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A MULTIDIMENSIONAL DISCLOSURE: ASPECTS OF AQUINAS'S THEOLOGICAL INTENTIONALITY

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TO GIVE SERIOUS ATTENTION to Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is to be continually amazed at the extent of the harmonies and deep resonances that echo through its different parts.[1] It works like a hologram, manifesting now this, now that, now some other dimension. In this essay, I wish to pay attention to the theological intentionality of St. Thomas's approach, in a way that might enrich our reading, and to continue the discussion that has *been* taking place *more* recently in the pages of this journal. It will involve asking what kind of consciousness Aquinas brings to his theological investigation, attending less to the metaphysical objectification of faculties, their objects, and the realities affirmed, and more to the experience in which all this occurs. It will mean a general kind of theological "intentionality analysis" of Thomas's approach-while, at the same time, deferring to specialists in the area of theological phenomenology for a fuller context.[2]

[1] An indication of the many distinctive readings is W. J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas's Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[2] The following are resources for developing (and criticizing) the position I have taken here: Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas,* vol. 2 of *Collected Works* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); idem, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972); Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994); idem, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and

For practical purposes, I propose to concentrate on that "new presentational whole" that Brian Shanley[3] has persuasively described in Aquinas's treatment of the mystery of God, with particular, but not exdusive, reference to the *Summa Theologiae.* The complex unfolding of its theology admittedly reduces most of us today, however *provecti* in some respects, to the status of *incipientes,* "beginners" the sense that the postmodern context is always one of beginning again. No matter how generally misunderstood or unnaturally schematized it often is, Thomas's approach to God remains a classic resource to be continually retrieved in the history of theological reflection.[4]

To suggest something of the holographic, multidimensional disdosure of the divine mystery, I will present this reflection four interrelated parts. The first deals more generally with the kind of intentionality that pervades the theological enterprise. The second treats of the horizon in which it unfolds. The third deals with the field of communicative intentionality which theology explores the God-world relationship. The fourth returns to the Trinitarian narrative that underpins the whole.

I. THEOLOGICAL INTENTIONALITY

In this section, I will attempt to sketch key aspects of Aquinas's theological intentionality. While this is entirely focused on the divine salvific subject, it unfolds with a high sense of the unique sapiential character of theological knowing. Yet there is a mood of discretion and a of "'deconstructive" attitude, which rejects any absolutist claims in regard to what it seeks to know, and with regard to the theological standpoint itself.

the still valuable study, Edward Farley, *&clesial Man: A Social Phenomenology of Faith and Reality* (Philadelphia: fortress Press, 1975).

[3] Brian Shanley, 0.P., *"Sacra Doctrina* and the Theology of Disclosure," *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 178.

[4] For a recent and thorough refutation of prevalent misconceptions on this point, see Gilles Emery, O.P., "Essentialism or Personalism in the Treatise on God in Saint Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 521-63.

A) Aquinas's Intention

In the prologue to the *Prima Pars,* Thomas accepts his role as "a teacher of *catholic* truth" *(catholicae veritatis doctor).* The catholic span of the that truth will include, at different junctures of theological exposition, philosophical, psychological, doctrinal, moral, spiritual, legal, political, sacramental, and eschatological dimensions of the whole. The scope of his concern is evidently intent on disclosing the "holic" in the "cat-holic." Yet he cannot write everything all at once, and so he proceeds in such a way as to guide his much admired "beginners" along a fruitful path at the outset of their career as preachers and theologians. [5] Just as there are stages and degrees in charity distinguished through different types of *studium (STh* 11-11, q. 24, a. 9), so also are there different levels of growth in the theological wisdom Thomas seeks to inculcate. For this reason, the *ordo disciplinae* is designed to avoid the confusions inevitable in a thicket of textual commentary and controversy-or, for that matter, occasioned by those unnatural and disjointed divisions often introduced in various efforts to schematize the exposition of the *Summa.* Aquinas's steady intention is to present the universe of Christian existence and experience specifically *sub ratione Dei (STh* I, q. 1, a. 8), in the light of the self-revealing God. In this regard, he states his reliance on God's help in addressing the task with brevity and clarity, "inasmuch as the matter will allow" *(STh* I, prol.). After all, "God matters" are inherently elusive. Because in this life we do not know the divine essence, we must make do with the data of what God has done-the "God-effect" in the realms of nature and grace *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 7, ad 1).

The theologian par excellence is here necessarily treading a fine line, in a way that suggests the holographic quality inherent in his approach to God. The theological standpoint, the horizon of infinite Be-ing,[6] the inner vitality of the Mystery

[5] See John I. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5, 79-90, for a new view of these "beginners."

[6] By translating *Ipsum Esse* as "Be-ing," I am trying to draw attention to the dynamic, verbal form of so designating the divine reality.

communicating itself to creation and indwelling human consciousness as known and loved in our knowing and loving-these are all dimensions in the disclosure of what intrinsically exceeds human understanding. As a "word about God" *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 7, *sed contra),* theology, like the Word it serves, is itself not "any kind of word, but a word breathing love" *(STh* I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2), as it participates in the eternal light of God's own self-utterance. The light in which theology proceeds is "nothing other than a certain participated similitude in uncreated light" *(STh* I, q. 84, a. 5), "manifesting" everything that falls under it.[7] Moreover, like all truth, theological truth results from a movement of the Spirit.[8]

B) Dimensions of Saving Knowledge

First, theological discourse is always analogical *(STh* I, q. 13, a. 5).[9] Without the analogical dimension theology would be at the mercy of its own univocal construction, to end at best in an immobile mythological system. The way of analogy defers to the unobjectifiable excess of Be-ing, the loving source of all that is *(STh* I, q. 20, a. 2).

Second, it operates within a much larger field of disclosure. The divine mystery intends our beatitude. Far from being an object of detached intellectual curiosity, it is our destiny, our last end, whose attraction is felt through the whole of creation, and is

[7] "Dicendum quod manifestatio quae fit per aliquod lumen, ad omnia ilia se extendere potest quae illi lumini subiiciuntur" *(SI'h* II-II, q. 171, a. 3).

[8] With an emphasis on the Spirit typical of the *Secunda Pars,* Thomas remarks that "whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit" *(omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est [SI'h* I-II, q. 109, a. 1, ad 1]).

[9] On this topic of analogy, current discussion might note that Derrida's whole deconstructionist project owes its origins to his desire to work out the terms of analogy. See Jacques Derrida, *An Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry,* trans. John P. Leavey Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989): "Husserl never ceased to appeal to the imperative of univocity. Equivocity is the path of all philosophical aberration. It is all the more difficult not to be hasty here, as the sense of equivocity in general is itself equivocal. There is a *contingent* plurivocity and multisignificance and an *essential* one" (100-101).

especially manifested in our human God-ward existence.[10] To suppress this eschatological dimension would be to deprive theology of its basic dynamism and hope as a science of salvation.

Third, though our pilgrim path must wait on the ultimate God-light of happiness, and though God is the "unknown one to whom we are united," there are also "many and more excellent effects" (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1) that communicate a revelation of Trinitarian life which we are called to participate in and image forth. These effects are *data* in a special sense, for they are indwelling and transforming *dona,* actualized in the grace of the divine missions (*STh* I, q. 43, a. 6). Forgetfulness of the economy of grace and the missions at any stage would bleach Thomas's approach of its Trinitarian color.[11] For the gift of grace works its own transformation, enabling the recipient to know and love God in a new intimacy.[12] Analogical knowing, therefore, anticipates a God-intended eschatological beatitude and is animated by the gifts inherent in the divine missions. Just as the divine Word, as just mentioned, is "not any kind of word, but a word breathing love," so the Spirit is not any kind of spirit, but the Love who proceeds from the Father and the Son.[13] A certain holographic intentionality is implied, as the various dimensions of data are considered. God is at once the object of theological inquiry, the source of the data it considers, and the light and the love in which such data are interpreted.

In the prologue of the first question (*STh* I, q. 1), Thomas determines the limits of sacred doctrine *(qua/is sit et ad quae se extendat).* It is characterized by a unique kind of excess. Human

[10] A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 93-101.

[11] Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maitre spirituel* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 31.

[12] For a constructive suggestion within the current problematic of the gift, see Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). How the various aspects of Aquinas's treatment of grace can be related to this would require a further article.

[13] Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question,* trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). In Thomist terms, we could say that, just as it Word is "not any kind of word," neither is the Spirit any kind of "spirit," let alone the *Geist* of the Nazi era.

learning, typified in philosophy, works within the scope of human reason. But the God of salvation and revelation "surpasses the grasp of reason." Our intending, be it cognitional or moral, must be ordered to this transcendent destiny, assenting to the divine truth on which "the whole of human salvation ... which is in God" depends *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 1). Theology must recognize this "wholeness," namely, the totality of the salvation that only God can give, the "things of God that have come to us by divine revelation." It is a realm of knowledge inaccessible to human reason alone.[14] Though lit covers materially many of the questions typical of philosophy, the kind of knowing theology inculcates is generically different from any purely philosophical notion of God *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; cf. *ScG* II, c. 4). It unfolds in a different horizon.[15] It is an exploration conducted within the world on the way to salvation.[16]

Citing the authority of Augustine, Aquinas sees theology as engendering, nourishing, protecting, and strengthening a healthy faith *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 2, *sed contra).* Despite its intrinsic limitations, it exhibits a dimension of a distinctive intentionality in that it is not dealing with something altogether absent or unrealized. At the upper limit of its intentionality, as a subaltemate science, it draws on the luminous intentionality of both "God and the blessed"--of those who are experiencing the fulfiHment of faith and love in the beatific vision. To this degree, the intentionality of theology has a dimension of realized eschatology even if its ordered sequences must take their own time.[17] The faith and charity that animate *sacra doctrina* already participate in the communicative bliss of

[14] For a dear exposition of theology as *sacra doctrina* and of the interconnection of various types of wisdom, see Matthew Levering, and the Viability of Thomistic Trinitarian Theology," *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 598-604.

[15] Shanley, *"Sacra Doctrina,"* 177.

[16] Of related interest is the article of Lawrence J. Donahoo, O.JP., "The Nature and Grace of *Sacra Doctrina* in St. Thomas's *Super Boetium de Trinitate," The Thomist* 63 (1999): 343-401.

[17] Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in Our Frail Minds: The Thomistic Model of Theology," *Angelicum* 76 (1999): 24-45.

God's own self-knowledge and love.[18] Theology thus unfolds in a field of divine-human friendship as charity causes us to participate in the Spirit "who is the love of the Father and the Son" (*STh* II-II, q. 24, a. 2; cf. II-II, q. 23, a. 1). In this it is the friendly science par excellence.

C) A Way of Wisdom

The intentionality of theology exhibits the character of a higher form of wisdom as it seeks to conform its "word about God" to the Word of God, and the love it breathes (*STh* I, q. 1, a. 6). Like philosophical wisdom, it reaches toward the creator, in order to judge of all things in the light of the first cause, knowable only through creatures. But there is a difference. Because its specific data are accessible only through faith and revelation, theology is constituted within a manifold field of communication. It is focused on what God reveals of what is known "only to him about himself, and communicated to others."[19] This kind of intentionality is determined, therefore, not only by the objective data of revelation, but by the divine subjective intentionality communicating itself to the created intentional subject.

In due course, the question will arise: if God is so self-revealing, what is the reality of that self that informs both the mode and the content of divine self-revelation? The answer to this question is anticipated by referring to that even higher type of wisdom, the gift of the Spirit, by which the graced mind judges of the things of God. Through the connaturality of charity theological consciousness "not only studies but experiences the divine reality" (*non solum discens sed patiens divina* [ibid., ad 3]). It is a receptive openness to the divine giver. Nonetheless, even though theology is ideally affected by the wisdom of experience flowing from the indwelling of God in grace, it still remains an

[18] "... a conformity of perspective, a seeing with God; it is a teaching that strives to display the luminosity and intelligibility that things believed have in God's own mind" (Shanley, *"Sacra Doctrina,"* 176).

[19] "id quod notum est sibi soli de seipso, et aliis per revelationem communicatum" (*STh* I, q. 1, a. 6).

ordered intellectual exploration (ibid.).[20] Though *discens et patiens divina* in a higher register of wisdom, on its level it is *discens et patiens humana,* humbly accepting the human limits to our knowledge of God in this life, and yet responding to the data, the "given," that lie within its scope. On that level, it must be able to defend its own procedures and integrity, even for those who would make no claims to mystical wisdom.[21] The intimacy of affective union with God is never a refuge from the demands of intelligence, even if charity and its experience underpin all such thinking.[22]

There is, therefore, an inevitable complexity in the cognitive intentionality here considered. There are many propositions and concepts (*STh* I-II, q. 27, a. 2, ad 2). What is evident to God in the simplicity of the one Word (*STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 2) is necessarily complex in our minds which are embodied in space and time, for what is known is in the knower after the manner in which that knower exists. Our present human condition demands the laborious complexity of concepts, judgments, and doctrines if the simple object of faith is to be respected. Yet this is not to miss seeing the forest because of the trees. For irradiating the complex creativity of the theological mind at work is the God-given intentionality of faith which already attains the divine reality (ibid., ad 2). Consequently, the numberless aspects of faith's inquiry are to be so ordered as to allow the simplicity of the divine Word to shine through-not to have it obscured by the complexity of the theological process. Although the life of faith is not the vision of the blessed (*STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 5), hope for that vision and the *persuasiones* of theological reason keep the mind directed to divine Truth and open to the ultimate evidence, only attainable through God's ultimate communication (*STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2). *As* faith touches on the divine reality and hope elevates and strengthens the will to rely on God in pursuance of its God-

[20] For a more general but insightful reflection, see Rowan Williams, "What does Love Know? St. Thomas on the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 82 CTune 2001): 260-72.

[21] Though Thomas does not identify theology with infused wisdom, he never loses the opportunity to point out the relevance of a deeper, more intimate manner of knowing God.

[22] Levering, "Wisdom and the Viability of Thomistic Trinitarian Theology," 593-618.

given end, charity, for its part, already anticipates its eschatological fulfillment in a kind of spiritual union that already savors what is finally to be revealed. In its affective and unitive role, charity, "the mother and root of all virtues" (*STh* I-II, q. 62, a. 4), is the source of the most intimate wisdom and experience of the divine reality. Love already dwells in the loved object (*STh* I-II, q. 28, a. 2), and participates in its loving (*STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 2, ad 1). Such love inspires a search for ways of enlarging our apprehension and appreciation of what that divine lover has revealed. [23]

Theology realizes that its intelligence can never be complete, that it must be patient with its groping conceptions (*STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 6, ad 1). On the other hand, the will in its affectivity need show no such patience; it reaches toward the divine reality in itself, beyond the clouded and fragmented mode of our human judgments (*STh* II-II, q. 27, a. 4). As loved, God indwells the consciousness of lover. To the measure that theological intentionality is animated by charity it cannot be content with a superficial or monodimensional understanding of the divine other; rather, it seeks to appreciate its every aspect, and to penetrate it more deeply-just as the Holy Spirit searches the depths of God (*STh* I-II, q. 28, a. 2).

Our knowledge of God in this life limps behind the attainment of love. However, here Thomas refers to a certain "circulation" in theological intentionality (*STh* II-II, q. 27, a. 4, ad 2). The cognitive dimension is affected and underpinned by an undertow of union and experience (*STh* I-II, q. 28, a. 2). In this circulation, intellect and will embrace each other in a mutual inclusion (*STh* I, q. 16, a. 4, ad 1). The intellect understands the will carrying it toward the unknown divine object; and the will prompts the intellect to understand more worthily what intrinsically exceeds its grasp. Knowledge is, in this case, one particular good desired by the will to fulfill the imperatives of union with the beloved (*STh* I, q. 16, a. 4, ad 1; I-II, q. 4, a. 4, ad 2; II-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 1). It occurs within the communication of friendship, in a heart-

[23] "Cum enim homo habet prornptam voluntatem ad credendum, diligit veritatem creditam, et super ea excogitat et amplectitur si quas rationes ad hoc invenire potest" (*STh* U-H, q. 2, a. 10).

to-heart communication (*STh* I-II, q. 28, a. 2), which has God as its source, form, and end.[24]

D) A "Deconstructive" Attitude

Still, the intentionality of the theological life does not unfold in uncritical self-assurance, as though it somehow possessed the divine mystery as an object, and forgot the radically unknown character of God. Inherent in the Thomist attitude, while it is focused on God, is a kind of ongoing deconstruction, as it relativizes its own complex conceptuality and defers its final evidence till the vision of God, face to face. It has appeared to some as an extreme example of onto-theology, the very paradigm of presentiality and systematization.[25] After all, its metaphysical framework comprehends even psychology in its ambit, as human nature operates through the spiritual faculties of intellect and will, elicits acts determined by their respective objects, and so on. However, it should not be forgotten that the disclosive realism of Aquinas's open, questioning mode of exploring the data of faith is underscored with the constant acknowledgment that we do not know what God is in this life (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 1), and that even the believer is united to the divine "as if to one unknown" (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1).[26] Thomas, in fact, extends this unknowability of the divine object to include even the subjective state of the believing theologian. He allows that it may be possible for some to know that they are in the state of grace through a special revelation (*STh* I-II, q. 112, a. 5). But this does not seem to be a common theological privilege. Neither is it possible to judge one's state in the light of God himself, the source and object of grace, since God, in the immensity of his light (ibid., ad 3), is unknown in this life. All that is left, even for the theologian, is to make a

[24] "solus Deus deificet, communicando consortium divinae naturae per quondam similitudinis participationem" (*Sl'h* I-II, q. 112, a. 1).

[25] Anthony J. Godzieba, "Ontotheology to Excess: Imagining God without Being," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 3-20.

[26] On the relationship of negation to affirmation in our knowledge of God, see *De Pot.* q. 7, a. 5. Further remarks are found Torrell, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maftre spirituel,* 43-50.

discerning judgment, "by way of conjecture through some signs" *(coniecturaliter per aliqua signa),* such as delight in God, contempt for anything less than God, and a pure conscience. This can be readily translated as a joy in the theological task, and a refusal of all kinds of reductive ways of knowing dominated by some gnoseological or cultural idol. The intentionality of faith would thus rely on a certain experiential assurance *(per quandam experientiam dulcedinis),* in a theological consciousness operating within the domain of grace.

E) The Theological Subject

It is understandable that one would speak of God as the object of theology. But that is not Thomas's precise language. God is the subject of the theological science. Everything theology considers is *sub ratione Dei-God* as the heart and horizon of faith's theological explorations. While there is no possibility of knowing the divine essence in this life, we do have, as mentioned already, divine communications, the effects registered in the realm of both nature and grace *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 7, ad 1). These are instanced in the whole range of theological data, for example, the sacraments, the work of redemption, the whole Christ, head and members-to say nothing of creation itself. God acts in the God-originated, God-informed, and God-finalized world of our existence. The essentially unknown God is known only in and through his creative and salvific activities, which include our own seeking, questioning, believing, and loving. In this regard, theology is an inductive or disclosive procedure, a movement from the *data* and the *dona,* from the given to the Giver. This is the sense in which God is the subject of theology. The divine mystery is not as a theoretical object somehow analyzable through human rationality. Rather-and this tends to anticipate something of the modern sense of the term-the subject, the personal reality, is freely self-revealed so as to realize a relationship of intersubjectivity that already fully reigns among the blessed. The effects of divine communication take the place of a definition of the divine reality

(ibid.; cf. also *STh* I, q. 13, a. 8 ad 2). As the subject of theology, God is allowed a self-definition that looks to its ultimate evidence in the light of the beatific vision.

Theological intentionality is not constricted to a foundational first principle of reason discoursing on an abstract object. It participates in a cointentionality of ecclesial faith illumined by the self-revealing God, objectified in the inspired Scriptures, creed, sacraments, and theologal life of the Church, as it promises an ultimate fulfillment *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 8). This does not mean that theology ceases to be an intelligent activity (ibid., ad 2). Grace perfects nature, and does not destroy it. The grace of faith and charity subsumes our intellectual capacities to manifest the divine reality in its proper light. The thoughtfulness of theology is integral to faith and serves it, just as the natural inclination of the will to the good is fulfilled in the gift of charity, and serves its life. On the other hand, theological wisdom argues its position, not by way of a philosophical objectification of the aspirations of the human spirit, but primarily in terms of the scriptural data which convey an inspired witness to God and his works *(STh* I, q. 1, aa. 8-10).

II. THE HORIZON OF THEOLOGICAL INTENTIONALITY

This section attempts to clarify the theological horizon in which the world is critically apprehended as God's creation. In this regard, God is related to the world and intimately present to it, yet, at the same time, eminently absent as a known and classifiable object within it. The notion of divine Be-ing has a theological function. It makes a clearing space in which the Trinitarian life of God can be appreciated as the source and end of worldly existence.

A) God beyond and within the World

In his path of disclosure, Thomas sets himself to address, first, the divine reality itself, and then the manner in which God is the

fulfillment of the rational creature. God's pure otherness in infinite Be-ing dominates the horizon in which the spiritual nature of the human can unfold *(STh* I, q. 2, prol.). These two indefinables, the Be-ing of God and our transcendent fulfillment in God, are linked concretely in Christ as the way, not only of our journey into God, but as the visible mission by which God has made his way to us through the incarnation of the Word, the primary effect of God's saving power. The Christ of the *Tertia Pars* is the *via* incarnate, transvaluing the values attributable to the divine essence.[27]

Yet the intimacy of God's self-revelation in the created world operates out of the boundless horizon in which God transcends that world *(STh* I, q. 13, a. 8, ad 2). There is, as it were, an ineffable space of God's absence and distance contrasted with the accessible presence of everything that is not God. This "remotion" or otherness of the divine reality in regard to the created universe prepares for another dimension of otherness, namely, that of the Trinitarian interrelated otherness within God confessed in the *distinction* of the persons *(STh* I, q. 2, prol.) In due course, the Trinitarian differentiation of the notion of divine Be-ing and its self-presence will lead to a consideration of the manner in which created being comes forth from God, and is marked with its Trinitarian origin, especially in the knowing and loving of spiritual beings (e.g., *STh* I, q. 45, a. 7, ad 3).

The theologian inhabits the world as the sphere of divine disclosure. However sublime its aspiration to participate in the divine intentionality through faith and love, Aquinas's theology never loses sight of this dynamic, actual world of interlocking and mutually conditioning realities. Within this world, and from this world, we are oriented, even if *sub quadam confusione* *(STh* I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1), to the infinite ground of all that is. Aquinas's *viae* are not refuting atheism in any modern sense.[28] None of the Greek, Jewish, and Arabian thinkers and commentators to which

[27] "our Lord Jesus Christ ... demonstrated for us the way of truth in himself" *(STh* III, prol.). Note, too, how the incarnation "transvalues" our natural knowledge of God: e.g., *STh* III, q. 46,a. 3.

[28] Torrell, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maftre spirituel,* 32-34.

he refers doubted the existence of God. Rather, his *viae* are more invitations to the believer to a receptive and reflective self-positioning within the universe. For human intelligence, in following the movement of universal being, consents, as it were, to a fundamental dynamic that leads to both the possibility and the ultimate impossibility of naming the God who is like nothing the world. In this ascent of the mind to God, Thomas is more a continuator of the older monastic theology than a rationalist modem philosopher. He is not applying general concepts to God, inviting his fellow *via.tores* into the movement, the *via,* of beings to Be-ing (*STh* I, q. 2, a. 3). The world is inhabited as the theater in which the unknowable God is necessarily present and already at work. Its reality is quasi-sacramental, contemplated, not as a sphere of delimited interrelating objectively visualized entities, but as a totality intrinsically God-ward in its constitution. It is the place of wonder, drawing mind beyond itself, beyond its commonsense visible appearances, into the "no-thing-ness" of Be-ing. In the five ways of disdosure (*demonstratio*), the experience of the universe takes us beyond our apprehensions, beyond the superficial presence of an object limited to sense data, imagination, or concept, to the all-actuating presence-in-absence of unknown Be-ing.

In our contemplation of this world as the theater of divine activity, God is intimated, through our manifold experience of the universe of being, as the light in which the world is intelligible in ultimate reality-indeed, as that which has been loved into being (*STh* I, q. 20, a. 2). In this theological horizon, God and human intelligence do not so much confront one another as they are related in a form of mutual inclusion: the world cannot be really known unrelated to God, and the divine source and agent of that is cannot be disclosed unless through the effects of its action within that worl& In this primal connection, as N. Williams notes, the self-revealing God is described already in relationship to the world.[29] Notions that will be part of a fuller disdosure, "demonstration," and "manifestation" of God-such

[29] Williams, *The Ground of Union,* 40-41.

as Be-ing, truth, goodness, life, happiness, person, and spiritual activity-are implicit in this initial beholding of the world as it is experienced. The revealed name of God in Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am," while it evokes the particular history of revelation, is located within a larger context-that is, within the intentionality of what all name as "God" *(STh* I, q. 13, a. 9). As Thomas goes on to state, "The name, God, is employed to signify something existing beyond everything, which is the principle of all, and yet is removed from all. This is what those using the name God mean" *(STh* I, q. 13, a. 8, ad 2). Thomas is situating his theology, not only with regard to the biblical and doctrinal data, but also in such a way as to include a much larger history of knowing and naming God.

The dynamics of remotion result, as Thomas himself admits, more in a consideration of how God is not than of how he is. Divine Be-ing infinitely exceeds every mode of being within the immediate world of our existence. God transcends the finite realm-by being its immanent ground, ultimate intelligibility, and transcendent fulfillment. Aquinas deploys categories such as causality, perfection, intelligence, and so forth, but never in a way that effaces the background notion of God as sheer Be-ing. This functions as a kind of clearing space in which the mystery of God can be explored, affirmed, but never fully known.

B) The Divine Simplicity

Following Augustine, Thomas accents the simplicity of the divine subject. This is the realm in which the Trinitarian relationships will be disclosed, for neither the unity nor the trinity can be anything but itself, undivided into parts, a pure act that knows no potentialities nor any composite principles nor external dependence *(STh* I, q. 3, a. 4). Since all division, separation, and potentiality are removed from the divine, all-simple reality *(STh* I, q. 3, prol.), the whole of God is involved in each of the divinely wrought effects and manifestations-though at this juncture the question of the Trinity of distinct persons is deferred. However

that it is to be conceived, it will not be at the expense the divine simplicity. the fullest sense of the words, God simply *is,* actual and simple Be-ing, whatever the complexity of our concepts, whatever the number of our propositions, whatever the number and division of the questions that make up the *ordo doctrinae.* Divine Be-ing is outside every germs and difference *(STh* I, q. 3, a. 5), as the self-involved source and sustainer of all that is. As *omnino simplex (STh* I, q. 3, a. 7), God cannot enter into composition with anything-not as a world soul related to the wodd as a body; nor a pure potentiality, however creative, as a kind of transcendent prime matter *(STh* I, q. 3, a. recurring problem for process thought especially in some recent ecological versions.[30] In short, God is present not as an ultimate object at the apex of a universe of interrelated objects, but as something else, an absence, a "no-thing," outside the whole order of the universe of beings. In the universe of potentiality and composition and generic specific differences, staticaHy imagined or conceived as presentations of being, the "to be" of any concrete reaHty is the all-enacting perfection. The act of being draws the mind to go beyond itself toward another realm, beyond imagination and concept, to Be-ing itself, "of all things the most perfect ... the actuality of all things" *(esse est perfectissimum omnium . .. actualitas omnium rerum [STh* I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3]). Since only God can be the source of this enacting "to be," God is necessarily "intimately within everything" *(STh* I, q. 8, a. 1). The absence results the most intimate form of presence. The remotion of Be-ing from the enables our understanding of its return, so to speak, with the immanence of the Creator to creation.

Further dimensions of this divine within-ness will be disdosed in the light of Trinitarian revelation. There are anticipations of this that the divine immanence to creation is realized in two possible manners,[31] both of which are of basic importance in the

[30] Joseph A. Bracken, "Images of God within Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 362-73.

[31] Though there *is* the special case of the Incarnation, "God in man through union" *(STh* I, q. ll, a. 3, ad 4)

fullest Trinitarian theology: "God is in a reality in two ways: causally, and intentionally-as what is known is in the knower and what is desired is in the desirer. In this special way, God is in the rational creature knowing and loving him either actually or habitually, as in grace" *(STh* I, q. 8, a. 3). Absolutely presupposed is the causal presence of the divine giver of being, in the innermost constitution of all that is. In that metaphysical donation of being, God is the "Be-ing-giving-being." But already at this point of divine immanence the subject of theology is appreciated in what today we can call its intersubjectivity. The divine subject indwells human subjects in the cognitive and affective dimensions of human existence-the interiority of the creature communicates with the interiority of God. Flowing from the fact that we are known and loved by God in the divine intentionality, we are enabled to know and love God in our human intentional being. We note, therefore, the importance of intentionality and affectivity in Thomas's account: he is not allowing his students to be limited or confined to what can appear to be a purely objective and almost physical apprehension of being-with Be-ing simply causing being as an effect, without any implication of interiority or intersubjectivity.[32] Not to appreciate this is to risk a very defective understanding of the *relatio rationis* of God's relation to the world.

C) *The Limits of Theology*

Given the radiance of God, theology is vespertilionine in its search *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 1): the bat cannot bear sunlight, as it flits through its environment only with radar-like soundings of its dark world. Still, our state is not essentially nocturnal; there is a natural desire to see God, and to come into the light-otherwise there would be a contradiction to faith which, as Chrysostom observes, promises a perfect knowledge of the Father and the Son *(STh* I, q. 12, a. 1). The clouded state of our intelligence *(STh* I, q. 12, a. 2)

[32] Though the fuller disclosure of such interiority awaits a Trinitarian reiteration, it is already adumbrated. See *STh* I, q. 10, a. 2, sed contra; I, q. 10, a. 3; I, q. 11, a. 4; I, q. 12, a. 1, ad 1.

already participates in the divine light- "in thy light we see light" (Ps 36:9). Human intelligence, at the culminating point of God's self-communication, will be strengthened by the light of glory to see God face to face. God will be in the creature as the known is in the knower, no longer according to the darkness of the human mode, but in accord with a divine mode, as God, in a final gift, joins himself to the created intellect (*STh* 1, q. 12, a. 4). This is a super-gift elevating the capacity of the human spirit (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 5, ad 1 and ad 3), making it deiform, and like to God (cf. 1 John 3:2).

In the meantime of our earthly existence, "God is known through the phantasms of his effects" (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 3 ad 2). An intriguing phrase: it suggests how the intelligence of faith moves from its sensory and imaginative experience through the active light of understanding, to conceive and judge of the reality of these effects and their transcendent cause in the inexpressible realm of the divine (always Trinitarian) subject (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 13). The following words anticipate the pattern of what is to be addressed at a later stage: there are more excellent effects, and within that activity, a foreshadowing of the divine missions:

> Though through the revelation of grace in this life we do not know the divine essence, and so are united with God as to one unknown, nonetheless we know him more fully in that more, and more excellent, effects are shown us and in as much as we attribute to God through divine revelation things which natural reason cannot attain, namely that God is three and one. (Ibid., ad 1)

Though faith is kind of knowing participating in the intentionality of the divine subject (ibid., ad 3), its mode of knowing is constricted by the connatural scope of the human mind situated in time and space. The transcendent realm can be approached only "by way of eminence, causality and negation" (*STh* I, q. 13, a. 8, ad 2). Infinite Be-ing remains what it is, outside the whole created order, with everything ordered and related to it. But God is not to be thought of as frustrating the human effort to know him, but as lovingly respecting the creaturely mode of our present existence (*STh* I, q. 13, a. 7). In this regard, we stand

securely on the floor or ground of our existence, but without any ceiling on either understanding or aspiration.

D) 'The One Who Is"

To a visualist ocular model of knowing, the affirmation of God's Be-ing must appear as an experience of absence rather than presence, a journey into "no-thing," an occupation of nowhere. But theological judgment has its own realist intentionality; and the intentionality of faith truly intends its divine subject. Given the supracategorial realm of divine Be-ing, the biblical name of God in Exodus as *Qui est* (Exod 3: 14) is the most proper to God *(STh* I, q. 13, a. 11). God exceeds all form and conceptions of being, as a boundless oceanic fullness of Be-ing in which we are immersed. The designation of God as "the One Who is" implies no limitation on the form or mode of existence. All other names appear as delimited and specific in their range; hence it is the most open-ended kind of designation, connoting the limitless breadth and timeless actuality of the divine reality.

"The One Who Is" is, therefore, the most appropriate name in our efforts to affirm the divine Being from below (ibid., ad 1). But as regards the actual singular reality of God, in the revelation and action that occurs from above, the personal, biblically based "God" and *YHWH* are more appropriate for the invocative naming of the divine. In this interplay of philosophy and faith-from above and from below-affirming God as Be-ing does not replace the religious designation of God, but works to elucidate it. In the theological disclosure of the divine mystery, the history of salvation is set within a universe grounded in Be-ing; and Be-ing itself awaits the self-revelation that occurs only in the history of salvation.

Thomas responds to an objection that cites Dionysius, a representative of the common patristic tradition of naming God first of all the supreme good from which all the gifts flow (ibid., ad 2). He replies that God is good because God is Be-ing; God's "Be-ing for" creation as its ultimate good is explicable only in

terms of God being Be-ing in itself, the ground of a universe that has no claim to exist of itself. All our ways of naming the divine, while triggered by the divine effects, are not reducible to God's relationship to creation (ibid., ad 3). What God is, even though disclosed within the world, is not defined by creation. As transcending creation, as in the world by being beyond it, "the One Who Is" is not annexed to any created economy made up of modes of being and the interrelationship of beings.[33]

Predictably, both biblical scholarship and deconstructionist philosophy find this blending of biblical and metaphysical thought suspect. Gilson's "metaphysics of Exodus" appears as a confusion of two different modes of discourse. On the other hand, one would expect the biblical authors to be rather nervous about speaking of God as "non-being." While the Lord is not in the earthquake, the wind, or the fire, but in the "sound of sheer silence" (1Kgs19:11-13), it would be hard to tell the author of the Book of Consolation in Isaiah that God "is not" (cf. Isa 40-41). This is even more problematic in the face of the more explicit philosophizing of the thirteenth chapter of *The Wisdom of Solomon* (Wis 13:1-19). Indeed, no less a scholar than Eric Voegelin, in his monumental *Order and History,* has interpreted both the cultural movement of ancient Greece and the religious journey of Israel as a progressive conversion to the transcendence of "being," as he terms it.[34] In his comparison of ancient symbols, he discerns a movement of *metaxy,* of the in-between-ness of symbol and being, in a kind of deconstruction of religious and philosophical symbols in the light of transcendent Be-ing, thereby precluding any gnostic idolatry. He deliberately differs from the generality of contemporary biblical historians who could not imagine how an early nomad people could come to such a transcendent sense of God. But here Voegelin agrees with Gilson: while there is no metaphysics *in* Exodus, there is a certain metaphysics *of* Exodus. He allows that "the Christian interpretation is well founded on the text," common as it is to

[33] Even in "the economy of the gift," as in Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift.*

[34] Eric Voegelin, *Orderand History I: Israel and Revelation* {Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 408-12.

Damascene and Aquinas alike. The intentionality of faith has realist implications. Voegelin proceeds to review in an appreciative manner how Thomas unpacked the meaning of the great symbolic experience of Exodus in terms of "being." This approach not only throws light on how the notion of divine Be-ing functions in the movement of Thomist thought, but suggests also why any reduction of the Thomist movement of thought to an immobile system is precluded. God's Be-ing is not an inert conceptualizable content, but an undertow drawing sense, imagination, concept, and word into a realm of silence and adoration. The notion of "the One who is" pervades every aspect of theological intentionality, but neither as a starting point nor as a label attached to an object already understood. The mind is "led by the hand" *(manuductio)* from the immediacy of sense impressions and imagination *(phantasmata)* to its ultimate realm of communion with God.[35]

Hence, the Be-ing of God is not a concept nor a simple intuition. The following passage serves as a summary as Thomas notes the two ways in which divine Be-ing can be considered:

> In one way, it means the act of being; in the other way, it means the making of a judgment which the mind comes to by joining a predicate to a subject. In the first way of taking "to be," we cannot know the "To-Be" of God, just as we cannot know the divine essence either. This leaves only the second way: we know that this judgment which we make about God when we say "God is" to be true. And we know this only from the divine effects.[36]

It is thus dear that no initial mystical intuition of Be-ing is implied; nor is there any way beyond words and language to affirm a truth that can neither be contained by any human concept nor adequately signified in the domain of discourse. But within the critical performance of language and within the ordered unfolding of questions, "the One who is," while remaining radically unknown, can be affirmed, an ant1c1patory answer to each of the questions arising from the data of faith and

[35] *STh* I, q. 12, a. 12. For a comment on the process of *manuductio,* see Philip A. Rolnick, *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 119-123.

[36] *STh* I, q. 3, a. 4. ad 2.

experience.[37] Such a "knowing unknowing" is possible only because of the divine effects, the self-diffusiveness of Be-ing-in creation, grace, revelation, and, indeed, in the ongoing life of the Church.[38] In other words, the divine Giver is known only in the divine giving, even while any adequate understanding of either the Giver or the gifts is impossible.

E) The Plenitude of Be-ing

As a *docta ignorantia,*[39] theology is, however, a knowing or tutored unknowing. Though the mind moves from divinely wrought effects to their transcendent cause, from the gifts to the Giver, the manner in which such judgments are true in the divine mystery is an absence at the heart of all theological discourse. All our efforts to name God "fail in representing him."[40] There is no question of visualizing the divine or of conceptualizing the manner in which God is God. The divine subject is intended, but never contained in theological objectification. Because of the eminently divine difference, there is an endless deferral inscribed into theological intentionality, awaiting that final communication that only God can give.[41]

Question 14 of the *Prima Pars* opens up a more vital consideration of the divine Be-ing as conscious of itself and the whole of creation in the intentionality of knowing and loving *(STh* I, q. 14, prol.). God is maximally self-knowing *(STh* I, q. 14, a. 2, ad 1), understanding himself, in the sheer actuality of Be-ing, and all else through himself (ibid., ad 3). The divine knowing and willing is immanent to Be-ing, for it is not determined from

[37] For a linguistic reading of Aquinas, see David Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

[38] *In Eph.* 1, lect. 8; *In Heb.* 11, lect. 1.

[39] *In Div. Nam.,* c. 7, lect. 4.

[40] *STh* I, q. 13, a. 2.

[41] This is not to say that the *via eminentiae* is ultimately negative. Note how Thomas is increasingly severe on the agnosticism of the great Jewish commentator Maimonides; compare I *Sent.,* d. 2, a. 1, ad 3 with *De Pot.,* q. 7, a. 5, and *STh* I, q. 13, a. 2. Kevin Hart's influential book, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000) awaits a full Thomist response.

without *(STh* I, q. 14, a. 4): "things are because God knows them" *(STh* I, q. 14, a. 8, *sed contra).*[42] Because the divine understanding is sheer act *(STh* I, q. 18, a. 3), "God has the most perfect and eternal life because his intellect is most perfect and ever in act." The same holds good for the divine willing *(STh* I, q. 19, a. 1). We note in both cases the flavor of Thomas's language--esse, *intelligere, velle-verbs* rather than nouns. The hermeneutical space is being cleared for the Trinitarian considerations of the intersubjective character of divine Be-ing constituted through the speaking of the Word by way of understanding, and the procession of the Spirit by way of love.

A later question addresses the passion and moral feeling in God-on the analogy with human passions and moral habits, expressed in perfections such as love, justice, and mercy and providence (prudence) *(STh* I, q. 20, prol.; I, q. 22, prol.) This consideration brings out the plenitude of Be-ing, and connects it with the actual history of salvation. It leads in turn to a profound theology of love. Aquinas makes explicit reference to the New Testament, "God is love" (1 John 4:16) *(STh* I, q. 20, a. 1, *sed contra).* "To be" and "to love" are one and the same in God. In terms of the divine Being-for-us in creation and grace, love is identified as the prime root of all movements of the will. Inasmuch as things are, they are good; and in as much as they are good, they are the outcome of the divine communicative love, not as objects already existing in some prior way, but as deriving from the divine love itself: "the love of God is actively infusive and creative of the goodness of things" *(STh* I, q. 20, a. 2). Just as being has its source in divine Be-ing, all created goodness arises from divine loving. The goodness of all creation reaches a climax in a special love-wrought goodness of human existence, since God can enjoy a love of friendship only with intelligent beings (ibid., ad 3). In creating human being, the divine Subject lovingly brings a world of many subjects into being, in an intersubjective universe of friendship.

[42] Citing Augustine, *De Trin.,* book 14.

A question concerning the divine bliss both follows on the consideration of what belongs to the unity of the divine essence (*STh* I, q. 26, prol.) and introduces the explicitly Trinitarian series of questions-even if some puzzles remain as to the precise positioning of this question.[43] But what is evidently reemphasized is that the beatitude of God is a feature of the communicative intentionality of the divine Be-ing. Since the divine Be-ing is God's *intelligere,* that actual, simple intelligence is necessarily divine bliss, understood as the perfect good of an intellectual nature, knowing itself in act and in action (*STh* I, q. 24, a. 1). God's joyful self-possession redounds to bliss to others who are assimilated to it (*STh* I, q. 26, a. 2; I, q. 26, a. 3, ad 1). All beatitude eminently preexists in God (*STh* I, q. 26, a. 4), in the sure and continuous contemplation of himself and others, and in the activity of governing the universe. The emphasis on the salvific economy of beatitude might explain why Thomas brackets divine beatitude out of a purely essential consideration pertaining to the divine *ad intra.* For a communication of blissful intentionality is involved: God possesses the happiness that he actively wills in friendship with his creatures. This highlights the sheer gratuity of the essentially blissful God seeking the beatitude of created others. In short, God's happiness makes room for others to share in it.

To summarize: the theological horizon embraces the world as a field of divine disclosure. Though, from one point of view, Be-ing is infinitely removed from the world of beings, it is present as the intentional source and goal of all that is, and especially within the intentional existence of the spiritual being. The notion of Be-ing is a clearing space in which the blissful love calls everything and everyone into being. We now proceed to an explicit consideration of the field of communicative intentionality in

[43] There seems to be a certain wobble in Thomas's precise intention here, for he finished this question by stating rather summarily that he has said enough about what "pertains to the unity of the divine essence" (*STh* I, q. 26, a. 4, ad 2), and then repeats the point in the prologue to the next set of Trinitarian questions in q. 27 : "having considered what pertains to the unity of the divine essence, it remains to consider matters pertaining to the Trinity of persons in God." I defer to specialists on this matter.

which human beings can appreciate themselves as the imaging of the divine Trinitarian reality.

III. THE HOLOGRAM OF COMMUNICATIVE INTENTIONALiIY

This section moves to the explicitly Trinitarian intentionality of Aquinas's theology. The understanding and love hitherto inscribed into the dynamics of the theological project now appear as a way of disclosing the understanding and love that constitute the life of the Trinity itself. In that disclosure, creation, and especially spiritual creation, is illumined as the sphere of Trinitarian communication.

A) Divine Intentionality

Aquinas moves from a consideration of the unity of the divine essence to an explicit consideration of the Trinity of the persons *(STh* I, q. 27, prol.). To that end, he sketches a delicate interrelationship between divine and human intentionality. He draws attention to biblical references to procession metaphors, while bearing constantly in mind the manner in which both Arians and Sabellians have failed to grasp the intentionality of the intradivine communicative life. Focusing on the intentional meaning of processions, Aquinas appeals to the psychological experience of immanent operations-implicit in his presentation so far-as not incompatible with either the biblical references or doctrinal orthodoxy: "whoever understands, from that very fact there proceeds an intellectual conception, a *verbum cordis."* Such an understanding of procession as related to immanent operations is in accord with the Trinitarian *fides catholica.* Moreover, this way of conceiving procession in God accords with the divine simplicity of Be-ing which has figured so prominently from the beginning of his treatment *(STh* I, q. 27, a. 1, ad 2). The more perfect the understanding, the more intimate to the knower is the conception of what is understood, a key to understanding how neither the divine unity nor the divine simplicity are

compromised. Furthermore, the luminous intimacy of the divine Word spoken by the Father includes a knowledge of everything that is external to God (ibid., ad 3), namely, the universe that God knows and loves into being.

Divine Be-ing is the habitation of infinite light and love. Since the Word is the luminous evidence of infinite goodness, God cannot be conceived as detached from himself, but is unrestrictedly consenting to the goodness he is, and can be for the other, both *ad intra* and *ad extra.* The divine self-understanding and self-expression reach beyond themselves to love what is so understood and conceived. A second dimension of affective interiority, namely, love, which has been stirring in Thomas's theological exposition up to this point, is declared: "according to the working of the will there is found in us a kind of other procession, namely the procession of love, according to which the beloved is in the lover, just as, through the conception of the word, the reality spoken or understood is in the understanding mind" *(STh* I, q. 27, a. 3). Hence, there is a certain order (ibid., ad 3): there is no procession of love unless it is related to the procession of the Word. In contrast to human experience, God is not joined to himself "as if to one unknown" (cf. *STh* I, q. 12, a. 13, ad 1), but loves himself as one who is known, and self-expressed in the Word. In this, divine love is supremely intelligent or rational. The love that animates the moral life as it is presented in the *SecundaPars* is a disclosure of Be-ing and the manifestation of truth. Intelligence and rationality underpin all values and moral action. Conversely, divine loving, originating as it does in God's self-understanding and self-expression, underscores the value of intelligence and its deepest rationality. [44] Yet the inmost center of divine truth moves beyond its self-expression to the self-giving of love, not just to a conception of the divine other, but to a real communion with the other. In this regard, love does not consist

[44] Neil Ormerod, "The Psychological Analogy: At Odds with Modernity," *Pacifica* 14 (2001): 281-94; and Anthony J. Kelly, "A Trinitarian Moral Theology," *StudiaMoralia* 39/1 (2001): 245-90. For surprising instances of the psychological analogy in German Protestant theology, see Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5-7, 18, 20, 47-53, 82-87, 210-18.

in expressing the other to itself, but proceeds more ecstatically, as a kind of impulse and surrender to the attraction of the other-as *aspiritus* *(STh* I, q. 27, a. 4). When this "certain vital motion and impulse" is experienced in loving, someone is said to be moved and impelled to action. The Spirit as the impulse or impetus of love receives the fullness of divine Be-ing from the Father and the Son in their joint loving: "From the fact that someone loves something, there occurs a certain impression, if I may so speak, of the reality loved in the affect of the lover, according as the loved object is in the lover as the reality understood is in the one who understands" *(STh* I, q. 37, a. 1). The plenitude of the Trinitarian Be-ing is a limitlessly realized interiority-as infinite Be-ing, knowing and known; and as infinite Be-ing, loving and loved: "Just as when someone knows and loves himself he is in himself not only through a [particular] identity, but as one known is in the one who knows, and as the one who is loved is within the one who is loving" (ibid.; cf. *Compendium Theologiae* I, c. 50).

Although there is no before or after in the divine life, there is a sequence in the order of our understanding. It is not as though the Trinity were somehow caught *in fieri,* in a state of becoming. There is, however, a holographic development in our theological understanding and in our capacity to express what has been understood. Gilles Emery nicely observes that, by giving systematic priority to divine unity of essence as an explicative principle, the consequent explicit treatment of the Father is always in the light of his intrinsic relational reference to the Word/Son.[45] Though there may be good biblical reasons for considering the Father at the beginning of any theological exposition-and so banishing any prior divine essence from consideration-Thomas's systematic accent on the unity of the divine essence suggests the principle by which the Father acts, the transcendent realm in which all divine action and relationship occurs-and the notion of Be-ing which serves as the disclosive space in which all theological words, symbols, and ideas point beyond themselves to their unknowable eminent realization. Thus,

[45] Emery, "Essentialism or Personalism," 548-49.

Thomist theology is not primarily a "Patrology," but a theology a more comprehensive Trinitarian sense; for the Father is not, as it were, already constituted independently before, or apart from, his generative and spirative acts and interpersonal relationships. The divine subject is the Trinity, not the Father alone. Both the Word the Spirit are eternally subsisting persons *(tam Verbum quam Amor est subsistens [STh* I, q. 37, a. 1, ad 2]). Despite the bias of language and imagination, the Spirit is not an impersonal medium in which the Father and the Son operationally merge, but the third person proceeding from them and uniting them in their loving *(STh* I, q. 37, a. 1, ad 3).

Hence, ..both the Father and the Son are said to love by the Holy Spirit or by proceeding Love, both themselves and us": *(et Pater et Filius dicuntur diligentes Spiritu Sancto, vel Amore procedente, et se, et nos [STh* I, q. 37, a. 2; see also ad 3]). All creation, actual and possible, is located within this innermost Trinitarian interiority. Not only are "we" known in the Word and loved in the Spirit, but, through a gifted participation in the divine Word and in the proceeding Love, we are enabled truly to know God and righdy to love the revealed God *(STh* I, q. 38, a. 1).

The notion the simplicity of Be-ing does not caned the reality of the relationships. It disdoses the horizon in which their distinctive reality can be properly affirmed within the eternal and self-communicating vitality of God. Even if there is an expository order of theological conceptions and categories, the actual vitality of Trinitarian Be-ing always eludes both relative and absolute ways of affirming it. In this regard, there is only a distinction of reason between the divine person and the divine nature *(STh* I, q. 39, a. Theological intentionality moves forward through a continual and patient "recyding" or reiteration of the notions of the nature and person. [46] The notion of God as transcendent Be-ing, while it removes God from the world and affirms the divine reality as outside every genus of being, and beyond any human conception, does not swallow up the divine persons in an undifferentiated essence. Through the notional acts and relations

[46] Ibid., esp. 554-63.

it is disclosed as a realm of communion and communication. By holding to a distinction of reason in this regard, Aquinas is, in effect, respecting the personal and interpersonal character of the divine subject, and its self-communication to creation. For the theological intelligence that makes this "distinction of reason" recognizes that God is not conditioned by any nondivine reality. It therefore excludes any real distinction in God other than that involved in the divine self-communication. It thereby highlights the intentional character of the Trinity's relationship with spiritual creation, as God knowingly and lovingly relates to created subjects in the full reality of interpersonal life-both of God and of ourselves. In other words, the Trinity is essentially God, and God is essentially Trinitarian, thus precluding the absurdity of the one divine reality somehow deciding to become Trinitarian for its benefit or our own!

B) Intra-Trinitarian Communication

In such matters, theological progress is possible only by way of a contemplation of Be-ing and its necessary immanent intentionality, explored and, to some degree, understood in terms of the created Trinitarian image we are.[47] What is eminently realized in God is the perfection of spiritual consciousness that we experience in our own knowing and loving. We cannot choose not to understand, since understanding is the very nature of our intelligence. Nor can we choose not to delight in the value of our understanding and loving, since that would be a denial of what we most radically are. Thomas sums up this point by simply observing that God naturally wills and loves himself, but others freely (*STh* I, q. 41, a. 2, ad 3); and that intellectual conceptions flow naturally, not by the will. There is a natural dynamic inherent in the intelligence involved, the *ipsum quia* that Frederick Crowe

[47] For the contemplative and moral dimensions of the image, see Michael A. Dauphinais, "Loving the Lord your God: The *Imago Dei* in Saint Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 241-67.

refers to.[48] The Word is spoken, not as contingently caused by the Father, but because the infinite self-expressiveness of the Father is identical with light of divine intelligence. When it comes to the divine order of processions, no temporal or privileged priority is implied. Here Thomas approves of Augustine's pithy statement, "not that one is before the other, but that one proceeds from the other" *(non quo alter sit prius altero, sed quo alter est ex altero [STh* I, q. 42, a. 3]): the Word and Spirit are not temporally subsequent to the Father, even if they proceed from him. Thus, in the one divine consciousness, the Father is God by uttering the Word and breathing with the Word; the Son is God as begotten and spoken; the Spirit is God as the affective inwardness of God, loved as known and expressed in the Word. The great Thomistic Commentator, Cardinal Cajetan, warned over four hundred years ago as he reflected on Thomas's account of the divine transcendence:

In God, in reality or in the real order, there is one reality which is not purely absolute not purely relative, nor is it mixed or composed of or resulting from both; but in a most eminent manner it formally contains that which is relative (indeed, many relative entities) and that which is absolute. We err if we approach God with the categories of absolute and relative as though we imagined such a distinction to be established in some way prior to the divine reality itself, and believed that one member of the distinction was subordinate to the other. For the divine reality is prior to being and its differences; it is above *being,* beyond *one* , and so on.[49]

The concepts of absolute and relative, and, consequently, of unity and community, are governed by a larger theological intentionality proceeding by way of negation to the transcendent eminence of the tripersonal reality *(STh* I, q. 28, a. 3, ad 3). Each divine person distinctly and really subsists in, and, indeed, as divine Be-ing: for example, "the Father is not less than the Trinity as a whole" *(tantus est Pater quanta tota Trinitas [STh* I, q. 30, a. 1, ad 4]). The vitality of intradivine communication does not imply either a sharing or a triplication of the divine essence. The

[48] Frederick E. Crowe, "For Inserting a New Question (26A) in the *Prima Pars," The Thomist* 64 (2000): 565-80.

[49] Cajetan's commentary on *SI'h* I, q. 39, a. 1 (Rome: Edit. Leonina, 1889).

divine person is *alius,* not *aliud,* a distinct divine "someone," an other in relation to others. This "incommunicability" of the divine persons in their relative opposition makes for the special character of interpersonal communication. It is founded in the infinite depth of self-communication and self-presence (*STh* I, q. 37, a. 1). Indicative of the reality of this interpersonal communication is a certain order: for the Son proceeds from the Father, not vice versa (*STh* I, q. 31, a. 1, ad 2). And yet this order is eternal, precluding any temporal succession (*STh* I, q. 36, a. 3, ad 3). The Son is not generated "before" the Spirit proceeds; for both belong to the eternal Now of divine life. Hence, acknowledging the Trinitarian order does not suggest an intradivine delegation of powers (ibid., ad 4), but rather the recognition of the intersubjectivity within the reality of the divine Subject-the "relational opposition" of traditional doctrine (*STh* I, q. 36, a. 4). The divine simplicity, far from implying either a negation or diminishment of Trinitarian unity, is the reason for unique interpersonal communion within God, just as the relational opposition between incommunicable properties of the divine persons guarantees the distinctive reality of Trinitarian communication.

In that vital unity of the three persons there is a circularity of mutual presence and indwelling. This triunity is based on the unreserved communication of the divine essence. The whole deity of the Father is communicated to the Son and the Spirit. Each is God, and the possessor of all that God is, even while the opposition of relationships remains. Indeed, even given the polar opposition of the relationships, the distinct reality of each subsistent relationship is inconceivable apart from the others: the Father is pure Son-wardness and Spirit-wardness; the Son is God by being purely Father-ward and Spirit-ward, just as the Holy Spirit is pure Father-and-Son-wardness. Moreover, from a more intentional perspe(.,i:ive,in the light of divine understanding, the Father consciously conceives within himself the Word expressive of all that the Trinity is, and can be for others. For his part, the Son is the conscious and subsistent expression of all that the Father is as the principle both of himself and of the Holy Spirit,

and, indeed, of all creation. In the same vein, the Spirit is the ecstasy of love toward the totality of the Trinity in the eternity of its life, and in its free temporal communication to the world *(STh* I, q. 42, a. 5). In the light of the triunity that includes both the divine simplicity and the communion of persons, all created inwardness of one entity in another is deficient (ibid., ad 1). Individual human consciousness, for example, is not the whole of human being, and its acts are varied, limited, and fragmented in time. On the other hand, a community of human individuals is a contingent coexistence of separate persons, ebbing and flowing in the vicissitudes of human communication and relationships.

We have been trying to bring out something of the interrelationship of divine and human intentionality in the Thomist theology of Trinitarian life. The more theologians, working at the lowly level of their own experience of knowing and loving the divine subject, have been able to disclose the communicative reality of the life of the Trinity, the more they return to themselves and to the creation of which they are a part to appreciate the whole as a sphere of Trinitarian action and presence. The next section will attempt to explicate this point in a more concrete manner.

IV. THE TRINITARIAN NARRATIVE: MOVING WITHIN THE HOLOGRAM

In this final section, we will stress the relativity of the psychological analogy in regard to the "given" or revealed reality of the Trinity in the experience of Christian faith. We will show that the work of "appropriating" Trinitarian faith is never complete, and that it leads back to where it began, to the self-giving of the divine persons in the history of grace and salvation.

A) The Psychological Analogy

Given the inevitable complexity of the concepts of processions, relationships, and notional acts, we must reiterate the importance of the data of faith to Thomas's exposition *(STh* I, q. 32, a. 1). As

faith adores God as self-revealed in Word and Spirit, theology reverently explores the manner in which God has such a self to give. But, detached from the data of faith, theological explanations can only be derisory, for the utter originality of the divine self-revelation would be displaced. Nonetheless, a critical consistency in our disclosure of the mystery is enabled by the use of the psychological analogy, grounded in the most intimate of human experiences of knowing and loving: "given the self-revelation of the Trinity, this kind of thinking is appropriate, but not so as sufficiently to prove the Trinity of persons" *(trinitate posita, congruent huiusmodi rationes; non tamen ita quod per has rationes sufficienter probetur trinitas personarum* [ibid., ad 2]). The governing reality is always the biblical narrative, and the subsequent liturgical and doctrinal expressions of the Church itself.[50]

On the other hand, the search for further theological knowledge of the Trinity is necessitated if faith is to penetrate the deepest meaning of creation, a divine gift, given in divine freedom (ibid., ad 3). Though there is a superabundant self-diffusion of the divine Good, creation is the work of an artist rather than the impersonal overflow of substance *(STh* I, q. 34, a. 3). Our understanding of creation looks back to the Father, the divine source, understanding of himself and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and all else.[51] The Father's Word expresses the whole Trinity, and all the possibilities of contingent creation (ibid.). The divine Word is expressive and operative in regard to aB creation, and so is *genitus creator* (ibid., ad 3). Likewise, with regard to the Holy Spirit, we read, "As the Father expresses in his Word himself and the creature, so the Father and the Son are said to love by the Holy Spirit of proceeding love both themselves and us" *(STh* I, q. 37, a. 2; cf. also ad 3).[52]

[50] The *usus &clesiae (STh* I, q. 36, a. 1, ad 1).

[51] See the following: enim intelligendo se et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, et omnia alia quae eius scientia continentur, concipit Verbum, ut sic tota Trinitas Verbo dicatur, et etiam omnis creatura" *(STh* I, q. 34, a. 1, ad 3).

[52] See Max Seckler, *La Salut et l'Histoire: La pensee de sant Thomas d'Aquin sur la tbeologie de h'histoire* (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 73-79.

Creation, then, is not an impersonal, automatic overflow, but has its source and form in the divine processions (*STh* I, q. 45, a. 6). Trinitarian faith thus affects our sense of creation.[53] Our graced conformity to the divine persons enables us to detect the trace of the divine three in the universe. Since the processions are the cause of creation, the universe is most radically illuminated, not by a "process theology" based on the interaction of contingent entities, but by a "procession theology" deriving from the Trinity itself. The Trinity has created the world out of its immanent life of intelligence and love, and is thus intentionally related to all creation. Creation is gifted existence, intrinsically marked with its Trinitarian origin and destiny. The Trinitarian character of the universe appears most clearly in the spiritual subject, in its knowing and loving (*STh* I, q. 45, a. 7). Thus, the human mind is the special site of the disclosure of the inner reality of the Trinitarian cause. At one level, the contemplation of faith can discern in the world traces of its Trinitarian origin. But in the case of the Trinitarian image occurring within human consciousness and its intentional activities, there results a more inward conformity to the divine persons as they indwell creation in a new way.[54] From both points of view, the Trinity of persons is the explanatory cause of creation "in some way" (cf. ibid., ad 3), manifested both in the character of the universe in general and specifically in spiritual beings within it.

B) Appropriation

In the dynamics of holographic reiteration, the essential attributes are appropriated to manifest the Trinitarian faith, making the less known manifest through the more known (*STh* I, q. 39, a. 7)-not that we should be under any illusion that we have an adequate knowledge of such divine attributes. Nor, for that matter, are the attributes to be detached from an explicitly

[53] Shanley, *"Sacra Doctrina,"* 181: "To grasp the Trinitarian distinction is to see that God could have been all that there is and completely happy ... quite apart from creation."

[54] F.-X. Putallaz, *Le sens de la reflexion chez Thomas d'Aquin* {Paris: Vrin, 1991), 251-74.

Trinitarian setting.[55] The context of appropriation is constructed through the consideration of the notional acts and the relationships they imply by means of the psychological analogy. The psychological analogy can bring both clarification and its own kind of experiential intimacy, for it enables the Trinitarian mystery to be subjectively "appropriated" as the form and dynamism of one's own intentional existence.

This analogical instance of theology, operating by means of cognitive and affective self-appropriation, works in a much larger field of meaningful attributions-appropriation in the traditional sense. It is not a theological word-play, but a technique designed "to manifest the persons," and to be "a manifestation of the truth" (ibid., ad 1).[56] In the psychological analogy, the persons are affirmed *in propriis,* while the essential attributes are connoted. In appropriation, the reverse procedure is more the case. It is a useful reminder of the unfinished business of Trinitarian theology. The experience of faith is always more than even the best kind of analogical thinking. And theology itself acknowledges in the mystery of God's Be-ing aspects of eminence and interpersonal communication that necessarily transcend the valuable clarification that the psychological analogy offers. While Thomas's methodical unfolding of the divine mystery proceeded by first creating the limitless space of the divine transcendence-the divine Be-ing and its attributes-it moved forward through the psychological analogy to consider the processions and the relationships they imply. But in a third phase, there is a doubling back in order to include the whole of tradition in its scriptural, mystical, and liturgical riches.

This total field of faith's experience guides the activity of appropriation. The divine subject thus always transcends-and expands-the intentionality of the human subject. For example, Trinitarian theology has in recent times included specific attention

[55] Torrell, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maftre spirituel,* 208-13.

[56] For a recent treatment of this topic, see Timothy L. Smith, "The Context and Character of Thomas's Theory of Appropriations," *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 579-612.

to divine revelation as related to the cross and resurrection.[57] This in turn has provoked an examination of how psychological analogy works within the narrative drama of Trinitarian revelation, caning into play further symbolic, aesthetic, and affective and psychological dimensions of human experience as subject to the transformative action of grace.[58] Here, the possibility of a new range appropriations emerges, based, not merely on the metaphysical properties of being, but on dimensions of human consciousness itself. In this regard, the psychological image is thereby notably enhanced, rather than replaced. The divine persons, though given, are never comprehended any theological scheme because of the play of appropriations made possible in the scriptural narrative. As theology serves the disclosure of the self-revealing subject, its intentionality is always more than the sum total of theological techniques.[59] Nor should it be forgotten that the gifts of the Spirit, especially wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, operate in a suprarational or instinctual mode m relation to the nonconceptualizable concreteness of the Trinitarian communication *(STh* I-II, q. 68, aa. 1-2).

In short, the practice of appropriation reminds theology not to lose contact with its *data-dona.* The aim of appropriation, therefore, is to stimulate the most meaningful rhetoric of our Trinitarian experience, to manifest the persons in the truth to be affirmed and as the mystery to be adored and invoked.[60]

C) The Missions

With the divine missions, the effects of the Trinitarian God that have been so basic to Thomas's presentation of God's self-

[57] Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery; A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1997).

[58] Anne Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and the Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies 59* (1998): 197-218.

[59] On this point, see Carl N. Still, " 'Gifted Knowledge': An Exception to Thomistic Epistemology?," *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 173-90.

[60] Shanley, *"Sacra Doctrina,"* 182: *"sacradoctrina* involves a new Trinitarian way of seeing the whole, but also of experiencing the whole."

revelation are introduced in a new key of personal self-communication of an intentional order. God's Be-ing has been progressively identified as the eternal communion of the divine persons, disclosed through a free communication or extension of the communal life of the Trinity. Through the missions, Trinitarian Be-ing enfolds created spiritual being into itself. Here there are two polarities (*STh* I, q. 43, a. 1). In the first place, the eternal Trinity in its interpersonal vitality is involved, for the missions of the Word and Spirit have a properly divine origin. Second, there results a transformed intentionality as the human subject, in its knowing and loving, relates to the divine subject-in its own self-knowing and loving. The Trinity becomes newly present in the interpersonal knowledge and love existing between the Trinitarian selfhood of God and the human self (*novus modus essendi in alio*). The unique visible mission of the Incarnation is designed to manifest the salvific intention of God's love as a concrete human nature is assumed into personal union with the Word. But in the realm of grace any number of intentional human subjects are assumed into a new intimacy with the Trinity now known and loved in a new way.

Because God cannot be conditioned by creation in any way, there is only a "relationship of reason" (*STh* I, q. 28, a. 1, ad 3) between God and the world. But this often confusing phrase can now be understood in its proper light. It is an eternal *relatio interpersonalis,* a free divine self-determination embracing all creation in the speaking of the Word and in the breathing of Love. Its ontological, world-changing effect is the gift of grace by which the spiritual creature begins to participate in God's own life.

This divine-human communication has a history, for it occurs in two interrelated ways (*STh* I, q. 43, a. 2). In the visible missions, the Word and Spirit are sent in an historical visibility. The hypostatic incarnation of the Word is the visible mission of the Son. Related to this is the Pentecostal economy of special divinely wrought signs manifesting the gift of the Spirit. These visible missions are marked with the particularities of space and

time, and so necessarily are exposed to the contingencies of history and the particularity of the divine economy enacted within it. God's communications are not reserved for pure spirits, but meet human existence in its temporal, historical embodiment (*STh* I, q. 43, a. 7; cf. I, q. 88, a. 3). God reaches out to human beings in a manner that accords with their nature *(connaturaliter).* In this way, the invisible mysteries are made known through the visible, that is, what falls within the immediate scope of our present mode of knowing. The incarnate visibility of the Son anchors in the world of immediate human experience the extent of God's self-giving. On the other hand, the precise extent of the visible missions is moderated by the concrete good of the Church-not so that believers should ding to the visible economy of God's gift, but that faith be confirmed and inspired in its origins-by the coming of Christ and the witness of the apostles and early disciples.

For their part, the invisible missions operate in the interiority of grace, coextensive the history of all holy lives (*STh* I, q. 43, a. 6, ad 1).[61] Our intentional existence is drawn into the transcendent depth of divine communion underlying creation. God, knowing and loving, indwells the soul, as known and loved in return (*STh* I, q. 43, a. The giving is interpersonaL It originates with the Trinitarian intentionality of God, and its term is the created spiritual mode of consciousness proper to the human person. As a result, our intentional consciousness is conformed to the divine persons (*STh* I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2). A dynamic assimilation to the Spirit by way of love is related to an assimilation to the Son by way of wisdom, for the Word is "not any kind of word, but a word breathing love."" The psychological analogy previously interpreted in more or less metaphysical-psychological terms is now grounded in experience marked by an interior enlightenment that "bursts forth in love." In this Augustinian perspective, the Trinity becomes an experienced reality-implying a certain affectively experimental way of

[61] For this broader sense of the invisible mission of the Word, see B. Pottier, S.J., "Note sur la mission invisible du Verbe chez saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 123/4 (October-December 2001): 547-57.

knowing.[62] Both missions communicate in "the one root of grace," but with the complementary effects of enlightenment and affectivity. In consequence, the graced believer does not simply behold God as an cognitive object, but is related to the Trinity in its subjectivity, by participating in the Trinitarian vitality of divine Be-ing.

Presupposed to any understanding of the missions is the Trinity's intimate presence to all creation. This is an indwelling proper to the creative activity of Be-ing, acting in love for all that is, "inpouring and creating the goodness in things" (*STh* I, q. 20, a. 2). But this universal, essential indwelling blooms to a new intimacy in the human heart and mind.[63] The gift of grace awakens the spiritual creature to the wisdom and love that enable it to dwell in the Trinitarian God. A certain interpenetration of divine and human consciousness is implied, for the divine persons do not deal with their personal creation impersonally. Through the reciprocal indwelling brought about by grace, the created person is drawn into the Trinity's interpersonal communal life. The deiform creature, known and loved by God, now knowingly and lovingly participates in God's own self-knowledge and self-love. God is thus present, not in a kind of metaphysical physicality after the manner of a depersonalized ontology, but intentionally, in the knowing and loving that have their roots in God's own Trinitarian consciousness. In this regard, the human being no longer simply beholds divine effects from without, but is enfolded into the divine communal life, knowing and loving God from within, in a growing interior familiarity that reaches its fulfillment only in heaven (*STh* I, q. 93, aa. 6-7). Consequently, Thomas's treatment of the missions is marked with a subtle interplay between presence and absence, between the visible and the invisible, and between the "already" in terms of Christian experience, and the "not yet" of its eschatological fulfillment.

[62] Torrell, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maftre spirituel,* 123-29.

[63] Note how this is anticipated in *STh* I, q. 8, a. 3, ad 4.

CONCLUSION

Through the four interweaving sections of this reflection, we have been attempting to show the holistic character of the Thomist disclosure of the divine mystery. The first section concentrated more on the subjective standpoint of the theologian in the humble and discrete exploration of the divine subject. This led into a sense of both God and the world in the Hght of infinite Be-ing, the boundless space in which theology must unfold. From there, a section led into the field of communicative intentionality in which Thomist theology seeks to understand the God-world relationship, while the fourth part returned to the Trinitarian narrative that underpins the whole and that stands at the origin of all Christian theology.

We hope to have indicated something of the holographic intentionality of Thomas's disclosure of the divine subject, the God of revelation. The *data* are the Trinitarian *dona;* the field in they can be understood, terms of both the gifts and the giver, is the limitless horizon of Be-ing, love and beatitude. The psychological appropriation of the Trinitarian mystery both clarifies the divine vitality of interpersonal communion and throws light on the manner in which the believer participates in that life by being conformed to the wisdom of the Word and the love of the Spirit. The result is a mutual indwelling, a two-way intentional communion, as human intentionality provides an analogy for the Trinitarian life of God, and as that Trinitarian life transforms our intentional existence into a divine dwelHng place, to be the image of God (*STh* I, q. 93, a. 4).[64] Though the humble path of theology is always veiled in the mediations of sense and imagination and the complexity of human reason, it remains a progressive entry into the manner in which God knows and loves himself within the Trinitarian mystery (cf. *STh* I, q. 93, aa. 5-8). It celebrates our being joined to God, even if the reality attained by our faith and love defers a full knowledge of the giver of all gifts to a fulfillment beyond this life.

[64] See Williams, *The Ground of Union,* 157-60, for an illuminating summary.

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KARL RAHNER AND THE METAPHYSICS OF PARTICIPATION

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S*PIRIT IN THE WORLD,* the published form of Karl Rahner's rejected doctoral dissertation, and *Hearer of the Word,* a series of lectures given in 1937, are the works in which Rahner undertakes a decisive response to the Kantian critique of metaphysics, developing a philosophical anthropology of incarnate spirit centered on an interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas by way of Pierre Rousselot, Joseph Marechal, and Martin Heidegger.[1] Through an analysis of the metaphysical constituents of human knowledge, Rahner seeks a contemporary justification of "the possibility of metaphysics within the horizon of space and time."[2]

The thesis of this essay is that the central argument Rahner makes in accomplishing this goal-the conscious but unthematic affirmation of the Absolutely Real is a condition of the possibility of knowing the worldly, finite real[3]-is dependent upon St.

[1] Rahner's indebtedness to Heidegger is accepted by all, but its extent is debated. Rahner called Heidegger his one true teacher, and lauded him for bringing philosophy to focus on the "unsayable mystery ... [which] we can scarcely name with words." Yet, Rahner immediately recognizes that Heidegger's abstention from speech about this mystery is not a path open to the theologian *(Martin Heidegger im Gespriich,* ed. R. Wisser [Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1970), 48-49; also *Foundations of Christian Faith,* trans. W. V. Dych [New York: Seabury Press, 1978], 64).

[2] *Geist in Welt: Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas van Aquin,* 2d ed., rev. J. B. Metz (Miinich: Kosel-Verlag, 1957), 44. English translation: *Spirit in the World,* trans. W. V. Dych (New York: Continuum, 1994), 30.

[3] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 165.

Thomas's metaphysics of participation, which Rahner develops as an intrinsic part of his metaphysics of knowledge. From this perspective, Rahner's forceful advocacy of "the thorough-going analogy of the concept of being"[4] can be upheld in the face of criticism that his defense of metaphysics depends upon a univocal concept of being.

In order properly to grasp Rahner's justification of metaphysics, it is necessary to consider its profoundly Thomistic provenance. Rahner's reliance upon and fidelity to Thomas's metaphysical vision, while often questioned by Rahner's critics,[5] and well-concealed by Rahner himself at key points, comes into dear view with the metaphysics of participation. This line of analysis requires a brief consideration of Thomas's novel approach to the venerable idea of participation; then follows an analysis of Rahner's metaphysics of the intellect, with particular attention to his development of a Thomistic metaphysics of participation within an analysis of judgment. Finally, Rahner's metaphysics of participation is presented as the means whereby a key difficulty his analysis may be darified: the daim that the human intellect "co-affirms" Absolute Being in every act of knowledge.

[4] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 163, n. 1.

[5] George Vass epitomizes the view of many: "Rahner is indeed not a *Thomist* and he can hardly claim the authority of Aquinas for his own philosophy" *(Understanding Karl Rohner,* vol. 1: *A Theologian in Search of a Phi!osophJ'* [Westminster: Christian Classics; London: Sheed and Ward, 1985], 43; see also Langdon Gilkey's review of *Geist in Welt* in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7 [1970]: 141-44). Conversely, see Gerald McCool, S.J., "Karl Rahner and the Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rohner, S.J.,* ed. W. J. Kelly, S.J. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), 86. See also in the same volume: Patrick Bums, S.J., "A Response to Fr. McCool," 103-4; Robert Kress, "A Response to Fr. McCool," 98; see also Andrew Tallon, *Personal Becoming,* rev. ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982), 21, 25-27. For critical assessments of transcendental Thomism in general, see Etienne Gilson, *Le realisme methodique* (Paris: Tequi, 1936); and *Realisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1947); and Robert Henle, S.J., "Transcendental Thomism: A Critical Assessment," in *One Hundred Years of Thomism: Aeterni Patris and Afterwards,* ed. V. B. Brezik, C.S.B. (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1981), 90-116.

I. ST. THOMAS ON CAUSAL PARTICIPATION

A bedrock principle of the metaphysics of St. Thomas is that "there is a certain mode of likeness of things to God."[6] Thomas specifies this likeness in terms of existence,[7] and then characterizes this existential likeness in terms of cause and effect: "it belongs to the nature of action that an agent produce its like, since each thing acts according as it is in act."[8] In the case of the relationship between God and creation, the nature of the causality that produces this existential likeness is the key element for an accurate interpretation of Thomas's metaphysics. Thomas states his own position with compelling clarity: "Creatures are said to resemble God, not by sharing a form of the same specific or generic type, but only analogously, inasmuch as God exists by nature, and other things partake existence *[et alia per participationem].*[9] Existence *(esse)* is what God is and what all creatures share in,[10] and causal participation is how Thomas understands the analogical relationship between divine existence and creaturely existence.

[6] *Summa contra Gentiles* l, c. 33. Quotations from Thomas, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the following translations: *Summa contra Gentiles,* 5 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975); *Summa Theologiae,* 60 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964ff.); *On the Power of God* [De *Potentia],* trans. L. Shapcote, O.P. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1952); *Commentary on the Book of Causes [In librum De Causis],* trans. V. A. Guagliardo, O.P., et al. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996); *An &position of the "On the Hebdomads" of Boethius* [De *Hebdomadibus],* trans. J. L. Schultz and E. A. Synan (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001); *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics [In Metaphysicorum],* trans. J. P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961); *The Division and Methods of the Sciences: Questions V-VI of His Commentary on the "De Trinitate" of Boethius [In librum Boethii De Trinitate],* trans. A. Maurer, C.S.B., 4•h rev. ed. (Toronto: PIMS, 1987).

[7] "But things are likened to God, first and most generally in so far as they are" *(STh* I, q. 93, a. 2).

[8] *ScG* I, c. 29; *De Potentia,* q. 7, a. 5.

[9] *STh* I, q. 4, a. 3.

[10] *STh* l, q. 45, a. 5, ad 1.

Causal participation is the deepest and most original level of Aquinas's metaphysics,[11] in which he synthesizes Neoplatonic participation, the Aristotelian distinction between act and potency, and his own notion of existence as the intensive act of all perfections. For instance, in the *Summa contra Gentiles,*[12] Thomas argues on traditional Neoplatonic lines that since similarity is a mode of unity, and unity cannot be grounded in multiplicity, unity of its nature precedes multiplicity; thus, a real perfection shared by many subjects demands as its ontological ground a single source, a causal agent from which each instantiation ultimately derives the common perfection by [13] Thomas applies this reasoning to existence *(esse):* to account for the real plurality of existing things, there must be a source that is existence itself, because "whatever is such by participation originates in what is such by essence."[14] It is God's nature to

[11] On participation in Thomas, see Cornelio Fabro, C.P.S., *Participation et causalite selon S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Paris: Nauwelaerts, 1961); *La nozione metafisica de partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino,* 2d ed. (Turin: Sociera Editrice Internazionale, 1950); "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Christian Philosophy: The Notion of Participation," trans. B. M. Bonansea, *Review of Metaphysics* 27 (1973-74): 449-91; in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), s.v. "Participation"; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995); John Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas and Participation," in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy,* ed J. F. Wippel (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 117-58; "Metaphysics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas,* eds. N. Kretzmann and E. Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 85-127; *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 65-176; Joseph de Finance, *Etre et agir* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1945); L.-B.Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin,* 2d ed. (Paris: Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1953); W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *Explorations in Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 72-91; G. P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual and Systematic Analysis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960); Bernard Montagnes, O.P., *La doctrine de l'analogie de l'etre d'apres saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1963).

[12] *ScG* IT, c. 15; see also *STh* I, q. 65, a. 1; *De Pot.,* q. 3, a. 5; *De Veritate,* q. 2, a. 14.

[13] W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *The Philosophical Approach to God: A Neo-Thomist Perspective* (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University, 1979), 39.

[14] *STh* I, q. 49, a. 3, obj.4.

exist,[15] and so he causes existence in creatures,[16] not through impartation of a common form, but by participation:

being *[esse]* is common to everything that is. Above all causes, then, there must be a cause whose proper action is to give being *[esse]*. ••. God is being *[ens]* by His own essence, because He is the very act of being *[esse]*. Every other being *[ens]*, however, is a being *[ens]* by participation .... God, therefore, is the cause of being *[essendt]* to all other things.[17]

It is at this point, where Thomas has established the causal relationship between the source of existence and the participant in existence that he executes the master stroke of transposing the Neoplatonic doctrine of participation into the Aristotelian framework of act and potency.[18] In the commentary on the *Liber de causis,* one of his last works, Thomas writes: "because it is not its own being but subsists in participated being, the subsisting form itself is compared to participated being as potency to act or matter to form."[19] Essence receives and limits existence as potency receives and limits act. Thus, each finite thing *(ens)* is a composite unity, a synthesis of essence (the "whatness" *[quidditas]* of a thing, its distinctive nature),[20] and the act of existence (the interior act of a thing which makes it to be).[21] Everything that is not subsistent existence receives its existence,[22] and existence is "contracted" into "a certain diminished participation"[23] by this receiving essence.[24] There results a hierarchy of beings, in which "some are fuller beings than others."[25]

[15] *STh* l, q. 3, aa. 3-4; &GI, cc. 21-22.

[16] *De Substantiis Separatis,* 3; *STh* I, q. 8, a. 1.

[17] *ScG* II, c. 15; I, c. 29; I, c. 80; *STh* l, q. 8, a. 1; I, q. 61, a. 1.

[18] Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics,* 95. See also George Wieland, "Plato or Aristotle-A Real Alternative in Medieval Philosophy," in Wippel, ed., *Studies in Medieval Philosophy,* 80-81; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 107.

[19] *In De Causis,* prop. 9.

[20] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 1.

[21] *ScG* I, c. 43.

[22] *De Ente et Essentia,* c. 4.

[23] &GI, c. 29.

[24] *De Spiritualibus Creaturis,* a. 1; &G I, c. 18; *De Pot.,* q. 7, a. 3; *Compendium Theologiae* I, c. 212.

[25] *STh* I, q. 44, a. 1.

This doctrine is cogently summarized in a passage from the *Quaestiones Quodlibetales:*

> Every created substance is composed of potency and act: for it is manifest that God alone is his own act of existence [*esse*], as essentially existing, in that obviously his act of existence is his substance, which can be said of no other being: for subsistent being can be only one, just as subsistent whiteness can be only one. Therefore it is necessary that any other thing whatsoever be a participative being; so that in it the substance participating existence is one thing, and the existence itself participated is another. However, every participant is situated to the participated as potency to act; so, therefore, every created substance is composed from potency and act, that is, from that which is and existence.[26]

It will be seen in the next section that Rahner is in substantial agreement with Thomas on all the points contained in this passage: (1) God exists in a necessary, nonparticipatory manner; (2) God alone exists in this way; (3) everything else exists in participatory dependence upon God; (4) this participation is partial because of the distinction in all created reality between receiving essence and received existence;[27] and (5) the relation of participant to participated is that of limiting potency to limitless act. This last point establishes the analogical relationship between subsistent *Esse* and created *esse.* Their resemblance is not a matter of shared form but of the similitude of participating existence to unparticipated *Esse.* At the heart of every actually existing thing is, in Gilson's phrase, "a participated image of the pure Act of Being."[28]

One question remains to this brief compass of Thomas's doctrine of participation, but it is a crucial one for properly

[26] *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* 3, q. 8, a. 20.

[27] The source of the limitation involved in participation is debated: Is the limitation the result of the composition of essence and *actus essendi,* or is it intrinsic to the deficient similitude/imitation by a creature's *esse* of its divine source, thus making limitation prior to composition? Fabro and Geiger, respectively, have taken these two distinct, though not necessarily opposed, positions. A good overview of the debate can be found in Helen James John, S.N.D., *The Thomist Spectrum* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 87-122. See also Wippel, "Aquinas and Participation," 152-58; and *Metaphysical Thought,* 124-31, for well-reasoned assessments of each view.

[28] Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 133.

understanding Thomas's metaphysics and Rahner's reliance on Thomas. When Thomas teaches that created things "partake existence," does he mean that created existents participate directly in the divine *esse?* Or is it a question of the participation by creatures in what Thomas calls *esse commune?*

In order to answer this question, a measure of clarity is required regarding the meaning Thomas gives to some key metaphysical terms.

(A) *Esse* (also *Ipsum Esse Subsistens, Esse Divinum, Esse Absolutum):* the one, self-subsisting existence, the pure act which is limited by no distinct essence and participates in no other existence.[29]

(B) *esse* (also *esse ipsum rei, actus essendi):* the actual existence of a created thing, in distinction to its essence; the intrinsic act of being whereby all forms and natures exist,[30] "the actuality of all acts, and therefore the perfection of all perfections,"[31] that which is "more intimately and profoundly interior to things than anything else."[32] *Esse* is not a genus divided into species, but the act of being distinguished by its reception in many subjects,[33] in each of which the act of existence forms a similitude of the divine *Esse* and so has a real participation in the divine.

(C) *ens:* an individual, concrete existent,[34] composed of essence and the act of *esse.* To be an *ens* is to be in act, to "have existence,"[35] either as a substance (in distinction from sheer potentiality),[36] or, in a secondary sense, an accident.[37] Every *ens* "'is' inasmuch as it participates in an act of being."[38]

(D) *ens commune* (also *ens inquantum est ens):* like *esse commune,* this is universal and exists only in the order of thought.

[29] *STh* I, q. 3, a. 4.
[30] Ibid.
[31] *De Pot.,* q. 7, a. 2, ad 9.
[32] *STh* I, q. 8, a. 1.
[33] *ScG* II, c. 52.
[34] *De Hebdomadibus 1.*
[35] XII *Metaphys,* lect. 1.
[36] *STh* I, q. 5, a. 1, ad 1.
[37] De *Ente et Essentia,* c. 1.
[38] *De Hebdomad.,* 2.

Ens commune is *esse commune* viewed as concretized by an essential principle. *Ens commune* is the idea of existence received by essence, of composite being in the most general sense. It is the idea of concretized existence Gust as *esse commune* is the idea of participated existence).

(E) *esse commune:* this does not subsist apart from individual existents,[39] but is the whole of created being considered from the angle of its participatory-causal dependence on *esse subsistens. Esse commune* is *esse* considered abstractly, as existence susceptible to participation. It is a logical construct designating participated existence in dependence upon God. *Ens commune* and *esse commune* are equal in extension (everything finite falls under both), yet logically differ in that things are said to participate in *esse commune* but not *ens commune.* This follows from the nature of the ideas, the latter denoting existence received by essence, and the former, the fullness of the unreceived *actus essendi.*[40] In this narrow sense, *esse commune* is the *esse* in which every *ens* logically participates,[41] the act of existence that is common to all, considered universally rather than as received by any concrete entity. This common, created existence depends upon but does not include God.[42] This will be considered in more detail below.

[39] *ScG* I, c. 26; John Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 141-42, 157; te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality,* 192,194; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 111, 121-22. For Thomas, neither *esse commune* nor *ens commune* subsist, and neither include God (Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 123-24; "Aquinas on Participation," 142).

[40] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 123.

[41] *In De Causis,* prop. 6.

[42] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 111-12, 591-92. For an opposing interpretation, see Josef de Vries, "Das 'esse commune' bei Thomas von Aquin," *Scholastik* 39 (1964): 163-77; and Klaus Kremer, *Die neuplatonische Seinsphilosophie und ihre Wirkung auf Thomas von Aquin* (Leiden: Brill, 1966; 2d ed., 1971). Kremer underscores the Neoplatonic background to Thomas, including participation. However, Kremer, like de Vries, equates *esse commune* and *esse subsistens.* As Father Fabro observes, Kremer makes this identification without the support of any Thomistic text (Cornelio Fabro, "Platonism, Neo-Platonism and Thomism: Convergencies and Divergencies," *New Scholasticism* 44 [1970]: 82). See also Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 389.

For St. Thomas, it is *ens commune,* existence compounded with essence, that is the subject of metaphysics; Thomas does not include God in the subject matter of metaphysics *perse.* Theology, based in revelation, is the science of God; metaphysics is "the science of being-in-general," the science of *ens commune* or *ens inquantum est ens.*[43] However, Thomas writes, although "we cannot know the quiddity of any separated substance by means of a speculative science," yet "the speculative sciences enable us to know of the existence of these substances and some of their traits."[44] Metaphysics studies God indirectly, *in via resolutionis,*[45] as the cause of what does fall within *ens commune,* as the principle of created being.[46] As John Wippel observes, Thomas (unlike Avicenna, Siger of Brabant, and Duns Scotus) excludes God from the direct subject matter of metaphysics precisely because God is not included under *ens commune.* Thomas explicitly asserts that *esse subsistens* is not identical to *ens commune* or *esse commune.* The whole of chapter 26 of book 1 of the *Summa contra Gentiles* is given over to showing that God "cannot be that being by which each thing formally is."[47] Thomas argues that to see God as the formal being of existents would lead to God's being having a cause (as all nonsubsistent beings do), and so render him a nonnecessary being.[48] He also argues that what is common exists only in the order of thought (e.g., "animal" does not subsist apart from Socrates, Plato, a dog, etc.). "Much less, then, is common being itself something outside all existing things, save only for being in the intellect."[49] If God were included in *esse commune,* therefore, He would exist only in the intellect.

In the *De Potentia,* Thomas repeats this: "God's being *[Esse Divinum]* which is his essence, is not universal being *[esse*

[43] *In Boeth. De Trin.,* q. 5, a. 1, ad 4,6 ,7.

[44] *In Boeth. De Trin.,* q. 6, a. 4; see also *In Metaphys.,* pro!.; Wippel, "Aquinas and Participation," 149.

[45] *In Metaphys.,* pro!.; John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 60-63.

[46] *In Boeth. De Trin.,* q. 5, a. 4.

[47] *SI'h* I, q. 26, a. 2.

[48] *SI'h* I, q. 26, a. 4.

[49] *SI'h* I, q. 26, a. 5.

commune], but being distinct from all other being: so that by his very being God is distinct from every other being."[50] In the *Summa Theologiae,* Thomas characterizes *Esse Divinum* as something from which, by its very definition, further specification is positively excluded (as reason is positively excluded from the definition of irrational animals), and *esse commune* as that whose definition contains no further specification, but that is open to such specification (as reason is not included in the general definition of animals, but also is not positively excluded from it).[51] Later in the same work, Aquinas avers that

> God exists in everything; not indeed as part of their substance or as an accident, but as an agent is present to that in which its action is taking place. . . . The perfection of his nature places God above everything, and yet as causing their existence he also exists in everything.[52]

In his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus,* Thomas holds that God is the cause of *esse commune;* that every existent falls under *esse commune,* but God does not; and that every created existent participates in *esse,* but God does not.[53] Although some texts appear to speak of a direct participation in *esse subsistens,*[54] the context of causality <*first* act, *first* principle) and the specification of a mode of participation (similitude, composition) are almost always present, and combine to support an interpretation in which Thomas does not see participation as a pantheistic piece-taking of the divine.[55] Thomas is asserting a participated, efficiently caused likeness of the divine *esse* within every finite being. Every finite *existent's actus essendi* is efficiently caused by God and stands as a likeness to the divine in virtue of

[50] *De Pot.,* q. 7, a. 2, ad 4.

[51] *SI'h* I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 1; also *De Pot.,* q. 7, a. 2, ad 6.

[52] *SI'h* I, q. 8, a. 1, corp. and ad 1.

[53] V *De Divinis Nominibus,* lect. 2.

[54] *De Spir. Great.,* a.1.

[55] Clarke, *The One and the Many,* 86.

its (caused) existence.[56] This is supported by Thomas's distinction between the procession of persons within the Triune God and the procession of creatures from God.[57] In the Trinity, the divine essence is unparticipated, but its likeness is propagated and multiplied in creatures. Thus, divinity proceeds into creatures and is multiplied in them in the sense of caused likeness, not in a pantheistic parceling out of existence.[58]

Summarily, Thomas explicitly and consistently refuses to identify *esse subsistens* with either *ens commune* or *esse commune.* The question remains as to how these three are related. As Wippel writes, Thomas holds that all concrete things *(entia)* participate in *esse commune* in the sense of logically sharing in, but not exhausting, the possibilities of created existence;[59] and as observed earlier, *ens commune* is the logical idea of created existence in composition with essence. The participation of all things in each of these two is a logical participation. However, for Thomas a concrete thing really participates in subsistent, divine being in the sense that it is caused by God, and so possesses a similitude of the divine being in its own limited act of existence. Since the whole realm of such concrete things taken abstractly is just what Thomas means by *esse commune,* Wippel's conclusion is correct: the ontological foundation for asserting that all created things participate in *esse commune* is their causal participation in *esse subsistens.*[60]

In the next section, we shall examine how this metaphysics of participation forms the ineluctable background to Rahner's metaphysics of knowledge. The clarification of this dependence of Rahner on Thomas will also help clarify Rahner's claim that Absolute Being is unthematically co-affirmed in every act of human knowing.

[56] As Wippel shows, participation in *esse* as an imitation of *esse subsistens,* and participation as the result of God's efficient causality bringing about the *actus essendi* of all things, are the same thing for St. Thomas *(Metaphysical Thought,* 121).

[57] II *De Divin. Nomin.,* lect. 3.

[58] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 120.

[59] Ibid.; Wippel, "Aquinas on Participation," 142.

[60] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 121.

II. RAHNER'S METHOD: INDICATIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Rahner himself never draws sustained attention to the theme of participation. He uses the term infrequently,[61] even when arguing for the continuity between his own work and that of St. Thomas. However, Rahner's method of "retrieving" from Thomas what was present but implicit licenses an effort to read Rahner in like manner, and Rahner's theological methodology itself provides evidence of his assimilation of Thomas's metaphysics of participation.

Rahner approaches being in the first instance, unlike Thomas, from a consideration of the metaphysics of judgment and the proximate and ultimate finalities of the human intellect. He regards this approach to metaphysics as no more than the transposition of Thomistic insights from an object-centered ontology into the metaphysics of knowledge, a Heideggerian conversion of ontic language into ontological:[62]

[61] Rahner authored the entry for "Teilhabe" in *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche,* ed. Joseph Hofer and K. Rahner (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 9:1340-41. In this brief entry, Rahner focuses more on the theological idea of participation than on the philosophical one, holding that it is only within the context of grace and Incarnation that the full meaning of philosophical participation is grasped. Here, Rahner picks up a theme found in Thomas: grace as participation (e.g., *STh* I-II, q. 110, a. 2, ad 2; and I-II, q. 112, a. 2). See "Grace" in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology,* ed. K. Rahner et al. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 2:415, 417; "*Theos* in the New Testament," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), 124-25; "Current Problems in Christology," in ibid., 199-200.

[62] *Martin Heidegger, Being and Time,* trans. J. Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 11-12, 191, 200, 406. Drawing attention to "the static categories of formal ontology" employed in classical Christology, Rahner argues that there is no reason to think that conceptual clarity is available only in vocabulary drawn from the ontic realm of worldly objects ("Current Problems in Christology," 166-69); see also "The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965), 324; "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in ibid., 68; "On the Theology of the Incarnation," in ibid., 109, n. 1; "Reflections on Methodology in Theology," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 11, trans. David Bourke (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 97; "Theology and Anthropology," *Theological Investigations,* vol. 9, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1977), 37; *Foundations,* 290-92; and "Man (Anthropology)," in *Sacramentum Mundi,* 3:366.

any consideration at all in formal ontology can really be developed *ontologically* only if it is transposed into a problem in the metaphysics of knowledge. Really ontological concepts can be acquired only in union with their corresponding concepts in the metaphysics of knowledge.[63]

In Thomas's approach, it is "on the basis of the idea of creation [that] an ontology of participation can be built up."[64] In Rahner's approach, the "inner similarity and community"[65] of reality is approached through an analysis of judgment. Rahner holds that "every finite being points to Absolute Being," but under the influence of Kant and Marechal[66] he starts from the implicit affirmation of Absolute *Esse* as it takes place in the judgment, an affirmation he roots in the nature of the agent intellect as "in a special way ... a *participation* in the light of Absolute Spirit."[67] In fine, the ontological constitution of human being is revealed in the dynamics of knowledge, because "there is always [a] question of a noetic hylomorphism, to which there corresponds an *ontological* hylomorphism in the objects, in the sense of a thoroughgoing determination of knowing by being."[68]

While this shift in method is not accompanied by an articulated metaphysics of partlClpation, it does present elements fundamental to such a metaphysics: (1) the ontological distinction between limitation and limitlessness, (2) the analogical relationship between these two (at this point, simply in the use of *esse* for both), (3) the assertion that the affirmation of Absolute *Esse* is the condition of the possibility (in an as yet unspecified

[63] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 331; "Current Problems in Christology," 169.

[64] Karl Rahner, "An Investigation into the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 16, trans. David Morland (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 249.

[65] Karl Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 161; also *Foundations,* 181.

[66] Joseph *Le point de depart de la metaphysique,* cahier 5, *Le Thomisme devant la philosophie critique,* 2d ed. (Paris: Desclee Brouwer; Brussels: L'Edition Universelle, 1949).

[67] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 226 (emphasis added). Thomas states that "participatio est duplex": the participation of the objects of the intellect in the divine goodness, and the participation of human intellect in the light of divine wisdom *(De divinis nominibus,* Il.4.177).

[68] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* liii-liiii.

way) of the affirmation of limited *esse,* and (4) the assertion of the correspondence of these affirmations to the structure of reality.[69] AJS the next section will argue, Rahner's analysis of judgment retains this methodological focus on finite and infinite *esse,* and articulates their relationship in terms of causal participation.

Before considering the details of this analysis of judgment, we must canvass briefly the dispute over Rahner's starting point His project hinges upon the transposition of Thomistic ontology into the idiom of human knowingo One of his favorite examples is drawn from natural theology. The traditional proofs of God's existence are given in terms of the metaphysics of being, in which the condition of the possibility finite being, or some aspect of it, is the existence of an infinite, necessary being. However, in the metaphysics of knowledge, it is rather the *affirmation* of finite being that demands as the condition of its possibility the affirmation of the existence of an absolute beingo It is the intellect's capacity to make such an affirmation of unlimited being that makes objective knowledge possible, "since only through it do we know the limitation of the finite being as such a limitationo"[70] But just this is the weH-known rub for many Thomists: How do we get to daims about real being from a starting point in the *a priori* conditions of knowledge? Are not a metaphysical critique and a transcendental critique, as Gilson writes, "essentially incompatible positions," since in Thomism "it is forbidden to limit in advance, in any way at the claim of the metaphysical critique (so-caHed) to a total, objective grasp of being as it is"?[71] "Without a doubt, even in a metaphysical critique the subject plays a role in the constitution of the known object,

[69] Joseph Owens, *C.Ss.R,An Interpretation ofExistence* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1968), 30; Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers,* 2d ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 203.

[70] Karl Rahner, *Horer des Wortes: Zur Grundlegimg einer Religionsphilosophie* (Munich: Verlag Kosel-Pustet, 1941); Eng. trans., *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy ofReligion,* trans. Joseph Donceel, S.J. (New York: Continuum, 1994), 51. See also Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 181-82; "Observations on the Doctrine of God," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 9, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1977), 140 ; *Foundations,* 70, 75-81.

[71] Gilson, *Realisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance,* 131, 134.

but a metaphysical critique is forbidden to place in question the 'objective absolute' which knowledge attains."[72] How can such critical realism justify its own realism?

In Rahner's approach, the subjectivity of the knower is achieved in the *reditio completa in se* which is also always simultaneously the achievement of objective knowledge.[73] His transcendental approach is not the snapping of the bond of Thomist realism, but its articulation within a metaphysics of knowledge which is from the start also a metaphysics of being. As Jack Bonsor argues, Rabner avoids the subject-object breach of the Cartesian tradition by defining subjectivity from the start as that which comes about through relationship with (rather than prior to) the other.[74] Thus, at the conclusion of *Spirit in the World,* Rahner argues that metaphysics

> first comes to itself in its *content* through the *a posteriori* ... the openness of the *a priori* for the *a posteriori,* of the transcendental for the categorical, is not something secondary, perhaps merely a subsequent piecing together of two completely separable contents of reality and knowledge, but it is the fundamental definition of the contents of the one metaphysics of man.... For although the basis upon which Thomas places all his philosophizing from the outset is the world, yet it is precisely the world into which the spirit of man-in turning to the phantasm-has already entered. For strictly speaking, the first-known, the first thing encountering man, is not the world in its 'spiritless' existence, but the world-itself-as transformed by the light of the spirit, the world in which man sees himself.[75]

For Rahner, as for Thomas, the object of metaphysics is *ens commune,* the act of existence as confined by the potency of *essentia.*[76] The shift from an ontic to an ontological perspective is

[72] Ibid., 136.

[73] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 133; *Hearer of the Word,* 44-45; *Foundations,* 19.

[74] Jack Bonsor, Rahner, *Heidegger and Truth* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 65; and *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 126-28. For a contemporary view in opposition to this, see Fergus Kerr, O.P., *Theology after Wittgenstein,* 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997), 7-14.

[75] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 405-6.

[76] James Reichmann, S.J., errs when he holds that, for Rabner, the subject of metaphysics is "strictly immaterial ..• common being, which, as common, is not found in the singular world of existents but transcends all of the limitations of those objects empirically given to the

not the dissolution of this goal through the daim to a metaphysical foundation in "an a priori notion of being viewed as welling up spontaneously from the dynamically oriented faculty of the knowing subject." [77] Rather, such a methodological shift focuses on the subjectivity always already unthematicaHy present Thomas's development of his ontic metaphysics. [78] The following sections lend probative weight to this Thomistic reading of Rahner.

Ht THE ANALYSIS OF JUDGMENT

A) The Dynamics of Judgment

For St. Thomas, human thought is not the mere connection of concepts; rather, it is judgment, the assertion that some thing exists, the affirmation that a thing *is.* Truth is *adaequatio intellectus et rei,* so true judgments, as Gilson observes, "unite in the mind what is united in reality, or they separate in the mind what is separated in reality. And what is thus united or separated is always existenceo" [79] Rahner shares Thomas's realism, and agrees judgment is the fundamental act of human thought, since

intellect through the mediation of the senses" ("The Transcendental Method and the Psychogenesis of Being," *The Thomist* 32 [1968]: 451). This error leads Reichmann to argue that "according to a certain priority of nature ... for Rahner the unlimited horizon of being is realized before the particular form is grasped" (ibid., 467). This culminates in the avowal that Emerich Coreth and "other proponents of the transcendenul method .... speak of an unlimited and unrestricted Being, [but] do not find occasion to refer to it as common Being, or at least very infrequently .... It is not known as common being simply because it is not a necessary condition for Being's themarized emergence from consciousness that it be shared by a community of limited, restricted beings" (ibid., 490-91). Although by this point in Reichmann's article all explicit reference to Rahner has long since ceased, I hope to have demonstrated in the present paper that "common being," as Thomas understood this, is of central concern to Rahner's metaphysics, and a very real buttress against the charge that transcendenul methodology is inherently anti-Thomistic.

[77] Ibid., 468.

[78] "To the extent that the 'transcendental method' rightfully emphasizes the supremely intellective nature of the science of metaphysics, we judge it to be beyond criticism .... St. Thomas does not hesitate to underline the intellectual dimension of metaphysics" (ibid., 456, text and n. 24),

[79] Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers,* 203.

knowledge is always knowing something of something.[80] This something is not an ideal *esse* or a realm of pure essences.[81] Thomas knows the real only as *esse,* what Rahner calls "to-be-actual" *(Wirklichsein)* and "to-be-real" *(Realsein).* Thomas's denial that created truth is eternal, but is a matter of the intellect's realized judgment,[82] and his oft-repeated definition of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus,* does not admit, according to Rahner, of an interpretation of *res* as ideal being, a "pure order of essences" or "in-itself which is in principle independent of the world."[83] For Thomas, judgment always attains to existence.[84]

However, these judgments about existence are made regarding material reality, which is the first object of the human intellect.[85] The mind has immaterial knowledge of material things. This means that human knowing is bipolar: intellectual and sensible, conceptual and receptive, *a priori* and *a posteriori.* Human knowledge as judgment is the grasp of material things as existing. Since the modes of being of the knowing and the known differ, the sensible must in some manner be made intelligible.[86] Thomas holds that, in addition to sensibility, human knowledge requires an agent intellect,[87] a faculty capable of making the forms of material things actually intelligible. Thomas calls this process "abstraction": the agent intellect works upon the sense images (phantasms) of existing things, "abstracting the universal from the particular, the idea from sense images, to consider the nature of

[80] Rahner, *Hearer of the Word,* 43, 45.

[81] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 163-65.

[82] *STh* I, q. 16, a. 7, ad 4.

[83] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 164-65.

[84] *Al;* Rahner observes, this was never a question for Thomas, for whom knowledge is always already situated in the world: "truths and validities are for him always true and valid of the real world" (Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 164).

[85] *STh* I, q. 85, a. 3; I, q. 85, a. 6; I, q. 85, a. 8; *De Verit.,* q. 10, a. 5.

[86] *STh* I, q. 84, a. 6; *De Verit.,* q. 10, a. 6, ad 1.

[87] *De Verit.,* q. 10, a. 4. This is not "proved," but is affirmed by subsequent considerations (Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 238; *Hearer of the Word,* 96-98; "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 13, trans. David Bourke (New York: Crossroad, 1975), 22, 26. In like manner, Thomas surveys the various explanations of human knowing, and concludes that Aristotle's is "more reasonable" than those of the Platonists and Arabs *(De Verit.,* q. 10, a. 6; *STh* I, q. 84, a. 1). See also *Comp. Theol.* I, c. 83.

a species without considering individuating conditions represented by images."[88]

Rahner takes up the issue of judgment at this point, and moves one step back in the line of Thomas's reasoning. For Thomas, the fact that we have intellectual knowledge of material things means that we must assume the existence of an agent intellect capable of abstracting universal form from individuating matter. Rahner asks: What are the dynamics of the agent intellect? How is it able to abstract the form of a material object?[89]

Rahner's solution begins with the definition of the act of abstraction as the grasping of limitation. Abstraction is a measuring of reality, the gauging of ontological limitation, the determination that this universal (e.g., green), belongs to this object, and so is limited. Rahner calls this the problem of the contingency of the form: How can it be known that the form is only contingently limited by this particular existent, and thus is in itself broader and so applicable to other existents? This contingency is not part of the form's content but is the form's mode of being (as "confined" or "contracted"), and so is not given in intuition.[90] Here we see the problem of the one and the many, addressed by St. Thomas in the first instance through ontology, transposed by Rahner into the realm of epistemology.

Rahner approaches this question by considering the goal of the human intellect. He shares Thomas's realism, and holds that it is

[88] *STh* I, q. 85, a. 1, ad 1.

[89] Rahner's undertaking here deserves due credit. Gilson writes that it is "extremely difficult to see what St. Thomas means" by abstraction (*The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas,* trans. L. K. Shook, C.S.B. [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956], 219), and this difficulty is evident in Thomas's expositors. For instance, Brian Davies limits himself to the assertion that intelligible species "come to be in us. They are the result in us of our minds getting to work on the data of sense experience and transforming it from a 'big, booming, buzzing confusion' to a world of meaning or understanding" (*The Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992], 127). Even Louis Regis, after spending many pages asserting the "superelevating activity" of the agent intellect and its relationships to the possible intellect and the intelligible species, does not advance beyond the metaphor of light: "The light of our intellect enables us to see by making visible the object of our possible intellect .... The agent intellect makes them [material objects] luminous by giving them a higher, that is, an immaterial, mode of existence" (*Epistemology,* trans. I. C. Byrne (New York: MacMillan, 1959], 239).

[90] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 140.

the things themselves that we know, rather than images of things.[91] He now specifies this through the Thomistic distinction between *complexio* and *concretio.* Human thinking, which Thomas holds is always knowledge of the "concreted form" in abstraction,[92] necessarily involves these two distinct but inseparable acts. *Concretio* is the formation of a universal concept, and *complexio* is judgment proper, the reference of a universal concept to an existing thing.[93] In *concretio,* a universal concept is abstracted, one which is ordered to predication of many existents.[94] There can be no thought so abstract, no concept so universalized, that it loses its ordination to a possible "this." No concept can be thought of completely outside a *concretio,*[95] for even the most abstract metaphysical concepts still include an intuitional element.[96] The intellect is incapable of stopping cold at the abstraction of form, and then deciding whether or not to refer such concepts to a subject.[97] Concepts are intrinsically ordered to the concrete, since human thought is abstract thinking about concrete reality, and so the abstracted forms must constantly be referred back-"converted"-to the phantasms, the images of sensible reality produced by the mind.[98] "The Thomistic theses that intellectually there are only universal concepts, and that the universal concept is known only in a conversion to the phantasm, are the two descriptions of this one structure of any

[91] *SI'h* I, q. 85, a. 2; *De Verit.,* q. 2, a. 6; Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 163-69.

[92] *SI'h* I, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3.

[93] *In Boeth. De Trin.,* q. 5, a. 3.

[94] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 120-23.

[95] Ibid., 139.

[96] Karl Rabner, "The Resurrection of the Body," in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 2, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1962), 208; *Hearer of the Word,* 97; "Christology within an Evolutionary View," 187.

[97] The "phases" of knowledge-sensibility and abstraction/conversion-are not temporally successive, but mutually conditioning moments of the original unity of human knowledge (Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 119), so that the phantasms are never given outside of, or temporally prior to, the *Vorgriff,* since it is spirit itself which "begets" sensibility in order to achieve its intellectual end (Rabner, *Hearer of the Word,* 122-23). In like manner, abstraction and conversion are "inseparably related to each other in a relationship of reciprocal priority" (Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 266).

[98] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 48; *SI'h* I, q. 84, a. 7; *ScG* 4, c. 11.

and all of our knowledge, and they must be kept together. "[99] knowledge, regardless the supramundanity of the object or the abstractness of the concept, is knowledge in «likeness and parables." [100] The universal is always given in and with the abstractive grasp of the sensible form as limited, and so even highly abstract concepts retain a reference to an existent. This reference is enacted in judgment.

Rahner uses color as an example. If I try to think of "green" by itself, independent of any colored thing, this universal concept unavoidably becomes an individual thing which is again a synthesis of a universal and a subject. In trying to think it in utter abstraction, I invariably distinguish a universal (that which makes color color--coloredness) and a subject (that which becomes "color" through coloredness). A concept always contains in itself a universal ("this thing of this kind"), and the universal as such is always still conceived as a subject ("this of this kind").

What the metaphysics of hylomorphism required from Thomas-the assertion of the agent inteHect in order to explain intellectual knowledge of sensible, material objects [101]-the metaphysics of judgment demands from Rahner. [102] In Rahner's

[99] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 121; *Hearer of the Word,* 105. Rahner's view that, though analytically distinguishable, abstraction, judgment, and conversion are dynamically inseparable elements of judgment (Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 207-8) marks his definitive difference from the conceptualist tradition of Thomistic commentary beginning with Cajetan and represented in the present century by Maritain. On conceptualism in general, see Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers,* 216-32; Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas,* ed. F. E. Crowe and R. M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 192-96. On conceprualism in Rahner, see Gerald McCool, "The Primacy of Intuition," *Thought* 37 (1962): 67-68; *From Unity to Pluralism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 114-60, esp. 117-19, 155-57; John McDermott, "Karl Rahner on Two Infinities: God and Matter," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1988): 439-40, 442, 447; and "The Amlogy of Knowing in Karl Rahner," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 36 (1996): 206, 210.

[100] Rahner, "The Resurrection of the Body," 209.

[101] m *De Anima,* Iect. 10; see also *ScG* H, c. 77; *STh* I, q. 79, a. 3.

[102] *Mirabile dictu,* Gilson speaks with a detectably transcendental accent, holding that the "solution of the problem of knowledge which St. Thomas here describes consist§ particularly in defining *the conditions required for the carrying out of an operation which we know takes place*. ... For the operation to be realizable, one condition is required ... and it is this: the action of the agent intellect which makes phantasms intelligible must precede the reception of this intelligible into the possible intellect" *(Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas,* 219-20 [emphasis added]).

example, "This tree is green," the judgment that this existing tree is green is made possible only by a power that is capable of recognizing "tree" and "green" as forms limited in, and so broader than, this particular green tree. This power makes thought possible by revealing form as limited,[103] by surpassing the given object in a recognition of wider possibilities. It is to the nature of this "recognition" that we now turn.

B) The Scope of the "Vorgriff": "Esse Absolutum"

The agent intellect is, in Rahner's understanding, the power of grasping the universal from the concrete, of seeing the form in its "referability" to many concrete existents,[104] of grasping the form as "a known intelligibility that exists in many and can be predicated of many."[105] The intellect knows an object given in sensibility by abstracting its form, that is, apprehending its form as limited. The "illumination" of the phantasm effected by the agent intellect is just this grasp of the contingent limitation of a form in a given object. Since conceptual, objective knowledge does exist, this power, which Rahner terms *Vorgriff,* must exist. The *Vorgriff* is neither an inborn idea of being nor an objective intuition of God (both of which would be independent of sensibility). It is "the spontaneity of the human spirit,"[106] the nexus of sensibility and intellect, and Rahner describes it so:

> It is an *a -priori* power given with human nature. It is the dynamic movement of the spirit toward the absolute range of all possible object [sic]. In this movement, the single objects are grasped as single stages of this finality; thus they are known as profiled against this absolute range of all the knowable. On account of the *Vorgriff* the single object is always already known under the horizon of the absolute ideal of knowledge and posited within the conscious domain of all that which may be known. That is why it is also always known as not filling this domain completely, hence as limited. And insofar as it is *thus* known *as* limited,

[103] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 395.
[104] Ibid., 139.
[105] Ibid., 120.
[106] Ibid., 224.

the quidditative determination is grasped as wider itself, as relatively unlimited. In other words, it is abstracted.[107]

In this definition of the *Vorgriff* as the dynamism of the human intellect, we find the answer to the question of the scope of the agent intellect or *Vorgriff* (now used by Rahner interchangeably, along with *excessus)*[108] which makes the recognition of limitation possible: «the absolute range of the knowable."

This contention brings the matter of the contemporary justification of metaphysics to a head. Kant's proposed refoundation of metaphysics hinges on the limitation of theoretical knowledge, knowledge of what is, to sensibility.[109] The success of Kant's project is jeopardized if these limits are not strictly enforceable, since the possibility of theoretical knowledge beyond the sensible realm is the theistic necrosis Kant seeks to excise from metaphysics. Thus, the question of the extent of the intellect's *Vorgriff-mobHe,* material being, more, or less[110]-is pivotal for Rahner's justification of metaphysics after Kant. It is also the point at which Rahner's assimilation of Thomas's vision becomes most evident, because the demonstration of the *Vorgriff* s true range is inseparable from the metaphysics of participation.

Rahner's argument is based on two key assertions: (1) the I(.,Uirni,ee;uu affirms not just a limitation of form, but a limitation of existence; in order to affirm these Hmitations of existence and essence, the agent *intdlect/Vorgriff* must "pre-apprehend" unlimited *esse.*[111] Regarding the first assertion, Rahner's reasoning

[107] Rahner, *Hearer of the Word,* 47. The German is plural: "moglichen Gegenstande."

[103] Dravving on *STh* I, q. 84, a. 7, ad 3, Rabner describes the *Vorgriff,* or agent intellect, as the *excessus,* the "transcendent reaching beyond the field of the imagination . . . the fundamental act of metaphysical knowledge" (llahner, *Spirit in the World,* 52), "the highest faculty of man ... the faculty of the *excessus* to *esse* absolutely" (ibid., 225).

[109] Immanuel Kam, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 398; *The Conflict of the Faculties,* trans. M. J. Gregor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 129.

[110] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 147-54; *Hearer of the Word,* 49-50. See also "The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger," *Philosophy Today* 13/2 (Summer 1969): 135-37.

[111] Rahner's interpretation of the agent intellect has excited considerable comment. The basic question is whether the agent intellect in Thomas is accurately characterized as an anticipation of Absolute Being. For criticism of Rabner on this point, see R.M. Burns, "The

is completely Thomistic: essence, as distinct from *esse,* can be the object of judgment only insofar as the former is in potency to the lattero "Thomas knows essences only as the limiting potency of *esse,* as the real ground and expression of the fact that *esse* in the individual 'this' is not given in unlimited fulness. Beyond that they are nothing:' [112] Just as judgment affirms the limitation of essence (tree) and accident (green), it simultaneously affirms the limitation of *esse;* indeed, the latter is the condition of the formero [113] The intellect is able to grasp the object as one only because it grasps *esse* as limited by properties which the *esse* itself uniteso[114] *Esse* is the unifying ground of both subject and predicate, the actual unity of the *ens* which is always given prior to and independently of judgment, and which judgment realizes anewo[115] Thus, Rahner calls it "the act of quidditative determinations!' [116]

Before proceeding to the second part of Rahner's argument, it should be noted that he has nearly completed his eduction of the metaphysics of participation from the metaphysics of knowledge. Within his analysis of judgment, Rahner has defined the relationship of the concrete object to being as that of *ens* to *esse;* further, he has specified this relationship as the participation of limited existence in unlimited existence itself; finally, this limitation is understood to be a matter of limitless *esse* received by the limiting potency of essence-the key Thomistic move, securing the unity of the concrete object and the universality of *esse* within the limitation of essenceoRahner follows Thomas here precisely: "The concrete essence of something which exists in itself, expressed in the concretizing as such, is thus the expression

Agent Intellect in Rahner and Aquinas," *The Heythrop Journal* 29 (1988): 423-49; John F. X. Knasas, *"Esse* as the Target of Judgment in Rahner and Aquinas," *The Thomist* 51 (1987): 222-45; Michael Tavuzzi, 0.P. "Aquinas on the Preliminary Grasp of Being," *The Thomist* 51 (1987): 555-74. The question of how the agent intellect is interpreted appears to be the key issue in the debate over whether Transcendental Thomism is legitimate Thomism, as in Leo Sweeney, S.J., "Preller and Aquinas," *The Modern Schoolman* 47 (1971): 273.

112 Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 151, 160, 172.

113 Ibid., 170.

114 **Ibid.,** 177.

115 Ibid., 155.

116 Ibid., 177; also ibid., 173, no 27o

of the extent to which, in a definite existent, *esse,* the ground of reality for an existent, can *let* such an existent really exist."[117] For Rahner, therefore, judgment is the grasp of the metaphysical structure of the object: participating existence limited by essence. Rahner makes this clear in a text from *Spirit:*

[T]he judgment which ascribes certain quidditative determinations to something which exists in itself, to the exclusion of other possible determinations, is implicitly and precisely a judgment that *esse does not belong in all its fullness* to this thing which exists in itself. But this also means that the real objects of our judgments are not distinguished perhaps merely by their quidditative determinations, but precisely by their *esse* as the ground of these latter. Thus, every judgment is precisely a critique of the object, an evaluation of *the measure of esse* which belongs to what is judged. In the essential judgment, the thing-which-exists-in-itself which is meant in the subject of the proposition is limited by the quiddity of the predicate which, as form, already expresses limit in itself; it is partially deprived of the *fullness which esse expresses in itself.* Therefore, the objects of possible judgments are distinguished in their *esse* as such: *esse* can be affirmed of them only analogously insofar as the determinations in each of them are related in the same way to the ground of their reality, that is, to the *esse* proper to each, and insofar as the *esse* of each of these objects as *limited by its essence* must be understood as a *partial realization of esse in itself.*[118]

Rahner repeats this understanding of judgment, and specifies the metaphysical participation involved, in two texts from *Hearer of the Word:*

The agent intellect is the "light" that permeates the sense object, i.e., puts it within the domain of being as such, thus revealing how it participates in being as such.[119]

[B]eing is comprehended as the being of a being, whereby we both separate and connect being and a being, and we refer being to a subject distinct from it and whose being it is. This is but another way of saying that through the *Vorgriff* we comprehend being only through the concept of a certain being given through the senses. Being and a being are not the same things, for pure being is the ultimate whither of the spirit in its absolute transcendence. Here it can no longer be analyzed into being and a subject which only shares being. But what being is

[117] Ibid., 174 (emphasis added).

[118] Ibid., 178-79 (emphasis added).

[119] Rabner, *Hearer of the Word,* 53.

becomes clear to our finite receptive knowledge only in the reception of a sense object that is comprehended as a stage of the spirit on its way to being as such. That is why it is comprehended as a participation of being as such, as in possession of being to the extent of its essence.[120]

It is here evident that Rahner's analysis of the nature and conditions of judgment concludes to a metaphysics of participation that is thoroughly Thomistic. In its grasp of the metaphysical structure of *esse-essentia,* judgment is intrinsically a judgment of analogous participation, the intellect's measurement of the essential limitation of existence whereby all created things are joined to one another in the analogy of being. The judgmental reference of a concept to an existent is in its very nature the cognitional re-enactment of the existential synthesis of an *ens*[121] in which its existence participates in-"partially realizes"--esse itself. The concrete existent is limited by its essence, unlike the absolute Being which is, and does not share, existence. Thus, every concrete existent is known as a stage of being, a partial fulfillment of *esse commune* which is the ultimate finality of the human intellect.[122]

Finally, it remains to address the second part of Rahner's argument: judgment as the measurement of existence limited by essence requires as the condition of its possibility an anticipation of Absolute Being; that is, Absolute Being is necessarily affirmed in the knowledge of concrete beings.

Again, *esse* is always known simultaneously with a "conversion to a definite form limiting *esse,*"[123] and so is known as nonabsolute, as both one and many, as demonstrated above.

[120] Ibid., 123-24.

[121] Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on Truth," 17-18.

[122] The metaphysics of finality is crucial to a proper interpretation of Rahner's thinking. The description of pure being as the "ultimate whither" to which human transcendence is dynamically geared is the context within which sense objects are grasped, and are grasped as limited instances of *esse* only in relation to "pure being." This is what Rabner means when he speaks of a "necessary relation of all reality in the world to God in man's transcendence" *(Foundations,* 171), and why he can describe the finite objects of human knowing as "single stages" of the finality of the agent intellect in its movement towards absolute *Esse (Hearer of the Word,* 47).

[123] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 180.

Rahner's central, and controverted, claim is that *Esse Absolutum* is unthematicaHy co-affirmed simultaneously with every thematic affirmation of limited *esse*. *Esse Absolutum* is never grasped objectively in the judgment, but always unthematicaHy, in a co-affirmation which Rahner terms "transcendental experience of the Absolute!' [124] In the anticipation of the *Vorgriff,* there occurs a nonobjective and unthematic consciousness of *Esse lpsum Subsistens.* Rahner offers a highly compressed and rather cryptic argument in support of this contention:

> But in this pre-apprehension as the necessary and always already realized condition of knowledge ... the existence of an Absolute Being is also affirmed simultaneously. For any possible object which can come to exist in the breadth of the pre-apprehension is simultaneously affirmed. An Absolute Being would completely fill up the breadth of this pre-apprehension. Hence it is simultaneously affirmed as real (since it cannot be grasped as merely possible). In this sense, but only in this sense, it can be said: the pre-apprehension attains to God.... because the reality of God as that of absolute *esse* is implicitly affirmed simultaneously by the breadth of the pre-apprehension, by *esse commune.* [125]

What is to be made of Rahn er' s contention that the *Vorgriffauf esse* attains not to *Esse Absolutum* but *esse commune,* yet also "aims at God"? This question is especially pressing because Rahner fails to give a detailed account of *esse commune.* John McDermott suggests that perhaps Heidegger's influence on Rahner accounts for the role given *esse commune;* that Rahner feared that a direct orientation of the agent intellect to *EsseAbsoiutum* would destroy the distinction between the natural and supernatural orders, since only the beatific vision could fulfill such an orientation. [126]

I would like to suggest a third possibHity: Rahner's thinking follows the logic of the metaphysics of participation, Certainly, Rahner never says as much; however, in light of his analysis of judgment, his assertion that the *Vorgriffs* anticipation of *esse*

[124] Ibid., 182.

[125] Ibid., 181; *Hearer of the Word,* 51.

[126] McDermott, "Kad Rahner 011 Two Infinities," 441.

commune also "goes to God" makes perfect sense. McDermott is certainly correct that, for theological reasons, Rahner wishes to avoid the specter of ontologism.[127] However, Rahner also rejects "the possibility of an immediate apprehension of absolute *esse* as an object of the first order"[128] on philosophical grounds: namely, the conversion to the phantasm. Again, the *esse commune* pre-apprehended in the judgment is known "implicitly and simultaneously as able to be limited by quidditative determinations, and as already limited," since the anticipation is always realized in judgement; that is, in "a simultaneous conversion to a definite form limiting *esse* and in the conversion to the phantasm."[129]

Summarily, the scope of the human intellect is, according to Rahner's analysis of judgment, an unrestricted openness to the whole scope of restrictable being--esse *commune*[130]-not unrestricted being *(EsseAbsolutum*), because the human intellect is tied to sensibility. The metaphysics of participation is the Thomistic route to explaining the relationship between unrestricted *Esse* and *esse commune.* Rahner affirms this route as well, concluding that because the dynamism of the human intellect is open to the whole breadth of restrictable *esse,* Absolute Being is necessarily co-affirmed: "the range of the *Vorgriff* extends towards being as such, with no inner limit in itself, and therefore includes also the absolute Being of God."[131] This contention must now be examined.

[127] Rahner, *Foundations,* 64.

[128] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 181.

[129] Ibid., 180-81.

[130] Ibid., 181, 401.

[131] Rahner, *Hearer of the Word,* 49 ("... und so auch das absolute Sein Gottes einschlieGt").The German verb *einschliePen* can be translated as "include," as Donceel does, or as "imply," as Robert Masson does (Robert Masson, *Language, Thinking and God in Karl Rahner's Theology of the Word: A Critical Evaluation ofRahner's Perspective on the Problem of Religious Language* [Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1978] 119). In the light of the metaphysics of participation and Rahner's explicit rejection of the identification of *Esse Absolutum* and *esse commune,* Masson's translation is more accurately nuanced.

IV. PARTICIPATION AS A CLARIFICATION OF RAHNER'S THOUGHT

As seen above, *Spirit in the World* describes the whither of the *Vorgriff* as *esse commune,* [132] and holds that this *excessus* towards !imitable being also "implicitly and simultaneously affirms an absolute *esse.*"[133] *Hearer of the Word,* although it does not use the term "common being," communicates its substance when it teaches that the scope of the *Vorgriff* is "the absolute range of all possible objects" and "the absolute range of all the knowable." [134] It also repeats the argument of *Spirit* that, since an Absolute Being would completely fill the range of the *Vorgriff,* it is co-affirmed as real; and so "the *Vorgriff* aims at God." [135] Yet Rahner never gives an explicit account of the metaphysical relationship between *esse commune* and *Esse Absolutum;* indeed, in his later works, he tends to drop all reference to *esse commune,* speaking instead of the human openness to absolute Mystery *tout court.* [136] Rahner does not specify how *esse* and *Esse* are implicitly and simultaneously connected in a sequence of co-affirmation, why "[t]he *Vorgriff* intends God's absolute being in this sense that the absolute being is always and basically co-affirmed by the basically

[132] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 180.

[133] Ibid., 182.

[134] Rabner, *Hearer of the Word,* 47.

[135] Ibid., 51. In the 1963 revision, supervised by J.B. Metz and approved by Rabner, this phrase is altered so: "der Vorgriff zielt auf-Gott." See Karl Rabner, *Siimtliche Werke,* Bd.4, *Harer des Wortes,* ed. A. Raffelt (Solothurn: Benziger; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1997), 101.

[136] This is especially true of *Foundations.* In many places Rabner calls God "the *tenn* of human transcendence" (e.g., *Foundations,* 454), and writes of "man's basic and original orientation towards absolute mystery" (ibid., 52), without any qualification of these remarks beyond that imposed by the conversion to the phantasm. He writes of the "pre-apprehension of 'being' as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality" (ibid.,33), but then goes on to speak of "absolute Being" *(absolute Sein)* and "being in an absolute sense" *(Seins schlechthin)* and "the ground of being which gives being to man" (ibid., 34). Nowhere in *Foundations* is there any metaphysical precision regardingesse *commune* and *Esse Absolutum,* which is at least on partial display in *Spirit* and *Hearer.* Rather, Rabner simply-and rather weakly-indicates that philosophy should explore how a transcendental relationship to being is related to and different from a transcendental relationship to God (ibid., 60).

unlimited range of the *Vorgriff.*"[137] Nevertheless, in light of the participation metaphysics revealed in the analysis of judgment, this critical connection may be illuminated.

In Thomas's metaphysics, as considered earlier, a causal link is posited between limited existence and absolute existence:[138] limitless *Ipsum Esse* is the source of *esse* restricted by essence, and so the study of *ens commune* can lead to a limited knowledge of God.[139] Rahner endorses this view; but, as we would expect, this causal link is translated from ontic to ontological terms: the affirmation of *Esse Absolutum* is the condition of the possibility of the knowledge of limited being.

> For to know God as the ground of the existent does not mean: to know that God (as already known beforehand) is the ground of the thing, but: to know that the ground, already and always opened simultaneously in knowing the existent as being, is the Absolute Being, that is, God, and thus to know God for the first time .... [T]he fundamental act of metaphysics is not some causal inference from an existent as such to its ground, which also would not have to be more than an existent, but the opening of the knower to being as such as the ground of the existent and its knowledge. But that is given precisely in the *excessus*. ... Since the way of causality already presupposes the knowledge that the *esse* of the existent is "received," which knowledge of limitedness already presupposes a concept of being as such as its condition, it is evident that the *excessus* in the sense which we give it is already a presupposition for the way of causality.[140]

The final link of Rahner's argument is now in place. *Esse Absolutum* is co-affirmed with the anticipation of *esse commune* in terms of their *causal* relationship; and just this causal relationship is evident in the analysis of judgment. First, in judgment a finite being is "profiled" against *esse commune,* "the totality of the possible objects of human knowledge,"[141] and thus is known as an essential limitation of received existence. Second, this recognition itself presupposes that the anticipation of *esse*

[137] Rahner, *Hearer of the Word,* 51.

[138] *STh* I, q. 44, a. 1.

[139] See Wippel, uQuidditative Knowledge of God," 215-241, in *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas; Metaphysical Thought,* 501-75.

[140] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 393-94.

[141] Rahner, *Hearer of the Word,* 48.

commune which makes objective knowledge possible is, in fact, simultaneously the unthematic anticipation of Absolute Being. Finally, since the *Vorgriff* is the power of spirit to transcend the whole scope of *esse commune-to* know, at least in principle, all things-the human intellect is nothing less than the ability to grasp the whole of finite reality in relation to its ground: *Esse Absolutum.* [142] Again, this does not produce objective knowledge of the essence of this ground, since this would involve a further *excessus* beyond Absolute Being. Rather, Absolute Being is "affirmed simultaneously as the condition of the possibility of the objective knowledge of *that* existent which alone is represented to the intuition, mobile being *(ens mobile).*"[143] Just as judgment grasps the green tree as "a participation of being as such, as in possession of being to the extent of its essence,"[144] as an object whose *esse* "as limited by its essence must be understood as a partial realization of *esse* in itself,"[145] so, too, judgment grasps the whole of participating being *(esse commune)* as a partial realization of the fullness of *Esse.*

The proper clarification of Rahner's argument would run so: Unlimitable being is necessarily affirmed in every judgment as the cause of both }imitable being and the knowledge of limitable being. As such, the former certainly would "fill up the breadth" of the anticipation of the latter, whose scope is *esse commune,* but only in the sense of infinitely exceeding it, while standing in a causal relationship of participation to it (just as each finite object is known as a participant in *esse).* The affirmation of the green tree's existence requires as its condition the movement of the intellect towards the scope of all participating existence *(esse commune),* and the condition of the possibility of this movement is the *Vorgriff* towards infinite, subsistent *Esse.* Like every affirmation of *esse,* the affirmation of *esse commune* is the affirmation of something that is causally dependent upon *Esse Absolutum.* In this, Rahner follows Aquinas, who, as Wippel

[142] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 399.

[143] Ibid., 398.

[144] Rabner, *Hearer of the Word,* 123-24.

[145] Rabner, *Spirit in the World,* 178-79.

observes, moves from individual existents participating in *esse commune* "to the caused character of such beings, and then to the existence of their participated source *(esse subsistens).* Once this is established, one can then speak of them as actually participating in *esse subsistens* as well."[146] It is this metaphysical context that makes it possible to understand Rahner's talk of "the pre-apprehension of *esse,* which implicitly and simultaneously affirms an absolute *esse"*[147] in causal-participatory terms. It justifies his contention that the *Vorgriff* "aims at God," in the same way that, from a purely ontic perspective, the metaphysical structure of finite being points to God.

In this understanding, I believe, is the key to interpreting some puzzling remarks in Rahner's work. In his 1974 essay "An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas," Rahner writes that the affirmative synthesis of 'what' and 'something' in human thought also affirms *esse* as the divine reality unknown in the statement, but also making the statement possible. "All human knowing, despite the possible intelligibility of the 'what' which is predicated, is enfolded in an incomprehensibility which forms an image of the divine incomprehensibility."[148] What is this "image of the divine incomprehensibility"? Why not simply say that human knowing is enfolded in the divine incomprehensibility *per se?* We may now say that Rahner's thought here is that the incomprehensibility at work in every statement is the *Vorgriff au(esse commune,* the anticipation of the limitless but limitable, utterly empty horizon of created being as such, which is an "image of the divine incomprehensibility" of intrinsically illimitable *Esse Absolutum,* to which it is causally related in both judgment and existence.

Another text demanding careful reading comes from *Hearer of the Word:* "'being' *[Sein]* in itself and in the most formal sense cannot be intrinsically fixated. Being is an analogous concept and this analogy shows in the purely analogical way in which every single being returns to itself, can be present to itself.... Every

[146] Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought,* 117.

[147] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 181-82.

[148] Rahner, "The Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas," 253.

activity, from the purely material up to the inner life of the triune God, is but a gradation of this one metaphysical theme, of the one meaning of being: self-possession."[149] This text, with its regrettable talk of "one meaning" without careful and explicit qualification, lends itself to an idolatrous reading in which the concept of being as self-presence serves as the abstract, *a priori* concept capable of univocally embracing both *esse commune* and *esse subsistens,* in direct contradiction to the teaching of St. Thomas.

The charge that in transcendental theology God is identified with being in general had already been lodged against Rahner's intellectual mentor, Joseph Marechal;[150] and Rabner, too, is subject to the suspicion that in his metaphysics "*esse* is more fundamental than God."[151] Understandable as these concerns are, I have tried to demonstrate (while not exculpating Rahner's lack of clarity) that they are not ultimately justifiable. Rahner's argument must be seen within the context of the metaphysics of participation he develops in *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word.* He holds that the metaphysical investigation of judgment necessarily posits a causal relationship between *Esse Ipsum*

[149] Rahner, *Hearer of the Word,* 37-38.

[150] St. Thomas was accused of the same; see Cyril Shircel, O.F.M., *The Univocity of the Concept of Being in the Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1942), 26. Contemporary versions of this objection can be found in Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1965), 70; William Alston, "Aquinas on Theological Predication: A Look Backward and a Look Forward," in *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Theological Philosophy in Honor of Norman Kretzmann,* ed. E. Stump (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Kai Nielsen, "Talk of God and the Doctrine of Analogy," *The Thomist* 40 (1976): 232-60; and Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology,* vol. 1, trans. G. H. Kehm (London: SCM Press, 1970), 217-25.

[151] Karen Kilby, *The "Vorgriff auf Esse": A Study in the Relation of Philosophy to Theology in the Thought of Karl Rabner* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1994), 92. Others who have charged Rabner with incorporating *esse subsistens* within *esse commune* include: Anne Carr, *The Theological Method of Karl Rabner* (Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), 76; Jennifer Rike, *Being and Mystery: Analogy and Its Linguistic Implications in the Thought of Karl Rabner* (University of Chicago, 1986), 213, 216, 221; William Hoye, "A Critical Remark on Karl Rahner's *Hearers of the Word," Antonianum* 48 (1973): 508-32. Thomas Sheehan recognizes the distinction between *esse commune* and *esse subsistens* in Rahner's thought (Thomas Sheehan, *Karl Rabner: The Philosophical Foundations* [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987], 219-20, 274-79).

Subsistens and *esse commune;* further, he holds the human intellect to be ordered to the latter. The dynamism of the *Vorgriff* to the whole scope of *esse commune* is not an ontologistic infringement on God because in the metaphysics of participation *esse* is not an abstract concept arrived at prior to the distinction between God and creatures, and then applied equally (= univocally) to both along with suitable logical modifications *(commune, Absolutum*).[152] Rather, like Thomas, Rahner sees that God *is* precisely as that being which is distinguished from beings as their cause.[153] Rudi te Vdde's assessment of Thomas on this critical point applies equally well to Rahner:

> In Aquinas, being does not play the role of a common term which is neutral and prior to the distinction between God and creature. God and creature are not similar in respect of being in spite of their difference. God is said to be, not from a conceptual perspective which is neutral to this distinction between God and creatures, but *as cause* of the being common to all creatures; and as cause God is distinguished from all other beings. So it is precisely *as being* that God is distinguished from other beings. God and creature are distinguished from each other with respect to the same, God has being *per essentiam,* a creature has being *per participationem.* The distinction should not be accounted for by an addition to a common factor, since God is distinguished from all creatures precisely as the common cause of their being.[154]

The distinction between *esse commune* and *Esse Absolutum,* brief as its explication is in Rahner, is still not a distinction between types of being (restricted and unrestricted) that are intrinsically related by a common nature. Rather, the relation, as it must be in a Christian context, is that of cause of existence to existents. In Rahner's appropriation of Thomas, this is taken from the angle of the human intellect's openness to common being and the predication of being of finite realities. This and this alone is the

[152] "Analogy,"in Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Theological Dictionary,* ed. Cornelius Ernst, trans. Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 18.

[153] Rahner, *Foundations,* 62-63.

[154] Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality,* 193. See Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy,* 31; Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics,* 7.

context for predicating *esse* of God; and this predication, for Rahner as for Thomas, is always analogicalo[155]

Vo CONCLUSION

Based an analysis of the uniquely human phenomenon of judgment, Rahner's metaphysics follows Thomas in bringing forth a vision of reality in which being is conceived analogously as caused by *Esse Absolutum* and flowing into a hierarchy of participatory *diversi modi existendi,* [156] This ontological structure is revealed through the dynamism of the intellect towards *esse commune* as enacted in the affirmation of the limited, caused, participating existence of finite objects, Rahner proceeds from Thomas's "metaphysics of light" [157] to the metaphysics of participation, in which God as Absolute Being is *the* light that makes finite, analogical knowledge possible, But this light is not direct: it is mediated, ultimately, through the whole breadth of finite being *(esse commune),* which is the unthematic horizon of all knowledge of finite reality, The analogy of being between finite *esse* and absolute *Esse* is enacted in every intellectual grasp of concrete reality through sensibility and abstraction; and so, we may say, analogy-in-participation is the tme meaning of the "conversion to the phantasm," the permanent structure of the human intellect in its knowing, For Rahner, knowledge works just as St. Thomas taught: univocal predicates are based on one nonunivocal analogical predicate, that of being. "[158] Herein lies the possibility of Christian metaphysics after Kant, a metaphysics of knowledge that necessarily affirms, as the condition of the possibility of human knowing, the ontological relationship of participation between creatures and their Creatoro

[155] Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* 4020

[156] See *De Pot.,* q. 7, ao 70

[157] Rahner, "The Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas," 247-48; *Spirit in the World,* 39L

[158] *STh* I, q. 13, ao 5, ad lo

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REASON AND REVELATION IN THE THOUGHT OF MEISTER ECKHART

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WHAT IS THE RELATION of reason to revelation in the thought of Meister Eckhart? How central is this relation to his thought? This article will argue that this relation constitutes the center of Eckhart's thought and that it is his distinct understanding of the relation of reason to revelation that defines and distinguishes his theologico-philosophical project as a whole.[1]

[1] This article will not address the thorny issue of whether Eckhart's thought can be called a species of "mysticism" or not, since this always involves the still thornier issue of what "mysticism" is in the first place. For the current status of the debate concerning the "mysticism" of Meister Eckhart see Bernard McGinn's *The Mystical Thought of Meister &khart* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 20-34. Here, McGinn gives a good overview of the current scholarship on Eckhart and in what sense we can or cannot term him a "mystic." Heribert Fischer, for example, has argued that Eckhart lacked the "charismatic gifts" of the mystic and has preferred to label him a theologian; for C. F. Kelly, Eckhart's thought represents a "pure metaphysics" that is rooted in the experience of the individual self and therefore we would better call Eckhart a philosopher of the purest type rather than a mystic. Kurt Flasch and Burkhardt Mojsisch have taken up and furthered this position, arguing that Eckhart is a philosopher and not a mystic. (See Heribert Fischer, "Grundgedanken der deutschen Predigten" in *Meister&khart derPrediger:Festschriftzum &khart-Gedenkjahr,* eds. Udo Nix and Rapheal Ochslin [Freiburg: Herder, 1960], 55-59; idem, "Zur Frage nach der Mystik in den Werken Meister Eckharts" in *La mystique rhenane* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963], 109-32; C. F. Kelly, *Meister&khart on Divine Knowledge* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977]; Kurt Flasch, "Die Intention Meister Eckharts" in *Sprache und Begriff: Festschrift{Ur Bruno Lierbrucks,* ed. Heinz Rottges [Meisenheim am Gian: Hain, 1974], 292-318; idem, "Meister Eckhart: Versuch, ihn aus dem mystischen Strom zu retten" in *Gnosis und Mystik in der Geschichte der Philosophie,* ed. Peter Koslowski [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988], 94-110; Burkhardt Mojsisch, *Meister &khart:*

Eckhart's project is thoroughly theological insofar as his thought is almost entirely taken up in the exegesis of sacred Scripture. AH of his work, including his famous vernacular sermons, is a commentary of some type or other on the text of Scripture. For Eckhart, genuine thought cannot be otherwise, seeing that all real human thought is nothing but a response to the primal Word or Logos that speaks to us (in all creation, to be sure, but) most directly in the revealed text of Scripture. According to Eckhart, therefore, in Scripture we find the ultimate truths not of God but of *all* the sciences. It follows that, for Eckhart, all sciences are dearly subordinate to theology and their ultimate truth comes to light only in the interpretation of Scripture.

Nevertheless, Eckhart's project is also genuinely philosophical. This is not only because he argues, as we shall see below, that it is necessary to apply philosophical categories to the "images and parables" of Scripture in order to uncover their inner, and hence universal, sense. Eckhart also wants to show how, in being applied to Scripture, the lived inner sense or truth of these otherwise static, objective categories of philosophical thought is revealed. In other words, Eckhart attempts to show that philosophical categories of thought as found in the writings of, say, Aristotle attain the fullness of their truth-content only when understood in relation to the soul's ascent to and union with God, because it is only in this ascent and union that the soul is able to come to know these categories in their ideal origin (who is, of course, Eckhart's thought, therefore, presents us with a sophisticated critique of philosophic reason in an attempt to show that the

Analogie, Univozitiit und Einheit [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983], 11-12, 111, and 146.) On the other hand, Kurt Ruh and Alois Haas, along with McGinn, argue that, if we are guided by apmper understanding of the term "mystical," we can with full justification label Eckhart's thought "mystical." (See Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendliindische Mystik,* vol. 2, *Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik der Fmhzeit* [Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993]; andAlois Haas, "Akmalit:iitund Normativirat Meister Eckharts," in *Eckardus Teutonicus, Homo doctus et sanct//'.s:Nachweise undBerichte zum Proze/5gegenMeister &khart,* ed. Heinrich Srimimann and Riidi Imbach [Freiburg, Switzerland: Univernitatsverlag, 1992]). McGinn, for example, argues that a mystic is not so much someone who has transitory "experiences" of God or the Absolute as someone who lives in awareness of the presence of God.

categories of philosophic reason are as much in need of interpretation as the text of Scripture. But it is the Word of God as revealed in Scripture and not any human ratiocination, even that of the great Aristotle, that provides the interpretive key necessary for understanding the inner truth of philosophical categories, for Scripture, under the cover of its images and parables, presents to us in the fullest way possible the story of the soul's ascent to and union with God.

Central to Eckhart's interpretation of Scripture is the birth of the Son in the soul. For Eckhart, all interpretive activity aims at this inner birth of the divine Word in the soul; it aims at cracking the "outer shell" of the text to reveal its "hidden marrow" which is precisely the process of this inner birth. Eckhart thus argues that the Christian life is not one of mere rational assent to the divine Word of Scripture but an actual giving birth to this Word in the innermost ground of the soul, which then bears fruit in a life of detached freedom and love. The Christian life is a life of *living the Word,* of proclaiming and manifesting the Word in all of one's actions. Without this existential transformation, the Word of God becomes a mere objective category of rational thought like any other category found in Aristotle. Thus, for Eckhart, the primal truth in which all other truths can be known is known only in this birth in which the soul does not merely have the divine Word or Truth as an object but in which its very mode of existing and knowing is transformed by this Word. This birth, then, is not a mere experience among other experiences [2] but is something much more fundamental-a new way of *structuring experience,* one in

[2] This is, in effect, the argument of Denys Turner in his book, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Turner argues that the habit in the current literature on mysticism has been to project back anachronistically on the medieval mystics the primacy in the modern mind of "experience" and to see all of mysticism as about special "experiences." Rather, he says, we must see the best medieval mystics, like Eckhart, providing a *critique* of such "experiences" and arguing that the properly Christian life is one that is grounded in what is beyond specific experiences. Louis Dupre (*"Unio Mystica:* The State and the Experience," in *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue* [New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1989], 3-23) makes a similar argument: "It seems that consciousness in the unitative state remains on a different level that transforms *all* experience" (ibid., 10).

which the soul lets God be in itself and in all things and thus comes to exist in absolute freedom. this way, Eckhart carries forward the Augustinian tradition of illumination: the birth of the Son in the soul describes a process of illumination which is revealed the inner truth not only of Scripture but of all the sciences.

I. REASON AND REVELATION IN ECKHART

Meister Eckhart interprets Scripture using as his basic premise that truth is one: God is the truth and, since God is one, the ultimate truth of things is one. AH particular truths derive whatever truth they have from God, who is the *prima verito.s* or "first truth," and in whose light they are known. [3] Eckhart, of course, like his fellow Dominican Thomas Aquinas, takes this basic premise from the Neoplatonic tradition. According to this tradition, all particular perfections in things (e.g., truth) must derive from a level of reality in which they are perfectly united, for multiplicity foHows upon change and decay and no general perfections can change or decay. They must, then, be united in what the Neoplatonists call the "One," which Eckhart identifies with God. Thus Eckhart say in his general prologue to the *Opus tripartitum* as a basic axiom of his thought: "What is divided the inferior is always one and undivided in the superior. It dearly follows that the superior is in no way divided in the inferior; but, whHe remaining undivided, it gathers together

[3] *See* B. Welte, *Meister &khan: Gedanken zu seinen Gedanken* (Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 19-20, *where* he remarks: "We have before us yet again the classic 'fidens quarens intellecrum' expressed in a peculiar way. It *must* be thought through, whenever the Word of God is supposed to be clarified" ("Wir haben also noch einrnal das klassische 'Fidens quaerens intellecturn' in eigentilmlicher Ausforrnung vor nns. Es *mu£gedacht* werden, wenn das Wort Gottes klarwerden soil"); and Wouter Goris, "Ontologie oder Henologie? Zur Einheitsmetaphysik Meister Eckhans" in *Was ist Philosophie in Mittelalter?* Miscellanea Mediaevalia 26, ed. Jan Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 1998), 695: "The fundamental schema of Eckhartian thought is the unity of nature and revelation, of faith and knowledge" ("Das Grundschema des Eckhartischen Denkens ist die Einheit von Narur 1.md Offenbarung, von Glauben und Wissen").

and unites what is divided in the inferior."[4] That is, to the degree that anything is perfect and a principle of the less perfect, to that degree it is one. This holds in particular for the perfection of truth: the cause of intelligibility in all created things, and thus the cause of many truths that can arise from the created intellect's adequation with them, cannot itself be multiple, but must be one. Eckhart can therefore also say that "Moses, Christ, and the philosopher teach the same thing."[5] He is quick to add that the truth of all three is not of the same value, since what the philosopher teaches is only probable, while what Moses teaches is worthy of belief and what Christ teaches is truth in all its certainty.[6] Nevertheless, all truth, be it found in revelation or in creation as understood through philosophy, has the same source, God who is truth itself.

But, as Eckhart implies, while truth is one, we human beings apprehend in different ways, some more adequate than others. All

[4] *Prol. op. trip.,* n. 10 (LW I:155/Maurer, 84). All translations from Eckhart's works are taken from the following editions: *Master &khart: Parisian Questions and Prologues,* trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1974), hereafter "Maurer"; *Meister &khart: The &sential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense,* trans. and intro. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist, 1981), *EE* (for "Essential Eckhart"); and *Meister &khart: Teacher and Preacher,* ed. and trans. Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist, 1986), hereafter *TP.* If no reference to the above translations is given, then the translation is mine. All citations from the original Latin and Middle High German are from the standard critical editions of Eckhart's works: *Meister &khart: Die lateinischen Werke* (LW), ed. Josef Koch (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936-) and *Meister &khart: Die deutschen Werke* (DW), ed. Josef Quint (Kohlhammer, 1936-).

[5] *In Ioh.,* n. 185 (LW 1Il:155): "Idem ergo est quod docet Moyses, Christus et philosophus." Also, ibid. (LW 1Il:154): "Sacred Scripture is thus very fittingly expounded in such a way that what the philosophers have written on the nature of things and their properties is in agreement with it, especially since all that is true, be it in being or in knowing, in Scripture or in nature, proceeds from one source and one root of truth" ("Convenienter valde scriptura sacra sic exponitur, ut in ipsa sint consona, quae philosophi de rerum naturis et ipsarum proprietatibus scripserunt, praesertim cum ex uno fonte et una radice procedat veritatis omne quod verum est, sive essendo sive cognoscendo, in scriptura et in natura"). Eckhart goes on to add that the Old Testament contains truths concerning what is movable and corruptible while the New Testament treats of what is eternal and incorruptible (ibid. [LW IIl:155-56]).

[6] Ibid. (LW IIl:155). See also E. Winkler, "Wort Gottes und Hermeneutik bei Meister Eckhart," in *Freiheit und Gelassenheit: Meister &khart Heute,* ed. Udo Kem (Griinwald: Kaiser, 1980), 176.

human modes of knowing, even that mode of knowing that takes revelation as its primary source, are imperfect and inadequate when it comes to knowing God. God is one; but the human intellect knows the truth, as Thomas Aquinas showed, only by forming judgments through composition and division.[7] This means that the human intellect, by virtue of the very mode of its operation, cannot of itself know truth in its utter simplicity. It can know it only in a round-about fashion by forming judgments based on the separation and union of subjects and predicates. In other words, the human intellect, in trying to grasp God by means of the finite categories of its thought, breaks up the divine unity into a multiplicity of attributes that, in itself, already falsifies what it is trying to know.

Eckhart addresses this problem in his *Commentary on Exodus,* where the influence of Maimonides is particularly strong. The Jewish philosopher took as one of his central problems the relation of the multiple divine attributes to the divine unity and how it is possible for us humans to predicate accurately and adequately these attributes of God. In discussing a passage from Philippians 2, in which the Apostle says, "I have given him a name which is above every name," Eckhart notes:

> From this the true answer of that knotty and famous question whether there is a distinction of attributes in God or only in our intellect's way of grasping is dear and evident. It is certain that the distinction of divine attributes, for example, power, wisdom, goodness, and the like, is totally on the side of the intellect that receives and draws knowledge of such things from and through creatures. Creatures, by the fact that they are from the One but below the One, necessarily fall into number, plurality, distinction, guilt, and fault, a condition by which they are numbered among all the things that are. That which commits an offense in the One and against the One incurs the guilt of distinction and happens to all things. This is one explanation of what is said in James 2: "He who offends in one point has been made guilty in all" (Jm. 2: 10). The distinction which the term "all" implies is indeed, guilt, fault, and defect in existence and unity. Everything that exists is either above all and above number, or is numbered among all things. But above all and outside number there is only the

[7] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 16, a. 2; and I, q. 85, a. 5.

One. No difference at all is or can be in the One, but "AH difference is below the One," as it says in the *Fountain of Life,* Book 5.[8]

When it comes to the problem of how we are to predicate any attributes of God, Eckhart dearly sides with Maimonides against Aquinas. Whereas Aquinas argued that some knowledge of God is open to us through the analogical predication of perfections from creatures to God, Eckhart argues that to conceive of any multiplicity even of perfections in God is already to misconceive God.[9] As Maimonides argued, any predication that we make from creatures to God will already be equivocal by the mere fact that what exists in a multiple fashion in creatures can only exist in perfect unity in God. But unity is such an integral aspect of divine perfection that any perfection in God will be totally unlike what that perfection is in the created thing. In God it will exist in unity with all other perfections, while in creatures it will not.

The upshot of this for Eckhart is that human reason is helpless to know God apart from revelation. This does not mean that Eckhartian thought is a species of irrational enthusiasm: quite to the contrary, Eckhart leaves human reason an essential role in coming to any knowledge of God. However, for Eckhart reason can operate effectively and according to its inner nature only under the tutelage of Scripture. The goal of any talk about God is

[8] *In Exod.,* n. 58 (LW II:63-64): uEx his patet evidenter veritas nodosae quaestionis illius et famosae, utmm distinctio attributorum sit in deo vel in sola apprehensione intellectus nostri. Constat enim quod distinctio attributorum divinorum, potentiae scilicet, sapientiae, bonitatis et huiusmodi, totaliter est ex parte intellectus accipientis et colligentis cognitionem talium ex creaturis et per creaturas, ubi necessario hoc ipso quod ab uno quidem, sed sub uno sunt, incidunt in numerum, multitudinem et distinctionem et reatum seu rnaculam, quo inter omnia numerantur. Quod enim in uno et unum offendit cadens ab uno, incidit reatum distinctionis et cadit inter omnia. Et haec est una expositio eius quod dicitur lac. 2 quod 'in uno offendens factus est omnium reus'. Distinctio enim, quam importat Ii 'omnia', reatus est utique, macula et defectus esse et unitatis. Omne enim, quod est, aut super omnia est et super numerum, aut inter omnia numeratur. Super omnia vero et extra numerum nihil est praeter unum. In uno autem nulla prorsus cadit nee cadere potest differentia, sed omnia »differentia sub uno« est, ut dicitur De fonte vitae 1. V."

[9] Konrad WeiB notes the great influence that the works of Maimonides exercised over Meister Eckhart in his interpretation of Scripture. See Konrad WeiB, "Meister Eckharts biblische Hermeneutik," in *La mystique rhenane* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de France, 1963), 103.

not to describe God or to give us speculative knowledge about God, for such talk is ultimately futile. It is rather to lead the believer to a *new mode of existing in* God, one that is, paradoxically, possible only when the human intellect has been stripped of any and aH preconceptions about the nature of God, so that there is a new basis for knowing God not as this or that object of reason but as the very basis of *all* of its knowledge (Le., of God and creatures). [10]

From this we can understand why, in the prologue to his *Book of the Parables of Genesis,*[11] Eckhart states that the diversity of sciences was created together with the human soul and has no correlate in God, appealing, interestingly enough, to Plato for support: "'This is the reason why the philosophers of the Academy used to hold that the intellectual sciences, the theological and the natural, and even the virtues in rdation to the ethical sciences, were created together with the souL" [12] The plurality of sciences, then, is something of a "falling away" from the divine unity and belongs to the multiplicity of the external and objective created

[10] Indeed, recent scholarship on Maimonides and his relation to negative theology sees in his philosophical-theological project something strongly akin to what I describe here as Eckhart's mystical project. See Kenneth Seeskin, "Sanctity and Silence: The Religious Significance of Maimonides' Negative Theology," *American Catholic Philosophical Qv.arterly* 79 (2002): 7-24; Diana Lobel "'Silence is Praise to You': Maimonides on Negative Theology, Looseness of Expression, and Religious Experience," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79 (1002): 25-49.

[11] Perhaps the most systematic account that Eckhart gives us of the undersranding of his own "mystical" project *is* in the prologue to his *Book of the Parables of Genesis.* Heribert Fischer remarks of this work that it is not a mere rehashing of the *Commentary on Genesis* but is rather a conscious methodological reflection on that first work: "The *Expositio libri Genesis* is the work placed first in the first volume of the Latin works; ithere then follows a second work on the same topic: *Liber parabolarum Genesis,* and the suspicion already arises that here one can expect not a mere repetition but a genuinely and methodically new treatment" ("Die *Expositio libri Genesis* ist das erste Werk, das sich im ersten Band der lateinischen Werke findet; ihm folgt ein zweites iiber das gleiche Thema: *Liber parabolarum Genesis,* 1.md man kann bereits vennuten, daB hier nicht eine Wiederholung, sondem eine echte methodische Neubearbeinmg zu erwarten ist"). See Heribert Fischer, "Die theologische Arbeitswiese Meister Eckharts in den lateinischen Werke" in *Methoden der Wissenschaft und Kunst Mittelalters,* ed. Albert Zimmermann (Berlin: de Gmyter, 1970), 52.

[12] *In Gen, II,* n. 2 (LW I:450-51/EE, 93): "Propter quod etiam acadernici ponebant omnes scientias intellectivas, put:! divinas et naturales, et itemrn vinutes, quantum ad scientias morales, esse animae concreatae.

world. The "objects" or "proper subject matter" of all the human sciences are therefore, in a sense, a creation of human reason because they multiply the oneness of God, the ultimate reality, into many different attributes or objects (a problem with which Maimonides and many Islamic thinkers concerned themselves) or, in an analogous way, they posit a plurality of sources of creation when there is really only one. Human reason is structurally unable to grasp God's oneness or the oneness of creation's source. Indeed, reason does not produce unity but division and diversity: it divides reality into "regions" of being and, even more fundamentally, it makes what is known into an object, separate and alien from the knower when ultimately knower and known are one in the divine unity.

The only way to overcome this alienating effect of reason is to present its truths under the cover of parables or myths, so that it will stimulate the hearer to the activity of interpretation and thus to an inward penetration and experience of the divine mystery" Thus, according to Eckhart even a philosopher and metaphysician like Plato spoke about divine, natural, and ethical problems in the form of myths or parables because he recognized the inadequacy of the static and objective categories of metaphysics for capturing the reality of God's dynamic unity.[13] For Eckhart, the ultimate goal of interpreting Scripture is to find Christ, both within the text and within the soul, for ultimately, Christ is born in the soul when that soul encounters Christ in the deepest meaning of Scripture.

From the oneness of God and the oneness of divine truth, Eckhart draws the following conclusions: as pure unity or oneness, God is both the objective or transcendent being or existence on whom our existence absolutely depends, and the inner or immanent principle of our existence.[14] God as the transcendent cause of creation also corresponds to the immanent ground of the souL As Eckhart argues in his *Commentary on*

[13] Ibid. (LW 1:451/EE, 94): "Plato ipse et omnes antiqui communiter sive theologizantes sive poematizantes docebant in parabolis divina, naturalia, et moralia."

[14] B. McGinn, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought,* ed. D. O'Meara (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1982), 137.

Wisdom, God's transcendence is defined by his very immanence in things, most of all the souL[15] It is the soul that God comes to understanding and hence is received in his essential nature, which is transcendent to aH created being. Or, as Eckhart puts it in a sermon that we shaH analyze more fully later: "God is in all things. The more he is in things, the more he is outside things; the more within, the more outside; the more outside, the more within. "[16] In other words, God is the inner principle of our existence precisely because he is the absolute existence on which our own existence and knowledge of him depend. The more we tum our attention inward the more we come to know God in both his immanence and his transcendence. This again means that we cannot know God except by revelation, precisely because our existence depends absolutely on God and we therefore know not as an object but as the ground of our existence. But at the same time, God is the inner principle of this knowledge and we can only know this knowledge as an inner principle through subjecting revelation in its outward form (i.e., as "sacred text") to a rigorous rational analysis that unlocks the inner, universal sense that is active and salvific in its effects.[17]

[15] *In Sap.,* nn. 144-57 (LW H:481-94).

[16] *Predigt,* 30 (DW II:94/TP, 292): "Got ist in alien dingen. k me er ist in den dingen, ie me er ist Uz den dingen: ie me inne, ie me fize, und ie me fize, ie me inne."

[17] Thus WeiB notes that Eckhart rarely refers to the *allegorical* sense of Scripture but almost always to its *parabolic* sense. Eckhart uses the term *allegorice* only when referring to the exegeses of others. The difference between the two lies in their function: an allegory consists in a mere one-to-one correspondence between symbol and reality while a parable is a story that is designed to lead the reader or hearer into an inner experience of that reality. In other words, the allegory remains on the plain of objective knowledge, while the parable leads to an "inner" knowledge and represents such a knowledge. WeiB also notes that Eckhart makes very little use of the traditional "four senses" of Scripture, more or less limiting himself to the literal and "parabolic" senses. See WeiB, "Meister Eckharts biblische Hermeneutik," 95ff; also Fischer, "Die theologische Arbeitswiese Meister Eckharts in den lateinischen Werke," 64-65: "Christ himself teaches in parables for those who have ears to hear and in them teaches deep, inscrutable, hidden truths. Everything in Scripture can be interpreted 'mystically'. Everywhere in Scripture Christ is hidden, and Eckhart's theology is a christological salvation-theology. In the parables is hidden what is essential to God, the ground and first principle" ("Christus selbst lehrt in Parabeln fiir die, wekhe Ohren zu horen haben, und er lehrt darin tiefe, abgriindige, verborgene Wahrheiten. Alles in der Schrift liiBt sich 'mystice' auslegen. Uberall in der Schrift ist Chrisms verborgen, nnd Eckharts Theologie ist christologische, Heilstheologie. In den Parabeln ist verborgen, was Gott, dem ersten Prinzip,

This dialectic of immanence and transcendence is reflected in the sacred texts: the outer or literal sense of the text corresponds to an inner or parabolic meaning. "In his exegesis, as everywhere in his thought, Eckhart is concerned with the basic opposition between inner and outer" [18]-and, one could also add, their essential harmony. At the beginning of his *Commentary on John,* Eckhart asserts that he will explain, "as in all his works," the meaning of Holy Scripture "through the help of the natural arguments of the philosophers. "[19] But at the same time, he notes, this use of the "natural arguments" *(rationes naturales)* of the philosophers will also yield the truth of philosophy because the *inner sense* of these categories is intimated in a parabolic fashion in Scripture: "The truths of natural principles, conclusions and properties are well intimated for him 'who has ears to hear' (Matt 13:43) in the very words of sacred scripture, which are interpreted through the natural truths. "[20] It follows for Eckhart that the task of the metaphysician is no different from that of the theologian: to make the divine *ratio* in and through which all beings are created transparent to reason.[21] Both, therefore, must turn to Scripture for a proper investigation of the truth because it is in Scripture that the metaphysician finds most clearly and

dem Grund eigen ist").

[18] McGinn, *The Mystical Thought ofMeister &khart,* 27.

[19] *In lob.,* n. 2 (LW Ill:4): "intentio auctoris, sicut et in omnibus suis editionibus, ea quae sacra asserit fides christiana et utriusque testamenti scriptura, exponere per rationes naturales philosophorum."

[20] *In lob.,* n. 3 (LW III:4/EE, 123): "Rursus intentio operis est ostendere, quomodo veritates principiorum etconclusionum et proprietatum naturalium innuuntur luculenter-'qui habet aures audiendi!'-in ipsis verbis sacrae scripturae, quae per ilia naturalia exponuntur."

[21] Henri de Lubac places Eckhart in the "rationalist school" ("l'ecole rationaliste") insofar as he has little or no concern for the historical sense of Scripture but, instead, sees it as a mine for "hidden" or "mystical" truths which are trans-temporal. Eckhart's method, according to de Lubac, is nothing less than a "demythologization" of Scripture so as to make religious truth transparent to reason. This view of Eckhart is, of course, very reminiscent of Hans Jonas's definition of the mystical project ("Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought," *The Journal of Religion* 49 [1969]: 315-29), although it is one, as this article seeks to demonstrate, that is incomplete. See Henri de Lubac, *Exegese medievale: Les quatre sens de l'ecriture* (Lyon: Auber, 1959), 4:164-65. For a more recent discussion of Eckhart's "rationalism" see Jan Aertsen, "Is There a Medieval Philosophy?," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 39 (1999): 403-5.

directly expressed the primal idea or *ratio* by which all things were created, for "God is the author of Sacred Scripture" *(deus autem auctor sacrae scripturae)* and "every truth comes from the Truth itself; it is contained in it, derived from it, and is intended by it."[22] It is in Holy Scripture that all mysteries of the various human sciences, both speculative and practical, are hidden: "Sacred Scripture frequently tells a story in such a way that it also contains and suggests mysteries, teaches about the natures of things, and directs and orders moral actions."[23]

In his first *Commentary on Genesis,* Eckhart says that what the metaphysician investigates is not the efficient or final causes of things-these causes belong to things insofar as they are distinct and particular and thus belong to the science of physics-but their ideal or exemplary causes:

> ... the reason of things is a principle in such a way that it does not have or look to an exterior cause, but looks within to the essence alone. Therefore, the metaphysician who considers the entity of things proves nothing through exterior causes, that is, efficient and final causes. This is the principle, namely, the ideal reason, in which God created all things without looking to anything outside himself.[24]

[22] *In Gen. II,* n. 2 (LW 1:449/EE, 93): "omne verum ab ipsa veritate est, in ipsa includitur, ab ipsa derivatur et intenditur."

[23] *In Exod.,* n. 211 (LW II:178/TI', 110): "Scriptura sacra plerumque sic narrat historiam, quod etiam tenet et innuit mysteria, docet etiam rerum naturas, mores instruit et componit." Eckhart's conception of the scientific nature of scripture, derived at least in part from Moses Maimonides, as well as other matters related to his biblical hermeneutics is discussed in WeiB, "Meister Eckharts biblische Hermeneutik," 104-5.

[24] *In Gen. I,* n. 4 (LW 1:187-88/EE, 83-84): "Adhuc autem ipsa rerum ratio sic est principium, ut causam extra non habeat nee respiciat, sed solum rerum essentiam intra respicit. Propter quod metaphysicus rerum entitatem considerans nihil demonstrat per causas extra, puta efficientem et finalem. Hoc ergo principium, ratio scilicet idealis, in quod deus cuncta creavit, nihil extra respiciens." This passage, of course, presumes a certain conception of metaphysics that was by no means shared by all or even most theologians during the Middle Ages. See A. Zimmerman, *Ontologie oderMetaphysik? Die Diskusion uberden Gegenstand der Metaphysik im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Leiden-Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1965); and L. Honnenfelder, "Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansiitze und Folgen der Wiederbegriindung der Metaphysik im *13J14.* Jahrhundert," in *Philosophie im Mittelalter: Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 165-86, for a detailed discussion of the debates concerning the proper subject matter of metaphysics in the Middle Ages. To summarize these discussions briefly: for someone like Aquinas, following in the footsteps of Avicenna, the proper subject matter of metaphysics is not God but being *qua*

Eckhart repeats this conception of metaphysics again in the opening pages of his *Commentary on John:* metaphysics consists of an investigation of the *rationes* prior to all things, their causes, and that which the intellect accepts when it knows the thing in its intrinsic principles *(in ipsis principiis intrinsecis).*[25] In this passage, Eckhart is operating with a classic scholastic distinction between concepts or *rationes* abstracted by the human intellect from sensible particulars and the transcendent "ideas" or *rationes divinae* in and through which God creates and that are identical with the divine substance. The concept or *ratio* abstracted from sensible particulars approximates the primal idea of the thing from which it has been abstracted, but it can never be identical with it because the created copy of the idea falls infinitely short of its ideal exemplar. Thus Aquinas argues that we cannot, in this life or *in via,* know created things directly in the divine ideas but only indirectly, abstracting the form from the sensible particular, which is in turn created in accordance with a divine idea.[26] Eckhart, on the other hand, argues that Scripture, insofar as it reveals the primal *ratio* or idea in which all things have been created, contains within itself the key to knowing created beings in their divine idea.[27] Thus, insofar as we apply the categories of reason to the interpretation of the parables of Scripture, what in effect happens is that the human intellect is raised, by grace, to an

being. God is considered by the metaphysician only insofar as God is the cause of being in general. But Eckhart, following the Averroist tradition, argues, in his prologues to the *Opus tripartitum,* that the proper subject matter of metaphysics is God, because being in general is none other than God. Thus Eckhart posits as his chief thesis in his general prologue to the *Opus tripartitum,* "Esse est Deus."

[25] *In Ioh.,* n. 29 (LW III:22-23): "... ratio dupliciter accipitur: est enim ratio a rebus accepta sive abstracta per intellectum, et haec est rebus posterior a quibus abstrahitur; est et ratio rebus prior, causa rerum et ratio, quam diffinitio indicat et intellectus accipit in ipsis principiis intrinsecis. Et haec est ratio, de qua nunc est sermo. Propter quod dicitur quod logos, ratio scilicet, est in principio: *in principio,* inquit, *erat verbum."*

[26] Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 84, a. 5.

[27] See also Eckhart's sermon for the feast day of Saint Augustine, given in Latin at the University of Paris (LW V:90ff.). He argues that the theologian properly speaking treats of things in a deeper fashion than the philosopher, mathematician, or physicist since he treats of the ideas of things before they were instantiated in bodily or sensible substances whereas the philosopher, mathematician, and physicist only treat of things insofar as they subsist in bodily substance.

intdlection of things divine ideas and the limits human discursive reasoning become palpable"

The truths of metaphysics and even physics, therefore, lie hidden under the "husk" of the images and parables of Scripture" The interpreter who wishes to know the true sense of all human concepts and aH categories of human reason must use them to penetrate into the hidden depths of Scripture, where all concepts and categories of reason are illuminated by the divine *ratio,* who is Christ himself:

> No one can be thought to understand the scriptures who does not know how to find its hidden marrow-Christ, the Truth. Hidden under the parables we are speaking of are very many of the properties that belong to God alone, the First Principle, and that point to his nature" Enclosed there are to be found the virtues and the principles of the sciences, the keys to metaphysics, physics and ethics, as weH as universal rules. Also there we find the most sacred emanation of the divine Persons with their properties ...[28]

Scripture reveals the "properties that belong to God alone," which are, as the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum* teH us, "existence, unity, truth, and goodness" or the *transcendentalia.* These are the first or most basic concepts of the inteHect corresponding to the most basic properties of things" Nevertheless, these properties, by their very infinitude and perfection, Eckhart argues, belong properly to God alone. They cannot be derived from creatures, since creatures are always limited to a genus and species while the *transcendentalia* "cut across" aH categories; they can therefore only come from God and be revealed by God.[29] Revelation, then,

[28] *In Gen. II,* n.3 (LW I:453/EE, 94): enim aliquis scripturas intelligere putandus est, qui medullam, Christum, veritatem, latitantem in ipsis nesciet invenire. Latent etiam sub parabolis ... proprietates quam plurimae ipsius dei, primi principii, quae ipsi soli conveniunt et eius naturam indicant. Iterum etiam ibidem dausae invenientur virtutes et principia scientiamm, metaphysicae, nalm"alis et moralis claves et regulae generales, adhuc autem et ipsa divinarum personarum sacrntissima emanatio cum ipsarum proprietate ...".

[29] *Prol. Op. Trip.,* n. 4(LW1:132), and n. 8(LW1:152-53). Eckhart planned this work to be divided, as its name suggests, in three parts: a *Book of Propositions,* in which he would lay out in axiomatic fashion the metaphysieal principles by which he would interpret revelation; a *Book of Questions,* in which he would deal, like Thomas in the *Summa Theologiae,* with specific theological questions; and a *Book of Expositions,* in which he would apply the metaphysical principles of the first part to the interpretation of Scripture. As Eckhart himself

can be the only source of a proper knowledge of these most basic properties and, by extension, of the first principles of all the sciences. That is why Eckhart asserts in his *Commentary on John* that "knowledge of God and cognition of divine things is not received from things outside of us but in accordance with revelation."[30] For Eckhart, this revelation finds its fulfillment in Christ, who is the embodiment of the divine *ratio* or rational principle of all things and in whom the *transcendentalia* and the first principles of all the sciences find their concrete expression. It is significant that Eckhart includes the Trinity in his discussion of the transcendentals and other first principles. The doctrine of the Trinity describes for him the formal emanation of the divine *ratio* within the Godhead and, as such, the process by which the soul also comes to understand the first principles of all things by giving birth to the Son in its innermost ground.

Eckhart thus sees the opening verse of John, "In the beginning was the Word," as the metaphysical fulfillment of the "physics" of the Old Testament. According to Eckhart, "the gospel contemplates being qua being,"[31] or God as the formal cause of all

says, the second and third parts would be of "little use" without the first part (n. 11 [LW 1:156]). That is, we cannot understand revelation without also understanding the ultimate structure of reality. But the *transcendentalia* themselves and all first principles refer directly to God, since they do not belong to creatures as such. It follows that they cannot be fully understood except when applied to the interpretation of revelation where they find their full embodiment in Christ (see *In Ioh.*, n. 97 [LW III:83]). For an in-depth discussion of the importance of the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum* and the doctrine of the transcendentals for Eckhart's mystical project see Robert J. Dobie, "Meister Eckhart's 'Ontological Philosophy of Religion,'" *Journal of Religion* 82 (2002): 563-85.

[30] *In Ioh.*, n. 347 (LW III:295): "scientia dei et divinorum cognitio non est ab extra a rebus accepta, sed secundum revelationem."

[31] *In Ioh.*, n. 444 (LW III:380): "evangelium contemplatur ens in quantum ens." In this passage of his commentary on John, Eckhart transfers Averroes' distinction between the proper subject matters of physics and metaphysics to that of the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament, like metaphysics, treats of God, or being as such, whereas the Old Testament, like physics, demonstrates the existence of the subject matter of metaphysics and, as such, is a necessary propaedeutic to the study of the New Testament or metaphysics: "This is because metaphysics, whose subject-matter is being qua being, considers merely the two intrinsic causes; physics, however, whose subject matter is movable being insofar as it is movable, observes not merely intrinsic causes, but also extrinsic causes. The witnesses of each and every thing are the causes proper to it. From these premises it is clear that the Gospel and the old law are related to one another as that which gives a demonstration and the topic [of

things, while the Old Testament only gives us a knowledge of God as creator, that is, God as the efficient and final cause of all things. When we know God as the efficient and final cause of creation, we know him as somehow divided off from creation and, therefore, we do not know him as he is in himself (i.e., in his absolute unity, which embraces all that exists).[32] Only when we strip God of such causality do we know him as the simultaneously transcendent and immanent *ratio* or formal cause of creation. Thus the gospels give us a properly metaphysical or philosophical knowledge of God in his pure formal *ratio* because Christ is the formal *logos* or *ratio* of creation. Scripture, then, gives us direct access to the proper subject matter of metaphysics, under the veil *(velamen)* of parables. But this "veil" is essential because it draws the soul into the inner sense of divine truths and thereby draws the soul into itself, where it can encounter and live these truths unhindered by the limitations put on the soul's life by the forms of finite rational thought.

Eckhart's thought is therefore a thoroughly hermeneutical endeavor: it is almost wholly concerned with the interpretation of the sacred text and the reactivation in the soul of the believer of its inner unity with God at the core of that text's meaning. "Eckhart believed that mystical consciousness was fundamentally

the demonstration], or as metaphysics and physics: the Gospel contemplates being qua being. By being, however, we mean that which in its own nature is incorporeal, is of an immutable substance and has its force in reason, as Boethius says in the first book of his *Arithmetica* and the second book of his *Musica."* ("Hine est quod metaphysica, cuius subiectum est ens in quantum ens, duas tantum causas intrinsecas considerat; physica autem, cuius subiectum est ens mobile in quantum mobile, non tantum intrinsecas, sed etiam extrinsecas causas speculatur. Testes autem uniuscuiusque rei propriae sunt causae ipsius. De praemissis patet quod evangelium et lex vetus se habent ad invicem sicut demonstrator et topicus, sicut metaphysicus et physicus: evangelium contemplatur ens in quantum ens. Esse autem dicirnus ilia quae ipsa quidem natura incorporea sunt et immutabilis substantiae ratione vigentia ut ait Boethius I Arithmeticae et II Musicae.") Here, as noted above, Eckhart presupposes Averroes' conception of the proper subject matter of metaphysics.

[32] Thus, the first proposition of the *Book of Propositions* will be "Esse est Deus" or "Existence is God." Eckhart argues that God cannot be anything other than existence itself, since that would imply that God receives his existence from another, which is impossible. It also follows that nothing can have existence outside of God, since if it did, it would have existence by something other than existence itself, which is also impossible. See *Pro/. Op. Trip.,* n. 12 (LW 1:156-58).

hermeneutical; that is, it is achieved in the act of hearing, interpreting, and preaching the Bible."[33] For Eckhart "mystical" meant primarily the inner, hidden meaning of the sacred text.[34] And precisely because this meaning is hidden, it is transformative, requiring the soul to enter at first with her intellect and then with her entire existence into the meaning of Scripture. Bernard McGinn notes that we cannot separate Eckhart's Biblical exegesis from his activity as a preacher: not only are all of his sermons mini-commentaries of sorts on Sacred Scripture, but the activity of preaching and of putting into action the words of Scripture is an essential completing of the hermeneutic act-giving birth to the inner sense of Scripture and hence of all the human sciences as well in both the preacher and the hearer.[35] Indeed, for Eckhart the revealed Word is in a fundamental way prior not only in the order of knowing God but also in the order of "being" or reality itself. In his first *ParisianQuestion,* a disputation that dates from his first professorship at Paris and therefore relatively early in his career, Eckhart notes: "The Evangelist did not say: 'In the beginning was being, and God was being'" but rather he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God."[36]

[33] McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister &kbart,* 24-25. The centrality of hermeneutical understanding, particularly the hermeneutics of Scripture, to Eckhart's metaphysical-mystical thought is discussed by Donald Duclow in his article "Hermeneutics and Meister Eckhart," *Philosophy Today* 28 (1984): 36-43. Professor Duclow draws some interesting comparisons between Eckhart's hermeneutics and contemporary philosophical hermeneutics as represented by Hans-Georg Gadamer. For Reiner Schiirmann, preaching or the event of the Word is the model of Eckhart's metaphysics, a model that "emphasizes event over substance and coming-forth over fixed objectivity." See his *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Pr., 1978), 89, as cited in Duclow, "Hermeneutics and Meister Eckhart," 37.

[34] The words "mysticism" and "mystic" are of relatively recent coinage (late eighteenth century) and were unknown to Eckhart. The adjective "mystical" did exist in the Middle Ages, but was used only in the hermeneutical sense mentioned above. That is, the medievals used the adjective "mystical" almost exclusively to mean the "mystical" or "hidden" sense of Scripture. See the introduction to Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God,* vol. 1, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991). Thus, the reading of Eckhart's mystical project as presented here attempts to stay close to the medieval (and hence Eckhart's own) understanding of the term.

[35] McGinn, *Mystical Thought of Meister &khart,* 29.

[36] *Quaes. Par. I,* n. 4 (LW V:40/Maurer, 45).

That is, prior to "being" or, more accurately, our understanding of "being," is the *revelation* *being* in the primal Word or *logos/ratio* of all things. Prior to our knowing beings or even being as such is the openness or dearing, to use Heidegger's term, .in which beings and even being as such can appear. For Eckhart, what opens up beings and being itself to our understanding is the divine Word, which is contained in Scripture but is understood folly only when we give birth to that Word the innermost ground of our souls. Given this understanding of the relation of reason to revelation in the *Parisian Questions,* Eckhart will be forced subsequently to rethink quite radically the relation of reason to revelation since, ultimately, the truths of human reason, which can be resolved into the most fundamental concept, "being," can only find their truth and fulfiUment in revelation. [37]

FROM OUTER TEXT TO INNER. BIRTH

Eckhart's entire intention is to reinsert the objective categories of speculative thought, whether in theology or in metaphysics, into their origin and basis the soul's living union with God in and through the divine or *ratio.* Eckhart's thought is, then, just as much practical as it is speculative. The goal of his dialectical critique of reason and revelation is to *reactivate* the believer an awareness of the always actual, but unrealized union of the soul with God in its innermost ground. Speculative thought as well as the parables of Scripture are to be "deconstructed" so as to reveal what both presuppose: the absolute unity of aU truth and the soul's inner experience of that unity in detached freedom. Speculative thought deconstructs revelation and revelation deconstructs speculative thought so as to reveal this inner union at the basis of both and to make it available for appropriation in the soul of each and every believer. in words closer to those

[37] McGinn puts this very well when he says: "[fhe highest form of philosophy] also teaches natural reason's insufficiency to attain the ground unless it surrenders itself to the action of the divine light. Some might call this 'mystical irrationality'. Eckhart thought of it as the higher form of suprarational knowing needed to bring reason to its goal" (McGinn, *Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart,* 24).

of Eckhart, it is only in "proclaiming the Word"-in bringing forth the Word and giving birth to it, in the act of preaching it or in the infinitely little actions of our lives-that the Word or primal *ratio* is understood. As Alois Haas puts it, "This actualization of the birth of the Son, which must again be seen in the image of the breakthrough, opens up for Eckhart the possibility of connecting faith with knowledge."[38] Faith, in Eckhart's thought, is not a mere assent to the literal meaning of Scripture and therefore separate from intellectual knowledge understood as the union of the intellect with what it knows (in this case, God). Rather, faith is a *form, indeed the highest form, of intellectual knowledge* in which the intellect is itself illuminated in its very operation by the inner sense of Scripture, which in turn unlocks for it the keys to understanding not only Scripture but also all the philosophical sciences.

This relation of the inner to the outer Word comes most to the fore in Eckhart's sermon *"Praedica Verbum."* Here Eckhart starts by commenting on a verse of Scripture that refers to St. Dominic, the founder of his order, the Dominicans or *ordo praedicatorum* (order of preachers). The verse is from 2 Timothy 4:2, which Eckhart paraphrases as "Speak the word, speak it externally, speak it forth, bring it forth, give birth to the Word!" Following this paraphrase, he launches into the following remark:

> It is a marvelous thing that something flows out yet remains within. That a word flows out yet remains within is certainly marvelous. That all creatures flow out and yet remain within is a wonder. What God has given and what he has promised to give is simply marvelous, incomprehensible, unbelievable. And this is as it should be; for if it were intelligible and believable, it would not be right. God is in all things. The more he is in things, the more he is outside the things; the more within, the more outside: the more outside, the more within.[39]

Eckhart understands God's presence in creation as one of simultaneous transcendence and immanence: to the degree that God is in all things, to that degree he is beyond all things, confined to none of them. And to the degree that God is beyond

[38] Haas, "Aktualitiit und Normativitiit Meister Eckharts," 255.
[39] *Pr.* 30 (DW 11:94n1',292).

or outside of all things, to that degree is he their inner principle and source. These are the logical implications of God's absolute unity. Eckhart compares God to a word: just as a word communicates its meaning to all that hear it and yet remains what it is independent of those who hear it, so does God communicate being to all those who receive or "hear" him while he remains who he is apart from creatures. In God as in the word, the inner and the outer coincide.

But which creature can be said to receive or "hear" God most fully? Which creature is potentially capable of having its being conform wholly to the divine being in listening to this divine communication? For Eckhart, both the human being and the angel are such creatures. For the human being and angel are present to themselves in a way that no other creatures are and, by being present to themselves, are able to discover God within themselves as the "within" that is also wholly "without." Eckhart focuses on the implications of this divine communication for human beings, for it was, after all, human nature that God assumed and in which he gave birth to his Son:

> God is in all things; but God as divine and God as intelligent is nowhere so intensely present as he is in the soul and in the angels; if you will, in the innermost and in the highest [part] of the soul... There, where time never entered nor image shined in, in this innermost and highest [part] of the soul, God creates this whole world. Everything that God created six thousand years ago when he made the world and everything he will yet create in a thousand years (if the world lasts that long), all this he creates in the innermost and in the highest of the soul. Everything that is past, everything that is present, and everything that is future God creates in the innermost of the soul.... The Father gives birth to his Son in the innermost of the soul and gives birth to you with his only-begotten Son, not less.[40]

All that God accomplishes, including the creation and the birth of the Son, occurs in the eternal "Now," which, being not subject to time, is known only in the innermost part of the soul. Only the intellectual soul is able to abstract from every *hie et nunc* or every

[40] Ibid. (DW Il:95-96(I1', 292-93).

here and now.[41] Since God creates all things in this inner and eternal Now, the inner meaning not only of Scripture but also of all of creation and of all the human sciences-physical, metaphysical, and moral-that study creation and ultimately God resides only here.

It is only in bringing forth the Word within in detachment that the soul comes to understand the divine Truth, as it manifests itself in both the sciences of reason and in revelation. Eckhart continues saying:

> "Speak the word, speak it externally, speak it forth, bring it forth, give birth to the Word!" "Speak it externally." That something is spoken from the outside is a common thing. This, however, is spoken within. "Speak it externally!" This means: Be aware that this is within you. The prophet says, "God spoke one thing, and I heard two" (Cf. Ps. 61:12). This is true. God has only ever spoken one thing. His speech is only one. In this one speaking he speaks his Son and, together with him, the Holy Spirit and all creatures; and there is only one speaking in God. But the prophet says, "I heard two," that is, I understood God and creatures. Where God speaks it, it is God; but here it is creature. People imagine that God only became man there [in Palestine]. This is not true. God has just as much become man here [in the soul] as there, and he has become man so that he might give birth to you, his only-begotten Son, and nothing less.[42]

Here Eckhart repeats a theme we have seen throughout this article: that human reason can only overlay God's utter oneness with a multiplicity of conceptual categories or figurative and parabolic images, and therefore remains ignorant of God as God. It is only when the soul penetrates beyond the particularity of the historical events narrated in Scripture to their inner meaning that it is able to allow God to give birth to his Son within it. When this

[41] *In Ioh.,* n. 318 (LW IH:265-66): "The intellect, however, abstracts from the here and now and, according to its genus has nothing in common with anything: it is unmixed and it is separate, as is clear from book Ill of the De anima .... Thus so should you be: humble, that is subject to God, separate from time and extension, having nothing in common with anything: then you come to God and God [comes] to you." ("Intellectus autem abstrahit ab hie et nunc, et secundum genus suum nulli nihil habet commune: impermixtus est, separatus est, ex III De anima .... Esto talis: humilis, scilicet subiectus deo, separatus a tempore et continuo, impermixtus, nulli nihil habens commune: venis ad deum, et deus ad te.") See also, *In lob.,* n. 38 (LW UI:32).

[42] *Pr.* 30 (DW ll:97-98/TP, 293).

happens, the soul is then able to understand God in his absolute oneness. It understands not God along with creatures but creatures in God, because, giving birth to God's Son within itself, it comes to subsist in God's eternal and absolutely free activity. This understanding can only occur in a soul that is completely detached from all creatures, for only in such a soul can God find the emptiness and receptivity into which God can give birth.[43] Eckhart thus finishes his sermon with this remark: "Direct all your works to God. There are many people who do not understand this, and this seems to me hardly surprising. For the person who is to understand this must be totally detached and elevated above all things." For Eckhart, we know and live in the divine Truth only when we are free, and we are free only insofar as we act with detachment. But what makes possible this detachment is not anything created or human, but the eternally detached freedom of God who, by giving birth to his Son in the soul, allows the soul to participate in that freedom. And by participating in God's freedom, the soul also comes to know the inner truth of Scripture, which is to say, of God, and the true inner sense of revelation and therefore of all truth.

As the passage cited above makes clear, the events and parables of Scripture signify not merely contingent historical or mythical events; more profoundly, they signify eternal and universal processes bound up necessarily in the divine life. The most notable of these is, of course, the birth of the Son in the soul, for it is by this process that the soul is united to God. In light of this view of the biblical text, Eckhart sees these parables as signifying as well the inner and true meaning of universal, objective philosophical categories (most notably those of Aristotle). For Eckhart, then, natural reasons can show us the necessity of spiritual truths revealed in Scripture while, at the same time, Scripture can show us the true inner sense of the truths of reason as rooted in the detached soul's experience of its own nothingness in divine unity. Thus Eckhart uses Aristotle's notion of "natural

[43] For a detailed discussion of the noetic dimension of detachment in Eckhart's thought see Robert J. Dobie, "Meister Eckhart's Metaphysics of Detachment," *The Modern Schoolman* 80 (2002): 35-54.

place" in his little vernacular treatise, "On Detachment," to describe the necessity of the union between God and the detached soul: "I prove that detachment compels God to come to me in this way; it is because everything longs to achieve its own natural place [cf. Aristotle's *Physica II,* 212b17-22]. Now God's natural place is unity and purity, and that comes from detachment. Therefore God must of necessity give himself to a heart that has detachment. "[44] A little further on in the treatise, Eckhart makes reference to Aristotle's argument that the human intellect is a sort of empty tablet to illustrate a basic principle of the union of the soul with God, that is, that just as a wax tablet is able to be written upon legibly only when it is wiped dean, so only when the soul is empty and free in its inwardness from all creaturely attachments is it able to receive and be informed by God.[45] When God and the detached soul are united, then, it is in the same way that knower and known or perceived and perceiver are united in one activity. For, as Aristotle argued, when we know something the act by which something is known is the exact same act by which the knower knows it. But for Eckhart, only Scripture can show *both* the universal *and* the inner significance of this truth. In other words, it is not the case that the detached soul's dynamic union with God is a species of union of mover and the moved (or of the knower and the thing known) but rather these latter are merely species and imitations of the soul's union with God or, more fundamentally, of God's union with his Only-Begotten Son:

Matter and form are the two principles of things in such a way that they are still one in existence and have one act of existence and one activity. Operation follows existence. This is what the figure of chapter two declares, "They were two in one flesh" (Gn. 2:24). And so the sense faculty and the sense object, the intellect and the intelligible object, though two in potency, are one in act. The one act belongs to both. The faculty of sight is actually seeing and the visible object is actually seen in the same utterly simple act.[46]

[44] *VonAbgeschiedenheit* (DW V:403/EE, 286): "Daz abegescheidenheit twinge got ze mir, daz bewxre ich da mite: wan ein ieclich dine ist gerne an si'ner natiurlkhen eigen stat. Nu ist gotes natiurlkhiu eigen stat einicheit und luterkeit, daz kumet von abegescheidenheit. Da von muoz got von not sich selber geben einem abegeschiedenen herzen."

[45] See *Von Abg.* (DW V:425-26/EE, 292).

[46] *In Gen. II,* n. 33(LW1:501/EE, 105).

What Scripture reveals is that Aristotelian philosophy (and all philosophy in general) has its primal root in the inner union of the detached soul with God, which then the soul, in its falling away into the multiplicity of the created world and the various sciences, reformulates in the objective terms philosophical or mythical-historical discourse, in the process forgetting and covering over that original, concrete, lived, inner union with the divine unity with stale speculative abstractions.

It follows that the inner sense or meaning of both revelation and the truths of human reason or philosophy is primarily for Eckhart a practical sense. That is to say, its truth is only understood in free and detached activity that is in union with God's free and detached activity. Thus, in his Latin sermon given at Paris on the occasion of the feast day of Saint Augustine, Eckhart, in discussing Boethius' ordering of the sciences, mentions the practitioners of the three main speculative sciences, the "'physicus," the ..mathematicus" and the *"ethicus sive theologµ.s"'* (the ethical philosopher or theologian)"[47] This list implies that all talk about God, whether in philosophy or theology, can only find its truth in a certain way of life. And that way of life is one that is embedded an ethical activity that is utterly free and detached from created things, concepts, or volitions" Thus Eckhart in several places, most notably in the beginning of his *Commentary on]ohn,*[48] compares the relation of God and the free, detached soul to that of justice itself to the just man. The just man is the man who "seeks nothing in his works""[49] The just man works completely detached from created things, treating all creatures with perfect equality. Indeed, the just man, Eckhart says, is equal to nothing.[50] As a result, the just man does not work for anything outside of himself or for any goal external to justice itseH. Or, as Eckhart puts it in one of his striking expressions, the just man works "without a why": he works simply for the sake of the work itself. When a man is perfectly just, he seeks nothing his own

[47] LWV:90.
[48] *In Ioh.,* nn. 13-26 (LW m:Bff.).
[49] *Pr.* 39 (DW H:253).
[50] *Pr.* 6 (DW !:107).

nature but everything in justice. And since God is, for Eckhart, justice itself, the just man lives, moves, and works in God: "The just man lives in God and God in him because God is born in the just man and the just man in God" and "God is justice. Therefore, whoever is in justice is in God and *is* God."[51] Thus insofar as the just man is just and lives in justice, he is of one nature with God; but because justice gives birth to the just man, they are also distinct. In other words, for the just man, who lives "without a why" detached from everything that is created, whether material or immaterial, justice is not a mere abstract concept-an intelligible form abstracted from sensible substances-but a fully concrete and living *idea* that is the ground of the just man's very existence and, more particularly, of his living and acting and loving. This is perhaps why Eckhart chose to concentrate on the "notion" of justice in describing the kind of operative or "verbal" unity[52] that occurs between the detached soul and God: justice cannot be understood by means of intellectual abstraction from sensible things; it can only be understood in perfectly detached, free, and loving action.

As Eckhart also puts it, the just man stands to justice as the word stands to its idea.[53] It is therefore the just man who, living without a why in detached freedom, "breaks through" to the primal Word or divine *ratio* which is the inner truth of both

[51] *Pr.* 39 (DW 11:252/TP,296-97).

[52] Thus Reiner Schiirmann talks about a notion of "operative identicy" in Eckhart, which he contrasts with a notion of "substantial identity" that one would find in, say, the works of pantheistic monists. Whereas the latter conceive of the union between the soul and God in terms of "merging" into "one substance," Eckhart conceives of this unity as a "verbal" unity: that is, a unity of action or actuality (Aristotle's *energeia).* Thus, Eckhart can maintain an utter oneness between God and the soul without claiming that they are one "substance," and thus avoid the pitfalls of monism or pantheism. See Reiner Schiirmann, *WanderingJoy: Meister Eckhart's Mystical Philosophy* (Great Barrington, Mass.: Lindisfarne Books, 2001), 22-23. Bernard Welte points out, in his seminal article, "Meister Eckhart als Aristoteliker" how Eckhart uses in particular the categories from Aristotle's physics of motion, in which the mover and the moved are understood as having *one sharedactuality* (Evepyeia) while still remaining distinct as mover and moved, to describe the union of God and the soul in the inner birth of the Son in the soul. See Bernard Welte, "Meister Eckhart als Aristoteliker," *PhilosophischesJahrbuch* 69 (1961): 64-74.

[53] *In lob.,* n. 15 (LW III:13).

revelation and philosophy. Thus Eckhart notes, in his sermon *"iusti vivent in aeternum":*

> One should not accept or esteem God as being outside of oneself, but as one's own and as what is within one; nor should one serve or labor for any recompense, not for God or for his honor or for anything that is outside oneself, but only for that which one's own being and one's own life is within one. Some simple people think that they will see God as if he were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one. I accept God into me in knowing; I go into God in loving... Working and becoming are one. If a carpenter does not work, nothing becomes of the house. If the axe is not doing anything, nothing is becoming anything. In this working God and I are one; he is working and I am becoming. The fire changes anything into itself that is put into it and this takes on fire's own nature. The wood does not change the fire into itself, but the fire changes the wood into itself. So are we changed into God, that we shall know him as he is.[54]

It is in the practical Hfe of detachment and justice that the soul is united to God, indeed, is changed into God not by virtue of anything of its own but purely by its detached action" It is only then that the soul knows God not as some object "over there" but as the very ground of its existence. And it is only then that it comes to know God as he is.

HI. MEISTER ECKHART AND SCHOLASTIC THOUGHT

The proper understanding of the relation of reason to revelation was one of the central preoccupations of medieval thought" It might therefore be good to dose this article with a quick look at how Eckhart's view of the subject compares with the understanding of the relation of reason to revelation found in the work of Thomas Aquinas, not only because of the towering importance of Aquinas for Scholastic thought in general but also because Eckhart himself, as a Dominican professor of theology teaching a generation after Aquinas's death, considered himself a Thomist vigorously defending at Paris Thomistic theses from Franciscan attacks. This comparison cannot pretend to be exhaustive, since such a comparison is beyond the scope of this

[54] *Pr.* 6(DW1:113-15/EE, 188-89).

article, but it will be sufficient to draw out the specific differences of Eckhart's approach, especially since it is in so many of his teachings quite naturally very close to that of his illustrious Dominican predecessor.

The difference in the understanding of the relation of reason to revelation as we find it in Thomas and Eckhart may be stated quite simply and concisely as follows: for Aquinas, as for Eckhart, truth is one and there can be no fundamental conflict between the truths of reason and those of revelation. For both, revelation gives us truths about God that are both more complete and more certain than the truths of reason. They differ, however, on the adequacy with which reason, unaided by revelation, can give us knowledge of God. For Aquinas, reason unaided by revelation can give us, albeit with much toil and uncertainty, truths about God. In other words, for Aquinas there are truths of faith that are inaccessible to human understanding and there are truths of reason knowable to us apart from any revelation. For Eckhart, however, there is nothing in Scripture that cannot be given a rational interpretation: even teachings such as those of the Trinity and the Incarnation can, according to him, be understood in terms of philosophical categories such as the transcendentals. By the same token, there is no truth of reason, be it "physical, metaphysical, or moral" that is not intimated in Holy Writ nor is there any rational truth that does not have its divine idea hidden in Scripture. Thus, it is in Scripture that the full truth of rational concepts is revealed. As we have seen, Eckhart does not mean to say that we can know things apart from revelation-the contrary is clearly the case-nor that divine mysteries can be understood by the finite intellect-on the contrary, he argues that ultimately all finite intellectual categories must be abandoned. But he will insist that both the truths of reason and the truths of revelation have an inner meaning or sense that can only be revealed in the inner ground of the soul. In other words, while Aquinas keeps reason and revelation in separate if overlapping spheres, in Eckhart they overlap entirely: the truths of reason find their inner sense in

revelation and the truths of revelation find their inner sense in the inner ground of the intellect [55]

This complete overlapping of reason and revelation means that all truths have an inner "mystical sense." That is, Eckhart' s project appears to be a systematic attempt to translate the ,,outward," objective of both revelation and reason into terms that describe the soul's inner union with God and the birth of the Son within itself.[56] For Eckhart the true, primal sense of the term *revelatio* is this inner union with God in which God infuses his own Word into the innermost ground of the souL[57] Thus, by recasting the parables of Scripture into the conceptual language of philosophy, Eckhart hopes to uncover their universal, which is also to say, their inner, lived sense- ..lived" in that they form the

[55] Insofar as Aquinas argues that metaphysics can treat the divine being never as such but only as the cause of the proper subject matter of metaphysics, being *qua* being, we can talk of a MmysticaldemenC in his thought. Particularly convincing cases for the importance of this element in understanding folly Thomas's thought have been made by, among others, Pierre Rousselot, *The Intellectualism of St. Thomas,* trans. J. E. O'Mahoney (London: Sheed and Ward, 1935); Joseph Owens, "Aquinas: 'Darkness of Ignorance in the Most Refined Notion of God,"' in *Bonaventure and Aquinas: Enduring Philosophers,* ed. Robert Shahan and Francis Kovach (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 69-86; and John Caputo, *HeideggerandAquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982). None of these scholars, however, goes so far to say that Aquinas was a mystic (however one defines the term). They limit themselves to describing a mystical "element" in his thought.

[56] By "outward, objective form" I mean a set of statements or propositions which are said to be true independent of anyone actually experiencing them as true.

[57] Hans Jonas argues that mysticism constitutes an "interiorization" of the objective images and parables of the mythological consciousness. As Jonas states, in mysticism "an ascending scale of mental states replaces the stations of the mythical itinerary; the dynamics of progressive spirinral self-transformation replaces the spatial thrust through the heavenly spheres. Thus could transcendence itself be turned into immanence, the whole process becomes spiritualized and put within the power and the orbit of the subject" Uonas, "Myth and Mysticism," 317). In other words, the mystic attempts to "loosen" the myth from its objective form and lay bare the inner experiential basis of the mythic forms with a view to reactivating this inner experience in the mystic himself: "As I suggested, this [interiorization] can be viewed as the recovery of the original essence from its embodiment in the mythological objectivation" (ibid.). for Jonas, the mystical project is one of *recovery:* a recovery of the original inner experience that is the existential root of the experiences described in objective form by sacred texts. Although Jonas does not mention Eckhart in his article, his description of the "mystical project" is strikingly similar to that of Eckhart as described in this article. If, then, there is any sense in which we can label Eckhan's tliought Mmystical,"it would have to be in this, Jonas's, sense.

basis of a new way of existing. This sense, of course, always refers to the soul's inner unity with God which is eternal and beyond all experience but which makes a new way of experiencing possible; that is, an existence of complete detached freedom. Or to put it another way, Aquinas's understanding of the relation of reason to revelation has much to do with his rejection of Augustinian illuminationism and his view that the human being attains knowledge by means of a natural light created with the soul. Eckhart's thought, on the other hand, not only retains, but as we have seen, develops this illuminationism and makes it, in his teaching of the birth of the Son in the soul, the center of his thought.

The primal *ratio* or Word, according to Eckhart, speaks and is known by the soul as the *ratio* of all things only insofar as it is received *inwardly* in the intellect. For it is only in and by the intellect that God is stripped of all objective being *(esse)-that* is, of being understood as efficient or final cause (or in the vernacular sermons as the "why" and "wherefore")-and is known in God's self. Thus, according to Eckhart in one of his Latin sermons, it is in the intellect and in the intellect alone that revelation finds "its fulfillment":

Note: revelation finds its fulfillment properly speaking in intellect or, even more, in the essence of the soul, which, properly speaking seeks existence *(esse)*. To be God, however, is to be naked without any veil *(Esse autem deus esse nudum sine velamine est)*. Or take both together: in the essence of the soul, insofar as it is intellectual, it is, according to Maimonides, bound to the supreme God himself and is thus the "genus of God." It follows that the essence does not generate in the Godhead *(in divinis)* nor does it bring forth the Word. Nor does it give birth to the Word unless it has the character of intellect. The Son does not proceed unless under the property of intellect.[58]

[58] *Senno XI,* n. 1 (LW N:108): "Nota: revelatio proprie est apud intellectum vel potius in essentia animae quae proprie esse respicit. Esse autem deus esse nudum sine velamine est. Vel die utrumque: in essentia, ut intellectiva, sic copulatur sui supremo deo, secundum Rabbi Moysen, sic est 'genus dei'. Unde essentia non generat in divinis nee verbum profert. Nee enim verbum gignit nisi sub ratione intellectus. Filius non procedit nisi per proprietatem intellectus."

Thus the very existence of God is his "nakedness" or his revelation of existence: *Esse autem deus esse nudum sine velamine est.* That is, his very existence is to reveal himself, to be Word. This self-revelation can only come about in and through the intellect, which is why Eckhart, in the *Parisian Questions,* says that God is essentially intellect. And so the soul, "which properly speaking, seeks existence," finds existence only insofar as it is purely intellectual, that is, detached from every finite existent and turned purely inward. In Eckhart's assertion that "revelation finds its fulfillment properly speaking in the intellect," we find a statement of his theologico-philosophical project in its purity: revelation, properly understood, is a purely inner event immanent in and perfective of the intellect. Revelation is not something that comes from "without" but is an emanation from within, described by Eckhart as a "birth" that comes to the soul not by virtue of its finite existence but by virtue of its potentially infinite intellectual nature.

Thus to the question as to whether Eckhart is a theologian or a philosopher, the answer is that he is both. He is both, however, by virtue of his theologico-philosophical project properly understood, which is to penetrate into the inner, primal *ratio* of Scripture by means of *rationes naturales.* By doing so, Eckhart claims to uncover the inner existential sense of both Scripture and philosophy, making him both a theologian and philosopher in the true sense of the words not despite but precisely because of the hermeneutical nature of his thought. For Eckhart, Scripture reveals to us the divine *ratio* of all things, who is Christ, and within that *ratio* the ideas or transcendent exemplars of all things. These ideas are normally inaccessible to human reason, limited as it is to abstraction of intelligible forms from sensible particulars. It is, then, only when the parabolic sense of revelation is understood in conceptual terms and the concepts of philosophy are understood in parabolic terms, that their source of meaning in the divine *ratio* is understood and lived as the birth of the Son in the soul.

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ARISTOTLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF PLACE

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I

THE NOTION OF "PLACE" is central to Aristotle's understanding of the motions of inanimate natural bodies. According to Aristotle, "the *energeia* of a light body is to be in a place, and up; and it is prevented whenever it is in a contrary place" *(Physics* 255b11-13).[1] He states further that "it is the nature of [heavy and light bodies] each to be at a certain place, and to be light and to be heavy is just this, specifically, to be up in the case of the light or to be down in the case of the heavy" (255b16ff). It is vital therefore that we rightly understand what Aristotle means by "place," and how he sees place functioning as a principle of motion in nature. We must ask, for example, how a "place" can be the final cause and actuality *(energeia)* of a natural body. What does it really mean for a natural body, such as fire, to be in potency to a specific place, such as "up"? What is it about "up" that makes it the natural place for fire? Such questions, moreover, must be answered in a manner consistent with Aristotle's overall philosophy of nature.

In order to come to grips with the notion of place and its role in natural motion, I will examine Aristotle's discussion of place as it is found in *Physics* 6.1-5. My goal here is to extract Aristotle's

[1] Unless otherwise noted, I use *Aristotle's Physics,* trans. with commentary and glossary by Hippocrates G. Apostle (Grinnell, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 1980) as a basis for the translations I provide:

principled understanding of place. Only after examining and properly understanding Aristotle's notion of place can we accurately judge its role in natural motion.

In presenting my understanding of Aristotle's doctrine, I wm chaHenge the arguments that Helen S. Lang has offered on these questions. Lang contends that Aristotle's concept of nature is essentially tied to an understanding of place according to which it serves both as a principle of order the universe and as the actuality, and hence the cause of m0tion, of inanimate bodies. She daims that absolute immobility is the most important feature of Aristotle's notion of place.

In my judgment, Lang's interpretation of place conflicts both with the texts of Aristotle and with Aristotle's overall natural philosophy, According to Lang, place is itself a cause of order in the universe, a formal constituent that renders the whole universe ordered and determinate, and hence is like a formal cause; yet Aristotle states explicitly that place cannot be a formal cause. Lang's daims require that place exist prior to and independent of bodies; as I will show, however, according to Aristotle's principled argument, place can in no way be taken as prior to or independent of natural bodies" Lang also daims that ..respective proper place is the actuality and hence the mover of each element": as an actuality, place serves as a final cause, and as a mover, it serves as an efficient cause. Yet Aristotle explicitly states that place is neither a final nor an efficient cause" How a place, by itself, can be the actuality of an element is never adequately addressed by Lang. Nor does she ever articulate her understanding of "actuality," I wiH argue that her account of place illicitly abstracts from the natural bodies that constitute place.

Lang further argues that "intrinsic directionality" and absolute immobility of the cosmos are inseparable from Aristotle's natural philosophy in general. To remove absolute directionality from Aristotle's physics (that is, to say that "up" and "down" are relative, and have no absolute natural ground), Lang suggests, would be to annihilate Aristotle's understanding of nature. I

argue that such daims are not supported by Aristotle's texts, or by his overall natural philosophy.

After my criticism of Lang, I shall present and defend James A. Weisheipl's analysis of place in Aristotle. Contrary to Lang, Weisheipl argues that absolute place is not an essential feature of Aristotle's general understanding of nature and natural motion. Moreover, according to Weisheipl, Aristotle's own argument for absolute place-that is, the notion that there is an intrinsic up and an intrinsic down to the universe, and that natural directionality is not relative-is not validly made. I shall present his arguments-with which I agree-for both of these positions. But of primary interest is Weisheipl's understanding that the most important characteristic of "real" or "natural" place is that it is made up of real bodies having active and passive properties, and that these surrounding bodies constitute an environment that is either hospitable or repellant to the body in that place. Again, on these points I find Weisheipl to be correct.

The goal of this paper, then, is first to liberate the essential points of Aristotle's understanding of natural place from what I take to be Lang's faulty interpretation, and second to defend Weisheipl's account.

II

Aristotle's treatment of "place" is found in book 4 of the *Physics,* following the definition and discussion of motion in book 3. Aristotle must address the notion of place since it is regarded by many to be among those things required for motion.[2] His goal in book 4 is, in part, to provide an alternative to "void," a concept that was advanced by the Greek atomists. It is dear that for the atomists the existence of void (that is, extended non-being) was absolutely required for local motion to occur; void was the atomists' solution to the Parmenidean problem of change. In the notion of "place," however, Aristotle seeks to provide an

[2] See *Physics* 200b21: "Again, motion is thought to be impossible without place and void and time."

alternative to the metaphysical absurdity and physical incoherence of the atomists' void.

Before defining "place," Aristotle sets out four requirements that the definition must meet:

> 1. A place is what contains that of which it is the place, and it is no part of the thing contained.
> 2. The primary place is neither less nor greater than the thing contained.
> 3. A place can be left behind by the thing contained and is separable from it.
> 4. Every place has the attribute of being up or down; and by nature every body travels to its proper place, and it does so in the direction of up or down. (*Physics* 211a1-7)

With these conditions in mind, Aristotle goes on to provide the following definition of place: "the containing body's boundary which is in contact with what is contained" (*Physics* 212a6). Lang and Weisheipl offer two competing interpretations of this definition. A comparison of the two will highlight its significance.

III

Lang's interpretation of the *Physics* as a whole stresses the importance of the elements and place: "Taken together," she writes, "place and the elements constitute nature, and so an examination of them exhibits nature as everywhere a cause of order." [3] She states her thesis as follows:

> As I shall argue, place, as a first limit, serves as a cause of order: it renders the cosmos determinate in respect to "where things are and are moved." Hence, place is ... a cause of motion insofar as it is a source of motion. [4]

According to Lang, Aristotle's account of place presupposes "his definitions of motion and nature, and it solves the problems posed by these definitions"; [5] she thus suggests that there is a seamless

[3] Helen S. Lang, *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10.

[4] Ibid., 66.

[5] Ibid., 67.

connection between the notions of "place," "nature," and "motion." Place is even able to cause the elements to move: "respective proper place is the actuality and hence the mover of each element."[6] According to Lang, because of Aristotle's definition of place as the first limit of the containing body, his philosophy of nature must conclude that "the cosmos is *intrinsically* directional: 'up', 'down', 'left', 'right', 'front', and 'back' are not just relative to us but are given in the cosmos itself."[7] "Intrinsically directional" seems to mean something similar to what Weisheipl calls the "absolute localization of position,"[8] in so far as both notions require place to be absolutely unmoved, and direction to be determined absolutely within the universe as a whole. Lang holds (contrary to Weisheipl) that such absolute place is inseparable from Aristotle's notion of nature. Her interpretation makes elemental motion impossible without her particular understanding of place.[9] She argues that "the differentiation of 'up', 'down', etc., is the *most important* feature of place both for Aristotle's account of place as in some sense required by things in motion and for his account of elemental motion in the *De Caelo.*"[10] She argues that, as a limit, place is like form, and therefore a cause of order: "the intrinsic directionality of the cosmos is a formal characteristic precisely because it is granted by place, which, like form, is a limit."[11] "Place," according to Lang, *"renders the cosmos determinate* in respect to 'where' with the result that all things that are, are 'somewhere.'"[12]

In order to grasp precisely what Lang is arguing, let us consider her claims in light of one of the "places" and one of the elements. "Up" in the universe is, according to Lang, designated, or

[6] Ibid., 71.

[7] Ibid., 10 (emphasis added); see also 100.

[8] James A. Weisheipl, "Space and Gravitation," *The New Scholasticism* 29 (1955): 184. Weisheipl will also accuse Aristotle of inappropriately "spatializing" place (184-85), but, unlike Lang, Weisheipl argues (we will see) that this is neither essential to Aristotle's understanding of place, nor is the claim validly made.

[9] See Lang, *The Order of Nature,* 266.

[10] Ibid., 79-80 (emphasis added).

[11] Ibid., 103.

[12] Ibid., 110 (emphasis added).

"determined," by the principle called "place." She also claims that "up," simply, is the *actuality* of one of the elements-namely, fire.[13] So, as motion, for Aristotle, is the actuality of the potentiality qua potential of a body, and as fire's natural potency is to be "up," and the universe has an "up" because of the constitutive ordering principle of place, Lang concludes that place is a cause that defines the actuality of fire. According to Lang, place itself is an actuality: "place as an actuality causes the motion of the elements."[14] This is why the "actuality of fire," simply, is for fire to be in a specific place-namely, "up." For Lang, "fire being up" is tantamount to "fire being actual." She writes:

> For example, when the light (or upward) is held downward, it is only potentially in its proper place, and conversely, when the heavy (or downward) is held upward; but when the light is upward (or the heavy downward) each is in its proper place, their respective motions are complete, *and they are actually.*[15]

The same analysis applies for the other elements with equal validity:

> rno achieve its proper place is for each element to achieve its form and actuality. As a limit, place causes all motion by rendering the cosmos determinate and so producing the proper place for each element within the cosmos. Proper place within the cosmos causes the motion of each element ... *just as* any actuality causes the actualization of the potency naturally orientated toward it.[16]

This, then, is Lang's answer to the question of how place is a cause of natural motion. She is dear that the cosmos is rendered determinate by "place," which is to say that place designates the various "wheres" in the universe. Hence, focusing on its limiting characteristic, she takes place to be a formal cause. Her position can be summed up as follows: the universe has an actual up, an actual down, and other determined and actual "wheres" because of "place"; the distinct positions in the universe which are

[13] See ibid., 71: "respective proper place is the actuality and hence the mover of each element."

[14] Ibid., 266.

[15] Ibid., 56 (emphasis added).

[16] lbid., 266 (emphasis added).

established by place, according to Lang's reading, are also the "actualities" and "forms" of the elements-that is to say, it is part of the essence of an element to be in a specific place in the universe; when it is in its proper place, its potential for being in that place is made actual. Place, then, according to Lang, is a formal and final cause of motion, and in some way a moving cause.

However, when Aristotle poses the question of how place might be a cause, he rules out certain possible answers:

> Further, of which of the things would one posit a place to be a cause? For *it can be no cause in any of the four senses of 'cause',* whether as matter of things (for no thing consists of it), or as form or formula of things or as end or as a mover of things. (209a19 [emphasis added])

At the end of his treatment of place, Aristotle provides a positive answer to this question of place's causality:

> [I]t is reasonable that each body should travel to its own place, for things in succession and in contact but not by force are alike in kind, and they are unaffected by each other when they are by nature together .... And further, it is not without reason that each [body] stays in its proper place. For any given part of the whole place is like a divisible part in relation to the whole, as if one were to disturb a part of water or air. And it is also in this manner that air is related to water, as if one of them were matter and the other a form, that is, water as if the matter for air and air as if the *actuality [entelecheia]* of the other; for water is potentially air, and it is in another manner that air is potentially water. (212b30-213a4)

An example might be helpful. According to this passage, air stays in its proper place because it is surrounded by air; air moves to its proper place because bodies that are not like it in kind affect it. A body of air, that is, does not move itself, nor does one part of it move another; the body, as a whole, is homoeomerous-each part is identical in kind to the whole: "[f]or any given part of the whole place is like a divisible part in relation to the whole."[17] As homoeomerous, no part of the body has something that another

[17] Aristotle thought all nonliving bodies, whether elements or mixed bodies, were homoeomerous..

part lacks; one part of a homoeomerous body cannot be moved by another part of it. Without contrariety, there can be no motion. Thus, when a particular body of air reaches its proper place, it is in that place with other "bodies of and these bodies do not act upon, nor are they affected by, each other.[18] A body is moved out of place, a place that is not its own, because the surrounding bodies (which make up that place) are unlike it and affect it in such a way as to cause it to move. Air is able to act: upon water because has something that water does not:; the need for contrariety is here met.

Two points must be made regarding this passage. First, Aristotle is explaining why things stay in their "own" place, their "proper" place. He daims that a certain place is said to belong to each kind of body. Lang asserts that this is because place itself is the actuality of the body. Aristotle's answer is notably different, for in explaining the causes of natural motions, he speaks explicitly, not of place, but of bodies acting upon and being acted upon by each other. Place is not a cause of motion or rest; other bodies are. Bodies stay in places whenever they are not affected[19] by the surrounding bodies.

The second point is that, in this passage, actuality *(entelecheia)* is not attributed to place itself, but rather to bodies (matter-form composites such as air and water). As we proceed we shall see more dearly the connection between place, bodies, and actuality. But here let it be that Aristotle refrains from calling place itself an actuality.

[18] A caveat: I use corpuscular language here purely out of convenience. For Aristotle, the complete lack of diversity and difference in a homoeomerous body makes it almost impossible to designate what we might call "natural" or "intrinsic" units in the body. When two separate homoeomerous bodies (for example, two separate glasses of water) are poured together, the resulting "body" is neither more nor less a unit than the previous two "bodies."

[19] In the *De Anima,* Aristotle makes a distinction between alteration, which involves the destruction or privation of one form and the coming to be of another, on the one hand, and the reduction of a essential potency to *energeia,* on the other. This distinction is important for my argument:, since I will argue that the proper place possesses those active and passive properties which bring the essential potencies of the natural body to completion-an affection that Aristotle distinguishes from alteration.

Moreover, even if Lang were right about the causal role of place in the motions of the elements, one would find it difficult to apply her account to the natural places of living things. Such places are complex and moveable, as experience shows; some animals, for example, migrate with the change of seasons because the character of one area changes-that is, it becomes too cold or too hot. Further, it is unclear how the import of place's "intrinsic directionality" would involve an account of the natural motions of living bodies; the simple motions of simple, nonliving bodies might be one thing, but the complex motions of complex bodies, that is, living natural bodies, seem to be another. These complex bodies are all found within the same general "place" in the cosmos, as Lang would have it; they are above the center of the earth, and well below fire, occupying the same general region as water and air. But if each natural body, including living beings, has its own proper, natural place-a place that corresponds to its specific nature and actuality-then Lang's account is inadequate for treating the great diversity of what we might call biological "places," or "habitats" required for the diversity of natural organisms. Her account would be limited to the elements qua principles of the heavens; consequently, "place" as considered in the *Physics* would not be a matter to consider in biological sciences. This deficiency alone casts considerable doubt on the validity of her analysis, for the *Physics* is a general account of the intelligible principles of all natural substances, not only of the inanimate substances that comprise the universe. The specific analysis of the universe as a whole, in terms of its inanimate parts, is found in the *De Caelo.*

But what does it mean for "up" to be the "actuality" of fire? The answer that "up" is the proper or natural place of fire certainly does not satisfy. Why is "up" the proper or natural place of fire? Lang's answer seems to be simply that "up" is one part of the ordered result for which place is the principal cause; as she would say, "up" is the "where" in the universe-designated by place-for fire, and that is why fire goes "up." Fire by nature is in potency to being "up"; "up" is designated in the universe by

"place." So, fire goes up. But the question that I take to be most fundamental has not been addressed: what does it mean for "up" to be the "actuality" of fire? What does Lang think "actuality" means?

Lang makes an important error at the outset. In order to arrive at her conclusion-that "place is a single principle that determines the cosmos as a whole and the elements from which all natural things and artifacts are composed"[20]-she begins with the claim that "[p]lace and the moveable body are not conjoined as two bodies in contact, but as a limit (place), and what is limited (movable body)."[21] The problem with this formulation is that Aristotle defines place as the limit, not of the movable body that is *contained,* but of the body that *contains* the movable body. In listing the initial requirements for a valid understanding of place, Aristotle said that "A place is what contains that of which it is the place, and it is no part of the thing contained" (211a1-7). He concluded that place is "the *containing body's boundary* which is in contact with what is contained" (212a6 [emphasis added]).

Lang's error may seem to be a small one, but it takes on great significance since her argument expressly hinges on what she takes to be the differing characteristics of a limit and what is in fact limited. She states that among the ways a limit is different from what is limited is that the former is "a formal constitutive part, indivisible, more closely identified with substance and more honorable."[22] She desires to call place a limit, and thereby attribute to it all these characteristics proper to limit. If her interpretation is going to invest "limit" with such importance, however, it is obviously quite important that the designation of the "limit" and "the limited" be correct. In identifying the *contained* body, rather than the *containing* body, as "the limited," however, she makes a critical error. Consider the following:

Aristotle has already asserted that the conjunction between container and contained most nearly parallels that of form and matter: the limit and the limited

[20] Lang, *The Order of Nature,* 100-101.

[21] Ibid., 93.

[22] Ibid., 92-93.

are conjoined as constitutive principle and that which is constituted. In this sense, place is not just "next to," "just beyond," or "in contact with" the first *contained* body any more than a surface or a form is merely next to or in contact with *what is bounded* by it. Rather, the limit and the limited together comprise one being, the first heaven, as boundary and bounded. [23]

Here Lang treats place as if it were the limit of the "contained body," but, again, we have noted that Aristotle defines place as the limit of the containing or surrounding body (see *Physics* 212a20). Sometimes Lang employs a correct definition of place, as when she states that "[b]y definition a limit must limit *something,* and place is the limit of the surrounding body." She continues in this very passage, however, with the following:

But the contained should not be thought of as contained by another body; rather, it is immediately in the limit, i.e., place. Hence, although the limit (of the containing body) and the contained are obviously "touching," they are not two bodies which are divided by touching .... Rather, the relation of the limit to the limited resembles the relation of form and matter. [24]

Lang's point is, I take it, that the "contained" (or the body in place) should not be thought of as in the containing body, but rather as in the limit of the containing body. Lang then takes advantage of the fact that, since it is indivisible, the "limit" of the containing body is just as much the limit of the body that is contained-the limit belongs to both bodies equally. So the correct way of thinking of the relation of a body and its place is not to think of the body in relation to the body that surrounds it, for the contained body is not immediately "in" the surrounding body; rather, for Lang, the relation of the body in place to place itself is one of limited to limit, and, going further, of matter to form.

Aristotle, of course, had rejected the attribution of formal causality to place,[25] for the third requirement for an adequate understanding of place listed by Aristotle was that "a place can be

[23] Ibid., 93 (emphasis added).

[24] Ibid.

[25] See *Physics* 209a19: "place *can be no cause in any of the four senses of 'cause',* whether as matter of things ... or as form or formula of things or as end or as a mover of things."

left behind by the thing contained and is separable from it" (211a5). Form cannot be separated from its matter; thus, Aristotle states that "it is not difficult to see that place cannot be either of these [matter or form], for neither form nor matter exists separately from the thing, but its place can exist separately from it" (209b23). In her attempt to give a causal role to place, Lang overstates the similarities between limit and form, and neglects the explicitly stated differences between form and place. She does acknowledge that, for Aristotle, place cannot be a cause as form ("It cannot be one of the four causes, i.e., form, matter, moving cause or final"),[26] but this admission is undermined when she later continues to use "form" language in describing place's causal role; for example, "[t]he limit is a formal not a material constitutive part."[27]

So, in order to establish place as a formal constitutive cause of the order in the universe, Lang makes place the "limit" of the body in place (that is, of the *surrounded* body).[28] Hence, she essentially says that place can be considered as the limit of the body that is contained. This interpretation, however, would make place identical to the body's shape, and Aristotle explicitly rejects such an identification:

> Because place is a thing that contains, it is thought to be shape; for the extremes of what contains and of what is contained coincide. Now both are limits, but not of the same thing. The one is the form of the thing [this is the shape of the contained body]; the other is the place of the containing body. (210b12-14).

The line that separates the contained body from the containing body is, as Lang has noted, indivisible, but it is absolutely clear from this passage that when Aristotle is talking about place he is talking about the limit of the surrounding body; place, as a limit, is not thought, by Aristotle, to "belong" in any meaningful way to the body contained "in" place. If this limit does not belong to the contained body, there is no way we can speak of it as a formal

[26] Lang, *The Order of Nature,* 266.

[27] Ibid., 267.

[28] See ibid., 270: "Place does not exist apart from the heaven; rather, together they form a whole (the heaven) comprised of container (place) and contained (first body)."

constituent of that body. We can conclude, then, that Lang's attempt to invest place with the characteristics of *eidos* fails. Aristotle explicitly addresses and maintains the difference between *eidos,* on the one hand, and *topos,* on the other.

There is another point in Lang's analysis that it is important to address, a point that, as we will see, contrasts sharply with Weisheipl's analysis. Weisheipl holds that there are two essential features of Aristotle's notion of place, namely, the qualitative surrounding environment, on the one hand, and the relative immobility of the limit, on the other. Lang, however, focuses strictly on the motionless limit, even separating it from the qualities of the environment:

> By definition a limit must limit *something,* and place is the limit of the surrounding body. But the contained should not be thought of as contained by another body; rather, it is immediately in the limit, i.e., place. Hence, although the limit (of the containing body) and the contained are obviously "touching," they are not two bodies that are divided but touching, e.g., water and a jug when the water is in the jug. Rather, the relation of the limit to the limited resembles the relation of form to matter. [29]

For Lang, water is not, in the most precise sense, "in" a jug; rather, water is in a "limit," a limit it shares with the jug. This limit, in the consideration of which all properties of the jug are excluded, constitutes, for Lang, the "place" of the water, and its relation to the contained water "resembles the relation of form to matter." Note, then, that for Lang place is a key principle in nature, and yet it is constituted by no more than what is essentially a mathematical limit. The causal power of place, according to Lang, is not traced back to the natural powers of a body. Rather, she understands Aristotle to be saying that the limit of a body, considered in abstraction from all active and passive properties of the surrounding bodies, has the power to move bodies in an orderly way.

Lang also advances a peculiar interpretation of the term "first place" *(proton topos).* Aristotle makes mention of "first" or

[29] Ibid., 93.

"primary place" in his list of requirements for a valid understanding of place, where he notes that the "primary place is neither less nor greater than the thing contained"(211a3). Lang's contention is that "place is not the 'first' [unmoved limit of what is contained] in the sense of 'nearest' to the contained body.... Place [rather] is first as the whole heaven is what first surrounds everything that is contained within the heaven."[30] Instead of being the nearest limit, the primary place is thus the widest limit that surrounds all bodies in the universe. The argument Lang provides in support of this interpretation is that "place in the sense of the heaven ... is the 'common' place for all things and, so, the more proper object of the investigation" of general physics.[31]

The confusion here comes from the fact that "common" can be taken in at least two different ways. Lang's main focus is on the requirement that place be common to all natural bodies, since a general science of physics is concerned with what is common to all natural things. However, she thinks that place must be common in the sense of "the common place," that is, the place which all things are in together, or "in common."

Aristotle does indeed discuss a *"common (koina)* place," and by this term he does mean the place in which all things are; but this does not mean that he holds that the all-inclusive "common place" is the one place properly investigated by physics. There is, rather, a second, and far more plausible alternative as to how "place" should be understood as "common" to all natural bodies. In the *Physics,* Aristotle is interested in those intelligible features which are found in each and every motion or movable being, and place is one of these "common" features. "Common" need not mean a specific *one* that belongs to all; it more plausibly refers to some *generic* feature that is specified for each specifically different body. Similarly, Aristotle's common or general definition of nature is a fine example of an account that belongs to all things in general, but differs specifically for each species. It is not because all things are in one place that place is common to all natural

[30] Ibid., 99-100.

[31] Ibid., 100.

bodies; rather it is because all things are in places that place is common to all bodies.

It can be shown, moreover, that Lang does not rightly characterize Aristotle's use of the term "first place" *(proton topos).* At the beginning of book 4, Aristotle says that

there may be a common place in which all bodies are, or a proper place in which a given body is primarily *[protOJ* (I mean, for example, that you now are in the heaven because you are in the air, and this is in the heaven, and you are in the air because you are on the earth, and similarly you are in this because you are in *this* place, which nothing greater than you surrounds), if the *primary* place surrounds each of the bodies, it [that is, place] would be a certain limit. (209a32-33)

Lang asserts that because the *Physics* is about nature in general, we may take it that the notion of place that Aristotle discusses is the general, or common place for all of nature. The passage above, however, says that the "first place" is what immediately surrounds and is no greater than the individual body. This reading is confirmed, also, in the following passage:

As to what place is, this should become evident. Let us consider whatever seems truly to belong to it according to itself. We think it fitting that place be the *first* surrounding of that of which it is the place, and nothing of the *pragma* [in this case, the thing in place]; and the *first* is neither lesser nor greater; it can be left behind by that [which it contains] and is separable; and in addition to these all places have the up and the down, and each of the bodies are carried and remain by nature in the proper places. (210b34-211a6)

In this list of requirements, we see clearly that "first place" is not that which contains everything, nor is it the place common to all things; rather, it is clearly the boundary of the body that immediately contains the contained body; "first place" is no less nor greater in magnitude than the body in place. Aristotle says that a thing is said to be

in the air-but not in all of it-because the innermost part of the air which contains the thing is in the air (for if the place [of the thing] were all the air, the place of a thing would not be equal to the thing, though it is thought to be equal, and this is the first [place] in which the thing is). (211a25-29, emended)

Thus, the understanding of primary place explicitly rejected by Lang, namely, the nearest boundary, is precisely the one held by Aristotle. First place is not a single feature of the cosmos, or some ultimate order of the universe as a whole, as Lang would have it. Rather, it refers to the limit of the most immediate surrounding body that contains the particular body under consideration.

Lang nevertheless defends her identification of first place with the common place by asserting that a local, relative place "cannot be place in the fullest and *most important sense* precisely because it is moved, and place nmst be unmoved."[32] Her argument for why absolute immobility is the "most important" feature of place is based on her view that place is a limit and source of order of the whole cosmos, a view that finds no justification in the texts of Aristotle. Certainly it is true that Aristotle did say that place was unmoved, but the examples he provides for the importance of immobility (an object in a boat, which is itself moving in a flowing river) suggest that relative immobility, in fact, often suffices (see 212a15ff).

To conclude our criticism of Lang, let us consider one last passage from Aristotle:

> By nature ... each [of the six directions] is distinct and exists apart from the others; for the up direction is not any chance direction but where fire and a light object is carried, and likewise the down direction is not any chance direction but where heavy or earthy bodies are carried, so that these [directions] differ not only in position but also in power. (208b18-22, emended)

This text contradicts Lang in an important way. The designation of direction is not a result of place differentiating the cosmos; rather, direction is designated according to the ordered behaviors of natural bodies. In other words, Lang thinks that "place" is a cause because it designates the intrinsic directionality of the cosmos, thereby serving as a principle of order; because of this, fire has an actual place designated for it, and that is why it goes where it goes. But Aristotle is saying something different: fire has a nature that causes it to behave in regular and orderly ways; one

[32] Ibid. (emphasis added).

of these regular behaviors, we may say, is that it moves away from earth. Fire moves according to its nature; it responds and reacts in an orderly way to the surroundings it is in at any time. When Aristotle says that the "up direction is not any chance direction but where fire and a light object is carried," we see that the order found in "place" is a result of natural substances being ordered in their behaviors. Up must be understood in terms of the motions of fire and other light bodies; down in terms of the ordered motions of earth and other heavy bodies. The principle that renders Aristotle's cosmos determinate with regard to place, then, is in truth the ordered motions and behaviors of natural substances. Were place itself understood in abstraction from or prior to the bodies that make it up (as Lang understands it), it would be a mathematical abstraction which in no way could account for motion; but Aristotle rejects this conception of place. In his view, place has no causal power other than those properties which are found in the bodies that constitute the surrounding environment. If place is understood as merely a limit, abstracting from consideration any natural properties of the surrounding bodies, place is left utterly incapable of causing any motion.

In sum, then, Lang's thesis is not supported by the texts of Aristotle. She claims that place is a cause of order, a formal constituent that renders the whole universe ordered and determinant; she claims that place is an actuality, the actuality of the elements. She also attempts to show that the intrinsic directionality of place (which is another way of saying "the geocentric universe") is an essential element in Aristotle's account of nature. Place, for Lang, is similar to a mathematical limit of a body; its power is independent of any natural powers grounded in the body-thus place turns out to be prior in being and power to natural bodies.

As I have shown, however, Lang's analysis is a distortion of Aristotle's argument. For Aristotle place is the limit of the containing body, not the body contained, and this point makes it impossible for place to be a formal cause. Nowhere does Aristotle intimate that place (independent of bodies) has any power to

move bodies or bring about order in the cosmos. I have also questioned whether absolute, immobile place, though unarguably maintained by Aristotle, is really essential to his understanding of nature. Lang has attempted to commit Aristotle to this position with arguments Aristotle himself, I am confident, would have rejected. We shall see in Weisheipl's account that place derives all of its power from the bodies that make it up. Weisheipl's claim that bodies are the subjects of passive and active properties is far more in keeping with Aristotle's understanding of nature, and it also serves as a legitimate means of doing away with the geocentric universe.

IV

It is in his article "Space and Gravitation" [33] that Weisheipl presents an account of "place" that is essentially Aristotelian, though not tied to the archaic elements of Aristotle's cosmology. For Weisheipl, the important point to be made is that "place" differs from atomistic void in that the former is "real" while the latter is an abstraction of the mind. Weisheipl notes that for Aristotle void, as extended non-being, is a metaphysical impossibility: "But Aristotle rightly objected that there can be no such extension existing apart from bodies." [34] Dimension and magnitude are quantitative accidents, requiring an underlying subject for their existence. [35]

Weisheipl agrees with Lang that place is necessary to explain the motion of bodies, but he makes an all-important addition to this claim: "real place" is what is needed, and not space or void which are mathematical abstractions. Weisheipl notes, "Aristotle, who has little to say about space, insists that real motion can be explained only in relation to real place, a physical ambient for

[33] James A. Weisheipl, O.P., "Space and Gravitation," *The New Scholasticism* 29 (1955): 175-223.

[34] Ibid., 180; citing *Physics* 4.4.211b13-29.

[35] See Weisheipl, "Space and Gravitation," 180.

which a body has an innate preference."[36] How a body might have an innate preference for one place over another could be discussed at greater length, but what is important here is that place, for Weisheipl, is a "physical" reality, which involves bodies with active and passive properties.[37]

Weisheipl identifies two essential features of the Aristotelian notion of place. First and foremost, place is "an environment, 'the innermost boundary of what contains' (212a20-21)"; and secondarily, "it is motionless, allowing bodies to move from one place to another."[38] Weisheipl argues that, depending on the science, these two features vary in importance.

> From the natural philosopher's point of view the environment is very important in explaining the movement and survival of bodies; the mathematician, abstracting from all qualitative considerations, is much more concerned with the immobility of place and the relations of distance.[39]

Environment, as understood by Weisheipl, is not merely the innermost boundary of that which contains, considered in a mathematical manner; that is to say, it is not merely the quantitative, geometrical dimensions that limit the body mathematically. Rather, environment also includes the active and passive qualities possessed by the containing body. Every natural body possesses such qualities, and a complete account of natural phenomena, therefore, must include these in its consideration.

[36] Ibid., 182.

[37] One might question Weisheipl's discussion of natural place, as it does not really point us toward the general definition of place found in book 4; namely, as "the containing body's boundary which is in contact with what is contained" (212a6). We shall see, however, that Weisheipl does address and incorporate Aristotle's definition of place below; and we shall see, moreover, that Weisheipl's account works well with *Physics* 8.4, (far better than Lang's), and it further suggests that the discussion of place in book 4 is meant principally to provide a truer alternative to void, which the atomists viewed as essential to motion.

[38] Weisheipl, "Space and Gravitation," 182.

[39] Ibid.; compare with Lang, *The Order of Nature,* 100: relative place "cannot be place in the fullest and most important sense precisely because it is moved, and place must be unmoved." Whereas Weisheipl attempts to see place as a something natural, relating to bodies with active and passive properties, Lang thinks of place as an absolute, mathematical-type limit, which in the end is not very different from space, except that Lang attributes (incoherently, in my opinion) formal causality to place.

Unlike Lang, Weisheipl argues that "immobility" is not a key consideration for the natural philosopher. In fact, he argues that Aristotle's argument for the absolute immobility of space is both unsound in itself, and unhelpful to the natural philosopher.

In direct opposition to Lang, Weisheipl argues that place is not a principle of absolute differentiation and directionality in the universe. To say so, according to Weisheipl, is to misunderstand the essentials of place.

> To say that different kinds of bodies have different 'natural places' is not to say that they have an absolute localization in space. A natural place is essentially a qualitative environment which is congenial to a particular nature and to which that nature spontaneously moves. Should the environment itself move, the body would not remain fixed in a point of space but would accompany or spontaneously seek out the nearest suitable environment.[40]

For Aristotle, the only things that have qualities are substances. So, if natural place is "essentially a qualitative environment," then it is constituted, not principally by spatial location, but by the character of the bodies found in that location. Place being *proper* to the nature of a body is not a result of spatial locality, but the qualitative environment of the surroundings. The upshot of this is that substances, for Aristotle, are prior in being to place, and especially natural place, a point that runs contrary to Lang's argument.

Lang had argued that place, being itself the actuality of the elemental bodies, is prior to the bodies that are in place; and because "up" is actual because of the definition given to it by place, "up" can be the actuality of fire-and hence we see why place is the cause of elemental motion. In contrast, Weisheipl claims that "[i]t is not to a position in space that natural bodies spontaneously move to but to an environment."[41]

Weisheipl's notion of environment, which is garnered from and consistent with experience, "has nothing to do with absolute position in the universe." Continuing, Weisheipl notes: "Our

[40] Weisheipl, "Space and Gravitation," 183.

[41] Ibid., 185.

conception of an absolute space endowed with fixed positions arises from the imagination. Moreover, there is nothing about this imaginative space which can account for the movement of bodies in the universe."[42] For Weisheipl, it is not immobility, or any spatial location, but instead the qualitative features of place that *explain* the motion of bodies. For "to explain" is "to state a cause," and while the immobility of place and spatial locations are important as frames of reference for measurements or descriptions of bodies in motion, they do not *cause* motion or behavior. Rather, qualities of bodies (that is, their active and passive properties) are the efficient causes of the motions and particular behaviors we encounter in experience.

Lang argues that absolute immobility is the most important feature of the Aristotelian conception of place.[43] Although Weisheipl concedes that Aristotle does in fact provide an argument for the absolute immobility of place, he claims that this argument neither grows organically from, nor is required by, the principles of nature that Aristotle presents in books 1-3 of the *Physics;* rather, according to Weisheipl, Aristotle "is really trying to justify the absolute character of *platonic* space."[44] Weisheipl claims that not only is the claim of absolute immobility unnecessary, it conflicts with Aristotle's own principles of scientific investigation and his own argument. That is, the concern does not originate organically from his principled approach to nature, but rather from a tradition to which he is no doubt indebted, but with which he is also in profound disagreement, not only in doctrines (e.g., relation of form and matter, accounts of change), but in methodology (e.g., the role of the sense

[42] Ibid., 186.

[43] Lang, *The Order of Nature,* 70-80: "the differentiation of 'up', 'down', etc., is the *most important* feature of place both for Aristotle's account of place as in some sense required by things in motion and for his account of elemental motion in the *De Caelo."* See also ibid., 100: "In short, the constitution of the cosmos as determinate, i.e., 'up' and down', is a direct consequence of defining place as a limit, and moved things are explained within the determinate cosmos. This consequence confirms the intimate relation between place and the cosmos and so provides a strong clue as to why place is a term without which motion in things seems to be impossible."

[44] Weisheipl, "Space and Gravitation," 183 (emphasis added).

experience in human knowing).[45] So when Weisheipl criticizes Aristotle's argument for the immobility of place, he believes he is liberating the valid, Aristotelian notion of natural place from a debilitating appendage not essentially tied to it.

Weisheipl's criticism proceeds from two grounds. First of all, Aristotle's claim (which, according to Weisheipl, is really Plato's) that place in the universe is designated absolutely with an immobile "up" and "down" is not justified.[46] Aristotle was in no position to declare that there was an absolute and immovable order and dimension to place:

> If we are talking about an order or *situs* existing in reality, what basis is there for saying that it has absolute immobility? According to what framework is that order the same and immovable? To say that there exists an absolute matrix against which the immobility of positions has absolute significance is to assert something without justification. All we can really [or validly] assert is that the relative positions *quoadnos* are the same and immovable.... This is all we are justified in meaning, and this is all we need to mean.[47]

Not only, however, is the claim to the immobility of space groundless, but it is entirely unhelpful in coming to a true understanding of the nature of things:

[45] Aristotle often criticized the Platonists for their method of approaching nature by way of speeches (logo1), instead of experience (see *Metaphysics* 1.6.987a30-988a7. For example: "The cause of comparative inability to see the agreed facts as a whole is experience. That is why those who are more at home in physical investigations are better able to postulate the sort of principles which can connect together a wide range of data; those whom much attention to *logos* has diverted from the study of beings come too readily to their conclusions after viewing a few facts. One can see from this too how much difference there is between those who employ a physical and those who employ a 'logical' mode of enquiry" *(On Generation and Corruption* 1.2.316a5-11 *[Aristotle's De Generatione et Corruptione,* trans. with notes C. J. F. Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), emended]). In experience we find that things change. Parmenides ruled that change was unthinkable, and therefore impossible. Parmenides began a tradition of philosophizing in spite of experience, opting instead for the way of logos. Aristotle seems to suggest that Plato himself is too much indebted to this element of the Parmenidean tradition. Aristotle, it could be said, takes experience as that which is to be explained, and, hence, he brings logos back to its source: intelligible being.

[46] See 211a5: "all places have the up and the down, and all of the bodies are carried and remain by nature in the proper places."

[47] Weisheipl, "Space and Gravitation," 184-85.

> Furthermore, even assuming that an absolute immobility could be ascribed to space, this space would have no value in explaining the movement of bodies to one place rather than another. An undifferentiated 'space' cannot account for the difference of movement. It is place rather than space which yields an explanation of locomotion. Physical place, being a qualitative environment, can account for the spontaneous movement of a body to one place rather than another, for it is within the intentionality of natures to seek a suitable environment in which to thrive and to reach fulfillment. While it is true that place must manifest a certain 'immobility', there is no need to think of it as absolute. All that is evident in experience is the relative immobility of natural place; and this is all that is required to explain the movements given in human experience.[48]

For the natural philosopher who wishes to state the causes of motion and of movable being, place must be considered with its qualitative properties. Even though place is defined by Aristotle as the innermost limit of the containing body, this limit cannot be understood in abstraction from the natural body to which it belongs, and still be a consideration of *real* place, that is, place as we experience it in the natural world. Mathematical, spatial limit is a cause of no body or movement. Only qualitative place, or, as Weisheipl prefers, "environment," is capable of explaining the motion and behavior of bodies, since the qualities possessed by the containing body act upon the body which is contained. Aristotle's definition of place as a limit still holds for Weisheipl. The difference between Lang and Weisheipl is that in her consideration, Lang abstracted all natural qualities from place (she "spatialized" place), whereas Weisheipl does not so abstract.

V

Helen Lang tries to show how place is a cause of motion and order in the nature. At 209a19 Aristotle asks the same question:

> Further, of which of the things would one posit a place to be a cause? For it can be no cause in any of the four senses of 'cause', whether as matter of things (for no thing consists of it), or as form or formula of things or as end or as a mover of things.

[48] Ibid., 192-93.

Lang, however, claims that place, having priority to bodies, is in fact a formal and final cause of nature and motion. In her view place is a formal cause, since it is a limit; and it is a final cause since it is an "actuality." Her interpretation not only runs contrary to certain foundational claims of Aristotle's natural philosophy, it explicitly contradicts Aristotle's stated positions specifically regarding natural place.

Weisheipl, on the other hand, provides a far more compelling account of Aristotle's understanding of place and its importance for physics, for Weisheipl's account is more in keeping with Aristotle's general philosophy of nature, and it does not explicitly contradict his stated claims. Even when Weisheipl disagrees with Aristotle, or points out an error in his argument, as in the case of Aristotle's absolutely immobile place and geocentrism, he does so within parameters that are recognizably Aristotelian.

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LINDBECK'S VISION OF THE CHURCH

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I. POSTLIBERALISM:A "RADICAL TRADITION"

EW PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANS in America deserve to be taken as seriously by Catholic readers as George Lindbeck. The former Yale professor attended three of the four sessions of Vatican II (1962-64) as a delegate of the Lutheran World Federation, and in the decades following the council participated in the key bilateral Catholic-Lutheran dialogues that culminated in the 1999 Joint Declaration on Justification. Lindbeck's early scholarship in medieval scholasticism had already inclined him to see points of continuity between Catholic authors like Aquinas and Duns Scotus and the later Protestant Reformers. As a Lutheran he has always identified with the evangelical catholicity of the Augsburg Confession (1530), as opposed to those strains of the Reformation more hostile to Catholic sensibilities. Among the graduate students he mentored at Yale are a number of Catholics-some of whom have appeared in the pages of this journal-who have applied his postliberal principles to a number of theological areas. More than a half-century of research and promotion of efforts to restore church unity and foster interreligious cooperation suggest strong sympathies with the goals of Catholic reform engendered by Vatican II.

One of Lindbeck's former Roman Catholic students, James Buckley, has compiled a helpful reader that demonstrates the appeal of the Yale scholar's postliberal theology and methodology

to a variety of audiences. *The Church in a Postliberal Age* belongs to a series of volumes that Eerdmans calls "Radical Traditions. "[1] The "radical" methodology that Lindbeck employs in the interest of recommitting the adherents of particular faith traditions to the truth claims that shape religious identity and practice has influenced theologians of varying Christian confessions, as well as some Jewish and Muslim scholars. Against the homogenizing tendencies of today's liberal culture, the defense of religious particularity and singularity cuts across denominational and cultural differences. The postliberal method, which received its definitive elucidation in Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984), places "dogmatic faithfulness" and "practical applicability" ahead of "apologetic intelligibility." Christian theology best serves the church not when it translates the believer's core convictions into a supposedly nonpartisan and universal idiom (preliberal approach), nor when it seeks to illumine the believer's inner sentiments of which those convictions are merely expressive (liberal approach), but rather when it fosters an assimilation of the believer into a universe of meaning that is engendered by the biblical story of Jesus and Israel (postliberal approach). Doctrines, as Lindbeck has argued, should be viewed not as primarily informative or symbolic, but instead as regulative of Christian belief, worship, and action in the world.

It would be difficult to overestimate the stimulating effect of this postliberal manifesto on a generation of Anglo-American scholars. The impression that Lindbeck had given voice to what some observers thought of as an emergent "Yale school"-which included his colleagues Hans Frei, David Kelsey, and Paul Holmer-helped to elicit swift reactions from varying and disparate quarters. Charges of relativism could be heard from cognitive propositionalists who read into some of Lindbeck's statements a disregard for the ontological status of dogmatic assertions. Experiential expressivists--or those whom Lindbeck appeared to identify as such-saw his reliance on analytical

[1] George A. Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age,* ed. James J. Buckley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002). Pp. 252. ISBN 0-8028-3995-9.

philosophy (Ludwig Wittgenstein) and cultural anthropology (Clifford Geertz) as a smokescreen for a rehashed Barthian style fideism. More recently, deconstructionist minded critics have questioned whether postliberalism's tendency to immunize the biblical story against critiques from the outside does not itself hide a hegemonic intent to regain the "center" of Western culture which had been lost through post-Enlightenment secularization. Yet other scholars searching for a means of opposing the "acids of modernity" that corrode confidence in communal religion and its particular truth claims have found in postliberalism, and in Lindbeck's cultural linguistic theory in particular, a research program that fosters faithfulness to one's own tribe while avoiding the unsavory aspects of fundamentalism or a wholesale sectarian retreat from culture.

Lindbeck himself has expressed surprise at the amount of controversy generated by his postliberal theory. Its purpose, he has argued, has always been to explicate the lessons learned from the ecumenical dialogues. The cultural-linguistic theory of religion and doctrine assumes for him a subordinate role in the overall effort to build bridges between religions and ecclesial communions. The primary concern has been to show how supposedly contradictory formulations of Christian doctrine on such matters as infallibility and justifying faith might be shown to be compatible on the twofold basis of their linguistic coherence with the universal norm of Scripture and their moral coherence with a way of life that the other side can identify as Christian. As Lindbeck notes in *The Nature of Doctrine,* the theory could be employed to demonstrate how positions that have been historically opposed can now appear as complementary aspects of a more comprehensive grasp of the truth.

By the late 1980s Lindbeck's primary focus shifted from his "pre-theological" concerns with cultural-linguistic theory and comparative dogmatics to rethinking the nature and purpose of the church. Against a changed ecclesial setting, in which efforts to resolve doctrinal differences among the confessions have yielded only a modest harvest, and ecumenism itself has been largely

redefined in terms of a shared commitment to peace, justice, and protecting the earth, Lindbeck has been laying the groundwork for an ecclesiology that looks to healing the primordial "division" of Christianity, namely, that between the church and the synagogue. The Israel-like vision of the Church, developed in the most trenchant of his essays in the Buckley volume, serves as something of a "tease" for readers anxious for a fuller and more systematic treatment of postliberal ecclesiology, on which Lindbeck has been rumored to be working for more than a decade and a half.

For the remainder of this review, I propose to examine five aspects of Lindbeck's postliberal proposals for the church. Beginning with (II) an examination of the nature of the church as the people of God in radical continuity with Israel, I will then assess in briefer fashion (III) Lindbeck's treatment of three additional areas that normally fall under a general study of ecclesiology: (A) ecclesial organization, (B) the teaching office, and (C) the mission *ad extra.* My overall concern in engaging this collection of essays, which spans more than three decades of scholarship, is to determine how congruent Lindbeck's proposals are with key developments in Catholic ecclesial self-understanding since Vatican II. While I maintain that Lindbeck's intriguing vision deserves a warm reception among Catholic scholars-especially those proposals that touch on the Catholic Church's irreversible commitment to overcoming doctrinal differences between itself and other communions-I am also aware that his re-visioning of the church necessitates careful scrutiny.

II. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Fundamental to Lindbeck's concerns is the need to demonstrate that the church and Israel form a single people. The coming of Christ brings about no rupture in the history of salvation. In the seminal reflections of Paul, Israel remains the true vine and the Gentile Christians are the branches grafted to the tree (Rom 11:11-36). For the early Christians, Jesus of

Nazareth institutes the new covenant in order that the one people of God might be enlarged, not replaced. By means of the covenant made in Christ's blood, the uncircumcised now share in the covenant with Abraham; or to put it another way, the first covenant has now achieved in Jesus the universal efficacy that had inhered in it from the beginning (Gen 12:3). There is no break between the followers of Jesus and the rest of Israel, for together they form one "household" (Eph 2:19) and one human being (Eph 3:6). Both groups retain their identity as agents in a continuous narrative in which God's saving will unfolds in surprising ways.

What are Christians then? For Lindbeck they form not "the new Israel" or "the new people of God" (both are nonbiblical terms), but rather that portion of God's single people who know themselves to be living in the time after the messianic era has begun, but before the final coming of the kingdom. In ecclesiology redefined as *Israelology,* the unity in identity of Christians and Jews serves not only to ground a proper understanding of the church, but also to help heal that primordial division within Christian history which has underwritten centuries of anti-Semitism and planted the seed for all ensuing schisms among the disciples of Christ.

To argue that church and Israel make up a single people implies a return to a nascent Christian awareness. Followers of Jesus, Lindbeck argues, found their personal and corporate identity within the only culture-forming narrative available to them, that is, the story of Israel. With Old Testament Scripture as a template, these Christians could interpret themselves as another faithful remnant which had passed from death to life by means of God's saving hand (1 Pet 3:18-22). But no less importantly for these first generations, less favorable parts of the Old Testament could also be applied to the church and her members. In Paul's interpretation of the Torah, the bad examples of Israel's adultery and idolatry serve as types *(typoi)* written as a warning to Christians who might be similarly tempted (1 Cor 10:5-10). Far from being a sinless community, Christians know that judgment

begins within their own household (1 Pet 4: 17). One clear difference between this exegesis and the kind that would inform the supercessionist theologies of the postapostolic period is that Jesus Christ alone-and not the church-is the fulfillment of the various types that foreshadow him in the Old Testament (cf. Matt 2:15). The church-according to what is purportedly the dominant Pauline view-is not the anti-type or "reality" in relation to Israel the "shadow," but rather the continuation of that same people of God, only now in the age and with the composition of the Gentiles.

The choice of Israel as the primary template for ecclesial self-description appears to serve a dual purpose for Lindbeck the Lutheran and ecumenist. For one, it casts the discussion in categories consonant with a *sola scriptura* approach to doctrine. The "people of God" image has long been considered ecumenically fruitful on account of its strong biblical inspiration and capacity to counter the triumphalist strain in ecclesiology, which identifies the church as sinless and its teachings as irreformable. When realistic-narrative is allowed to render the true nature of the church, the description can only be of an empirical agent and not some invisible, "all holy" essence that lies beyond the space-time world in which human struggle with sin abounds. An "invisible church," Lindbeck maintains, is as biblically odd as an invisible Israel.

The Israelological approach also draws support from a large body of contemporary New Testament scholarship that uncovers the threads of continuity between Judaism and the organizational patterns and self-understanding of nascent Christianity. Today scholars of varying confessional ties agree that the teaching of Jesus and the views of the New Testament writers assume the permanent validity of Israel's relationship with God, its ethical teachings, and its communal structures (many of which were adopted by the early church). These same biblical scholars carefully distinguish anti-Jewish polemic in the New Testament-which has to do with concrete historical contexts-from later hostility or persecution of the Jews *as Jews.* The latter form of

anti-Semitism, the Pontifical Biblical Commission has recently argued, has no basis in the New Testament. What are sometimes found in Christian Scripture, the commission states in its document *The Jewish People and Their Scriptures in the Christian Bible,* "are reproaches addressed to certain categories of Jews for religious reasons, as well as polemical texts to defend the Christian apostolate against Jews who oppose it."

In making the "one people of God" image foundational, Lindbeck provides a framework that allows for critical engagement with anti-Judaism and greater appreciation of the Jewish faith as a partner to the church in its own self-discovery. Christianity needs Judaism as it needs no other religion, Pope John Paul II has argued. In a 1980 visit to the synagogue in Mainz, the pope enunciated the principle that the "encounter between the people of God of the Old Covenant, which has never been abrogated by God, and that of the New Covenant is also an internal dialogue in our church, similar to that between the first and second part of the Bible." In pursuit of this dialogue, Lindbeck insists that the story of Israel must once again provide the narrative context for unfolding everything else about the church, including its traditional marks of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. From now on Christians must think of themselves as "honorary Jews"-an expression that Lindbeck borrows from Lutheran bishop and exegete Krister Stendahl.

One may share with Lindbeck many of the same motives for advancing an Israel-like view of the church, and still question whether the template he employs is indeed the most fruitful one or even the most biblically faithful one. The same 2001 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission that argues for the internal role played by Judaism in the formation of early Christian identity also treats two other values that factor into New Testament interpretation. A hermeneutic of "continuity" must be balanced by a hermeneutic of "discontinuity" and "fulfillment" in order to account for what is distinct about the mission of Jesus, and also to make room for the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament as a "possible" reading. Rather than merely fulfill Old Testament

Scripture, Jesus sheds new light on them to uncover meanings that would scarcely have been recognizable to many of his Jewish contemporaries. As the Christian messiah, Jesus does not merely re-gather the people of God through his prophetic work and life-saving death, but also re-creates them as an altogether new community of faith. As sharers in the Passover of Jesus, Christians become in Paul's pleromatic words "a new creation" (Gal 6:15) that anticipates but has not yet achieved the participation of all of Israel (cf. Rom 11:23-33).

It is questionable whether Lindbeck's interpretive framework corresponds precisely to that of the early Christians. While he acknowledges that for the New Testament writers Israel's story has been "transposed into a new key through Christ," it is not always dear what this Christological transposition entails. What does it mean, for example, to be the people of God "in Christ"-an expression that appears with frequency in Pauline texts? Do not baptism and Eucharistic communion constitute a bond stronger than that of natural blood ties (cf. 1 Cor 10:16)-and one that, at least to some degree, eludes empirical description? Is the "new human being" of Ephesians 2:11-14 the composite of all Christians and Jews (as Lindbeck supposes), or is it rather made up of those who "have been brought near by the blood of Christ"? Does the church come to birth from the womb of Israel, or from the crucified one who is raised up in order to draw all people to himself (cf. John 12:32; 19:34)? In answering these questions many patristic exegetes appear to be closer to the early Christian consciousness than is Lindbeck, whose empirical definition excludes giving priority to the invisible bonds that unite believers in Christ.

The postliberal emphasis on the empirical church also appears to reverse the direction that has gradually become dominant in Roman Catholic ecclesiology over the past two centuries. Against the backdrop of the late medieval and Tridentine notion of the church as *societas perfecta,* theologians like Johann Adam Mohler (1796-1838) set the agenda for modern Catholic ecclesiology by seeking to move beyond an overly empirical church concept that

emphasized external structures at the expense of the Church's interior life. For St. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) and other earlier proponents of Tridentine reform, appeal to a visible church-society-indeed one as concrete as the Kingdom of France andthe Republic of Venice-helped to define Roman ecclesiology over and against Calvin's "invisible church" of the elect. But by the mid-twentieth century Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* (1943) could build on decades of biblical and patristic research that uncovered a more organic notion that did justice to the interior dimensions of ecclesial communion, even while maintaining the identity of the Mystical Body with the historic Roman Catholic Church. The proper ordering of the invisible and the visible aspects of the Church occupied a number of theologians who would help shape the agenda of Vatican II, including Emile Mersch (1890-1940), Yves Congar (1904-1995), and Henri de Lubac (1896-1991). It was de Lubac's analysis of the sacramental character of the Church that helped to frame the entire discussion of the church constitution, *Lumen gentium.*

By endorsing Lindbeck's call for a church as visible as historic Israel, the Catholic interpreter would be swimming against the tide of nearly two hundred years of ecclesiological development. It is doubtful whether an exclusive focus on "people of God" can provide a sufficient basis for ecclesial self-understanding and reform. The Second Vatican Council makes a strategic decision by including the discussion of "people of God" in the second chapter of *Lumen gentium,* only after treating the mystery dimension of the church as sacrament of unity and instrument of salvation. For Lindbeck the selection of one image or concept over another appears somewhat arbitrary. Yet for the bishops at the 1985 Roman Synod, convened to assess the reception of Vatican II, the "people of God" metaphor cannot stand alone. In seeking to counter "a unilateral presentation of the Church as a purely institutional structure devoid of her Mystery," the synod's Final Report insists that "people of God" must be viewed as mutually dependent with the other biblical images taken up in *Lumen gentium,* such as body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit. In

language that cautions against over-reaction to the institutional ecclesiology dominant in the pre-Vatican II era, the document asserts that we "cannot replace a false unilateral vision of the Church as purely hierarchical with a new sociological conception which is also unilateral." It would seem that from the standpoint of these developments, Lindbeck's proposal for an Israel-like view of the church could only be judged acceptable by the Catholic if it were expanded to include other concepts.

III. TOPICS IN ECCLESIOLOGY

A) Organization of the Church

Turning to specific topics in ecclesiology, Lindbeck finds broad application for the Israel template. The neuralgic issue of the indispensability of the threefold office of bishops-presbyters-deacons emerges from the ecumenical dialogues in which the Yale scholar has been a participant. For Lindbeck's Lutheran associates, whatever benefits the episcopal order might have served in guiding the formulation of the faith and maintaining unity in the early centuries, its present and future role must be subordinated to the rule of faith found in Scripture. The freedom of the gospel demands that all ministerial structures be, in principle, adaptable to changing circumstances. Catholics, by contrast, find in the historic order of bishops a permanent embodiment of the church's Christological foundation. Faithfulness to Christ demands communion with the successors of the apostles who carry out his mission to the nations. Seeking to bridge the divide between Catholic institutionalism and Protestant functionalism, Lindbeck argues not for the replacement of Catholic leadership structures, but for their reform on the basis of biblical warrants.

Within the narrative of Scripture leadership develops according to both institutional and functionalist patterns. Lindbeck sees the changing forms of Israel's government from the time of the judges through the monarchy to the period of the diaspora as evidence for the Protestant insistence on functionality as a providentially

sanctioned standard. Yet the same scriptural story also points up how "functionally important" are such long-surviving institutions as the Davidic monarchy, which-analogous to long-surviving species-"can incorporate in their genetic code a wealth of evolutionary wisdom unmatched by conscious calculation." Even Paul is made to recognize that his own divinely authorized mission to the Gentiles requires approbation from the apostolic leadership in Jerusalem which is also sanctioned by God (Gal 2:2-6). Tradition counts for the postliberal theologian, and ruptures in the continuity of tradition-bearing offices "are to be avoided except when absolutely necessary, and even then the search for precedents is important."

Lindbeck extends this principle of tradition's functional importance into the postbiblical world. God's providential guidance of his people continues into the era of the early church when the episcopal structure becomes the unifying power for maintaining catholic faith and worship. Protestants should have no trouble accepting the historic episcopate-at least in the form in which the Lima text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) recommends it-as something congruent with the biblical conviction that Christ does not desert his church. In fact the communion network of early Christianity, in which bishops certified one another's orthodoxy by means of communion letters and various liturgical devices, provides something of a model for the organizational pattern that Lindbeck believes will secure Christianity's survival in the third millennium. Within this postliberal vision, the church begins to resemble a "Christian Internationale of sect-like groups" in which otherwise autonomous communities remain mutually accountable after the pattern of the catholic *ecumene* of the late Roman empire.

In reappraising leadership structures on the basis of early church *communio,* Lindbeck follows a general trend in ecumenical theology. Yet by recommending that the episcopal ministry be restored to those Reformation communities currently lacking it, he makes an historical case for the utility of this office in maintaining unity both within and among the particular

churches. Tied to this "functionalist" argument is the insistence that neither the episcopal order nor any other can be thought of as irreversible. Protestants necessarily view the daim "that a specific ordering of the church is permanently optim::iJ as infringing on God's freedom, confusing law gospel, and endangering the principle that human beings, including church communities, are justified by faith, not by works." Remaining nonepiscopal has been for much of Reformation Christianity a matter of defending the authentic gospel against corrupting alternatives. Were the policy to be reversed for the sake of inter-church unity, the decision would remain, by virtue the "Scripture alone" and "faith alone" principles, of necessity provisional.

It is questionable whether adopting the episcopal structure under these conditions passes the test of commensurability with the Catholic understanding of ministry as fundamentally sacramental. Eucharistic ecdesiology, as it has developed within Catholic circles since Vatican H, has increasingly emphasized the correspondence between structures of worship and office. The episcopal order cannot be added "from the outside" as a matter of expediency, even for so laudable a cause as inter-church unity, but rather emerges "from within" as both an expression a guarantee of the church's essential unity that was present on the day of Pentecost and can never be lost. For this reason, a valid Eucharist requires a vali.depiscopal order: the eucharistic body of Christ, which is one before it becomes present on the many altars of the world, always exists relation to both the and its episcopal ministry which remain one before they are actualized in particular churches (dioceses). This priority of the universal church over particular churches their local altar communities, defended in the Vatican document *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion* (1992), is Hnked to the priority of the episcopal college over the admission to the episcopal office of each of its members. Bishops do not form themselves into an association for the sake of mutual accountability, as Lindbeck would seem to suggest. Rather, they are inserted upon their

episcopal consecration into an already existing college that stands in succession to the apostles. It is this connection across space and time with the universal college that renders the eucharistic celebration of the bishop (or of one his delegates) truly catholic. Missing from Lindbeck's ecclesiology is a clear sense of how the episcopal order arises not only as means of securing the church's organizational unity, but also as a requirement of its sacramental worship. It is uncertain to this writer whether postliberal ecclesiology, in seeking to preserve catholic structures, preserves their catholicity.

(B) The Teaching Office

Seeking to reconcile historic antinomies has occupied many of Lindbeck's labors in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogues. Ecumenical experience has taught the Yale scholar that when it comes to specific confessional statements, and the teaching organs that generate these statements, scholars today must attend to the cultural-linguistic contexts in which beliefs are formulated. For example, Lutheran statements on justification belong to a Lutheran linguistic system that develops along existential and personalistic lines to address a specific set of problems (e.g., the need for passive submission to the word of God). The doctrinal assertions of Trent, however, reveal an indebtedness to the metaphysical categories of Scholasticism which are employed to address wholly different concerns (e.g., human cooperation with grace). Both thought-forms ultimately take their departure from the biblical story and its subsequent formulations in the early creeds, but neither should be evaluated according to the standards of the other's categories. "The unity of the churches is not properly attained by surrender, capitulation, or loss of identity on either side," Lindbeck argues, but rather by demonstrations of how each side's doctrine remains faithful to the meta-theological rule-in the case of justification, the human being's utter dependency on God for salvation-embedded in the gospel.

Obedience to the word of God as attested in Scripture functions as *the* meta-rule for assessing every doctrine and every means of producing doctrine. In Lindbeck's reading of Vatican II's Constitution on Divine Revelation, no. 10, tradition no longer constitutes an independent source from Scripture (as it did in certain Tridentine theologies), but is rather the interpretive context for rendering the word of God. The same conciliar text also maintains that the Catholic Magisterium "is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on." In pointing to these passages from Vatican II, Lindbeck appears to be wanting to make room within official Catholic teaching for a *sola scriptura* position that gives to sacred Scripture the status of ultimate norm. Yet the same conciliar constitution advances an argument against the exclusive sufficiency of Scripture *(Dei Verbum,* no. 9), and in favor of the coinherence of tradition, Scripture, and magisterium (no. 10). Each of these three streams flows from the same divine "wellspring" and cannot exist without the other two. Scripture, while being in some sense the unnormed measure of Christian belief, nonetheless requires a living voice for its faithful elucidation in every age.

Looking across the Reformation divide at Catholicism the Protestant quarrels not with whether there are infallible teachings, but with the claim for an indispensable office that teaches infallibly. Protestants accept infallible beliefs, such as those contained in Scripture and the creeds, but not *permanently* infallible structures. Yet even in this instance of disagreement the postliberal task becomes that of trying to identify the truth contained beneath centuries of cultural-linguistic overgrowth-or as Lindbeck puts it, "to extract a tumorous growth from a vital organ without committing suicide." While lacking this vital organ, Protestants must acknowledge that their own evangelical beliefs only found expression by means of instruments that were at one time permitted by divine providence to speak binding truth.

What reforms need to take place within the Catholic Magisterium before inter-church unity can be achieved? Lindbeck offers three recommendations that have been germane to a

number of the ecumenical dialogues. First, conciliar infallibility must demonstrate true ecumenicity. From a Protestant standpoint, the Council of Trent was incapable of speaking for the whole church because it lacked the representation of much of western Christendom. Second, both conciliar and papal infallibility must be tied to the principle of reception. No confessional statement has the guarantee of infallibility merely by fulfilling some juridical or formal conditions quite apart from its recognition as belonging to the faith by a biblically formed people-what Catholics identify as the *sensus fidelium.* Third, the Catholic teaching office must always present its dogmatic statements-the Marian ones of the past, and any future ones-in such a way that other churches and communions can recognize them, "even if not necessarily true, as not opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Even if these conditions were ultimately able to be harmonized with the claims of both Vatican I and Vatican II-and that is a big "if"-the achievement would not logically require of Protestants an acceptance of either papal or conciliar infallibility as constitutive of the church's life and mission. The ultimate terms of reunion would allow Catholics to continue believing that when certain conditions are met popes and councils have immunity from error when they teach definitively, whereas Protestants would only be made to hope that such were indeed the case. Within Lindbeck's vision of doctrinal reconciliation, the Reformation's rejection of the indispensability of the hierarchical priesthood as the final arbiter of Christian truth continues to be upheld. A teaching office may exist in the postliberal blueprints for a reunited church, but it appears that its authority is finally subsumed by the *so/a scriptura* principle.

(CJ The Mission to the World

In turning to the last of the topics, the most distinctive challenges in postliberal ecclesiology come into view. Alternative theologies have misconstrued the purpose of the church's mission, which is neither the salvation of souls-as if the church exhausted

God's saving activity in history-nor the amelioration unjust conditions in society. Both the narrowly sectarian gospel and the social gospel miss the point. In Lindbeck's understanding the possibilities of both salvation and damnation actually increase when one enters the Christian community, as evidenced by its history which tells the story of both faithfulness rejection of Christ's kingdom agapeic love. The church's most crucial service on behalf of the world is rather to be a sign, "to give witness to the God who judges and saves, not to save those who would otherwise be damned." Christians must be concerned first with the quality of their own and personal witness, and not with repairing the wider society nor the spiritual condition of its inhabitants.

Effective witnesses requires formation within communities that build Christian character and seek to understand the world from the vantage point of the Christian story. Such training is arduous, as the early church must have understood when it required prolonged catechesis for its initiates. Unlike the Pharisees, whom Jesus condemns for traveling far and wide to make proselytes (Matt 23: 15), the early Christians insisted on several years of immersion in the teachings and practices of the new faith so that a wholly new way of apprehending self and world could emerge. The restoration of the ancient Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), and its accompanying catechumenal process today's Catholic parishes, offers perhaps the dearest example a post-Vatican II reform congruent Lindbeck's vision for the future church.

Rethinking the church along the lines of pre-Constantinian Christianity follows from Lindbeck's earliest writings the Buckley volume, which forecast the conditions under which the church can survive an age of de-Christianization. Borrowing from Karl Rabner the image of the "diaspora church," Lindbeck remains cautiously optimistic about the possibilities of reassuming the minority status that characterized the Christian movement in early centuries, and that has always distinguished the situation of Jews outside the land of IsraeL As the histories of

both communities demonstrate, the Christian people can have a vast influence on culture even when their numbers remain relatively small. Sociologically, sectarian status need not exclude an orientation toward culture that is fully catholic and engaged.

Yet in order for the church to reacquire this kind of evangelical efficacy within society, its internal unity and catholic identity must be firm. "Thus those whose convictions and values are radically different from the majority must huddle together in cohesive groups of the like-minded in order mutually to support each other in maintaining their minority definitions of the real and the good." By becoming more Israel-like, more conscious of its place within the one people of God, Christians can acquire a faithfulness to the sacred texts and rituals that can positively shape their identity and make the church's presence in society truly transformative. A biblically informed *sensus fidelium* may be perhaps the most potent Christian means of combating injustice and helping to create a global environment in which peace among the religions and ethnic communities can prevail.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This writer believes that Lindbeck's postliberal proposals fall short of being fully reconcilable with a postconciliar Catholic view of the nature, structure, and teaching function of the church. Without certain modifications, Israelology and the postliberal recommendations for reforming ecclesial structures remain unacceptable on Catholic dogmatic grounds. Yet when it comes to the general thrust of Lindbeck's assessment of the church's relationship with culture, a different response from the Catholic may be called for. Like Christians of other confessions, Catholics know themselves to be living in what Lindbeck describes as the middle period of post-Enlightenment secularization, in which the forces of history are gradually transforming the churches sociologically into sect-like enclaves. Progressive secularization, and not the proselytizing efforts of Pentecostals, Christian fundamentalists, and (more recently) Muslims, has been the

principal cause of defections from the Catholic Church places like Latin America. The cultural landscape looks different from the way it might have appeared forty years ago when the fathers of Vatican II anticipated an era of rapprochement between the church and modem culture. An era in conciliar theology that regarded the Catholic gospel as translatable into terms set by some of the modem philosophical systems seems aH but completely ended. Younger Catholic scholars are more inclined to inquire into the thought-forms engendered by the texts and practices of their own particular tradition or that of another group, rather than to assess the daims of faith from some allegedly neutral philosophical perspective. For some time now, faithfulness to one's own particularity has counted as a higher value (even in interfaith and ecumenical discussions) than seeking some universal ground on which to stand.

Perhaps George Lindbeck's most enduring legacy will have been to provide the theological warrants for repositioning the churches in relation to contemporary culture. One young Austrian interpreter of postliberalism, Andreas Eckerstorfer, argues persuasively for this point in his book *Kirche der postmodernen Welt* (2001), Certainly in the wake of the sex abuse scandals, attacks on Catholic leadership and teaching by elements within the culture have reawakened old suspicions about whether America can provide a hospitable cultural environment in which authentic Catholicism can thrive. Yet the same church crisis might also be said to offer evidence for what might seem to be a most anti-posdiberal viewpoint, namely, that the church sometimes is severely lacking the resources for its own self-reform. Time wiU tell whether the voice of Professor Lindbeck and his posdiberal supporters can not only diagnose our present predicaments, but also provide viable solutions.

BOOK REVIEWS

Proportionalism and the Natural Law Tradition. By CHRISTOPHER KACZOR. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002. Pp. x + 228. $49.95 (doth). ISBN 0-8132-1093-3.

In 1989 Richard McCormick observed that a shift had occurred in Catholic moral theology. A "revisionist" perspective on moral analysis, known as "proportionalism," had emerged among Catholic ethicists. Briefly stated, proportionalism is a method for determining the moral rightness or wrongness of actions and for identifying exceptions to moral norms. McCormick further asserted that most Catholic moral theologians embrace some form of proportionahsm. Whether or not this second assertion is still valid, proportionalism remains deeply influential. Yet, does proportionalism mark a renewal of moral theology, as revisionist theologians claim, or is it a corruption? In his insightful and well-written analysis of proportionalism, Christopher Kaczor attempts to answer this question.

Kaczor begins his study by describing proportionalism as understood by its proponents (ch. 1). He offers the reader a sympathetic account of proportionalism's inherent attractiveness as a solution to the problems facing moral theology. He then considers proportionalism's relationship to the manuals of moral theology (ch. 2). Although many revisionists see proportionalism as rejecting the manuals and returning to the thought of Aquinas, Kaczor holds instead that proportionalism develops aspects of manualist thought that diverge sharply from Aquinas. Kaczor explains that although proportionalists reach a number of conclusions that manualists would reject, proportionalism is rooted in the moral psychology of the manuals and develops features latent in it. Specifically, proportionalism's view of intention, the central place it affords double-effect reasoning, and even its understanding of proportion all resemble the dominant manuahst perspective on moral analysis. Kaczor next offers an admirable sketch of Aquinas's theory of action, emphasizing the difference between intended and foreseen consequences. This enables Kaczor to compare Thomistic and proportionalist ways of analyzing specific cases and to introduce his initial criticisms of the proportionalist perspective (ch. 3). In the remaining chapters, Kaczor considers features of human action that proportionalists themselves consider fundamentally important: the object of the human act (ch. 4), the character of practical reasoning (chs. 5 and 6), and the nature of moral

norms (ch. 7). In these latter chapters Kaczor develops his case against the thesis that proportionalism is a renewal of moral theology. He argues instead that proportionalism harnesses the terminology of the "natural law tradition" only to undermine its core conclusions. Instead of effecting a harmonious evolution in Catholic moral thought, proportionalism marks a revolution that overturns the tradition's fundamental principles.

In considering the initial "plausibility of proportionalism," Kaczor introduces the principal protagonists (Knauer, Janssens, Schuller, Fuchs, McCormick, etc.), and places them in the context of their contribution to proportionahsm's development. This first chapter is slender, yet it sketches accurately proportionalism's central concepts: pre-moral good and evil, proportionate reason, the rightness/goodness distinction, deontology vs. teleology, the question of intrinsically evil acts and of exception!ess moral norms. Kaczor covers ground here familiar to anyone who has followed the debate. His account is dear and well structured. Those unfamiliar with proportionalism will find this chapter an accessible introduction to it.

Kaczor's account of the relationship between proportionalism and the tradition of the manuals is perhaps his most important contribution to the contemporary discussion. Without downplaying the differences between proportionalists and the manuals, Kaczor traces convincingly how the proportionalist perspective presupposes a manuahst conception of human agency. In portraying the manualist roots of proportionalism, Kaczor also underlines how both these perspectives differ from Aquinas.

First, there is the issue of double-effect reasoning. Aquinas only employs double-effect reasoning once, in a single article of the *Secunda Secundae,* where it enables him to appiy in a particular case (self-defense) the more fundamental principles he introduced in the *Prima Secundae.* Both marmalists and proportionalists, however, place double-effect reasoning at the center of their thought, transforming double-effect reasoning itself into a fundamental principle, whether this be the "principle of double-effect," or the "principle of proportionate reason."

Second, manuahsts and proportionalists share similar conceptions of proportionality. For both, the relevant proportion is between the good and bad effects of an act, which (borrowing from Brian Johnstone) Kaczor describes as the "effect/effect proportion." For example, both groups determine the morality of an act of self-defense by analyzing the proportion between what they consider as the two effects of the act: the death of the aggressor and the preservation of the defender's life. Kaczor notes, however, that Aquinas considers the relevant proportion to be that between an act and its (intrinsic) end-the "act/end proportion." Aquinas uses the concept of proportionality to affirm that the defender should use only the force necessary to stop the attack. The agent's action (force used against an unjust aggressor) should be proportionate to the intrinsic end of the action intended (self-defense).

Third, manualists and proportionalists share an equally impoverished account of intention. While Aquinas recognizes the inner stages of action, describing

agents as *intending an end,* manualists and proportionalists neglect the interior features of action and simply describe agents as *causing effects.* Kaczor explains that this impoverished view leads both manualists and proportionalists to underestimate the moral value of the Thomistic distinction between intended and foreseen consequences.

Kaczor explains that while foresight functions as a prediction concerning future events and pertains solely to the intellect, intention entails desire and primarily belongs to the will. For example, although we may be held responsible for an act's foreseen consequences, we are only described as intending those acts we directly will. Kaczor holds, however, that proportionalists deny the moral significance of **this** distinction, at least concerning what they describe as "pre-moral goods and evils." They affirm that what we directly intend in the mechanics of executing the act (what some call "psychological intention") is not of itself morally significant. What matters is the "moral intention," which is solely determined by the presence or absence of proportionate reason between the *"pre-moral* goods and evils" effected. From this perspective, the pre-moral evil caused (such as killing a human being) becomes a moral evil (murder) only if we will it without a proportionate reason. On the other hand, if the pre-moral evil of killing is done for a proportionate *pre-moral*good (saving innocent life) then the act is *morally* good and one who intends such an act has a morally good intention. He is intending self-defense. Kaczor rightly counters, however, that what we psychologically intend has a moral component. It affects our moral character. Yet, Kaczor also recognizes that to understand this we need to understand more about practical reasoning's role in defining the act's object.

Kaczor remarks that at issue in proportionalism is the nature of the object. How do we determine an act's object? All agree that certain specific features (sometimes called the "specifying circumstances") determine or change an act's object. For example, the specific identity of the person with whom one has sexual relations-one's spouse or the spouse of another--changes the object (moral character) of the act. The proportionalists, however, go further and assert that the consequences of one's action also enter into the object. Some proportionalists interpret this to mean that an agent's motive (remote end) is a constitutive component of the moral object of the act. Others seek to retain the distinction between end and object, but nonetheless see the moral object as constructed from a iarger set of circumstances than traditional moral analysis would admit. Either way, at issue is whether and which consequences are constitutive of the moral object.

Kaczor notes, however, that a theory that regards the motive (or other consequences of the act) as constitutive of the object could in principle justify virtually any "pre-moral evil" in the presence of a proportionate pre-moral good. For example, from the proportionalist perspective, why couldn't a sheriff kill an innocent person if doing so would save the lives of many others? After sketching the "secondary conditions" proportionalists formulate to show why such actions are not in fact permissible, Kaczor demonstrates how these solutions fail to convince. Indeed, he suggests that when proportionalists employ secondary

conditions the are actually drawing on a richer conception of human action than their theory itself allows.

Kaczor portrays the determination of the object as posing two challenges. First, there is the challenge of determining what belongs to the agent's intention, as apposed to being simply something the agent foresees as a possible outcome. Second, within the agent's intention, there is the specific challenge of distinguishing the direct object of the agent's intention (proximate end) from the agent's motive (remote end). In response to the first of these two challenges, Kaczor offers four criteria. An outcome is intended if: (1) achievement of the effect presents a problem requiring deliberation; (2) it constrains other intentions; (3) the agent endeavors to achieve the effect, perhaps being forced to return to deliberation if circumstances change; and (4) failure to realize the effect is a failure in the agent's plan. Kaczor persuasively illustrates how these criteria function by applying them to several difficult cases.

Kaczor responds to the second challenge-how to distinguish the proximate from the remote end-by proposing the following principle: the intention is accomplished *without remainder* in the act itself, while the motive is *not* so accomplished. He offers the example of three actions generically the same (giving money to another), but differing specifically by having different proximate and remote intentions: bribing someone to save another's life; loaning money to manipulate the recipient, giving a gift to show love. He notes that in each case the proximate end is effected in the very act of giving money: a bride is offered, a loan or a gift is given. On the other hand, not only are the motives not effected in the act, they might never be. There is no guarantee that the bribe will save a life or the loan will manipulate.

Many readers will find this second solution unsatisfactory, especially as Kaczor applies itto kidney transplantation. He rightly rejects proportionalist attempts to portray the motive as a component of the moral object. Nevertheless, certain complex human actions remain unintelligible if defined too strictly in terms of the physical agency of the agent. For example, when the *Catechism* defines lying as "speaking a falsehood with the intention of *[cum voluntate* ad] deceiving" (2482), it is recognizing an intentional element integral to the object but distinct from the motive. Note too that in this definition, the "intention to deceive" is *not* effected without remainder in the act done (speaking a falsehood), which it would have to be if Kaczor's criterion for establishing the object were correct, since for the *Catechism* the intention to deceive is a constitutive component of lying. Instead, as with organ transplantation, the success of the action (deception) may depend on factors outside of the agent's control. Moreover, Kaczor's failure to allow an expanded object forces him to explain the morality of organ transplantation by affirming that the removal of a kidney from healthy donor does not mutilate the donor's body, something that is hardly credible. It makes more sense to describe the object of the surgeon's intention as directed toward the entire transplantation process, with the health of the recipient being his motive. Although this is not the place to develop this critique, I would like to suggest that a better way to distinguish the proximate

from the remote end would be by developing a criterion of intelligibility. For example, is the removal the kidney intelligible to the surgeon himself apart from direct reference to its subsequent placement in the sick recipient?

Even with these limitations, however, Kacror's study is a remarkable achievement. It is simply the best book-length critique of proportionalism currently available. Anyone wishing to understand proportionalism and why it fails as method of moral analysis would do well to read Kaczor's book.

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The Fullness of Being: A New Paradigm for Existence. By BARRY MILLER. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002. Pp. 184. $29.95 (doth). ISBN 0-268-02864-8.

This book proposes a new analysis of the relation between any individual and its instance of existence. This new paradigm replaces construing an individual's instance of existence as inhering in that individual, as, for example, wisdom inheres in Socrates. What defeats this latter analysis is that, given that things are logically prior to their properties and that it is due to his existence that Socrates is something actual to begin with, how could an instance of existence be a property inhering in Socrates when there is nothing there for it to inhere in (56)? Further, if Socrates is said to what individuates his property of existence, how again and for the same reason can that possibly be the case? How can Socrates play any role whatsoever in the individuation of his own property of existence without having some reality independently of the latter, which he does not (103)? Again, if, like wisdom, virtue, etc., Socrates' existence is a real property that inheres in Socrates, then just as we add something to the subject when we say that Socrates is wise, virtuous, etc., so too should we add something to Socrates when we say that he exists (82-83, 104). But a legion of modern and recent philosophers have echoed Kant's insistence that nothing is added to the concept of the subject when we say that Socrates exists. It follows that unlike wisdom or virtue, existence is not to be construed as being a real property that inheres in a subject. Finally, construing existence as a property that inheres in an individual invites strange entities such as a subsistent Pegasus (40ff.). If 'exists' is a first-level predicate then so too is 'does not exist' (24). But then in order to deny that Pegasus exists one must assume that Pegasus in some sense has being. Since this is intolerable, it must be denied that 'exists' is a first-level predicate. But supposing it true that existence is a property of individuals if and only if

'exists' is a predicate of individuals, it follows that existence cannot be construed as being a real property that inheres in an individual.

Many answer these puzzles by denying in the first instance that 'exists' is a first-level predicate and hence that existence is a property of individuals. This move is made by Hume, Kant, Frege, Russell, Quine, and C. J. F. Williams, among others, all of whom insist that 'exists' occurs redundantly in 'Socrates exists.' Hence, Miller refers to these philosophers as redundancy-theorists about existence (2-13). Non-redundancy theorists, according to him, include Avicenna, Henry of Ghent, Aquinas, and himself. The task for non-redundancy theorists is to show how the above problems can be skirted *without* denying that existence is a real property of individuals. To the question of how an instance of existence could ever be said to be predicated of Socrates when the latter has no actuality independently that existence, Avicenna and Henry of Ghent answer that Socrates' essence has a special being or existence of its own, that is, *esse essentiae,* which is different from Socrates' instance of existence *(esse existentiae)* (14-15}. The question is answered, then, by positing something that is independent of Socrates' instance of existence and of which Socrates' instance of existence *(esse existentiae)* is predicated. And that is Socrates' *esse essentiae.* As for Aquinas, Miller holds that while the Angelic Doctor rightly rejected the notion of an *esse essentiae* (and hence the solution of Avicenna and Henry of Ghent) he nonetheless proffered no solution of his own (16).

Miller contends that the solutions of these two medieval non-redundancy-theorists on the one hand as well as recent redundancy-theorists on the other are not only wrong but also have a common source. For though their solutions are different, they all make the same false assumption from which the problems in question spring in the first place. That assumption is that if existence is a property of individuals, then the relation between them is one in which the latter inheres in the former. Thus, Socrates' instance of existence inheres in Socrates just as do his non-existential properties of wisdom and virtue. That, however, cannot be so. For the inherence-relation implies that the inhering property depends for its actuality on the subject in which it inheres, as, for example, Socrates' wisdom depends on Socrates. But when it comes to the property of existence, it is just the other way around. Though Socrates' instance of existence depends on Socrates for its individuation, Socrates depends for his actuality on his property of existence and not vice versa.

To dissolve the problems, then, one need not and should not either deny that existence is a real property of individuals (the ploy of redundancy-theorists) or introduce some extra and peculiar *esse essentiae* for an individual's existence to inhere in (the answer of some medieval non-redundancy-theorists). Instead, one should drop the assumption that an individual's instance of existence *inheres* in that individual and say that it is bounded by that individual (95ff.).

Miller explains this bound/bounded relation by the analogy of a glass ball with etching on its surface (102). In the person Socrates, the Socrates element is to the element of his instance of existence what the glass of the ball is to its etched surface. As the etched surface contributes no glass to the ball but simply

marks its limit or bound, so too the individuating or Socrates element in the Socrates contributes no actuality to the existing Socrates but simply marks the reach, limit, or bound of what *does* contribute all the actuality, namely, Socrates' instance of existence. In a much less complex individual like Andy the amoeba, the same analogy holds. In Andy, the Andy element is to the element of his instance of existence what the etched surface of a glass ball is to the glass of the ball, except that here the etching on the ball is much less complex, reflecting the more primitive life of amoebae. Socrates, then, depends on his instance of existence for his actuality whereas Socrates' instance of existence depends on Socrates for its individuation. Alternatively, as regards actuality, Socrates is incomplete in respect to his instance of existence, whereas, as regard individuation, Socrates' instance of existence is incomplete in respect to Socrates (141).

Under this shift all actuality comes from the bounded or existence element. Even so, the bound element plays a role, albeit a secondary one, in the make-up of any individual. It supplies what Miller calls the quidditative content of a thing (119-21). The latter does two things: it both individuates the thing's instance of existence and maps the reaches of its instance of existence. (99££.). It is to its instance of existence what an architect's plan, which is embodied in a building, is to the building's instance of existence. As the reach of a building's instance of existence can be neither more nor less than the building's plan, so too the reach of Socrates' instance of existence can be neither more nor less than the pattern, bound, or quidditative content of Socrates. The wealth or complexity of any instance of existence is directly relative to the complexity of the pattern or bound of which it is the instance of existence (116).

It might seem that this assay is inconsistent. Miller rejects the view (adopted Kenny and Hughes) that Socrates' instance of existence is irrelevant to both the kind of thing Socrates is and all his non-existential properties. That unacceptably makes existence the most impoverished of properties; it is simply that by which an individual is something rather than nothing. Yet Miller insists that the bound or Socrates element includes not just Socrates but all his non-existential properties, a move that seemingly *does* make the existence element entirely impoverished. Miller would answer by distinguishing saying (falsely) that Socrates' instance of existence is *itself* human, wise, virtuous, etc. from saying (truly) that it is that *by virtue of which* Socrates is human, wise, virtuous, etc. (123-25). That allows Socrates' bound to contain all his non-existential properties without impoverishing, as do redundancy theorists, Socrates' instance of existence.

The ascending wealth among instances of existence from stones to amoebae to humans makes us wonder if the series has an upper terminus. Is there an instance of existence without any bound at all, one that is 'boundlessly' rich (132)? Such a being would be concrete rather than abstract and yet would be unbounded, utterly simple, and infinitely rich. Like the idea of a singularity in physics, it would be ontologically (as opposed to physically) both infinitely dense and utterly simple (ibid.). This is the idea of subsistent existence in philosophers

like Maimonides and Aquinas, that is, the being that is identical with its existence. Now the intelligibility of the notion of subsistent existence has been called into question. Miller devotes chapter 6 to defending an interpretation of subsistent existence that avoids the stock objections to that notion.

One problem with the notion takes the form of a dilemma. It parallels the dilemma that Plantinga raises against the idea of divine simplicity. Subsistent existence is identical either with existence as such or with an instance of existence. If the former, subsistent existence is abstract and not concrete and ends up being ontologically impoverished. But if the latter, then like all property instances subsistent existence is incomplete (136). Second, the very idea of subsistent existence is incoherent. In God or subsistent existence the properties of existence, wisdom, power, etc. are identical with God and hence with each other (134). But how is this either meaningful or possible? Third, the idea of a completely unbounded instance of existence is prima facie self-contradictory, since, as the function of a bound is to individuate, such a property instance would be one that belonged to no individual whatsoever (132).

To answer these and other problems with the intelligibility of the concept of subsistent existence, Miller proposes a limit case account of subsistent existence (141ff.). This replaces a limit *simpliciter* construal of subsistent existence, an assay of subsistent existence under which none of the objections in question can be answered.

The difference is that the limit *simpliciter* of a series is itself a member of the series and differs from other members in degree only, even if its difference from them is very great. Under this idea of a limit God's wisdom and ours are generically the same even though God's wisdom is wisdom to the maximum degree. By contrast, the limit case of a series is not itself a member of the series and differs absolutely from any and all members of the series. So here the limit of the series and the members of the series are not generically the same. There is no univocity between them. Thus, the limit case of a series of shorter and shorter lines is a point, which is not itself a line. Though they differ absolutely and not just in degree, the limit case of a series and the members of the series are nonetheless remotely similar as is shown by the fact that they are not interchangeable (140). The limit case of a series of shorter lines (i.e., a point) is not interchangeable with the limit case of a series of polygons with ever-increasing sides (i.e., a circle). Thus, under a limit case account of subsistent existence, though wisdom in God is absolutely different from wisdom in us and not just the maximum extension of our wisdom, still, the two are remotely similar. But this similarity is not generic as is the case between a limit *simpliciter* of a series and the members of that series.

Now under a limit case (though not a limit *simpliciter*) account of subsistent existence, the above troubles with subsistent existence fade away. Thus, though it is self-contradictory to say that with respect to individuation an instance of existence is complete, there is no contradiction in saying this about a limit case instance of existence. For not being itself an instance of existence, a limit case instance of existence needs nothing else to individuate it (146). Again, though

it is inconsistent to say that with respect to actuality a bound of existence is complete, one consistently says this about a limit case bound of existence, just as one consistently says that a circle, the limit case of polygons with increasing sides, does not have sides. For not being itself a bound, a limit case bound needs nothing else to actualize it (ibid.). So under a limit case account of subsistent existence it makes sense to say that God or subsistent existence is the identity of two limit cases, namely, the limit case instance of existence and the limit case bound of existence (149-50). To say the former is not to say that subsistent existence is an instance of existence and hence incomplete from the side of a bound. And to say the latter is not to say that subsistent existence is a bound and hence incomplete in respect to existence. In this way is the utter simplicity yet infinite density or richness of subsistent existence made possible (152ff.). In this way too is it saved from the incoherence that accrues to it when, instead of being assayed as a limit case, it is assayed as a limit *simpliciter.*

Toward criticizing the paradigm shift, does not the same problem about treating existence as inhering in Socrates resurface in the analysis of 'Socrates is human'? Socrates is an individuated pattern which is individuated in its own right and not by an individuator (100-101). But then, just as we can ask what is there for existence to inhere in in 'Socrates exists', so too can we ask what is the subject for human to inhere in in 'Socrates is human'. It cannot be an individuator since there is none. Nor is it Socrates' humanity since that evidently inheres in the subject, Socrates. Nor is it even Socrates' instance of existence, since Miller holds that that depends for its individuation on Socrates' individual pattern of humanity, which, as was said, is not subject but what inheres in the subject, Socrates. So the same problem that Miller solves *via* the bound/bounded relation on the level of existential statements is resurrected in his program on the level of predication by species where recourse to that solution is excluded.

That calls for a single, broad-based account that settles the issue on both levels. That seems to be an analysis in terms of the relation of actuality to potentiality. Thus, to the question, "What is there for Socrates' existence to be referred to in 'Socrates exists'?" the answer is being in the sense of essence, where essence is related to existence as potentiality to its actuation in the order of existence. Similarly, to the question, "What is there for 'human' to be referred to in 'Socrates is human'?" the answer is being in the sense of primal matter, where primal matter is related to the form human as potentiality to its actuation in the order of essence.

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The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics. By W. NORRIS CLARKE, S.J. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001. Pp. 324. $45.00 (cloth), $24.00 (paper). ISBN 0-268-03706-X (cloth), 0-268-03707-8 (paper).

This book is intended to be "an advanced textbook of systematic metaphysics in the Thomistic Tradition." It seems to be geared towards advanced undergraduate students, or possibly graduate students. Clarke describes it as a "creative retrieval" of Thomistic metaphysics, one that adapts the teaching of St. Thomas in light of modern science and contemporary thought; it does not seek to provide a strictly faithful rendering of Aquinas's teaching. The book is divided into short thematic chapters. Each chapter contains a set of helpful questions for review and discussion and most sections of the book are followed by a list of articles for further reading.

The book begins with some introductory chapters dealing with the nature of metaphysics as a science, covering themes such as the distinctive subject matter of metaphysics, its possibility, various meanings of "being," and types of analogy. It is in these early chapters that we get the clearest sense of Clarke's distinctive take on Thomism. The remainder of the book is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with the intrinsic principles of finite being. This part of the book contains an extensive treatment of the internal structure of finite beings through a discussion of three metaphysical compositions: existence/essence, form/matter, and substance/accident. Clarke devotes a lot of attention to the relation between form and matter since he thinks these concepts need to be adapted to modern science. The second part of the book is devoted to the extrinsic causes of finite being. It begins with a detailed discussion of efficient and final causality and then turns to a series of proofs for the existence of God and a discussion of the divine attributes. The remainder of the second part of the book contains a discussion of the transcendentals, a treatment of the problem of evil and an interesting chapter on evolution (Clarke maintains that evolution as a fact is undeniable, but he argues that there must be a higher cause guiding the evolutionary process). The final chapter is a meditative overview of metaphysics using the image of the universe as journey (away from and back towards God). Human beings play a unique role in this cosmic story because they are the mediators between the material cosmos and its divine source; the material universe would be incomplete without a rational being able to appreciate the divine gift of being and to give thanks to God in return.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Clarke's approach to metaphysics-a variation of existential Thomism-is his contention that every being, by its very nature, pours over into action which is *self-revealing* and *self-communicative.* The reader will find that this idea is applied in a number of ways throughout the book, but it plays an especially important role at the beginning where Clarke clarifies the subject matter and starting point of metaphysics. Since every being communicates itself through action to other beings and in turn receives the action of other beings upon it, it is through the mutual interaction of one being

upon another that the universe is constituted: "all the real beings that count, that make a difference, are dynamically active ones, that pour over through self-manifesting, self-communicating action to connect up with other real beings, and form a community of interacting existents we call call a 'universe'" (33). What is important for Clarke's analysis is not simply the principle that first act is completed by, or teleologically ordered towards, second act, but that all action in some way terminates in, or is communicated to, another-"to *be* is *to be generous"* (34). Clarke seems to suggest that being *qua* being is self-revealing and self-communicative. The obvious objection to this claim is that a totally self-sufficient being, namely, God, could exist without communicating with anything other than itself. Noting this objection, Clarke admits that in principle a perfect being would be free to create or not to create, but he insists nonetheless that since God has in fact created the universe in which we live, we can conclude that even a perfect being has an "intrinsic tendency" to communicate his being with others. The ultimate reason why there is a universe, he maintains, is that "it is the very nature of God himself to be self-communicative love" (33). It is hard to know what to make of this claim. If God freely creates the world, it is not clear how the universe results from the very nature of God as self-communicative. One might appeal to the diffusion of being within the Godhead as evidence that a perfect being is self-communicative, but such an argument would move us beyond metaphysics towards revealed theology.

A second point that Clarke makes is that it is through action that we come to know the world. "Action is precisely the self-revelation of being. Action that is indeterminate, that reveals nothing about the nature from which it proceeds, is not action at all" (35). This is a key point since, according to Clarke, a contemporary metaphysics must begin by addressing the skepticism that stems from the Cartesian doubt of the senses and the Kantian critique of metaphysics. "What is needed, to reassure the self-doubting contemporary mind of the natural affinity of the mind for the real and of the possibility of a metaphysics of real being, is a starting point of metaphysics that involves a direct existential encounter with the real so luminous or self-revealing that it is not open to practical (I do not say logical) personal doubt or uncertainty" (39). Clarke goes on to suggest that the most fruitful existential encounter with which to begin a contemporary metaphysics is the "We are" manifested in interpersonal dialogue, an experience that contrasts with the "I think, therefore I am" of the solitary Cartesian mind faced with the problem of how to connect with the world. Moreover, interpersonal dialogue gives us an immediate insight into the fact that we are parts of a larger whole since it "plunges us immediately into real being as a community of distinct but intercommunicating centers giving and receiving from each other across the bridge of self-expressive action. In a word, it reveals to us that *to be* is *to be together, actively present* to each other" (40). Further consideration of this provocative statement could lead the reader in any number of directions.

Clarke's understanding of being as self-communicative prompts him to make some significant modifications of traditional Thomistic metaphysics at various

points in the book. For example, he modifies the traditional list of the transcendentals. He affirms St. Thomas's understanding of the transcendentals as positive predicates of every real being which, though convertible with being, express an aspect of being that is not made explicit by the term "being" (e.g., "one," "true" and "good"), but he thinks that "active" ought to be added to the list since "every being, insofar as it actually exists, has a natural tendency to communicate itself, to pour over into self-manifesting, self-revealing action, expressing its own nature by it characteristic activities" (294). But, it is unclear whether "action" as a transcendental notion is distinct from the concept of "being." In fact, earlier in the book when Clarke explains what is meant by the term "being" he argues that for something to *be* is not to be something static or inert, "but a *dynamic act or presence* that makes any essence or nature to be real, to present itself actively to other real beings" (79-80). Even if one were to resolve this difficulty, one must still address the question of whether God's own activity-at least as an object of unaided human reason-is necessarily self-communicating.

The treatment of form and matter is another interesting and unique part of Clarke's analysis since he proposes a significant revision of the hylomorphic theory. All material things are constituted by two principles, form and matter. They can be described as co-principles because neither can exist independently; together they constitute a material thing. Thus far, Clarke's analysis is faithful to the teaching of St. Thomas. But he goes on to "adapt" it in light of modern science:

> The impression given by Aristotle and some textbook presentations of the doctrine is that every composition of form/matter is between a form ... united directly to pure formless primary matter with no intermediate levels. That is too simplistic a picture. In fact, though there is definitely one major, central organizing form that operates as the one fully autonomous and operative essential form, it organizes and controls lower levels of organized elements-cells, molecules, atoms, subatomic particles. These already have a certain formal structure of their own taken over and controlled by the central form to make them part of a higher whole; they are not purely indeterminate formless matter lacking any formal structure at all. They are rather subordinate levels of formal organization taken over and controlled or used by the higher central form for the goals of the organism as a whole, hence no longer operating autonomously. (99)

According to Clarke, modern science shows us that complex things (e.g., living things) are constituted by various layers of organization-atoms, molecules, cells-and that this layering refutes the notion that a substantial form is united directly to prime matter, that is, pure formless matter. He admits that when we reach the lowest level of the subatomic particle, substantial form is united to formless matter; all higher forms, however, are united to prime matter only through intermediate forms. He insists that in a complex being there is only one

dominant or controlling form that is fully autonomous; all other forms are subordinate to a higher form and, through successive layers, ultimately to a single dominant form. Nonetheless, he asserts that the substantial forms of complex things do not inform prime matter directly; rather the simpler substances themselves serve as a matter for a higher form since they are capable of being "taken over," that is, directed towards the goals of the larger organism.

Clarke's attempt to integrate philosophy and experimental science is laudable, but such an endeavor runs the risk of undermining the ontological analysis that serves as the basis for Thomistic metaphysics and natural philosophy. The difficulty here is that Clarke's adaptation seems to fundamentally alter the notions of form and matter. Since matter cannot have any actual existence without form, St. Thomas insists that substantial form causes the matter to be absolutely: "if there is a form which does not give unqualified existence to matter but which accrues to matter that is already actually existing through another form, then such a form will not be a substantial form" (Q. *D. De Anima,* q. 9). Since, on Clarke's account, what is ordered and directed towards a further end is something that already *is* a being with its own formal structure, he appears to turn the form/matter relationship into that of agent/patient and to undermine the substantial unity of a complex being by positing a plurality of substantial forms.

The chapter on proofs for the existence of God is somewhat disappointing since Clarke makes no attempt to discuss the traditional Five Ways. He presents two sets of arguments: (1) cosmological arguments, which begin with the world as a whole and proceed to a single ultimate source by way of efficient and final causality; and (2) arguments that begin from our own inner consciousness and proceed towards God as the ultimate goal of our own drive towards Truth and Goodness. One or two of the arguments roughly correspond to one of the Five Ways (e.g., he presents an argument from design closely resembling the Fifth Way), but others seem to be altogether different arguments. One suspects that Clarke has doubts about the validity of some of the Five Ways. Earlier in the book he suggests that the First Way is no longer valid since Newtonian mechanics has shown that inertial motion does not require a cause. Unfortunately, Clarke does not discuss what he takes to be the strengths and/or weaknesses of the Five Ways. Given their importance for any Thomistically inspired metaphysics, however, one would expect a discussion of these arguments.

Clarke has written a very interesting and provocative book, one that is likely to inspire future students to study metaphysics in the Thomistic tradition. We are especially indebted to Clarke for his willingness to engage modern science and his contribution to the revival of metaphysics as a systematic study.

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The Ethical Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar. By CHRISTOPHER STECK, S.J. New York: Crossroad, 2001. Pp. 217. $35.00 (paper). ISBN 0-8245-1915-9.

Christopher Steck's book is interesting in a number of ways. It is interesting in itself-clearly and engagingly written as well as full of insights-but it is also interesting for what it indicates about the place of Balthasar in contemporary Catholic theology. This book in some ways signals the long-deferred "mainstreaming" of Balthasar among English-speaking Catholic theologians, his liberation from the ghetto of "antimodernism" or "conservatism" where some writers had interred him. As such, it offers hope that Catholic theology is moving beyond the misleading categories of "liberal" and "conservative."

Steck has written a book that might serve as an introduction to Balthasar for ethicists, but could equally well serve as an introduction for a more general audience. Though Steck focuses on issues that might be of particular concern to those in the guild of ethics, such as questions of human agency, virtues, and natural law, he also recognizes that part of the importance of Balthasar is his refusal to separate theology and ethics. One cannot understand Balthasar's ethical thought without having a grasp of his entire theological vision. Thus, one must become familiar with what he says about Trinity andCliiistology before one can even begin to approach what he has to say about human agency. Much of the book is devoted to topics that many theological ethicists have not thought about (in a professional way) since seminary. Steck gives such lucid exposition of Balthasar's Trinitarian thought and his notion of "mission" that even those ethicists whose theological tools are a bit rusty will be able to follow the considerable complexities of Balthasar's thought.

At the same time, Steck is more than simply an expositor of Balthasar; he presents and argues for a specific synthesis of Balthasar's thought with regard to its use in Christian ethical reflection. On his account, Balthasar presents us with a variation on "divine command ethics," a form of ethics that, Steck notes, has been "traditionally viewed as antithetical to Catholic moral commitments" (1). This approach, which he plausibly attributes to the influence of Barth on Balthasar, stresses "obedience" rather than "fulfillment," and thus seems to run counter to the teleological approach found in either the virtue-based ethics of Thomism or the maximizing of goods of proportionalism. Yet Steck argues that Balthasar effects a transformation of divine command ethics-what he calls an "Ignatian reconfiguration" (152)-that brings together the poles of obedience and fulfillment. This involves a "contemplation of the world in light of the gospel," which is "a fundamental practice of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*" (ibid.). In other words, the divine command is mediated to use through worldly structures, which must be subjected to the discerning contemplation that seeks to know ultimate human fulfillment.

We might think of Balthasar as seeking to reconcile two contrasting pairs: the "vertical" and "horizontal" and the "universal" and "particular." In both cases, Christ is the key to the reconciliation. In him, the vertical and the horizontal

meet, and we contemplate the universal in the particular. The divine command **that** comes to us calls us to the human fulfillment that we contemplate in Christ as the appearing of divine glory. As Steck puts it, Balthasar makes "the bipolarity between human agency and earthly goods participate in and mediate vibrantly the encounter between the human person and God who approaches us in Christ" (153). Steck recognizes that Balthasar is part of the revolution in Catholic theology flowing from de Lubac and others, which sought a closer integration of nature and grace, and which has had a considerable impact in the field of ethics. But he also recognizes that many Catholic ethicists offer "only a truncated form of de Lubac's theory of grace" (98). By this he means that they, like de Lubac, see human beings always already oriented to life with God, but fail to stress, as de Lubac always did, that such orientation only finds fulfillment through Christ. In other words, recent Catholic ethics has tended to stress the horizontal and the universal at the expense of the vertical and the particular. What Balthasar offers, in Steck's reading, is a way of holding these things together.

However, ethicists who find Steck's account of Balthasar compelling might yet be frustrated when they try to imagine what material difference this theology makes to how they do ethics. Steck's argument operates on a fairly abstract level, never really addressing what most would think of as "ethical issues," apart from occasional, passing mention of things like the environment or refugees or crime control (see, e.g., 153). In a sense, Steck is hardly to blame for this; as he notes, Balthasar himself never really discusses concrete issues. But does this constitute a flaw in Balthasar's theology (Barth, after all, devoted considerable space in the *Church Dogmatics* to discussion of concrete moral issues)? In trying to defend Balthasar on this count he notes that his theory of the Christian life "lacks the ordered tidiness associated with good theories. There is no formula which draws the vertical and horizontal together into a systematic relationship and which would then allow us to progress straightforwardly from the intrahorizontal claims of our finite existence to a claim about what the personal God of Jesus Christ is calling us to do in this moment" (159-60). Fair enough. Balthasar resists the temptation to offer either a theological or an ethical system that could then by "applied" to concrete situations. But this is precisely *why* discussion of concrete examples is needed: not as deductions from an ethical system, but as models that shape the imagination. As Aristotle knew, we need models to imitate in order to develop the kind of practical wisdom that allows us to make right judgments. Balthasar seems to recognize this in the realm of theology. The volumes of *The Glory of the Lord* on "Clerical Styles" and "Lay Styles" serve to display the kind of theological aesthetics Balthasar is talking about by giving us accounts of how figures in the tradition have themselves done theology. These are not simply illustrative, rather they are integral to "getting" what Balthasar is talking about; his interpretations of Bonaventure, Hopkins, and others train us in how to do theology in such a way as to take seriously God's glory. Perhaps what Balthasar needed to offer was a kind of "hagiography" of people like Franz Jaegerstetter or Madeleine Delbrel in order to train us in how we ought to think

about war or economics, and perhaps the failure to do so is a serious failure in his ethical thought. If Steck's book could be improved in any way, I would think it would be by providing some such exemplars, along with a "Balthasarian" reading of their lives.

As I mentioned at the outset, the other thing that makes Steck's book so interesting is that it signals something of a shift in how .Balthasar is being appropriated in the English-speaking world. Though he was considered part of the theological avant garde in the 1950s and early 1960s, the general perception is that he took a "conservative tum" (along with de Lubac) in the late 1960s, breaking with the journal *Concilium* and founding the rival journal *Communio.* fa particular his somewhat ill-tempered screed in *The Moment of Christian Witness* (a masterpiece of Christian polemic), which was directed perhaps at Rabner or perhaps at some of Rabner' s more simpleminded popularizers, seemed to locate him firmly in the "traditionalist" or "restorationist" camp. The result of this is that, at least in America, he was looked upon with suspicion in many Catholic theology departments, when he was noticed at aH. During the 1970s, especially, his books were more or less unavailable in English--older works having gone out of print and newer works remaining untranslated. This began to be remedied in the 1980s, thanks to Ignatius Press and T & T Clark, who began the mammoth project of translating .Balthasar's trilogy. But the perception of Ignatius Press as a "conservative" publishing house only increased some people's anxiety about Balthasar. And the fact that John Paul H granted him a cardinal's hat shortly before his death sealed his fate in some people's eyes.

Of course it is easy to find so-called "conservative" views expressed by Balthasar on such topics as the ordination of women or liberation theology. But to focus on litmus test issues is to miss the deeply radical nature of Balthasar's theology. For example, despite his strong affirmation of the role of the papacy, his ecclesiology is hardly "restorationist." From his early work, *Razing the Bastions,* to his later theology of the secular institute, he represents a radical break with the fortress mentality of Tridentine Catholicism. Likewise, his understanding of the "internal kenosis" of the persons of the Trinity is enough to make a traditional Thomist shudder, just as it made Karl Rahner accuse him of "gnosticism." Again and again, if one looks not at specific issues but at the larger theological structures, Balthasar is a far more radical theologian than Rahner. Indeed, Rahner would routinely cite Denzinger in support of his views, while Balthasar devoted his volumes on Clerical and Lay Styles, as weU as specific studies of non-Western theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa and Maxim us the Confessor, to constructing a sort of "counter-tradition" in Catholic theology. Correspondingly, Balthasar was also noticeably lukewarm toward Augustine and Aquinas, the traditional towering figures of Catholic theology. Aquinas appears an almost marginal figure in JBalthasar's counter-tradition, and in some ways Augustine is actively opposed (see, for example, *Dare We Hope?).*

Steck's book is interesting because he is aware of the radicality of Bakhasar's theology and sees the difference it can make for how we do ethics. It is probably no accident that the book began as a dissertation at Yale, where for several yearn

George Lindbeck taught a course on Rabner and Balthasar that examined them in a context that was free from most of the theological politics of Roman Catholicism. I am not aware of any direct influence of Lindbeck on Steck, but my point is that even today it would be difficult to write a dissertation on Balthasar in an American Catholic theology department without being labeled as somehow "conservative" or "restorationist."

Similarly, books on Balthasar tend to get dumped by many theologians into the dustbin of "conservatism." A case in point is David Schindler's *Heart of the World, Center of the Church.* Though the economic perspective is, according to conventional thinking, far to the left of anything on the American political spectrum, many commentators seemed simply baffled by the book largely because they were unable to fit it into preconceived categories, thus blunting its impact. It would be a shame if Steck's book suffered the same fate, though his attention to a relatively minor thing like gender-inclusive language might forestall too preemptive a judgement. Indeed, the book, unlike Schindler's, avoids the neuraligic issue of gender entirely. Whether or not this is intentional-and whether or not one can do complete justice to Balthasar without attention to issues of gender-this omission may help the book receive a fair initial reading among those who have been previously suspicious of Balthasar.

Any fair reading of this book makes clear that Steck employs Balthasar in such a way that ethics becomes a quite messy affair, rather than the neat set of moral absolutes normally associated, rightly or wrongly, with the term "conservatism." He takes seriously the theodramatic rejection of the "epic" view that would seek to derive exceptionless moral norms by an abstract process of reasoning. While Steck does not endorse the proportionalist critique of moral absolutes, he also does not accept the kind of New Natural Law ethics represented by thinkers like Finnis and Grisez. Rather, he proposes what I would call an "ethics of discipleship," which looks neither to the maximization of goods nor to the application of universal moral laws, but rather to the following of Christ, which can, at times, be a messy and uncertain affair.

In this way, Steck uses Balthasar to offer us a moral theology that, like Balthasar himself, is radically traditional, transcending the misleading labels of "conservative" and "liberal." Indeed, I would argue that it is not that different from the moral theology of Thomas himself, which is not ultimately about natural law or even about virtue, but rather about *sequela Christi,* the following of Christ. I hope that Steck's book is a sign that Catholic theologians are finally getting over the now-tired "progressive" versus "conservative" debates that followed the Second Vatican Council and can get about the task of helping the Church witness to Christ before the watching world.

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The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. By PAUL GoNDREAU. Beitrage zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, neue Folge, Band 61. Munster: Aschendorff, 2002. Pp. 516. ISBN 3402040107 (paper).

In this learned and very detailed study Gondreau examines St. Thomas's doctrine of the passions of Christ, a subject which has never been treated in so much detail. He compares what Aquinas writes with his sources, such as Aristotle, Nemesius, St. John Damascene and others and points out the amazing analyses of Thomas, his faithfulness to the image of Jesus depicted in the New Testament and his stress on the passibility of Christ. The dominating place of Holy Scripture in Aquinas's theology is repeatedly underlined ..

After two chapters on the Christological and the anthropological sources of Aquinas's theology of Christ's passion, Gondreau discusses what he calls the five foundational principles of this theology: the union, the integrity of Christ's humanity, his absolute sinlessness, the of economy, and fittingness. \

Chapter 4 deals with the passible soul of Christ, chapter 5 with the manner in which the passions were present in Christ. Gondreau pays special attention to the specific "passions" mentioned in *Summa Theologiae* III, question 15, to dose his study with some remarks on the passions of Christ and his enjoyment of the vision of God. The book is enriched by a detailed bibliography and indices of names, principal terms, and abbreviations. An enormous amount of work went into this study, which is the most complete treatment to date of the issue and a work of solid theology. Its treatment of the Angelic Doctor's doctrine of Christ's passions commands admiration and assent.

A difficult question is whether Jesus ever experienced the onset of antecedent passions, that is, passions not commanded by reason and will. Gondreau denies this, although on certain occasions he seems to leave the answer open when recalling the seldom used term "pro-passions" (cf. 366). However, if by an antecedent passion in Christ we understand an emotion that is elicited by his totally well-ordered sensitive appetite, penetrated by reason, it would seem that the reality of Jesus' human nature demands the occurrence of such passions, not previously commanded by reason-such as, for instance, spontaneous sadness and compassion when confronted with human suffering. Such emotions were not commanded by Jesus' will although they were in harmony with it. A further point that demands some comment is that the author finds difficulty with the fact that, when speaking of the passions of Christ, St. Thomas does not deal with all eleven passions as studied in the *Prima Secundae.* The answer lies perhaps in the fact that in the *Tertia Pars* he does not intend to give an exhaustive treatment of whatever is implied by the sensitive nature of Christ, but deals with those feelings and experiences, attested by the Gospels, which seem at odds with the fullness of science and grace in Christ, as flowing from the hypostatic union. For instance, the *admiratio* of Jesus, discussed in *STh* III, q. 15, a. 8, seems to create a problem, not because it is a passion, but because it appears to point to some

form of ignorance. In his treatment of this issue and elsewhere Gondreau parts way with Aquinas in that, following a number of contemporary authors, he prefers not to admit the presence of the beatific vision and the *scientia infusa* in Christ. However, a rejection creates serious difficulties. If one ascribes the fullness of grace and virtue to Christ, why not the fullness of knowledge, as Colossians 2:3 suggests Jesus possesses?

I conclude with some minor points. I wonder whether Goodreau does not too easily speak of "sources" of Aquinas's doctrine. The presence of a parallel text in an earlier author, known to Aquinas, does not necessarily mean that it is a source of his doctrine. Another difficulty a reader may experience is that, at least in the first part of the book, Gondreau does not sufficiently keep apart the passibility of Jesus and the emotions of the sensitive appetite, called passions. Physical suffering and pain do not come under the latter but are the loss of a natural disposition. Goodreau himself writes that the notion of passions as defects is virtually absent from the treatise of emotions in general (in the *Prima Secundae)* (220). Does this not imply that we should sharply distinguish between these two senses of the term "passion" when dealing with Christ's passibility and emotions?

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"Modus et Forma": A New Approach to the Exegesis of Saint Thomas Aquinas with an Application to the "Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios." By CHRISTOPHER T. BAGLOW. Analecta Biblica 149. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2002. Pp.290. $18.00 (paper). ISBN 88-7653-149-1.

Christopher Baglow's *"Modus et Forma"* posits two admirable methodological norms for scholars interested in mining Thomas's biblical commentaries (and, indeed, any of the medieval scriptural commentaries): namely, "a) that a truly systematic and comprehensive approach to Thomas' biblical commentaries is necessary for a fruitful encounter with his biblical corpus, and b) that such an approach must be united to the analysis of his actual practice as an exegete" (17). These two "fundamental assertions" provide the structure for Baglow's work.

Part 1 aims at a "truly systematic and comprehensive approach" by examining standard methods of inquiry into Thomas's exegesis (19-22); the nonnarrative suitability for theological or moral exposition demonstrated in the *Lectura super Iohannem, Lectura super Epistolas Pauli Apostoli,* and the *Expositio super lob* as supported by Aquinas's "... envisioning biblical authorship as focused not on narrative primarily, but rather on meaning transmitted by concepts" (36); the

relationship between *sacra scriptura* and *sacra doctrina* by which Thomas "doctrinalizes scripture ... [and draws] the narrative and historical parts of the Bible into a unity with the parts which are more expository" (44); Aquinas's hermeneutical approach which is the literal sense of the text, ". . . Thomas' major preoccupation as an exegete, ... on which his theory of interpretation focuses" (45); the *status quaestionis* and appraisal of Thomas's hermeneutics through A. A. Torrance's (55) and O. H. Pesch's (73) critique of his "Aristotelian schematization" of Scripture, as well as C. Clifton Black's negative appraisal (e.g., of Thomas's homogenizing exegesis, "constructive" development of the literal sense [62, 65-66]). Chapter 3 attempts to forge a template (89-112) through a detailed "Genre-Identification Approach" to "formulate a comprehensive approach for the benefit of those who would attempt to consider other Thomistic biblical commentaries." Baglow's proposal has three principal subdivisions: pre-analysis (textual pre-analysis, Thomas's exegetical framework, and *auctoritates* [93-100]), Thomas's analysis of the parts of the text (minor divisions, words and phrases, interpretive conclusions, use of *auctoritates* [100-110]) and summative overall evaluation (similarities/differences from Thomas's other works, *lectura, expositio, postilla* as theological models, miscellaneous data [110-12]).

In part 2 Baglow applies-although not exhaustively-the Genre-Identification Approach to Thomas' *Lectura Super Epistolam ad Ephesios,* namely: pre-Analysis (115-38), Thomas's analysis of select texts from Ephesians (139-231), and the overall evaluation of the Ephesians *Lectura* and its potential contribution to contemporary theology (233-75) guided by the architectonic theme *de institutione ecclesiasticae unitatis.* Thomas provides this theme in his thematic subdivision of the Pauline letters *(Super Epistolas Pauli Apostoli,* prol.,11), and Baglow applies it analogously to the internal structure of Ephesians itself. A useful, if all too brief, bibliography (277-90) completes the work. (With reference to "completion," unfortunately, the book is missing some of the author's original text (see 171-72 as well as the missing n. 134.)

Part 2 is most successful when Baglow isolates specific texts that demonstrate Thomas's ecclesiological themes, attending directly to the commentary texts. However, several serious methodological difficulties emerge which demonstrate that Baglow's twofold norms are not realized.

Baglow is extraordinarily dependent upon secondary sources, especially in his use of Sabra and the self-selected theological critiques mentioned above. While these sources represent an array of views, the author's analysis cannot be labeled either comprehensive nor systematic. Repeatedly the reader looks in vain to discover original texts to substantiate claims which are not mediated through Torrance, Clifton, Black, Pesch, Yaffee, or Sabra. One yearns for Baglow to encounter the texts of Thomas directly. This becomes most crucial when the reader seeks to explain Baglow's functionally equivalent use of *sacra doctrina* and *sacra scriptura* by a close reading of question 1 of the *Prima Pars,* especially article 3. *Sacra doctrina* is more comprehensive than Baglow claims. It is in fact all knowledge taught us by God's grace. Theology is therefore a single science,

enjoying a single formal light. In other words, our being taught by God is prior to the establishment of distinct theological disciplines or crafts. *Sacra scriptura* is therefore considered under *sacra doctrina,* "as under one science" *(STh* I, q. 1, a. 3). Baglow summons Torrance (not Thomas) only to conclude: "we are only one step away from Thomas' characterization of *sacra doctrina* itself as a science. This is preeminently a science of Scripture, which serves as the locus of greatest proof in theological argumentation" (48). Much of Baglow's subsequent argumentation depends upon getting this relationship of Scripture to the *sacra doctrina* right at the outset, which he fails to do. This leads to an important (albeit unsustainable) claim: "Therefore in a very real (though not absolute) sense, Job and the Pauline Epistles functionally resemble Thomas' conception of Scripture as *sacra doctrina* much more than other parts of Scripture, which in his mind depend upon the former to teach 'more openly' than they do" (41). Later comparison between two textual groupings, headed by the Fourth Gospel and the Pauline Epistles, attempts to further refine an internal ranking of suitability by a very select statistical analysis through Valkenberg. Baglow concludes, "the commentaries on Job, John and Paul are of a higher quality than the rest, revealing a certain presuppositional bias on Thomas' part for conceiving of Scripture in a non-narrative way" (51). He claims to have "searched Thomas' exegetical principles for an explanation" (ibid.) but fails adequately to cite Thomas's own texts rather than secondary interpreters. In the final analysis, these exegetical principles and Thomas's presuppositionless bias, to a large degree, elude the author and the reader alike. While Baglow's analysis is suggestive, his failure to be truly comprehensive and systematic and to provide a close reading of the text leads him to propose effectively a theological canon within the canon. The fact that there exists no presuppositionless exegesis (whether of scriptural or theological texts like those of Aquinas) makes Baglow's use of secondary authors appear eclectic and a hindrance to his stated objectives.

A second methodological difficulty is the failure to use works of Thomas that are contemporaneous with the *Lectura ad Ephesios,* especially the *Summa Theologiae.* Baglow accepts Torrell's chronology of Aquinas's works uncritically. As a result, he neglects a substantial resource to illumine his understanding of the Headship or Capital Grace of Christ in the commentary, and the relationship between the Jewish people and Gentiles. Nevertheless, the study is strongest in part 2, wherein Baglow mines the ecclesiological elements embedded in Thomas's commentary. Yet, at times, Baglow seems to be on a "search and rescue mission" at the expense of a more comprehensive and systematic analysis; the result is a leveling effect, which reference to the *Summa Theologiae* would have precluded. It is not that the author is unaware of the resource; indeed, Thomas's comments on Ephesians 4:25-28 "bear the mark of *ST* 1.75-102, which Thomas composed during the period in his career in which he lectured on Ephesians" (213). Baglow states:" ... one must beware the tendency to use synthetic works (i.e. the *Summae)* as primary interpretive guides-these are not necessarily the best works for this activity, especially in the case of the Pauline commentaries. In all cases, the commentary itself must be given pride-of-place, it is the work

under analysis, and no other" (107). Such a methodological principle is rooted in a misunderstanding of textual genres as well as the nature of *sacra doctrina.* An example may prove useful here. The *Prima Pars* was written, according to Weisheipl, between 1266 and November 1268, that is, prior to Thomas's second Parisian regency when the *Romans Commentary (CRO)* received its "final" form. *CRO* 763, for example, demonstrates a substantial material congruence with *STh* I, q. 23, a. 4-if not a material borrowing altogether. The discussion of the relationship of Gentiles and the Jewish people is framed by Aquinas in his commentary on Romans 9-11 by God's providence, predestination, and election. What we see in *CRO* and in other Thomistic texts, especially the *Summa Theologiae,* is that predestination and the ancillary doctrine of election account for the ongoing role and status of the Jews as a privileged, temporal manifestation of God's eternal will. God's election of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles retain a temporal tension or ambiguity which Paul himself recognized and which he struggled to articulate in corporate and individual aspects. Thomas preserves the inherent ambiguity of the Apostle and seeks to provide an explicit theological rationale for the soteriological interdependence of Jews and Gentiles, and by implication, of his Jewish and Christian contemporaries. As he did with John 10: 16 in *ad Ephesios,* Thomas punctuates *CRO* with John 4:22: "Salvation is from the Jews." A similar intertextual analysis of Baglow's Genre-Identification Approach is eschewed if not practically lacking. His assertion that the Pauline commentaries are not best interpreted by synthetic works demonstrates again his failure to attend to the primary texts (especially contemporaneous texts) of Thomas and their potential for mutual illumination. Baglow does not successfully demonstrate his theory in practice.

Baglow might have considered profitably how the headship of Christ amounts to a created grace given to the Risen Lord to exercise his Lordship over the Church. Aquinas emphasizes the perfection of Christ's grace required for such authority. Furthermore, for Thomas, there is a direct correlation between the hypostatic union and its potential effects upon the composite elements of body and soul. Under the formality of soteriology, Christ merits the power of bestowing grace on all the members of the church. Most significantly, Thomas ascribes these prerogatives to Jesus in accord with his two natures: as God, he authoritatively bestows the Holy Spirit; as man, it belongs to him instrumentally to give grace. The instrumentality of his assumed humanity pertains to the entirety of Christ's being. Therefore, no aspect of properly human existence goes untouched by the power of Christ. Paul, in fact, would express the same truth as the Lordship of Christ. The capital grace of Christ thus would strengthen Baglow's assertion that Thomas's ecclesiology "is founded on an even more essential christology. In fact, he has forged what could be called an ecclesiological soteriology in response to the text, in which Christ saves humanity by uniting it" (179) But for Aquinas, Christ is far more than "an exemplar for all human activity in the church regarding the unity of her members" (240).

Baglow's goals are as important as they are ambitious. The Genre-Identification Approach is a useful template, but it can lead to erroneously thinking that data collection and literary analysis lead to a unified *theologia.* I applaud Baglow's efforts to break new hermeneutical ground by an inductive method and his expressed desire to be comprehensive and systematic. He recognizes that medieval commentary is a worthy dialogue partner, even if he sometimes exhibits an overly naive and uncritical stance toward the adequacy of determining textual meaning by means of corporate exegetical efforts-as if these are somehow devoid of philosophical or theological presuppositions. In addition, there are lamentable references to post-Tridentine caricatures of complex theological matters which function more as gratuitous "straw-man" arguments than as substantive contributions (235, 243) and erode the author'8'-credibility.

At the very least, *"Modus et Forma,,* warrants a close reading for those seeking to understand what one medieval theologian *may have* thought about the sacred page, in this case, Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, as well as how he may have thought about the sacred page itself. This is a new business for biblical scholars in pursuit of a Thomistic *theologia,* but this study also demonstrates the need to be trained equally in two disciplines: biblical hermeneutics and Thomistic studies.

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