newman meant by his statement, to view miracles as "but a branch of the evidences" sounds like a nonbiblical reductionism. The resurrection, moreover, is the least "raw" and most *significant* of all miracles. Together with the crucifixion, it is the great sign, the necessary lifting up of the Son of Man. Furthermore, Giambrone's final statement may be true of the individual's act of faith, but our responsibility as theologians and exegetes is to *fill in* Lessing's ditch, not to play Evel Knievel. Our "fill" must include a great ressourcement of the biblical and patristic notion of the *mysteria vitae Iesu* (including the Johannine theology of "signs") and a deeper understanding of the proper relations between word and event, Scripture and Tradition, *sensus litteralis* and *sensus spiritualis*, Old Testament and New Testament.

Chapter 7, "The Revenge of Alexandrian Exegesis: Toward an Ecclesial Hermeneutic," begins Giambrone's critique of the Early High Christology School. Larry Hurtado's "argument from worship"—that is, that early Christians would not have worshiped Jesus unless they thought he was divine—works nicely, provided "the doctrine of a shared divine *ousia* is first in place." Absent this, Hurtado's identification of Jesus as "God's chief agent" (against the background of "divine agent figures" in Judaism) tends toward subordinationism (165-66). Bauckham's "divine identity" Christology is "a sophisticated effort to dethrone metaphysics" in favor of narrative theology (172). By focusing on the ascription to Jesus of "creative agency," to the neglect of the soteriological instrumentality of his humanity, Bauckham steers around the "principled relationship between the economic and immanent orders" and the "functional-ontic polarity" that give patristic-conciliar Christology its metaphysical precision, thus incurring a "Monophysite risk" (171-76).

Giambrone traces this and related problems back to Bauckham's "theological muse," Jürgen Moltmann (176-82).

Chapter 8, "*Interpretatio Iudaica*," explains that Jewish monotheism's aniconic and ethical character gave it a certain affinity to Greek philosophical religion, and that "natural theology"—that is, reflection on the nature of the gods/God—became "a passable bridge" between the two (196-99). The study of New Testament Christology can benefit from the recognition that the "epic encounter" between natural and revealed religion, and between "biblical and metaphysical modes of thought," was "already well underway and heading toward its ultimate resolution before the New Testament had even been written" (208).

Chapter 9, "Primitive Christology As Ancient Philosophy," builds nicely on the previous chapter. The recent rehabilitation of Pseudo-Dionysius as "an integrally Pauline thinker" and of Thomas Aquinas as a serious exegete has implications for how we read Paul and how we view the relationship between primitive Christology and the development of Christological dogma (210-11). Giambrone supplies a series of "prime hints of Greco-Roman philosophy's aboriginal role in the articulation of primitive Christology" (228), including: Paul's use of "prepositional metaphysics" in Romans 11:36 and 1 Corinthians 8:6 (224-26), the use of the terms ὑπόστασις and ἀπαύγασμα in Hebrews 1:3 (227-30, 234), and the Johannine Prologue's transference of the Logos "out of the mythical mode and into a historical order of predication" (230-33).

In his treatment of the Philippians Hymn and "divine Name theology," Giambrone's aversion to "onto-unfriendly narrative theology" (222) seems to override the manifest communicative intention of the inspired author. He takes the clause, "he bestowed [ἐχαρίσατο] on him the name that is above every name" (Phil 2:9), to refer to "an act of naming that transpires within [God] . . . a primordial operation of immanent theology" (223). In context, however, this clause indubitably refers to an economic event—that is, to one aspect of Christ's exaltation. The Philippians Hymn is, after all, a narrative.

In chapter 10, "Two Loci of Greco-Roman Jewish Monotheism," Giambrone continues his critique of Early High Christology by noting that "properly analyzing the early high New Testament claims of Christ's *divinity* becomes problematic when it forgets his created *humanity* as an integral part of the picture" (252). After considering the Jerusalem temple as a "locus of mediation" in various noncanonical sources (253-58) and Jesus as the new temple in the Gospel of John (259-62), Giambrone concludes that it is only with reference to Christ's humanity that we can properly understand both the Logos's descent and the Son of Man's exaltation (and sending of the Spirit), and only from this same perspective that we can understand both the "Christological monotheism" of John 10:30 and the "subordinationist word" of 14:28 (261-62). With this excellent essay, part II concludes.

Chapter 11, "*Scientia Christi*: Three Theses," introduces the main idea of part III. By "knowledge of Christ" Giambrone means Jesus' self-understanding, especially as it is revealed in his interpretation of Israel's Scriptures (266). As a

label for this "theoretical cornerstone" of his work (11), Giambrone chooses the Aristotelean term *anagnorisis*, "recognition," and makes much of the idea that this word means "reading" in the New Testament (275-76; cf. 336-37, 342, 352). In actual fact, however, ἀναγνώρισις never means "reading" and never occurs in the New Testament. Giambrone has confused it with ἀνάγνωσις. In any case, his three "theses" (actually, directives) are, first, that "recovering the 'messianic consciousness' of Jesus should not be abandoned" (267); second, that "the regnant portrayal of Jesus as a thoroughly apocalyptic figure must be abandoned or revised" (272); and third, that "contemporary exegesis must recover a Chalcedonian hermeneutic" (278). To accomplish this last, "special attention" must be given to "Christ's created, mediating, instrumental human nature" (281). Giambrone has good reason to harp on this point, which addresses a common blind spot in New Testament scholarship.

Chapter 12, "Another Johannine Thunderbolt? The *legatio baptistae* and 'the Poetic Christ,'" is not so much an argument as it is a discursive meditation—namely, on the distinctive *vox Iesu* that is presumed to be at the root of all four Gospels. This chapter is marred by baroque diction and exaggerated claims. An example of the former is the reference to "the whole dexterous élan that electrifies Jesus of Nazareth's thought" (291). It is difficult enough to understand how someone's élan can be dexterous, much less what it means to say that such dexterous élan "electrifies" that person's thought. An example of Giambrone's exaggerated claims (one with hermeneutical consequences) is the assertion that "*Jesus speaks as though the Bible* [i.e., the Old Testament] *speaks uniquely to, about, and for him*" (298). Actually, there are numerous exceptions (e.g., Mark 10:4-9; 10:19; 11:17; 12:26-34). One might take this as mere hyperbole, had not Giambrone explicitly asserted it "as an Archimedean Christological point" and "a firm historical datum" (298).

In chapter 13, "'Why Do the Scribes Say?' Scribal Expectations of an Eschatological High Priest and the Interpretation of Jesus' Transfiguration," Giambrone weaves a vast intertextual web from Second Temple sources in order to demonstrate that Jesus took John the Baptist to be "the prophesied eschatological priest . . . Elijah-Phineas-Servant," and that "as the Davidic Servant-Son-of-Man-Messiah, Jesus' role was to take up John's mantle to share his fate and complete the priestly mission, and [that] this is what transpires at the Transfiguration" (316, 318, 332). "In the absence of compelling alternatives," Giambrone interprets Mark 9:13—"Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they wanted, *just as it is written*"—first in connection with Pseudo-Philo's *Liber antiquitatem biblicarum* 48, and then as an allusion to Sirach 48:10 (313-14, 317). But in the literary context of Mark's Gospel—where Antipas, Herodias, and John the Baptist are the antitypes of Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah respectively—the reference is more likely to 1 Kings 19:2 (as noted in many commentaries). Giambrone's "agglutinative scribal approach" (332) raises hermeneutical issues about the relationship between the ideas that canonical and noncanonical texts indicate to have been "hovering in the cultural background" (314), on the one hand, and the inspired author's communicative

intention as embodied in the particular canonical text under consideration, on the other. As Giambrone himself notes, "once started, the irrepressible associative logic of scriptural aggregation is hard to hold down" (318). In other words, associative logic too easily becomes free association.

Chapter 14, "Prosopological Exegesis and Christological *Anagnorisis*," is a "hypothetical reconstruction" of Jesus' own "exegesis" of Psalm 110 (349). Here Giambrone presupposes what he sets out to demonstrate, namely, that Jesus' approach to Scripture "generated vast webs of interpenetrating associations" (352). Although Jesus never mentions Melchizedek and quotes only verse 1 of Psalm 110 (Mark 12:35-37; 14:62), his "special interest" in this psalm is due, in large part, to its reference to Melchizedek in verse 4 (346). The Melchizedek text from Qumran Cave 11, a midrashic pastiche of Old Testament references, never cites Psalm 110, and yet it helps Giambrone identify the "interlocking series of Scriptures" and the "rich cluster of intertextual connections" that Jesus likewise "played with" (346). Meanwhile, the one question that Jesus actually asks about Psalm 110—How can the Christ, whom David speaks of as "Lord," also be his "son"? (Mark 12:37)—plays no part in Giambrone's reconstruction.

In my opinion, chapters 13 and 14—which contain the "dogmatic heart" of Giambrone's project (11)—suffer from a lack of methodological rigor and hermeneutical clarity. Following Augustine (*De doctrina christiana* 2.5.6), *Dei Verbum* 12 teaches us that, "in order to perceive what God has willed to communicate, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture must attentively investigate what the sacred writers actually intended to signify" (my translation). In the two examples cited above, Giambrone pays insufficiently careful attention to the actual wording and expressed concerns of Jesus' references to Scripture in Mark 9:13 and 12:37. The literal sense of such Gospel passages needs to exercise more control over the process by which Giambrone gathers "a much larger web of interwoven biblical [and nonbiblical] readings"—a web that he takes to approximate Jesus' own exegesis of the Old Testament and his "provocative self-understanding" (346). Giambrone also needs to clarify how *Dei Verbum* 12's canonical principle—"one must attend no less diligently to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture"—applies to his "agglutinative" method, which appears to draw upon canonical and noncanonical sources in the same manner.

Giambrone reverts to a more cautious mode of exegesis in chapter 15, "Jesus' Prophetic Knowledge and the Gospels," which is filled with valuable insights. For example, he explores the "profound inner relation" between Jesus' temple prophecy and his passion predictions (364). John and Luke clarify this relation in complementary ways that "represent the two sides of Jesus' self-identification," divine and human. In John, "Jesus identifies himself as the Temple—namely, the living presence of YHWH in the midst of his people," whereas in Luke, he "melds his personal history with the history of the people [and] the city [of Jerusalem], a sort of deep solidarity that makes Israel's national story both the prequel and the sequel to his own" (366). With this fine chapter

and the two appendices, which are likewise well written and insightful, the volume ends on a high note.

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The Roman Mass: From Early Christian Origins to Tridentine Reform. By UWE MICHAEL LANG. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xi + 456 (hard). $120.00. ISBN: 978-1-108-83245-8.

I can imagine it is gratifying to an author when his accumulated scholarship can come together in one splendid volume. I know it is gratifying to a reader when he discovers a 1500-year history of the *Ordo Missae,* written with a new, synthetic approach, that attends to classic texts of liturgical history, gently questions shortcomings, explains the current issues, attends to new methodologies in order to nuance current opinion, and interweaves topical concerns into historical narrative. A history must be more than a simple concatenation of dates and facts. These must be woven into a narrative tapestry if they are to command interest, and this is Fr. Michael Lang's masterful accomplishment. He presents liturgical development within a broader historical and theological context that takes account of political, social, and cultural factors.

Lang's subject is the *Ordo Missae* of the western Latin Church. He explains its origin, its historical development, and its flowering as the *Missale Romanum* of 1570. He stops at this date for three reasons. First, because the four hundred years that followed brought only peripheral developments (and the modern period has been dealt with by numerous other books). Second, most other histories of the Mass are contained in works that cut a much broader swath than he proposes. Lang has deliberately narrowed his focus upon the Roman Mass. And third, the medieval period has received renewed attention from a current generation of scholars. Attention to the Middle Ages is coming not only from historians of liturgy, but from scholars interested in symbol, ritual, religion, culture, sociolinguistics, language, music, architecture, rhetoric, affective piety, and what some have called "vernaculars other than language."

Books from a generation ago did not take any of these topics into account because the history of liturgy was confined to text alone. Lang is giving the reader access to scores of scholars who are taking a new look at the Middle Ages because they are looking with less prejudice, and because the methodologies have been blown wide open to treat more than text alone. He is uniting classic history of liturgy with new information about music, architecture, symbol, politics of the day, allegory, women's studies, ways of embodying ideas, and so

on. The seismic shift that occurred in the world of liturgical studies has resulted in scholars no longer confining their attention to text alone, instead opening themselves to research the performance and reception of liturgy.

What Lang has accomplished is to unite classic liturgiological history with new results coming from updated methodologies. That is quite a task to ask of any one scholar, but he proves himself up to it, as his extensive footnotes demonstrate. The immensely useful bibliography should be mentioned. First, both primary and secondary sources are included. Second, Robert Taft once said that there are things a monoglot will miss because he is unaware of fields of scholarship going on elsewhere, but Lang cites studies made in English, French, German, Spanish, and Latin. The bibliography and footnotes make the book a study guide for the liturgical student.

Any division into historical units is somewhat arbitrary, but there is always a reason for making them, and Lang's temporal divisions permit manageable topical treatments. The pace is right. An author faces the challenge of deciding how many pages to allot to a particular issue or development. Each of the chapters could become its own book, but Lang has reason to fit them all together into one readable volume. I would describe it as hitting a sweet spot between two challenges: (a) being sufficiently detailed so as not to give a superficial treatment, (b) moving along without getting bogged down.

He has set himself the task of dealing with the Latin Mass from its origin in the Lord's Supper up to the Council of Trent, with special attention to the formative period leading up to Trent, which is frequently overlooked. Chapters 1-3 describe the roots of the Mass. The summary of scholarship about Jesus's Last Supper, and a treatment of the earliest Eucharistic prayers, is relevant to any tradition, East or West. Then Lang narrows his focus to the western, Latin liturgy specifically, which requires placing it in the religious, theological, cultural, and political context of the European Middle Ages. Often enough, these thousand years are blurred together in one large lump, as though there were no significant features to notice over that span. Instead, Lang divides chapters 4-8 into time periods (early formative, Carolingian, the Ottonian revival, and the later Middle Ages immediately preceding Trent). This gives him space to interweave topical concerns (the Christian Latin culture, the stational liturgies in the city of Rome, liturgical books, the role of the papacy, and the question of active participation). He displays his expertise in fields of study beyond liturgy alone (rhetoric, culture, literary criticism, papacy, urban Christianity). Chapter 9 is his in-depth examination of the Tridentine reform, and here he stops, because Trent's product, the *Missale Romanum*, has been his objective. He wants the reader to understand where it came from, what its structure is, its continuity across ages, and its value and importance.

Any student of liturgy knows this is a potential minefield. A narrative that has dominated in liturgical history is that the Roman liturgy moved from early dynamic development, through medieval decline, to early modern stagnation. This was the impression I received when I began my studies. But Lang approaches his topic with exceptional fairness. This book is an apologetic for the

so-called Tridentine Mass, but it is not a diatribe. People often throw stones in stained-glass houses, and liturgical scholars can sometimes be first among them, so it would be beneficial if a book like this could bring sanity to the discussion—and I mean bring it to both the left and the right. As one can well imagine, scholars tend to be sorted into liberal or conservative on a whole host of questions, and one of the most refreshing features of Lang is that he avoids being trapped by prejudice. In his footnotes, I could pick out the so-called liberal scholar lying side-by-side with the so-called conservative scholar, often on the same page, sometimes in the same footnote, with appreciation being given to both for what they contribute to our overall understanding. Lang is truly familiar with all the necessary literature. And he teaches the reader about not only the history of the Mass, but also the scholarship that has been conducted on the history of the Mass. This is valuable, first, for the scholar, who wants to know who has argued what position, and where to go in order to do further research; it is also valuable, second, for the student being initiated into the world of liturgical scholarship.

This book sheds more light than heat, and Lang is quite possibly the most even-handed liturgical historian I have ever read. Everyone has prejudices, but Lang's do not stop him from acknowledging all the significant scholarship, and presenting it in a fair light even if he disagrees with some points. He uses phrases like these to describe certain scholarship: "argues somewhat implausibly," "we must offer something supplemental and corrective," "today this is a marginal position," "there is no evidence for the once popular theory," and so forth. When there is as yet no consensus among scholars, he admits it. And if the consensus of scholarship today has concluded there is "little possibility in the claim," he may still mention it because the claim was important at the time. He describes how the resolution unfolded because it may have affected the current state of affairs. He wants to explain what others have said, what is at stake, what objections scholars have made since, and occasionally gives his own direct approval or rebuttal. All he insists on is that some of the landmarks of liturgical scholarship need to be revisited with added data and fresh eyes. There are many examples of other authors whom the left considers too conservative, or the right considers too liberal, but whom Lang cites in order sometimes to concur and sometimes to debate.

Anyone who tries to write a summary historical narrative will find it harder than one thinks. Frequently syllabi in medieval liturgy units included nothing but a survey of the liturgical books that appeared during that time. Lang does introduce the books, but places them in their far more interesting narrative home. That is what must be done to hold the reader's interest: weave the facts into a narrative tapestry, and include topics auxiliary to liturgy in order to give a fair picture. Lang succeeds at this. After describing the situation, and after describing scholars' positions, Lang presents a summary so that the reader can come away with a proper understanding. Every student of liturgy remembers being told about the events Lang is treating, but the student cannot necessarily fit them all together. When did Latin become the standard language of the

West? Why was the Franciscan missal influential? What factors went into the private Mass? This book clarifies, settles, and explains, and then makes a summary of what we can safely know.

The book wants to show that the picture of development is more complex than we have sometimes thought. Elements of decay and vitality existed side-by-side; historical development is marked by both change and continuity. Although simplicity can sometimes be preferred over complexity, having a simplistic understanding of a complex circumstance should never be preferred. Knowing our past illuminates our present celebration and experience of the sacramental rite that is at the heart of Catholic Christianity.

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Necessary Existence and the Doctrine of Being in Avicenna's "Metaphysics of the Healing." By DANIEL D. DE HAAN. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. xv + 426. $181.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-90-04-43037-2.

Modality is a key element in Avicenna's metaphysics. Necessity and possibility connote being and are crucial in explaining both the renowned distinction between essence and existence and the relation between the First Principle or the Necessary Existent—both locutions are Avicenna's own terminology—and the world. In this respect, modality is also relevant for the definition of metaphysics as theology. It is in the *Metaphysics* of the *Book of the Healing*, the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, that Avicenna fully accounts for this doctrine, the essential elements of which are already introduced in the first book or treatise (*maqāla*) of the *Ilāhiyyāt*. Daniel D. De Haan's recent book offers a detailed analysis of this treatise that is both a guide to reading the whole book and an overview of Avicenna's metaphysics. De Haan's conviction—which he defends with well-constructed arguments—is that the first treatise of Avicenna's work can be read as the program of the entire metaphysics elaborated by the *shaykh al-ra'īs*: it unveils its structure and fundamental terminology and has, so to speak, a generative role. In particular, De Haan believes that the notion of "necessary" (*wājib* is identified with permanent existence; *ḍarūrī* indicates logical necessity and therefore means both necessary existence and necessary nonexistence [59]) is the nodal point that allows Avicenna to connect being *qua* being (more literally: "the existent *qua* existent," *al-mawjūd bi-mā huwa mawjūd*)—that is, the subject of metaphysics—to the being of God, which constitutes the object of enquiry or goal of metaphysics. In fact, in the first treatise of the *Metaphysics* of the *Book of the Healing* Avicenna distinguishes

between the subject or subject-matter (*mawḍūʿ*) and the goal or object of research of metaphysics (*ġaraḍ; maṭlūb*) and consequently explains the articulation of metaphysics into a science of being (ontology) and a science of God (theology). Although the two sciences are distinct, they cannot in fact be thought of as separate, as if one were to exclude the other: as existent, the First Principle is studied by metaphysics which is the investigation of the existent *qua* existent (being *qua* being); and this even though, as divine, the First Principle cannot be part of the subject of metaphysics: the existence of God is precisely its goal or object of enquiry. Therefore, the distinction of a subject (*mawḍūʿ*) and an object of research (*maṭlūb*) or goal (*ġaraḍ*)—a distinction that Avicenna originally outlines in the *Posterior Analytics* in order to explain the hierarchical relations between the various disciplines—gives rise to a duplication in metaphysics: because of its subject (being and its properties) metaphysics is ontology; because of its goal, it is theology. Metaphysics studies being, but the question (*maṭlūb; maqṣūd, mabḥūth 'an-hu*) to which it must give an answer concerns the divine Principle of being, the existence of which must be demonstrated or established (*ithbāt*). The Principle of being cannot, therefore, be the subject of metaphysics. Rather, metaphysics—"the science of divine things" (*ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt*)—must demonstrate the existence of the Principle. Avicenna therefore divides being in an absolute or indeterminate sense (being in general, which is not a genus) from divine being. At the same time, he includes both in the same area: in this respect, for Avicenna, God is not beyond being.

The reasons for this theory lie in the Aristotelian tradition and in the need to define—this is Avicenna's true starting point—the status of metaphysics as a *science*. For there to be a science, according to the distinctions of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, some precise conditions must be fulfilled: (1) one must define its subject (for Aristotle the genus subjected—*genos upokeimenon*—to scientific examination); (2) one must start from certain hypotheses or assertions concerning this same subject; and (3) one must identify certain starting axioms or "first principles," principles that must allow one to identify deductively both the various species of beings that fall within the subject of the science in question and the accidents that necessarily belong to it. In the first place, therefore, to be scientific an investigation must have *its own subject, its own principles (and questions)* and, regarding its own subject, *it must presuppose the existence of this subject*. That is to say, the subject of a given science cannot be the object of demonstration in this same science: science assumes that its own subject exists either because the existence of that subject has already been demonstrated (thanks to previous scientific research) or because it is self-evident: the subject of a given science is its proper starting point. According to the classical example of the Aristotelian tradition that Avicenna himself takes up, physics studies the genus of bodies and subjects it to research insofar as bodies are subject to motion and rest: physics does not prove the existence of bodies, and starts from the assumption that change exists.

But how, then, can one grant a scientific status to metaphysics? How can metaphysics be a science if its subject—being (or "the existent *qua* existent")—

is not a genus? And how can metaphysics give a definition of its subject if being is not definable? The definition—which in Aristotelian terms is the basis of all scientific knowledge—is in fact given in terms of genus and specific difference. If being is not a genus, how can it then be defined? And how can one indicate the species that are subjected to scientific analysis?

The solution lies in a reworking of the Aristotelian ontological concepts: indeterminate or absolute being that is indistinctly (i.e., unconditionally) predicable of everything (e.g., of the cause as of the caused) is the subject of metaphysics and, as it were, the genus. The being that exists on the condition that certain predications of it that are contrary to its own definition are excluded is the First Principle. This necessary and uncaused being constitutes the object that is investigated by the science of metaphysics. In short: considered outside all conditions, being constitutes the subject or starting point of metaphysical enquiry; circumscribed as "principle," it constitutes its research horizon, that is to say, that which metaphysics—and no other science—can establish as existent. The consequent duplication of metaphysics, which comes to be both ontology and theology, reveals that the First Principle is not the principle of all being, but only of a part of it, namely, of being as caused. Nonetheless, this duplication also makes the fundamental attribute of necessity evident: indeterminate or absolute being is indefinable and necessary (it is the final point in the logical process of analysis); the principle of noncontradiction that expresses it is also absolutely necessary and the First Principle of existence is necessary in itself. In short, the concept of necessity explains—albeit differently—both being and the being of God.

In his book—which is divided into four main parts—De Haan focuses on exactly these issues. The first part, "The Logical Context of the Metaphysics of the Healing," discusses in two chapters the logical premises that have just been outlined. The first chapter ("Logic, Knowledge, and Questions") examines the notions of conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*), which constitute the answer to the two fundamental questions of scientific knowledge: "what is a given thing?" and "whether" a given thing exists (conceptualization or conceptual representation in fact corresponds to essence, whereas assent always also summons existence). These notions, although central to the Aristotelian tradition, are essential for Avicenna's reflection on metaphysics as a science. Avicenna discusses these notions in the logical parts of his work (eminently the *Isagoge* and the *Book of Demonstration*, i.e., *Posterior Analytics*) and in *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 5 in relation to metaphysics. The second chapter, "Conceptualization, Assent, and Scientific Knowledge," deepens the discourse on these issues and presents Avicenna's theory of scientific definition and demonstration. For De Haan, the first two chapters establish the "logical and epistemological framework" necessary for reading Avicenna's metaphysical treatise "as Avicenna intended it to be read, namely as demonstrative philosophical science" (92).

Chapters 3 and 4—the two chapters of the second part on "The Scientific Order of the Metaphysics of the Healing"—consider the crux of the matter: how can one speak of metaphysics as a demonstrative science, what are its

subject and goal, and what are its first principles? If in the first two chapters the Avicennian text of reference is essentially that of the *Posterior Analytics*, with these two chapters the actual discussion of the first treatise of the *Metaphysics of the Healing* begins. The first two chapters of Avicenna's text are dedicated, in fact, to the question of metaphysics as a science. De Haan offers a detailed analysis of Avicenna's text, proposing a translation of several passages of it: chapter 3 ("Subject and Goal of the Science of Metaphysics"), in particular, deals with being *qua* being ("the neutrally nonmaterial being" [128]) as the subject of metaphysics (*Ilāhiyyāt* I, 1 and I, 2). De Haan explains how being— which is not a genus—is to be understood as a "quasi-genus" (132-33). The ten Aristotelian categories are then "quasi-species" of being, and certain fundamental oppositions—anterior/posterior, act/potency, perfect/imperfect, universal/particular and cause/effect—are its "quasi-accidents." The aim or research object of metaphysics is the demonstration of God's existence and thus the understanding of it as Necessary Existence. In the last parts of the chapter (142-49), De Haan analyzes I, 3 and I, 4 of Avicenna's text.

Chapter 4 ("The Scientific First Principles of the Science of Metaphysics") discusses the first principles of metaphysics by offering an initial analysis of *Metaphysics* 1.5-8.

The actual examination of these principles and the detailed reading of the passages that refer to them in *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 5-8 are to be found in the four chapters (5-8) that make up the third part of the book, "The Scientific Principles and the Senses of Being," which is the heart of De Haan's study. In chapter 5 ("The Four Senses of Being and the Scientific Principles of Metaphysics: A Formal Approach") De Haan examines the senses of being already identified by Aristotle and al-Fārābī and presents how Avicenna integrates these various senses into his first metaphysical principles (from 5.1.3 "Avicenna on the Four Senses of Being" onward [201-19]). The lengthy chapter 6 ("The Four Senses of Being and the Scientific Principles of Metaphysics: A Material Approach to the Principles of Conceptualization") takes an original look at some of the key elements of Avicenna's ontology—to which different studies have already devoted considerable attention—and considers the first intentions or notions that Avicenna places alongside the first principles, entrusting them with the role of scientific definitions. These notions are four in number: De Haan examines the being-existent (*mawjūd*), the thing (*shay'*), the one (*wāḥid*) and the necessary (*ḍarūrī/wājib:* in metaphysics they both mean "the necessary as ontological necessity" [261]). He also discusses the synonyms, like *mā* for *shay'*: *wujūd ḫāṣṣ* corresponds to "the quidditative or essentialist meaning" of *wujūd* (244); it is a "secondary and subsidiary way of amplifying the meaning of quiddity and true nature" (248), or *muthbat* "established" and *muḥaṣṣal* "realized" for *mawjūd* (242ff.). These notions have the same extension, even though they are distinct because of their levels of intension: "one" means, for example, the indivisibility of an existent, but everything that is existent is one; "necessary" means the invariance or permanence of what is (and in this sense the necessary is "true" or "real") and everything that is is necessary. So it should be for the term "thing"

(*shay'*) if it is true that all that is is something (but here a question opens up concerning divine being: can it be said to be a thing?). An interesting part of the chapter is devoted to the misinterpretations that pose "a proper or special mode of existence to essences in themselves" (esp. 247-54).

By closely following Avicenna's text, in chapter 7 ("The Four Senses of Being and the Scientific Principles of Metaphysics: A Material Approach to the Principles of Assent") De Haan discusses the propositional principles of metaphysics, namely, those primary theses and axioms that are, together with the primary notions, the foundations of metaphysics. Here De Haan identifies some ontological statements that are at the basis of metaphysics; these indicate the properties of the Necessary Existent, on the one hand, and those of "possible existents" ("things that, when considered in themselves, their existence is not necessary" [273]), on the other. These are statements such as "the possible existent in itself has a cause" (to which corresponds that the necessary existent is uncaused) or "the Necessary Existent in itself is absolutely simple" (and the possible existent is composite). According to De Haan, Avicenna has no "ontological argument": in *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 6-7, the *shaykh* simply exposes or verifies the properties of necessary and possible existents. He does not establish the existence of God until VIII, 3. Nonetheless, at the apex of the ontological statements is the principle of noncontradiction, expressed in the terms of the excluded middle. The discourse thus ends up being about truth.

Chapter 8 ("Being *per se* and Being *per accidens*: On the Analogy and Accidentality of Existence"), which concludes this third part, deals with two crucial themes of ontology: analogy—this is how De Haan renders the term *tashkīk* which some scholars render as "modulation" (see firstly A. Treiger)—and the related theme of the accidentality of existence in possible entities. The themes that contemporary research has variously insisted upon are thus discussed: analogy explains Avicenna's ontology. According to De Haan, in analogical notions there is no "proportionally unified and distributed central meaning" (299). What interests him in particular is the role to be attributed to analogy in the investigation of the ten categories, as well as the sense in which, in "possible existents" existence is accidental to essence. Being and existence are not univocal and being is *per accidens* "in the widest sense of accident" (321): "accidentality of existence can be described as a sort of nonconstitutive accidental, since, according to Avicenna, existence is beyond, outside of, and not included within the quidditative constitution of a thing's essence or true nature" (324).

In the fourth and final part of the text, "Basic and Fundamental Principles in the Metaphysics of the Healing," De Haan discusses the primary notions of metaphysics in search of what would be the "most fundamental" notion. In chapter 9 ("The Basic Primary Notions in Avicenna's Metaphysics") De Haan defends the idea that "being/existence" and "necessary" are the most basic notions in Avicenna's metaphysics. The identity of existence and necessity, on which De Haan insists, is a point already highlighted by scholarly research. He expands on this in chapter 10 ("The Fundamental Primary Notion in Avicenna's

Metaphysics")—the notion of "necessary" is for De Haan the truly fundamental one. In short, the key to Avicennian metaphysics would not lie in the modalization of ontology (the modal connotation of being), but instead in an ontologization of modality. In Avicenna's analysis, then, the primacy should belong to logic rather than to metaphysics. In this sense, according to De Haan, Avicenna sees metaphysics as a syllogistic demonstration: the lesser term is its subject, that is, "being *qua* being," and the greater term is its object of enquiry, its goal, which is the being which is in itself necessarily existent. The first intention or the "fundamental primary notion" of "necessary" is like a middle term that allows the various questions of metaphysics to be linked with the subject and horizon or goal of metaphysics.

Necessary Existence and the Doctrine of Being in Avicenna's "Metaphysics of the Healing" is a profound and detailed analysis of Avicenna's metaphysics, both of the text of the *Metaphysics*—where the role of the first programmatic Book is highlighted—and of metaphysics itself as a discipline. It is a complex and articulate book that considers and attempts to explain in a unified and systematic manner various essential elements of Avicenna's metaphysics, such as the idea of metaphysics as a science, the distinction of essence and existence, the analogy of being and the demonstration of God's existence, not to mention various terminological distinctions. In fact, in this book De Haan considers anew some questions he had already addressed in his previous articles (see the bibliography, 401). Certain choices could be questioned, for example, regarding the translation of certain terms (e.g., *ta'akkud al-wujūd* as "invariance of existence." Even the choice of translating *wujūd* as "being" might be discussed: De Haan is sometimes obliged to duplicate the translation by using "being and existence." Similarly certain theses raise questions. In particular, one might still ask whether the primacy of the necessary (see chaps. 9 and 10)—evident in theology, which is the science of the existent which is in itself "necessary existent"—is really so. De Haan sees the necessary as the fundamental notion, but the function it has—which is both theological and ontological—must also be recognized in the other notions. The role of henology in particular could be further emphasized: although it is a negative determination (it essentially means indivisibility), like the necessary the concept of one appears to be modulated in an absolute sense (which is only of the First Principle) and in a relative sense, which is of the world. The Necessarily Existent is in fact purely being and therefore simple and one, however, while the possibly existent is composite. Another question concerns Avicenna perhaps more than De Haan: one might ask, in fact, what room there is for a creative act on the part of God (the first efficient cause of existence [see 375-79 on aitiology]) if being in itself is necessary. But beyond these questions, which are inevitable for a text that aims, as a sort of metacommentary, to rediscover the sense and the founding structure of Avicenna's work, one must congratulate the author on this intelligent, thorough, and articulate reading that discusses not only Avicenna's text but also secondary literature, and reveals aspects of Avicenna's ontology that have not yet been fully examined. De Haan's book is a very important and useful work

for the interpretation of Avicenna's metaphysical thought and opens up further discussion and important research horizons.

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The Irreducibility of the Human Person: A Catholic Synthesis. By MARK K. SPENCER. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022. Pp. xviii + 454. $34.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8132-3520-2.

It is notoriously difficult to define the concept of a person precisely, particularly in the realm of philosophical anthropology. Many thinkers maintain that there is an essential difference between a person and a human being, citing as evidence the fact that what makes a human person cannot be fully accounted for by the natural characteristics of the human species.

In this recent book, Mark Spencer puts forward an audacious perspective that human persons cannot be reduced to any single aspect, whether it be physical or mental, objective or subjective, solitary or social. To capture the uniqueness of a human person, he argues that all these components must be taken into account as indispensable elements. To accomplish this goal, Spencer draws on the Catholic anthropological tradition, particularly phenomenology and Scholasticism, to create a synthesis. As the Introduction demonstrates, this is achievable because many of the traditional assertions are rooted in experience. On the one hand, phenomenological reduction provides a powerful theoretical instrument to reconstruct our authentic experience of how we are subjectively given to ourselves as unique persons, which is the foundation of any objective analysis. On the other hand, theories focusing on objective principles strive to "save the phenomena" of person by "reasoning to the truth about things on the basis of how they appear" (35). Consequently, Spencer believes that phenomenology and Scholasticism will eventually converge in ideal situations. In particular, he applies Balthasar's aesthetic method to show how the subjective and objective aspects can be unified into a direct aesthetic perception of the human person as "a single, underlying, beautiful whole" (4).

The book is then divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the various powers of the human person, which can be confirmed through both phenomenological reduction and Scholastic analysis. In chapter 1, Spencer follows Edith Stein's guide to show how a Husserlian reduction of conscious acts can reveal a hylomorphic structure that has been a fundamental part of Scholasticism (42-43). For example, in an episode of joy, one not only directly experiences a feeling of satisfaction, but also realizes that this satisfaction is

caused by something other than the subjective feeling itself, such as the Andante of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 15. The feeling functions as the form of joy while its content serves as its matter that needs to be actualized (51). Spencer argues that the ubiquitous hylomorphic structure of experience demonstrates that "I" as a human person is neither reducible to my conscious acts nor their intentional contents or objects, since what is encountered in my direct experience should be included in any comprehensive metaphysics (44). Consequently, Spencer rejects any kind of materialism, including nonreductive forms such as emergentism, which cannot adequately account for the formal aspect of personal activities. The principles of hylomorphism of conscious acts also lead to a metaphysics of powers in us because they are essentially related as potentialities to various acts as their formal objects.

In chapter 2, Spencer examines the powers that we share with other living things, including vegetative, sensitive, appetitive, and locomotive powers. He provides a metaphysical analysis of the acts associated with these powers, which is largely based on Aquinas's classic account, as well as a phenomenological interpretation of our interaction with the world, drawing heavily from Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception. He offers not only a psychological interpretation of the mechanisms of sense perception, however, but also an ontological account of the nature of sensible beings. From the immaterial being of sensible species in the media and our soul, he concludes that sensible objects must also have an immaterial mode of being in order to cause sense perception, since nothing can cause an actuality that it does not have (87). Appealing to Hildebrand's aesthetics, Spencer further identifies sensible qualities as "messages" not only from a sensible world, from other irreducible persons in the same world, but also from God as absolute and unified beauty (101).

Spencer then moves on to the powers that are characteristic of persons in chapters 3 through 6, which deal respectively with intellect, will, affectivity, and some minor spiritual powers.

For Spencer, intellectual acts involve not only illumination, abstraction, and conceptualization, but also aesthetic cognition, which allows us to experience holistic beauty (*kalon*) as the source and goal of all cognition. As with sense perception, these cognitive powers commit us to a realistic ontology, not only of Aristotelian forms individualized in material things, but also of Platonic Forms in which individual beings participate (137), and of a being that manifests itself in aesthetic cognition before all concepts (158). This is because ideal essences and holistic beauty are directly and perfectly given to us in our intellectual experiences, and thus cannot be mere mental fictions, nor Scotus's formalities, nor imperfect forms immanent in material beings. This applies to both the speculative intellect and the practical intellect.

Spencer's account of the will begins with Aquinas's conception of it as an intellectual appetite that is open to contrary courses of action, thereby granting it an essential freedom that is independent of our bodily powers. However, the will can interact with the body by initiating new causal chains of bodily acts (170). To accommodate this free action of the will, Spencer believes we need a

physical world as described by quantum mechanics (175). This is not to reduce willing to scientific experience; rather, as Max Scheler and others have demonstrated through direct experience, we become aware of the resistance of the world and our capacity to transcend the limitation of the body through a free decision of the will—a capacity that renders us irreducible in that we lack a stable identity. Here Spencer adopts a voluntarist interpretation of the freedom of will by emphasizing the priority of election in determining the meaning of our actions.

Drawing on the personalist tradition, Spencer maintains that value constitutes a distinct level of being and accounts for its axiological unity, such as the holistic dignity or unique beauty of a person (210). It is spiritual affectivity that allows us to be motivated by this inherent importance, value or beauty. Unlike acts of will, "spiritual affects intend their objects in a receptive way, insofar as those objects' importance is felt" (219). This affective response is more fundamental to a human person, because it guides our intellectual and volitional acts.

In the final chapter of the first part, Spencer introduces further spiritual powers of the soul, such as an aptitude for social behavior, spiritual perception of immaterial realities, memory, and more. He emphasizes the real distinction between the soul and its powers to highlight the irreducibility of the spiritual powers. For this reason, he rejects any form of concurrentism regarding divine causality, which is seen as incompatible with our experience of free will and love. Instead, he appeals to Gregory Palamas's conception of *energeia* as a being's self-diffusion to demonstrate how God and human persons share in each other's acts by giving themselves (265). This participation or communion is referred to as *sun-energeia*, with its highest form being divinization or becoming like God. Spencer believes that the concept *sun-energeia* defends both the omnipotence of God and the irreplaceability of human personhood in explaining divine causality in human spiritual acts.

In the second part of the book, Spencer attempts to develop a unified definition of the human person by combining his earlier reflections on human powers and acts. The human person is often defined as a rational substance composed of soul and body. However, Spencer devotes the three chapters of the second part to demonstrate that human personhood cannot be reduced to either the body, or a rational substance, or even just the soul.

First, he cites the immortality of the human soul to argue that our personhood will survive death, since spiritual acts such as intuiting immaterial being's existence do not require the presence of a physical body. However, it is impossible to have acts or *energeiai* typical of human persons without retaining one's personhood. In this context, Spencer offers an original defense of survivalism in Thomistic debates about the separated soul.

Spencer's argument against defining a person in terms of substance is closely related to a Scholastic debate concerning the unity and plurality of substantial forms. He uses scientific and phenomenological evidence, such as the malleability and evolution of the human body, and the independence of sexual

arousal and passion, to support his pluralistic view that there are multiple substances in a human person. Accordingly, "there is an irreducible plurality of ways in which human powers are expressed in different kinds of bodies" (349).

The inherent plurality of a human person highlights why incarnation is essential to human personhood, even though it can survive death. I experience my body not only as object, but as a subject belonging to the world as a body (361-62). A *sun-energeia* between spiritual and physical acts constitutes our authentic experience in this world; its holistic beauty is irreducible neither to the soul nor to the body. This also explains why a human person should be seen as the incarnate image of God and the face (or *prosopon*) is a key element of human personhood.

Spencer's book provides an illuminating examination of how various strands of Catholic thought, from Thomism to Scotism, from phenomenology to analytic philosophy, can be synthesized into a unified understanding of the human person that emphasizes its uniqueness and beauty. Despite the abundance of information, appeal to divergent schools of thought, and intricate terminology, the book is thoroughly researched and written in a lucid and comprehensive manner. It is replete with content, and some of the explanations unavoidably include controversies. In order to reconcile conflicting ideological claims, some philosophers' original intention is occasionally distorted; some arguments are also advanced too hastily and contain gaps, particularly the transition from phenomenological accounts of experience to a realist ontology. Nevertheless, these shortcomings do not diminish the book's worth as an invaluable resource for anyone interested in exploring Catholic philosophical anthropology.

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Martin Luther and the Shaping of the Catholic Tradition. Edited by NELSON MINNICH and MICHAEL ROOT. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021. Pp. xix + 310 (hard). ISBN: 978-0-8132-3532-5.

The energies unleashed by the five-hundredth anniversary in 2017 of Martin Luther's posting (or not) of the *95 Theses* continue to bear scholarly fruit, as seen in this fine book. The chapters originated as papers given at an international conference hosted at the Catholic University of America in the summer of 2017. The Introductory section of the book includes several greetings, notably one from His Holiness Pope Francis, in which the Holy

Father expresses his hope that the work of the conference will yield a harvest of "purification of memory" and "the growth of Christian unity." Such hopes became de rigueur in the heyday of post-Vatican II ecumenism, and it was surely appropriate to invoke such hopes at the conference. Nevertheless, one might well ask: Given the intransigence of ecclesial division in today's "ecumenical ice age," does this volume suggest a future in which the healing of the wounds of the past and a deepening sense of common identity in Christ will continue? On this, more to follow.

The book is divided into five parts, the first of which begins with Cardinal Kurt Koch's energetic essay on the state of the reception of Luther in the Catholic Church today. Everyone who reads this essay should be gratified to see that the prefect of the Congregation for the Promotion of Christian Unity exhibits an impressive familiarity with Martin Luther's life and theology. The cardinal notes the many ways in which the modern ecumenical dialogues have challenged and led to a substantial revision of both Catholic and Protestant perceptions of Luther and his Reformation. The reader sees how Luther has become a conversation partner in Catholic theology today, challenging the Catholic Church to embrace reform wherever there is deformation. At the same time, the cardinal recognizes some of the ways Luther remains a problematic figure, particularly in the area of ecclesiology. Koch's essay is followed by responses from the emeritus Lutheran bishop of Helsinki, Eero Huovinen, the Catholic ecumenist Wolfgang Thönissen, and the Lutheran historian and ecumenical theologian Kenneth Appold. Thönissen offers a brisk review of modern Catholic scholarship on Luther, while Huovinen assesses the recent U.S. Lutheran Catholic agreed Declaration on the Way, offering a wide-ranging review of the state of the Lutheran-Catholic conversation, and expressing his disappointment that Catholic references to the Lutheran churches typically take the form of "ecclesial communities" or include the qualifier "not churches in the proper sense." The Finnish Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, it should be noted, also proceeds apace and in some ways outpaces the conversation elsewhere. Appold's essay is a response to Thönissen, which, as he observes, surveys ecumenically sensitive Catholic scholarship on Luther, without addressing some of the more critical voices. Appold notes that Luther's formulations were problematic for sixteenth-century Catholics in part because his "formulations are not only 'new,' they are new in a way that appears to discredit the old" (51). Luther's theology raised the Church's reflexive hackles, when patient and hermeneutically sensitive responses were needed. Is Catholicism today prepared to offer such responses to new formulations of old truths?

Part 2 takes up the issue of justification, presumably the *sine qua non* of the Reformation. The ecumenical theologian Theodor Dieter, a wise veteran of decades of ecumenical dialogue and the emeritus director of Strasbourg's Institute for Ecumenical Research, contributes a brilliant essay that powerfully explicates Luther's doctrine of justification by setting him between two theologians whose work he knew well: Gabriel Biel, and the unknown author of the *Theologia Deutsch*. These two poles—one Scholastic the other mystical—

provide a structure for making Luther's approach to justification clear. Dieter offers a nuanced treatment of Luther's famous criticisms of Biel's "nominalist" theology, of which only a hint can be given here. Biel argued that initial justification comes about through the sinner's own decision of the will to love God alone above all things and for God's sake alone. The infusion of grace follows, which enables the reconciled one to do meritorious good works. Careful study of Scripture and spiritual experience led Luther to a different conclusion: "he understands love for God as the complete dedication of the whole person to God with all aspects of her being" (63). Dieter notes that this position was ratified by Lutherans and Catholics in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999). The neo-Platonic *Theologia Deutsch,* on the other hand, provided Luther with the notion of a distinction between God's presence understood in an ontological sense and the sinner's discovery that she has her being in God in a participatory sense. Dieter sees Luther finding confirmation here of the sinner's radical self-centeredness that seeks God as the *summum bonum* with a love of use rather than a love of delight. This theme informs Luther's theology of the cross.

Following Dieter's efforts, Timothy Wengert's essay reveals some inner-Lutheran tensions between readings of Luther's theology of justification that find a center in *theosis* and those that focus on imputation. This, too, is related to the meaning of Luther's theology of the cross. Wengert notes that Luther can speak of the "theology of glory" as a *theologia illusoria*. What does Luther want? "Luther seeks not an irrational theology but rather an anti-rational one—and specifically in this sense is he anti-ontological when it comes to the doctrine of justification" (89). Here, perhaps, one will recall the 1963 Helsinki Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, which was unable to adopt an agreed statement on justification. Indeed, the goal of widespread Lutheran agreement on justification was not reached until the Joint Declaration was agreed to by the churches in 1999. Wengert's affirmation of Luther's anti-rationalism here should be understood as he himself puts it: not irrational, but *anti*-rational. Why? Because, once again, sinners cannot rise up to know God as the highest good apart from the preaching of Christ, and him crucified.

Michael Root's essay takes up the vexed question of Luther's impact on the shaping of Catholic teaching, especially at the Council of Trent, where a fulsome Catholic doctrine of justification was defined for the first time. On the one hand, Root affirms, the council fathers as a group were not particularly well informed about Luther's theology, except through snippets extracted from his writings. On the other hand, a few bishops, notably Girolamo Seripando, were quite familiar with Luther's teaching. The care with which the council fathers articulated Catholic doctrine itself reveals some inner-Catholic tensions, especially regarding congruent merit. Luther's influence was nevertheless reflected in the council's work, but. as Root puts it, the Catholic teaching was "framed in different ways, with different goals and answering to different standards" (102). Root's exploration of Trent's work in light of Luther's influence is paralleled in some ways by Trent Pomplun's exploration of Catholic

responses to Luther's rejection of Eucharistic sacrifice, which surveys a vast number of works across several centuries.

Part 3, which includes Pomplun's study, begins with Bruce Marshall's lengthy and substantive chapter on later medieval theologies of the Eucharist, focusing on presence, sacrifice, and Mass intentions. Here Marshall bemoans, as do several other writers in this volume, caricatures of the Middle Ages that dismiss later medieval theology as plagued by a vague "nominalism" that represented the decline and decay of later medieval Christian thought more broadly (see 130-32). In the context of such characterizations, this essay explores the rich and rewarding later medieval discussion of Eucharistic presence. Like Dieter's work mentioned above, this chapter defies neat summary. Marshall's review of later medieval debates over impanation versus Eucharistic conversion is particularly helpful, especially his treatment of the debates over the counterfactual question whether it would have been possible for Eucharistic presence to occur by impanation rather than substantial conversion. Instead of dismissing such debates as, say, evidence of the dead end of "nominalist" debates over God's ordered and absolute powers, Marshall takes them as crucial for articulating the Church's faith in the presumably defined teaching of transubstantiation. More importantly for present purposes, he leverages this discussion into a contextual analysis of Luther's own teaching on the Eucharist. Marshall's essay is followed by Lee Palmer Wandel's historical consideration of Luther's reception of the medieval Mass, which stresses its crucial differences from the medieval practice (especially the canon), with the action of the Mass migrating, so to speak, away from the medieval notion that the mass is a prayer offered, as it were, from below to above, to Luther's notion of the divine service as one in which the crucial action is from above to below, where the proclamation of Christ's Eucharistic testament effects God's real presence. Given Marshall's clear articulation and defense of the Mass as meritorious, these two chapters leave much for readers to consider.

Part 4 treats ecclesiology, while part 5 turns to the question of the meaning of Lutheran-Catholic ecumenism to Orthodoxy. Nelson Minnich's lead essay on models of the Church in the later Middle Ages is outstanding for its breadth and clarity, especially given the complexity of the various papal schisms and the tensions between conciliarist and papalist churchmen. Minnich also draws attention to many and substantive treatments of ecclesiology written by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Augustinian friars, noting that there is no evidence Luther was familiar with these works. This observation might be taken together with Eric Saak's finding that Luther's education had been somewhat curtailed in comparison to Augustinian theologians in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (*Luther and the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages*, 2017). Dorothea Wendebourg's essay notes that two lines of thought stand in tension within Luther's ecclesiology. One is commonly known as the priesthood of all believers, which posits a foundational equality between Christians, regardless of their vocation. Some believers are chosen to carry out ministerial tasks, but Luther does not ontologize the difference between the public ministry and the

common priesthood. This line of thought has been predominant in Lutheran ecclesiology and ministeriology. The second line of thought emphasizes Christ's institution of the ministry. The Church and its ministry, therefore, are instituted by Christ. No structure of the Church, however, can guarantee faithfulness to the Gospel as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Johanna Rahner offers a Catholic reflection on Luther's ecclesiology, noting that his work has to be set in the context of the emergency conditions of the sixteenth century as he and other Protestants saw them. This can be taken, she argues, as an argument for extreme papalism.

Part 5 includes three shorter chapters, written by Yury Avvakumov, Nicolas Kazarian, and Will Cohen. The brevity of this part of the book perhaps underscores the position of holy Orthodoxy on the sidelines of the Reformation-era controversies. Avvakumov makes the intriguing observation that at the Leipzig debate Luther invoked the Orthodox Churches as proof against Johann Eck's characterization of them as heretics and schismatics. For his part, Luther offered what Avvakumov sees as an affirmation of the ecclesial other. One might connect this to some recent scholarship on Luther's ecclesiology which finds that he assumes the continuing structure of the historic Churches and bishoprics, but without ceding to the Roman see primacy and universal jurisdiction *de iure divino*.

In sum, this is a fine volume filled with excellent essays that make important new contributions to the state of knowledge. At the same time, this reviewer notes a certain fatigue. Lutherans and Catholics now know one another well enough to recognize not only what is admirable and acceptable from their particular points of view, but also what is not. If the modern age of doctrinal ecumenism has reached its end, as some seem to think, then perhaps the friendship and mutual respect seen here will in the end prove more important than a straightforward reconciliation of doctrinal divergences. Lutherans and Catholics have become, it seems, good friends in Christ. The "growth of Christian unity," therefore, continues.

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Jerome's Commentaries on the Pauline Epistles and the Architecture of Exegetical Authority. By ANDREW CAIN. Oxford Early Christian Studies Series. Edited by GILLIAN CLARK and ANDREW LOUTH. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. ix + 304 (hard). $100.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-284719-5.

This monograph sets out to address a lacuna in Hieronymnian studies by examining Jerome's four commentaries on Pauline epistles (Galatians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Titus). Cain adopts a thematic approach, meaning that he focuses on what he considers to be the most salient aspects of these works, including Jerome's philological method, appropriation of Greek exegetical material, and adoption of Pauline thought to support his own theological positions. Given the thematic approach of this work, there is not a single unifying argument that unfolds over the course of its seven chapters. Yet, there is a scarlet thread running throughout the analysis that may be summed up as follows: (1) by employing novel tools like nonexpository prefaces and an *ad fontes* exegetical method, Jerome "effectively recalibrated and retooled Latin biblical exegesis and created what was for all practical purposes a new species of Pauline commentary in Latin" (227); and (2) Jerome used this "new species" of commentary to lay claim to his status as a unique exegetical (and theological) authority in the Church.

The introductory chapter examines the circumstances accompanying Jerome's composition of these four commentaries, and also essays some reasons why these four letters were selected by Jerome. In this analysis, Cain correlates the composition of each commentary with the life events of Jerome, explaining his decisions as outgrowths of experience and reaction to negative experiences.

The second chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the prefaces of each commentary, which total eight in all. The chapter opens with a few observations about prefaces in general that contextualize them within the ancient Greek and Roman literary world. As Cain observes, Jerome uses the preface as a platform for his literary artifice and employs "traditional exordial topoi" in them in order to bolster his image before his audience (49). For example, Jerome depicts himself as an industrious scholar by mentioning how he worked late into the night to produce his commentaries. In addition, Jerome eschews the purely expository prologue, instead engaging in apologetic and polemical argumentation in order to justify his method of biblical interpretation. In this, Cain argues that Jerome takes the ancient playwright Terence as his model to become the first Latin biblical commentator "to use the preface for sometimes exclusively non-expository purposes" (53). This insight serves as the framework for the remainder of the chapter in which the thematic content of the prefaces is considered. In this analysis, Cain demonstrates the manner in which Jerome deploys various rhetorical tropes to establish and defend his own exegetical authority. Further, Cain briefly presents the different methodologies of Jerome and Victorinus within this framework; Jerome advocates for his *ad fontes* methodology and his own expertise as an exegete by criticizing Victorinus's lack

of engagement with the Old Testament, and also insinuates that his commentaries are not worthy of being read by omitting them from his list of consulted sources.

Chapter 3 explores how Jerome developed his *ad fontes* methodology in the four commentaries as a way of building a subtle but unmistakable argument that Hebrew and Greek philology are essential to serious study of the Bible. The first part of the chapter focuses on Jerome's attitude toward the *Vetus Latina* (VL), presenting several illustrative examples from his Pauline commentaries where he criticizes the VL's rendering of the Greek text. The second part of the chapter considers Jerome's concept of *Hebraica veritas* as articulated in his personal letters and how it influences his Pauline commentaries. For Jerome, the concept of *Hebraica veritas* not only entails using "the Hebrew text as the final arbiter in all text-critical and interpretive matters relating to the Old Testament" (87), but also requires consulting the Hebrew Bible when interpreting the New Testament since it is the very source from which the Gospel writers drew (89). Cain adduces a few examples of how Jerome incorporated Hebrew philology into his Pauline commentaries as well as how he consulted the Hebrew Bible (both the Masoretic Text and the Samaritan Pentateuch) in his examination of Paul's citations of the Old Testament.

Toward the end of this chapter, Cain relates this analysis of Jerome's *ad fontes* methodology to his broader argument that Jerome constructs his exegetical authority through these commentaries. By arguing that it is necessary to work with the Greek and Hebrew of the biblical texts, Jerome implicitly put himself forward as the model biblical scholar since he was virtually the only fourth-century commentator who was able to employ this methodology skillfully.

In chapter 4, Cain returns to the biographical context in which Jerome composed these commentaries, arguing that he used them "as platforms for promulgating, on the authority of Paul, his own peculiar brand of ascetic spirituality" (103). This chapter begins with an examination of his ascetic program as it is reflected in his personal correspondences, before then looking at the Pauline commentaries, which were "a direct outgrowth of Jerome's private instruction of a rather small circle of religious women" (105). One of the chief features of this ascetic teaching is the need for immersive reading and study of the Bible that leads to the mortification of the body and rejection of the world. Another aspect of the ascetic program that is amply addressed is Jerome's emphasis on the importance of chastity and virginity. Here Cain turns his attention more squarely to the Pauline commentaries, which in his opinion are characterized by Jerome's tendency to allow "ascetic advocacy" to bleed into his exegetical work such that he often imposes asceticized readings on the text (108 and 115). Focusing on the commentary on Titus, the next section of the chapter deals with Jerome's promotion of the ideal of a monastic clergy. This section sets his advocacy for a monastic clergy against the backdrop of his negative evaluation of some of the ecclesial hierarchy and prominent Christians in Rome, and enumerates several constitutive elements of his program of clerical

asceticism: celibacy, abstinence from alcohol, shunning wealth, practicing hospitality, and intense training in Scripture that enables the cleric's defense of orthodox doctrine and effective teaching. Cain observes how this program of asceticism gave rise to various disputes with other Christian leaders in Rome, and eventually was the foundation of his being accused of promulgating Manichaean teachings.

In the fifth chapter, Cain examines the antiheretical statements found in Jerome's Pauline commentaries, dividing them into two broad categories: those that are generic, *ad hominem* attacks, and those that specify and refute erroneous doctrine by using the words of Scripture. In examining the former category, Cain points to examples of Jerome attributing demonic inspiration to the heretics, calling into question their moral character, and giving them various epithets, such as "serpents" or "plagues." Cain spends more time treating the latter category, first by analyzing how Jerome receives Marcion as an emblematic arch-heretic due to his reliance on Origen's commentaries, and then by examining his statements against Arius, Photinus, the Ebionites, and Apollinaris regarding Christological and anthropological errors. In his analysis, Cain seeks to demonstrate how Jerome's exegesis is influenced by dogmatic concerns. One example, which is described as illustrative of Jerome's "eisegetical tendency," is his interpretation of Titus 3:4-7 wherein he explains that the Trinity is "very clearly revealed" (149-50). Another good example is Galatians 1:15-16, which Jerome argues is mistakenly used in support of the heretical doctrine of two natures (that people are fated to be either good or evil from birth), and should instead be understood as referring to God's foreknowledge and love of the elect who freely choose righteousness and are thus saved (158-59). Cain argues that Jerome puts forth this interpretation of Galatians 1:15-16 because it has ramifications for his own ascetic theory; if the opposition's view of two natures were true, then his program of asceticism would be futile since it would not change one's nature or destiny.

Chapters 6 and 7 comprise an extended source-critical analysis of Jerome's Greek and Latin sources, respectively. In chapter 6, Cain treats each commentary in its turn with the goal of evaluating the veracity of Jerome's statements regarding his use of sources in his prefaces, especially his claims to have followed Origen. Given the fact that most of the commentaries Jerome mentions are no longer extant, direct comparison is impossible in most cases, and there are only two commentators with whom Cain is able to compare Jerome: Eusebius of Emesa (only on Galatians) and Origen. In his comparison between Jerome and Eusebius, Cain relies on nineteen extant fragments of Eusebius's commentary and is able to identify at least one close similarity between the two commentators in their remarks on Galatians 1:13-14. In his comparisons between Origen and Jerome, Cain relies on the citations of Origen found in Rufinus's Latin translation of Pamphilus's *Apology for Origen*, except in the case of the Ephesians commentaries for which there are surviving Greek fragments in the *catena* manuscripts. Cain is able to adduce many convincing close parallels that point to Jerome's thoroughgoing reliance on Origen in his

exegesis of Galatians, Ephesians, and Philemon. In contrast, Jerome's commentary on Titus, while still having some similarities with Origen's, paraphrases and compresses it while also adding much more of his own original content. Cain closes this analysis by again returning to Jerome's rhetorical technique, suggesting that his conspicuous self-alignment with Greek sources is a way of claiming exegetical authority. Further, Cain observes that when Jerome presents multiple interpretive possibilities for a passage (called the variorum approach), he does so without attributing them and places his own interpretation first. Cain concludes that this is a form of Roman rhetoric by which Jerome, "through rhetorical sleight of hand," privileges his own interpretation over the others.

In chapter 7, Cain continues his source-critical investigation by surveying references to Roman Republican and Imperial authors whom Jerome would have regarded as classical, including Terence, Cicero, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, Quintilian, and Seneca the Younger. These references are mostly adapted allusions, and they are typically incorporated for aesthetic reasons, or to drive home a point that has already been made. The chapter proceeds to investigate Jerome's borrowings from three Christian authors whom he regarded as classical: Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius. Cain provides a helpful side-by-side comparison of the Latin texts of many of these proposed phraseological and conceptual borrowings, most of which are quite convincing. He makes two important conclusions regarding Jerome's borrowings from Latin authors: first, "None of them immediately contributes to the core exegetical content, or at least not in the way the Greek commentaries do. Their basic function is either utilitarian or aesthetic" (221); and second, where it is certain that such allusions to Latin authors are present, it can be concluded that Greek allusions are not.

Overall, Cain is quite successful in his project of elucidating the thematic content of Jerome's Pauline commentaries, and this volume deserves attention for its many illustrative text-based examples that serve to support its cogent analysis of these various themes.

The only weakness of the study is that in the course of his analysis Cain makes claims about Jerome's inner, psychological motivations that go beyond the evidence and are, at times, downright cynical. For example, in his discussion of Jerome's polemic against Victorinus, Cain concludes, "Undoubtedly one of the factors motivating his polemical impulse was a deeply felt insecurity," without mentioning that Jerome likely genuinely believed that his own method was essential for accessing the truth of the Scripture (71). While Cain eventually does acknowledge Jerome's belief in *Hebraica veritas* as it pertains to the truth of Scripture (101), he does not consider that this might be a motivating factor in Jerome's use of rhetoric; rather, Jerome's motivation is reduced to a desire for authority in the face of insecurity. Another example is Jerome's requests for prayers from his students and the saints, which Cain regards solely as an "inspired interpreter trope" designed to bolster his authority (63). While this trope is indeed found in many ancient commentaries, it does not follow that his request for prayers was a calculated ploy to give his commentaries greater

authority; it is also possible, and I would argue more likely, that Jerome asked for prayers because he believed in the efficacy of prayer. There are many other such examples in this work, and collectively they depict Jerome in a rather unsympathetic light.

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Possibility and Necessity in the Time of Peter Abelard. By IRENE BININI. Leiden: Brill, 2022. Pp. xii + 326 (hard). $166.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-47028-6.

Irene Binini's book is a comprehensive survey of Abelard's views on possibility and necessity. It is an important contribution to our understanding of Abelard's logic and metaphysics, especially because of its use of state-of-the-art research on other twelfth-century sources (many still unedited and available only to those with strong paleographic skills and access to restricted collections), which helps us better to see precisely where Abelard's philosophy is innovative and distinctive. In addition to consolidating and expanding upon the literature devoted to this fascinating aspect of Abelard's thought, the book is a spur for further research into the logics, metaphysical systems, and epistemologies of modality developed in continental European thought in a time when the full corpus of Aristotle's writings (even the logical ones) was not available.

The book aims to provide an overview of all aspects of Abelard's reflections on *alethic* modalities; it does not say much about whether Abelard has any well-worked views about epistemic and deontic modal statements. It is hard to find fault with this, given the vast terrain that needs to be covered merely to trace and reconstruct Abelard's views about predicates such as "possible," "necessary," "potential," and "contingent." Moreover, as Binini notes, while Abelard makes the occasional remark that suggests he has some intuitions about, say, epistemic modalities, it is not clear whether he has a full-fledged theory on offer, given that his point of reference is Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, which also covers only the alethic modal predicates (see 8.1, p. 202).

Binini divides the book into three main parts. The first part aims to place Abelard within his intellectual milieu. Chapter 1 explores the frameworks that twelfth-century thinkers inherited from Aristotle and Boethius. Chapter 2 furthers this project by looking at how twelfth-century logicians thought about the grammar and syntax of modal propositions. Of particular importance is their notion of a "mode." Chapter 3 surveys twelfth-century thinking about the signification of modal terms like "possible," "potential," and "necessary." It is here as well that Binini introduces the reader to several of the common ways of

grounding modal claims in reality. For instance, is a potentiality a kind of form that inheres in a substance? Or is the metaphysical ground for a potentiality something else?

In the second part of the book, Binini turns to the task of reconstructing Abelard's modal logic. Chapter 4 attends to Abelard's specific way of distinguishing between *de re* and *de dicto* senses of modal propositions, and she shows that when analyzing difficult arguments involving premises that refer to possibilities and necessities, Abelard tends to prefer *de re* readings over *de dicto* ones. Chapter 5 turns to Abelard's views about the existential import of modal claims. In keeping with his antirealist proclivities, Abelard thinks that modal claims can be grounded in actual, particular substances and their forms. There is no need, for instance, to posit the existence of ghostly merely possible things or possible worlds. Chapters 6 and 7 constitute the heart of part 2. In chapter 6 Binini outlines Abelard's logic of modal propositions, laying out with the help of a set of useful tables the complex web of logically equivalent sentences and warranted syllogistic inferences. Chapter 7 addresses the wrinkle in the basic theory that "determinate" modal propositions pose. In particular, Abelard and his contemporaries were very interested in parsing modal claims with temporal qualifications, such as "Socrates cannot sit so long as he is standing" or "a man cannot see once he is blind."

In the third and final main part of the book, Binini turns her attention to metaphysical and epistemological issues. The key concept for Abelard is the notion of nonrepugnancy with nature. Chapter 8 begins to elaborate on Abelard's notion of "nature" and the "natures" of things. It is here that we also learn that Abelard refuses to reduce claims about necessity and possibility to one primitive notion. Instead, both "possible" and "necessary" are treated as primitives in his writings. This in and of itself is a striking discovery, especially for those of us trained in standard contemporary modal logics. The central chapter in part 3 is chapter 9, wherein we learn about how Abelard understands possibility and impossibility in terms of whether some state of affairs is repugnant to a thing's nature or not. It is here that we see how Abelard's understanding of the natures of substances leads him to endorse some seemingly incongruous counterfactual propositions, such as that a blind man can see or that, contrary to the teachings of Porphyry, it is possible that humans are not capable of laughing. Even more surprisingly, Abelard maintains that it is possible for a human to be irrational. This is striking, given the Aristotelian idea that rationality is an essential property of humans. Abelard's solution suggests that, if presented with a well-known twenty-first-century riddle he would concede that, once properly parsed, Bertrand Russell truly could have been a poached egg. (The key is to see that things tend to have complex natures, and hence, the true proposition is not that *Russell* could have been an egg, but that the thing that is [actually] Russell, or Russell's "substance," could have been an egg, and not a human.) It is also in chapter 9 that we get glimpses into Abelard's views about what we can know about powers and possibilities of things, and whether Abelard thinks that conceivability is a good guide to thinking about

possibility. Chapter 10 surveys Abelard's analyses of several well-known puzzles about necessity, determinacy, and God's foreknowledge of allegedly contingent events. Binini argues that Abelard's views about necessity are not as well worked out as his views about possibilities. In the former cases, Abelard pursues several strategies which do not seem to neatly cohere into a unified, systematic account of what it means to be necessary. By contrast, Binini argues that Abelard's various discussions of possibilities and potentialities do coalesce around the core notion of nonrepugnancy with nature.

Throughout her study, Binini makes use of a rich trove of anonymous Aristotelian commentaries and logical treatises written during Abelard's heyday. The compendiousness of this book will make it useful to many scholars, not only of twelfth-century European logic and metaphysics, but also those interested more broadly in medieval logic and medieval metaphysics. There is, however, some repetitiveness in the book, and a thicket of cross-references. While this makes it possible for readers to jump in and out at will (for instance, if they wish to only round out their understanding of Abelard's theory of the syllogism or if they only wish to see how Abelard's antirealist metaphysics accounts for unrealized possibilities), it makes a start-to-finish reading a bit choppy. Some of the redundancies probably cannot be helped, especially given Binini's decision to structure the book around *our* notion of how to parse up the terrain of philosophical discourse about modality. Abelard is capable of systematic thought. To see this, one need only scrutinize the surviving portions of his *Dialectica*, a stand-alone presentation of Aristotelian logic (and the metaphysics that underlies it). But his system is determined by the curriculum laid out in the Aristotelian logical corpus inherited from late antiquity via Boethius. Thus, for instance, Abelard will systematically work through terms, and then sentences, and then arguments. Likewise, he will follow Porphyry and discuss in systematic Porphyrian fashion genera, then species (and individual substance), then *differentia*, then *propria*, and finally accidents. But this means that his views about, say, the metaphysical grounds of possibility and necessity are not treated thoroughly in any given place, but rather are scattered across his written corpus. Moreover, lessons about inferences from a logical point of view and the metaphysics behind it will be tightly intermeshed, whereas Binini's structure disentangles and isolates these threads.

Another sort of redundancy, however, probably could have been avoided. Binini chooses to treat the tradition within which Abelard's works appear independently from Abelard's theory. This is only partially successful, for she cannot help but refer to the Aristotelian and Boethian tradition as well as the views of his contemporaries when discussing Abelard's own views in parts 2 and 3, and she often sketches Abelard's own answers to several traditional puzzles in part 1. It might have been more effective to organize material around several of the problems that vexed Abelard and his contemporaries (e.g, whether *de re* or *de dicto* readings should be privileged, the existential import of statements about possibilities, whether the statistical model of possibility is true, whether

bivalence entails logical determinism, and so forth) and then compare and contrast the different solutions to a given issue all at once.

In general, the material presented in the book should be accessible to those with limited training in twelfth-century philosophy, although there are two occasions where a key passage is presented in Latin without an English translation (130 and 273)—an unnecessary hurdle for nonspecialists that I hope will be rectified in a revised edition. I anticipate that Binini's book will be the standard resource for scholars and students for the foreseeable future. Yet, as Binini herself acknowledges, there is much more work to be done on these texts. Thus, while this book will be a valuable resource to scholars for a long time, one of its best features is the way that it will be the impetus and basis for future discoveries.

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Thinking Theologically about the Divine Ideas: Reexamining the "Summa" of Thomas Aquinas. By BENJAMIN R. DESPAIN. Brill's Studies in Catholic Theology 11. Leiden: Brill, 2022. Pp. xi + 245. $139.00 (hard). ISBN: 978-90- 04-51150-7.

The doctrine of divine ideas has been getting quite a bit of attention in recent years. In 2021 Oxford University Press published Mark A. McIntosh's book *The Divine Ideas Tradition in Christian Mystical Theology*, following on Cambridge University Press's publication of *Divine Ideas* by Thomas M. Ward (2020). The Catholic University of America Press had already published, in 2008, Gregory T. Doolan's work *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, and more recently published an important book by Carl A. Vater, *God's Knowledge of the World: Medieval Theories of Divine Ideas from Bonaventure to Ockham* (2022). Vater's book contextualizes Aquinas's treatment of the doctrine within the flow of thirteenth-century theological reflection and in this serves as an essential addition to what I was able to do (Vivian Boland, *Ideas in God according to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis* [Brill, 1996]), to what Doolan's book offers, and to what we find in the book under review here.

A first point to note is the presence of the term "theologically" in the title of DeSpain's book. Against Doolan's proposal to treat the doctrine purely philosophically, DeSpain argues that such a methodology must fail to do justice to Aquinas's presentation and use of it. Of course there are philosophical aspects to it, but it is not only as a philosophical tool that it is useful to Aquinas. The divine ideas doctrine, DeSpain argues, is central to Aquinas's theology—he can

quote Marie-Dominique Chenu for whom the realm of the divine ideas is "the real spiritual and scientific home of theology"—and it cannot be understood by the application of an exclusively philosophical hermeneutic.

The "atomistic interpretive" approach—collating the texts in which the doctrine is presented as well as appeals to it elsewhere in Aquinas's writings—is limited and in recent times tends to be a defensive strategy, seeking to show that the doctrine has an essential place in Aquinas's theological enterprise in the face of contrary arguments. Doubts sown by later presentations of the doctrine of divine ideas, presentations that sometimes border on caricatures, have often put students of Aquinas on the back foot as they seek to respond to questions and concerns about it. Free of such doubts, DeSpain wants to identify and explain what he terms "the contribution of the doctrine's more subtle gestures to Aquinas's works" (5).

The term "gestures" is an important one for DeSpain, although he never really defines it. His aim is to treat the theological work of Aquinas as essentially pedagogical, seeking to guide readers from the confession of faith to the wisdom of *sacra doctrina*. In this pedagogy the doctrine of divine ideas is a type of grammar that provides what he terms "gestures of contemplative fittingness" that support the overall project of showing humanity's dependence on God in creation and salvation. He is not then claiming that Aquinas's theology is really all about the divine ideas, but he believes that the doctrine has what he terms "a peripheral centrality": it is not the focus of Aquinas's theology but once that focus is clear it is also seen that without this doctrine Aquinas's vision would be incomplete.

DeSpain's argument unfolds in six movements. First (chap. 2) comes an evaluation of the pedagogical design of *Summa theologiae*. Some of the standard criticisms of the doctrine of divine ideas—that it is rationalistic, anti-Trinitarian, even non-Christian—fail to take account of its context in Aquinas where it is informed and reordered by the pattern of theological education which explains the form of his theological discourse. Not a closed system, the *Summa* nevertheless has a pedagogical unity, seeking to lead the reader from faith to wisdom, and doing so always in terms of the Word of God as the expression of the Father's self-knowledge. DeSpain relies significantly on Josef Pieper in presenting his case that the *Summa* is essentially a pedagogical project, a view that is strengthened by the "apophatic turn" in the interpretation of Aquinas, of which Pieper is not the only representative. Faith itself means accepting God as our teacher in order to learn from God's own knowledge, become wise thereby, and so be saved (healed). The *Summa* is at the service of this learning and the doctrine of divine ideas is therefore theologically motivated, intended to enhance the reader's movement toward the contemplative vision of God.

The next part of the argument, chapter 3, argues that Aquinas reordered the doctrine in order to give it "theological validity." The chapter begins with reference to Dietrich Bonhoeffer who rejected the doctrine as an attempt to get "behind" the creating God, thereby locking God into a metaphysical system. For Pieper, however, creation is the key to Aquinas's thought and the doctrine

of divine ideas has an essential place in his understanding of creation. The doctrine protects the mystery which is at the heart of everything since, as Pieper says, "we can never fully grasp these likenesses of the Divine Ideas precisely as likeness" (quoted in DeSpain, 76). Within the context of the *Summa*'s overall project, question 15 of the *Prima pars*, "on ideas," is but a prelude to the development and application of the doctrine later in the *Summa*. The first questions that arise are what is meant by ideas in God, what it means to speak of a plurality of ideas (with its perceived threat to Aquinas's magnificent account of divine simplicity) and finally to consider of what God can be said to have an idea. DeSpain's argument is that in reordering the doctrine Aquinas decisively links it with God's providence and sets it within the conditions of "faith seeking understanding" which is the *Summa*'s focus.

In chapter 4, DeSpain engages with the first of what he terms "peripheral gestures" of the doctrine, namely, its use in Aquinas's Trinitarian theology. The familiar theme of "fittingness" (*convenientia*) in Aquinas's theological methodology invites his reader to delve further into what DeSpain calls the "peripheral and subtle gestures" of the doctrine (90). First though there is an excursus on the vocabulary Aquinas uses in speaking of the ideas: *idea*, *ratio*, *forma*, *exemplar*, *similitudo*, *species*. Where some see inconsistency or even confusion, DeSpain sees pedagogical advantages in this "flexibility": it allows Aquinas's more subtle gestures with the doctrine which facilitate the reader in attending to the focal point in the discussions where they appear, and it means he can introduce the doctrine where it is needed but where an explicit consideration of "ideas" might be unhelpful or distracting. The relation between the Word and the ideas thus grounds a Trinitarian rereading of the doctrine. All is subject to the "logic of fittingness," and DeSpain appeals to Gilles Emery's work on the unity of the treatise on God in the *Prima pars* as well as to Aquinas, who not only relates the Word and the ideas but understands the Trinitarian processions themselves as "exemplars" of the production of creatures.

Chapter 5 engages directly with the question of philosophy and theology in Aquinas's work, challenging the view that an exclusively philosophical doctrine can be extracted from the theological context of the *Summa*. Bifurcating theology and philosophy in Aquinas's work is "a curious practice," DeSpain says (the phrase seems to originate with David Burrell). On one side, John Wippel and Doolan, Etienne Gilson and James Ross, emphasize either the philosophical and/or redundant character of the doctrine of divine ideas. On the other hand, Mark D. Jordan regards many philosophical aspects of the doctrine as having been abandoned by Aquinas in order to make it theologically acceptable. However, the ideas become redundant here also because of Aquinas's settled view that the divine essence is the one sufficient and direct exemplar of all created being. Each of these approaches relies on bifurcating Aquinas's thought along some point of division between theology and philosophy. By looking at the fourth and fifth ways of proving the existence of God, DeSpain seeks to show why an exclusively philosophical doctrine fails to support what Aquinas is doing in the *Summa*. It is a theological pedagogy whose reach is always

Christological and soteriological, and there is no realm of "ontotheology" in Aquinas outside the domain of faith. Where the fourth way refers enigmatically to the exemplar forms, the fifth way, according to De Spain (supported in this by Doolan) includes a number of themes that Aquinas often makes use of in his formal discussion of the divine ideas, namely, divine intelligence, providence and natural law. This chapter ends with a consideration of providence since the divine ideas relate not just to the origin of created things but to their entire existence as things ordered to an end (150). In his account of the eternal law Aquinas says that the divine wisdom, the source and goal of *sacra doctrina*, means "art," "exemplar," and "idea" as creating all things, and means "law" as moving them to their due ends (*STh* I-II, q. 93, a. 1). The divine ideas thus inform the entire *exitus-reditus* of creation and redemption.

In chapters 6 and 7 DeSpain explores the presence of the doctrine of divine ideas in Aquinas's treatment of moral and theological virtues. He wants to respond to the criticism, from Paul DeHart, that Aquinas does not consider the ethical or anthropological implications of the doctrine, but also to illustrate further the "peripheral centrality" of the doctrine across the full range of Aquinas's theological vision. Aquinas made use of a distinction of virtue, which he found in Macrobius, in which the highest level is that of "exemplar" virtues (*STh* I-II, q. 61, a. 5). For DeSpain this is another "peripheral gesture" to the divine ideas since Macrobius, in effect, identifies these "exemplar virtues" with the ideas. Chapter 7 then treats of the theological virtue of hope. It is a part of Aquinas's work that, DeSpain believes, challenges the "formulaic dichotomy between metaphysics and theology" which is repeatedly projected onto his thought (the dreaded "bifurcation"). There is a natural anticipation of this virtue in the passion of hope, a physical and emotional response which perdures into the higher actualizations of hope including the supernatural theological virtue itself. The personal experience of being drawn into the fullness of dynamic union with God is given a theological voice by the doctrine of the divine ideas which is included in references to "divine norms," "eternal ideas," and "eternal law" within Aquinas's treatment of hope. And because the final end is related to each person in a unique way, the movement of hope is a movement towards the actualization of God's eternal idea for each individual. This is in Christ, the Word, the exemplar of all creation, so that the restoration of creatures comes about by the same *forma artis* by which they are originally created. DeSpain thus concludes that, for Aquinas, the true meaning of each person is eternally conceived in the mind of God. This is an understanding that is not controversial for the Christian believer: the argument here is that it is supported theologically by the subtle gestures of the divine ideas within Aquinas's account of the theological virtue of hope.

The book concludes with a discussion of some of the hermeneutical challenges involved in the process of theological *ressourcement*. Necessary as they are, inquiries into intellectual history have positive and negative implications, DeSpain says, as he revisits some of the difficulties that attend any attempt to re-source the doctrine of divine ideas. He does not use the terms

"aporia" or "mystery" which others might be tempted to apply here; instead he notes the challenges the doctrine presents for the contemporary theological identity that governs our reception of texts. In particular, if people expect from Aquinas a definitive systematic account of the doctrine of divine ideas they will be faced with well-known difficulties. What the *Summa* offers is not a system, either philosophical or theological, but "a path to the vision of God rooted in the revelation of humanity's createdness" (206). Chenu spoke of the divine ideas as the scientific and spiritual heart of Aquinas's theology. For DeSpain it is because of the breakdown of language before the face of God that constructively reclaiming this doctrine is theologically important. The clearest summary of his thesis is this: "If theologians and scholars are going to recover a greater appreciation for Aquinas's doctrine of the divine ideas, they must be willing to alter the trajectory of their interpretations as Aquinas guides readers along the network of subtle gestures to the divine ideas that shift and reshape the doctrine through different contexts and innovative exchanges with other heuristic networks within his thought that both recast the divine ideas, and advance his reception and transmission of the doctrine" (175).

DeSpain himself works from an "heuristic network" other than that of many interpreters of Aquinas, which gives added interest to his interpretation. A clearer definition of the meaning of "gesture" would, nevertheless, have been helpful and would facilitate dialogue among the various networks engaged in studying Aquinas. It is clearly linked with the methodological principle of *convenientia*, a well-known principle operative throughout Aquinas's work but here presented in ways that are fresh. The invitation to think "theologically" about the divine ideas might seem unnecessary, but DeSpain shows why it is important to emphasize this. He enriches the reception of this particular doctrine achieved by earlier authors, and contributes in important ways to reflection on the question of philosophy and theology in Aquinas. While his choice is to consider only the *Summa theologiae*, it would be interesting to see what "gestures" might yet be identifiable in other parts of the *Corpus Thomisticum*. DeSpain's work is a welcome addition to the growing bibliography dealing with this doctrine.

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Revelations of Humanity: Anthropological Dimensions of Theological Controversies. By RICHARD SCHENK, O.P., trans. MICHAEL MILLER. *Thomistic Ressourcement Series* 20. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022. Pp. xvi + 461. $65.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-8132-3552-3.

Richard Schenk, O.P., is an internationally respected theologian who regularly publishes in English and German. He dedicates this book to the director of his doctoral dissertation (1986), the prolific German theologian Leo Cardinal Scheffczyk (1920-2005) on the centenary of his birth.

The volume is a compilation of twelve articles originally published separately in German between 1993 and 2011. Divine charity is considered *the* decisive *datum* for defining the human being. The abiding tension between seemingly autarkic, yet in itself ambivalent, human existence and redemptive divine-human relationality is the uniting *leitmotif* for the essays. They provocatively ask the question whether discounting the possibility of such divine self-disclosure mortally imperils the core of the *humanum* of humankind. Intellectual veracity must admit divine-human relationship is always "entangled" (5), but "harmony" between the two must be yearned for, lest the human being fails himself or herself. It is conscience as a dynamic vehicle towards self-transcendence—captured perhaps best by the ancient call "*gnothi se auton*"—that impels the human spirit forward to its redeeming *telos*.

The first four essays discuss divine self-disclosure as charity. Schenk notes "an insuperable tension between faith and evidence" (13) in the first essay (11-39) and shows how Plato and Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Kant wrestle with this incontrovertible reality. There is no denying that the definitory nature of human existence is its open-ended transcendence. It finds a resolution—albeit a tentative, open-ended one—in the acknowledgement of this facticity. Such admitted distance, captured as Thomistic *adaequatio,* allows an "approximation to the range of verifiability, unaware that the human being *in statu viatoris* is sustained positively by the (supernatural) virtue of hope. This tension Schenk applies to diverging Christian professions of faith. Regarding conscience, Thomas is again the point of reference (40-82), with his concept of *perplexus supposito quodam*. After surveying Gregory the Great, Abelard, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Walter of Bruges, and others, Schenk shows Thomas in four different cases of perplexity of an erroneous conscience (conflict of objective, judgement and intention, sinful intention, and as regards norm). Thomas emphasizes the moral obligation to surmount *ignorantia iuris*. By virtue of its binding nature, conscience is required dynamically to employ *accusare, excusare, instigare,* and *remordere*. The third essay (83-109) ponders whether the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998) indeed expressed a preferential option for Thomism, and reflects on Alasdair MacIntyre's turn to the *Doctor Angelicus* in *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999). Schenk sees both Thomas and MacIntyre seconding Scheffczyk's call to recognize the limits of human reason as a salutary chance. Such realization overcomes the "hermeneutic turning point"

inaugurated by Kant and Georg Hermes and appreciates afresh a "dogmatic model." The next essay (110-47) in this first cluster illuminates the influence of Gottlieb Söhngen on the *Habilitationschrift* of his student Joseph Ratzinger/ Pope Benedict XVI. Schenk shows convincingly Söhngen's sense of urgency to overcome the theoretically instructive (propositional) method of preconciliar theology, while Ratzinger argues that it must not yield to "a 'contradictory pluralism'." Söhngen had been somewhat involved in the nature/grace debate between Karl Barth and Erich Przywara. Over and against Thomas, Bonaventure, Söhngen, and Ratzinger favor prioritizing the apophatic *analogia fidei* vis-à-vis the *analogia entis*, thus bringing Ratzinger closer to Barth, although not as much as Bonaventure or Söhngen would like. *Pace* Thomas, the human *similitudo Dei* is more than merely structural or external. In the wake of John Peckham, Bonaventure's abiding Christocentrism leads to apprehending in revelation ultimately an encounter with the divine Thou as expressed in *Dei Verbum,* which was composed to no small degree under Ratzinger's influence.

The second group of essays posits that amid all earthly *tristitia* (sadness), in a real sense the human being can laugh, as he is already embraced by a good creator who perplexingly suffers, despite his divine immutability. Thus, anthropology and eschatology converge, without suspending the call to live the supernatural virtue of hope. Here Schenk integrates the prophetic wisdom of Vatican II (especially that of *Gaudium et Spes*) into his and Rahner's and Balthasar's responses to contemporary interjections, such as Umberto Eco's celebrated *The Name of the Rose* (151-63). This essay is decidedly cheerful and witty: it is not the agnostic, but the Christian who can laugh as he lives inalienably in the glow of Easter.

In the final group of essays Schenk felicitously demonstrates how ecumenical and interreligious dialogue can "reveal" facets of revelation. In this context, he pleads for ecumenical honesty. For instance, the Lutheran and Catholic understanding of the Eucharist cannot be facilely reconciled. And yet, Schenk invites the reader to "learn" from partners in ecumenical dialogue. The *fides quae* cannot be sacrificed even for the sake of genuine irenic intentions. Here the focus is heavily on German Catholic-Protestant dialogue.

In this last section, Schenk marks out three areas in which he takes up the cudgels against contemporary thought, areas in which theologians often prefer the path of lesser political resistance or intellectual effort: sacrifice, the pluralistic theory of religions, and the nature of sacrament.

With the background of the Shoah, Schenk recognizes the problematic nature of sacrifice in contemporary discourse. This is compounded by a lack of "a reliable pre-understanding" (295). Not only the Council of Trent, but human cultural history in general provides orientation on this point. Schenk reminds the reader that already his fellow Dominican Robert Kilwardby—while discussing pre-Abrahamic critiques of sacrifice—saw non-Judeo-Christian religiosity expressing a need for propitiation and "search for the mercy of God" (304). Thomas develops his theory of atonement in dialogue with Maimonides. Christ's sacrifice is both fulfillment and end of all pre-Christian sacrifices.

D'accord with Thomas and Rahner (perhaps a too favorable reading?), Schenk sees Christ's unsurpassable self-immolation as the "'sacrificial victim' fragrant, 'in odorem suavitatis' [in] . . . unparalleled acceptance by God" (337), and as the ageless "sought-for liberation from disaster" (338). In a personalist turn, Schenk emphasizes Christ's "philanthropic" proexistence as *perfectissimum sacrificium*. Modernity's need for a deeper appreciation of sacrifice is seen fulfilled in Balthasar's perspective of *kenosis* and sacrifice as defining moments of intra-Trinitarian life. Mechanical, impersonal *ex opere operato* thinking is relativized, though its theological valence is not denied. "Death itself is not what fulfills and perfects: rather the expected fulfillment by God is essentially directed against death" (356-57). Following the *Ecumenical Taskforce of Lutheran and Catholic Theologians* document (published in 1983), Schenk considers the Lutheran-Catholic positions in this regard not as "denominational antitheses" (357). Self-surrender as a Christian posture is rediscovered in its positive relevance for every human being's existence. One's own subjectivity finds fulfillment "in the proexistent character of Christ's death" (359) in the Eucharist. Schenk considers moral theology challenged to rediscover the social dimension of human conduct. Oscar Romero's last words prior to his assassination are presented as a felicitous expression of this enhanced view of sacrifice.

In the penultimate essay, Schenk dialogues with the different variants of religious pluralism proposed by Paul Knitter, Raimon Panikkar, John Hick, Perry Leukel-Schmidt, and even Keith Ward and Leonard Swidler. Regarding Hick, who is considered "the least pluralistic" (380), Schenk asks: "Is plausibility replaced here by an illusory logical compulsion?" (366). Confronted with the alternatives of inclusivism, pluralism, and exclusivism, the pluralist theory of religions *nolens volens* denies the universal significance of salvation in Christ. Here Schenk is interested in lines of argumentation and genuinely welcomes the chance for theoretical investigations. When John Henry Newman laments that Scottish Calvinism devolves into "post-theistic Unitarianism" (382), Schenk poses the question, why is a pluralistic argument necessarily superior to any other perspective, if the mediatorship of Christ, his divine preexistence, human and divine personhood, and the blessed Trinity are superior ontological realities? What is the positive yield of a Christ "relativized after Ebionite and Adoptionist models" (384)? Must not these approaches acknowledge the high value of "the Gospel of Jesus Christ as good news for 'every creature'" (386)?

The final contribution probes the nature of Catholic sacramentality vis-à-vis Protestant statements, the Old Covenant, and the world religions. Already the confrontation with native American religions and Jewish faith had the Torquemada brothers subscribe to opposing views: Do non-Christian sacrifices possess any salvific value? What is the basis for any critique of human sacrifice, if not Christianity? Schenk discusses ancient Mayan sacrifices and René Girard. He sees the relationship between biblical, more specifically Christocentric, and nonbiblical sacrifices still in need of clarification. Further, for the dialogue *intra*

muros Christianos one must discuss the Church herself as sacrament. Schenk also explores a state of gracelessness and the doctrine of justification in the context of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in Germany and warns against "gloss[ing] over confessional differences" (394). He calls to mind Seripando's and Söhngen's thoughts on the distinction between Law and Gospel and the discussions surrounding the notion of the *ecclesia ab Abel*. Rhetorically he poses the question: "Was Abel, this primordial figure of the church, something like a Mayan?" (401), or were Old Covenant ceremonies never pleasing, as Fishacre had argued? Augustine disagrees. The significance of the old rites lies in their prefiguring and thus in their abolition by Christ (406). Schenk pleads refraining from forced harmonizations in intra-Christian dialogue. "The death of Jesus on the cross appeared as a critique of sacrifice *and* a sublimation of sacrifice combined in one, a culmination and a cessation" (410).

Schenk does not shy away from contested issues, which he analyzes on historical grounds, as well as the nuances and possible solutions medieval thought may offer. He shows himself to be a scholar most familiar with the Middle Ages, and therein again with the *corpus Thomisticum*. While some lines of discussion certainly reflect the German context, this book reveals a cultured mind constantly engaging towering figures of Christianity and presenting academia with complex thoughts driving discussions to higher *plateaux*. It is enriching to examine the long footnotes Schenk provides. It is interesting to read Thomas and other great minds of the Christian tradition in general with the background of the recent dramatic developments in the areas of the sciences and technology and the attendant unification of humankind into one global community. Alienated from natural revelation by such contraptions as the smartphone, what are the means to reveal afresh to the human being his or her God-given dignity and innate doxological purpose? This volume is a most helpful thesaurus to respond to the spiritual needs of countless people. It provides them with load-bearing orientation.

The book concludes with a rich bibliography and indices. Schenk is consistently ecumenically sensitive and irenic. A philosophically trained systematic theologian, he offers twelve precious vignettes allowing vistas into a stable and coherent Catholic whole, namely, the *Katholische Glaubenswelt* (Scheffczyk), while not simplifying issues. Schenk is an important transatlantic bridge, sharing "the state of art" of Thomistic studies "on the continent." The footnotes are resplendent with little-known theological, philosophical, and historical studies. This collection leads the reader to profound heights of thought. This collection of Schenk's essays, eminently erudite and cultured, is most valuable for anyone teaching or studying fundamental theology.

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Thomas d'Aquin, Dieu et la métaphysique. By THIERRY-DOMINIQUE
    HUMBRECHT, O.P. Paris: Parole et Silence, 2021. Pp. 1432. € 45,00
    (paper). ISBN: 978-2-88959-343-9.

    In this massive work, Fr. Humbrecht seeks to articulate the structure of St.
Thomas's metaphysical thought concerning God in a manner that is not only
historically sensitive but that allows St. Thomas's reasoning to present itself on
its own terms. A brief review can only provide the reader with a summary
outline of the themes treated at length in this book. The volume is divided into
five major sections. The first and the fifth serve as synthetic bookends to the
central three, expository parts. For the sake of clarity, I will summarize the
themes of these expository sections in brief sequence below. Following that, I
will make some broader observations.
    The first expository section is dedicated to the question concerning what is
often referred to as the two theologies (natural theology and sacred doctrine).
Humbrecht opens by considering various texts related to the distinction of and
relationship between metaphysics and sacred science, parsing the various
meanings and names attributed to metaphysics by St. Thomas, comparing him
with and contrasting him to his contemporaries and to later trends in
Scholasticism. This textual analysis enables the author to reiterate the well-
known position articulated by St. Thomas regarding God's place solely as cause
of the subject of metaphysics, thereby belonging to metaphysics only in this
respect and not as falling directly under its primary subject (*ens commune*). This
entire section is animated by a salutary effort to refute the temptation to seek
out in St. Thomas a "natural theology" that would be separated from his
metaphysics, as well as from the data of faith itself. Of particular note is an
illuminating study concerning the theological nature of the *Summa contra
gentiles*. Near the end of this section, Humbrecht presents a rather surprising
(and perhaps somewhat questionable) analysis claiming that with the passage of
time the notion of subalternation decreased in importance for St. Thomas's
conception of *sacra doctrina*. He also presents an interpretation of St. Thomas's
oeuvre that draws attention to the decrease in importance played by the *exitus-
reditus* schema over St. Thomas's career.
    The second section takes up the question of being, *esse*, and above all how it
is said of God. Thus, Humbrecht is led to discuss the metaphysics of *esse* as act,
as well as the metaphysics of participation, variously discussing the Christian
context of St. Thomas's metaphysics of *esse*. To the latter topic, he connects a
discussion of the relevant theme regarding analogy in its dual understanding as
being "horizontally" concerned with the various Aristotelian categories and
"vertically" with divine naming. Thus, he takes up the question concerning St.
Thomas's reverential exegesis and integration of Aristotle's account of the First
Cause in both the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*; this section also contains
chapters devoted to the natural knowability, and, more importantly,
unknowability of God. Other important chapters in this section take up topics
concerning the relations of nature and grace, as well as faith and reason,

providing textual support from Thomas for the hermeneutic that guides Humbrecht's overall project. (I will discuss this more below.) Of particular merit in this section is his discussion of the preambles of faith.

The third section is devoted to St. Thomas's understanding of the dependence of all creatures upon God. Thus, the overall arc of this final expository portion is oriented toward questions of creation and divine providence and governance. It is here that Humbrecht takes up the twofold composition of act and potency in finite, material beings, in particular to consolidate what he already had emphasized concerning the preeminence of *esse* as act. His brief account of the transcendentals provides some scaffolding for this topic in relation to "vertical analogy" regarding God, though the matter of this section leaves room for no small amount of further amplification. It is here in particular that he provides an account of St. Thomas's reasons for reverentially rectifying Aristotle's position concerning the First Cause's efficient causality of the world. The section closes with an account of providence and divine omnipotence that emphasizes (perhaps too strongly in some ways, though not without reason nor textual support) its supernatural character, even in the order of knowledge, though reason retains a role in rendering account of these topics. For readers interested in the topics of creation and providence in particular, Humbrecht admirably structures his discussion around the lengthy portions of *Summa contra gentiles* II and III devoted to these topics.

The methodology of the main chapters of the text contained in these three expository sections is primarily textual-exegetical. In these chapters, the author's references to the broader academic literature, which is extensively treated in his opening and closing chapters, becomes much more controlled as he focuses on pivotal texts related to the particular work or theme under consideration. This does not, of course, prevent him, in these expository chapters, from engaging with the broader literature concerning debated points of history and interpretation.

However, throughout these sections, he devotes a number of chapters to thematic questions that require him to consider a kind of *status quaestionis* from contemporary scholarly literature in each case. These "conceptual overview" chapters present structural preparation for various themes that arise amid his exegetical labors. Of particular note are the chapters devoted to analogy and participation, the preambles of faith, the Gilsonian debate concerning "the metaphysics of Exodus," as well as two chapters devoted to a thorough consideration of Gilson's account (with important lines of consideration from Fabro) concerning the metaphysics of *actus essendi*, and an important chapter dedicated to the question of St. Thomas's "reverential" reading of Aristotle as regards the efficient causality of God in relation to the world. In all of these conceptual chapters, along with the introductory and concluding sections, Humbrecht, whose thought bears a marked Gilsonian stamp, richly and critically engages with contemporary literature devoted to the interpretation of St. Thomas, never showing himself wholly subservient to a particular outlook

and always attempting (even if with some inevitable missteps) to allow St. Thomas's own writing to settle the matters at hand.

I wish, now, to offer a comment on the major substantive question that is in the background of the entire work: what is the status of metaphysics, and especially the metaphysical treatment of God, in St. Thomas's own exercise of philosophical and theological reflection? The hermeneutical method proposed by Humbrecht deploys two different schemata for articulating the distinction and coordination of reason and faith (always with an eye, specifically, to the question concerning the nature of the metaphysical consideration of God). First, one might broadly consider Thomist metaphysics within the framework of a kind of modified "Chalcedonian schema" (103-7, 1311-19) providing the general framework for two sciences that interpenetrate, without separation or confusion, with faith maintaining its rule over the domain of reason.

However, as Humbrecht observes, this schema remains too general in its explanatory value, requiring, secondly, further specifications concerning the modalities under which metaphysics operates in the midst of this Chalcedonian subordination, namely, by means of the critical *integration* of other philosophers, by being *constituted* by *sacra doctrina* itself, and by way of *manifestation* as theological reasoning utilizes reason and follows the latter's own requirements, though while still remaining under the sway of a broadly theological task. The first modality (*integration of others*) would be that of, for example, the various commentaries, which, although taken up by St. Thomas as a task motivated by his theological labors, nonetheless were primarily concerned with the articulation of the metaphysics found in the given author or text under consideration. The second (*constituted by theology*) would be the method of the *Summa theologiae* above all, though also that of many of the disputed questions, the *Compendium theologiae*, the scriptural commentaries, parts of the *Summa contra gentiles*, and so on. The third (*manifestation within theological labor*) would be a mode of metaphysics found most forcefully in the first three books of the *Summa contra gentiles,* which Humbrecht presents as offering a theology-directed use of reason. He presents (with suitable qualifications) illustrative examples of how various twentieth-century thinkers emphasized particular modalities in their interpretation of St. Thomas's metaphysics as a whole: Louvain figures like Van Steenberghen and Wippel giving preference to the first, at least tendentially; Gilson forcefully prioritizing the second; Kretzmann somewhat transmuting the third into a case of the first; various medievalists influenced by Vignaux placing the latter two under the heading of the first.

Humbrecht attempts to approach the texts of St. Thomas from all three of these angles, recognizing that each modality plays its role variously throughout his works. This means that the interpreter of St. Thomas is faced with the difficult task of reactualizing the content and spirit of the whole of his doctrine, though in a form that would not be a free-floating and independent reconstruction, reconstituted or reconstructed as a kind of separated doctrinal synthesis. Metaphysics has a *de iure* autonomy from theology, though it was

never constituted by St. Thomas in isolation from his theological tasks. And this is even more true for "natural theology," which never existed in isolated separation either from metaphysics or, even more importantly for Humbrecht, from *sacra doctrina* in St. Thomas's own labors. In these assertions, one senses a Gilsonian echo, though Humbrecht's massive work is too variegated to be reduced merely to that well-known theme of twentieth-century Thomism.

Ultimately, to the present reviewer's eyes, though based upon multiple methodological remarks throughout the work, Humbrecht's thoroughgoing concern is to remain as "Thomasian" as possible. This term, often used in French works of the past several decades, signifies articulating St. Thomas's own thought, historically, in contrast to a detached, ahistorical "Thomist" doctrine, in particular as problematized in the schemata of the later "Thomist school." Thus, the entire work aims to be historical-theological and historical-philosophical, not lacking in speculative analysis but ultimately framed by the desire to present the historical thought of St. Thomas, to reactualize it in the telling. Amply articulated in the introductory and concluding sections, as well as in the very methodology deployed in each section of the text, this animating spirit clearly is summarized in the text's own back-matter: "*Il faut tout reprendre, laisser parler les textes. Restituer, oui, reconstruire, non. Conditions pour découvrir chez Thomas d'Aquin trois modalités de la métaphysique, autant d'articulations différenciées entre raison et foi*" ("Everything must be taken up anew, allowing the texts to speak for themselves. To reconvey [the meaning], yes; to reconstruct it [as though it existed in this form], no. These are the conditions required for discovering in St. Thomas three modalities of metaphysics as so many differentiated articulations of the relationship between reason and faith").

The weakness of this hermeneutic is that it risks a kind of historicism, for one will feel a constant temptation to *contrast negatively* the historical-Thomasian Thomas to the Thomist "non-Thomas," opting for the former to the exclusion of the latter, which is implicitly presented as being a kind of dead end. Nonetheless, the great strength of this hermeneutic is that it enables the author to attempt to render present anew the élan of St. Thomas's own thought as it unfolds *in fieri* rather than as a static and almost eternalized doctrine *in facto esse*. It is not merely a question of historical sensitivity to the development of his thought (which, however, is a concern throughout the work) but above all an exercise of sensitivity to the very modality of St. Thomas's thought as he utilizes metaphysical reasoning in the midst of his theological labors. To this end, Humbrecht's study provides a model example for an always-necessary corrective to a merely "Thomist-doctrinal" presentation of St. Thomas's thought, a synthesis that may cohere with St. Thomas's objective positions but that was never openly articulated in that particular synthetic form by the saint himself.

For an American readership, the size of the book is a bit daunting. On the whole, Humbrecht's French should be accessible to a reader with a general capacity for reading the tongue. This is particularly true for the sections

throughout the text where the author is primarily concerned with providing an exegesis of texts in St. Thomas. The reader who has a general knowledge of Thomas's thought will find such sections relatively easy to read without the need of additional translation tools.

For all engaged in Thomist (or "Thomasian") scholarship, the text is a necessary addition to one's library. It is arguable that no historically and textually sensitive reading of St. Thomas's metaphysics and philosophical reflection on God should be undertaken without considering in detail Humbrecht's presentation. Even where one differs with him on this or that point, he does yeoman's work in rendering present anew the élan and content of St. Thomas's own thought.

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Plato's Second Republic: An Essay on the Laws. By ANDRÉ LAKS. Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. ix + 296 (hard). ISBN: 978-0-691-23313-0.

As André Laks notes in the first sentence of this book's Introduction, his interest in the *Laws* began some forty years ago. His bibliography lists fifteen of his publications on this dialogue, beginning with *Loi et persuasion: Sur la structure de la pensée politique de Platon* (typewritten thesis, Doctorat D´État, 1988). Since then, scholarly interest in this late (probably last) work of Plato has grown enormously (as has attention to the *Statesman*, generally accepted as a transitional work between the *Republic* and the *Laws*). *Plato's Second Republic* reflects Laks's engagement with this literature as well as his careful analysis of the central passages of the *Laws*. It will be indispensable to all students of Plato's political thought and of the history of political philosophy.

It is not comprehensive in scope (that would require a much longer tome), but focuses on the themes of the *Laws* that are of greatest interest to many students of political philosophy: the inevitable corruptibility of unchecked power; the rule of law and the servitude it requires; the kind of mixed regime prescribed by the *Laws* (from which our notion of "checks and balances" emerges); the role played by persuasive legislative preambles in mitigating the coercive nature of the law; and the sense in which the city proposed in the *Laws* is nonideal and only second-best.

Laks acknowledges that "for all its importance in the emergence of constitutionalism and republicanism" the *Laws* "accentuates rather than alleviates the most unpleasant tendencies of the *Republic*." "Everything yet remains subordinate to the well-being of the political community. The control

of artistic production is as absolute as ever; an unredeemable atheism . . . is grounds for the death penalty. . . . If Socrates were to visit the city of the *Laws* and there promote the principle of free discussion, he would be arrested, expelled, and asked never to return" (7). Laks thus acknowledges the force of Popper's characterization of Plato as an enemy of "the open society." But he immediately adds: "On the other hand, the discussion of the political principles that are put to work and articulated in Plato's second constitution—expertise, freedom, equality, friendship—can be detached up to a certain point from their embodiment in particular norms and practices that can be legitimately criticized, or for that matter defended, and evaluated in their own right" (7-8). I take Laks to mean that the *Laws* has both repellent and appealing features, and we should not let the former stop us from reflecting on the latter.

When the city constructed by the *Laws* is called second-best (by its principal interlocutor, the Athenian stranger), this might be taken to mean that the ideal polis depicted in the *Republic* remains best, in Plato's mind. But Laks holds that the relationship between the two dialogues is not quite so simple: "It is in the *Laws*, not the *Republic*, that we find Plato's picture of the *really* . . . best city" (64). By this he means that in Plato's mind the city of the *Republic* is not a *real* possibility; it is only a "logical" possibility (45). There is, for Laks, no conflict between the two works in this regard. In the *Republic*, as he reads it, we are told that there is no *contradiction* in saying that someone has both absolute power and philosophical wisdom. That claim is compatible with the statement of the Athenian in the *Laws* that even if someone knows that the common good should take precedence over his individual good, he will, given absolute political power, eventually succumb to the forces of human nature and follow his irrational passions rather than what reason and justice require (*Laws* 875c-d, cited in Laks, 46).

There are two alternatives to this way of depicting the relationship between the *Republic* and the *Laws*. (A) We might say that (1) in the *Republic* the ideal city is not merely a logical possibility. For all we know, at some time or other, an absolute ruler has existed or will exist who rules justly and wisely over the whole course of his reign; at any rate, nothing in human nature prevents this. But (2) in the *Laws*, Plato changed his mind, and came to see that absolute power eventually corrupts even those who fully possess the virtues. (B) We might accept the first part of (A) but not the second; even in the *Laws*, we might say, Plato continues to believe that although absolute power normally tends, over time, to erode a commitment to the common good, in ideal but achievable conditions—conditions that need divine assistance for their realization—a talented and properly educated human being will not become corrupt but will in fact do a better job than any code of laws could.

Interpretation (B), it seems to me, is supported by the text: "if ever some human being was born adequate in nature and by a divine dispensation were able to obtain . . . the relevant knowledge and the power to endure, he would not need any laws ruling him. For no law or order is stronger than knowledge . . . but it should rule all things. But in fact it is so nowhere. . . . That is why one

must choose what comes second: order and law" (Laws, 875c-d, trans. in Laks, 46-47).

Admittedly, it is difficult to decide between these three alternatives; this review cannot pursue the issue further. But here is one point to keep in mind: there is no reason to believe that Plato changed his mind, after writing the *Republic*, about whether having a just soul is the greatest human good. Accordingly, someone who combined absolute power with philosophical wisdom would never see any reason to act unjustly. He would hold (with Socrates in the *Republic*) that being just is both his greatest good and his greatest pleasure; the just exercise of power would best serve not only others but also himself. Since there is no evidence that Plato entertained second thoughts about this, interpretation (B) above seems superior both to (A) and to the reading Laks favors. The superiority of rule by philosophy to rule by law is upheld in the *Laws*, and Plato thinks that rule by philosophy is a real (not just a logical) possibility. At present, conditions for realizing such a regime do not exist. That, as the *Laws* says, is why we must settle for the rule of law.

Laks describes the path from the *Republic* to the *Laws* thus: "The psychology at work in the *Laws* . . . is not structurally different from that of the *Republic*, but there is a change in the balance of power within the soul, and as well the correlative inclusion of political power as a source of pleasure. Overall the picture is much closer to that advocated by Thrasymachus in the first book of the *Republic* than to Socrates' paradigmatic countermodel in this dialogue: human beings do crave, in the world as it is, for a power, which, when it is excessive, and especially monarchic in the sense of undivided and unchecked, necessarily leads to cognitive blindness and then to political disaster" (155).

But Plato could not have believed that "in the world as it is" all human beings crave power. Socrates, he knew, did not. Further, when the philosophers depicted in the *Republic* are ordered to return to the Cave and spend many years governing the city, they would rather remain in the light of the Sun; they consent to return because they recognize that justice demands it. The reluctance of the philosophers to rule reflects Plato's experience of the joys of the philosophical life and his conviction that the thirst for power can dry up or at least be greatly weakened.

Laks writes, immediately after the sentences quoted above: "Human reason . . . cries out for reinforcement." That of course is Plato's doctrine, in the *Republic*, in the *Laws*, and elsewhere. But he also believes that the spirited part of the soul can become a powerful ally of reason, and that appetite can be trained to cooperate with these other parts. Cultivating a just soul is not a human impossibility. If Plato came to believe that human beings, once having cultivated a just soul, will inevitably become unjust when given absolute power, he would need to explain how this psychological transformation can occur in someone who accepts the argument of the *Republic* that justice is the greatest good. Nothing in his writings provides such an explanation.

We must be careful not to let what is now a widespread assumption—that power eventually corrupts *everyone*—influence our way of reading him. Of

course, Plato recognizes that the portrait of human nature painted by Thrasymachus is an accurate depiction of the way *many* human beings feel and behave. But even if that picture happened to be true of *all* human beings up to the present (it is not—there have been good monarchs who did not become tyrants), that would not show that in social conditions (not impossible to realize) more favorable than those that presently obtain, a just ruler could arise whose power would need no limitations.

I turn briefly now to several related themes of the *Laws* that interest Laks: the value of the rule of law, the coercive nature of law, and the correlative need for "preludes" to the laws.

The rule of law is a notion that features in one of the epigraphs Laks has chosen for his book. It is a quotation from Rousseau's *Considerations on the Government of Poland*: "Putting the law over man is a problem in politics that I liken to that of squaring the circle in geometry. Solve this problem satisfactorily, and the government based on this solution will be good and free from abuses. But until then, you may be sure that wherever you believe you have made the law rule, it will be men who are ruling" (chap. 1, trans. Gourevitch).

Rousseau's point is that laws do not enforce themselves. They can be neglected and flouted; those charged with interpreting them or enforcing them can be corrupted. A population will be law-governed only if they are morally educated to value the rule of law; and it is not easy for a sizable population to be so educated. So, although giving unchecked power to one person or a small group of rulers is risky, there is also a risk in republics that the rule of law will become a sham as corruption becomes rampant and enforcement lax. There is no way to achieve a just and benign political order in the absence of the right kind of moral education of the citizenry. Plato's scheme in the *Republic* requires an extraordinary education of a few and a less rigorous training of many; successful republics require a much wider diffusion of political and moral skills. If little virtue can be expected of most people, both republics ruled by law and philosophical monarchies are in trouble. Pessimists about human nature might accuse the *Laws* of indulging in a dreamy utopianism little better than that of the *Republic*. Squaring the circle is not possible (as we have learned since Rousseau); nations (such pessimists say) are always dominated by self-seeking, power-hungry partisans, never ruled by impartial law.

Finally, a brief remark on one of the most innovative features of the *Laws*: it contains both an elaborate penal code and a proposal that legal commands be preceded by "preambles" meant to persuade citizens to accept the underlying rationale of the law's commands. Laks takes Plato to be assuming that most citizens of the second-best city of the *Laws* will not obey the law unless they face the prospect of punishment for disobedience. This reading assigns the preambles a rather minor role: "what preambles can at best achieve is to reduce the constraint and increase the voluntariness with which the citizens will obey a law" (109). Such citizens think that, on balance, they would fare best by breaking the law—if only they could get away with it. In effect, Laks takes the

preambles to provide citizens *some* reason, but not enough of a reason, to obey the law. His reading of the *Laws* on punishment, like his reading of the dialogue on absolute power, reflects his conviction that Plato has (I would say: mysteriously) become more Thrasymachean and less Socratic.

So read, Plato misunderstands why legal systems, even the best, should include the institution of punishment. A well-designed penal code gives citizens confidence that compliance with the law will be widespread enough to achieve the benefits of social cooperation. You will not be the only one who obeys the law—many others will do so as well; by acting together, as legally required, we will all be better off. The threat of punishment is a safeguard, providing an additional inducement to cooperate with others, in case the preambles are less effective than they can and ought to be. Since the *Laws* admits of this interpretation, charity favors it.

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Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) on God, Freedom, and Contingency: An Early Modern Reformed Voice. By ANDREAS J. BECK. Leiden: Brill, 2022. Pp. xvi + 616 (hard). ISBN: 978-90-04-50438-7.

This volume is a translation of a German-language monograph originally published in 2007. In addition to the translation, this edition includes significant revisions, especially in terms of the engagement with scholarship over the last two decades on the relationship of early modern Reformed theology and philosophy to medieval predecessors, as well as to contemporaries from other confessional traditions.

Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) was a prominent, and perhaps the preeminent, continental Reformed theologian at the transition from the eras of early to high orthodoxy in the seventeenth century. Voetius was a pastor and professor in the Netherlands, living and working mostly in and around Utrecht. This study by Andreas J. Beck is the first book-length treatment of this influential figure in English, and represents a major touchstone for future study of Voetius himself as well as the history of Reformed orthodoxy and Scholasticism.

Beck's study serves as an introduction both to Voetius's life and work in general and to a specific and technical advancement in the scholarship surrounding the doctrine of God and its significance for understandings of the relationship between divine and creaturely causality. After a brief but significant statement of methodology and approach, the study proceeds by surveying

Voetius's biography and works before moving on to explore his involvement in various controversies—most notably the disputes over Cartesianism—and then advancing through various theological loci of the doctrine of God: predicates and attributes, divine knowledge, God's will, his right and justice, divine power, and the divine decree and human free choice. A synthetic and evaluative summary concludes the volume.

Beck's study is part of what is now a decades-long revisionist methodological program—associated with the diverse contributions of scholars such as Heiko Oberman, David C. Steinmetz, Richard Muller, and Willem van Asselt—reassessing the relationship between the early Reformers and the medieval period as well as their later heirs in the latter half of the sixteenth century, through the seventeenth century, and into the age of Enlightenment. Older scholarship tended sharply to delineate the reformers, particularly Luther and Calvin, from both broader intellectual predecessors and later generations of Protestant theologians. In this way the Reformation was often isolated and treated as a kind of radical break with the surrounding intellectual trends.

More recently, however, a number of significant studies and research programs have emphasized both the continuities and the discontinuities between the medieval and Reformation eras, on the one hand, and between the Reformation and post-Reformation periods, on the other. Such studies have focused on particular doctrinal topics as well as methodological concerns and intellectual influences. The uses of scriptural exegesis, the place of Scholastic tools, and the topics of soteriology, theology proper, and ethics have all been reconsidered in this more nuanced and contextually sensitive approach.

Beck's work is a signal representative of the maturation and continued development of such approaches. It seeks to place the work of Voetius within the larger intellectual framework of his times, including not simply positive influences of earlier Reformed figures like John Calvin, but also especially his engagement with other figures, including Roman Catholic contemporaries like Luis de Molina and Francisco Suárez as well as medieval thinkers, particularly Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.

One of the major research questions arising out of this revisionist and corrective scholarship is the extent to which Protestant theologians were influenced by medieval thinkers and schools, not only apologetically and polemically but also positively and constructively. A dynamic dialogue has emerged in the scholarship over the place of Thomism more generally and the thought of Aquinas himself in relationship to Reformed orthodox theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A corollary of this has to do with the same kind of question regarding the influence of Scotus as well as other distinctive or characteristic medieval answers or approaches to particular questions. While all sides generally agree that there are no representatives of a purely Thomist or Scotist approach to theology writ large among the Protestant Scholastics, there are disagreements over the relative dependence or reliance on Aquinas or Scotus on particular issues or topics.

Voetius is significant for this question in the scholarship because of his stature in his own tradition, his erudition, and his influence on the course of Reformed theology. He is in this sense an important representative figure of the broader Reformed approaches to faith and reason, theology and philosophy, and doctrinal formulation in the era of Reformed orthodoxy. If someone like Voetius, whose confessional commitments and orthodox bona fides are unquestioned, can be shown to have been influenced substantively by medieval thinkers, then the validity of narratives that emphasize the radical discontinuity between the Middle Ages and Reformed theology must at the very least be reevaluated, if not discarded.

In Beck's careful, detailed, and nuanced telling, we find in Voetius an extremely learned, careful, and technically precise engagement with a host of complex issues related to the doctrine of God and human causality. Voetius is a scholar-theologian at the height of his powers in Beck's analysis, and a leading light of what might rightly be called the Reformed branch of the broader movement of neo-Scholasticism.

In this way Reformed Scholasticism can be seen as an analogue to what has been more broadly characterized as the Second Scholasticism of the early modern period. Beck calls this "early modern or Baroque scholasticism," and in Voetius's case this involves a significant element of his published work appearing in the form of Scholastic disputations. These documents show a remarkable facility and engagement with a variety of sources and authorities, from the Church fathers and medieval doctors to Reformed and Lutheran theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They also engage a wide variety of questions and topics, including controversial movements and views, including Socinianism, Arminianism, Cartesianism, and a variety of Roman Catholic traditions. Beck's exposition of Voetius's disputes with Descartes as well as with Cartesian elements within the Reformed camp is particularly worthwhile.

Readers of this journal will be especially interested in how on Beck's account Voetius deploys various Thomistic and Scotistic tools and distinctions to articulate his own characteristic doctrinal positions. On the nature of theology as a theoretical or practical science, for example, Beck writes that Voetius's strong view that theology is a practical science that "aims at our union with and enjoyment of God" establishes "a remarkable resemblance between the understanding of Voetius and of Scotus, both of whom saw theology as a purely practical science" (190-91). In at least a few cases, there appears to be some development of Voetius's own position, at least as Beck interprets the nuanced inflections of the various points of doctrine. On the question of whether the beatific vision is "an act of the intellect (as Aquinas holds), of the will (as Scotus argued) or of both faculties," Beck notes that "Voetius developed in his thinking on this question as he himself reports on several occasions" (199). Initially Voetius favored a Thomistic-intellectualist position, but later "clearly tends to a more voluntarist, Scotist view" (199).

Even as Voetius sides with Scotus against Aquinas on various specific points, however, his entire theological enterprise is deeply shaped by Aquinas's thought. For instance, in the formal structure of his treatment of the doctrine of God, Beck observes that subdivisions of topics in Voetius's *Syllabus problematum theologicorum* (1643) "betray a thematic orientation that follows the structure of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*" (224). In some cases the similarity is such that Voetius treats the same questions in the same order as Aquinas does, albeit "without noting this correspondence" (227). On the question of univocity, Beck once again interprets Voetius as aligned with Scotus against Aquinas, and includes Voetius with other Reformed theologians "who to some degree defend a nuanced, roughly Scotist form of univocity" (239). On the characteristically Scotist formal distinction of being, however, Voetius sides with the Thomists, albeit with the caveat that he is concerned to determine "whether and how the position of the Scotists can be properly explained or at the very least excused by applying certain terminological distinctions" (262). As Beck writes, "With this statement, Voetius shows himself remarkably sympathetic to the Scotist view" (ibid.).

One general way of describing Voetius's relationship with Thomism and Scotism is that he often (although not always) adopts a kind of Thomistic framework or structure, which is then sometimes substantively elaborated in a Scotistic fashion. For example, writes Beck, with respect to the distinction of attributes, "Here we find Voetius adopting Thomist terminology, which he nevertheless materially fills out in an alternative sense when he interprets God's essence and life as two distinct 'moments' in God according to our mode of understanding. This represents a Scotist perspective, echoing the specifically Scotist doctrine of distinct moments or stadia" (269).

Voetius's willingness to appropriate dynamically traditional approaches to questions, and synthesize them in characteristically distinct ways, demonstrates both the breadth of his facility with a wide diversity of sources and a posture of measured respectfulness for traditional authorities. In this way his attitude toward the views of earlier Protestants are representative of a broader posture towards older sources: "Although I will not censure Luther, Calvin, and other doctors as their thankless students do, I am still not bound to embrace all they ever said as the common teaching of our churches" (373).

Beck traces Voetius's agile constructions and appropriation of Aquinas, Scotus, and many others through specific doctrines concerning God's knowledge, will, right and justice, and power. Throughout these nuanced and technical discussions, Beck is careful to articulate and explicate Voetius's own views, although he often emphasizes and highlights potential Scotistic accents. Learned readers will have to determine for themselves the accuracy of such characterizations, but even if one disagrees with some of Beck's particular conclusions, sympathetic readers will be struck by the carefulness of his discussions, the clarity of his analysis, and the erudition of his study.

One final aspect of Beck's study of Voetius is worth particular mention, as it has to do with the cross-confessional nature of controversies over soteriology

that were characteristic of not only the Protestant camps but also Roman Catholic schools in the early modern period. The *De auxiliis* controversy has analogues in the disputes among the Reformed about the validity of middle knowledge and implications for soteriological teaching understood in a broadly Augustinian framework. Voetius is writing in the aftermath of both the uneasy conclusion of the controversy between Jesuits and Dominicans as well as the determinations of the Synod of Dordt, which confessionally codified Reformed teaching as opposed to the views of the Arminians and Remonstrants. His engagement with the doctrine of middle knowledge shows that these disputes were alive and vigorous well into the seventeenth century.

Beck's study of Gisbert Voetius advances the scholarship not only of this important and underappreciated Reformed theologian, but also the state of the question on technical theological questions more broadly in the era of baroque Scholasticism, particularly those related to methodology and the significance of Scholastic disputations as primary sources, as well as explorations of creaturely causality and freedom, divine foreknowledge and power, and the relationship of God's intellect and will. Beck's work is indispensable for a better understanding of the era of Reformed orthodoxy, its relationship to broader Scholastic movements and contexts, and the role and significance of one of its foremost representatives.

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