The Thomist 62 (1998): 1-39

MUST JOB LIVE FOREVER? A REPLY TO AQUINAS ON PROVIDENCE

TIMOTHY P. JACKSON

Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

INTRODUCTION

"IF GOD IS SO GOOD, why isn't God's creation more so?" This is the problem of evil *in nuce*, and it trades on the fear that perhaps God is not so good after all-indeed, that God may not exist. To assuage this fear we moderns cast about for either (a) convincing empirical evidence of God's real benevolence or (b) imaginative scenarios in which God and evil are logically compossible. Finding (a) would suggest that we are rationally justified, if not compelled, in believing in God's goodness (a theodicy proper), while finding (b) would suggest that we are not necessarily unjustified in doing so (a more modest defense of religious faith). [1]

In contrast to us with our post-Enlightenment concerns, Thomas Aquinas is not centrally occupied with the problem of evil. As we will see, this is true even in Thomas's *Expositio super Job ad litteram*, the place where theodicy questions would seem most pressing. [2] This does not mean that Thomas is oblivious to

[1] I take the distinction between a theodicy proper and a defense of faith from Terrence Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 130-33.

[2] As Eleonore Stump has noted,

> the story of innocent Job, horribly afflicted with undeserved suffering, seems to many people representative of the kind of evil with which any theodicy must come to grips. But Aquinas sees the problem in the book of Job differently. He seems not to recognize that suffering in the world, of the quantity and quality of Job's, calls into question God's goodness, let

the relevant issues, for he is clearly aware of the apparent incompatibility of worldly evils and an all-good God (see *STh* I, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1).[3] But the vector of his commentary runs in the opposite direction from that of most modern theodicists: again, moderns tend to reason from the world even with its palpable evil to a real (or at least possible) God, whereas Thomas tends to reason from a palpable God to a defeated (or at least eschatologically defeasible) evil.[4]

Just as Thomas is aware of the argument *from* design in the world *to* the existence of God (the fifth of the "five ways" in *STh* I, q. 2, a. 3) yet focuses more on the argument *to* design *from* the existence of God,[5] so he is aware of the argument *from* the defeasibility of evil but focuses more on the argument *to* the defeasibility of evil. One can overdraw the contrast here, but first of all and most of the time Aquinas begins with trust in God's providence and asks what follows with respect to the nature and final disposition of evil. Aquinas's concern is not so much with "intellectual obstacles" to justified belief in God as with practical obstacles to the profitable contemplation of God.[6] His primary

> alone God's existence. Instead Aquinas understands the book as an attempt to come to grips with the nature and operations of divine providence. (Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," *inReasonedFaith* [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993], 333)

[3] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1981); all of my subsequent references to and quotations from the *Summa* rely on this five-volume edition.

[4] I call evil "defeasible" if it can be shown by argument (either a priori or a posteriori) not to undermine the overall goodness of human lives, either individually or collectively. Present-day theists tend to argue from the defeasibility of evil to the (possible) existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God who created and governs those lives (cf. Richard Swinburne); atheists and agnostics tend to argue from the indefeasibility of evil to the (probable) nonexistence of such a God (cf. J. L. Mackie and William Rowe); Aquinas, in contrast, tends to argue from the reality of God's eternal love and providential power to the defeasibilty of temporal evil.

[5] I take this terminology from Jonathan Wells, *Charles Hodge's Critique of DaTWinism: An Histarical-Critica/Analysis of Concepts Basic to the 19th Century Debate* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 9, 93-101, and 215-23.

[6] John Hick writes: "the challenge of evil to religious conviction seems to have been felt in the early Christian centuries and in the medieval period as acutely as it is today." He goes on to observe that "in the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas listed as the two chief intellectual obstacles to Christian theism, first, that constituted by the reality of evil and, second, the difficulty of establishing the existence of God in view of the apparent explicability of the world without reference to a Creator" (Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* [New York: Harper and Row, 1978], 3-4).

purpose is not to defend the rationality of believers, as several commentators have reminded us, but rather to promote their happiness. [7]

I want to explore here in a limited way the relation between divine providence and human history, especially the experience of freedom and evil. I first examine three alternative conceptions of the meaning of temporal life and how it relates to "the love of God," [8] all of which are discussed or alluded to by Thomas in his *Expositio super Job ad litteram.* I call them (1) impersonal fatalism, (2) Deuteronomic retributivism, and (3) eschatological perfectionism. I am deeply indebted to Aquinas's views, but in opposition to his considered opinion I next elaborate and defend a fourth vision, dubbed (4) strong *agape.* My aim is not to solve the modern theodicy problem but rather to understand a religious faith that flows from being touched by divine love.

I applaud Aquinas's distancing of the problem of evil, as well as his denial of impersonal fatalism [9] and this-worldly retributivism. These moves allow him to avoid many of what Terrence Tilley calls "the evils of theodicy" [10] (e.g., explaining away temporal suffering). Thomas does offer cosmological

[7] See Stwnp, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job." As Martin Yaffe has maintained, Thomas's commentary is more "protreptic" than "dialectical" or "scientific"; it points out the limits on philosophical argwnentation concerning the nature of divine providence even while exhorting readers/listeners to faith. See Yaffe, "Interpretive Essay" accompanying Anthony Damico's translation of *The Literal Exposition on Job: A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 6-7. In a similar vein, Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued that Aquinas generally does not offer an "evidentialist apologetics" in which traditional dogmas are grounded in certitude; he provides, instead, a natural theology that clarifies hwnanity's ultimate felicity as a union with God that is orchestrated by God. See Wolterstorff, "The Migration of the Theistic Arguments: From Natural Theology to Evidentialist Apologetics," in *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment,* ed. Audi and Wainwright (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[8] I mean the phrase "the love of God" to play on both the objective and the subjective genitive (i.e., God's love of creatures as well as creatures' love of God).

[9] As I argue below, I do not believe that Thomas completely escapes a sophisticated version of providential fatalism. He explicitly wants to preserve meaningful hwnan freedom (e.g., *STh* I, q. 23, a. 6), but his embracing of unalterable predestination undercuts this.

[10] "Certainly one can construct a Thomistic resolution to the problem of evil," Tilley concedes, "but 'the problem of evil' was not Thomas's problem." According to Tilley, in fact, "constructing theodicies is not a Christian discourse practice before the Enlightenment" (Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy,* 227 and 229).

arguments for the existence of God, [11] but I want to emulate his typical pattern of beginning primarily with God and then reasoning to order in the world. It is my thesis, however, that this pattern in fact leads to some non-Thomistic conclusions. More specifically, affirming the transcendent goodness of God counts against (a) a compatibilist doctrine of irresistible grace, (b) an exclusively pedagogical account of human suffering, and (c) an emphatic insistence on personal immortality.

The lesson of Job, I argue, is that God's love is an utterly gratuitous personal presence, the possibility of tenderness even in the face of extreme suffering and death. It is an ineffably kind visitation that is its own reward, as well as a source of the obligation to be kind to others. The more maximal our appreciation of divine charity, including its permission of human freedom, the more minimal can be our bother over theodicy and longevity. We are rightly moved by human (and animal) suffering, and "longevity has its place" (King), but abstract theodicies tend to inure us to others' pain and to make an idol of an afterlife. The more we admit that the problem of evil remains mysterious and that physical death may be the end of one's personal existence, the more constructive is our response to tragedy and mortality.

I. IMPERSONAL FATALISM

By "impersonal fatalism" I mean any perspective on the meaning of life that denies divine attention to and promotion of the well being of individual finite agents. This denial may involve construing human history as the more or less chance upshot of random forces (the priority of contingency) or the more or less fixed upshot of predetermined forces (the priority of necessity). Beyond this, on my definition even the Aristotelian-Averroist denial of particular providence counts as impersonal fatalism, since on this account God is not (indeed, cannot be) concerned

[11] Victor Preller exaggerates an important insight when he intimates that the five ways to prove God's existence discussed in the *Summa Theologiae* are not Thomas's ways. See Preller, *Dfvine Science and the Science of God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 109. It is momentous to realize how little work the cosmological arguments do in Thomas's apophatic project, but he does endorse them as sound. He sees the existence of God as one of the preambles of faith that can be proved by natural reason *ab effectu,* beginning with (God's) sensible effects (see *STh* I, q. 2, aa. 2 and 3).

with individual human beings but only with the species. In our personal lives, we must be resigned to a sort of divine indifference, and this rules out, among other things, the possibility of a personal relation with the ultimate Power in the universe. At the theological level, our fate simply bears down on us; to hold otherwise is to embrace a crude anthropocentrism. [12]

Aquinas takes a rejection of fatalism to be a central lesson of the Book of Job. The various versions of fatalism are mistaken about divine providence and lead, in turn, to private despair and public immorality. Whether or not one can conceive some form of "fatalistic virtue" (e.g., as in Stoicism), one can readily agree with Thomas that this would be a far cry from traditional Christian faith as well as from the foundational beliefs of Job. Impersonal fatalism amounts to a denial of God's omniscience and omnipotence, but more significantly for Christians it slanders God's love. If God created human beings such that the hairs on their heads are numbered, then God can and does care for them as individuals. In short, Thomas's siding with Job on the particularity of providence (see also *STh* I, q. 22, a. 2) seems convincing to most believers, though the question of how this providence operates (whether it leaves room for human freedom, whether it orchestrates an afterlife for believers, etc.) remains open.

II. DEUTERONOMIC RETRIBUTIVISM

An alternative view of divine providence is Deuteronomic retributivism. A weak version of such retributivism holds that God often punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous in this life, but Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad embrace a much stronger version in their accusations against Job. In an effort to explain Job's suffering while preserving God's limitless power and discriminating justice, they endorse two related theses: (1) that God provides earthly rewards for good individuals and earthly

[12] For a highly nuanced attempt to defend a theocentric emphasis in ethics that wicouples belief in personal immortality from genuine piety, see James Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, vols. 1-2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981 and 1984). Gustafson does not deny human freedom, but he does make the faithful individual's relation to God less personal than is traditionally assumed. He is the most cogent Stoic Christian writing today.

punishments for wicked individuals, and (2) that *everything* that happens in human history is explicable as part of this retributivist system. If Job suffers, they reason, it *must* be due to his past sins.

Aquinas takes exception with the friends' strong retributivism. The "comforters" subscribe to the this-worldly, divine retributivism outlined in Deuteronomy and challenged by the Book of Job, as well as by biblical Wisdom literature generally. Like Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad, Thomas thinks that God is just and that God rewards and punishes individuals; but Thomas also holds two related beliefs that separate him from both impersonalists and Deuteronomists. According to Aquinas, (1) divine rewards and punishments are not (usually) in the form of material goods and ills or physical pleasures and pains, and (2) they are not meted out in time (at least not uniformly or decisively).[13] God's providence is at work in history, but it is only in eternity that the means and ends of that providence are finally realized for, and fully evident to, finite persons. In this life, the righteous suffer injustices and the wicked often flourish, at least in material terms.

To the extent that religion is identifiable with Deuteronomic theology, therefore, "Job" is an irreligious book. Aquinas is similarly irreligious, however, and would have us (like Job) "repudiate and repent of dust and ashes."[14] He encourages us,

[13] As Eleonore Stump points out:

> On Aquinas's account, the problem with Job's friends is that they have a wrong view of the way providence operates. They suppose that providence assigns adversities in this life as a punishment for sins and earthly prosperity as a reward for virtue. Job, however, has a more correct view of providence, according to Aquinas, because he recognizes that a good and loving God will nonetheless allow the worst sorts of adversities to befall a virtuous person also. (Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 333-34)

[14] This translation of Job 42:6 follows that of Dale Patrick, as cited by Gustavo Gutierrez in *On job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Mary knoll, N.Y.: Orbis Press, 1987), 83. Gutierrez reads Job as at last being so moved by God's loving presence as to change his mind about his previous lamentation. Job comes to see that, although he is innocent, "he cannot go on complaining" (87). Edwin Good agrees that Job's final "repudiation" or "repentance" does not negate his claim to innocence, but Good emphasizes even more than Gutierrez that verse 6 can be read as Job's rejection of the Deuteronomic obsession with guilt and innocence and its self-mortifying ritual symbolized by "dust and ashes." "Job takes a religious action to foreswear religion .... He repents of repentance" (Edwin Good, "Job," in *Harper's Bible Commentary,* ed. James L. Mays [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988], 431; see also

that is, to reject all rituals that presume earthly ills always or even usually to be punishments for personal guilt. Worldly losses are genuine ills: we are communal creatures who are vulnerable to real harms, and virtue is not the only good thing. [15] Nevertheless, given Thomas's equation of human happiness with the contemplation of God, even those who (like Job) are physically and emotionally afflicted in this life may still, to a degree, be called "happy" -though they cannot, of course, enjoy the ultimate felicity of an entirely stable relation to God. [16]

I consider virtue and happiness to be still more vulnerable, more separable, than Thomas at times allows. Though not a Stoic, Aquinas comes uncomfortably close to what I have elsewhere called, playing off of Martha Nussbaum, "the facility of goodness." [17] For Thomas, happiness is "nothing else than the right order of the will to the last end [God]" *(STh* 1-11, q. 5, a. 7), and this implies that the good are happy by definition (see *STh* 1-11, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1). But does the Holy Spirit always protect the peace and joy of those who remain faithful in affliction, and may we call someone "happy" who is without peace and joy, however morally upright? Here we must recur to *Summa contra Gentiles* and remind ourselves, in Thomas's own words, that "freedom from death [and accompanying sorrow] is something man cannot achieve in this life. Therefore, it is not possible for man in this life to be (entirely] happy." [18] Thomas holds that "no man can of himself be the sufficient cause of another's spiritual death, because no man dies spiritually except by sinning of his own will" *(STh* q. 73, a. 8, ad 3). But even if no one can be compelled by another to sin, what of those who are so abused as to be kept from virtue, from moral agency itself, through no fault of their own? These are challenging questions, and the heart of Thomas's answer is an

Edwin Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990], 170). For a criticism of Gutierrez, see Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy,* 99-102.

[15] Stump demonstrates that Thomas is no Stoic who insists on radical self-sufficiency or simply denies the reality of temporal evil. See "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 339.

[16] See Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* III, c. 48, trans. VernonJ. Bourke (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1956).

[17] Timothy Jackson, "The Disconsolation of Theology: Irony, Cruelty, and Putting Charity First," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 20 (Spring 1992): 2.

[18] Aquinas, *ScG* III, c. 48. I add the qualifier "entirely" because Thomas himself does so in his next paragraph.

eschatological perfectionism that presumes personal immortality, as well as compatibilist freedom.[19] These are precisely the premises I wish to probe.

III. ESCHATOLOGICAL PERFECTIONISM

Perhaps the key difference between Job and his friends, on Thomas's view, is that Job believes in bodily resurrection, while they do not.[20] For it is Beatitude in the afterlife that makes evil and suffering defeasible.[21] This commitment to personal fulfillment in an afterlife, when specifically coupled with the claim that there must be an afterlife for there to be fulfillment, is definitive of eschatological perfectionism.

> It is impossible for natural desire to be unfulfilled, since "nature does nothing in vain." Now, natural desire would be in vain if it could never be fulfilled. Therefore, man's natural desire [for felicity] is capable of fulfillment, but not in this life, as we have shown. So, it must be fulfilled after this life. Therefore, man's ultimate felicity comes after this life. (*ScG* III, c. 48)

As with impersonal fatalism and Deuteronomic retributivism, there are two major versions of eschatological perfectionism: one that emphasizes divine justice and one that emphasizes divine compensation. Whereas Thomas highlights God's eschatological justice in rewarding the virtuous with eternal joy and punishing the wicked with eternal torment, many contemporary philosophers of religion (e.g., Robert and Marilyn Adams) highlight God's eschatological charity in compensating people for the ills

[19] In theological contexts, "compatibilism" is the view that creaturely responsibility is not undermined by the Creator's determination of all actions and events as their sufficient reason; human freedom and divine determinism are "compatible." Incompatibilism, by contrast, contends that such freedom and determinism are not reconcilable; not even God can "necessitate" a finite free act. "Compatibilist freedom" is possessed by a human agent whose actions can, in theory, be causally guaranteed by God (e.g., by God's irresistibly moving the agent's will). "Incompatibilist freedom" admits of no such divine determination.

[20] Yaffe ("Interpretive Essay") repeatedly makes this point.

[21] As Stump puts it: "Aquinas's idea … is that the things that happen to a person in this life can be justified only by reference to her or his state in the afterlife." "Aquinas takes the book of Job to be trying to instill in us the conviction that there is another life after this one, that our happiness lies there rather than here, and that we attain to that happiness only through suffering" (Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 334 and 345).

suffered (either unfairly or merely unfortunately) during their temporal lives. The difference is between construing the perfection of God's providence as God's giving finite individuals their spiritual due and construing it as God's giving them a joy that outstrips all moral merit and demerit.

Unlike Job's accusers, Aquinas rejects this-worldly retributivism, but he is a firm believer in eschatological retributivism. For all of his accent on the gratuitousness of God's love, Thomas still speaks of a just God who ordains heaven for some and hell for others "in that life to which man is restored by resurrection."[22] Yet is there sufficient warrant to say, as Thomas does, that God damns some to eternal torment without chance of mercy *(STh* suppl., q. 99, aa. 1-2)?[23] Compensationalists do not try to justify suffering (either in this life or a next) with reference to divine retribution. Nevertheless, there are two related theses common to both versions of eschatological perfectionism: (1) that God's providence comes to consummation only beyond the end of time, and (2) that without an afterlife involving some form of resurrection, God cannot be either just or loving.[24] If God is to be God, so to speak, there must be personal immortality, at least for believers.

IV. STRONG *AGAPE* DEFINED

Strong *agape* is an alternative to the three visions considered thus far. As I define it, strong *agape* affirms: (1) that the reality of agapic love is not merely the greatest good but also a metavalue: namely, that virtue which makes other human virtues possible and that good without which no other human good can be substantively enjoyed; and (2) that the possibility of loving and being loved, freely, may be a sufficient reason to justify creation

[22] Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job,* 225.

[23] For a contrasting Catholic perspective, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Savetf?, With a Short Discourse on Hell* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

[24] Marilyn Adams, as Stump underscores, merely insists that the presence of God experienced by creatures after death will be of such surpassing value that it will make up for the evils of this life. The reasons for evil remain a mystery for us in time, but eschatologically the overall goodness of the world is guaranteed. See Adams, "Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil," in *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment;* and "The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians," in *Reasoned Faith,* 301-27.

of the world in spite of its liability to sin and natural evil. Ideally, the love in question is directed toward and received from both God and other human beings. Emphasizing that it be given and taken "freely" does not imply, however, that *agape* must always be a matter of self-conscious deliberation and/or struggle against inclination; *pace* Kant, spontaneous dispositions count.

In elaborating these affirmations, strong agapists side with compensationalists in one key respect and depart from both Thomas and the compensationalists in another.[25] They believe that God's goodness entails that whatever salvation there is is offered to all creatures independent of merit or demerit (either pre- or postmortem) and is accepted (if accepted) freely. Yet they also believe that there is no way of knowing whether God's goodness requires our immortality for its perfection and no way of knowing whether the world will eventually be good overall. Like most compensationalists, strong agapists hold that incompatibilist human freedom is essential if we are to escape impersonal fatalism; but they also hold that putting charity first among the virtues does not require God either to reward us for goodness, to punish us for evil, or to compensate us for ills, in either this life or an afterlife. Charity as participation in the life of God is its own reward, and this is possible here and now (as Thomas reminds us elsewhere);[26] hatred as willing harm for another is its own punishment, and this is all too actual here and now.

What is the basis for such a strong position? Is any counter-evidence entertainable?[27] Answers must be largely biographical and autobiographical. The example of Job himself suggests that death need not be known to be defeated before goodness can be realized, any more than evil need be known to be defeated before faith can be realized. Job celebrates God in spite of temporal pain and doubt. The presence of an infinitely loving Person makes existence worthwhile, if trying; indeed, the power to care that flows from that presence suggests to strong

""In "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," Stump expounds Thomas's views on evil rather than argues for them; still, she finds them "impressive and admirable in many ways" (356).

[26] See, e.g., *STh* 11-11, q. 27, a. 4, ad 3.

"James Gustafson has pressed these questions, in conversation.

agapists that Love is the generating source of one's very being. Were virtues like empathy and hope, justice and mercy, creativity and patience, thwarted rather than enhanced by *agape*, there would be grounds for rejecting the view. But the opposite seems to be the case. Strong *agape* reflects a leap of faith, based more on trust in the Creator than on calculations about creation; nevertheless, it is not arbitrary.

V. STRONG *AGAPE*, HUMAN SUFFERING, AND INCOMPATIBILIST FREEDOM

Aquinas need not be insensitive to human pain or utterly dismissive of the import of the temporal world, because it is in this world that (some) people are prepared for eternal joy. Such joy, in turn, justifies the pain experienced in acquiring it. Commentators like Eleonore Stump rightly emphasize that Aquinas is no masochist: individuals are schooled in patience by affliction, according to Thomas, yet the suffering in question is not judged good *simpliciter* but only *secundum quid*, that is, as a means to an end (cf. *STh* I, q. 21, a. 4, ad 3).[28] Temporal suffering is like a harsh (spiritual) medicine administered by a benevolent physician. Yet Stump asks the crucial question: "how would we know with regard to suffering when it was serving the function of spiritual health and so was good rather than destructive?" She answers that "we can't know"[29] and thus must rely on the expertise of God. I contend, however, that both Stump's question and her answer are virtually impossible for Thomas to formulate, given his account of divine providence and human freedom.

Aquinas's views on freedom, a form of compatibilism, render the modern problem of evil *unintelligible*, not merely secondary or uninteresting. I have emphasized and even applauded the fact that Thomas wants to reject impersonal fatalism, but at the end of the day his own conception of grace undercuts any significant human agency, I believe. His compatibilism (see *STh* 1-11, q. 13, a. 6) is untenable: this life and God's love lose their import when we factor in Thomas's mature claim that God is the sufficient

[28] Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 347.
[29] Ibid., 348.

cause of all objects, actions, and events (what Bernard Lonergan calls the "universal instrumentality" thesis).[30] Thomas insists that God respects inferior causes, giving creatures "the dignity of causality" *(STh* I q. 22, a. 3), but he nevertheless holds that God (irresistibly) moves the human will:

> God moves man to act, not only by proposing the appetible to the senses, or by effecting a change in his body, but also by moving the will itself; because every movement either of the will or of nature, proceeds from God as the First Mover. And just as it is not incompatible with nature that the natural movement be from God as the First Mover, inasmuch as nature is an instrument of God moving it, so it is not contrary to the essence of a voluntary act, that it proceed from God, inasmuch as the will is moved by God. Nevertheless both natural and voluntary movements have this in common, that it is essential that they should proceed from a principle within the agent. *(STh* I-II, q. 6, a. 1, ad 3; see also a. 4, esp. ad 1)

As the Creator of the world, God brings about necessary things necessarily and contingent things contingently, according to Thomas *(STh* I-II, q. 10, a. 4; and I, q. 22, a. 4). It is paramount to recognize that God's moving an individual's will is not like a thug's violently coercing another to do something. God is not like one more finite agent (especially powerful or ruthless) competing for causal efficacy. God acts "within us, without us," in the stock phrase, such that we cannot but realize our divinely ordained end according to our rational nature. When a person is moved by God to virtuous action, this is the *perfection* of finite agency, not its *violation*, in Thomas's estimation. The action remains "voluntary" in the literal sense that it flows from the person's will *(voluntas)* and is accompanied by knowledge of the action's end *(STh* I-II, q. 6, aa. 2 and 3).

But does it really make sense to speak of God's irresistibly moving the will in such a way that genuine creaturely freedom is

[30] *See* Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Patout Burns (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1971). Lonergan notes that in his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter the Lombard* and parts of *De Veritate*, Aquinas has not yet embraced providential determinism. *The* divine attributes do not yet translate into irresistible grace. Beginning consistently with *Summa contra Gentiles*, however, Thomas thinks that *he* must bring God's omnipotence into line with His omniscience; thus *he* construes God's will as all-effectingeven as *he* had been construing His intellect as all-knowing. This "universal instrumentality" doctrine is fully developed in *Summa Theologiae.*

preserved? Can God as omnipotent Creator be the sufficient reason for everything that happens without having providence collapse into a determinism in which God is directly responsible for evil?[31] If freedom entails the ability to do otherwise, then no one can render ineluctable a free act, not even the Deity, for this would be a contradiction in terms. (Someone can, of course, necessitate the absence of a free act-by killing me, for instance.) Harry Frankfurt has argued that meaningful freedom of the will does not require the sort of liberty of indifference *(liberum arbitrium)* commonly associated with the ability to do otherwise. Frankfurt's is the best recent defense of compatibilism, so I want now to ask whether it might be enlisted in support of Thomas's views on providence and freedom. I hope eventually to show that Frankfurt's ingenious argument is flawed.

Frankfurt maintains that it is enough for personal agency that one have second-order volitions, that one care normatively about what first-order desires move one to action. Personal freedom, in turn, is a matter of one's second-order volitions effectively governing one's first-order dispositions. "[f]he statement that a person enjoys freedom of the will means (... roughly) that he is free to want what he wants to want. More precisely, it means that he is free to will what he wants to will, or to have the will he wants. "[32] In brief, moral responsibility does not require the ability to do other than what one does, only the ability to want to do what one in fact does. One may be accountable for an action even though one could not have done otherwise-as in the case of a willing addict who could not resist taking a drug if he wanted to, but who does not want to resist and who takes the drug "by choice."

Frankfurt illustrates his thesis with a famous example, the complexity of which requires that I quote it at some length:

[31] For a useful glimpse at the contemporary debate concerning divine grace and human freedom, see Thomas F. Tracy, ed., *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations* (University Park, Penn.: Penn State University Press, 1994). Kathryn Tanner and David Burrell defend here a form of compatibilism similar to Aquinas's own, while Tracy and William Hasker argue that such "compatibilism" is in fact a form of determinism that undoes genuine human freedom and/or makes God the direct cause of evil. I side with Tracy and Hasker, for reasons indicated below.

[32] Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," in *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 20.

Suppose someone-Black, let us say-wants Jones to perform a certain action. Black is prepared to go to considerable lengths to get his way, but he prefers to avoid showing his hand unnecessarily. So he waits until Jones is about to make up his mind what to do, and he does nothing unless it is clear to him (Black is an excellent judge of such things) that Jones is going to decide to do something *other* than what he wants him to do. If it does become clear that Jones is going to decide to do something else, Black takes effective steps [e.g., pronounces a threat, gives him a potion, hypnotises him, or manipulates his brain] to ensure that Jones decides to do, and that he does do, what he wants him to do. Whatever Jones's initial preferences and inclinations, then, Black will have his way....

In this example there are sufficient conditions for Jones's performing the action in question. What action he performs is not up to him. Of course it is in a way up to him whether he acts on his own or as a result of Black's intervention. That depends upon what action he himself is inclined to perform. But whether he finally acts on his own or as a result of Black's intervention, he performs the same action. He has no alternative but to do what Black wants him to do. If he does it on his own, however, his moral responsibility for doing it is not affected by the fact that Black was lurking in the background with sinister intent, since this intent never comes into play.[33]

Frankfurt's analysis of "responsibility" is akin to Thomas's analysis of "voluntariness." In both cases it is self-conscious action in accordance with an internal principle, rather than the ability to do otherwise, that is key. Indeed, it is tempting to think of Frankfurt's Black as analogous to Thomas's God, though the Angelic Doctor's Deity is waiting ubiquitously with prevenient grace rather than "lurking in the background with sinister intent." The parallel is not exact, of course, since Thomas's God (unlike Black) is the First Mover who *always* moves the will of rational creatures to the universal object of their will, the good, even if He only "sometimes" moves their will to "something determinate" (*STh* I-II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3).

For all its subtlety, in any case, Frankfurt's example does not prove the compatibility of moral responsibility and determinism (whether natural or supernatural, human or divine). The fallacy lies in thinking that Jones "performs the same action" come what may, regardless of the causal etiology involved. The identity of an

[33] Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," in *The Importance of What We Care About*, 6-8. Throughout the quotation, I have dropped the subscript from "Jones." for the sake of clarity.

action is inseparable from the casual chain that brought it about. If I lift my arm because I consciously willed to do so, this is a different action from what I do when a threat, potion, hypnotic suggestion, or neural manipulation causes me to raise my arm involuntarily. Indeed, the last three scenarios seem more like events than actions. Motives matter when denumerating actions, not just gross external movements or effects, and only a narrowly utilitarian theory of agency tempts us to forget this. The question is whether an action performed due to divine agency can also be one and the same action performed due to human freedom.

Consider how "the-action-performed-by-consciously-willing-to-move-one's-arm" cannot be substituted in many sentences, *salva veritate,* for expressions like "the-action-performed-by-hypnotic-suggestion." Take the following two examples:

(1) The-action-performed-by-consciously-willing-to-move-his-arm constituted Jones's voting for Johnson.
(2) The-action-performed-by-hypnotic-suggestion constituted Jones's voting for Johnson.

The first sentence might be true, but the second never could be. The genesis of the "action" in (2) would mean that no legitimate vote had been cast, for a hypnotized individual has no alternatives while a consciously willing individual does. This failure of substitutability suggests absence of identity in the referents of the hyphenated expressions. Jones does not "perform the same action" in both cases. At the very least, the lines quoted from Frankfurt present us with what Willard Quine calls the problem of "referential opacity." [34] We don't know what it would mean to speak of "the same action" or "a different action" given Jones's conditions; thus the point of Frankfurt's inventive example is blunted.

Consider another flight into science fiction: what if Chipper Jones, the third baseman for the Atlanta Braves, were to hit a game ball over the outfield fence by virtue of manager Bobby Cox's having hypnotized him to swing in a particular way upon

"See Willard Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), 14lff.

seeing a certain pitch?[35] Wouldn't this be "hitting a home run," even though the action might be considered less voluntary than normal? I grant that the run would count in this case. At what point, however, would "novel management" give way to charges of cheating? What if Cox had planted electrodes in Jones's head and literally caused him to swing by throwing a switch in the dugout? (One might imagine Cox secretly picking up the opposing catcher's signs and moving his own batter like a Nintendo figure in response.) I presume that now we would be inclined to say that *Jones* had not "hit a home run," he only seemed to. Once again, how we specify the action (and agent) depends on history and context, not merely external results.

In spite of Frankfurt-like scenarios, the incompatibilist intuition remains intact that if God is the sufficient reason for everything that happens, if there are no "alternative possibilities" open to human agents as proximate causes, then God is indeed responsible for evil. Meaningful human freedom vanishes and God's providence is indistinguishable from fate. All historical truths are *de dicto* (if not *de re)* necessary, on this reading of providence. Since God's predestination is irresistible, history could not be other than it is and is exactly as God planned-wars, famines, tyrannies, diseases, etc. notwithstanding. Even if human beings are the S(:condary causes through which . divine determination partially operates, they are more like pawns than moral agents. As Thomas himself writes, "there is no distinction between what flows from free will, and what is of predestination. . . . For the providence of God produces effects through the operation of secondary causes" *(STh* I, q. 23, a. 5). Rather than embracing such a view, I prefer instead to reject Thomas's compatibilist account of freedom and with it the consolation he offers for human suffering and its ordainment by divine providence. I prefer, that is, to allow a place for genuinely fortuitous events and genuinely free actions that are undetermined (or at least underdetermined) by both nature and grace. Saints and sinners are both subject to blind chances and

[35] I owe this example to Nicholas Fotion.

both capable of willing and doing other than they in fact will and do.[36]

It may be argued that I have underestimated the sublimity of God's causality as Thomas conceives it, thus that I have after all treated God like one more finite agent subject to (or subjecting others to) fate. In *De Malo,* q. 16, a. 7, ad 15, for instance, Thomas reminds us that

> from the fact that God sees in themselves all the things that take place, the contingency of things is not done away with. And as regards the will we must take into account that the divine will is universally the cause of being and universally of all the things that follow on this, hence even of necessity and contingency; but His will itself is above the order of the necessary or contingent just as it is above all created being.[37]

This is a powerful statement of what it means to be Creator rather than creature. But even if God is above necessity and contingency on the finite plane, the horizontal axis of causality, it still remains a question whether God is above necessity on the infinite plane, the vertical axis of causality.[38] It is common for theologians to claim that God is necessarily existent, necessarily perfect, etc., and it would seem that (for Thomas) God necessarily brings about necessary things necessarily and contingent things contingently. It would seem, that is, that God's vertical causality is infallibly

[36] For more on these much-debated matters, see John Martin Fischer, ed., *Moral Responsibility* (Ithaca: Corne! University Press, 1986), especially" Ability and Responsibility" and "The Incompatibility of Responsibility and Determinism," both by Peter Van lnwagen. Van Inwagen's essays are a potent rejoinder to Frankfurt's stimulating work.

[37] See Aquinas, *On Evil,* trans. Jean Oesterle (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 506.

[38] The language of "plane" or "axis" of causality I borrow from Kathryn Tanner, "Human Freedom, Human Sin, and God the Creator," in *The God Who Acts,* 118. Tanner holds that "given the will of God, we never actually choose anything but what God wills us to choose; what's more, … we never *want* to choose anything else" (128). In an all-too-brief response, I can only appeal to a familiar distinction and observe that it is one thing to say that the general human ability to choose is perpetually sustained by God's grace and thus is dependent upon Him; it is another thing to say that one's specific choices, together with the concrete acts of choosing, are directly and ineluctably brought about by God. The latter view seems to be both Tanner's and Saint Thomas's, but the question then becomes: How do we make sense of human disobedience to God? Tanner's answer is the candid admission that "here I believe the theologian holding onto our picture must simply admit the limits the picture places on the intelligibility of sin" (132). Sin is, after all, an inexplicable "exception" to the universal efficaciousness of God's will (133-35). With this, however, Tanner surrenders a central premise of her otherwise determinist account of God as Creator.

and ubiquitously efficacious in the world, thus that God may rightly be called the "necessary and sufficient" reason for everything that happens. This result is what threatens human freedom and/or indicts God for directly bringing about evil. It does· little good to say that human beings are not utterly determined by the realities of the created world {physical forces, desirable goods, psychological habits, etc.), if humans beings are nonetheless fully determined by the reality of the Creator God. For God "does it all" in either case.

In opposition to Thomas's claims about God's universal instrumentality stands an Arminian vision of God's creative fidelity. To speak of "creative fidelity" is to accent God's redemptive love for creatures rather than God's controlling power over them; it is to allow for the kind of covenantal relation between Creator and creature that Thomas himself describes so eloquently at times. Evidence for God's redemptive love takes its most graphic form in the cross of Christ (see *STh* III, q. 1, a. 2); more accurately, Christ's sacrificial death on the cross *is* Love Incarnate calling most poignantly for a response. Only an omnipotent Deity could freely create, then redeem, responsible creatures.

This is not a sentimental vision of being "dose confreres with the Almighty." In as much as God creates them *ex nihilo,* judges them *ab extra,* and finally saves them *sola gratia,* human beings remain absolutely dependent on God for their existence, self-awareness, and salvation. Nevertheless, their being made in the image of God implies that human beings are capable of real (if minimal) responsiveness to grace. However finite, creatures retain their ontological otherness to God; they are neither mere nothings nor simple appendages to the Deity. However fallen, human beings retain a modicum of freedom that permits them to accept or decline the gratuitous offer of redemption. They cannot earn their salvation, nor even prepare for it on their own-here is neither Pelagianism nor semi-Pelagianism-but they can say yes or no to God's indispensable gift of it (cf. *STh* I, q. 23, a. 5).

Aquinas's commitment to God's universal instrumentality precludes him from acknowledging the extent to which the goodness of the world depends on creatures and is still open-ended. God has "immediate provision over everything" *(STh* I, q.

22, a. 3, ad 2) and "[t]he order of divine providence is unchangeable and certain" (*STh* I, q. 22, a. 4, ad 2). If the love for which we are made by God is a passive potential that must be freely realized, in contrast, then the instrumental value of suffering is in part up to us. If suffering does not elicit love, then the former may be deeply harmful, as Stump allows. Indeed, Thomas seems to have no room for utterly fortuitous and radically maiming suffering that completely unmakes a person -what Stump calls "spiritual toxicosis." [39] When a strong accent on *agape* is combined with an incompatibilist view of human freedom, however, there is no need to insure a priori the goodness of the world. The effort to do so only leads to such abortive doctrines as universal instrumentality, election and reprobation, etc. The world's goodness can remain an open question even if the goodness of God is taken for granted.

Putting charity first flows from the belief that the possibility of our freely loving and being loved by God and neighbors, in this life, may be sufficient ground for God's creation of the finite world. This is so even though such creation also opens up the possibility of evil, both moral and nonmoral. Love may be construed as either an action or a disposition to act or both, but in any case it requires freedom. Without freedom, actions would be events, dispositions would be fates. Freedom, however, entails the possibility of evil, even radical evil wherein creatures perversely reject salvation.

The priority of charity does not solve the problem of evil, but rather implies a recognition of the problem's temporal insolubility. This is so for two reasons. First, putting charity first presumes the existence of a benevolent God as the source of *agape* instead of proving it. The operative intuition is that our love has a transcendent source; we experience charity as a good and perfect gift, and we wish simply to respond in gratitude. Second, because freedom is held to be internal to human virtue as well as vice, the final goodness of the world is yet to be determined. Goodness awaits our responsible choices, if only our free consent to grace; thus there is no guarantee that evil will be defeated. To believe in the possibility of good free choices is, in a limited sense,

[39] Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 348.

to believe in the *defeasibility* of evil. But love's priority constitutes neither a strict theodicy nor a strict anthropodicy. [40]

In creating the world God has taken a risk that Thomas could not acknowledge, but it is not the case that if the experiment turns out badly God is somehow culpable. A modest defense of the goodness of God despite the present reality of evil turns on distinguishing between God's dispositional goodness and God's utilitarian efficacy. Biblical faith holds that God's love is forever disposed to offer creatures relation with Deity, the greatest good; but love's unwillingness to coerce such a relation means that there is no way to guarantee that the greatest good for the greatest number will actually be brought about as a consequence. I agree with any number of people (e.g., Alvin Plantinga) that humanity's having significant free will is not a morally sufficient reason for God to allow evil. If my developing free agency depends on God's permitting the extreme affliction of the innocent (or even of the guilty), and if free agency as such is the highest good, then I am inclined to say, with Ivan Karamazov, that it is not worth it. This leaves open, however, the possibility that *agape* may be such a morally sufficient reason.

Professor Stump performs a very great service in suggesting that any account of Aquinas on the meaning of life and the place of suffering in it must begin (or at least end) with charity, "quia bonum hominis in caritate consistit." [41] But we must freely love through suffering in spite of it. Even God must bring good out of evil for which God is not responsible, not via evil that God irresistibly ordains, or else the Deity is reduced to doing evil that

[40] Authors as diverse as Terry Tilley and Judith Shklar suggest that we need to be weaned from the theoretical gratifications of theodicy as tending cruelly to underestimate the scope and gravity of human suffering and injustice. There is no theodicy in this life, in the sense of proof of the truth of God's goodness given the reality of evil, even if there can be a defense of the coherence of religious faith that begins with the experience of *caritas.* See Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy,* esp. chap. 9; Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), esp. chap. 1, and idem, *The Faces of Iniustice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), esp. chap. 2. Tilley frequently criticizes Austin Farrer as a dismissive theodicist who does not heed the warning of Job (e.g., 89, 229, 233, and 245), but these judgments tend to be too harsh. Farrer is well aware of what he calls "Job's agony," and he explicitly acknowledges that "the value of speculative answers [to the riddle of providence and evil], however judicious, is limited.... the substance of truth is grasped not by argument, but by faith." See Austin Farrer, *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited* (London and Glasgow: Wm. Collins Sons, 1962), 186-87.

[41] This phrase, "since the good of human beings is charity," is from Thomas's "Commentary on Romans," quoted by Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 337.

good might come. God may have no obligation to intervene to prevent human sin, but God would be unworthy of worship were He to necessitate or pander to it.

Strong agapists believe that God was (or at least may be) justified in creating the world for the sake of the possibility of love, but one can only judge such things in the first person. There will be no universally convincing arguments on this head. And even if one does judge the question affirmatively, one might still favor saying that evil (especially natural evil) is a "mystery" that constitutes prima facie evidence against the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent Deity. There is indeed evidence against God, if one is looking for it, but the personal experience by creatures of the love of God remains a source of joy and hope. The experience is constitutive of, not merely epistemic warrant for, belief in God. And one defends religious faith by testifying to and acting out of love, however difficult this may be, rather than by trying to explain away evil and its impact or by trying to prove God's reality at one remove.

In fact, reference to God's suffering presence with human beings in the midst of physical affliction and moral corruption seems to me the only Christian response to the problem of evil-an "incarnational" response, but not an answer in any final sense. Such Love, and the attendant human joy, is the substance of divine providence as we know it.[42] Stump herself writes: "Perhaps there is no greater joy than the presence of the person you love when that person loves you to the fulfillment of your heart's desire. Joy of that sort, Aquinas says, is not destroyed by either pain or tribulation." She goes on to add: "On Aquinas's account, Christianity does not call people to a life of self-denying wretchedness, but to a life of joy, even in the midst of pain and trouble. Without joy, Aquinas says, no progress is possible in the

[42] This account does not leave Christianity with an impotent Deity incapable of acting in history, a mere fellow sufferer. There are two reasons for this: (1) God has acted decisively in time in the person of Jesus Christ; and (2) the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, when freely accepted, continues to empower individuals to do what would otherwise be impossible for them. It would not be compatible with true love, however, for God to compel particular actions by finite agents. In kenotic self-limitation, God has created free creatures and thereby partially bound the divine will.

Christian life."[43] In light of these emphases, I can only ask again: why the Thomistic *requirement* of an afterlife?

Is the possibility of temporal joy not enough? Must earthly existence be a fleeting school of virtue for the Creator to be good and creatures fulfilled? I turn to these questions in earnest in the next section, but I can anticipate by stressing that I do not claim to resolve the problem of evil without recourse to immortality. Rather, I indicate that others cannot resolve the problem even with such recourse, for the meaning of immortality itself is elusive.

VI. THE PEDAGOGY OF LOVE: AGAPE WITHOUT AN AFTERLIFE?

Thomas's understanding of God's providential goodness leads him to construe human suffering as instrumentally valuable, orchestrated by God for humanity's spiritual edification.[44] Two corollaries to this view are worth noting, then interrogating. (1) If we accept Aquinas's account of God's universal instrumentality, it is too weak to say that God merely "permits" evil for the sake of positive ends. Even if God is thought to be beyond both necessity and contingency in some sense, God is the universal and sufficient reason for whatever happens, according to Thomas, and thus God must be seen to prepare persons for heaven by actively prescribing temporal woes that remind them of their true home. But what of the possibility that suffering can become so destructive as to "unmake"[45] (rather than school) an individual's identity, through no fault of her own?

It is standard to suggest that natural evil is necessary to bring out such virtues as courage and self-sacrifice, even as moral evil is necessary to elicit such goods as retributive justice and forgiveness. There is considerable plausibility in these claims: as Thomas avers, "there would be no patience of martyrs if there were no tyrannical persecution" (*STh* I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2). It is also standard, however, to point to the problem of *excess* suffering:

[43] Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 352 and 354.

"Stump also embraces this broadly pedagogical view, albeit "with considerable diffidence"; see her "The Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1983): 410.

[45] I borrow the idea of pain "unmaking one's humanity" from Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

there is more pain in the world than seems warranted for pedagogical purposes, and sometimes this pain utterly destroys innocent parties. Surely a loving God would not actively ordain affliction, if this meant that some were innocently undone by it, even if the overall goodness of the world were thereby maximized. Aquinas contends that "it belongs to [God's] providence to permit certain defects in particular effects, that the perfect good of the universe may not be hindered, for if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe" *(STh* I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2). But if God loves us as individuals, God cannot be a pure utilitarian, for this entails sacrificing the legitimate interests of the few in the name of the many.[46]

A defender of Thomas might point out a second corollary of his view of providence: (2) God does not will eternal life for all; some persons are reprobated, in the sense of being "permitted" to fall into sin and thus into the punishment of damnation *(STh* I, q. 23, a. 3). We should conclude, the defender might reason, that when someone is broken by suffering this indicates they are not among the elect whom God intends for heaven. God cannot be faulted for ordaining catastrophic suffering because, with respect to membership in eternity, not everyone "counts as one and no more than one." (Indeed, Christ died only for some, those happy few chosen to benefit from his Atonement.) In sum, Thomas's God is not unjust because creatures who go under have no claim on any other fate.[47]

The problem with this defense is twofold. First, given that immortality is a supernatural end "which exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature" *(STh* I, q. 23, a. 1), heaven is the true home of no one. If "our happiness lies there," this happiness is as alien and imponderable to the worst sinner as to the greatest saint. Speaking naturally, nobody counts when it comes to life eternal, nobody has a claim on it. If heaven is a reality, it is a pure gift. So we are left with an ancient question. An all-powerful and all-loving Creator may not be obliged to give immortality to any

[46] On these matters, see Thomas F. Tracy, "Victimization and the Problem of Evil: A Response to Ivan Karamazov," *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (1992): 301-19.

"For more on the justice and mercy of God, see Timothy Jackson, "Is God Just?," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1996): 386-99.

creatures, but why would He offer it to some and not all, even as a matter of His "consequent" will? This implies, as Thomas grants (*STh* I, q. 23, a. 3; ad 1; see also a. 4), that God does not love all equally. If God elects some and reprobates others because, in Thomas's words, "the completion of the universe" requires "different grades of being[,] some of which hold a high and some a low place in the universe" (*STh* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3), then God seems an objectionable utilitarian after all. It is not unjust to give persons more than they strictly deserve; it is not unjust even to give this more to some persons and not all (cf. Jesus's parable of the vineyard, Matt 20:1-16); but it is unjust to use the innocent pain of some as a means to the undeserved glory of others. This is to give less than is due to creatures made in God's image.[48]

God's permitting the abominable misery and death of some in order to edify others as to their immortality appears especially farcical. The "edified elect" (my phrase) could only be arbitrarily predestined for a reality about which they can know nothing and do nothing. To attest, with Thomas, that God's mercy spares the elect and God's justice punishes the reprobate is to set God at odds with Himself. Rather than "manifest His goodness" (*STh* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3), it would make God schizophrenic; it is unloving, indeed perverse, to punish individuals for doing what you yourself have engineered they could not but do.

This brings me to the second major problem with my projected defense of Thomas on providence. Given God's universal instrumentality, the distinction between election for heaven and reprobation for hell is actually a distinction without a difference. Again, it is misleading to say that God merely "permits" anything, including sin.[49] As the sufficient reason for everything that

[48] Thomas writes: "Individuals ... which undergo corruption, are not ordained as it were chiefly for the good of the universe, but in a secondary way, inasmuch as the good of the species is preserved through them" (*STh* I, q. 23, a. 7). This "not ... chiefly" must be cold comfort for the reprobate. However biblical the language, to call some persons "vessels of wrath," created infallibly for destruction, is to deny that they are carriers of the *imago Dei*.

[49] In *Providence and Predestination: Questions 5 and 6 of "De Veritate,"* trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (South Bend: Gateway, 1961), Aquinas calls predestination one of providence's "parts" (100), even though it technically differs from both providence and election. "Providence ... is concerned only with the ordering to the end. Consequently, by God's providence, all men are ordered to beatitude. But predestination is also concerned with the outcome or result of this ordering, and, therefore, it is related only to those who will attain heavenly glory" (101). Election, in turn, is a "prerequisite of

happens, God controls all. Moreover, without prevenient grace providing the power to avoid sin, all creatures must fall into damnation. It simply does not make sense for the Deity to punish individuals for not doing something which they could not but fail to do on their own. This is rather like a mother spanking her newborn baby for not feeding itself. It is the very picture of abuse to induce a dependency in others, unbidden, and then to condemn them for being needy. A God who would do this would be unworthy of worship.

Rather than defending the instrumental value for the elect of natural and moral evil, it seems better to admit that evil (like immortality) remains largely a surd. The radicality of evil, its power to stifle moral personality, is opaque. Modern believers struggle to square some moral evil with the goodness of God by referring to humanity's abuse of liberty, but such explanations of evil will always be secondary to cleaving in faith to God's free decision to be with creatures amid evil. If the pious did not first sense God's presence, they would not be so concerned to defend God's (or the world's) goodness. The destructive nadir of evil (abomination) can only be contrasted with the kenotic apex of good (incarnation). Yet it is just here, in the face of evil, that Thomas, for all his massive astuteness, oversteps the epistemic limits he himself regularly sets. Although he maintains in the *Secunda Secundae* that "those things are in themselves of faith, which order us directly to eternal life" *(STh* 11-11, q. 1, a. 6, ad 1), he argues more forcefully in the supplementary question on the resurrection: "it is dear that if man cannot be happy in this life, we must of necessity hold the resurrection" *(STh* suppl., q. 75, a. 1) or else humanity's natural end would be unrealizable. The word "necessity" is potentially misleading, however, and difficult to square with Thomas's own insistence that "resurrection, strictly speaking, is miraculous" *(STh* suppl., q. 75, a. 3). In spite of his distinction between faith and science, that is, and in spite of his

predestination," "the choice [of God] by which he who is directed to the end infallibly is separated from others who are not ordained to it in the same manner" (102). I have mainly ignored these fine distinctions as irrelevant to my discussion of *Summa Theologiae* and *The Literal Exposition on Job.* Even in *De Veritate,* q. 5, however, Thomas uses the familiar language of "permission": "since evil does not come from God, it does not fall under His providence of approval, but falls only under His providence of permission" (35). This language (and its critique) is not irrelevant to *my* purposes.

contention that "nature cannot be the principle of resurrection" (ibid.), Thomas relies at times on the ace in the hole of life after death as though it is something rationally demonstrable rather than a blessed hope (see *ScG* III, c. 48).

To reiterate, Aquinas reads the Book of Job as demonstrating the inseparability of divine providence and human immortality: since God is good, Job must live forever. But is immortality so dearly required for Job (or us) to avoid meaninglessness and/or malice? Does insisting on an afterlife necessarily follow from affirming that God is Love? In the spirit of Thomas's distancing of the argument from design, I maintain that we cannot reason from temporal exigencies to the fact (much less the necessity) of God's granting human beings eternity. Such an argument would presume to tie God's hands on the basis of ambiguous empirical evidences: we cannot know that earthly suffering must be compensated for in heaven. But can we reverse the argumentative direction and reason from the omnibenevolence of God to the perdurability of (faithful) human beings? My thesis is that communion with the living God, together with scriptural revelation, gives believers cause for hope for immortality, but this hope is distinct from dogmatic certitude.

Aquinas overstates the case in this regard, even by his own best lights. He writes, "man always desires the future as if he is not content with the present; hence, it is *manifest* that the ultimate end is not in this life but that this life is ordered toward another end."[50] That this other end is resurrection is made dear when he contends, "if there were no other life of man except that life on earth, man would not seem worthy of such great concern about him on God's part; therefore, the very concern which God has especially for man *demonstrates* that there is another life of man after the death of the body."[51] These arguments too readily explain away death and are typical of the certitude I oppose. *Pace* Thomas, they are not attributable to Job, even if they approximate the position of other biblical figures.

I do not wish to play the Sadducee to Thomas's Pharisee. In considering personal immortality the object of a blessed hope, I

[50] Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on job,* 146 (emphasis added).

[51] Ibid., 154 (emphasis added).

entertain the possibility of resurrection and thus do not repeat the Sadducees' dogmatic denial. But I do reject Thomas's eschatological perfectionism in which postmortem resurrection of the righteous becomes at times a clear and indispensable part of divine providence, if not an answer to Job's affliction. Such a picture is a threat to compassion, I fear, for two reasons. First, eschatological perfectionism may unintentionally corrupt motivation by encouraging individuals to act compassionately in order to guarantee heaven; second, it may make us blind to suffering in the present, imperfect world by accenting beatitude in the next. So I opt instead for strong *agape*. Strong *agape*, as adumbrated by the Book of Job, makes freedom an internal element of charity but lets go of immortality as an inevitable upshot of that love.

Putting charity first among the virtues is not a philosophical answer to the problem of evil, and neither is it a theological guarantee of everlasting life. Job demands that we be disconsoled away from any such answer or guarantee. Why some people are unmade by suffering, we do not know. Job supports the belief, nonetheless, that it is possible to know the God who is Love even amid extraordinary doubt and pain. Johan faith says "neither/nor" to the Pharisee/Sadducee debate, neither affirming nor denying an afterlife, because it considers God's *'hesed* here and now the primary good. The possibility of knowing God's *agape* in this life is key: sufficient unto the day is the good thereof.

Aquinas (and apparently Stump) disagrees. Stump quotes Aquinas's *Commentary on I Corinthians:* "If there were no resurrection of the dead, people wouldn't think that it was a power and a glory to abandon all that can give pleasure and to bear the pains of death and dishonor; instead they would think it was stupid." And Stump herself concludes that

> if we don't share the worldview which holds that there is an afterlife, that true happiness consists in union with God in the afterlife, and that suffering helps us to attain that happiness, we will naturally find Aquinas's valuing suffering even as a conditional good appalling or crazy.[52]

[52] Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 350-51.

If we accept God's universal instrumentality, however, then an afterlife loses much of its point: it cannot be a perfection of our finite freedom, and it cannot be the eternal context of condign reward or punishment. Everything has been unalterably prescripted. More importantly, the remarks quoted from Aquinas and Stump wrongly suggest, I believe, that if there is no immortality then the discipleship of love in this life is meaningless or wrong-headed. This proposition I dispute, taking my lead from Job himself.

Aquinas rightly claims that Job does not deny resurrection,[53] but nowhere does he affirm it either. Thomas repeatedly attributes to Job a desire for and a belief in an afterlife.[54] In fact, however, the desire is muted and the belief nonexistent. Job says:

there is hope for a tree,
if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease....
But man dies, and is laid low;
man breathes his last, and where is he?" Uob 14:7-10)

In the end, Job seems to accept his mortality as a sad matter of course, even as he struggles to hold on to some hope and sense of meaning. He asks "If a man die, shall he live again?" (14:14), but the implicit answer seems to be either "No" or "I have no idea." Job does want God to "remember" him (14:13), but Thomas's insistence that this "is nothing else than to appoint a time for resurrection"[55] seems strained eisegesis. Edwin Good is much truer to the text when he comments:

The Hebrew Bible has no expectation of a pleasant afterlife, and the analogy to the tree has a rueful tone. Job goes on to wish (vv. 13-15) that, as a special case, he might have an afterlife, that God might conceal him among the dead ("in Sheol," v. 13) until he is ready to deal with him. He would wait eagerly for a positive outcome (v. 15). But it is for nothing. The idea is raised only to be dropped. The physical world wears away, "and you destroy a man's hope"

[53] Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on job,* 149.
[54] See, e.g., ibid., 225-31.
[15] Ibid., 228.

(vv. 18-19). Nothing is there for Job except "his flesh's pain" and a lamenting soul (v. 22).[56]

Thomas notwithstanding, Job requires not bodily resurrection followed by endless life but rather relief from pain and a just recognition of his state before he dies. Above all, perhaps, Job wants and needs to love God, and to be loved by God. If Job gets any relief from suffering, it comes with God's presence to him in time-their mutual seeing and hearing-not with "plausible reasons"[57] for confidence in a future eternity. The Catholic premise of immortality is simply read by Thomas into the Hebrew text,[58] thereby blurring the fact that theophany (not immortality) is what gives Job his ineffable consolation *in extremis.*

VII. EXEGETING "JOB," RESPONDING TO JOBS

The section of the Book of Job in which God speaks out of the whirlwind is the dramatic climax of the story, though it provides a relational theophany rather than a rational theodicy. God appeals to His superior power and knowledge-things which Job never denied-and thereby challenges Job's right to question Him. Unlike the comforters, however, God does not call Job guilty; and unlike Aquinas, God does not promise Job an afterlife. The personal presence of a Deity who cares enough to respond moves Job to cease to question and to "repent in [or of] dust and ashes" (see note 14 above). The questioning was essential, one imagines, but the reality of God evoked by the questioning finally renders the questions secondary. Job is thus able to move from

[56] Edwin Good, "Job," in *Harpers Bible Commentary,* 415. See also idem, *In Tums of Tempest* (206-7, 240-41), where Good argues that Job denies immortality and even longs for death in places, seeing it as freedom and rest, even as "liberation from the god" (207). It is worth noting, in passing, that the single place in the Old Testament where resurrection is clearly proclaimed is the Daniel 12:2, which postdates Job by at least 600 years.

[57] Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on job,* 230.

[58] Thomas even seems to flirt with the natural immortality of the soul: "Now the power of each corporeal creature is determined for finite effects, but the power of free will is directed toward infinite actions. Hence, this very fact attests to the power of the soul to last into infinity" (ibid., 231). He is truer to his deepest insights when he talks instead of "the *hope* of restoration" possible only "through *divine* power" (ibid., 229-30; emphases added).

despair to faith: the mystery of God's justice is not penetrated intellectually but there is a peace that comes through trust.

The Epilogue is a return to the original framing story-how else could one end?-butJob's getting property and children back double and living happily ever after is a betrayal of the main point of the central composition. It is an ersatz immortality even more troubling than heavenly perdurability. Children are not interchangeable, and the Deuteronomic theory of the Prologue and Epilogue are exactly what Job has refuted in his own case against the comforters. How are we to explain this slippage between the heart of the work and its retributivist and utilitarian packaging?

The history and authorship of the Book of Job are exceedingly difficult to determine with any confidence, but on the basis of archaeological, theological, linguistic, and literary evidences (many of which were unavailable to Aquinas) the following account seems likely. The Prologue and Epilogue were taken from an already existing story of a patient sufferer Job, a story perhaps as ancient as the second millennium B.C.E. This is suggested by the fact that the Prologue and Epilogue are in prose, while the central Dialogue is in poetry, and by the fact that the theology is markedly different. The character of Job in the middle parts is fundamentally at odds with that described in the Prologue and Epilogue. The Job of the Dialogue is more like Ecclesiastes than the patient sufferer we may think of when we think of Job independently of the actual work. The Dialogue and Theophany were probably written during the sixth or seventh century B.C.E., though given that the hero is an Edomite sheik from the land of Uz it is unclear whether the author was an Israelite. Some have argued that the concern with justice and injustice marks the book as "100% Jewish," but others are not so sure.[59]

Even if this exegesis of Job is accurate, of course, we are still left with the normative issue of whether Job-like sufferers require an afterlife. Maybe Thomas saw something that even the author(s) of the biblical text(s) missed. Let me amplify Job, therefore, to

[59] See Bernard Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 548-60; Marvin Pope, *Anchor Bible Commentary on job* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973); and Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (New York: Abingdon, 1973).

make the strongest case I can for the theological indispensability of an afterlife, and then respond to it. Imagine that innocent Job were entirely broken by his suffering, driven mad or even rendered sociopathic. At a point of excruciating sadness and alienation, he can only howl with pain, evidently insensate to the moral presence of other human beings and of God. This is a Job who does not see God and who does not receive back his health and children. Would we not say that such a life had become a burden to Job? And would we not say that the only way to avoid faulting God for having made a world where this could happen, is to postulate an afterlife in which Job is compensated for his earthly affliction? The fact that some persons are unmade by suffering through no fault of their own-a fact neglected by Thomas because of his emphasis on the pedagogy of pain-is actually the most powerful support for Thomas's insistence on eternal life. There are real individuals like my imagined Job, the argument runs, and if they do not experience the rectifying joys of heaven, then God has created a universe full of undeserved and unredeemable evil.

How might a strong agapist respond to this forceful claim? A first step is to observe that pure arbitrariness, in which individuals are forever free to do just anything without qualification, is not the only alternative to hard determinism, in which they are never free to choose among various possibilities. Our reality lies in between these extremes. We are extensively products of our environments; gravity, genes, parental knees, and social mores limit our options and tailor our dispositions. "The experience of freedom" (Kant) continues to convince many, however, that environmental causation is not the full story. Indeed, our situatedness in concrete contexts is the germ of both necessity and liberty; our identities as moral agents presuppose tastes and talents that have been both circumscribed and empowered by experience. Present spontaneity grows out of past history.

The reality of freedom means that, for all the dull facticity of matter and all the sad ubiquity of sin, neither other persons nor even God can necessitate a particular moral act. Within a finite range, discrete choices can be made for which persons are accountable. Even a coerced act may be called "intentional," in

the sense that it is willed by the agent, though under duress. Beyond a certain level of coercion, of course, the agent will not be deemed blame- (or praise-) worthy: it would have been too difficult to make another choice. A literally "necessitated act," however, is a contradiction in terms. Unavoidable determination precludes responsibility, as I have argued above, so being unmade by fate is distinct from being rendered ineluctably culpable.[60]

A second step is to grant that, although we are substantially free and responsible, we are nonetheless also deeply vulnerable. It is empirically undeniable that some lives are undone either by the malevolence of others or by sheer bad luck. Some infants are so stunted early in life, for instance, as never to be able to love or even to achieve the threshold of personal agency.[61] Others, like my imagined Job, are victimized as adults to the point of despair, "spiritual toxicosis." Even though innocence cannot be taken from without, happiness can.

A third and final step is to maintain that all human lives are, nevertheless, good creations since all are given the potential of loving and being loved by God. Again, this potential is thwarted in some, through no fault of their own, by natural or moral evil. But the potential granted to all may be enough to justify God's creating a world where some fall into actual despair. No creature is wronged by God when he or she is unmade by suffering, the strong agapist presumes, so long as allowing suffering is the only way that God can simultaneously allow for love, the greatest good. But God must only permit, not cause, human misery. Creatures morally wrong other creatures when they torture the innocent, abuse the weak, fail to protect the vulnerable, etc., but this does not indict God. For, *ex hypothesi*, God has made it possible for all to experience charity, though not all actually do.

[60] What of original sin? The literature on this topic is immense, and I cannot begin to recapitulate Aquinas's views here. I would only suggest that even original sin is best understood as a universal *disposition* to evil, made *all but* irresistible by preexisting social structures, lest morality be exploded by fatalism. This is not to say that anyone is actually perfect in this life, only that "the fault lies not in our stars [or in our parents] but in ourselves."

[61] The case of "Genie," the so-called "Wild Child" documented by PBS, may be a case in point. For her first ten years, Genie was so neglected and abused by her parents (locked in a room alone and tied to a potty-chair for weeks at a time, seldom spoken to, even less often held, etc.) that she never learned to speak or to interact with others on anything but a primitive level. See Nova, "Secret of a Wild Child" (WGBH/Boston, 1994).

The most plausible Christian response to even an amplified version of Job, then-a response implicit in the Book of Job itself-is that the partial reality of the kingdom here and now, experienced by those who love God and neighbor with the aid of the Holy Spirit, is of surpassing worth independently of the possible immortality of persons. Johan love is disinterested, fearing God "for nought" Gob 1:9).[62] In addition, it is precisely in living agapically that one both discerns human suffering and freely acts to remedy it, without falling into hopelessness over its tragic dimensions. Gob will always have friends who do not love him and enemies whom he loves.) *Agape* might see some suffering as a conditional good, regardless of an afterlife, if that suffering prompts sympathy for others or clarity about oneself. Yet this vision of human pain is dangerous and needs to be highly qualified; it is nowhere near enough for a full-blown theodicy, and it may contribute to a masochistic acquiescence in evil. For those unmade by it, innocent suffering is purely and simply bad.

It is always risky for an ethicist to say what Yahweh can and cannot do-"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... Will you even put me in the wrong?" Gob 38:4 and 40:8)-but if speaking of God as just and loving is to be meaningful, some things must be ruled out. God would be unworthy of worship, for example, if He directly used the innocent suffering of some as a means to the greater utility of many, or even of the elect few. (Recall that the reprobate both suffer and are damned, according to Thomas; they never taste the sweetness of heaven toward which human suffering putatively points, so their pain is not instrumental to their saving edification.) Yet God does not directly cause innocent suffering, as the strong agapist sees things, at least not unto the unmaking of human identity. Innocent suffering may be merely permitted by God as a double effect.

The possibility of innocent suffering may be inseparable from the possibility, initially open to all, of achieving the highest good: loving union with God and the neighbor. I understand why some suspect that even divine permission would be enough to render

[62] For an excellent discussion of the "disinterestedness" of Job's religion, see Gutierrez, *On Job*, 4-6 and 70-71.

God unjust, assuming that there is no compensating afterlife, since innocent suffering sometimes completely undoes individuals in this life. The strong agapist trusts in an alternative, however. Because the possibility of all persons loving and being loved is such an overwhelming good, the strong agapist speculates, it could outweigh even in the minds of the afflicted the tragic losses they experience in reality. To echo John Rawls, impartial contractors could consent to life with no immortality for any, even the least well off, if this were required to open the possibility of life with love for all. Allowing the possibility of suffering might be to the greatest benefit of the least well off, if the alternative is either nonexistence or existence without the metavalue of charity.

This is not a prescription for callousness. One hopes for a compensating afterlife for the afflicted, a final convergence of happiness and virtue, and affliction-unto-despair remains a painful mystery to the pious. But divine proportionality does not seem straightforwardly to mandate immortality. (Though immortality may require God, the reverse proposition does not appear to be true.)[63] **After all, the most devastating failures of love are first of all and most of the time the fault of human beings. Immortality would be required by divine justice were God to have**

[63] Cf. Kant's moral argument for the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. Because duty requires perfection and we cannot become perfect in this brief physical life, Kant reasons, we must assume immortality as the realm of perpetual progress toward holiness. (If there were no immortality, then "ought" would not imply "can," and moral perfection would be unintelligible.) Only an omnipotent and omnibenevolent Deity can guarantee an afterlife for creatures, however; thus we must also assume the existence of such a Being. This is a practical proof, Kant insists, not a matter of speculative knowledge; God and immortality are conceptual requirements of ethics, "postulates of pure practical reason," rather than inductive conclusions from empirical evidence. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason,* trans. Lewis White Beck (Indiana and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), part **1,** book 2, chaps. 4 and 5, pp. 126-36.

As I define it, strong *agape* treats God's love as the primary content of and criterion for moral uprightness, rather than as an external incentive for moral behavior. Practical rationality cannot be uncoupled from divine charity if we are to have an adequate picture of human goodness. Thus strong *agape* amounts to the sort of "theological morality" Kant rejects. Kant favors a "moral theology" that begins with "duties [man] finds grounded in his own nature" and derives religion from these alone. See Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology,* trans. Allen W. Wood and Gertrude M. Clark (Ithaca: Corne! University Press, 1991), 31 and 40-42. Nevertheless, Christians may still have something to learn from the Master of Konigsberg about God, freedom, and immortality. Kantian insights help deliver us from determinism concerning the will and dogmatism concerning an afterlife, for example. Concerning the latter, Allen Wood has remarked that "in Reflection 8101, Kant describes faith in immortality as 'faith of the second rank' and suggests that it may not be necessary to the moral life after all *(Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 19, p. 644)" (Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology,* 131 n. 20).

promised an afterlife to some or all persons. But no such promise is evident in the Book of Job, and New Testament revelation on this score is moot.

Saint Paul is adamant in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19: "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.... If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." But it is unclear if Christ himself saw eternal life in this way. Although he speaks of the faithful having "treasure(s)" and "reward" in heaven (see, e.g., Matt 6:20 and 19:21; Luke 6:23), Jesus seems not to make immortality-as-endless-life a *sine qua non* for purity of heart. Christ evidently believed that the just will be resurrected and that the pure in heart "shall see God" (Matt 5:8), but this assumption of faith is not a theodical proof of or insistence upon immortality. Jesus clearly rejected Deuteronomic retributivism (see John 9:1-5), and it is in the spirit of such a rejection that one lets go of dogmatic versions of eschatological perfectionism. It is surely a less than pure intention, a less than Christlike obedience, to dwell on whether or to what degree virtue must win an afterlife. It is the gratuitous and demanding reality of the kingdom that matters to the Redeemer. Even the "eternal life" promised in John 3:16-"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"-can be read as "present participation in God's life" (see note in RSV) rather than trans- or supra-temporal perdurability. [64]

Misgivings about being ethically motivated by .immortality extend beyond concern for the characters of agents; one fears for the patients of deathless actors as well. Focus on heavenly torment or ecstasy may warp one's own personality, but it can also lead to blindness to the temporal suffering of others, if not to active cruelty. Judith Shklar states the qualm energetically:

> The pursuit of eternal salvation may function just like the aristocratic quest for self-perfection in shunting the victim of injustice aside. In Augustine's *City of God* we are told that the victim of political injustice, the slave in particular, is

" Portions of this and the following paragraph are drawn from my "The Disconsolation of Theology," 21 and 27.

'ultimately less of a victim than the owner because the victim is not exposed to nearly as many temptations .... In a Christian view, the powerful are the real victims, while the poorest and most miserable people stand the best chance of avoiding sin. Any picture of the Last Judgment will tell us what an advantage they have.[65]

The familiar challenge for Christian ethics is not to allow ideas of eschatological retribution to undercut attention to the plight of the Jobs of this world. The seriousness of Last Judgment doctrines-vivid portrayals of the final effects of different ways of life-must be augmented by insouciance about immortality as an ethical motive. Even if all virtuous actions are performed in part for God's sake because at base they are performed at God's command, obedience as such wills the Good rather than its own endless survival. Charity's dying to the self entails, in other words, a dying to both death and deathlessness as springs for love of God or neighbor. Desire for eternity for oneself ought not usually to move one; desire for eternity for others is more admirable, especially when it springs from their need for compensation for temporal ills.

There may be an afterlife (who knows?), but an accent on its pure graciousness and unpredictability is characteristic of the best of biblical religion and foreign to much of modern theodicy.[66] Certainly any talk of "necessary evolution" between this life and a next will erode a piety that would be grateful to, and responsible before, God for earthly existence and its potential for love. Whatever the place of attrition in ethics, one can no more preserve genuine charity when motivated by fear of death or coveting of life than one can reconcile significant human freedom with irresistible grace. Thus just as Aquinas encourages a faith that distances the problem of evil, so the strong agapist encourages a love that distances the problem of immortality. If love "bears all things" (1 Cor 13:7), this must include love's own finitude and possible extinction. (Again, Job nowhere appeals to deathlessness

[65] Shklar, *The Faces of Iniustice,* 32-33.

[66] Austin Farrer presumes that God will "rescue" rational persons from "destruction," insisting that "[t]here is no getting round death .... all we can hope for is resurrection." But Farrer also writes: "How God is to remake us is necessarily unimaginable to us.... What God will do for us is God's secret; that he will do it is our faith. It is no part of our business in this book to prove that God raises the dead" (Farrer, *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited,* 182 and 110-11).

as a requirement for meaning or as a viable remedy for suffering.) The best of Thomistic faith is not blind to the religious implications of undeserved suffering, but the antecedent concern is with how to be a faithful minister to those now in pain. Similarly, rather than postulating the necessity of an afterlife, the strong agapist stops with the realization that, in Thomas's words, "[w]hoever has the love of God ... already has what he loves."[67]

CONCLUSION

Job may not live forever, for he is now free to live for and with God. By Job's own lights, it is not essential that he be given an afterlife in order to avoid despair or immorality.[68] For one who is personally touched by the living God, the experience of perfect Goodness may make existence bearable even in the midst of great anguish and uncertainty. (For one not touched, through no fault of her own, the story is admittedly less dear.) This is not to say that one becomes blind to human vulnerability or, more generally, that one champions *amor fati.* Just the opposite. The strong agapist would not be guilty of "marginalizing suffering";[69] she is, therefore, neither Stoic nor Nietzschean. Like Jonah, she "does well to be angry" over injustice (especially her own, but also others' and even what appears to be God's); unlike Job's "friends," she does her best to be uncritically compassionate before affliction (especially other people's, but also her own). The strong agapist simply believes that her pity for the world is itself God working with her, consensually. If there were no God, she feels, one would not give a damn about innocent suffering so long as it spared one's house; but since there is a God, one can and

[67] Quoted by Stump, "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job," 352.

[68] Gustavo Gutierrez allows that "the Christian profession of faith in a future life does not essentially alter the point the poet [who authored the Book of Job] was trying to make" (Gutierrez, *On Job,* 89). I agree. I would add, nevertheless, that the Book of Job, in turn, keeps Christians honest by forcing them to confront suffering and mortality. Reductionist accounts of religion as centrally motivated by the fear or denial of death find their counterexample in Job. Love and gratitude, not avoidance, are the well-springs of his witness.

[69] Tilley levels this charge specifically at Austin Farrer (see Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy,* 229). The accusation is unfair, however. Farrer repeatedly drives home the extent of human misery and the insidiousness of human sin, as the title of his relevant work suggests *(Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited;* see, e.g., 114-20, 166-67, and 178-79).

must care. (Hence the theodicy problem 1s partially self-dissolving: if one feels the itch, one has already been scratched by grace, so to speak.) One loves not because all is well or one "finds the world enough" (Auden), but because one would participate in a charity that is supernaturally present to the finite world in all its woe.[70] This is not immanentizing the eschaton but humbling epistemology, not theodicy but theism.

Supernatural charity is nothing less, and nothing more, than steadfast love of the particular by the particular. And since providence makes such love possible (even mandatory) for individuals in time, the standard problems of evil and immortality may be left to the philosopher's study, on weekends, in a dry season. Or perhaps we can stop preoccupying ourselves with them altogether, finally dismissing them as temptations to abstraction-as (in Aquinas's famous expression from another context) just so much "straw." A realistic practical goal, in any event, is to avoid the extremes of what Shklar calls an "unreasoning fatalism" and a "scapegoating" fanaticism. Fatalism often amounts to an "ideologically convenient" complacency before others' victimization, while fanaticism would always rather blame people than accept the legitimate distinction between misfortune (what just happens to us) and injustice (for which someone is culpable).[71] Strong *agape,* as I have described it, seems more likely to generate a proper balance here than Thomas's eschatological perfectionism.

A dosing example from a well-known Holocaust memoir may illuminate what remains at this juncture a rather abstract thesis. In the most moving scene from Elie Wiesel's *Night,* SS guards hang a young boy and two adults accused of sabotage "in front of thousands of spectators." The boy, "being so light," struggles literally at the end of his rope for more than half an hour, "dying in slow agony." Forced to pass by and witness the pathetic figure, Wiesel (himself only a child at the time) recalls that

[70] This is not to say that one must self-consciously believe in God in order to be loving, though it seems to help in some cases. Obviously many atheists and agnostics display charity for their fellows, and this constitutes real moral worth. A theological version of strong *agape* does imply, however, that even putatively "humanistic" virtues are in fact causally sustained (though not necessitated) by divinity. Loving atheists just do not give credit where credit is due.

[71] Shklar, *The Faces of Iniustice,* 58-60.

Behind me, I heard [a] man asking:
"Where is God now?"
And I heard a voice within me answer him:
"Where is He? Here He is-He is hanging here on this gallows.... "

This is a very Jewish answer to a very Johan question with a very humane wisdom for anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear. The narrator has previously described a loss of religious "faith," but what's in a name? I can only believe that Wiesel's courage and compassion-his resolution, e.g., "Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue *sky"-is* the Spirit of God incarnate amid monstrous evil.[72] As Christians sing in Taize services, "Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.,*m*

[72] The Wiesel quotations in this paragraph are from *Night,* trans. Stella Rodway (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 61-62 and 32. It once seemed possible to read the quoted passages as approximating a Jewish death-of-God theology, but Wiesel's recent "A Prayer for the Days of Awe" gainsays this reading after the fact. The silence and apparent absence of God during the Holocaust remain vexing-" Auschwitz must and will forever remain a question mark only"-but Wiesel writes: "What about my faith in you, Master of the Universe? I now realize I never lost it, not even over there, during the darkest hours of my life" *(The New York Times,* 2 October 1997).

[73] I wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for *The Thomist* for extremely helpful suggestions about how to improve this essay. My gratitude also goes to the following careful readers: Nicholas Potion, James Gustafson, Eleonore Stump, and John Witte.

The Thomist 62 (1998): 41-74

NICHOLAS LOBKOWICZ AND THE HISTORICIST INVERSION OF THOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY

STEVEN A. LONG

Silver Spring, Maryland

NICHOLAS LOBKOWICZ'S essay "What Happened to Thomism? *From Aeterni Patris* to *Vaticanum Secundum*"[1] is fraught with implications for the nature of Thomistic philosophy. It proffers putative historic insight into the transmutative evolution of Thomistic studies over the last one hundred years. However-and it is this that kindles the attention of the philosopher-its systematic content is marked by those pathogens which have dislocated much of contemporary Catholic culture from the speculative value and dynamism of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. Moreover, there are strong ties of entailment between Lobkowicz's systematic view of the nature of Thomism and his historical treatment of its fortunes in the twentieth century.

The nexus between Lobkowicz's view of the nature of Thomism and his historical account of it lies in the methodological priority he grants historical study within philosophic method. The problem raised is the protean issue of the right relation between the historical matrix for the study of philosophical texts and the nature of philosophy as a speculative *habitus.* As Lobkowicz puts the matter:

> To begin with, the species *Thomist* claims to be a subdivision of the genus *philosopher* and I do not think that I am a philosopher myself. Of course, l;have studied philosophy; I have taught it for many years and many if not most of my

[1] Nicholas Lobkowicz, "What Happened to Thomism? *From Aetemi Patris* to *Vaticanum Secundum,*" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (Summer 1995): 397-423; hereafter cited as WITT.

books and published papers deal with it. Philosophy differs, however, from most other university subjects in that one must not be, in fact in most cases is not, an exponent of the subject one informs others about. In part, this has to do with the lofty meaning of the expression "philosopher." Someone who teaches physics or history must indeed be a physicist or a historian; philosophy, on the contrary, is rather similar to poetry in that one need not be a poet in order to say intelligent things about poetry, and when one studies poetry, one usually will not become a poet. It also has to do with what philosophy has become in the last hundred and fifty or so years. When one studies philosophy, one indeed familiarizes oneself with what philosophers have said and written, yet one studies the history of philosophy rather than philosophy proper. The overwhelming majority of one's teachers have been and are in the same predicament. [2]

The substitution of historical learning for systematic intelligence noted (and approved) by Lobkowicz continues to exert a dislocative cultural pressure on Thomistic philosophy. One need but enter a bookshop with a compendious philosophy section to discover-as did this author recently upon entering an enormous *Borders Bookshop-a* small sign: "for books on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas see 'historical studies.'" Upon dutifully seeking out the historical section, one finds precisely no Thomistic philosophy.

The reason for the bookshop's enormous omission is easily to be identified but only with great effort to be explained. Somewhere along the line scholars interested in the work of Aquinas forgot that the very criteria of historical relevancy themselves are *philosophic*. The very *ratio* under which we find this rather than that speculative matter to be worthy of attention is itself of the speculative order. It is thus in relation to theological and philosophic reasons that one judges historical research to be valuable. Yet the tail of historical study has grown far longer than the body of speculative engagement, in some cases almost leading a life of its own. Thomistic philosophy has passed from being nourished upon historical reflections to being devoured by them.

The etiology of this historicist inversion of Thomistic philosophy calls for serious consideration. Accordingly in this essay I will make a twofold response to Lobkowicz's analysis. I

[2] Ibid., 397.

shall first offer a philosophic account of the error at the root of the inversion. As it bears a genealogy proportionate to its influence, I here respond not alone to Lobkowicz but to a figure whose undoubted genuine greatness and prestige is historically related to this phenomenon of the imperialism of historical method: Etienne Gilson. Then, secondly, I shall turn to Lobkowicz's historical account to demonstrate how this methodological error regarding the nature of Thomism colors his interpretative lens so as to falsify his history of Thomism.

I

A) Situating the Pathology

The historicist inversion of philosophic method emerges rather dearly in Henri de Lubac's view of the "disregard for history and slender critical sense"[3] of the Thomistic commentators of the sixteenth century, buttressed by a comment from M.-B. Lavaud, O.P.: "Exegesis and history concerned them far less than the fundamental nature of things."[4] As Lobkowicz's account shows,[5] this charge may with equal cogency be made of St. Thomas himself, who rarely if ever subordinates the quest for truth to historiographic concerns.

The project to substitute historical erudition for the work of philosophical intelligence is mistaken in part because the work of philosophical exegesis itself is far more an exercise in systematic philosophic contemplation than a mere work of external historical description. Moreover such exegesis is not the chief moment in philosophical labor (for as St. Thomas reminds us in his commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo*, what matters is not chiefly what has been said, but whether it is true).[6] Insofar as philosophic exegesis is a work of historical method simply, it is

[3] Henri de Lubac, *Augustinianism and Modem Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Herder, 1968), 233.

[4] Ibid.

[5] WHT, 419, re: St. Thomas: "This history, however, did not interest him except to the extent that it gave him material with which to work."

[6] A point expressly noted by Lobkowicz (ibid.) in the course of criticizing the timelessness of St. Thomas's thought.

auxiliary to properly speculative engagement. That this is St. Thomas's view explains his writing of commentaries on Aristotle while lacking even command of the Greek language.

As Lobkowicz's comments make clear ("one studies the history of philosophy rather than philosophy proper"), many conquer the auxiliary tools of historical reflection; few similarly master the philosophical disciplines in their own right, for these are more arduous of rational attainment. It magnifies the sublime reasonability of St. Thomas that he happily leaned upon the linguist for auxiliary aid, while safeguarding the interpretative act in its properly philosophical character. The *per se* is prior to the *per accidens,* and the philosophic *habitus* is absolutely prior to the historical one. *Mirabile dictu,* the putative flaw of the Thomist commentators of the sixteenth century thus transpires to be precisely the precondition of the reasonable exegesis of St. Thomas (or any philosopher), and moreover the attitude and method of St. Thomas himself.

As Jacques Maritain has said, the philosopher

> is sorely in need of teachers and of a tradition, but in order for them to teach him to think when he looks at things (which is not as simple as all that), and not, as is the case with the theologian, so that he can assume the whole of this tradition into· his thought. [7]

Nonetheless Maritain also noted regarding the philosopher that

> his most normal way of approach is *historicaland critical* examination of what has gone before him.... This method of procedure is merely introductory, but it is very necessary both for teaching and for research. [8]

To engage oneself with philosophic considerations that are the fruit of speculations far older than oneself requires historical exertions to recover the text. Hence these exertions are not only of material aid, but in some way integral if not essential to the labor of penetrating the intellectual patrimony of any philoso-

[7] Jacques Maritain, *The Peasantof the Garonne,* trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 161.

[8] *Ibid., 161-62.*

pher. The very meaning of any text is embedded in its historical context.

Thus the point is not to banish historical considerations from philosophic study-which would amount to the suggestion that human facticity, finitude, and historical context can be magically overcome via some dialectical daring. Rather, the point is that one's attitude toward these historical elements itself implies philosophic judgments. For instance, if one adopts a perspective within which being is phenomenalized, transcendental being evaporated, and the relative transcendence of human intellection denied, history and historical appropriation will quickly satellize one's method. An overly rationalist starting point will by contrast seek to elude all historical context or tradition from its inception. The mean between the extremes is to be found in the method actually employed by St. Thomas-a method proportioned to epistemological moderate realism and to the anthropological datum of the human knower's composite nature. This method recognizes (1) that history materially conditions our cognitions, (2) that this conditioning while *essential* is nonetheless in a certain sense *extrinsic,* and (3) that consequently historical study is integral but not essential to philosophical method.

Regarding the first point, acts of knowledge, as acts of composite subjects, are indeed subject to temporal conditions. Understanding the intellectual milieu of a given thinker may provide invaluable aid in understanding how he pursues certain preoccupations, and in fathoming those preoccupations themselves. The temporal elements conditioning intellectual labor are such that change, development, and dependence upon inspirations conveyed through media present at one moment but not earlier (or later) are all pertinent to interpretation.

Likewise the language used by a thinker, as his very own, is in one sense bound to be better than any translation. Yet one notes that even when read in its own language, philosophical exposition both invites and requires interpretation. It is quite possible that one may misinterpret in the native language, while-owing to supervening philosophic insight-another may interpret rightly on the basis of a translation (even a poor translation, as St. Thomas has shown us). Moreover there is no basis for supposing

that the structure of being is uniquely mirrored in any particular language. It is possible that in some cases translation might even enhance the objective presentation of a metaphysical consideration (e.g., as with translation of substance ontologies from languages that lack subject-copula-predicate structure).

This leads to the second point, namely that in a certain sense the historical conditioning in question is essential but not intrinsic to cognition. From this proposition, when properly understood, will follow the conclusion that historical study is integral but not essential to philosophical method.

If by historical conditioning one refers to *temporal* conditioning, then the human spirit is essentially ordered to time while nonetheless transcending it. Intellective cognition of any object entails abstraction from spatio-temporal limits. This capacity to engage meaning divested of material and temporal limits is a sign of the substantial spirituality of the human soul. Acts are proportioned to powers which themselves articulate the natures of the substances in question. Intellective abstraction, and the cognition of universal natures prior to adversion back to the sensible singular, are possible only to a spiritual substance. Yet this spiritual substance is itself according to St. Thomas the form of a material being: the spiritual soul is ordered to its appropriate matter, and the human body is human only because informed by the spiritual soul.[9] We are embodied creatures who transcend the limits of our own bodiliness-and hence the limits of temporality-in acts of knowledge and love.

Yet for St. Thomas the proper object of human knowledge is not an abstracted object, but the quiddity of a material thing. We only truly know a nature when we know it according to the manner in which it subsists. For example, the knowledge of the universal "stone" is perfected only insofar as one cognizes the nature of stone as it actually exists: namely, in individual stones. And this means adverting to the singular subsistent via the phantasm. [10]

Although our knowledge is complete only when it grasps natures as they actually exist-and our knowledge is rooted in the

[9] Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, qq. 75 and 76.
[10] Cf. *ST/J* 1-11, q. 84, a. 7

senses-nonetheless we know spiritual realities by way of causal inference. Hence what we know may be ontologically superior to the mode of our own knowing. For example, God is ontologically superior to the mode of human cognition; be temporal; and the principle of act supersedes potency and is altogether primary in St. Thomas's metaphysics. Indeed, act, form, and substance each may but need not be found with matter; may, but need not, be the act, form, or substance of a being properly measured by temporal duration. [11] In knowing these principles, what we know is irreducible to our composite mode of knowing.

Is there a reason to suppose that the essential structure and principles of being *qua* being are necessarily unintelligible save within a certain temporal period? While the antimetaphysical *animus* of the modern and postmodern periods might incline some to form necessitarian historical theses like those of Comte, the presence of contemporary philosophers of all stripes-induding Thomists, Platonists, Scotists, Aristotelians-argues the contrary. The essential delineations of these teachings are not properly historical but systematic.

While the benefit of historical learning materially and integrally conditions the exercise of philosophic method, the philosophic act itself-an act whose performance begins where historical considerations leave off-is essentially defined vis-a-vis its theoretic object. Of course there is a history of theory; but any such history sufficiently penetrating to be helpful will in its construction be largely an exfoliation of philosophic judgment. In other words, theory gives one a major premise, history a minor, and one's conclusion-the "intellectual history"-is a philosophic act (awaiting completion in further such acts to be sure, if we wish to apprehend truth rather than merely explain the activities of others who sought to do so). In a sense that I hope to develop in my argument, Lobcowicz's own essay provides an example of such entailment.

Historical method and context *in sensu stricto* should, then, provide a helpful auxiliary to-and never a substitute for-philosophic engagement. Indeed, there is little reason to suppose

[11] Cf. Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate,* q. 5, a. 4.

that there is one optimal ratio of historical and philosophic *habitus.* The freeway is wide, and for so long as history is not falsified, nor philosophy reductionistically historicized, there are many plausibly allowable ways for the two *habitus* to cohabit the same soul. Yet it is more plausible to claim that the wiser philosopher is the wiser historian than the reverse because the criteria of philosophic significance which govern and assess all historical research do not themselves derive from historical study, but from implicit or express philosophic judgments. How does one determine that the philosopher whose writings one has discovered is brilliant? By judging his work. Can such work ever be judged in translation? We have the witness of Augustine and Aquinas vis-a-vis Plato and Aristotle that the answer is yes.

Furthermore, it is not necessary that the *habitus* of the professional historian be possessed by the philosopher, but only-witness St. Thomas's own work-that he advert to it and depend upon it. It is more important that the diamond cutter know how to cut diamonds than that he be the one to unearth them. Only let them be unearthed, and he will cut them very nicely indeed if he possesses the requisite *habitus.* And does anyone deny the enormous unearthing process of Thomistic historiography?

Surely engendering the philosophic *habitus* should be given primacy in schools of philosophy; this in turn provides an assured stimulus for further historical work. It provides both an external demand for such historiography as well as a certain quotient of historical laborers from each generation of philosophers. Subordinating philosophic to historical *habitus* because the philosopher needs historical matter is rather like a coach subordinating coaching to procreation because elsewise there would be no players.

Such stress laid upon the philosophic *habitus* might be thought a license for theoretical hubris. Yet it is easy to pretend humility and self-emptying of philosophic judgment in the service of history while in reality concealing and privatizing properly philosophic judgments. By contrast properly philosophic judgments should be made forthrightly and publicly so that they are subject to appropriate intellectual scrutiny and receive the benefit

of critical collaboration. Without the criticism of other minds speculative judgments rarely will be as carefully sculpted, as penetrating, or as probative. Those who subordinate their philosophical reasoning to historical considerations may perform valuable services: but when it is time for philosophical claims to be assessed we ought to accommodate ourselves to the object in view.

The camouflaging of judgments about truth in historical garb is itself part of the positivist war of specialization against philosophical method. One humbly refuses judgment about an essential methodological question because "I'm in medieval and thus-and-so isn't my specialty." How easy is the false condescension toward other philosophers masked by an artificial delineation of historical interest! How unphilosophic is such an attitude, and how fraught with lost opportunities and incoherence is the intellectual environment it nurtures!

By contrast, the philosopher takes upon himself the discipline, so manifest in the work of Aquinas, of answering theses and criticisms that derive from a variety of conceptual frameworks. What matters is not the given fact of plurality, but whether and to what degree elements of these frameworks may be well founded, consistent with the *habitus* of first principles, or salvageable from some initial conceptual mistake.

One lure of historicism is its tacit suggestion that Thomism may be safeguarded from uncongenial philosophic probings through immersion in historical method. Philosophy is not to be the task and the responsibility of the Catholic philosopher, but to be alienated to a glorious past, relics of which shall reverently be approached in the Great Temple of Historicity. A few of the specially trained may be permitted reverently to venerate the holy of holies: a syllogism written on a scroll, inserted into the mouth of a venerated clay idol, and incensed while all present chant the editorial policy of the journal *Medieval Studies.* This caricature-thankfully never wholly reproduced in reality although too frequently invited-is the image of a corrupted scholasticism hiding from daylight in the cave of history. This is even more pressing a concern when the work of St. Thomas himself is

faulted for its remotion from historical reflection. Shall we not, it is suggested, save Thomas from himself via historical reason?

Indeed Lobkowicz considers St. Thomas's "lack of reflection on history" [12] to be a critical weakness. He criticizes St. Thomas as follows:

> Of course, St. Thomas knew that there is something like a development and therefore also a history of philosophical thought. This history, however, did not interest him except to the extent that it gave him material with which to work. As he himself put it in an often-quoted passage in his commentary on Aristotle's treatise *Peri ouranou, De caelo,* one does not study the history of ideas in order to discover what authors of the past meant to say but rather to find out *qualiter se habeat veritas rerum,* what is the truth with respect to reality. [13]

Lobkowicz evinces no sign of awareness that the absorption with history he finds lacking in St. Thomas is itself the reflection of a particular, and highly controvertible, philosophy. Instead he considers St. Thomas's superior interest in philosphic truth as a sign that his thought in these matters is not of permanent objective worth:

> Of course, Aquinas would probably never have become the greatest systematic thinker of the Christian tradition if he had bothered with such details, which are of little interest from a metaphysical point of view; but the fact that today we are interested in areas of human experience outside his sphere of interest is only one more argument against the timelessness of his thought. [14]

By this standard, all it takes to efface the permanency of truth is the aversion of one's gaze.

One might think that the areas of human experience unexplored by St. Thomas need be conjoined to objectively and immutably true metaphysical first principles if they are to be safeguarded from the reductionist implosion we see in various one-sided accounts of reality. Yet Lobkowicz writes that "there is even a sense in which I feel that it is impossible to be a Thomist simply because Aquinas lived more than 700 years ago." [15] I shall

"WHT, 419.
n Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 399.

speak more completely to this proposition in treating Lobkowicz's view of the nature of philosophic progress. But one must note that if the metaphysical structure of reality may change every seven hundred years, it may as well change every seven seconds: metaphysical first principles either are or are not knowable. And if metaphysical truth is unknowable we may face a rather more vital problem than that of the nature of Thomism.

Again, historical study is an invaluable and necessary auxiliary to philosophic inquiry. But the *habitus* of philosophic inquiry ought itself to be the first, middle, and last preoccupation of those who teach philosophy. An instructor of philosophy who conveys nothing of this *habitus-like* a violin teacher who knows the history of the violin but does not listen to the music nor know how to play-may *be* master of passive periphrastic constructions or textual evolutions, but certainly not of philosophy. Those tempted at this point to think of history as the score, and philosophy as the *habitus* of performance, should recall the Suzuki method of musical instruction. In any case, what matters is getting the notes right. In noetic matters as in music the attunement of mind to object is primary.

Before ending this preliminary disquisition on historical and philosophic method one should observe the enormity of the difficulty in the development of either the historical or the philosophic *habitus.* There are amazing people who are prolifically accomplished in both domains; yet in such cases the likelihood of one *habitus* to some degree imperializing over the other is a permanent peril.

For a person of supereminent philosophical and theological gifts to divert his strength of mind to sublunary historical issues is not always to *be* wished. Saint Augustine and St. Thomas did not even possess direct linguistic competency over the corpus of the philosophic teachers who most influenced them. One ought to consider the prolific labors of historical scholars now studying Plato and Aristotle, and ask oneself the following question: how much would one willingly subtract from what Augustine and Aquinas actually accomplished and replace with the labors of contemporary historical Plato and Aristotle scholars?

B) Gilson: The Temptation of the Thomist Historian

Let me now bite the bullet by contradicting a man to whom all Thomists are rightly indebted for his genius both philosophic and historical: Etienne Gilson. In his pellucid Marquette Aquinas Lecture of 1947, titled *History of Philosophy and Philosophical Education,* Gilson states, "One cannot create in philosophy unless he be a true philosopher; but one can live and die a true philosopher without having created anything philosophical. "[16] I think that this proposition, stated as it is and without further modification, is simply false. It may be that the philosopher creates no great and lasting work or system. But I do not think it is possible for a philosopher to avoid adding *something,* some reasoning, insight, critical objection, or for that matter new effort at explication, to the body of tradition.

If Gilson's proposition means that of that which is thus created little proves to be of decisive import, this is true by definition inasmuch as one defines "decisive" wholly in terms of the discovery of first principles. But it is not true if one acknowledges that these principles allow of indefinite application to areas of inquiry not yet sufficiently explored, in which consequently decisive progress may be made. If Gilson's proposition means that little of what is thus created is of permanent value, this is disputable even if only slight progress is made, for many small developments go into the enhancing of a tradition of thought. These incremental analytic lucidities, while not themselves overwhelming, still collectively augment the richness of a philosophic tradition. Moreover large discoveries do await those who contemplate previously unexamined or unavailable evidence under the light of perennially true first principles.

Where a tradition of thought is founded upon objectively valid and immutable first principles that are susceptible of indefinite development and application, the scope for creativity is commensurately indefinite. In any case, philosophers either philosophize or they do not. If they philosophize, inasmuch as they think old but true thoughts with their own minds, they can

[16] Etienne Gilson, *History of Philosophy and Philosophical Education* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1948), 19-20; hereafter cited as HPPE.

hardly avoid juxtaposing such thoughts with other considerations: they are not a mere chorus of parrots. The manner of the consequent juxtaposition is ineluctably creative (although not thereby ineluctably true or beneficial).

I will add to Gilson's first proposition a second which I consider to be even more palpably false and hence wish all the more to contradict: "No philosopher can know that he is a Thomist unless he also be an historian." [17]

This would be true if and only if history were itself a science. Alas, it is not. Let me be precise: we do not know with apodictic certainty, but with reasonable and overwhelming historical certitude, that Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo. Such certitude must be ceded some epistemic reliability; but it is not apodictic. Why do we believe Napoleon lost save on the basis of the testimony of witnesses? Let us go further: do not most of us believe this, not alone on the basis of the testimony of historical witnesses, but rather also and largely on the basis of the consensual judgment of historians?

Is the belief of anyone concerning who won at Waterloo less reasonable for being the judgment of a nonhistorian? Such judgment doubtless is less historically professional, but this is not the issue. Is it less reasonable simply? No. Presumably one is not intended to think that only historians enjoy reasonable historical certitude and that all others must refrain from believing that Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo.

Similarly: was Aquinas himself less reasonable for farming out the work of Aristotle to the best translator he knew rather than taking on the job himself? No: he knew that he could spot philosophical inconsistencies which might betoken errors of translation well enough while nonetheless for the most part trusting in the *habitus* of the translator. It should be considered that by doing this he took a far greater risk than would anyone in a similar undertaking today, inasmuch as there were far fewer persons in Western Europe competent to criticize Moerbeke's translation than there are today. Yet St. Thomas reserved to himself the right of interpretation, up to and including correction

[17] Ibid., 30.

of Moerbeke's translation when the philosophic sense of the text required it.

The question is not whether historical skill may befit or aid in philosophical research: no one seeks to deny the philosophic inquirer entry into historical study. Nor is there any implied derogation of the value of historical research as stimulus for philosophic reflection. The question is only this: can one be a Thomist at all without being an historian? Gilson says no, and in saying so he manifests the imperialism of the historical *habitus.* But the true answer is that while one must rely on historical wisdom to philosophize it is not at all unreasonable to rely on this wisdom in and through others, so as to focus more critically upon the prime philosophic obligation: that is, the obligation to achieve probative judgment and truth. For this last task there is no substitute for possessing the speculative *habitus.*

To rely upon the superior auxiliary skill of the historian while maximally engaging the speculative *habitus* may at times be simple wisdom, which is why St. Thomas did what he did. Doubtless he might have mastered Greek; but it is a prudential question whether one's talents are better spent developing one *habitus* or improving another. The implicit error of Gilson consists in the implication-which follows with dear necessity-that if only the historian can know himself to be a Thomist (or in some matters an Aristotelian), St. Thomas himself could not and did not know it, for he was no historian. Can a pupil follow a master ignorant of his own teaching? No, it is not so: the historical knowledge exhibited by St. Thomas is his own, despite the fact that Thomas was not an historian. Historical knowledge is not the preserve only of historical specialists. As is true of many other wisdoms, possessing historical wisdom *via* intermediaries is better than either not possessing it, or possessing it as a specialist at an undue cost to one's vocational obligations.

The way here pointed by Gilson-a very great teacher, philosopher, and historian-is the route of historicist inversion. I do not say that Gilson was an historicist, which would be absurd. Rather I say that his thesis about the relation between the historian and the philosopher implies such inversion. It manifests itself in its obliteration of the prudential element of the question

in behalf of a wrong principle. Where the thinker should ask "What are my gifts? Will this immersion in historical preoccupations nourish my philosophic gifts or dull them?" Gilson_erects a principle: "Every Thomist his own historian." This is no more plausible than requiring of every historian a specialist's knowledge of Thomistic philosophy (although if he seeks to be an historian of Thomism, he had better have it).

One asks again: who wishes that Augustine had refrained from thinking about Plato because of his lack of historical acquaintance with the sources? Surely Gilson does not wish that Aquinas had spent his time writing historical monographs. Gilson's thesis would apparently legislate that speculative *eros* be permitted only to historians. Alas, by nature this supposition is impossible, and insistence upon such a self-defeating stance by Thomistic philosophers has had the only outcome it could have had: it has withdrawn Thomism from the speculative marketplace where, by consequence, other teachings grow predominant. Clearly the danger of historical method imperializing over philosophy, and seeking to dictate where it ought not to do so, is visible.

By contrast the message of the method and example of St. Thomas is clear: we must depend upon others-not only historians and linguists, but also the great articulate minds of the past-if we wish to philosophize. Such dependence is ineluctable even in the historian (was he not instructed by others? did he originate his historic comprehensions out of a vacuum?). But in philosophic life this dependence is made good through speculative responsibility and accountability rather than through chimeric historical omni proficiency. The retreat of Thomism from the cultural arena began the day that the primacy of philosophic *eros* and *habitus* was suppressed as secondary to historical learning.

Let us put the matter differently: there is no work of Thomas in which half the attention is given to historical development as is prevalent in many putatively Thomistic works today. Thomas's use of history is by contrast a speculative cut to the chase: "Aristotle says 'x' and gives three reasons, a, b, and c; on the contrary, Augustine says 'y' because of d, c, and e." Then Thomas's own analysis and response to objections ensues. He

filled both his *Summae* with such considerations,[18] and no genuine Thomist supposes that he exhausted the fertility of the principles which he employed. He could not afford the luxury of pretending to historical competencies which distracted from his speculative focus.

It is understandable why historians prefer to sequester such a speculative tendency to the past-when it erupts in the present, it raises issues that the historian is incompetent to address. These issues require the talcing of philosophic responsibility for one's views, and a willingness to respond to criticisms from diverse sources and conceptual backgrounds. It is easier to conceal one's judgments in the thickets of historical research than to subject one's understanding to criticism through forthright philosophic analysis. Of course it was the very magnitude of Gilson's philosophic and theological engagement that drove his historical inquiry. But here I am addressing not the man but the erroneous formula in which he sought to express the truth he discovered and lived. By contrast I say that the right proportion of systematic to historical engagement is a prudential issue for the individual thinker, while the defining note of the philosopher is the speculative *habitus.*

As Peter Redpath reminds us:

> Principally and primarily what *philosophia* names for Aquinas is the act of the habit of a person. Only in an analogous sense does St. Thomas extend the notion of philosophy to name a "system" or a "body" of knowledge.[19]

The philosopher walks a speculative tightrope without an historical net: if he is mistaken he is so without support of the excuse that he intended only an historical disquisition. The very rope he walks is woven in history. But his business is to walk it and keep his balance without falling rather than to become an authority on hemp who cannot use it for the purpose for which it was designed. Philosophic texts are designed to contribute to the speculative life and to aid the search for wisdom. To use such

[18] Granted the difference in form between the two *Summae,* both exhibit the same promptitude in framing and addressing speculative issues rather than issues of historical development.

[19] Peter Redpath, review of *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas, The American Maritain Association Newsletter* (Spring, 1995).

texts for a purpose different than this manifests irreverence as well as obtuseness.

It is the supreme compliment to Gilson that, while uttering his judgments about the Thomist and the historian, he nonetheless honored philosophy in the person of Jacques Maritain whom he doubtless knew as one whose gifts were not chiefly those of the historian. Of course Gilson's own greatest works are those in which the historical nexus of Christianity and philosophy provide evidence and inspiration for a philosophical thesis regarding the nature of philosophy itself-for instance *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, The Unity of Philosophical Experience,* or *God and Philosophy.* Where he is not reasoning from such historic evidence, his philosophical achievement is real but far less striking.

By contrast Lobkowicz derogates the philosophic achievement and originality of Maritain and derides his metaphysical work as "little more than paraphrases of works by Aquinas." [20] Gilson was both too good a philospher and too good an historian to share this view of Maritain's achievment. As he put it:

> we have lost our way because we have lost the knowledge of some fundamental principles which, since they are true, are the only ones on which, today as well as in Plato's own day, any philosophical knowledge worthy of the name can possibly be established. If anybody be afraid of sterilizing his own precious philosophical personality by simply learning how to think, let him read the books of Jacques Maritain as a sedative for his fears of intellectual barrenness. [21]

Gilson's strong concurrence with Maritain in many essential points in metaphysics and epistemology points to his regard for the fecundity of Maritain's mind. Yet it is true that Gilson's regard for Maritain-as his regard for St. Thomas Aquinas-ill accords with his own professed views about the normative relation between the office of the Thomist and the office of the historian.

Lobkowicz argues about Maritain that "True creativity .was something he achieved only in the two subjects about which he found little in Aquinas: in political philosophy . . . and m

[20] WHT, 409.

[21] Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), xiv-xv.

aesthetics."[22] Of course, carrying principles further than they have yet been carried means going beyond their prior application. The suggestion that Maritain was uncreative in his understanding and development of St. Thomas's metaphysics stands as a striking illustration of the way an historicist inversion of Thomism leads to the distortion of the history of Thomism. To the explanation of this larger point I shall now turn.

II

Henceforth I have strenuously criticized what I have titled the "historicist inversion of Thomism" present in Lobkowicz's essay. It might mistakenly be supposed that, inasmuch as this speculative error resides at a different level of discourse, it should not be able to distort a treatment of the history of Thomism in the twentieth century.[23] On the contrary, Lobkowicz's discarding of the notion of immutable truth[24] finds its complement in critical errors regarding the history of Thomism. It is important to exhibit these historical misjudgments because their nexus with his speculative errors is pronounced. The upshot is clear: it is far more important for the historian of Thomism to undertand Thomism, than for the Thomist to supplant his *habitus* with historical method.

A full response to Lobkowicz would delve positively into the history of Thomism since *Aeterni Patris.* Instead I here highlight three pivotal issues wherein entailments of Lobkowicz's historicism impact upon his historical judgments about Thomism and seem to me to breed grave historical error. These three issues are as follows: (1) Lobkowicz's view of creativity and philosophic tradition in relation to his claims about creativity in Thomistic philosophy; (2) his view of the nature of philosophic progress in relation to his claims concerning the lack of dear progress in

[11] WHT, 409.

[23] Lobkowicz calls his subject "Neothomism"but never provides a sufficient reason for distinguishing it at the level of principle from its root in the thought of St. Thomas-"Neothomism" appears to be an umbrella covering anyone having anything to do with St. Thomas's teaching. See ibid., 397: "As I intend to reflect on the fate of Neothomism ... "

[24] Ibid., 399: "Today, there is even a sense in which I feel that it is impossible to be a Thomist simply because Aquinas lived more than 700 years ago." Of course "a sense in which" is an elastic phrase, but in any significant sense this proposition is an historicist error.

Thomistic research; (3) his identification of scriptural study and the renewal of interest in the Church Fathers-as opposed to the philosophic negations of the *nouvelle theologie* and the antecedent manualist dessication of philosophic instruction-as responsible for the post-conciliar eclipse of Thomism.

A) The Question of Creativity

The first critical historical error made by Lobkowicz flows from his strong suggestion that philosophic creativity requires divergence from philosophic tradition, and specifically divergence from the principles of St. Thomas. As he puts it:

> As we shall see, one of the most serious problems of Thomists consisted in the fact that, on the one hand, the very nature of the philosophy they taught induced them to say that they "do philosophy" while, on the other hand, they were committed to the thought of a teacher of such overwhelming authority that it was difficult for them to be creative.[25]

Sed contra: it is through the "overwhelming authority" merited by St. Thomas's teaching that inexhaustible metaphysical principles are discerned which are both paradigmatic in their openness to reality and susceptible of indefinite creative application. By contrast, Lobkowicz appears to identify creativity with "thought on the borderlines of orthodoxy."[26] Hence he argues that

> the really creative Thomists-mostly Frenchmen and Belgians, but also Germans and later North Americans-almost from the very beginning confronted Aquinas's thought with modern philosophy, especially with Kant and the German idealists, later also with Husserl, Scheler, and even Heidegger, and, as they could not escape their influence, thereby very quickly became suspected of no longer being genuine Thomists, indeed of being semi-heretics. Most of them were Jesuits: Pierre Rousselot, only 37 years old when he died in World War I, was fascinated by Maurice Blonde!; Joseph whose *Point de depart de la metaphysique* was published in five *cahiers* between 1922 and 1947, struggled with Kant and Fichte; in Germany, Erich Przywara, whose speculative thought, especially on the analogy of being, was as ingenious as it

[25] Ibid., 398.
[26] Ibid., 399.

was almost unintelligible, took Aquinas only as a sort of jumping-off ground for his own highly original, in part deeply poetic thought; also Karl Rahner, who in 1937 wrote his extremely original analysis of the metaphysical foundations of human knowledge; in Canada and later in the United States Bernard Lonergan, whose *Insight* of 1957 was probably the last truly original study a Thomist wrote prior to the Vatican Council.[27]

With the planted axiom at the beginning-that truly creative Thomists must not escape the influence of Kant and Husserl-the criterion for making the list of "creative" Thomists becomes dear: "really creative" Thomists are those who "could not escape the influence" of idealist principles contrary to those of St. Thomas. This is not a matter of a narrow party line but of speculative honesty: to suggest that idealist themes are consonant with Thomas's thought is simply untrue.

The reason why the authors on Lobkowicz's list speak a philosophic language diverse from Thomas is that they understandably sought a way from within the idealist starting point to vindicate metaphysical realism. Yet a gnoseological consideration sufficiently powerful to move one from the dynamism of thought to the affirmation of the intelligibility of being is effective only inasmuch as it implicitly adverts to the very being of this dynamism itself. But if the intelligiblity of being is thus admitted, any path will do, and all roads lead to Rome.

The Thomas who insisted that negations are always founded upon affirmations[28] could hardly license the most fundamental negation of all: the negation of the very knowability of reality as such. Nor could a Thomist seek to begin the theory of knowledge with a gnoseological starting point for other than apologetical reasons (if Thomists are those who follow the method of St. Thomas).[29] Philosophical truth has its own demands, and these are not infinitely elastic even for the best of apologetical reasons. It is for this reason, rather than from an obscurantist obsession with shopworn platitudes, that most Thomists have not endorsed the "turn to the subject" as consistent with St. Thomas's meta-

"Ibid., 407.

[18] See Aquinas, *De Potentia,* q. 7, a. 5: "The understanding of negations is always based on affirmations, as is manifest by the rule of proving one by the other."

[29] See note 31, *infra,* for an illustration of the difference between the gnoseological approach and that of Aquinas.

physics *absent initial metaphysical affirmations.* What is not present in the beginning will not be present at the end: either one begins and ends with intellective *contactus* with being, or one does not. The brilliance of these seminal Jesuit figures notwithstanding, the effort to co-opt idealist starting points for realist purposes is simply not the best methodological prescription for Thomism.

Of course the figures on Lobkowicz's list for the most part have sought to affirm metaphysical realism. Yet Rahner embraces the *a priori;3°* Lonergan speaks of thought rather than being as the supreme name under which God is naturally to be affirmed;[31] and Marechal's brilliant efforts arguably end by presupposing precisely the knowability of being that the idealists he sought to persuade reject from the start.[32] Remarkably the one project to bear lasting fruit from the fascination with continental methods is the one most insistent upon the superordinate status of Thomistic metaphyiscal realism vis-a-vis phenomenology and the turn to the subject: the work of Karol Wojtyla.[33] But such

[30] See Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word* (New York, 1968), 51: "this inner relation of all beings to some possible knowledge is an *a priori* and a necesssary proposition .... This is simply to say that being as such, to the extent that it is being, is knowing." Insofar as a rock has being, it knows? In the name of saving being from thought, being is absorbed into thought: an odd way to save metaphysical realism.

[31] See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), esp. 657-77. See Lonergan's view of the proper name of God on page 677: "Among Thomists, however, there is a dispute whether *ipsum intelligere* or *ipsum esse subsistens* is logically first among divine attributes. As has been seen in the section on the notion of God, all other divine attributes follow from the notion of an unrestricted act of understanding. Moreover, *since we define being by its relation to intelligence,* necessarily our ultimate is not being but intelligence" (emphasis added). Compare with *STh* I, q. 13, a. **11,** where Thomas insists that "I answer that this name HE WHO IS, is the most proper name of God for three reasons." The reasons are (1) the being of God is his very essence; (2) all other names are either less universal or if convertible therewith add something in idea, whereas He Who Is designates no mode of being but rather the infinite ocean of substance; and (3) this name signifies being in the present which above all applies to God. Thomas clearly does not think that being is defined by its relation to intelligence but rather the converse.

[32] See Joseph Marechal *Le point de depart de la mhaphysique* (Louvain, 1927). See also Otto Muck's synoptic treatment of these authors in his work *The Transcendental Method* (New York, 1968). His words about Rahner (p. 188) inadvertently point to the prior affirmation of the intelligibility of being in any case involved in transcendental Thomism. He states that we "must view knowing as a trait of being." Of course, in Rahner this leads to the assertion (cf. ibid.) "that being, in itself, is knowing and being known"-whereas Muck's prior words ought to indicate the ontological priority ot existential act to knowledge.

[11] See Kenneth Schmitz's excellent *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993). Note especially the quotation from Wojtyla on page 130 regarding phenomenology: "This manner of

prototypically realist creativity does not entitle one to a place on Lobkowicz's list of creative Thomists (nor let it be forgotten that Wojtyla lectured and wrote extensively *before* the council!).

Thomists who have forthrightly insisted upon a metaphysical realism that follows its own lights remote from the preoccupations of continental rationalism are depicted by Lobkowicz as being "interested in reconstructing and then following Aquinas's original thought more than in creative philosophizing."[34] He notes the objection of these Thomists-among whom he lists "Ambroise Gardeil, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Antonin-Dalmace Sertillanges, in Switzerland Gallus Manser, in Spain Santiago Ramirez, in Italy later Paolo Dezza, in Poland Mieczyslaw Krapiec"[35]- to his band of creative thinkers on the ground that "they were not Thomists, certainly not 'true Thomists.'"[36] Yet he demurs that this shows "how difficult it had already become by the '20s-and then from decade to decade increasingly so--to say who was a Thomist and who was not."[37]

Yet in a dialectical somersault this difficulty is swiftly surmounted by Lobkowicz in assessing the troublesome work of Jacques Maritain. Surely for those who judge creativity by the promptitude with which one embraces rationalist or historicist *motifs* in one's philosophy, Maritain is an impediment. He surely was not one of Gilson's historians, and hence--despite Gilson's high regard for his thought athwart their differences-by Gilson's principles presumably is not to be esteemed as a Thomist. Furthermore Maritain's polemic against systems of thought that begin by bracketing reality and then later claim to define its contours was stark. Consider these words from his *Notebooks:*

treating consciousness is at the base of the whole so-called 'transcendental philosophy.' This examines acts of cognition as intentional acts of consciousness directed to transsubjective matter and, therefore, to what is objective or to phenomena. As long as this type of analysis of consciousness possesses the character of a cognitive method, it can and does bear excellent fruit [by providing descriptions of intentional objects]. However, the method should not be considered a philosophy of the reality of man or of the human person, since the basis of this method consists in the exclusion *(epoche)* of consciousness from reality or from actually existing being."

[34] WHT,407.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 407-8.

The idealists.

Either they affirm nothing concerning existence but solely concerning our possible knowledge. Their discovery is then only this affirmation: "We know only the known, and we will never be able to know anything except the known." Let them say therfore what it would be to know something which is not the known, which is not known.

Or else they are not content with this tautology, and affirm something concerning being: "There is only ... " I stop them. They do not have the right and go infinitely beyond their premises.

If we wish to speak of being, it is necessary to posit other postulates.[38]

Hence Lobkowicz-who has already assured us from the start of his work that he is not a philosopher-promulgates his judgment that Maritain:

was not an original or for that matter a good Thomist; many of his works, for example those on metaphysics, are little more than paraphrases of texts by Aquinas or merely of commentaries on him by John of St. Thomas.[39]

This claim, like the earlier ones that Thomists unwilling to compromise metaphysical realism with idealist, rationalist, and historicist currents were "uncreative" is patently false. One notes in particular Maritain's successfulargument showing that between the language of the judgment of *separatio-which* St. Thomas himself sometimes, as in the *Summa Theologiae,* replaces with *abstractio*[40]*-and* the language of John of St. Thomas regarding the third degree of abstraction, there is no necessary conflict of *sense.*[41] In each case the existential judgment involved is paramount, and in each alike being as such rather than its specific infravalent modes is the object.

In particular, Maritain's awareness that the analogy of being is intelligible only owing to the primacy of act is a *tour de force.*[42]

[38] Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks,* trans. Joseph Evans (Notre Dame, 1984), 17.

"WHT, 409.

[40] See *STh* I, q. 85, a. 1, where he distinguishes two modes of abstraction: the "abstraction" of composition and divisionwherein one understands that a thing is or may be separate from another; and the "abstraction" of "simple and absolute consideration" wherein one thing is merely understood without considering another. By contrast in his *In Boet. de Trin.,* q. 5, a. 3, St. Thomas refers to intellectual distinction through composition and division as *separatio* as opposed to *abstractio.*

[41] See Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent,* trans. Lewis Gallantiere and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1948), 30 n. 14.

[42] See ibid., chap. 1.

His insight that a *per se* concept of intelligible being apprehends being through act-limited-by-potency, but that act most formally considered is not self-limiting, addresses important issues at the foundation of Thomistic metaphysics. Among other things, it provides a clear account why it is that the subject of metaphysics is not limited to the subject matter of physics.

Historical scholars such as Joseph Owens have confused the *per se ratio* of being and the *ratio* of *a se* being.[43] The second is found in God alone; the first is found in everything that is. Act precedes potency, and while limited by potency in all the beings that fall under our sense knowledge there is nothing about act considered most formally and as such that requires potency. As being is intelligible only in terms of diverse proportions of act, being may-but need not-be physical. Maritain's footnote on this matter in *Existence and the Existent* addresses this foundational issue of Thomistic metaphysics more forthrightly, clearly, and coherently than any other writing on the subject to the present day.[44]

In contrast those whom one might identify as Lobkowicz's "idealizing scholastics" have been so engaged in striving to deflect idealism from its natural course as to leave important foundational issues regarding St. Thomas's own metaphysical teaching unaddressed. Where do Marechal, Rabner, or Lonergan address the judgment of *separatio,* or regard being itself other than as a correlate of cognitive theory? But being is *that which is* before, and as condition of, being as *the object of the unrestricted desire to know. Being* is absolutely prior to *thought.*

[43] Note the well-known position of Owens to the effect that one must prove the existence of God before arriving at the real distinction of essence and existence as real principles. But that *esse* is in God a real nature is only knowable insofar as *esse* has been distinctly known from and in creatures, for God is not naturally known by creatures save through causal inference; see Joseph Owens, "Stages and Distinction in De Ente: A Rejoinder," *The Thomist45* (1981): 99-123.

[44] See Maritain, *Existence and the Existent,* 28, where he speaks of the discovery of being as subject matter of metaphysical science: "If it can be separated from matter by the operation of the negative judgment, the reason is that it is related in its content to the act of existing which is signified by the (positive) judgment and which over-passes the line of material essences-the connatural object of simple apprehension." This most formal understanding of act is still *temi incognita* to many Thomists who fail to see that;is potency can be-and can be intelligible-only through act, so act most formally understood is not self-limited but limited only by matter and potency. Hence there is nothing about the principle of act which requires its limitation by potency, albeit in our sensible experience act is always so limited.

Surely the cognitional emphasis of these brilliant figures has much to do with their apologetic engagement, inclining them to attempt to co-opt antagonistic idealist movements of thought from within. No one can doubt the intellective vigor of their effort. Nonetheless laudable theological motivation and intellectual energies must bow to the limits of philosophic possibility-limits more often discerned by Thomists more palpably in the realist tradition. Maritain stands at the foremost ranks of such Thomists, and his creativity ought not lightly be derogated.

The sum of this historical error of Lobkowicz lies in this: despite his open avowal that he himself is not a philosopher, he has erected philosphic criteria for "creative Thomism" which show decided rationalist and historicist bias. It transpires that a party line is being imposed. It is a line historically drawn by one who disclaims philosophic engagement and imposed upon philosophically engaged metaphysical realists. To be counted among the blessed such realists must evidently either abjure the status of the philosopher and become mere historico-textual critics, or else embrace idealism (the same idealism so pregnant with postmodern implications once the a priori is plurified) and so count as "really creative" philosophers. To their credit, creative Thomists such as Maritain did not abandon the distinctive propositions of the philosophy of Aquinas nor abandon contact with the modern world.

As Lobkowicz rightly-and somewhat incongruously with the remainder of his account-notes, "Thomists had too many difficulties in expressing themselves in a way that transcended medieval Latin."[45] Yet he acknowledges by way of contrast that Maritain "wrote an elegant French."[46] Here again we see a glimmer of the historical truth: the historicist inversion of Thomism, and the *desideratum* of a Thomism made artificially congenial to continental rationalism, historically swallowed up authentic Thomism of the type represented by Maritain and others who addressed speculative issues contemporaneously. Even-perhaps especially?-the reception of Gilson's philosophic

[45] WHT, 410.
[46] Ibid., 409.

work has suffered from this *gestalt:* he shows a marvelous historical sense, but is he not too hostile to continental rationalism to be counted amongst Lobkowicz's "really creative" Thomists? In any case Lobkowicz excludes him from his list.

B) The Question of Philosophical Progress

Regarding philosophic progress Lobkowicz identifies two equally unsatisfactory alternatives: one which would view philosophic progress as cognate with progress in the positive sciences, and the other which hearkens to some historically situated "point of its highest development in times past, with Aquinas, or with some other thinker." [47] The first alternative too blithely assumes that contemporary philosophic views necessarily represent progress; [48] the second "is not very satisfactory either, since then we have to face the problem of what to do with all the philosophies that have turned up since the times of the philosopher in question. "[49]

In the face of this impasse, Lobkowicz argues that if one is to avert the response of radical historicism one must find a way "of suggesting that philosophies are 'true' in a sense that differs from the truth of individual propositions. "[50] In discussing differences amongst philosophies, one finally

> is no longer discussing the truth or falsity of a conclusion, or for that matter the validity or invalidity of an argument, but rather the applicability of a conceptual framework, the ways of speaking about our common experience. [51]

Philosophic history is constituted by a series of partial and at times near total paradigm changes,[52] changes that are not without

"Ibid., 412.

[48] Ibid.: "there has been some philosophical progress.... This progress, however, is by no means so obvious that if a student asked us what to read in order to find out how far philosophy has progressed, we would suggest to him that he study Derrida or for that matter Fukuyama or read the most recent book by Habermas."

" Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 413.

[52] Ibid.: "the history of philosophy cannot be understood without granting that most of the passages from an older to a more recent philosophy are in a sense paradigm changes, changes of conceptual framework that are usually partial, but sometimes almost total."

relation to issues of cultural plausibility.[53] As Lobkowicz puts the matter most fundamentally:

> There is more than one way to interpret our experience, and the only philosophy that would be true in the most elementary (and complete) sense of the term would be one that succeeded in integrating all these ways, incorporating all conceivable parameters.[54]

Much of what Lobkowicz here suggests is reasonable, with one rather notable exception. While it is true that there is more than one way to interpret our experience, it by no means follows that at the metaphyical level there is more than one set of first principles into which interpretations must be resolved. The only complete synthesis of all possible truth of human experience is in the mind of God. This datum does not relegate philosophical labor to a no-man's land of agnosticism. Although Lobkowicz admits he does not wish to deny that "it does not seem overly realistic to assume that there ever existed two such equally 'true' philosophies,"[55] this is a rather slight metaphysical affirmation.

The problem is in the identification of philosophies as *systems* putatively complete. It was never St. Thomas's intent, nor the claim of his commentators and those philosophizing within the ambit of the principles he articulated, to author a system exhaustively true and requiring no further development. But the question is precisely the metaphysical one: are there objectively and immutably true principles that paradigmatically open the mind to all the evidence of being? If the answer is yes than these principles illumine an inexhaustible field for a work of synthesis that will never be completed.

Furthermore the negation of these true metaphysical principles will indeed count as error and falsehood irrespective of the historical period in which it occurs. While Lobkowicz avers his desire to elude radical historicism, his method permits him only an *ad hoc* juggling of metaphysically incompatible systems lest we imply that some philosopher has discerned principles of permanent worth. Unsurprisingly, Lobkowicz cannot discern

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 414.
[55] Ibid., 413.

what Thomism is any longer, much less discern what would count as Thomistic "progress." *De facto* difference subtly becomes all that is determinative, as *de jure* truth can never decisively and permanently be located. This is a simple function of the dislocation of metaphysical truth and the speculative *eros* and *habitus.* Why else should acquaintance with the historical plurality of theories imply that permanent metaphysical elucidations have not occurred? or that they have, but that they are not criteria for judging philosophic progress?

By any Thomistic standard of progress, Woytyla's use of phenomenological method to instantiate the matter of Thomistic metaphysical judgments should be counted as some type of progress. So should Maritain's insights into the foundations of metaphysics and natural law, and certain aspects of his political theory; certainly the work of Maritain and Gilson in aesthetics, and Gilson's own work regarding the character of Christian philosophy, should count as Thomistic progress.

More contemporary instances of progress would surely note Alasdair Maclntyre's account of the role of tradition in philosophizing, [56] or Russell Hittinger's work in natural-law theory and legal epistemology. [57] And, at the auxiliary level, the explosion of textual apparatus and resources for Thomistic study counts as enormous material progress. But if philosophic progress necessarily sprang from historico-textual progress, the efforts of the Leonine Commission would be themselves associated with the great advances in Thomistic philosophy. Yet this is not so: it is the names of Maritain, and Gilson, and Woytyla, and others that represent genuine Thomistic philosophical progress in the twentieth century.

C) The Nouvelle Theologie and the Eclipse of Thomism

[56] What proponents of the historicist inversion of Thomistic study miss about Maclntyre's view of tradition is this: it is tradition already constituted *in* the philosophic order. It is not the role of historico-textual study he highlights, but the role of speculative nourishment by other minds-whether one is oneself an "historian" in Gilson's sense or whether, like St. Thomas himself or Jacques Maritain, one is not. Of course it follows from this that historico-textual study is of material importance to philosophy (whoever doubted it was?). But the *habitus* of philosophic study is prior to the auxiliary *habitus* nourishing this study.

[57] Russell Hittinger, "Natural Law as Law," *Americanjournal of Jurisprudence* 39 (1994): 1-32.

Lobkowicz writes that

> since the 1920s some of the most creative theologians of the day, mostly French Jesuits teaching at Lyons, and their pupils had begun to rediscover the older Church Fathers, in particular Great Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, but also Augustine. Theologians such as Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar were able to write theological treatises displaying a depth, but also of a liveliness almost unknown for a century because-without thereby in any way denying the importance of Thomas-they had studied and written about these older theologians, who were certainly much less systematicthan Aquinas but much closer to the words of Holy Scripture than were his writings. All in all, then, considering the ecclesiastical side of the development, it may have been not so much the influence of modern philosophy that called Thomism into question but rather the return to Scripture and the rediscovery of the relevance of the classical Fathers of the Church.[58]

Doubtless there is much to be said in behalf of such a view. Certainly the deepening and broadening of theological contemplation through scriptural and patristic studies is a positive achievement of de Lubac, von Balthasar, and others. But it may be doubted that these positive achievements in themselves detract from Thomistic study. What is omitted from this portrait is the deep negation that attended the real contributions of these figures, for this portrait omits mention of de Lubac's thesis regarding nature and grace. It is this thesis that largely negated the role of natural philosophy as a necessary condition for theology.[59] Whether this was de Lubac's intention or not, it is indeed an effect which appears to flow from acceptance of his thesis.

Of course the destruction of nature as a normative concept in theology was a door through which some passed in order to free themselves of dessicated manualism so as to contemplate scripture and the Church Fathers (in howsoever fideistic a fashion). But this should not obscure vision of the historical fact that a whole

"WHT,416.

[59] See Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel:Etude historique*(Paris: Aubier, 1946); idem, *Augustinianismand Modem Theology,*trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Herder, 1968), 242-51; and idem, *Le Mystere du surnaturel*(Paris: Aubier, 1965), noteworthy for its criticism of the Dominican commentator tradition, pp. 87-88, 142, 179-89. Cf. n. 60, *infra.*

group-the Concilium group-marched through this same door in the quite different direction of an historicized radical theological pluralism from which Catholic theology has yet to emerge.

To put the matter less controversially: the manualism into which Thomism had fallen was arguably inferior to the inspiration of *Aeterni patris.* It was like having a very abstract map of the city, rather than being introduced to the city in a way dictated by its very nature. Hence the manuals are still marvelous shorthand summaries of philosophic insight for those who have achieved such insight: but it is dubious that such manuals constitute a sufficient philosophic education in their own right, much less an introduction to the philosophic *habitus.* They appear as almost catechetical in form, submerging the living speculative *eros* in the fixity of an abbreviated philosophical context and thus concealing the full contemplative amplitude of philosophical life from the student.

In the light of such a situation-a situation dictated largely by apologetic considerations-de Lubac and other scholars sought a more contemplative direction. But the manualist impediment of the residue of scholasticism needed to be removed first. The upshot of this project was de Lubac's account of nature and grace, an account that so hot-wired nature into the orbit of grace that the role of natural philosophy in theology was derogated. [60] This opened the door for a renovation of theology along lines free of apologetical and manualist shackles. Yet it disposed of the baby with the bath water, abandoning any normative conception of nature as a precondition for Catholic theology. This was a giant

[60] Of course de Lubac insisted that grace is not intrinsic to human nature. But once nature itself is identified as already oriented apart from grace directly to beatific finality, "the natural" is no longer definitively distinct from "the supernatural." This is because substances are defined by powers, powers by acts, acts by objects, and objects by *ends.* If specifically and determinately supernatural beatitude is naturally sought-as distinct from a natural seeking for the indeterminate fulfilling good-then nature is supernaturally adequated, finite ends derogated, and supernatural grace merely a means for something antecedently emerging from nature. Natural desire for the indeterminate good, and for God as known from nature, is not yet directly oriented to supernatural bliss, whereas supernatural grace is. For the trajectory of nature to be elevated within grace it must be initially and diversely adequated from grace. These are systematic implications of his position never acknowledged by de Lubac, who rightly always maintained the character of grace as a pure, unmerited gift of God. Still, the objective implication of his thesis-the impossibility of defining nature in precision from grace-remains a dubious legacy.

step backwards-surely a tactical liberation, but a strategic ensnarement.

The thumbnail sketch I here forward is of course eminently controvertible. But I posit the proposition that neither biblical study (which was St. Thomas's first engagement as a theologian) nor regard for the Church Fathers (the tensions among whose thought kindles the appetite for profound synthesis) of itself dampens the inspiration of St. Thomas's theology and philosophy. It is rather that apologetical dilutions of the contemplative context of Thomas's teaching so constrained the paths of theological inquiry as to catapult the *nouvelletheologie* toward its radical solution. Unfortunately, as history witnesses, this solution did not enhance but rather wounded the legacy of Thomism. An apologetically motivated dislocation of Thomistic contemplation and inquiry was supplanted by an even more narrowly motivated solution[61] repudiating the normativity of the concept of nature in Catholic theology.[62]

As Lobkowicz states,

> Aquinas's *philosophy* had no counterpart in the history of the Church; but in *theology*, a return to the Church Fathers was possible and in the end significantly contributed to the calling into question of the of Aquinas's thought.[63]

This of course misses the very nature of St. Thomas's theology and philosophy as providing an hermeneutical key to the contemplation of the patristic legacy. Only persons whose speculative interests are artificially depressed could fail to be moved, in contemplating the writings of the Church Fathers, to

[61] That is, the solution of escaping an overly abstract, deontologized, catechetically formatted and dessicated scholasticism.

[62] Lobkowicz insists that de Lubac and Balthasar pursued their theological agendas "without thereby in any way denying the importance of Thomas" (WHT, 416). The word "importance" is well chosen: the prestige of Thomas's teaching construed as supporting the role of philosophy in theology needed to be dislodged for de Lubac's project to unfold. His desire to reinterpret Thomas thus cedes an exemplary importance. Whether de Lubac's account is consistent with the teaching of St. Thomas I treat elsewhere (see my "Obediential Potency, Human Knowledge, and the Natural Desire for God," *International Philosophical Quarterly* (March 1997). It is of course noteworthy that de Lubac's speculative derailment of St. Thomas's theology begins with an historique" -doubtless one reason why Gilson viewed it with such amazing and alarming sanguinity.

[63] WHT, 404.

a desire for deeper synthesis and unity. These exemplars of Christian wisdom write with profundity and passion about the same truth: but their understanding of this truth leads them to formulations that war with one another in a variety of respects. Is the Christian mind to suppose that these surface contradictions are unreconcilable?

Similarly, many theories of the world raise serious issues for Christians: are Christians to abandon the effort to understand the world lest they encounter difficulties? St. Thomas dearly thought not, and fashioned a theology and philosophy maximally and simultaneously open to the tradition of the Church and to the world.

Whatever one's explanation of the postconciliar eclipse of Thomism, the suggestion that biblical and patristic study motivated abandonment of the spirit of St. Thomas bespeaks an unfruitful fideism. This fideism fits very well with the historicist inversion of Thomism. An unhistoricized Thomism may insist upon certain prerequisites of rational, truthful discourse even within theological contexts. Once burnt, twice shy: the antischolastic revolution did not oust the manualist distortion in order to embrace a more genuine contribution of philosophical method within theology. Rather the goal was and is autonomy from philosophical methods and norms within theology,[64] a goal largely (if destructively) a cultural *fait accompli.* The mere medievalist makes no theologically bothersome claims to transcendental validity, and is a welcome domesticated mutation from the species "Thomist." Only, the historicist might say, let him know his place, and avoid declaiming about the truth.

III

Thomists who discern the perennial validity of an *organon* of principles naturally wish to understand these principles better and apply them more extensively as well as more deeply. Thus they

" Cf. David Schindler, "The Person: Philosophy, Theology, and Receptivity" *Communio* (Spring 1994). All philosophical categories are held to be subject to a higher theological *gestalt,* as anteriorly open to revision, and this without prejudice to the integrity of philosophic method. The problem with this? Immutable truths are in themselves intrinsically unrevisable.

will necessarily be challenged to judge and to some degree to assimilate the contributions of other modes of thought. Under fire both from within the Church and from without after the Second Vatican Council, Thomistic scholars were offered a precious relief from such conflicted contemporaneity by the historicist inversion of philosophy. This inversion provided a safe enclave from within which Thomist research would not necessarily provoke either theological hostility or the opposition of other styles of philosophizing: for it was but "medieval scholarship." Such scholarship has made material contributions to Thomistic theology and philosophy. But through a sad irony of history the prestige of these material contributions has been portrayed as sufficient replacement for the prime and essential duties of the philosophic office itself.

The Leonine Commission, aiming to place historico-textual energies at the service of a Thomistic renaissance, has instead placed wondrous tools before scholars many of whom (like Lobkowicz)[65] no longer think of themselves as philosophers and find it difficult to say what Thomism is or why it-should matter. Some who would speak convincingly to these l:ist questions neglect the single most primary ingredient: before one can be a Thomist philosopher one must first be a philosopher. The philosopher's task is first and foremost to seek the truth, and so always to preserve and cultivate the philosophic *habitus.* Insofar as the philosopher is an academic teacher the encouragement of such *habitus* in others is a complete and challenging cooperative work.

Historicist inversion of Thomistic philosophic study-a phenomenon with complex theological and philosophic causes-has suppressed speculative gifts essential to philosophic progress as well as to the common good of the Church. While Nicholas Lobkowicz's writing manifests an instructive material knowledge of the history of Thomism, it is finally an *apologia* for the historicist inversion that occludes both speculative and historical judgment. It remains the case that reflective consideration of the speculative history upon which Lobkowicz

[65] WHT, 397: "I do not think that I am a philospher myself."

comments is the path to recovery. Hence he must be thanked for exhibiting in his account the very syndrome at whose feet the (surely temporary) eclipse of Thomism may be laid.

The Thomist 62 (1998): 75-96

A VIA MARITAINIA: NONCONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE BY VIRTUOUS INCLINATION

DONALD F. HAGGERTY

Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Emmitsburg, Maryland

I

A SIGNIFICANT ASPECT of Jacques Maritain's originality as a Catholic philosopher was his ability to discern analogous patterns of operation in disparate areas of human knowledge. One example of this resourcefulness involved proposing a nonconceptual cognitive process to explain poetic knowledge, mystical knowledge, and knowledge of the natural law. In all three instances, according to Maritain, the arrival at an act of knowing does not depend on the abstractive power of the intellect. Instead the customary role of the concept as a cognitional sign is replaced by an alternative vehicle for the realization of knowledge. The cognitive medium is different in each case--creative emotion, supernatural charity, or natural inclinations, respectively. But the common pattern in Maritain's analysis was to posit a reservoir of intelligent preconceptual activity beneath consciousness as the origin and ground for the eventual knowledge grasped in conscious awareness.

While Maritain pursued these topics with notable distinction, he left some intriguing questions still uninvestigated. A case in point is the relation of prudential knowledge to a nonconceptual process of cognition. The invitation is clearly present because of the connection between prudence and a virtue-modified appetitive life. To function effectively as the intellectual virtue it is, prudence requires an ordering of the appetites to their proper

human ends. The moral virtues provide this rectitude of inclination within the appetites, but by means of interior attractions or repulsions not always consciously adverted to. These tendential movements remain vital and operative in the appetites as a dynamic a priori structure of interior inclination before any formal choice of action takes place. The result is to predispose the person of advanced virtue to lean in the direction of virtuous action prior to any conscious deliberation over existential options of choice.[1]

The question arises whether the interior dynamisms residing in the appetitive life provide a type of underlying cognitive source for the prudential knowledge eventually grasped in concrete instances of moral choice. Though St. Thomas Aquinas did not write expansively on the matter, at two places in the *Summa Theologiae* he gives support to this possibility when he describes a practical knowledge linked to appetitive predispositions. He contrasts a twofold manner of judgment: one by way of discursive reasoning and the other by way of "a certain connaturality." In the first case a correct judgment concerning a moral matter, such as chastity, depends on acquired learning after sustained inquiry into moral science. Intellectual activity is the pathway to such knowledge, which produces mere intellectual conformity with a moral truth grasped in conceptual formulation by a "perfect use of reason."[2] In this instance it is possible for the intellect to achieve knowledge of chastity while the person is at the same time devoid of the actual virtue. On the other hand, a person who possesses virtue, writes St. Thomas, "judges rightly of what concerns that virtue by his very inclination towards it."[3] Thus the

[1] In a number of places Aquinas stresses the necessity of moral virtue rectifying the appetites as a precondition for prudence to judge well and command virtuous choices. For example, *STh* 1-11, q. 57, a. 4: "Ad prudentiam, quae est recta ratio agibilium, requiritur quod homo sit bene dispositus circa fines; quod quidem est per appetitum rectum. Et ideo ad prudentiam requiritur moralis virtus, per quam fit appetitus rectus" (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 58, a. 2; 1-11, q. 65, a. 1; 11-11, q. 47, a. 13, ad 2).

[2] *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 2: "Rectitudo autem judicii potest contingere dupliciter: uno modo, secundum perfectum usum rationis; alio modo, propter connaturalitatem quamdam ad ea de quibus jam est judicandum. Sicut de his quae ad castitatem pertinent per rationis inquisitionem recte judicat ille qui didicit scientiam moralem: sed per quamdam connaturalitem ad ipsa recte judicat de eis ille qui habet habitum castitatis."

[3] *STh* I, q.1, a. 6, ad 3: "Cum judicium ad sapientem pertineat, secundum duplicem modum judicandi dupliciter sapientia dicitur. Contingit enim aliquem judicare uno modo per modum inclinationis, sicut qui habet habitum virtutis recte judicat de his quae sunt secundum virtutem .... Alio modo per modum

presence of chastity as a virtuous *habitus* modifying the concupiscible appetite inclines a person to judge concrete matters related to chastity in accordance with the virtue. When faced with a moral dilemma, a practical judgment is reached not through an intellectual process of inquiry but through a tendential interior bent which spontaneously inclines the mind to shape its judgment in conformity with chastity.

An important aspect of this second type of judgment is the apparent mingling of the intellect's conscious awareness with tendential propensities that serve as an active substratum of interior inclination beneath the reasoning intellect. The intellect arrives at a judgment because moral virtue has trained the inclinations to a natural attraction for all that is consonant with the virtue. The resulting practical judgment is due to an ensemble of prior influences which register on the intellect an inchoate experiential guidance through appetite and interior inclination. It is our contention that the prompt ease with which virtuous actions are chosen when virtue is well-developed reflects not only a strength of tendential inclination residing within the appetitive life, but something akin to a type of instinctive practical knowledge. Human experience gives witness to an apparent naturalness in such virtuous inclinations and the actions that accompany them. But the challenge nonetheless remains to explain the process of practical recognition by which a seemingly spontaneous attraction arises toward a concrete opportunity for virtuous action. [4]

Our effort here will be to expose an analogous pattern of cognition that occurs in creative inspiration and in the discernment of moral choice. Although Maritain did not explicitly make this connection himself, his writings on the creative emotion in poetic knowledge bear striking similarity as a

cognitionis, sicut aliquis instructus in scientia morali posset judicare de actibus virtutis etiamsi virtutem non haberet."

[4] Aquinas's acknowledgement of the need for a "pre-existing disposition" to virtue implies an intelligent ordination operative in the *habitus* as a guiding influence beneath conscious awareness. *STh* 1-11,q. 55, a. 2, ad 1: "Modus actionis sequitur dispositionem agentis; unumquodque enim quale est, talia operatur. Et ideo cum virtus sit principium aliqualis operationis, oportet quod in operante praeexistat secundum virtutem aliqua conformis dispositio." Our effort is to account epistemologically for the practical truth that "mode of action follows the disposition of the agent."

cognitional vehicle to what he termed a "preconscious notion of reason" when he was speculating on the existence of what he called a pre-philosophical knowledge of moral value. When examined in tandem with the creative emotion, this so-called preconscious notion of reason fits very aptly the requirements necessary for a nonconceptual cognitional medium functioning as a preliminary stage in prudential knowledge. The ultimate purpose of developing such an analogy is to disclose important cognitional implications of growth in virtue. A refinement of appetitive inclination accompanies any enhancement of the human person through virtue. But this means precisely that preconscious intelligent activity has intensified in its guiding power and as a critical catalyst for choices in the existential order.

II

The foundation for an analogy between creative intuition and practical discernment under the influence of moral virtue depends on the existence of a "spiritual unconscious" in the structure of the human psyche. According to Maritain, the spiritual unconscious can be understood as a locus of preconscious activity animated by an active intelligence and marked by a basic reasonableness in its activity. As an active zone of purposive intelligence, albeit below the threshold of consciousness, it is distinct from the Freudian unconscious, deaf to reason. Although the spiritual unconscious and the Freudian unconscious exist simultaneously and both are screened from the self-reflexive grasp of consciousness, they register independent effects on consciousness. While the Freudian unconscious can sometimes dominate consciousness by irrational instinct, the spiritual unconscious constitutes an interior locale for preconscious converging movements that are consonant with the affective life and the appetitive tendencies of the human subject. As the attractions linked to emotional experience or to the appetitive life emerge into conscious awareness, they serve as catalysts to creative intuition or to moral recognitions. Discernible patterns of attraction felt in emotion or recognized in moral discernment thus reflect the intelligent vitality of tendential dynamisms

emerge into conscious awareness, they serve as catalysts to creative intuition or to moral recognitions. Discernible patterns of attraction felt in emotion or recognized in moral discernment thus reflect the intelligent vitality of tendential dynamisms operative below consciousness. In his work on creative intuition, Maritain proposes the importance of this subliminal presence of intelligent preconscious activity not only for creative inspiration but as a source of knowledge for concrete moral guidance:

> [I]t is enough to think of the way in which our free decisions, when they are really free, are made, especially those decisions which commit our entire life-to realize that there exists a deep unconscious world of activity, for the intellect and the will, from which the acts and fruits of human consciousness and the clear perceptions of the mind emerge, and that the universe of concepts, logical connections, rational discursus and rational deliberation, in which the activity of the intellect takes definite form and shape, is preceded by the hidden workings of an immense and primal preconscious life. Such a life develops in night, but in a night which is translucid and fertile.[5]

Clearly this understanding of the psyche conflicts with a common perception of the boundary of consciousness as a disjunction between rational intelligence and the random irrationality of the unconscious. Rather than a kind of dream state marked by illogic and directionless movements, the spiritual unconscious manifests a primordial intelligence deeply rooted in the rational nature of the human person. The notion of intelligence is thereby not reducible to the operations of conscious life. On the contrary, the existence of a spiritual unconscious allows us to extend our understanding of human intelligence beyond the discursive activity of consciousness to include prior stages of non-discursive activity which shape and influence consciousness in certain indeterminate ways. Moreover, as one might expect from the choice of terminology, a profound spiritual operation is implicit in the existence of a spiritual unconscious. The soul itself is the ultimate source of the hidden springs of interior vitality that will move the intellect in its dynamisms to

[5] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, Bollingen Series 35 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 68.

seek knowledge or to know in an inspired manner. As Maritain writes:

> Reason does not only consist of its conscious logical tools and manifestations, nor does the will consist only of its deliberate conscious determinations. Far beneath the sunlit surface thronged with explicit concepts and judgments, words and expressed resolutions or movements of the will, are the sources of knowledge and creativity, of love and supra-sensuous desires, hidden in the primordial translucid night of the intimate vitality of the soul. Thus it is that we must recognize the existence of an unconscious or preconscious which pertains to the spiritual powers of the human soul and to the inner abyss of personal freedom, and of the personal thirst and striving for knowing and seeing, grasping and expressing: a spiritual or musical unconscious which is specifically different from the automatic or deaf unconscious. [6]

The fundamental premise as such is that there exists, as Maritain expresses it, "a vast realm where reason and intelligence function in a way that is not yet either conceptual, logical, or reasoning ... a whole life of intelligence and reason, at once intuitive and unexpressed, and preceding rational explications . . . which is the unconscious of the mind at its source, the preconscious of the life of intelligence and of reason."[7] Our concern is to show in what manner this preconscious life of intelligence, inhabited by affectivity and appetitive tendencies, provides a type of preconceptual moral guidance prior to any discursive deliberation on the moral suitability of a particular choice in the existential order. The undercurrent of intelligent activity functioning beneath conscious awareness seems to suggest this is so. For the attractions of the appetitive life not only indicate the existence of tendential dynamisms operative below consciousness but reveal consistent patterns of desire for virtuous choices registered in consciousness itself. How is it, then, that

[6] Ibid., 69. Louis Gardet, "Poesie et experiences mystiques: L'apport de Jacques and Raissa Maritain," *Notes et Documents* 7 (1977): 16-24, refers to the spiritual unconscious as "l'une des grandes intuitions de Jacques Maritain, et dont nous n'avons pas fini d'exploiter la richesse: ['existence de cette zone clarie-obscure que Maritain aime appeler 'le preconscient spirituel de l'ame,' toute traversee par !'influx de !'intellect illuminateur, mais ou ne sont point encore operees Jes distinctions d'objet et de modes de la conscience claire" (20). The present effort to establish the legitimacy of a nonconceptual moral knowledge through inclination is in part an attempt to "exploit" more fully that intuition.

[7] Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy*, trans. Cornelia N. Borgerhoff (Albany, N.Y.: Magi, 1990), 53.

what is recognized as a good to be pursued in concrete action initially unleashes a power of attraction upon the human person prior to an actual choice?

III

Before continuing further with this question, it is appropriate to turn now to creative intuition and examine the preliminary stages of an analogous cognitive process rooted in the intelligent vitality of the spiritual unconscious. Contrary to caricatures of artistic inspiration, creative intuition does not leap forth from nothingness nor from within a mental vacuum. Rather, notes Maritain, it manifests "a quite particular intellectual process, a kind of experience or knowledge without parallel in logical reason." [8] While it involves, as all knowing does, an activity of the intellect, it is a knowledge closely aligned to the artist's resonance with a transitory state of strong emotion. As Maritain writes, "poetic knowledge proceeds from the intellect in its most genuine and essential capacity as intellect, though through the indispensable instrumentality of feeling." [9] In Maritain's description, a cognitive process combining preconscious intelligent activity and affective sensitivity is requisite to creative production:

> In the mind of the poet, poetic knowledge arises in an unconscious or preconscious manner, and emerges into consciousness in a sometimes almost imperceptible though imperative and irrefragable way, through an impact both emotional and intellectual or through an unpredictable experiential insight, which gives notice of its existence, but does not express it. [10]

More to the point, in creative intuition an extramental reality confronted in sense experience provokes an emotion which will become, within the preconscious activity of the spiritual uncon-

[8] Maritain, *Creative Intuition,* 84.

[9] Ibid., 87.

[10] Ibid., 86. The failure to acknowledge the active intelligence at work in the spiritual unconscious would surely have negative consequences for artists. Robert Speaight, "The Springs of Poetry," *New Scholasticism* 46 (1972): 51-69, points out Maritain's awareness of a "crisis of subjectivity" (60) in modern art, bent on pursuing an exalted intellectuality while liberating itself from conceptual reason. For Maritain this ambivalence is due to a disregard for intelligent preconscious activity in the "mysterious centers of thought" *(Creative Intuition,* 96) where creative intuition lies.

scious, a nonconceptual cognitional vehicle for the realization of creative knowledge. Thus the so-called creative emotion that is a necessary catalyst to creative intuition is itself dependent on the artist's reception of extramental "things" "into the obscure recesses of his passion," where they are known "as inseparable from himself and from his emotion, and in truth as identified with himself."[11] The accent on the "creative" aspect of this emotion signifies that it registers within the spiritual unconscious a unique content whereby extramental things and the subjectivity of the artist are "both obscurely conveyed through an intentional or spiritualized emotion."[12] A simultaneous seizing of things and the self in a single intellective act is the defining note of such an experiential vehicle of knowledge. "[f]he thing grasped is grasped only through its affective resonance in and union with the subjectivity."[13] This immanent act of affective identification between the self and "things" through the presence of an emotion penetrating the spiritual unconscious is merely a preliminary stage to the act of creating a work of art. The fully "embodied" expression of artistic knowledge requires the actual making of the artistic work. Nonetheless the very tendency of this "spiritualized emotion" is to manifest itself in a creative work. Until then, however, the creative intuition remains within an emotional matrix of obscure knowledge, detached from concepts and discursive reasoning, yet at the same time always linked to some actual encounter with extramental being that has initially provoked emotional reaction in the spiritual unconscious.

A knowledge that depends in such a manner on an interpenetration of emotional affect and some extramental reality produces a distinct alternative to conceptual apprehension. While one must acknowledge that the intellect alone, not emotion, has the capacity for knowing, in the cognitive process that leads to creative intuition the "spiritualized emotion" takes on a cognitional role ordinarily assigned to the concept. One should note how different this is from the usual process of conceptual reasomng. In the latter, through the intentional existence

[11] Ibid., 83.
[12] Ibid., 90.
[13] Ibid., 93.

possessed by a concept, the object known, immaterialized under the cognitional sign of the concept and identified in *esse* with extramental being, is made one with the intellect in the act of judgment. On the other hand, in the case of creative intuition, an emotion linked to extramental being becomes an intentional means by which a reality is not only conveyed into the depths of subjectivity, but "re-colored" by the emotion's activation of preconscious mo.vement within the spiritual unconscious. The creative emotion undergoes a unique "spiritualization" in its link to extramental reality precisely as it penetrates the spiritual unconscious. It is the "spiritualizing" aspect of this creative emotion that makes creative intuition obscurely reveal both the subjectivity of the poet and the singularity of things. To see how the creative emotion transforms extramental reality in this manner, we should note that the so-called creative emotion has a dual effect once it penetrates the spiritual unconscious.

In the first place, says Maritain, "it spreads into the entire soul, it imbues its very being, and thus certain particular aspects in things become connatural to the soul affected in this way." [14] The necessary resonance of an artist's subjectivity with extramental things requires this pervading presence of emotion as the catalyst to artistic knowledge. But always it is extramental "things" which are the initial source of the emotion which has penetrated the spiritual unconscious. The sparking of creative intuition thus entails not simply the seizing of any random emotion by a subjective act, but an experiential response within the spiritual unconscious in which "aspects in things" become connatural to the artist precisely through their immaterial presence in the emotion now pervading the spiritual unconscious. "In poetic intuition objective reality and subjectivity, the world and the whole of the soul, coexist inseparably." [15] *As* Maritain says in his explication of such creative emotion as a medium for knowledge:

> It becomes for the intellect a determining means or instrumental vehicle through which the things which have impressed this emotion on the soul, and the deeper, invisible things that are contained in them or connected with them,

[14] Ibid., 88.
[15] Ibid., 90.

and which have ineffable correspondence or coaptation with the soul thus affected, and which resound in it, are grasped and known obscurely. [16]

In the second place, however, and more specifically, emotion "is received in the vitality of intelligence," [17] that is, the intelligence natural to the spiritual unconscious, which remains in a virtual state in respect to the act of knowing, and yet is already permeated by intelligent light. The emotion which has imbued the very being of the soul, disposing or inclining it in a pervasive manner, becomes a point of converging strength of feeling within the spiritual unconscious. Through the active intelligence animating the spiritual unconscious of the artist, the emotion is subsequently transformed into a vehicle for knowledge, but always tied indissolubly to the "things" which have become connatural to the artist through the presence of that emotion. The emotion serves as the nonconceptual means by which the self and things are grasped together in a single intuitive apprehension. In that moment the emotion itself, linked to an extramental reality, takes on an objectivity as the intentional means for knowledge. As Maritain explains, we are dealing here with "emotion which *causes to express*, emotion as formative, emotion as intentional vehicle of reality known through inclination and as proper medium of poetic intuition." [18] The epistemological nuances are complex and demand a careful reading.

> [I]t suffices for emotion disposing or inclining ... the entire soul in a certain determinate manner to be thus received in the undetermined vitality and productivity of the spirit ... then, while remaining emotion, it is made-with respect to the aspects in things which are connatural to, or like, the soul it imbues-into an instrument of intelligence judging through connaturality, and plays, in the process of this knowledge through likeness between reality and subjectivity, the part of a nonconceptual intrinsic determination of intelligence in its preconscious activity. By this very fact it is transferred into the state of objective intentionality; it is spiritualized, it becomes intentional, that is to say, conveying, in a state of immateriality, things other than itself. [19]

[16] Ibid., 89.

[17] Ibid., 88.

"Ibid., 310-11 n. 7.

[19] Ibid., 88-89. See G. Richard Dimler, "Creative Intuition in the Aesthetic Theories of Croce and Maritain," *New Scbolasticism* 37 (1963): 472-92 for perceptive insights into the epistemological realism that animates Maritain's conception of a simultaneous grasp of things and subjectivity as the ground for

Creative knowledge thus has its moment of realization when an emotion, permeated by the light intrinsic to the spiritual unconscious, has fructified as the intentional vehicle of knowledge. Maritain calls this instant of poetic intuition taking place within the spiritual unconscious an "intellective flash" which results in a "spiritualized emotion."[20] The creative emotion should therefore not be equated with "the merely subjective emotions and feelings of the poet as a man." Creative emotion is linked to them as a source, it "lives on them," but it is "bound to transmute them."[21] This is emotion not as disengaged from subjectivity, grasped extraneously as a potential "subject" for a work of art, but emotion as experiential, engaging subjectivity within the spiritual unconscious. It is, as Maritain describes, "emotion as *form* ... being one with the creative intuition."[22] In this analogous sense by which it replaces the concept in the process of knowledge, experiential emotion is "raised to the level of the intellect" and thereby becomes the "determining means or instrumental vehicle through which reality is grasped."[23]

A final issue concerns the content of what is grasped by creative knowledge. It would be misleading to speak here precisely of an object of knowledge, since poetic intuition involves no objectivization in a concept to serve as the intentional means for knowing. The relation of creative knowledge to extramental things is different. A creative emotion has assumed at this moment, as the concept does in the formation of an intelligible species, the immaterial condition of the intellect. But rather than being directed toward the grasp of universal essences, as a concept is, the creative emotion provides an immediate link to the existential order. In creative intuition the singular existent is grasped in the obscure experience by which it resonates in the subjectivity of the artist by means of the "spiritualized emotion."

the creative intuition-in contrast to Croce's Kantian turn "away from the beautiful thing in itself to the subjective concept we form of it" (474).

[20] Ibid., 89.

[21] Ibid., 311 n. 7.

[22] Jbid., 87.

[23] lbid.

[P]oetic intuition is not directed toward essences, for essences are disengaged from concrete reality in a concept, a universal idea, and scrutinized by means of reasoning; they are an object for speculative knowledge, they are not the thing grasped by poetic intuition. Poetic intuition is directed toward concrete existence as connatural to the soul pierced by a given emotion: that is to say, each time toward some singular existent, toward some complex of concrete and individual reality, seized in the violence of its sudden self-assertion and in the total unicity of its passage in time.[24]

IV

With this understanding of creative emotion as a nonconceptual cognitive vehicle, we can address now the question of how it is that an opportunity for virtuous action is often recognized through a seemingly instinctive awareness before conscious deliberation about an actual choice takes place. If we turn to Maritain's description of what he termed "a preconscious notion of reason" we find a clear similarity to the triggering function of the creative emotion as a nonconceptual cognitional vehicle. Indeed the existence of such a preconscious entity can clarify the reason for spontaneous attractions to virtuous actions. First of all, we should note that an initial attraction toward a virtuous action depends on some connection between a sense perception and the preconscious life of tendential inclination. The presence of moral virtue residing in the appetites implies this possibility. In a manner akin to the production of a creative emotion, certain sense experiences will inevitably provoke tendential movement within the appetites whenever moral virtue inhabits the appetites. Given a singular circumstance and the particular sense perception it produces, a spontaneous attraction felt toward any contingent action indicates a correspondence between a virtue-modified interior appetite and the moral opportunity contained in a concrete circumstance. When the opportunity is for doing good, the appetite's structure of tendential inclination will resonate with the moral content present in a unique possibility for choice. That the practical intellect subsequently commands a choice by the exercise of prudence follows the preliminary appetitive attraction provoked

[24] Ibid., 91.

through the immediacy of a sense perception. The initial sense perception has triggered a reaction in the appetitive life toward a particular virtuous act.[25]

The first notable point of resemblance, then, between the preconscious notion of reason and the creative emotion is a necessary connection to sensory experience. In both instances an encounter with a concrete circumstance produces a sense perception that will penetrate the spiritual unconscious in a unique manner. In the case of the preconscious notion of reason, however, rather than producing an emotionally charged association, the sensory encounter involves for the subject some exigency of moral significance. Like the creative emotion, a preconscious notion of reason will remain identified with the empirical observation embodied in a singular encounter. But this is not simply the imageable content of a sense experience. There are moral implications in what the senses are confronting. An implicit engagement with a content of moral import is taking place. The preconscious notion of reason conveys to the spiritual unconscious this unique moral resonance extracted from the concrete situation. As a result the perception filtered through the senses registers an appealing or a disquieting effect at a preconscious level of awareness before any formal reflection occurs. While the moral content identified with this sense experience will remain in an inchoate state within the spiritual unconscious-"implicit, immersed, not disengaged for itself' [26]--certain moral overtones are nonetheless one with it, that is, immersed in it as a sense perception. "The situation in question is seized in a certain concrete view or concrete notion of reason which remains engaged, immersed, embodied in the situation

[25] The development of a refined sensitivity of vision for virtuous opportunity necessarily accompanies the modification of the appetites through moral virtue. This is implied when Aquinas refers to virtue as a "good quality of the mind" ("bona qualitas mentis": *STh* 1-11, q. 55, a. 4) and prudence making the intellect "suitably affected towards things ordained to the end" ("Necesse est in ratione esse aliquam virtutem intellectualem, per quam perficiatur ratio ad hoc quod convenienter se habeat ad ea quae sunt ad finem. Et haec virtus est prudentia": *STh* 1-11, q. 57, a. 5).

[26] Maritain, *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 56.

itself, inseparable from it, and preconscious, not expressed in a mental word. "[27]

Maritain's claim here is that the entrance of such preconscious notions of reason into the spiritual unconscious will produce certain partially formed, preconceptual insights in an immediate manner. Such insights are "felt" rather than reflexively grasped, felt as true by some mode of preconceptual intelligence or morally intelligent instinct. The question is how an immersed or preconscious notion of reason embedded in an empirical observation can provide such an incipient form of preconceptual moral knowledge. The answer is in its effect on the appetitive dynamisms animating the life of interior inclination in the spiritual unconscious. Maritain's contention is that the empirical fact engaging the subject's powers of observation sparks appetitive movement within the spiritual unconscious precisely because the preconscious notion of reason identified with an extramental reality has this provoking effect on appetitive inclinations. The basis for this effect, however, depends on a proper understanding of natural inclination as an ontological source of vital tendencies within human nature.

Thus we should note that the dynamisms of interior inclination operative in the appetites always function to some degree from their source in the natural inclinations of human nature. Natural inclinations being ontologically rooted in the rational nature of the human person, they possess a coherent intelligibility that reflects the essential rational ends of human life. Inasmuch as rational ends exercise a power of attraction upon

[27] Ibid. Our argument is that the moral content implicit in a preconscious notion of reason, constituted as it is by confrontation with a singular circumstance, is a key preliminary element in prudential knowledge. It would seem that Aquinas's "sensibly conceivable singular" in the following passage suggests this notion of a moral content imbedded in the contingent circumstance.

> [S]cilicet prudentia, est extremi, scilicet singularis operabilis, quod oportet accipere ut principium in agendis: cuius quidem extremi non est scientia, quia aliquo sensu percipitur: non quidem illo quo sentimus species propriorum sensibilium, puta coloris, soni et huiusmodi, qui est sensus proprius; sed sensu interiori, quo percipimus imaginabilia … Et ad istum sensum, idest interiorem, magis pertinet prudentia, per quam perficitur ratio particularis ad recte existimandum de singularibus intentionibus operabilium. (VI *Ethic.*, lect. 7, n. 1214-15)

natural inclinations, there is necessarily an intelligent direction intrinsic to the finalities of natural inclination. But precisely as tendential movements toward ends consonant with the intelligible finalities of a rational nature, natural inclinations lie below the threshold of consciousness and inhabit the reservoir of active intelligence Maritain calls the spiritual unconscious. They operate as interior dynamisms of attraction within the preconscious life of appetitive movement. These tendential attractions arising from natural inclinations manifest the preconscious intelligent activity that takes place in the spiritual unconscious. And this "intelligence" of natural inclinations drawing the human person toward rational human ends indicates the underlying active intelligence present in the spiritual unconscious. It is in the spiritual unconscious that natural inclinations exert a directive impact upon the intellect as preconscious catalysts to moral knowledge. [28]

Once it penetrates the psyche, then, according to Maritain, a preconscious notion of reason becomes "a point of convergence for the forces of the person's emotions and propensities ... a fixed point which sets in motion proportionate inclinations and emotions. "[29] In other words, it functions as an organizing element within the spiritual unconscious for the tendential dynamisms of the human person. This occurs because of a subtle action on the preconscious life of the human psyche when a locus of attraction "operates like a pattern for our inclinations" [30] within the spiritual unconscious. More specifically, as a point of convergence for the appetitive life within the spiritual unconscious, a preconscious notion of reason transmutes the lower inclinations stemming from

[28] The notion of natural inclination possessing an intelligent direction in the spiritual unconscious complements Aquinas's description of the inchoate manner in which virtue is seminally present in human nature.

> [V]irtus est homini naturalis secundum quandam inchoationem. Secundum quidem naturam speciei, inquantum in ratione homini insunt naturaliter quaedam principia naturaliter cognita tam scibilium quam agendorum, quae sunt quaedam seminalia intellectualium virtutum et moralium; et inquantum in voluntate inest quidam naturalis appetibus bani quad est secundum rationem. (*STh* 1-11, q. 63, a. 1)

[29] Maritain, *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy, 56-57.*

[30] Ibid., *56.*

the animal dimension of human nature into properly rational tendencies consonant with the finalities of a spiritual nature. And it does so by becoming a focal point of attraction for tendential inclinations toward the essential finalities of a rational human nature.[31] Thus, in Maritain's description, these preconscious notions of reason become "points of irradiation, 'centers of organization, "'[32] which first disengage the inclinations of the animal nature as "instincts predetermined by nature" and then "cause to emerge the inclinations of a specifically different and typically human order."[33] These latter inclinations now enter a higher area of the psyche where the irradiations of reason natural to the spiritual unconscious alter their very structure as inclinations and raise them to a properly rational direction. Once they are in place as rational inclinations, spontaneous judgments of moral value ensue on the basis of insights that remain yet to be conceptually formulated, determined simply by rational inclinations operating as a preconscious activity of the intellect. "[I]t is according to these inclinations," writes Maritain, "that conscious reason, reason functioning as reason, will spontaneously make its value judgments."[34]

In Maritain's view the origin of these spontaneous judgments is therefore "an inclination, a tendency, which a preconscious and 'immersed' notion of reason caused to rise up from the instinctive dynamism of nature."[35] If judgments of moral value occur subsequently, it is by a spontaneous agreement between rationally

[31] The connection between such essential finalities and the inclinations expressive of a rational nature is clear in Aquinas, *De Veritate,* q. 22, a. 1:

> Aliquando autem id quod dirigitur vel inclinatur in finem, consequitur a dirigente vel movente aliquam formam per quam sibi talis inclinatio competat: uncleet talis inclinatio erit naturalis, quasi habens principium naturale .... Et per hunc modum omnia naturalia, in ea quae eis conveniunt, sunt inclinata, habentia in seipsis aliquod inclinationis principium, ratione cuius eorum inclinatio naturalis est, ita ut quodammodo ipsa vadant, et non solum ducantur in fines debitos .... naturalia vadunt in finem, in quantum cooperantur inclinanti et dirigenti per principium eis inditum.

[32] Maritain, *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy,57.*

[33] Ibid.

"Ibid., 58.

[35] Ibid.

ordered inclinations and that which is instinctively discerned as a moral value by reason responding in an unarticulated, unreflective way to these inclinations. Maritain can speak in this regard of "reason acting vitally, organically, like a catalytic ferment which releases, by virtue of a preconscious notion, not made distinct in concepts, natural inclinations on which moral judgments will be founded. "[36] Affective inclinations thus function in themselves as a preconscious preliminary light for the human person inasmuch as they are rooted in the rational nature of the human person.[37] As Maritain writes, "we are dealing with judgments determined by inclinations which are themselves rooted in reason operating in a preconscious way."[38] This is prior to any argument in defense of such values through discursive effort, prior to any ability to explain and justify them. Nonetheless intelligent activity is vitally present at this preconceptual level, and not only when formal modes of cognition are operative.[39]

"Ibid., *59.*

[37] The manner in which virtue inclines the appetites manifests a similiar rootedness in the nature of the human person, since to act virtuously is to act in accord with reason, that is, with a human nature inscribed with rational tendencies.

> [l]d quod est contra ordinem rationis, proprie est contra naturam hominis inquantum est homo; quod autem est secundum rationem, est secundum naturam hominis inquantum est **homo. "Bonum autem hominis est secundum rationem esse, et malum hominis est praeter** rationem esse," ut Dionysius <licit [!2!: Divinis Nominibus, iv]. Uncle virtus humana, quae hominem facit bonum, et opus ipsius bonum reddit, intantum est secundum naturam hominis, inquantum convenit rationi. *(STh* 1-11, q. 71, a. 2)

[38] Maritain, *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy,* 59.

[39] The role of prudence is to command the choice of a means to realize an end consonant with appetitive inclinations rectified by the moral virtues. The necessity of an appetitive dynamism as the ground for that choice of means suggests that tendential inclinations enter into the cognitive process of prudence as an intellectual virtue.

> Duo enim sunt necessaria in opere virtutis. Quorum unum est, ut homo habeat rectam intentionem de fine; quod quidem facit virtus moralis, inquantum inclinat appetitum in debitum finem. Aliud autem est quod homo bene se habeat circa ea quae sunt ad finem: et hoc facit prudentia quae est bene consiliativa et iudicativa et praeceptiva eorum quae sunt ad finem. Et sic ad opus virtutis concurrit et prudentia quae est perfectiva rationalis per essentiam, et virtus moralis quae est perfectiva appetitivae quae est rationalis per participationem. (VI *Ethic.,* lect. 10, n. 1269)

V

Maritain envisaged the preconscious notion of reason as leading to a preliminary natural or prephilosophical awareness of moral value that would later be conceptualized in an abstractive process of formal reasoning. His argument was that value judgments initially can take place by conformity to the active dynamisms of interior inclination. He called this a "natural knowledge of moral values," and he meant by this a judgment by mode of inclination that affirms the validity of generalized ethical standards. Here by contrast we want to posit the preconscious notion of reason as an intentional vehicle in the realization of prudential knowledge in the existential confrontation with a singular moral choice. To do so we first of all turn again to the "intelligent ordination" possible in the life of interior inclinations.

Within the spiritual unconscious, as we have seen, the existence of natural inclinations occupies a vital and active presence, but one which is subject to modification. For prudence to function well as an intellectual virtue, a properly ordered life of appetitive inclination is requisite. The moral virtues provide this undercurrent of tendential movement in directing the appetites to the rational ends of human nature, without which prudence would be ineffective. Virtue-modified appetites thus create an altered dispositional state within the spiritual unconscious, which amounts to a fundamental preconscious readiness for tending spontaneously toward human goods.[40] In the existential order of contingent choices, then, a particular good registers a power of attraction upon the appetitive disposition because the appetite has been rectified by moral virtue prior to

[40] The appetitive *habitus* of moral virtue makes virtuous judgment connatural to the virtuous man.

> Sicut homo disponitur ad recte se habendum circa principia universalia per intellectum naturalem vel per habitum scientiae, ita ad hoc quod recte se habeat circa principia particularia agibilium, quae sunt fines, oportet quod perficiatur per aliquos habitus secundum quos fiat quodammodo homini connaturale recte judicare de fine. Et hoc fit per virtutem moralem; virtuosus enim recte judicat de fine virtutis, quia "qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei," ut dicitur in *Ethic [Ethics* Ill, 5. 1114a32]. *(STh* 1-11, q. 58, a. 5)

the actual attraction for a choice embodying some virtuous option. Though the moral virtues remain directed toward essential human ends in a very general manner, their influence will be experienced in the appetitive movement toward particular goods present in concrete situations. [41]

Given Maritain's understanding of an active preconscious intelligence vitally at work within the spiritual unconscious and the dependency of prudence on virtue-modified inclinations, it is reasonable to expect that there be some cause, other than inclination itself, provoking the concentrated movement of appetitive inclination within the spiritual unconscious when a person confronts a choice in the existential order. What we have described as a preconscious notion of reason achieves precisely this triggering role as an intramental entity. Once it penetrates the spiritual unconscious, the preconscious notion of reason is a direct catalyst for activating the undercurrent of appetitive tendencies that animate the spiritual unconscious when moral virtue inhabits those appetites. Assuming that moral virtue has taken hold of the appetites, the very existence of the preconscious notion of reason will be constituted by its becoming a preconscious point of convergence for tendential movements directed toward a particular good in the existential order. The question remains how a practical judgment on the basis of such virtuous inclinations occurs by a nonconceptual mode as a preliminary stage of knowledge prior to an actual moral choice. [42]

[41] The appetites possess a natural capacity of response to contingent singulars. "[A]ppetitus tendit in res, quae habent esse particulare" *(STh* 1-11, q. 66, a. 3).

[42] As we conclude this discussion about the cognitive aspect of appetitive dispositions, it is nonetheless important to keep a clear distinction between the role of moral virtue and of prudence in the concrete choice.

> Cum autem electio sit eorum quae sunt ad finem, rectitudo electionis duo requirit: scilicet debitum finem; et id quod convenienter ordinatur ad debitum finem. Ad debitum autem finem homo convenienter disponitur per virtutem quae perficit partem animae appetitivam, cuius obiectum est bonum et finis. Ad id autem quod convenienter in finem debitum ordinatur, oportet quod homo directe disponatur per habitum rationis: quia consiliari et eligere, quae sunt eorum quae sunt ad finem, sunt actus rationis. Et ideo necesse est in ratione esse aliquam virtutem intellectualem, per quam perficiatur ratio ad hoc quod convenienter se habeat ad ea quae sunt ad finem. Et haec virtus est prudentia. Unde prudentia est virtus necessaria ad bene vivendum. *(STh* 1-11, q. 57, a. 5)

The answer is in the directive strength of tendential inclinations when they converge as a concentrated force around a preconscious notion of reason within the spiritual unconscious. If indeed Maritain's preconscious notion of reason is identified with an empirical observation, inseparable from a sense perception, the way it works is analogous to the manner in which a creative emotion, provoked upon contact with some aspect of extramental being, remains identified with the extramental thing even as it then penetrates the spiritual unconscious with some concrete emotional association. Just as the creative emotion becomes an intentional vehicle for a creative intuition in which subjectivity and things are grasped simultaneously in the creative emotion that penetrates the spiritual unconscious, so the preconscious notion of reason arising from a contingent circumstance becomes an intentional medium in the spiritual unconscious-in the present case, however, as a locus of tendential movement animating the natural inclinations. This occurs in response to the concrete situation that is inseparable from it. *As* an intramental entity the preconscious notion of reason is a bridge, as it were, to an extramental moral option felt internally by tendential movements of attraction or aversion.

With appetitive inclination thus flowing from it, the preconscious notion of reason constitutes a locus of energy for a tendential knowledge, operative now as a power of inclination which crosses the threshold of consciousness to become an attraction toward a particular concrete good. Insofar as it has become a point of convergence for tendential inclinations, the preconscious notion of reason has taken on an intentional energy, activating natural inclinations and causing a movement of attraction or repulsion within the spiritual unconscious toward some moral option present in a singular circumstance. Since it remains unreflected upon and beneath the threshold of consciousness, however, it is accurately described as a preconscious cognitional medium from which arise spontaneous moral judgments. If moral virtue has modified the appetitive dispositions, a practical judgment by inclination can emerge from the spiritual unconscious with an apparent immediacy, still unfor-

mulated conceptually, and yet providing a directive impact by affective attraction or aversion in the face of a concrete circumstance. This is necessarily a nonconceptual knowledge through tendential inclination, a type of experiential knowledge prior to reflexive considerations, making itself known as a spontaneous instinct for the appropriate virtuous response. Yet it is nonetheless a mode of practical knowledge perceived, as Maritain says, "in confuso," but with an immediacy and an intelligibility natural to the force of virtue-modified appetitive tendencies. [43] It remains of course for prudence as a virtue of the practical intellect to command the particular choice consistent with those preconscious inclinations. [44]

Knowledge by inclination thus has its place in the structure of moral knowledge as an aid to the intellectual virtue of prudence. By the time prudence commands concrete means of action, the decision-making process has crossed the threshold of consciousness. At this point we are not speaking of a nonconceptual knowledge. But there are two quite distinct paths to the prudential command, one requiring a more labored practical deliberation, and the other grounded in the dispositional response of virtue-modified appetites inclining the moral agent toward essential human ends. In the latter case, a degree of knowledge is operative in tendential movements directed toward the intelligible finalities of essential human ends. When moral virtue is well developed, the command of prudence can occur through a spontaneous judgment that reflects the dispositional movements roused by the subject's confrontation with a concrete circumstance calling for a moral choice. In those instances when the recognition of a virtuous choice seems to take place with this

[43] The argument here presumes Aquinas's affirmation that moral virtue, while residing in the appetites, participates in the rational nature of the human soul. "[V]irtus moralis est in rationali per participationem; virtus autem intellectualis in rationali per essentiam" (Sfh 1-11, q. 66, a. 3); "[V]irtus non potest esse in irrationali parte animae, nisi inquantum participat rationem" (Sfh I-II, q. *55,* a 4, ad 3). Yves Simon's *The Definition of Moral Virtue,* ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), offers further insights in this area, especially on the spontaneity of practical knowledge due to the presence of moral virtue in the appetites.

[44] The essential point here is that prudence functions cognitively in dependence on the appetitive movements rooted in moral virtue. "[P]rudentia non consistit in sola cognitione, sed etiam in appetitu: quia … principalis eius actus est praecipere, quod est applicare cognitionem habitam ad appetendum et operandum" *(STh* 11-11, q. 47, a. 16).

kind of immediacy, the likely explanation is that the preconscious life of appetitive inclination has been the ground for this apparently unreflective discernment that a concrete good is to be pursued in act. There is a tacit rapport, as it were, between the act to be chosen and the tendential inclinations of the subject. Such appetitive attractions may not constitute a knowledge of precise means, which awaits the exercise of prudence, but they do establish the vital tendential movements which are required if prudential knowledge is to determine a choice that will be in harmony with the presence of moral virtue residing in the appetites. In this path to prudential knowledge the interior movements of appetite remain dynamisms of the preconscious life rather than revelations of concrete means to choose in the existential order. But they are nonetheless decisive sources of directive guidance enabling the practical intellect to discern the good in existential moments of choice.

The Thomist 62 (1998): 97-115

THE IMMUTABILITY OF NATURAL LAW ACCORDING TO SUAREZ

DAVID WILLIAMS

Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

IMMUTABILITY tends to be a problematic topic for the medieval tradition of natural law. There is a wide consensus that natural law is concerned with what is right and wrong *per se*. "It does not vary according to time, but remains unchangeable," as Aquinas has it (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 6). This principle seems to be required for such a law to have a truly natural character. If a fire in Boston and one in Madagascar are both equally fire, sharing a common nature, then natural law ought to be the same in all times and places. The difficulty is that the conditions necessary for a fire are simple and well-defined while those of human action are almost infinitely variable. The circumstances of time, place, and persons can intersect in so many ways that they seem to escape the grasp of any general theory.

There are many who find this difficulty an insuperable obstacle to traditional ideas of natural law. One well-known author characterizes those ideas as "abstract, a priori, and deductive," or as seeking "to cut through the concrete circumstances to arrive at the abstract essence that is always true, and then work with these abstract and universal essences."[1] Others accept the justice of this critique while suggesting that its true target is not the Thomist idea but rather a degenerate form of natural law thought derived from later scholasticism.[2] This analysis would lay much of the

[1] Charles E. Curran, "Natural Law in Moral Theology," in Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S.J., eds., *Natural Law and Theology* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1991), 265.

[2] Here one thinks of Germain Grisez and those inspired by him such as John Finnis or William May; cf. Germain Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the Summa Theologiae, 1-11, q. 94, a. 2" *Natural Law Forum* 10 (1965): 158-196; John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*

blame for the rationalist and deductive character of "conventional natural law thinking" atthe feet of Francisco Suarez (1548-1617). Indeed, that is a primary thesis of the only English-language article published on Suarez's idea of natural law in the last two decades.[3] The aim of the present essay is to show that, whatever else one may say about Suarez's understanding of natural law, it cannot fairly be labeled as an abstract or a priori system that is dismissive of the particular circumstances of human actions.

Arguably the greatest figure of the sixteenth-century Scholastic revival, Suarez produced two works, *Disputationes Metaphysicae* and *De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore,* that became standard texts in both Catholic and Protestant universities for generations.[4] In the ten books of *De Legibus,* he consciously gathers and refines almost four hundred years of speculation on law into a coherent theory. It is this attempt to give a comprehensive and detailed view of law as a whole that sets him apart from many other authors in the natural law tradition, including Aquinas, who treat of the subject by the way or in small portions of larger works. Suarez's contribution is particularly significant in the present discussion (which makes the misunderstanding of his thought more striking), for while maintaining the constant character of natural law, he lays out a specific and detailed way of approaching concrete situations.

The question of immutability and change occupies more than a third of Suarez's treatment of natural law in *De Legibus* 11.[5] He

(Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); and William May, "The Meaning and Nature of the Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas," *American Journal oflurisprudence* 22 (1977): 168-89.

[3] William May, "The Natural Law Doctrine of Francis Suarez," *New Scho/astici$m* 58 (1984): 409-28. There are also a number of references to Suarez in Finnis's *Natural Law and Natural Rights.* The influence of the dismissive attitude toward Suarez's natural-law theory engendered by this line of thought may be shown in the fact that the issue of *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* devoted to Suarez (see n. 4) had no contributions in this area due to lack of submissions.

[4] For further biographical detail, see Jorge J.E. Gracia, "Francisco Suarez: The Man in History," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 259-66, as well as Carlos Norena, "Suarez and the Jesuits," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991) 267-86.

[5] There is no complete or even reasonably comprehensive English translation of *De Legibus.* A few sections (relating mainly to *ius gentium* and international law) were translated in G. W. Williams and James Brown Scott, ed. and trans., *Selections from Three Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944). There is a critical edition of the first four books: *De Legibus ac Deo Legi$/atore,* ed. L. Perei\a and V. Abril, Corpus Hispanorum de Pace 11-17, 21, 22 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de lnvestigaciones Scientificas, 1971-81).

begins by noting that we can speak of natural law "changing" in different ways. The first is through addition, which is not a matter of controversy. No one denies that natural law can and must be supplemented by different types of positive law. For example, the former has little concern with the details of the penal system or the means of commercial transaction so long as the basic requirements of justice are satisfied. Such additions are not truly examples of change. They rather form a superstructure on the whole and unmoved foundation provided by natural law.

The real argument concerns whether natural law can suffer change by way of subtraction, change which removes the law or at least its obligation. Change in this sense can be due either to internal or to external causes. Law changes through internal causes when its object becomes harmful or unreasonable. External causes come into play when some other power effects a change in the law. In either case, the change is either universal, which Suarez terms "abrogation" of law, or confined to some particular case, which he labels "dispensation" (11.13.1).Our inquiry begins with the possibility of intrinsic change, before moving on to consider external causes.

Suarez opens his substantive discussion with a firm and clear statement: "I say that properly speaking natural law can neither fail nor be changed by itself, either in general or in particular cases, while rational nature with the use of reason and freedom remains" (11.13.2).[6] He regards this latter condition as implied in the very idea of natural law, since law strictly speaking can only be imposed for rational creatures. If there were no rational beings, there could not be any type of law (1.4.2). Some thinkers wish to understand natural law as another way of referring to rational nature itself, but Suarez prefers another description. He views it as an "intrinsic property necessarily flowing from such a [rational] nature, *by which* it is such" (11.13.2; emphasis added).[7] This seems to imply that subjection to natural law is a crucial element of what it is to be rational.

[6] "Dico igitur proprie loquendo legem naturalem per seipsam desinere non posse vel mutari, neque in universali neque in particulari, manente natura rationali cum usu rationis et libertatis." All citations from Suarez are from *De Legibus*, in the critical edition cited above; translations are my own.

[7] "intrinseca proprietas necessario fluens ex tali natura, qua talis est."

Being so intimately bound up with rational nature, there is little room for change left to natural law. The internal causes that justify a change in law can generally be reduced to the passage of time or some other change in circumstances that renders the command of the law unjust or imprudent. As far as Suarez is concerned, natural law is impervious to these factors because it is concerned only with necessary truths. This is the main characteristic marking it off from positive law. It contains only first and self-evident principles of action, such as "Do good, and avoid evil," together with conclusions necessarily inferred from them. Since self-evident principles can never prove false, by definition, neither can conclusions correctly drawn from them. This inference may require a shorter or longer chain of reasoning, but so long as reason does not err, that is irrelevant. Error is not at all uncommon, admittedly, but that does not affect the truth of right reason. "Abusus non tollit usum" ("abuse does not take away use"). As matters of necessary truth, the precepts of natural law can never become false, unreasonable, foolish.

Suarez is careful to note, though, that natural law is concerned with both negative and affirmative precepts. Both are immutable, but their negative or affirmative character causes this immutability to function differently. Negative precepts are easier to explain. These are concerned with actions that are intrinsically and *per se* evil. As a result, the negative precepts oblige in any possible situation, "always and for always" ("semper et pro semper"). The *per se* evil must always be avoided, as implied in the most basic principle of natural law: "Do good and avoid evil." Nor can something essentially evil cease being so without changing its entire character. Since evil is, for Suarez and the scholastics in general, a matter of being disordered or disproportionate, removing the disorder also removes the evil.

The necessity of affirmative precepts functions in another manner. These precepts are not any less a part of natural law, but their affirmative role narrows their scope. To use the traditional terms, they apply "always but not for always" ("semper non tamen pro semper"). That is to say, they will always oblige under certain conditions, but under others they will not. It is essential to an affirmative precept that it includes an understanding of

prerequisite conditions. For example, giving to charity is an affirmative precept. Yet I may not steal in orqer to give, nor should I make a donation if my family is starving. The precept includes an implicit understanding that one should give one's own property, without damage to others. Such precepts bind when it would be evil not to fulfill them. When I do have a surplus, I am obliged to donate. The precept itself is always in force even though there are situations in which it will not apply. Further, it does always involve a prior willingness to act according to it, under the proper circumstances. I may not form a fixed resolution against giving. Circumstances of this sort do not alter affirmative precepts, but are included with them from the beginning. Suarez can thus conclude that "however much things vary, the judgment of natural law cannot vary" (11.13.3).[8]

There is one major objection to this analysis which he immediately addresses. The account given here, which ascribes an immutable character to each and every precept of natural law from first principles to the most distant and abstruse conclusions, seems fully open to the charge of making natural law a deductive and abstract system without much concern for the concrete. Aquinas, on the other hand, seemed to restrict immutability to the first principles of natural law. The specific conclusions drawn from those principles may hold for the most part, but they can sometimes fail, "due to some special causes impeding the observance of such precepts" *(STh* 1-11, q. 94, a. 5). Aquinas used the standard example of returning a deposit to its owner. This is a command of natural law, yet it does not apply if the deposit is to be used against the common good.

Suarez adds several examples to make the case dearer still. It is also a natural precept that one should keep secrets, yet not when revealing the secret would prevent harm to innocents or to the republic as a whole. In the same way, one ought not to kill, but killing in self-defense is allowable. Aquinas explained variations of this sort by making a comparison between the moral and physical sciences. Speculative knowledge is generally more certain than practical knowledge, and yet in the physical sciences even

[8] "quantumvis res varientur, iudicium legis naturalis variari non poterit."

necessary conclusions sometimes fail. For example, it is generally true that human beings are born with sight and hearing. Sometimes, though, children are born without these senses. This does not change the general rule, because other causes have intervened, and natural science could give an account of why this particular child cannot see. The conclusions have changed, because their material has changed, without making the science as a whole false. The same reasoning can apply to moral matters, but even more so, since human affairs are much more variable. Natural law has to do with changeable material, and so shares that mutability.

Suarez turns the objection by remarking that things which consist in a certain relation can be changed either intrinsically or extrinsically. Intrinsic change occurs because of some intrinsic alteration in the subject, for example, a father ceases to be a father upon his death. Extrinsic change occurs when the change happens to another, for example, a father ceases to be a father upon the death of his child without change taking place in the father himself strictly speaking. This is only "conceived or signified by us in the mode of change" (11.13.6).[9] In natural law, the only changes are extrinsic changes, changes in the material. In this way, "the action is withdrawn from the obligation of natural law" (Il.13.6). [10] The law itself does not change in any way; rather, the circumstances in which it would apply have been altered or replaced.

Suarez finds this extrinsic change easier to explain when he considers that natural law is expressed in a way different from all other laws. They are written down in general words drawn from a particular language, but natural law "is not always dictated in the mind with those general or indefinite words with which it is pronounced or written by us" (11.13.6).[11] Natural law is "written in the heart," or, less metaphorically, in conscience and reason, and as such any expression of it in particular words is always

[9] "per modum mutationis a nobis concipitur vel significatur." Suarez's choice of father-child as the relationship for this example seems odd or at least harsh but one can think of the orphan who says, "I have no father."

[10] "actio subtrahatur ab obligatione legis naturalis."

[11] "non semper dictari in mente illis verbis generalibus vel indefinitis quibus a nobis ore profertur vel **scribitur."**

limited. The judgment of particular cases that most properly constitutes natural law always includes "limitation and circumspection." For example, deposits should be returned when reasonably requested, which is to say, not for the purpose of harming innocents. Yet the precept is ordinarily expressed as "Deposits should be returned" because the other conditions are or should be understood. They cannot all be declared in a concrete formula suitable for general use in any case. The heart of natural law, Suarez maintains, is the natural power of right reason or right judgment and not the verbal formulations that we use to express that judgment.

These two principles, one distinguishing between change in natural law itself and change in the material to which we apply it and the other pointing out natural law's independence of particular linguistic formulae, are the centerpiece of all Suarez has to say regarding the problem of immutability in natural law. Let us step back here and consider them more broadly.

The distinction between natural law itself and the matter subject to it is an expansion of an idea used by Aquinas *(STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 5; q. 100, a. 8): certain actions that seem to break one or another precept of the Decalogue only appear to do so, because the nature of the action is changed. For example, killing is forbidden not as killing simply but as undue killing. Self-defense or rendering just punishment alters the case. Aquinas uses this to explain why the general principles of natural law, which he considered completely immutable, always apply. Suarez expands upon the notion and uses it even in considering the particular conclusions drawn from those general principles, which Aquinas had considered mutable.

This is an extension of the earlier teaching, but Suarez supports it with a consideration not found in the *Summa.* It had always been said that natural law was written in the heart or soul *(STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 6), but the implications of this were not often realized. Suarez recognizes that, given this writing in the heart, natural law cannot be identified with its verbal expressions. To do so is to assimilate it too closely to positive law, and leads to misunderstanding. This is the critical step by which Suarez frees natural law to account fully for circumstances without losing its

obligatory and permanent character. Imprecision and mutability are shifted away from natural law itself and into the general ways we are forced to discuss it as we move farther away from specifics. It should be stressed that this is not to call the general formulations worthless. Suarez is far from trying to make natural law some sort of formless intuitionism. The general phrases will cover most cases, because in most cases the particular circumstances will not affect the moral quality of the actions involved.

The analogy with the natural sciences, or natural philosophy as Suarez says, may illuminate the distinction further. The universal statements in "the propositions of physics" may sometimes appear to fail in particular cases, but as scientific conclusions they remain whole. All of them implicitly contain a limitation: "excepting the intervention of other causes." If I see someone floating several feet above the ground, I do not immediately abandon all I know of physics but begin to seek an explanation for why he floats.

Suarez goes on to say that this is the only way in which one can infer necessary conclusions from natural principles, and as shown earlier, only such necessary conclusions enter into natural law. This necessity is not affected by the mutability of human actions because

> natural law recognizes mutability in the material and accommodates its precepts accordingly. It commands in that matter one thing for one state and another for another. Thus it always remains unchanged in itself, although with respect to our mode of speaking and by extrinsic determinations it may seem to change. (II.13.9) [12]

The examples brought up in discussing the objection fill out the point clearly. The case of returning a deposit is typical. The promise to return something, a gun perhaps, is notably altered if one knows that its owner plans to use it to murder someone. Indeed, in this case, natural law rather forbids returning the deposited item since that would be cooperation in murder. Similarly a secret is received with the understanding that keeping

[12] "lex naturalis discernit mutabilitatem in ipsa materia et iuxta illam accommodat praecepta; nam aliquid praecipit in ilia materia pro uno statu et aliud pro alio; et ita ipsa in se manet semper immutata, licet quoad nostrum modum loquendi et per denominationem extrinsecam quasi mutari videatur."

it will not result in damage and injury to someone else. I cannot tell someone that I am going to shoot the President, and bind him to keep it a secret.[13] The natural precept not to kill also includes several conditions, such as that one may not kill on one's own authority, nor in aggression.

Suarez plays on the points he has made in the discussion of intrinsic change for the rest of the discussion, in which he embraces the subject of extrinsic change or dispensation. The notion divides neatly into two subordinate questions, one treated primarily by professional lawyers, either canon or civil, and the other discussed by theologians. The legal experts attempt to determine whether humans may dispense others from the requirements of natural law, while the theologians focus on God's ability to do so.[14]

Suarez examines each position in turn. Before doing so, he pauses a moment to clarify terms. His sources frequently confuse dispensation from divine positive law with dispensation from divine natural law, which is not surprising since much of their concern was with the precise limits of papal power.

> But we speak distinctly and specifically, and only now do we treat of natural law in relation to whatever human power and its action, whether it be a dispensation or a precept or a legal institution, whether it be through law, local custom, or the universal custom commonly called *ius gentium.* (II.14.1)[15]

The most important caution Suarez offers is to beware of facile identifications. There are three different ways in which we may say that something is a matter of natural law *(de iure naturali),* and not all possess a strictly legal character. The first way, and that most important to Suarez, is when natural law commands some action, for "this is the proper mode of natural law that we

[13] Suarez notes in almost the same breath that he speaks here of a "natural secret," and not of the confessional seal which has a "higher obligation" (11.13.8).

" Suarez was a man of vast erudition, whose discussions of various topics can often serve as brief histories of scholastic thought. Since our prime concern here lies with his argument rather than his sources or dialogue partners, the interested reader is referred to the extensive notes of the critical edition.

[15] "Nos vero distincte et specifice loquimur, et nunc solum agimus de iure naturali in ordine ad quamcumque potestatem humanam et actionem huius, sive sit dispensatio sive praeceptum aut iuris institutio, sive per legem sive per consuetudinem vel particularem vel totius orbis, quae solet dici ius **gentium."**

discuss" (11.14.6).[16] This command occurs when, whether through a short or long chain of thought, natural reason judges something to be necessary for moral rectitude. As long as reason judges correctly, the length of the path taken to reach a judgment is of no importance. The second way is when some matter pertains to natural law "permissively or negatively or concessively" (ibid.). This exists when something is either licit for humans or even simply given to them, if one attends only to natural law. Suarez counts common ownership of property and human freedom as examples of this sort, noting that natural law does not command these things, or any similar matters, as necessary or permanent conditions. They form a kind of natural substrate that is open to the various devices or plans which may develop to meet the needs of particular circumstances. A further example may clarify his meaning. One might say that nakedness is natural for humans, insofar as all are born that way. Granting the actual physical and moral conditions under which people live, though, we expect people to be clothed. In a similar way, liberty is natural for us in terms of natural law itself, but that law does not forbid the loss of liberty. The third mode is even looser. It is not uncommon to regard a matter as pertaining to natural law when it merely bases itself upon a natural condition, although the subject himself is indifferent. For example, it appears quite fitting and natural that a child should inherit from an intestate parent. Natural law may not prescribe this in any meaningful way, but "it inclines to it and it follows as though naturally unless some other impediment is postulated" (ibid.).[17]

This threefold division is set out only to exclude the latter two modes from the discussion. Here as throughout *De Legibus,* Suarez is concerned only with true and proper law. The subordinate and non-legal distinctions that he draws serve primarily to illuminate or eliminate objections that stand in the way of his positive teaching.

There is a further point to be made regarding natural law in the strict sense. Even when natural reason acknowledges a moral necessity, it does not always do so in the same way. Many

[16] "Hie est modus proprius iuris naturalis de quo nos tractamus."

[17] "Ad id inclinat et quasi naturaliter sequitur nisi aliunde impedimentum ponatur."

precepts of natural law are concerned with, so to speak, immediately obligatory affairs. For example, duties to God and neighbor or the inherent disorder of false witness must simply be acknowledged. There are precepts that do not directly apply, but presume some prior human arrangement. Natural law does strictly insist on honoring vows, promises, and similar contracted obligations. However, it does not insist that one take up those obligations. Humans may commit themselves in those ways, or not, as they please. Unlike the prior case, where the direct subject of natural law has a certain independent existence, these "pacts, conventions, or obligations that are introduced through human wills" exist only on supposition (11.14.7).[18] In a formal, abstract sense, both types of precepts enjoy the same unchangeable character. If we regard their subject matter, precepts of the first sort have a greater immutability inasmuch as precepts directed to human choice itself are vulnerable to material change, for that choice "is very mutable and often needs correction and change" (ibid.).[19]

These points serve mainly as prolegomena to Suarez's basic position. Three basic assertions provide the structure, and each is examined in turn before he turns to the question of divine dispensations from natural law.

"No human power, not even if it is papal, can abrogate any proper precept of natural law, nor diminish it properly and in itself, nor dispense from it" (11.14.8).[20] If natural law is immutable in itself, a fortiori it is impervious to human interference. Humans cannot change their nature, the properties of which, illuminated by reason, form the basis for the specific injunctions of natural law, any more than they can alter God's decree, which grounds its obligatory character.[21] Further, natural law is the ultimate foundation of the various forms of human law. If it were abrogated by a human law, that law would be destroying its base

[18] "Pacta, conventiones aut obligationes quae per humanas voluntates introducuntur."

[19] "Mutabile valde est et saepe indiget correctione et mutatione."

[20] "Nulla potestas humana, etiamsi pontificia sit, potest proprium aliquod praeceptum legis naturalis abrogare, nee illud proprie et in se minuere, neque in illo dispensare."

[21] "Suarez lays out this model of natural law earlier in 11.6.5-13. It should be noted that he has often been criticized as a voluntarist. The truth or falsity of that assertion is not in question here, for our concern is the consideration he gives to concrete situations and circumstances.

and hence itself. It may appear that Suarez is attempting to avoid the question since dispensation rather than abrogation is at issue here, and dispensation seems necessary simply as a matter of good order. The approach is deliberate, for he regards the power to grant dispensation as equivalent to (i.e., a limited instance of) the power of abrogation. The objection that God might delegate such authority is also answered; even God cannot grant dispensations in the strict sense from the requirements of natural law, much less enable others to do so.

The second assertion is but one of many instances where the distinction between formal change in natural law and merely extrinsic change on the part of its subject matter ground Suarez's solution to a difficulty.

> The precepts of natural law which depend in their commanding obligation on the prior consent and efficacy of human will for doing something can often be dispensed from humans, not directly and precisely by lifting the obligation of natural law but by means of some relaxation on the part of the material. (11.14.11)[22]

Ultimately, all precepts of this type may be reduced to one: "faith should be kept with God and people." If one makes a commitment one should fulfill it, and natural law does bind one to that fulfillment. However, these voluntary obligations contain a certain intrinsic dependence either on one's superiors or on acceptance of the commitment by the one to whom it is made. These persons could, for whatever reason, cancel the commitment by remitting, suspending, or forgiving it. In that case, there is no question of dispensation from natural law. One's obligation to fulfill the promise ceases, in and of itself, when the promise ceases to exist. My duty to repay a loan may end not with repayment but with the lender forgiving the debt.. If I am in military service, my commitments are at least implicitly contingent on the approval or acquiescence of my commander. In neither case does the lender or the commander work any change in the precept of

[22] "praecepta iuris naturalis quae pendent in sua obligatione praeceptiva a priori consensu voluntatis humanae et ab efficacia illius ad aliquid agendum, possum interdum per homines dispensare non directe ac praecise auferendo obligationem legis naturalis sed mediante aliqua remissione, quae fit ex parte **materiae.**"

honoring promises. His actions touch upon natural law only indirectly, by altering the existence of the very commitment that brought considerations of natural law into play. If the promise itself no longer exists, my obligation to fulfill it disappears as well. "Having made such a change, not only is it not contradictory to lift the obligation of natural law, but the obligation itself *per se* ends and ceases to obligate" (ibid.).[23] Suarez here notes that actions of this type are often called "dispensation" in a loose sense, where the dispensation in question is not really from natural law but from a vow or oath.

This is a particular instance of a more general principle regarding the relation of human actions to obligations of natural law. Suarez makes this the third assertion of his argument. "Through human law either civil or international such a change in the material of natural law can be made that, by reason of it, the obligation of natural law also varies" (11.14.12).[24] Change of this sort does no harm to the immutability or necessity of natural law, however much it might seem to do so. The explanation is based on an analogy with medicine. A good physician will hand down many different prescriptions, some for the sick, others for the healthy, taking many different conditions into account. The more skilled a doctor is, in fact, the more specific and particular her advice will be. This is no reflection on medicine as an art, for attention to variable circumstances is an essential part of it. The variety of human affairs requires a similar attention to circumstances in the application of natural law, although this does not affect its intrinsically necessary character. This has already been discussed above; what is new here is the acknowledgment that relevant changes in circumstances may sometimes be made by conscious human action. In this way, the moral evaluation of an act may be changed. For example, a declaration of war will legitimize many previously criminal activities while criminalizing others without working any change in natural law. The change in circumstances brings into play that group of precepts and rules

[23] "facta autem tali mutatione, non solum non repugnat auferri obligationem legis naturalis, sed etiam per se cessat ac desinit obligare."

[24] "Per ius humanum sive gentium sive civile fieri potest talis mutatio in materia legis naturalis ut ratione illius varietur etiam iuris naturalis obligatio."

commonly known as just-war theory while suppressing many of the normal rules of civil life.[25]

Suarez moves next to discuss the possibility of God granting dispensations from natural law, which he is forced to do by a number of biblical examples that seemed to acknowledge the existence of such dispensations. There were three passages that became classic points of argument: Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, which appeared to violate the commandment against killing (Gen 22); Hosea's taking a "wife of prostitution," which seemed to violate the commandment against adultery (Hos 1:1-3); and the spoiling of the Egyptians by the Israelites during the Exodus, which appeared to violate the commandment against theft (Exod 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36). Each of these events took place following a direct command on God's part, and each seems to contradict a precept of the Decalogue. Even without examples, a *prima facie* examination of the question would imply that God could easily grant dispensations from natural law. Human monarchs often do so for those under their rule, and a fortiori God should be able to do so.

Suarez denies this possibility, on the basis of a consideration of what constitutes a dispensation. In the strict sense of the term, when exercised by a just monarch as we must suppose God to be, a dispensation is granted when some requirement of the law has become unjust or indifferent. This cannot happen with natural law, as outlined above, since it is intrinsic to "rational nature with the use of reason and freedom." For God to give a dispensation from natural law would be equivalent to his giving a license for wrongdoing, a substantive injustice which would contradict the divine nature itself.

This is no more than the logical consequence of views already outlined several times. Natural law is, in and of itself, unchangeable and unchanging; however, the human actions to which it is applied are not. By changing the circumstances of an action, one can sometimes bring it under the jurisdiction of different aspects of natural law. Suarez has already applied this to apparent instances of dispensations granted by human agency.

[25] This is not to deny or ignore any controversies regarding just-war theory. The example is intended only as an illustration.

Much more is he able to do this in speaking of God, since "we cannot deny that God sometimes brings it about that those material actions may be licit which otherwise, without God himself and his power intervening, cannot licitly be done" (II.15.19).[26] Suarez still would not call this dispensation, though, for he does not see God acting as a lawgiver in effecting those material changes.

Dispensation, in the strict sense, is the act of a legislator who deliberately suspends the operation of a law in a case where it would otherwise apply. There are two other forms of divine authority which Suarez uses to account for instances of apparent dispensation. Beyond being the supreme lawgiver, God "is also the supreme lord, who can change or establish dominion. He is also the supreme judge, who can punish or render to anyone what he is owed" (ibid.).[27] If some act is to be counted true dispensation on God's part, it must be only the act of a legislator working a change in the law. In those cases that involve judging or simply transferring or altering dominion (as Suarez believes all the standard examples to be), God is changing the material subject to natural law rather than natural law itself. Whether the dispensation in question is human or divine, Suarez applies the same principles to account for it.

Supreme judgment and supreme lordship, though, go far beyond any authority available among humans. This enables God to alter situations that are, humanly speaking, unalterable. This becomes clear in the examination of the scriptural examples cited above. When Abraham was commanded to kill his innocent son, that command came from one who is master of life and death. If God had wished to kill Isaac by divine agency, there would have been no need of dispensation. In the biblical view, life is a gift of God that is withdrawn when God chooses.[28] Abraham served in this situation simply as God's instrument, and the Fifth Commandment does not at all prohibit that. (One is under a

[26] "negare non possumus Deum aliquando efficere ut actus illi materiales liceant, qui alias, non interveniente Deo ipso et eius potestate, licite fieri non possint."

[27] "est etiam supremus dominus, qui potest dominia mutare vel condere. Est item supremus iudex, qui potest punire vel unicuique reddere quod ei debetur." It should be noted that "lord" ("dominus") and its cognate are used here in the sense of owner or proprietor.

[28] See, among a host of others, Ps 104:29, Job 4:9; 34:14-15.

heavy obligation to verify that it is truly God giving such a command, of course.) In the case of Hosea, who was commanded to take a woman of prostitution, Suarez finds no proof that Hosea was ordered to have intercourse with a prostitute but simply that he was ordered to marry one.[29] The misinterpretation may still illustrate his principle, though. Even if Hosea had received such a command, it would not be question of dispensation. God enjoys an authority over men and women, again by virtue of the divine status as supreme lord, which no one else can possess. What God has joined together, let no one separate; but God is free to do as he pleases. Suarez takes this portion of his explanation almost directly from Aquinas *(STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3). In this light, the Hebrews' looting of the Egyptians is also readily explained. It is a question not of theft, but of distributive justice. God caused the Egyptians to load the Hebrews with treasure, not as a dispensation, but as a judge awarding compensation for their servitude and toil. Thus,

> it should be said that, properly speaking, God does not dispense from any natural precept, but changes its material or circumstances without which the selfsame natural precept does not obligate of itself and apart from dispensation. (11.15.26)[30]

This is not to say that every element of natural law is susceptible to this type of indirect action. There are some elements whose moral quality does not depend on the divine lordship in any way, and "then such a precept is not only indispensable but also so immutable that what it prohibits cannot for any reason be made licit" (Il.15.22).[31] This sort of immutability is found only in negative precepts, and Suarez's primary examples are drawn from the first table of the Decalogue.

[29] Suarez takes this interpretation from Augustine *(Contra Faustum* 22.80, 89), Jerome *(Letters* 123.13), Jrenaeus *(Adversus Haereses* 4.37), and others. Modern scholarship has come to the same conclusion, and has dismissed the alternative view so thoroughly that it is no longer mentioned (see the notes *ad lac.* in the New Oxford Annotated Bible).

[30] "dicendum est, proprie loquendo, non dispensare Deum in aliquo praecepto naturali, sed mutare materiam eius vel circumstantias sine quibus praeceptum ipsum naturale non obligat ex se et absque dispensatione."

[11] "tune non solum indispensabile est tale praeceptum, sed etiam ita immutabile, ut non possit ulla ratione licitum fieri quod prohibet."

His meaning becomes very clear with this assistance. For example, the First Commandment forbids the worship of any other god. This can in no way be changed, for to worship anything but God is contrary to his unicity and excellence. Nothing else can be the last end of rational creatures, and nothing else is worthy of worship. God himself cannot establish or make something worthy of equal honor to himself. "Two supreme beings" is as contradictory and essentially meaningless as "square circle," and so beyond the scope of even the divine power. The case is the same with the Second Commandment, forbidding idol-worship, for two reasons. It involves the prohibition of lying, for the representation is false and inadequate, and so worshipping even an image of the true God is prohibited. It also involves a certain irreverence that runs contrary to the divine authority. Both these examples are related directly to God, and in some way derive from God's own immutability.

There is only one other precept that shares this material immunity to change, and that is the stricture against lying. In keeping with the tradition of Western Christianity, Suarez sees lying as absolutely wrong under any and all circumstances, although the gravity of the fault may vary.[32] He is, though, somewhat unclear as to its explanation.

> Perhaps there is a special reason, either because it is wrong even with respect to God himself or because it is not of itself limited to created matter nor does it depend upon God's dominion over it or persons, but can be said of any material and any person whatever, or finally because its deformity does not depend on some dominion or divine law but is born instantly from the dissonance of words and mind. (11.15.23)[33]

We need not linger on this point, but it is interesting to note a rare case of wavering and uncertainty on Suarez's part, even in

[32] The position is derived from Augustine's work *(De Mendacio* and *Contra Mendacium),* and frequently repeated in others; see Aquinas, *STh* II-II, q. 110.

[33] "fortasse est specialis ratio, vel quia etiam respectu ipsius Dei malum est, vel quia de se non limitatur ad materiam creatam, nee pendet ex dominio Dei in illam vel in personam, sed in quacumque materia et de quacumque persona dici potest, ve] denique quia eius deformitas non pendet ex alio dominio vel divino iure, sed statim oritur ex dissonantia verborum ad mentem."

outlining possible alternatives, as he attempts to find a theoretical justification for a point of such practical importance. [34]

After this exposition, it should now be clear that neither Suarez nor a teaching truly inspired by him could be characterized as seeking "to cut through the concrete circumstances" or as "highly rationalistic and deductive" (in the normal sense of these latter words). [35] One can understand the critique formulated by Charles Curran as directed against the manuals of theology and ethics common in early twentieth-century Catholic teaching, often justly subjected to criticism, and an Aquinas understood through their lens. Curran's concern is more with the present condition of natural law thinking and his perception of its flaws than with its historical development. Suarez falls outside of his purview.

Accounting for the strong objections raised in William May's article, and its explicit engagement of Suarez's texts, is a different matter. Here one should note that the primary target of the article is the alleged "voluntarism" of Suarez's natural law, and not its "rationalist" character. That question occupies only the last quarter of the text, with only one explicit citation of Suarez (11.5.9, on the role of human nature as the basis of natural law). According to May, Suarez's natural law is

> "highly rationalistic and deductive" because "the precepts of natural law expressed in human judgments are the work, not of practical reason deliberating about what-is-to-be-done-and-pursued and what-is-to-be-avoided, but of speculative reason affirming what is or is not in conformity with human nature abstractly considered." [36]

The strong distinction between practical and speculative reason in this passage indicates that there is more than a touch of Kant in such an analysis. This has also influenced the wording in a potentially misleading way, inasmuch as "abstractly" appears to

[34] Augustine, for one, and most likely Suarez as well, could see the practical import perfectly. If lying is sometimes licit, then presumably it would be possible for God to lie. Besides contradicting some important biblical passages (Exod 22:16; Wis 1:11; John 8:44, which appears to derive all lies from Satan), a doctrine which admits such a conclusion calls the whole structure of divine revelation into question.

[35] Curran, "Natural Law in Moral Theology," 265; and May, "The Natural Law Doctrine of Francis Suarez," 422.

[36] May, "The Natural Law Doctrine of Francis Suarez," 422.

mean "with speculative rather than practical reason" and not "dismissive of actual circumstances." The understanding of natural law that May espouses has been subjected to strong criticism as a fundamentally Kantian misreading of the natural law tradition, creating a false chasm between practice and theory while failing to perceive that one and the same human reason is at work in both practical and speculative affairs.[37] The accuracy of his criticism here, based on the idiosyncratic ideas of his school and without extensive engagement with the relevant portions of Suarez set out above, is open to doubt.

If we are willing to devote the time and energy needed to absorb his detailed and extensive texts, Suarez's thought could prove most useful in modern discussions of natural law. He had a firm grasp of its implications and consequences, which helped to ground a flexible yet clear explanation of its basic stability within the varied flux of human affairs. He recognized natural law as being essentially prior to any of the verbal formulations that humans may use in speaking of it. Every concrete moral judgment remains an instance of natural law, implicitly or explicitly, but a natural law that is aware of particulars and conditions in a way that no positive law can ever attain. This flexible attentiveness to circumstances may require much more of the would-be interpreter of natural law than a simple facility with axioms and conclusions, but that ought not to be a surprise. The final locus of all other types of law known among human beings is some written or spoken text, with all the limitations of human speech, while natural law finds its source in the light of reason and judgment itself.

[37] Germain Grisez must be credited as the founder of this understanding in his famous article, "The First Principle of Practical Reason" (seen. 2 above), closely and strongly followed by both May and John Finnis. It is noteworthy that while May finds predecessors outside his own school when attacking Suarez as a voluntarist, he must abandon them and rely on Grisez and Finnis in turning to the question of rationalism. For criticism of Grisez and his school, see Ernest Fortin, "The New Rights Theory and the Natural Law," *Review of Politics* 44 (1982): 590-612; also Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1987).

The Thomist 62 (1998): 117-31

RECENT MORAL THEOLOGY: SERVAIS PINCKAERS AND BENEDICT ASHLEY

WILLIAM E. MAY

John Paul II Institute
Washington, D.C.

TWO RECENT STIJDIES by Dominican theologians, one a Belgian (Pinckaers), the other an American (Ashley), are among the most significant in the field of moral theology in the postconciliar period, Pinckaers in particular. [1] Although quite different in structure, content, and purpose, a central theme is common to both: the Christian moral life is emphatically *not*, as too many people mistakenly and unfortunately believe, basically a question of meeting obligations and obeying laws that inhibit human freedom. It is, rather, a matter of striving to become fully the beings God wants us to be, that is, persons who share forever his own divine life and happiness, an end attainable, with the help of God's never-failing grace, by living a life of excellence, shaped by virtues, rooted in faith and hope, and animated by love.

I. PINCKAERS

A) Overview

Pinckaers divides his study into two introductory chapters and three major parts. The introductory chapters provide a definition

[1] Servais Pinckaers, O.P. *Sources of Christian Ethics.* Translated from the third edition (1993) by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P.; foreword by Romanus Cessario, O.P. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995. Pp. xxi + 489. $44.95 (cloth), $24.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8132-0834-3 (cloth), 0-8132-0818-1 (paper).

Benedict Ashley, O.P. *Living the Truth in Love: A Biblical Introduction to Moral Theology.* Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1996. Pp. xiv+ 558. $24.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8189-0756-8.

of Christian ethics and an overview of the basic questions of concern to it.

Part 1, "Ethics, Human and Christian," embraces five chapters. The first of these (chap. 3) treats deftly the profound differences between the kind of knowledge of human acts proper to the empirical behavioral sciences and that proper to moral thought, and the way in which these disciplines can fruitfully collaborate provided that these differences are respected and that their practitioners do not attempt to pontificate on issues beyond their competence.

Chapter 4 introduces the question of the distinctive character of Christian ethics. Pinckaers, noting that the terms of the contemporary debate over this issue have been framed by an ethics of obligation, shows that this has led to a search, one bearing little fruit, for obligatory precepts unique to Christians. The result has been the widespread acceptance of the view proposed by Joseph Fuchs, S.J. This position, sharply distinguishing between the "categorical" level of morality (concerned with specific behavioral norms) and the "transcendent" level (focusing on internal dispositions and attitudes), contends that nothing distinguishes Christian ethics at the categorical level but that it is quite unique at the transcendent level. Pinckaers judges that this approach, dictated by the ethics of obligation, is not only wrongheaded but also leads to the separation of the categorical and transcendent levels, seriously underestimating the impact of specific kinds of behavior (categorical) on moral character (transcendent).

Thus in subsequent chapters of part 1 Pinckaers turns to the sources of Christian ethics for an answer to the question of its distinctive character. He begins with the teaching of St. Paul (chap. 5), who clearly expressed the uniqueness of Christian ethics in confronting the Jewish view of morality as justification through the works of the Law and the Greek understanding of the moral life as the work of purely human wisdom and virtue-approaches that inevitably give rise to legalistic hypocrisy on the one hand and pagan vice and pride on the other. For Paul the unique foundation of the Christian moral life is faith in Jesus Christ and union with him, the living source of an entirely new

kind of life and power. Given this foundation, Paul can then integrate into a moral life the human virtues extolled by the Greeks, for these virtues have been purged of pride and find a new source and center: Christ crucified and risen and living now in his members.

Chapter 6 turns to another great source of Christian ethics: St. Augustine, who saw in the Lord's Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5) the "magna carta" of the Christian moral life and its perfect pattern or model. This marvelous chapter beautifully details Augustine's understanding of the distinctive character of Christian ethics. It is a life of union with Christ, whom Christians are to follow by shaping their lives in accord with the Beatitudes. They not only portray the stages in Christian life, from humility and poverty in spirit through repentance for sin, mercy to those weaker than ourselves, and purity of heart to wisdom and the vision of God, they also give Christ's answer to the question about happiness. Moreover, since one cannot follow the path the Beatitudes mark out without the grace of God and prayer, corresponding to them are the gifts of the Spirit and the petitions of the Our Father. This is the way of life characteristic of Christians-not a life centrally framed by a set of obligations.

Part 1 concludes with a brief chapter (chap. 7) on the Christian character of St. Thomas's moral thought. Pinckaers shows that the pinnacle of the moral theory set forth in the *Summa Theologiae* is found in the questions devoted to the evangelical law or law of grace *(STh* 1-11, qq. 106-8), where Thomas insisted that "what is most powerful in the law of the new covenant, and in which its whole power consists, is the grace of the Holy Spirit ... given to Christ's faithful" *(STh* 1-11, q. 106, a. 1), which inwardly transforms the person, enabling him to live as a Christian.

Part 2 offers a concise yet substantive history of moral theology from the patristic period to the present. Chapter 8, devoted to the Fathers, and chapter 9, on the high Scholastics, show how both rooted their moral teaching in the Scriptures, which they studied in order to penetrate beyond the words and signs to the reality signified: the mystery of Christ and God and the loving relationship God willed to exist between himself and

humankind and made possible by Christ's saving death/resurrection. Using dialectic as reason's tool, and integrating into their biblically rooted thought the Greek understanding of the moral virtues, the high Scholastics were able to give moral theology a more systematic and scientific basis than could the Fathers. Yet like the Fathers their emphasis was on the human quest for happiness, on God as our one and only final end and cause of beatitude, and on the virtues, beginning with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as factors enabling us to shape our lives so that they can be crowned with beatitude.

In the late middle ages (chap. 10), the understanding of the nature of morality was drastically transformed in the wake of the nominalist revolution led by William of Ockham. Ockham introduced a radically new understanding of freedom-the "freedom of indifference" is the way Pinckaers describes it (briefly in this chapter and more extensively in chap. 14). According to this view, human freedom is totally autonomous vis-a-vis created nature. Impervious to reason and truth, and unaffected by natural inclinations, it .is the sheer power to choose between contraries independently of all causes and influences. On this view, there are no inherent links between different acts of the same person; each is completely independent and atomistic. Hence virtues, understood as second nature connaturally inclining us to the good, were neglected and reduced to mere mechanistic habits one could freely choose to use or not. Human created freedom is confronted by the divine omnipotence and God's freedom. God's will is completely, infinitely autonomous, at liberty to command whatever it wills. Law is essentially a set of arbitrary obligations imposed on men by God's sovereign will and confronting human freedom, which it limits and restrains. The obligations of this law are paradigmatically set forth in the Decalogue, and the moral life essentially consists in conforming one's actions to these obligations. Human freedom and the law are set in opposition. The ethics of obligation, replacing the ethics of happiness/ beatitude, now becomes the hallmark of the Christian life.

Unfortunately, this radically new way of conceiving Christian morality deeply influenced subsequent development of moral theology, as Pinckaers shows in chapter 11, devoted to a

consideration of the moral theology typical of the modern era of the manuals. While these manuals filled in large measure the task assigned them-to make available to confessors the essentials of Christian morality conceived as an ethics of obligation-they unfortunately severed the Christian moral life from its biblical roots and contributed to the idea that a life of sanctity was meant only for an elite few; for the ordinary Christian, a life free from mortal sin was sufficient.

After briefly comparing and contrasting (chap. 12) Protestant ethics and Catholic moral theology in the post-Tridentine period, Pinckaers, in the final chapter of part 2 (chap. 13), surveys the current status of moral theology. The Second Vatican Council, stressing the unity of theology and the deep bonds connecting dogmatic, moral, and spiritual theology, directed moral theologians to root their thought in the central themes of Scripture and make it clear that all Christians, not an elite few, are called to a life of sanctity. It likewise strongly commended the work of St. Thomas. During the immediate decades of the postconciliar period, however, the hoped-for renewal was blocked by an allergic reaction to the concept of law, an unbalanced understanding of the role of conscience, and unfortunate attempts to revise moral principles to make way for exceptions to norms judged absolute by the Magisterium. This period was also marked by an uncritical acceptance of secular thought, an overly critical attitude toward the Magisterium, and a movement from God-centeredness to man-centeredness.

Part 3, "Freedom and the Natural Law," has four chapters. The first (chap. 14) elaborates in detail the freedom of indifference championed by Ockham, contrasting it to what Pinckaers calls "freedom for excellence." Since the essential features of the "freedom of indifference" and the ethics of obligation to which it gives rise have already been sketched, there is no need to dwell extensively on it here. Pinckaers argues that underlying this concept of freedom is a primitive passion for self-affirmation, giving rise to what I believe can be described as an understanding of freedom as the "freedom to do as one pleases," the kind of freedom widely championed in today's world.

Chapter 15 presents in rich detail the contrary concept of "freedom for excellence," the freedom at the heart of the biblical, patristic, and Thomistic understanding of man and the moral life. This kind of freedom presupposes man's natural inclinations to the goods perfective of him and to happiness. It is open to the direction of reason and the appeal of the truth. It develops to maturity through a process of education, beginning with the discipline persons need in order to respect intelligent directives (law understood in this sense, as the work of reason) designed to protect the goods of persons and their rights, a stage in which the Decalogue plays a key role insofar as its precepts, rooted in the twofold commandments of love of God and neighbor, protect the goods of our neighbor made in God's image. It progresses with the acquisition of the virtues, which are by no means mechanistic and thoughtless ways of acting but are rather the fruit of freely chosen good acts resulting in stable and firm dispositions enabling the person to do the good freely and well and to come to a connatural love for the good. At this stage of moral development the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes are of central importance, for they focus on the interior dispositions needed for virtue, in particular the virtue of charity, to develop. The final stage in the development of the freedom for excellence is characteristic of those who seek only to do freely what is pleasing to the Father, those willing to be led by the Spirit. Freedom of excellence is rooted in the interpenetration of intellect and will and in man's natural inclinations to the good and the true; it is developed through education and requires virtue for its perfection. It is not set in opposition to law, which is conceived as an external aid to freedom's development and not as its enemy; it interiorizes the law's intelligent requirements by becoming connaturally disposed, through the virtues, to the real goods to which law directs. This kind of freedom, moreover, is open to all of Scripture, and not merely, like the freedom of indifference, only to texts detailing strict obligations.

The following chapter (chap. 16), relatively brief, is devoted to describing St. Thomas's understanding of human freedom and to showing that without question he understood it as the "freedom of excellence" and not as the "freedom of indifference."

Chapter 17, "Natural Inclinations at the Source of Freedom and Morality," is the final and longest in the book. In it Pinckaers sets forth in detail the relationship between natural inclinations, freedom, and natural law central to the thought of St. Thomas. Precisely because we are the kind of beings we are, we are naturally inclined to the good(s) perfective of us. Thomas, Pinckaers writes, distinguished five basic human inclinations. [2] The first of these is toward the good itself, that is, to what is perfective of our being and serves as its "end." The first and basic principle of natural law is rooted in this natural inclination to the good, namely, the principle or truth that "good is to be done and sought; evil is to be avoided." This principle, like other natural law principles, is not an imperative imposing an obligation; it is, rather, a truth of practical reason directing us to whatever is truly good and perfective of us as the kind of beings we are. The other four basic natural inclinations orient us to the diverse goods perfective of our being at different levels. These are the natural inclinations to self-preservation (the good of life itself), to sexual union and the rearing of progeny, to knowing the truth, and to living in society with others. Corresponding to these natural inclinations are the 'Other first, that is, nondemonstrable, principles or truths of natural law: the principles directing us to preserve and protect life and health, to marry and raise children, to pursue the truth, especially about God, and to live in justice and amity with others. In the light of these first principles we can come to see the truth of other natural law precepts, such as those protecting the precious goods to which these principles direct us.

In this chapter Pinckaers develops beautifully St. Thomas's teaching on natural law as rooted in the dynamic inclinations orienting us to what is truly our good. He gives particular attention to the good of human sexuality and of marriage, illustrating, in his discussion of these great goods to which we are naturally inclined, how truths of revelation deepen and perfect

[2] Unfortunately, one of the few typographical errors in the book is found on p. 405, where Pinckaers treats natural inclinations and the goods corresponding to them in St. Thomas; the reference given, to *STb* I-II, q. 92, a. 2, should be to q. *94.*

truths knowable in the light of reason (see his treatment of marriage and virginity).

This brief overview of Pinckaers' *Sources* has only skimmed the surface, as it were, of this richly erudite and probing study. I will conclude my review of his work with a few observations.

B) Comments

My comments will focus on two issues, relating Pinckaers' masterful study to Germain Grisez's *Christian Moral Principles,* another outstanding postconciliar work in moral theology. The two issues are (1) the specificity of Christian ethics, and (2) St. Thomas's teaching on natural law.

As we have seen, Pinckaers argues-and rightly so-that Christian ethics is unique primarily because it entails an entirely new kind of life, one made possible by union with Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, given to Christ's faithful and transforming them inwardly, making them "new" creatures, living now in, with, and through Christ, led by the Spirit and inwardly disposed to act in accord with the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Grisez totally agrees (and so do I) with Pinckaers here (see Grisez' s magnificent treatment of the Beatitudes as "modes of Christian response," specifying the requirements of Christian love and charity in *Christian Moral Principles,* 627-60).

But Pinckaers does not think that there are any *specific moral norms* unique to Christians. I believe that he holds this view because he fears that this would turn Christian ethics into an ethics of obligation instead of an ethics of happiness and virtue, rooted in faith and hope and animated by charity. But specific moral norms are *not* legalistic impositions arbitrarily limiting human freedom but rather *truths* meant to help us make good choices. Grisez argues that there are specific moral norms or truths unique to Christians and meant to help them carry out their baptismal commitmentto participate in the redemptive work of Christ. He further argues that each Christian, in addition to having the common Christian vocation to holiness, has a unique, personal vocation: his own way of sharing in Christ's redemptj.ve work by integrating everything he freely chooses to do into his

baptismal commitment. He continues by proposing that, in the light of the Beatitudes, which are specific Christian modes of responding to God's call and of fulfilling one's vocation as a living member of Christ, Christians can form for themselves specific moral norms or truths to guide their choices throughout the day. A specific moral norm incumbent upon all Christians is to discover, through prayer and self-examination, one's own personal vocation as a living "vicar" of Christ and to carry out this vocation faithfully. The norms specific to Christian moral life, in short, are by no means the legalistic and arbitrary obligations typical of the ethics of obligation which Pinckaers rightly opposes. They are rather truths known in the light of faith and the Beatitudes meant to enable the Christian to discover and carry out faithfully his personal vocation in Christ.

Grisez's thought on this matter is of exceptional value for the moral-spiritual life of the Christian and is fully compatible with the vision of Christian ethics set forth by Pinckaers. It complements and does not contradict Pinckaers' thought and makes up for what I consider a lacuna in the truly superb work of Pinckaers.

Pinckaers masterfully sets forth St. Thomas's teaching on the relationship between our natural inclinations and natural law, rooting natural law in these inclinations. In doing so he has, I believe, done a wonderful job of explaining clearly the material side of St. Thomas's teaching on natural law. However, it seems to me that he pays insufficient attention to the *formal* aspect of natural law in St. Thomas, that is, natural law as a work of reason and as consisting of an ordered set of true practical propositions about what we are to do. Thomas distinguished three levels of such natural law principles (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 100, aa. 1, 3, 11): (1) the first and common principles of natural law or practical reason, including the principles discussed in *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, where Thomas treats of the natural inclinations and basic natural law principles directing us to the good as such and to the different goods perfecting us at different levels of our being, and also such principles as the love commandments and the Golden Rule; (2) the proximate or immediate conclusions or practical truths known in the light of these first and common principles, which

Thomas identifies with the precepts of the Decalogue, whose truth, he says, depends primarily on the two commandments of love (cf. *STh* 1-11, q. 100, a. 3, ad 1); and (3) more remote conclusions or practical truths known only by the "wise," that is, the prudent, in the light of experience. Pinckaers neglects to consider this aspect of Thomas's teaching. One important issue here is the movement from the first or common principles of natural law to its "proximate conclusions," the precepts of the Decalogue. Thomas himself says little about this movement. Grisez has done much to shed light on this key issue in natural law thinking. I thus see his work as once more complementing Pinckaers' superb study.

Pinckaers' study is a masterpiece for which all Christians, and in particular moral theologians, should be most grateful. He is a man of exceptional erudition and practical Christian wisdom, the kind of person to whom we should listen because by doing so we can learn many truths and come to a deeper and richer understanding of our Christian faith.

II. ASHLEY

A) Structure and Content

Similar to Pinckaers' study in spirit, Ashley's work is quite different in structure and content. In essence it is a remarkably comprehensive yet concise and clearly written account of the whole field of moral theology: fundamental moral, sexual and marital ethics, human rights and justice, human life issues, etc.

An introductory chapter concerns the biblical foundations of morality; Ashley then divides his material into three major parts: "Faith," "Hope," and "Love." In the introductory chapter Ashley proposes that moral theology can best be rooted in Scripture, as Vatican II demands, by centering reflection on the *moral* instruction set forth in the Scriptures. In constructing a Christian moral theology on biblical foundations we must begin with (1) the Torah of the OT, without which NT teaching cannot be understood; and (2) the perfecting and fulfillment of Torah in the NT by Jesus. Then, in order to discriminate in both Testaments

between elements that are historically conditioned (e.g., the veiling of women's heads in the *ekklesia)* and those that are not, we must use the concept of "natural law" to free this teaching from particular situations and universalize it.

In giving a moral interpretation of the Scripture primacy needs to be given to the Lord's Sermon on the Mount and the Pauline notion of Christian love. In Ashley's view, "a firm foundation for a Christian moral theology can only be a study of Christian love, and the faith and hope such love presupposes" (34). Appealing especially to Wisdom 8:7 and 1Peter1:5-7, Ashley then builds a case that the cardinal virtues extolled by the Greeks (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude) are indeed central to biblical moral teaching. He suggests (and this provides him with the structure of the following three parts of his study) that the cardinal virtues can be integrated with the three theological virtues, prudence with faith, temperance and fortitude with hope, and justice with love. In essence, Ashley proposes that a biblically rooted introduction to moral theology can be organized around the theological and moral virtues (a structure quite similar to that found in another Dominican theologian of an earlier age, Thomas Aquinas!).

From this we can understand the subsequent division of the book. Part 1, "Faith," has two chapters: the first on the theological virtue of faith and the second on the cardinal virtue of prudence. Part 2, "Hope," has three chapters: the first on the theological virtue of hope; the second on the cardinal virtue of moderation (temperance) and its species (abstinence, sobriety, chastity) and allied virtues (humility, docility, humane manners, simplicity of life style, meekness); the third on the cardinal virtue of courage or fortitude and virtues allied with it (nobility, generosity, ,patience, endurance). Part 3, "Love," has three chapters, but unlike parts 1 and 2 it does not first treat the theological virtue but rather the cardinal virtue (justice). Since justice has three major integral parts and is so closely connected with the question of rights, two chapters of part 3 are given over to a consideration of rights and the different species of justice. Of these the first takes up the question of rights (natural and positive, primary and secondary, property rights and their limits) and

major issues of commutative justice (justice among individual persons), issues such as the killing of the innocent (including abortion, euthanasia, suicide), self-defense, police action and just war, defamation, contracts, etc., whereas the second is concerned with issues of legal justice (of individuals to society), distributive justice (of society to individuals), and virtues related to justice (religion, obedience or filial piety, patriotism, truthfulness, gratitude, and leniency).

In the final chapter of part 3, Ashley takes up love. But instead of first considering the theological virtue of love, he offers a study of human friendship love and then of sexual love and marriage, following all this with his treatment of Christian love or agape, its nature, and the works proper to it and the sins opposed to it.

From this overview of the contents of the three parts of the work one can see its comprehensive nature. In the chapters on faith and prudence in part 1 Ashley considers major questions in fundamental moral theology; in the chapter on moderation and its species in part 2 he takes up important issues regarding drug and chemical dependency and matters of sexual ethics; in the chapter on commutative justice and its requirements in part 3 he offers a concise treatment of many bioethical issues, and in the chapter on friendship and human love in the same part he treats of marriage and marital ethics. In what follows I will center attention on some key issues in fundamental moral theology that Ashley treats in his presentations of the theological virtue of faith and the cardinal virtue of prudence.

In considering the virtue of faith Ashley deals decisively with the role of the Magisterium in making revealed truths and those necessarily connected with them known to humankind. He emphasizes that the basic moral principles and norms proposed by the Magisterium (e.g., the precepts of the Decalogue as these have been and are understood within the Church), although not solemnly defined, are nonetheless definable and hence are infallibly true.

In discussing prudence Ashley writes of the fundamental principles of natural law (principles in whose light one can make prudent judgments). In treating them he perforce takes up the question of the human good. God, of course, is the *summum*

bonum and ultimate end, but certain penultimate goods corresponding to our fundamental needs serve as the principles or basic precepts of natural law. Ashley, unlike Pinckaers, prefers to speak of basic "needs" rather than "natural inclinations"; he contends in his interpretation of St. Thomas that there are four basic needs and four basic goods or values that satisfy them, to wit, the goods or values of life and health, reproduction, life in society, and truth. Ashley insists (unlike Pinckaers) that these goods are hierarchically ordered: he thus claims that the basic principles of natural law direct us to "seek bodily health, the preservation of the human species, the common good of society, and truth as the highest element of the common good, *in ascending order of importance,* and avoid whatever is contrary to these goods" (108; emphasis added).

In treating of moral conscience in the chapter devoted to prudence, Ashley affirms that there are some absolute or exceptionless moral norms and offers ·a critique of the proportionalist method of moral judgment, contending that this system errs because it is self-contradictory and denies moral absolutes. He holds that some norms are absolute because they prohibit intrinsically evil acts, that is, acts which contradict the true goal of human life.

His consideration of the cardinal virtues of moderation (temperance) and courage in part 2 is a model of clarity. In it he explains in terms more familiar to moderns what the Scholastic theologians meant by distinguishing between the concupiscible appetite (perfected by the virtue of temperance or moderation) and the irascible appetite (perfected by the virtue of courage). Ashley calls the former the "pleasure/pain" drive and the latter the "effort" drive. Moderation (Ashley's name for temperance) disciplines our pleasures, bringing them under the sway of reason by enabling us to "feel" them appropriately.

I cannot, unfortunately, provide further illustrations of how ably Ashley covers central issues of different areas of moral theology in this amazingly comprehensive and useful work. Structured (in a very Thomistic fashion) around the virtues, the volume is deeply biblical, for throughout Ashley effectively makes use of Scripture, not to provide proof texts but to integrate

beautifully the "torah" or moral instruction of both Old and New Testaments, texts concerned with the way of life meant to characterize God's people, particularly the people of God under the headship of Christ. It is worthy to note that by far the greatest number of Old Testament references are to the Wisdom literature (419 in all), and that the largest number of New Testament references are to the moral teaching of Jesus, with 401 references to the Synoptic Gospels and 115 to the Gospel according to John, and 438 to the Pauline literature. Ashley deftly uses these texts throughout the work to characterize the Christian life as one of virtue rooted in faith and hope and enlivened by love.

B) Comments

My comments concern (1) Ashley's insistence that the basic goods of human persons are hierarchically ordered, and (2) his critique of proportionalism and explanation of why some human acts are intrinsically evil and prohibited by moral absolutes.

As we have seen, Ashley interprets St. Thomas (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2) as holding that the basic goods perfective of human persons are hierarchically ordered: life is ordered to reproduction, reproduction to life in society, life in society to truth. I submit that St. Thomas does not so arrange these goods into a hierarchy and that this is an imposition, and a dangerous one, on the text of St. Thomas. [3] It is dangerous because it lends support to those who claim that, once a person is no longer able to know the truth (e.g., one in a so-called persistent vegetative state), his bodily life is no longer of value to him because of his inability to participate in the "higher" good of truth. Ashley, of course, does not hold this. However, by erecting the basic goods into the kind of hierarchy he does (a move not made by Aquinas), he opens the door to this way of thinking. Moreover, neither Ashley nor Pinckaers pays sufficient heed to St. Thomas's care in setting forth the basic goods of human persons in *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2. He

[3] See Germain Grisez and John Finnis, "The Basic Principles of Natural law: A Reply to Ralph Mcinerny," *American Journal offurisptudence* 26 (1981): 21-31.

makes it clear that he is not seeking to identify *all* basic human goods, since he uses such expressions as "and the like" *(et similia)* and "of this kind" *(huiusmodi)* in speaking of them. Thus it seems to me that Grisez's effort to identify all the basic goods of human persons-an effort Ashley dismisses somewhat gratuitously-has a basis in St. Thomas himself.

Ashley is, of course, quite right in repudiating proportionalism. Yet it seems to me that his repudiation in many ways begs the question. He claims that a major reason why this system is false is that it denies moral absolutes and intrinsically evil acts. This is of course true in the strict sense; and proportionalism is wrong in doing so. But it is not self-evidently true that some acts are intrinsically evil by reason of their objects; this needs to be shown very clearly, and this must be done to show the falsity of proportionalism. Ashley argues that some acts are intrinsically evil because they contradict the goal of human life. This is true, but he does not clearly, in my opinion, show why they do so because he fails to show clearly that such acts of necessity set one's will against some basic human good. John Paul II offers, I believe, a much clearer explanation of this in *Veritatis splendor.*

Despite these minor criticisms (and a few others could be made), I think that Ashley has offered us a marvelous study of a moral theology solidly rooted in Scripture. Neatly integrating material from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *Veritatis splendor,* his book admirably supplements Pinckaers' profound study of the sources of Christian morality. It offers a solid panoramic view of Catholic moral theology.

With these two studies and the volumes now available in Grisez's *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles;* vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life;* and vol. 3, *Difficult Moral Questions),* teachers and students of moral theology have at their disposal, in English, superb works in moral theology incorporating splendidly the desires expressed at the Second Vatican Council.

BOOK REVIEWS

De la verite, ou La science en Dieu. By THOMAS D'AQUIN. Edited by Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1996. Pp. 607. SF 65, 00 (paper). ISBN 2-8271-0711-2.

This volume contains a French translation of question 2 of the *De Veritate* preceded by a long introduction (240 pages) and followed by a copious commentary on the text (another 240 pages). Bonino's illuminating scholarship is motivated by the conviction that the understanding of St. Thomas's doctrine of divine knowledge has been skewed by the subsequent historical controversies surrounding the foreknowledge-predestination problem. Bonino shows that there is something ironic about this because Thomas's original treatment involved a transposition of the question of God's knowledge from the traditional Augustinian problematic of foreknowledge and predestination to an Aristotelian-influenced problematic of divine knowledge in general. The aim of Bonino's work is to recover this original historical-doctrinal context and show how Thomas's principal achievement was to close the previously unbridgeable gap between the apparently limited omniscience claims of *Metaphysics* 12.9 and the exhaustive omniscience claims entailed by the doctrines of divine providence in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. As Bonino shows, the success of St. Thomas is attributable not only to his skilled appropriation of Aristotle's noetic, but also, more importantly, to his own original metaphysic of creation.

This review will focus on Bonino's introduction, which comprises two main parts. The first provides the broad historical context for Aquinas's work. Bonino catalogues the remote background with a special emphasis on the Neoplatonic tradition embodied in Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Boethius (later reinforced by the *Liber de causis).* Pseudo-Dionysius's *De divinibus nominibus* was especially important for Aquinas in establishing that God knows things other than himself in himself as their cause; the essential link and coextensive range of divine knowing and divine causing will be a linchpin of Aquinas's position. Bonino then reviews twelfth-century theological views in order to display how much the traditional problematic was altered by the introduction of Aristotle. The task facing Thomas and his thirteenth-century contemporaries Albert and Bonaventure (whose positions are consistently referenced by Bonino) was not simply the absorption of the texts of the Philosopher, but rather the assimilation of highly developed systems of Aristotelianism marked by Neoplatonic borrowings and muddied by pseudo-Aristotelian works. The main interlocutors for Aquinas were Avicenna,

Averroes, and Maimonides; it was their Aristotelian/Neoplatonic doctrines of divine omniscience that framed the problem. While relatively successful in effecting a reconciliation of divine omniscience with divine simplicity, the Islamic tradition had been unable to bring material singulars within the divine ken. It was the knowledge of material singulars, not future contingents, that was the historical *crux intertyretatum.* Avicenna's doctrine of God's knowledge of the particular through the universal was the special object of Aquinas's attention. Thomas consistently argued that it is not possible to know the singular *qua* singular through what is universal; in order to know a material singular, it is necessary to know the matter that is its principle of individuation. The divine knowledge of matter then is the basic epistemological problem exposing what Thomas considered to be the root metaphysical problem: Avicenna's God cannot *know* material singulars because within his emanationist schema God does not directly and immediately *cause* material singulars.

The second part of Bonino's introduction is a doctrinal overview of the two main elements of Aquinas's position: divine knowing and divine causing. Bonino provides an excellent account of Aquinas's understanding of knowing. In order to avoid the extremes both of agnosticism and of anthropomorphism, Aquinas needs an analogical doctrine of knowledge. Knowing is a perfection realized differently according to the mode of being of the knower. At the heart of the activity of knowing is the knower's intentional realization of the perfections proper to other beings; a knower is a kind of center of synthesis in which the perfections of other beings are united. Knowing is a sharing in the being of the other without becoming the other in a physical sense; Aquinas describes this special way of having the form of the other in terms of immateriality. Yet both the intellectuality of the subject and the intelligibility of the object are rooted in something still more basic than immateriality: actuality. Actuality is itself grounded in *esse* as the *actualitas omnium actuum.* Hence the greater the mode of *esse* of the knowing subject, the greater the degree of its intellectuality; and the greater the mode of *esse* of the object, the greater the degree of its intelligibility. This identification of intelligibility with *esse* is the key to Aquinas's solution to the intelligibility of matter for God: because matter has *esse* from God, matter is intelligible to God.

The activity of knowing as an immanent intentional union requires some kind of causal assimilation between the subject and the object. It is the role of the *species* as *similitudo* and *medium quo* of knowledge to explain the assimilation. In human knowing, the *species* is caused by the object known; the human mind receives the presentational *species-form* as *similitudo* from the object. Although there is a direct connection between similitude and causation such that the knower knows the known based on a causal relationship between the two, it is not essential that the *species qua similitudo* as the formal resource explaining the knower's union with the known be caused by the object ("moveri ab objecto non est de ratione cognoscentis inquantum cognoscens, sed inquantum est potentia cognoscens"). The crucial difference between divine

and human knowing is that in divine knowing the knower-known assimilation is caused by the knower's creating the known as an imitation of the knower's being. The causal relationship between subject and object is reversed in God.

Picking up on an idea already prominent in the tradition, Aquinas argues that the primary model for divine knowing of what is not God is practical rather than speculative. God knows other beings as the Creator-Artisan of the universe, not as a passive spectator. The practical model introduces the divine will as an explanatory element in God's knowledge. Bonino describes the relationship between causality, knowledge, and will in God as a kind of *perichoresis* in order to rule out any temptation to think about God's knowledge as though God first considered pure possibles and then subsequently made a causal choice of some by decreeing their actual existence (although Bonino does not say so explicitly, it is precisely this kind of error that lies behind Molinism). Whatever God considers outside himself he considers as realizable by him *per modum causae* such that even the science of simple intelligence is virtually practical knowledge. Although Bonino provides an interesting appendix on the background and nature of St. Thomas's distinctions between *scientia simplicis intelligentiae, scientia visionis,* and *scientia approbationis,* the relationship between divine knowing and willing is one of the few topics that one wishes he had spent more time untangling.

A second major difference between divine and human knowledge is that unlike human knowledge, wherein the partial aspects of reality disclosed by received *species* require a processive synthesis in judgment and discursive reasoning, God's knowledge evidences neither process nor temporality since everything is known through the medium of God's eternal being. In the simpleness of God's knowledge there is a perfect identity between the subject, its knowing activity, and the medium of that activity; all are identical with the *ipsum esse subsistens.* Within the context of this analysis of the infinite plenitude of the divine creative essence as the *species quo* perfectly adequate to be the *similitudo omnium,* Aquinas can overcome the *aporiae* of the previous tradition. God can know things lower than himself without thereby incurring any imperfection because the cognitive assimilation is explained by the medium of the divine essence creatively thinking into being what it knows. What is known by God exists in the knower according to the modality of that whereby it is known. Because God's knowledge is through the medium of his eternal essence and does not depend upon the existence of its object, God is able to know all at once what has for us no present temporal existence. The Boethian background is obviously quite strong here, but it must be remembered that God's eternal knowledge of time is causal-practical. Since God's knowledge is not by means of an abstracted universal similitude wherein the potency of matter is left out of consideration but rather through the universal cause of *esse* likening all things to itself in some way, God is able to have direct knowledge even of material singulars.

As Bonino shows, St. Thomas consistently interprets the key Aristotelian text of *Metaphysics* 12.9 as implicitly corresponding to his own position. Aquinas argues that Aristotle's assertion that the sole object of the divine intellect is its own thinking is really tantamount to the claim that the divine intellect is the primary object and sole medium of divine thinking. In knowing himself as the cause of all being, however, God also knows everything else as his effects. Here Aquinas is grafting on to Aristotle elements of the Neoplatonic tradition-for example, the axioms that the more perfectly a cause knows itself, the more it knows its effects, and that in every cause producing an effect similar to itself the effect pre-exists in the cause-in order to make Aristotle's First Mover compatible with the Christian Creator.

As Bonino demonstrates, Thomas found the root cause of his predecessors' failure to provide God with comprehensive omniscience in their metaphysical failure to provide God with comprehensive creative causality. Within an emanationist metaphysic like that of Avicenna, the lack of direct divine causality of material beings results in a corresponding lack of direct divine knowledge. Within Thomas's metaphysical understanding, God's immediate transcendental causation of the *esse* of every being ensures God's immediate knowledge of every being. Averroes had articulated an apparently similar doctrine in asserting that God knows every being as their *causa essendi.* Thomas denies, however, that Averroes thereby accounts for God's knowledge of singulars because Averroes's understanding of being as a kind of generic notion leaves God knowing only what a particular being has in common with other beings and not what makes it *this* particular being. It is not enough simply to argue that God knows things as *causa essendi.* It is also necessary to articulate a doctrine of *esse* as root actuality requiring the immediate transcendental causation of God and thereby grounding immediate divine cognition.

Bonino notes that question 2 of *De Veritate* does not represent Thomas's fully mature doctrine on divine causality. Bonino argues persuasively that Thomas operates in q. 2, a. 4 with two models of divine causality. According to the first, which seems almost vestigially emanationist, God is the cause of all that is because he is the First Cause upon which all the mediate causes depend; this view seems to make God's causality (and therefore knowledge) somewhat mediated and indirect. The second model, inspired by Pseudo-Dionysius, is more immediate and direct: God knows every being as the direct and immediate cause of its *esse.* In Thomas's more mature works, this latter kind of direct causal knowing will be exclusively invoked.

These main lines of Bonino's introduction prepare the reader for the excellent translation of the Leonine text that follows. The translation is both readable and accurate. The notes that follow the text are superb. Bonino provides a brief historical and doctrinal introduction to the problematic of each article, a list of the parallel passages in St. Thomas, and then copious notes on the sources, terminology, parallel passages, contemporary setting, doctrinal

implications, and key secondary literature. His commentary is informed by excellent scholarship and a deep grounding in the Thomistic commentatorial tradition. This superb work answers a serious need in the literature for an historically sensitive treatment of Thomas's doctrine of divine knowledge that is also grounded in a firm grasp of the larger metaphysical and theological context of St. Thomas's thought. Bonino is right in saying that from the time of the *De auxillius* controversy right up until the present day, considerations of divine knowledge in Aquinas have generally failed to attend to the historical, theological, and metaphysical background. More recently, many writers have erred in their assessments of Aquinas's position on divine foreknowledge and predestination by failing to grasp the metaphysical-theological background of creation. Bonino judiciously refrains from trying to adjudicate between the historically competing interpretations and assessments of Aquinas's doctrine that would arise in the ensuing debates about foreknowledge and predestination. Anyone who would purport to weigh in on that question would be well advised to read this book first in order to understand Aquinas's doctrine of *scientia dei.*

BRIAN J. SHANLEY, O.P.

The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination. By MARY CATHERINE HILKERT. New York: Continuum, 1997. Pp. 252. $29.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-8246-0925-3.

In the introduction to this long-awaited book by Mary Catherine Hilkert, systematics professor at the University of Notre Dame, the author states that "even when implicit, the preacher's fundamental theology, anthropology, christology, and ecclesiology are operative in the preaching event" (15). Further on she asserts that "every preacher has a theology of preaching even if that theology remains implicit" (48). In effect this book explicates more fully and completely what the author has already indicated in earlier writings about the relationship between preaching and these facets of systematic theology (see, "Naming Grace: A Theology of Proclamation," *Worship* 60 [1986]: 434-49; "Theology of Preaching," in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990]: 996-1003; and "Revelation and Proclamation: Shifting Paradigms," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 29 (1992]: 1-23.) Here she offers a comparatively complete and unique theology of preaching.

Clearly written and more than amply documented, the book is divided into ten chapters plus an introduction and conclusion. The first two chapters deal with the dialectical and sacramental imagination. Along with the introduction they set up the book's thesis. For Hilkert the dialectical imagination stresses the distance between God and humanity, the hiddenness and absence of God, the sinfulness of human beings, the paradox of the cross, the need for grace as redemption and reconciliation, and the not-yet character of the promised reign of God. The sacramental imagination emphasizes the God who is self-communicating love, the creation of human beings in the image of God, grace as divinizing as well as forgiving, the mediating role of the church as sacrament of salvation in the world, and the foretaste of the reign of God present in human community wherever God's reign of justice, peace, and love is fostered (15). The respective subtitles to these chapters are informative as Hilkert discusses the relationship between "the power of the word" (chap. 1) and "grace enfleshed in word and action" (chap. 2) by summarizing (regrettably altogether too sketchily and briefly) the contributions of contemporary theologians to understanding how God is revealed and how God operates in human life. Chapter 1 offers insights from Karl Barth; Rudolph Bultmann; the "new hermeneutic theologians" (her term), notably Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling; and Paul Tillich, the last of whom, she asserts, offers a bridge between the dialectical and sacramental imaginations. In chapter 2 Hilkert relies on Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, and a number of others who she asserts offer "liberation perspectives" (including Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff). Because of space limitations her treatment of these theologians in the text is cursory at best. The endnote documentation is abundant.

What is curious in the book as a whole, however, and what is particularly noticeable in the "liberation" section in chapter 2, is Hilkert's almost exclusive reliance on English-language sources. In addition, rare is the reference to the evolution of an author's thought or what might have influenced any documentable change. For example, Hilkert uses Karl Rahner's essay on "Priest and Poet" in *Theological Investigations* in a way that eclipses other, more theologically substantial works, such as the article "What Is a Sacrament?" (which she also cites) where he argues that the highest degree of the "exhibitive" power of the proclaimed word (Rahner uses the phrase "exhibitives Wort") is when it is proclaimed and effected in sacrament. To have at least indicated this argument might also have influenced Hilkert to see in the celebration of the church's sacraments-the liturgy-a way to hold the dialectical and the sacramental in some relationship to each other that does not so neatly separate them as she does in these admittedly intriguing chapters. In addition, greater reliance on Eileen McKeon's doctoral dissertation on "A Theology of Preaching Based on Karl Rahner's Theology of the Word" (which Hilkert cites but which is admittedly, and regrettably, unpublished) would have shaped the Rahner section more substantially.

In chapter 3 the author begins to develop her theology of preaching based on how the divine (often explicated as "the Spirit") is mediated through creation and human experience. Here preachers are appropriately challenged to listen to human experience with an ear for "an echo of the gospel." The theology expounded here is poignant and pertinent to humanity today, in particular to suffering humanity. Despite ample reference to ecofeminist theologians, it is surprising that Hilkert refers sparingly to the suffering humans cause to the cosmos and the degradation of creation by creatures. Much of the chapter is passionately written. For example she states that "the preacher is sent to the poor not to announce good news they have not heard but rather to be among the poor to hear the good news they experience when they listen to the scriptures from the context of their lives and struggles" (52).

In chapter 4 Hilkert offers nuances to the theology of preaching in chapter 3 and helpfully discloses that what is revealed in human life may well not be sufficient for a theology that must admit and name the absence of God's reign in humanity's suffering, as well as the joy and fulfillment of finding the divine in what humans experience. It is here that the author deals with "the liturgical homily" specifically, and with the power of the word in the liturgical assembly. She cites approvingly the 1982 document from the Priestly Life Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, which quotation (67) reveals a theology most congenial with Hilkert's. What would have enhanced this section would have been a consideration of other recent statements about the liturgical homily from such sources as the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, nn. 10, 35, 51-52; the General Instruction on the Roman Missal, n. 41; and the second edition of the General Instruction on the *Lectionary for Mass*, n.24 (since the second edition of this text is much richer theologically than that which preceded the first edition of the *Ordo Lectionum Missae* [1969]).

Hilkert enters a more controversial realm in chapter 5 when she asserts that the principle of the dialectical view that the Christian assembly gathers to be shaped by the text can be dangerous, especially when those texts function as "texts of terror" for women, Jews, or anyone who is subordinated or rejected because of them. She appeals for and delineates the shape of a hermeneutic of suspicion that requires the exercise of critical discernment drawn from Sandra Schneiders's "paschal" imagination and Walter Brueggeman's "prophetic" imagination about texts that dominate, not liberate. Who decides and what characterizes domination or liberation is left unexplained on the level of principle. One is hard pressed, however, to dismiss the examples she uses to illustrate her point.

The clearest examination of the author's underlying theological anthropology is delineated in chapter 6. Here she explores the theological grounds for narrative preaching based on the way the sacramental imagination stresses the role of grace in human experience. Her cautions here about preachers speaking far too much about their own experience in narrative and autobiographical

ways are very well taken. Indeed the shift from "our" story to "my" story distorts even more the fact that it is always God's (often surprising) story. Regrettably absent here (and throughout the book) is any discussion of how the classic Catholic category of sacramental causality can today be influenced by a theology of preaching where both word *and* sacrament together can be understood to cause grace. If in fact every magisterial statement from and since Vatican II has asserted that word and table at the Eucharist form one act of worship, then this principle could well ground a truly substantial theology of preaching as causative of grace. In addition, whether Hilkert's thesis about "naming" grace does sufficient justice to causality in the sacramental event and to this category of sacramental theology is open for debate. The author explores the implications of some truly valuable writing among liturgists and sacramental theologians today (e.g., David N. Power) indicting a blithe overemphasis on praise and thanks and commanding the restoration of a true sense of lament in our liturgies and sacramental structures. She states: "the preacher 'names grace,' but, especially in the contrast experiences of life, it is equally important that the preacher name the situations of impasse and 'dis-grace,' or sin that confront creation and call out for redemption" (111). If such is indeed true, then would not a theology based on both the dialectical and the sacramental provide the theological structure for what she ultimately wishes to argue? In other words, is the uniqueness of the author's thesis the very reason it becomes strained ultimately? If so why not delineate a theology based on a combination of both of the approaches to theological anthropology that she has creatively delineated? At least a comment about the theological and spiritual importance of moving from word *to* altar (or font etc.) would have been helpful here so that the healing aspect of liturgy could be made more evident.

Another helpful critique about much contemporary preaching (along with autobiography), namely that it is "slim fare" (128), is dealt with in chapter 8 on "doctrinal preaching." Hilkert's astute observations here are worth serious consideration. The antidote she offers concerns preaching from a solid theological base that offers the preacher the resources to name what is actually grace in life and to do so in a way that is not theologically trivial. The irrelevance of some thematically structured preaching before Vatican II has been matched by some post-Vatican II preaching that is based on the Scriptures but that is really historical study of the Bible. Both systematics and Scripture (along with the range of other theological disciplines) are acolytes to the proclamation of the word and the homily. But they do not substitute for it. Theologically informed and scripturally based homilies are intended to reveal, cause, and name grace for specific congregations here and now. The proclamation of the homily is a bridge built into the structure of the liturgy to do this. Like many other things in theology and liturgy, it is easier to say what its content should not be than what it ought to be. It ought not to be Bible study or the study of theology; but both should be evidently reflected in the finished product.

Chapters 9 and 10 (as well as the conclusion) contain some of the most poignant rhetoric in the book. They deal with the obviously heartfelt question about whether preaching can remain genuinely inclusive of the experience of women and yet also be biblical, liturgical, and doctrinal. The author explores a full range of issues here as she questions the conventional church assumptions about who has the charism for preaching, what is the source of authority to preach, and the relationship between ordination and preaching. Here her reliance on the work of William Hill, 0.P., could have been even greater. Her assertions might have been better argued if different kinds of preaching events and different kinds of preachers were laid out fully. As these chapters stand the (implied) focus is on preaching at the liturgy (of the Eucharist), not on a wider tradition and contemporary experience of varieties of preaching and preachers.

That Catholicism has sustained preaching at its liturgy throughout the centuries, has traditionally sent (ordained and lay) missionaries to preach the gospel, and has revived the practice of frequent preaching in the reformed Roman liturgy should be recalled as one reads critiques of contemporary homilies and homilists. The fact that as a church we may be out of practice does not mean that we have never known the art and craft of preaching. What we do need today is a theology of preaching that deepens the seminal (pre-Vatican II) insights of Otto Semmelroth and Domenico Grasso (among others), the present practice of the craft by preachers such as Walter Burghardt, and the theoretical sketches about what preaching is from teachers such as Robert Waznak, William Skudlarek, and James Wallace. Concomitant is our need for a theology of the liturgical homily that gives pride of place to insights of liturgical theologians such as Alexander Schmemann, Gordon Lathrop, and Mary Collins and to the retrieval of the maxim *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi.* It will take some time to determine whether the still-evolving and maturing work of Mary Catherine Hilkert on preaching will make her name worthy of inclusion into the ranks of such as these.

KEVINW. IRWIN

The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas: An Interpretation of the "Summa Contra Gentiles." By THOMASS. HIBBS. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996. Pp. 288. $34.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-268-00878-7.

The *Summa contra Gentiles* (1259-64) of St. Thomas Aquinas is the one summa of theology that he did complete, unlike its later and bigger sibling, the *Summa Theologiae* (1265-73). Perhaps because it is an earlier, and presumably

less mature, work of Thomas, scholars who consult it tend to consider only the parts of it that concern their doctrinal focus. Hence a writer interested, say, in Thomas's various arguments for the existence of God might commence a doctrinal study with texts found in book 1, distinction 3 of his *Scriptum super libros sententiarum,* progress through book 1, chapters 10-13 of the *Summa contra Gentiles,* read the relevant passages in the *Compendium Theologiae,* tarry in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae,* and finally consider the various commentaries on Aristotle. The upshot of this mode of procedure is that the *Summa contra Gentiles* is but a stop along the way, hardly ever read cover-to-cover. While there is something about the literary genre of the *Summa* that allows and even encourages this way of using the text-after all, is even the *Summa Theologiae* regularly read all the way through?-it remains that Thomas's personal sense of how theological matter should be disposed, his achievement in actually ordering the material to be found in the work, and his subtle emphases and corrections (even tacit ones) are often lost.

Thomas Hibbs's book is an attempt to read and study the *Summa contra Gentiles* in its own right, not merely as a doctrinal stepping stone to other, putatively more useful texts of the saint. Merely to undertake this effort is an accomplishment in itself-"non a poco," the anonymous reviewer of the *Rassegna di letteratura tomistica* said when Hibbs's teacher, Mark Jordan, wrote on the entire structure of the *Summa contra Gentiles* (see Mark D. Jordan, "The Protreptic Structure of the *Summa contra Gentiles," The Thomist* 50 [1986]: 173-209). The reference here to Jordan is not gratuitous; Hibbs began to study the work while a graduate student of Jordan's in the early 1980s, and acknowledges his debt to his teacher (ix). And thus one finds in Hibbs's rendering what one finds in Jordan's: an attention to structure, an unwillingness to foist modern categories and concerns upon the text, and an attention to whatever historical research allows us to know about the text's origins and audience, all with an eye towards letting the text speak for itself as much as possible.

Hibbs's book, therefore, is as much an exercise in showing how to read a text as it is anything else. But the text itself, and Thomas's doctrine therein, are not lost as a result of this demonstration; Hibbs accomplishes his task by reading through the entire text of the *Summa contra Gentiles,* addressing the issues it poses with as much detail as a single-book treatment will allow. The result is a book that will prove of lasting usefulness to all scholars interested in this particular element of Thomas's literary legacy.

The book begins with a first chapter devoted to situating the *Summa contra Gentiles* in its historical, literary, and argumentative contexts, and it is here that Hibbs's proposes his hermeneutical thesis for the work: the *Summa contra Gentiles* is built upon both dialectic and narrative. It is built upon dialectic because, like many of the works of Aristotle, whose notion of dialectic is operative here, it is written within a tradition of authoritative texts and received opinions, texts and opinions that Thomas absorbs and orders, and

even corrects when necessary (as in the case of certain Arabic philosophical teachings that touch upon key Christian doctrines). But the *Summa contra Gentiles* can also be read narratively. Hibbs notes, however, that while narrative can be a fashionable contemporary tool that binds philosophical and theological discussion to antirealist, antimetaphysical epistemological underpinnings, it is nonetheless a real element in Thomas's book because so much of its subject matter, ranging from the fact of a contingent creation of things to God's freely chosen decision to become incarnate, is, in fact, something of a metaphysical story.

There is something exciting about these two suggestions, which Hibbs argues for briefly (23-34), and then, letting Thomas's own stated principle of the "office of the wise man" help to order the work as a whole, seeks to demonstrate through his careful study of the whole *Summa.* The book continues with chapters devoted to each of the four books of the *Summa:* chapter 2 considering God as summit, source, and exemplar of the life of wisdom; chapter 3 dealing with "the divine artistry"; chapter 4 dealing with the dialectic of human inquiry and the narrative of divine providence; and chapter 5 presenting the "drama of redemption." Throughout these chapters Hibbs presents the arguments and structures that comprise Thomas's work, and brings the arguments into discussion with the appropriate secondary sources (e.g., Fr. Gauthier's 1993 book on the *Summa* for historically situating the work; de Lubac, de Broglie and Laporta on the gratuity of the supernatural [lllff.]). Hibbs recapitulates in chapter 6 ("The *Summa contra Gentiles* as Divine Comedy"), suggesting the ways in which the work might be more profitably seen as a kind of divine comedy rather than the *exitus-reditus* that Thomists know so well, and perhaps repeat more than is necessary. Readers will decide for themselves whether they are comfortable with letting such notions as "divine comedy" and "drama of redemption" be useful descriptions of parts or wholes of Thomas's writing, but Hibbs turns to such descriptions precisely because he takes very seriously the Christian, theological character of the *Summa,* something particularly welcome given how often the work is used as a sourcebook for ahistorical, philosophical arguments.

I mentioned that I found Hibbs's overall thesis exciting. If he succeeds in convincing his reader to see the *Summa contra Gentiles* as an instance of dialectic and narrative, then the reader must henceforth, it seems to me, exercise a certain care in how he or she employs texts taken from the work, for the arguments Thomas uses in a particular section, and ones he consciously ignores, will indicate something of the weight he attributes to them, and the sources and texts from which they derive. The emphasis upon the narrative of creation will surely help shape the way Thomas presents the human person, the ultimate goal of humanity, etc., distinct from the way he might present them in, say, a commentary upon one of the works of Aristotle. Once again we might be cautioned against generalizing certain of Thomas's arguments into his "theory" of this or that.

A few points of note. In a work that covers so much ground a certain selectiveness must prevail, but I found myself wondering why Hibbs did not avail himself of the sixteenth-century commentary of Ferrariensis (Francesco Silvestri di Ferrara, O.P.) in analyzing the work's structure or arguments, if only for the sake of thoroughness. Also, Hibbs provides the reader with a useful appendix (279-85) on the idea that the *Summa contra Gentiles* may have had an apologetic purpose, a thesis he in concert with almost all modern commentators denies (see also 9-14). But by removing apologetics as a possible motive for writing the work, and by appreciating Gauthier's *oeuvre de sagesse* stance on the work, even Hibbs, I fear, reads the *Summa* in something of an ahistorical way-"ahistorical" in the sense that we do not uncover the precise motive for which Thomas undertook to write this admittedly anachronistic work. We know that it was begun during the summer of 1259 when Thomas and four other Dominican masters in theology, comprising a commission (hand-picked by the Master General, Humbert of Romans) to think through Dominican education, produced the so-called *ratio studiorum* that was promulgated as part of the *acta* for the order's general chapter of 1259 at Valenciennes. This *ratio* reemphasized what was then the traditional Dominican focus upon canon law (e.g., Raymond of Peftafort), case-based moral theology, Scripture, and various preaching tools. If, for instance, we were able to argue persuasively that Thomas began writing the *Summa* as a first personal attempt to fill-out the doctrinal gaps left behind after Valenciennes, might that have some possible bearing upon the way in which it is read?

But these questions cannot detract from this successful work. Hibbs identifies two key elements to be used in our reading of the *Summa contra Gentiles* and argues for, and demonstrates by example, their-role as interpretive keys. My hope for this book is that it will not suffer the same fate that its subject suffers, such that it be read only in part, and without interest in what emerges when it is read as a whole. To do so would both be unfair to this skillful book and its author, and dampen our ability to appropriate the sole intact surviving theological synthesis that Thomas produced.

MARK JOHNSON

Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Christian Faith and the Theological Life. By ROMANUS CESSARIO, O.P. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996. Pp. 197. $34.95 (cloth), $17.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8132-0868-8 (cloth), 0-8132-0869-6 (paper).

The most important moral question underlying all the debates that have evolved since Vatican Council II is the question of the existence of a Christian morality. In other words, does faith make a new contribution to morality, and does it exert a direct influence on the life of Christians and on their response to the moral problems facing them? Or does Christian teaching propose a purely human and rational morality, placed within a spiritual, Christian context which supports and confirms it?

The title of Romanus Cessario's beautiful book clearly expresses his perspective. He proposes to show how faith penetrates the moral life of the Christian and transforms it to the point where it can be called theologal, which in no wise prevents it from being human. Christian life is truly "a life of faith," guided and inspired by faith, hope, and charity.

Cessario's exposition is set in the framework of the moral theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. The moral textbooks of recent centuries, on which many moralists have relied, focus their moral material on an explanation of the Ten Commandments, the source of moral obligation and the principle of the division of special morality "at the categorical level" (according to a modern phrase). They take the theologal virtues for granted and in fact study them only from the viewpoint of the obligations they impose. While preserving, with the Decalogue, the chief and indispensable basis of the moral life, this teaching is in fact more rational and humanistic than theologal and Christian.

St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae,* in keeping with patristic tradition, presents a morality of virtues which form a living organism, the theologal virtues being its head and heart. In his special morality the Angelic Doctor begins with the treatise on faith and studies it less from the point of view of its precepts than its dynamism, precisely as a virtue that enlightens the other virtues so as to order them to the sovereign Good which it reveals, the cause of man's perfection and happiness. For Thomas faith is the first virtue of the Christian life, giving it a properly theologal dimension. Faith is a practical virtue. We would have to call it dead if it did not generate virtuous acts.

Furthermore, a certain separation was set up in post-Tridentine theology between dogma, which treated questions of faith, and morality, considered as the domain of obligations and claiming autonomy in regard to the other branches of theology. Morality was specialized and given a technical vocabulary all but incomprehensible to the uninitiated, even if they were theologians. In adopting St. Thomas's views on the basic unity of "sacred science," Cessario has reestablished a close bond between dogmatic theology, which treats of the triune God and of Christ, and morality, which studies man's response to God's gratuitous call to happiness.

While basing his exposition on the theology of the Angelic Doctor, Cessario also calls on the saints, those witnesses to Christian experience, and particularly such Fathers of the Church as Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor, as well as other spiritual writers , ancient and modern, including Tauler, Nicholas of Flue, and in the Carmelite school John of the Cross, the two Theresas, and Elizabeth of the Trinity. Cessario skillfully combines a rigorous theological consideration, presented in the Scholastic manner, with the experience of the life of faith as described by spiritual writers in their more concrete and imaginative language. The effect of this is to provide us with solidity of thought and to help fill in the gap that still lies between theological reflection and spiritual experience.

Cessario's research extends likewise to the present day through the theological problems he evokes and through recourse to the great documents of our time: the *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* a veritable catechetical synthesis, and the encyclical *Veritatis splendor,* both of which have solidly reestablished the foundations of Christian morality by taking up again the teaching of the gospel and the tradition of the Fathers.

Yet it is no easy thing to reconnect faith and morality in our times, when what we might call "a morality of actions" still predominates, in the tradition of casuistry. In this view actions are considered individually, as cases to be judged according to their conformity or nonconformity to laws or norms. If each action is separated from all the others, how can an act of faith be related to an act of charity, justice, or temperance, and inspire them? What is at stake is the practical importance of faith.

Cessario points to the answer by highlighting the virtuous character of faith. It is because it is a virtue, a stable disposition, a *habitus,* an inclination to believe in the God of Jesus Christ and in His promises of happiness, that faith can direct and engender, with hope and charity, the entire life of the believer, together with all the actions that make it up. As dynamic qualities of the human mind and heart, the virtues are not isolated as successive actions but vitally united among themselves. Faith is the first of the virtues because it brings God's light to all the others through the external Word of the gospel and the interior Word of the Spirit of Jesus.

The concept of virtue, therefore, plays an essential role in Cessario's consideration of faith, as it did for St. Thomas. Faith is a quality of the person, a perfection of the mind and will that adhere to the light of God. However, the virtue acquires, in theology, a particular condition unknown to Aristotle and the philosophers: faith is an infused virtue, produced in us by the sheer grace of God, who reveals Himself as the source of a truth beyond human intelligence. Hence a twofold aspect results in the life of faith. Faith is a passive or receptive virtue and at the same time it is active. It communicates divine light to us and also leads us into the darkness of mystery. As Cessario emphasizes, the moral life of the Christian is a journey in the chiaroscuro of faith. In the life of faith, faith and human freedom join. Their union has been

the object of lengthy theological debates, on which Cessario comments briefly and judiciously. Taking up St. Thomas's original theory, he shows how the theologal virtues, directed by faith, transform the acquired virtues, thanks to the infused moral virtues which order them to the end of supernatural happiness.

The richness of the Christian experience is indescribable. For our better understanding, and taking his inspiration from St. Paul and St. Augustine, the Angelic Doctor explains the predominant action of grace in the life of the Christian by relating the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the theologal and moral virtues. He fine-tunes their definition: the gifts are dispositions to follow the inspirations of the Spirit with docility and thus to act in a more excellent way. In this connection we are reminded of those inspired saints, Dominic and Francis.

Here again the change in moral theology that Cessario discusses is important. For some centuries Catholic moralists have not been dealing with the Holy Spirit and His gifts. They have been a little hesitant about the Spirit, too often invoked by Protestants in favor of an individual interpretation of the Bible, and have relegated the gifts to a another science, the rather suspect domain of mysticism. The reintegration of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His gifts into Christian morality is therefore an urgent and very timely task. Did not St. Thomas define the gospel law, the summit of Christian morality, as the grace of the Holy Spirit received through faith in Christ and operating through charity, both of which animate all the virtues and gifts? Cessario is therefore absolutely right to devote a special chapter to the teaching on the gifts. They are no marginal supplement of moral theology; we cannot do without them. He is particularly interested in the intellectual gifts, which perfect faith; this is an initial preparation for the study of the other gifts together with the virtues.

These several considerations evoke, in a few lines, the background of the teaching of morality against which Cessario's work unfolds. This should help the reader to understand its plan and measure its importance. Today traditional casuistry still remains the cultural basis for moralists, whether they critique or prolong it. Cessario has the advantage of belonging to another tradition-I might call it "St. Thomas rediscovered"-which enables him to retain whatever solid material the manuals possess (viz., the teaching on the Decalogue and natural law), and to reestablish what is missing (viz., rootedness in the gospel and in faith).

Let me briefly run through the present work. After an introduction on theologal life flowing from faith in the triune God revealed in Christ, Cessario focuses his exposition on the virtue of faith. He considers it first of all as coming from Christ, head of the Church and source of theologal life by means of grace, which assures its dynamism and conforms us to Trinitarian life (chap. 1). He next considers faith in its various aspects. The object of faith is God as First Truth manifested in His mystery with the help of the articles of faith

taught by the Church (chap. 2). On the part of the subject, faith is firstly an interior action consisting in willing adherence to a truth which remains mysterious. It finds completion in outward confession. The act of faith engages human affectivity as well as intelligence. It arouses the desire for knowledge, which enlightens theologal life and is at the origin of theology. Here we encounter the problem of the relationship between faith and reason, notably regarding the preliminary truths of faith and those naturally attainable (chap. 3). The act of faith does not remain isolated, but is the work of a person's virtue or stable disposition. It presupposes close collaboration, "synergy," between intellect and will under the motion of grace, which is verified by an informed faith and manifested in the genesis of faith and in the education it demands (chap. 4). The gifts of the Holy Spirit, remarkably exposed by John of St. Thomas-and in particular the gifts of understanding and knowledge-come to perfect the work of living faith and cause it to produce the fruits of the Spirit (chap. 5).

The plan adopted by Cessario clearly shows the twofold dimension, objective and subjective, of faith and the moral life, which in my opinion can only be assured in a virtue-based morality. Better than a morality based on actions, which reduces the subject's part in the moral action to intention and a here-and-now choice, the consideration of virtue undergirds the action throughout its duration and allows us to take into account the preparation of a conversion to faith and the educative work that assures progress in the life of faith. At the same time, while being a quality of the subject, of the person in his substantial unity, virtue better guarantees the objectivity of the moral judgment. Above all if it is inspired by charity, virtue disposes the human mind and heart to open itself to the external reality-God, neighbor, and the world-in order to know and love it. This is verified especially in the case of the virtue of faith which consists in believing in someone other than oneself, in the Word of Christ, in divine truth. As compared with moral systems based on obligation and imperatives resting on the opposition between subject and object and oscillating between physical objectivism and a subjectivism which relativizes law, virtue-based morality tends to create a coordination and harmony between subject and object, preparing man to welcome reality interiorly and to love it in its very objectivity.

In this connection it should be noted that virtue as found in Christian theology, in an Augustine or a Thomas Aquinas, is clearly more "objective" than in Greek philosophy, because of faith in a God who reveals Himself and intervenes actively in the history and life of believers. Precisely because of its openness to the divine object, Christian morality cannot remain indifferent to the contribution of faith and dogmatic theology regarding Trinitarian life and the mystery of Christ. Cessario understands this very well.

This book therefore brings a very positive contribution to the reconstruction of Christian morality. At the base of moral theology it places the cornerstone of faith, too long neglected by the writers of the manuals. The

other stones obviously remain to be set in place; the other virtues, gifts, and precepts are yet to be discussed.

The work is a fine initiation in the theology of faith in its relation to the moral life. It is written in a clear style and provides an explanation of technical terms and a succinct exposition of the principal problems. The frequent appeal to spiritual experience helps the reader better to situate the questions in the concrete. Doubtless the trained reader may sometimes wish that the author had gone a little further in his analysis and clarified his position on controversial problems, but I can only admire his overall procedure.

I should like to add two remarks. In explaining the classic definition of faith found in the Letter to the Hebrews, Cessario rightly emphasizes the synergy between intellect and will, characteristic of the functioning of the spiritual faculties in St. Thomas, as contrasted with nominalism, which disassociates them (chap. 4). However, it seems to me that the exposition gives a little too much weight to unformed faith apart from charity, since a virtue, like every being, only manifests itself fully in its perfect state. Isn't it a weakness of theology in recent centuries to have considered faith too much in the abstract, separating it from charity and cutting it off from the experience of a living faith? From this comes the idea of considering unformed faith as a stage prior to formed faith and preparatory to the acquisition of charity. Following this line of thought, can we truly distinguish in the experience of Augustine or others a stage of unformed faith preceding formed faith, or again a stage of attrition, followed by contrition (155-56)? If grace is first, does it not offer faith, hope, and charity all together, in a spiritual seed which grows progressively in proportion to the welcome it receives? As Cessario himself reminds us, the priority in the analysis of the formation of faith is in the logical rather than temporal order (cf. the analysis of justification in *STh* 1-11, q. 113, a. 7).

The chapter dealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit is finely developed. It is based on the universal call to holiness, which is remarkably illustrated by the teaching of St. Thomas linking the gifts of the Holy Spirit with the theologal and moral virtues. With John of St. Thomas, Cessario insists on the special mode of knowledge conferred by the gifts, a knowledge of divine realities that is connatural and is effected by spiritual experience.

A clarification seems useful here. The insistence on knowledge through connaturality in this last chapter could make the reader think that this type of knowledge is connected with the gifts of the Spirit and belongs to the order of mystical graces rather than to the moral domain. He might even wonder whether John of St. Thomas's teaching on the gifts did not further, by its very richness, the divisionsbetween morality, asceticism, and mysticism, which were set up precisely in his time.

It is well to stress, therefore, that the work proper to the virtues consists especially in giving knowledge through experience or through connaturality to those who are sufficiently advanced in the moral life, and in thereby conferring

on them the ability to judge more surely in the practical order than can those who have only book knowledge (cf. *STh* 11-11, q. 45, a. 2, on the gift of wisdom, with the example of chastity). Each virtue, or more precisely all the virtues united in the active experience, provide such a knowledge which is specifically moral.

The knowledge through experience that is given by the gifts is inseparable from that proceeding from the virtues, for the organism of virtues and gifts, united in the believer, intervenes integrally in the concrete action. The gifts are rooted in the theologal virtues and cannot be separated from them. Nevertheless, the experience of the gifts possesses its own special character, an awareness of an inspiration or a motion of the Spirit calling for docility and inciting to action. From the subject's point of view the modality is more passive or receptive. There is a sense of being moved by another, while at the same time acting very personally in faith, confidence, and love.

Many other things could be said about this beautiful book which touches upon numerous problems. I only hope these lines will be sufficient to make it appreciated. (Translated by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P.)

SERVAIS PINCKAERS, O.P.

Albertinum
Fribourg, Switzerland

The Beginning and the End of "Religion." By NICHOLAS LASH. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. 284. $54.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-521-56232-5.

About halfway into this book of collected essays, Nicholas Lash mentions that he keeps at home a poster from the British Government's Propaganda Office during World War II, one of a series meant to sustain high levels of vigilance in the civilian population. Its message: "Careless talk costs lives" (127).

Only slightly altered, this *monitum* could also serve as the epigraph to what, in retrospect, makes for a remarkably cohesive assemblage of essays: "careless God-talk corrodes faith." Like a *leitmotif* in an opera, Lash, the Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, alerts the reader to this central concern of his, as when he defines theologians as those people "who watch their language in the presence of God" (59), or when he wittily points out that too often in contemporary theology the bandying about of the term "ineffability" has become an all-purpose cop-out for hard theological analysis: "As the God of modern deism fades from view like Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat, his only trace a smile of vague and indeterminate benignity, some people

construe ineffability to mean that we may say, concerning God, more or less whatever takes our fancy" (58). But more centrally, this motif emerges both from the author's insistence that words be defined carefully and from his own consistency in their use.

This requirement has become especially exigent in today's global civilization, where nearly everyone is aware that past traditions are now colliding in a "clash of civilizations," so that it becomes imperative to speak across traditions in a way that both respects the integrity of the other tradition and yet also allows real conversation to occur. Consider this dilemma:

> In contemporary uses of the word "god," there is a common carelessness which takes two forms. On the one hand, we find it far too easy to label as "gods" whatever *other* people worship and, on the strength of this ascription, to judge such people to be "polytheists." Whereas, of course, although "we" reverence, cherish, hold in high respect and worthy of devotion a great diversity of people, values, things, ideas and dreams, we suppose ourselves to worship only that which *we* call "god." (31)

This passage occurs in part 1 of this two-part book, that is, the section devoted to the encounter of Hinduism and Christianity (the three chapters of this section are made up of Lash's Teape Lectures in India, which were established by the Revered W. M. Teape to promote Hindu-Christian relations), where these kinds of misinterpretations are especially tempting. *Soi-disant* monotheists are especially prone to look on apparently "polytheist" religions and cultures as tautologically idolatrous, but Lash insists that this too-easy classification can obscure in two directions at once: first, he holds with Julius Lippner *(Hindus: Their Religious Belief and Practices* [London: Routledge, 1994], 304-5) that "the Sanskritic tradition has [never] advocated polytheism proper" (52); and second, he points out, much in the manner of Paul Tillich, that *real* monotheism is perhaps as rare as Hebrew prophecy in Israelite monotheism:

> Almost all human beings set their hearts on something, have some object of their worship, and if they are distracted or discouraged from that laborious *ascesis* . . . then they will set their hearts on some particular fact or thing, some dream or vision or good feeling, some institution, individual or idea. In other words, the displacement of religion from the realm of truth merely unleashes the horsemen of the Apocalypse, leaves our propensity for idolatry unchecked and unconstrained, with devastating consequences. (110)

This passage occurs in part 2 of the book, but it accurately summarizes the way Lash wants to initiate a dialogue with Hinduism: by getting away from surface terminology like "polytheism" and "monotheism" and to what for the author is clearly his central passion, the right naming of God. *That* is how all interreligious dialogue should be conducted: "in Christian as in Hindu thought, consideration of how God might be named, far from being a merely academic exercise, is at the heart of the religious quest" (50).

To that extent, part 2 ("Emerging from Modernity") tries to meet the challenge posed in part 1 ("A Meeting-Place for Truth"): how are we to speak reliably of the unknowable God? What Lash makes clear is that the pursuit of the "reliable" does not mean a search for "scientific" (in the sense of "positivistic") exactitude. Quite the contrary: the author is sharply critical of the way "theologians, philosophers and scientists alike developed a single-minded passion for pure prose. All knowledge [in this view] is of objects, and objects are to be measured and described, as objectively and simply and straightforwardly as possible" (12). He quite properly looks askance at the cult of the literal that has been such a besetting sin for theological epistemology since at least the time of Newton (Lash shrewdly notes that fundamentalism is not an anachronistically surviving *precursor* of modern rationalism and literalism but almost totally a *byproduct* of it). In fact, at one point he even notes how this cult of the literal can detrimentally affect the translation of Thomas:

> I am unhappy about suggestions that God "literally" acts, or knows, or speaks, or loves the world, not because we may not properly and truly say God really does these things, but because "literally" may too easily be taken to imply that, in saying them, we know what we are doing. It is a pity that Aquinas' distinction between what is said *"metaphorice"* of God, and what is said *"proprie"* is usually translated as a distinction between metaphorical and literal speech. "Literally" [as a translation for *proprie]* seems to carry unfortunate connotations of straightforwardness, of knowing without too much difficulty what we means "across the gap," which (translating by] "appropriately" or "properly" might not. (129-30)

But here precisely is the rub: for Lash-together with so many contemporary theologians-rightly criticizes the past five centuries of theology for speaking mere prose, for its cult of objectivity, for its neglect of metaphor, image, narrative, and poetry. Rather like Moliere's Monsieur Jourdin who discovered to his amazement that he had been speaking prose all these years without realizing it, contemporary theology has awakened from its "prosaic slumbers" to realize the inherently polyvalent semantics of its language. And yet this very realization makes the job of the theologian even more perilous, for it is precisely here that the theologian can be tempted to think that "anything goes."

The only way through this dilemma for Lash is a heightened alertness to the seriousness of the task before the theologian, who must be like the literary critic of a rich and polysemic work of literature, whose sole task must be to unfold and explicate what the reader is only dimly aware of experiencing. Consider these two passages, the first of which carefully distinguishes the subjective side of the meaning of the word "god" and the second of which distinguishes "holy" from "divine":

> Perhaps the best place to begin is with the elementary observation that the word "god" is not a proper name. It is the common name for whatever people worship, whatever people take to be divine. And "being divine" is not like being fat or thin, being British or being short-sighted. It is more like being heard or seen. Something is divine if someone worships it. (30-31)
>
> Where God is, is not God; this sanctuary of God's presence is, however holy, not divine. (61)

Now taken alone, the first passage can seem too easily Tillichian with its airy assumption that everyone has an "Ultimate Concern" which is "god" for that person but of course isn't "God" to *real* monotheists. But from previous citations, we know that this cannot be Lash's meaning. This emerges even more clearly from the second quote above, for God is always to be distinguished from the revelation-and even the very presence-of God.

If Lash has indicated to the reader how he would best try to resolve this dilemma that he has so effectively outlined, it is probably in chapter 7, on Michael Buckley's *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), which he rightly lauds for its fascinating *tour d'horizon* of Enlightenment atheism but also scores (again rightly in my opinion) for its genealogy of that same atheism, which makes Thomas Aquinas's proofs for the existence of God at the beginning of the *Summa Theologiae* the *fons et origo* of atheism. Lash quite correctly points out how this is fundamentally to misunderstand the neo-Platonic structure of the *Summa* with its schema of *exitus-reditus,* within which the proofs are meant to do their work.

As is true of any collected edition of essays, Lash's chapters must be read in terms of each other if the reader wants a cohesive point of view to emerge. But alertness to that gradually emerging point of view brings rich rewards, not least a therapeutic reward; Lash's command of the tradition furnishes him with an admirable wisdom and a learned perspective to be able to point the way out of theology's many contemporary dilemmas. As he says, "the surest approach to the divine is by the scrutiny of linguistic failure" (130).

EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J.

Regis University
Denver, Colorado

God's Grace and Human Action: "Merit" in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas. By JOSEPH P. WAWRYKOW. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995. Pp. x + 293. $39.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-268-01031-5.

Joseph Wawrykow contends that most twentieth-century efforts to interpret Thomas Aquinas's theology of merit have been deficient in at least two

respects. First, they have presume:d that his position on merit is essentially the same in all his writings, with the result that differences between parallel discussions in earlier and later works are downplayed or simply overlooked. Second, and even more important, they have relied too narrowly on the texts in which Thomas treats merit explicitly, as though what he says on that subject could be adequately understood without considering what he says about the related topics of creation, providence, predestination, and grace. Such methodological cutting of corners has inevitably produced impoverished and misleading accounts of the role merit plays in Thomas's theology. Wawrykow persuasively argues that any effort to remedy this situation must approach Thomas's teaching on merit as a developing element within a developing theological synthesis.

Wawrykow does an impressive job of gathering the data needed to meet this challenge. He examines and critically appropriates the historical studies of Henri Bouillard and Bernard Lonergan, who earlier in this century traced a series of developments in Thomas's understanding of God's creative and redemptive presence in the world. Their insights help establish the context within which Thomas's notion of merit is situated. Furthermore, while researching this project Wawrykow adopted the strategy of reading practically all of Thomas's theological writings. In this way he hoped to gain a "[s]ensitivity to Thomas's concerns" and "a feel for the texture and flow of Thomas's theological argument" (viii) that have not always been apparent in the work of other interpreters.

The book is composed of four chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the literature on merit and related subjects and indicates where the major points of controversy lie. Chapter 2 considers Thomas's early writings on merit, especially the *Scnptum super libros sententiarum* and *De Veritate.* In chapter 3 Wawrykow locates the discussions about merit in the *Summa Theologiae* and other late works against the backdrop of Thomas's ever-more comprehensive theological synthesis. Finally, a provocative but all-too-brief chapter 4 attempts to respond to Protestant critiques of the Catholic doctrine of merit by showing how Thomas's view of merit, especially as evidenced by his use of scriptural authority, is faithful to the Pauline and Augustinian emphasis on the utter gratuity of grace and the necessity of grace for salvation.

The most noteworthy aspect of Wawrykow's study is his highlighting of the contrast between Thomas's earlier and later treatments of merit. The presentation in the *Scriptum* contains some ambiguities and at certain points seems to overestimate the contribution human beings make to the accomplishment of their own salvation. There Thomas explains the necessity of grace, conceived at this stage primarily as an infused habit, only in terms of its function of making good acts supernatural. He maintains that only those who prepare themselves for its reception and choose rightly once they have received it are predestined to be saved. Since Thomas does not yet see how the causal certitude of divine providence could be extended to contingent effects,

he does not make the further claim that God is the efficient cause of salutary acts. In Wawrykow's words, "To put it bluntly (yet fairly, I believe), in the *Scriptum* grace and the supernatural reward of heaven are 'there for the taking' through the gracious will of God. People must simply do their best, and they shall receive the appropriate reward." (100) Within this scheme the basis of merit is distributive justice-for God freely wills to reward equally all who attain the same degree of merit-and the measure of merit is human effort.

Between the *Scriptum* and the *Prima Secundae,* however, Thomas made theoretical breakthroughs on a number of related subjects, including the freedom of the human will, the instrumentality of created causes, the distinction between habitual grace and *divinum auxilium,* and divine transcendence. As a result, he was able to characterize the created universe as a dynamic *ordinatio,* in which God is the efficient cause of the interplay of created causes. From this perspective it is apparent that creatures depend absolutely on God not only for their existence but also for their activity. Nothing escapes God's providential knowledge and causal efficacy: these extend to all created causes and their effects, whether necessary or contingent, including the human will and its free acts. The meritorious acts by which we prepare for justification or cooperate with the movements of grace are themselves caused by God and are an integral part of the divinely willed world order. Within this enlarged and highly refined theological context, the notion of merit acquires new shades of meaning. It still represents the right to a reward, but now the gift-character of that right shows forth more clearly. The direct dependence of each and every meritorious act on God's causation underscores the gratuity of salvation. At the same time, the fact that God has wisely and lovingly created a universe in which human beings are invited to participate actively in reaching their ultimate end through their own graced free choices manifests God's goodness and accentuates the dignity of the position humans occupy in the divine *ordinatio.*

The significance of this shift is borne out by a parallel development in Thomas's treatment of hope. In both earlier and later writings he defines the object of hope in terms of its end, which is the "future, arduous, possible good" constituted by the beatific vision. The basis of hope, as spelled out in the *Scriptum,* is the fact that God has granted people the means (in the form of habitual grace, the theological and moral virtues, free will, and the providential order of the universe) to attain that end. Hope is certain because the means God has provided are efficacious for those who make the effort to employ them. But Wawrykow draws attention to the emergence of a rather different picture in the *Summa,* where Thomas adds a second object of hope: namely, God, to whom we look for the assistance we will need to attain that end. Hope, in other words, is grounded in the awareness that God's gracious and active presence, not our own striving, is the ultimate source of our confident expectation of salvation. Yet Thomas's discussion of despair and presumption-the vices opposed to hope-indicates that the primacy of grace does not

contradict the need for human cooperation in bringing God's redemptive activity to fruition. Despair stems from the sinner's failure to trust in the power and generosity of God's intentions towards himself or herself. Its opposite, presumption, is rooted in the mistaken view that God's grace obviates the need for repentance or meritorious action. To have hope, therefore, is both to rely utterly on God's grace and to take (meritorious) responsibility for living one's life in accordance with the urgings of grace.

This careful probing of the Thomist corpus reveals that the standard criticisms directed at Thomas's position on merit rest largely on misinterpretations. Some, particularly Protestants, have attacked Thomas's position and, more fundamentally, the notion of merit itself as inimical to the gratuity of grace. But Wawrykow establishes that in the *Scriptum,* which admittedly contains statements that could be construed in this way (including the affirmation of a "congruent" merit of the first grace), the difficulty is not Thomas's failure to recognize that grace is unowed but rather his lack of a theoretical framework capable of coherently disclosing the complex interrelations of divine grace and human freedom. Furthermore, it is apparent throughout Thomas's work that merit involves a claim on God not in any absolute sense, but only because God in his liberality has so willed it; in the *Summa* he explicitly states that the only debt God owes in connection with human merit is a debt to himself. Others have portrayed Thomas's teaching on merit as legalistic and depersonalizing. This criticism simply does not stand up, especially in light of Thomas's later work. In the Summa-where he departs from his earlier practice of determining the species of justice to which merit pertains-Thomas affirms that divine justice is rooted in divine love, that God is intimately involved in the exercise of human freedom, and that merit is a manifestation of divine wisdom and goodness. Though merit necessarily involves a juridical element, Thomas's treatment never degenerates into a narrow legalism, even in the earlier writings.

The chief shortcomings of this careful, copious study have to do with its mode of presentation: there is a fair amount of repetition, due to the fact that early sections of the book anticipate later arguments in some detail; the footnotes are so long and contain so much substantive material that they end up competing with the main text for the reader's attention; and the dearth of subdivisions in the text, coupled with the absence of an index, makes it difficult for the reader to gain a real command of the author's argument. In terms of content, more attention might have been given to spelling out the particulars of Thomas's views on human freedom, secondary causality, and divine transcendence, all of which are crucial for grasping how it is that God and the human will can both be causes of a free choice. There is an occasional lapse into language more reminiscent of Banez than of Thomas: for instance, Wawrykow speaks of grace, not God, as operating, causing, or applying the will (e.g., 46, 52, 66 n. 15, 194 n. 98) and even refers in one place to "the role of grace in the 'mechanics' of the meritorious act" (216). This phrasing suggests

that grace is a *tertium quid* that God uses to cause supernatural acts in human potencies, rather than the acts themselves. But if this is the case, then one can no longer appeal to divine transcendence, as Thomas did, to explain why graced human acts are free; for transcendence can be predicated only of God, not of any created reality. This is a technical issue, but a crucial one for maintaining the integrity of Thomas's synthesis.

These complaints notwithstanding, the most important point to be made is that there is much to be learned from this very intelligent book. The author's insistence on the evidence for development in Thomas's understanding, his broad reading, his alertness to the interconnectedness of Thomas's ideas, and his willingness to grapple with the details of a text all combine to yield a wealth of insights. Wawrykow has gone a long way toward recovering the "essential spirit" (32) of Thomas's notion of merit, and any serious discussion of the doctrine of merit or of Thomas's theology of grace will have to come to terms with his achievement.

J. MICHAEL STEBBINS

Woodstock Theological Center
Washington, D.C.

Descartes : An Intellectual Biography. By STEPHEN GAUKROGER. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. Pp. xx+ 499. $39.95 (cloth), $19.95 (paper). ISBN 0-19-823994-7 (cloth), 0-19-823724-3 (paper).

Those interested in the life of Descartes (1596-1650) are indebted to Adrien Baillet, his first major biographer, whose *La vie de monsieur Descartes,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1691) provided the details of Descartes's work, travels, friends, correspondents, and so on. We are fortunate too that despite trying circumstances so many of Descartes's letters and replies were preserved by devoted followers in the decades after his death.

The French, obviously, celebrated their intellectual hero with regular editions of his writings across the centuries and we are also especially indebted to the editorship of Charles Adam and Paul Tannery for their monumental edition published as *Oeuvres de Descartes,* 13 vols. (Paris, 1897-1913; 2d ed., 11 vols., Paris, 1974-86). English biographies, as distinct from biographical introductions to a selection of his writings, have been infrequent this century. Elizabeth S. Haldane did a four-hundred-page study (London, 1905) which is most readable and is rich in personal details, though marred somewhat by a tendency to criticize the Catholic Church for insufficient intellectual freedom; Jack Rochford Vrooman published *Rene Descartes: A Biography* (New York, 1970) which made use of the enormous material French scholars had been

producing from the beginning of the century, and his study is balanced and readable, giving special attention to the relationship Descartes developed with his young friend and disciple, Princess Elizabeth of Palatine, who was living in exile in Holland in the 1640s. Vrooman's study is balanced in the sense that it contains the personal details of where Descartes lived and to whom he wrote, and yet these do not overwhelm the features of his philosophy. Now a different biography has appeared in time to celebrate the fourth centenary of his birth. Unlike previous studies it focuses on his scientific work in contrast to his metaphysics and epistemology.

Stephen Gaukroger, a professor at the University of Sydney, and author of several other Cartesian studies, entitles his book *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*. The title is appropriate but a more informative subtitle might have been "A Study of Descartes's Contribution to a New Version of Mechanistic Philosophy of Nature." The stages of Descartes's life and travels are not ignored, but the thrust of the work is to spend hundreds of pages working through works such as the *Regulae* and *Le monde,* works not published in Descartes's lifetime, analyzing and explaining everything Descartes was attempting as he developed an approach to natural phenomena that was both an alternative to Aristotelianism and a new and original version of the mechanism of the time. Where classical atomism proposed impenetrable particles of matter, Descartes proposed different-shaped corpuscles that mix and slide by each other in such a way they form the basis of everything from light to all the subtleties of the organic process in our bodies. It takes a patient reader to work through the chapters on the *Dioptrique, Meteors,* and the *Geometrie.*

Gaukroger credits Descartes with an original version of mechanism, matter in motion, and he wants to give him credit here where others have overlooked his accomplishments. Gaukroger's point is that even where the development of science took a different, Newtonian direction Descartes's originality and brilliance should be better appreciated.

Since the author is so generous in giving the background of all the physical and mathematical writings the reader expects comparable depth on the classic metaphysical features of Descartes's system. Thus one is disappointed when the "hyperbolic doubt," as Gaukroger calls it, is treated with no special reflection on what other students of Descartes, such as Etienne Gilson, have had to say about it. This is somewhat puzzling since a notable feature of this biography is the mastery of the secondary literature about many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century intellectuals: Renaissance Aristotelians, later Scholastics, and the men who were Descartes's contemporaries such as Fermat, Balzac, Galileo, Gassendi, Arnauld, Pascal, Huygens, Mersenne.

Again Gaukroger is disappointing in being so sparse with the details leading up to the final days before Descartes's death in Stockholm where he lived in the household of the French Ambassador to Sweden while teaching Queen Christina. For example, he neglects to mention that Descartes received the last

sacraments from the Catholic chaplain who was part of the Ambassador's entourage in Lutheran Sweden.

By contrast, Gaukroger is most generous in discussing the background of Descartes's education. We know few details except that it appears Descartes enrolled in the Jesuit college at La Fleche about 1606, staying until about 1614, when he left to do further studies in law at the University of Poitiers. But to supplement the lack of specific information on Descartes's studies, Gaukroger writes an extraordinarily interesting essay on Jesuit education in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, treating the history of Jesuit colleges and the versions of the *Ratio Studiorum,* and speculating that the late Scholasticism Descartes came to know was not St. Thomas Aquinas but a Thomism interpreted by Cajetan, Suarez, and Fonseca and an Aristotle interpreted by the commentators at Coimbra. Gaukroger pays some attention to the fact that at La Fleche Descartes would have studied Quintilian for rhetoric; he believes that from these studies Descartes may have developed the notion of clearness and distinctness as an indication of the truth of our knowledge.

Descartes was undecided as to what he should do with his life after Poitiers in 1616. Not much is known of his activities until, in the summer of 1618, he left France for the Netherlands to join the army of Prince Maurice of Nassau. While in Breda he met Isaac Beekman, a Fleming, some seven years his elder. They discovered they had a mutual interest in using mathematics to analyze natural phenomena, and with Beekman, at first as a mentor, Descartes was launched on what was to be his career as a philosopher of nature. "Descartes learned from Beekman the basics of a micro:corpuscalarian approach to mechanics." Since in Gaukroger's judgment Descartes's principal achievement was the mechanistic interpretation of the physical world it is not surprising that he devotes a chapter to "The Apprenticeship with Beekman, 1618-1619" as they worked together to study music, falling bodies, hydrostatics, and proportional compasses; it was then that the idea of *mathesis universalis* was born.

By 1619 Descartes had left Prince Maurice's army and entered the service of Maximilian I, Duke of Bavaria. In Ulm, on 10 November 1619, he had the famous dreams that he interpreted as a message from God to give his life to the search after truth.

It took a while for Descartes to settle down and go to work on his life project. The early 1620s were given to travel and in addition to Bohemia and Germany he visited Italy before returning to Paris in the mid-1620s. He came to know and work with his lifelong friend the Minim priest Marin Mersenne, and he began to concentrate on method as he wrote what were to be the abandoned *Regulae* or *Rules of the Direction of the Mind.* Gaukroger notes that at this point there was no concern with skepticism but rather an attempt to develop an alternative mode of scientific investigation to that of the Aristotelians.

Father Mersenne was seeking to develop an alternative position to the anti-religious naturalism which had been one of the legacies of the Renaissance. This alternative was to be a form of mechanism for the natural world that kept God as creator and mover, and would preserve immortality and free choice for man. Here Descartes and Mersenne were allied and Gaukroger does a fine job of explaining how their quantitative mechanism differed from the qualitative mechanism of Hobbes and Gassendi. This is the strength of this study: the careful analysis of how Descartes's form of mechanism with its various-sized particles could account for the physical nature of light, perception of color, the law of refraction, magnetism, and a host of problems that challenged the natural philosophers of this age.

To work more effectively on his physics Descartes moved to the Netherlands again in the late 1620s. His project was to write the all-embracing study of the world, *Le monde,* and we know from his letters to Mersenne the progress he was making month by month on this project. In November 1633 he learned that Galileo had been condemned in Rome for teaching the Copernican theory. This was a crisis, for *Le monde's* approach leads to heliocentrism. Descartes judged that he did not want the hassle that publishing would bring, so he scrapped his plan to bring this work to the public. It was saved, of course, and published after his death, and it is this work that Gaukroger patiently works through for scores and scores of pages. To the reader who is more anxious to get background on the *Discourse* or the *Meditations* this can be tedious, but in my case I consoled myself anticipating a comparable richness of analysis on the background of part 4 of the *Discourse* and the *Meditations.*

I was disappointed. While Gaukroger obviously does not ignore these works he studies them as providing the metaphysical legitimization of his natural philosophy. The hyperbolic doubt is studied, as are some varieties of skepticism, but no awareness is shown that with his methodical doubt Descartes cut himself off from contact with the being of the things in the world of experience and became, as it were, the prisoner of his own mind. These metaphysical and epistemological critiques do not seem to interest Gaukroger. As to the arguments for the existence of God, he does not quote them and only vaguely paraphrases them, again neglecting to note the universal rejection of the argument from the *Meditation* 5, later to be known as the ontological argument. So given is Gaukroger to presenting a sympathetic account of Descartes as a natural philosopher, he shortchanges the review a biographer would be expected to make of the man who in the history of Western thought is called 'the father of modern philosophy.'

Again as it suits his purpose as a student of Descartes's form of corpuscular nature, Gaukroger makes a careful exposition of Cartesian physiology in reviewing the interaction of brain and mind in cognition and the workings of the will and the passions in *The Passions of the Soul,* but there is no treatment here of many of the traditional philosophic issues we associate with Cartesian philosophy. (There is a notable mistranslation as well: on p. 404, no. 153 in

The Passions of the Soul Gaukroger translates "never to ask the will" which makes no sense. Cottingham's translation: "never to lack the will to undertake and carry out whatever he judges to be best. To do that is to pursue virtue in a perfect manner" makes perfect sense.) Gaukroger brings some knowledge of Thomism but seems to have missed the importance of *esse*, the act of existing, in Thomistic metaphysics. Thus he worries about how Descartes preserves the individuality of the immortal disembodied mind or how Thomas would preserve the individuality of what we would call "the separated soul." Gaukroger believes Thomas can only save his position by invoking the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. It would seem, however biased this might be, that to do justice to the metaphysical and religious thought of Descartes it takes a biographer who is steeped in the Scholastic tradition.

Any future biographer of Descartes will have to contend with this study for the richness of its scientific analysis and the tremendous wealth of references presented in the notes. It is a well-printed, handsome volume. It has valuable number of biographical sketches of contemporaries of Descartes and a helpful index. The notes to this volume are an impressive study in itself and the bibliography will continue to be source for other Descartes's scholars for some time to come (despite two curious omissions: the Elizabeth Haldane biography is not included in the list of biographies, nor the Elizabeth S. Haldane/G. R. T. Ross *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911], the standard English translation used by generations of Ph.D. candidates until the appearance of the John Cottingham et al. translation, 3 volumes [Cambridge, 1984-1991]). Altogether the celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of Descartes's birth was well served by the publication of this study.

DESMOND]. FITZGERALD

University of San Francisco
San Francisco, California