The Thomist 71 (2007): 505-28

AQUINAS ON ORAL TEACHING

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IN QUESTION 42, article 4 of the *Tertia Pars,* Aquinas asks whether Christ should have handed on his teaching in writing. He argues that it was fitting he did not, for three reasons: because of his dignity, because of the excellence of his teaching, and so that his teaching might go forth from him to everyone else in an order. I propose to consider this article more closely.[1] By way of a prologue, I will begin with a look at its most important written philosophical antecedent, even though Aquinas does not seem to have known it, namely, the argument in Plato's *Phaedrus* that no serious teaching can be transmitted in writing. To contextualize the issue in Aquinas's work I will then briefly mention some passages on writing in his commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate* and his *Summa Theologiae.* Finally, with respect to the article on Christ's not having written, I will discuss its Augustinian source, its *sed contra,* and its three arguments.

[1] For a thoughtful earlier consideration of Aquinas's article see Domenico Farias, "Utrum Christus debuerit doctrinam suam scripto tradere," *Divus Thomas* (Piacenza) 59 (1956): 20-37. The present discussion differs in emphasis from that of Farias, who, for instance, draws some useful connections with texts of Aquinas on the nature of teaching. See also Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Le Christ en ses mysteres: La vie et !'oeuvre de Jesus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Desclee, 1999), 2:250-54. For the general context of *STh* III, q. 42, see the discussion of the structure of the *Tertia Pars* in John F. Boyle, "The Two-fold Division of Thomas's Christology in the *Tertia pars," The Thomist* 60 (1996): 439-47.

I. THE *PHAEDRUS* ON TEACHING AND WRITING

The *Phaedrus* consists of a conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus that treats the question of how to compose a speech addressed to a beloved, then goes on to discuss written composition in general and the difference between good and bad writing. Towards the end Socrates offers a critique of the art of writing in three parts.[2]

First he presents a myth about the invention of writing (274c-275d). Someone who had invented writing and many other arts showed them to a king, praising the art of writing in particular as a drug for improving memory and wisdom. The king disagreed. He said that writing would instill forgetfulness rather than memory, because men would come to rely on written marks instead of exercising their memories; it is a drug for being reminded rather than for improving memory, and it would instill an appearance of wisdom rather than the reality, because its users would lack instruction, although they would be "hearers" of many things who as a result would seem to know a lot. Socrates comments that anyone who believes he can put knowledge into writing, and anyone who accepts writing as if anything clear and steady could come from it, are foolish to think that written words can do more than serve as a reminder to someone who already knows what the writing is about.

Socrates next compares writing to painting (275d-276a). The products of the art of painting stand there as if they were alive, he says, but if you ask them something they are very silent and solemn. It is the same with written words: they speak as if they had understanding, or so you would think, but if you want to learn something and ask them about it, they just keep signifying the same one thing. Once a speech is written, it rolls around promiscuously in all directions, among those who understand it and those for whom it is unsuitable, and it does not know the difference between those to whom it should and those to whom it should not speak. If it is attacked and unfairly accused it always

[2] Cf. Plato, *Seventh Letter* 341a-342a.

needs the help of its "father" or author, since it is unable to defend itself. By contrast, the living speech of one who knows, which is the "legitimate brother" of the written word and of which the latter is a mere image, is "written" with knowledge on the soul of the learner, is capable of defending itself, and knows to whom it should speak and before whom it should be silent.

Finally Socrates compares teaching with farming (276b-277a). An intelligent farmer might, for amusement, plant seeds that flower in eight days, but when he is being serious and applies his art, he is happy if his seeds reach perfection in eight months. Likewise, anyone who has knowledge about what is just, beautiful, and good will be intelligent about the "seeds" he plants. When he is not serious he will sow them in black ink with a pen, using words that can neither defend themselves with a word nor teach the truth adequately. He will sow gardens of letters for amusement, writing for himself and others, and saving up reminders as protection against the forgetfulness of old age. While others are amusing themselves with pleasure, he will write. This is noble, but much nobler still is serious talk about the just, the beautiful, and the good, in the application of dialectic to the "planting" of words in a suitable soul, words that are accompanied by knowledge and are capable of defending both themselves and their "planter." These words bear fruit from which seeds grow in others, in a process of transmission that can go on forever, and they make the one who has them as happy as it is humanly possible to be.

II. AQUINAS ON TEACHING AND WRITING

What might Aquinas have made of this passage? An answer to this question would have to begin by saying that no Christian, and no Jew or Muslim, could speak quite so lightly about the written word in general. The importance of sacred writing for Christians is recalled in the first *sed contra* of Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae,* which quotes 2 Timothy 3:16 on the divinely inspired *scriptura* that is useful for teaching, arguing, correcting, and instructing in

justice.[3] Aquinas clearly regarded his own writings as serious and potentially useful, although towards the end of his life he is reported to have disdained them as "straw" "in comparison with what I have seen," and on his deathbed he submitted them for correction to the holy Roman Church.[4]

On the other hand, in question 2, article 4 of his commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate,* Aquinas does reflect on the written word's incapacity to discriminate between those to whom it should and those to whom it should not speak. The question is whether in theology what is divine should be veiled by verbal obscurity. The response begins by saying that a teacher's words should be adjusted so as to help, not harm, the hearer. Some things, namely, the things that everyone is bound to know, harm no one if they are heard and these should not be hidden but clearly presented to all. But some things do cause harm to the hearers if they are clearly presented, and this in one of two ways. If the *arcana,* the secrets, of the faith are exposed to unbelievers who detest the faith, the latter will mock them. For confirmation of the point Aquinas quotes Matthew 7:6, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs," which, incidentally, are the first words of Christ quoted in the *Summa Theologiae (STh* I, q. 1, a. 9, ad 2), and he also quotes Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy.* On the other hand, if subtleties are presented to the unlearned, what they understand imperfectly will only give them material for going astray. For confirmation here Aquinas quotes 1 Corinthians 3: 1-"Brothers, I could not speak to you as spiritual men; rather I gave you, as little ones in Christ, milk, not meat"-the last part of which is the epigraph of the *Summa Theologiae,* a work

[3] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1, *s.c. (Opera Omnia* [Rome: Leonine Commission, 1882-]), 4:6a: "Sed contra est quod dicitur II ad Tim. III: *omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad corripiendum, ad erudiendum ad iustitiam."*

[4] On Aquinas's concern for usefulness in his writings, see Rene-A. Gauthier's preface to *Sentencia libri De anima* (Leonine ed., 45.1:276*). On hls comment about straw, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation a saint Thomas d'Aquin: Sa personne et son oeuvre* (Fribourg-Paris: Editions universitaires-Editions du Cerf, 1993), 401, 424. On his submission of his writings to correction by the Church, see ibid., 428.

directed to beginners; he also quotes a gloss by Gregory.[5] Secrets and subtleties, then, are the two kinds of things that should be concealed when revealing them would cause harm.

Drawing from Augustine's *De doctrinachristiana,*Aquinas then explains the relevant difference between the written and the spoken word. A speaker can make a distinction between hearers that allows him to say in private to the wise what he leaves in silence in public, but no such distinction can be applied in writing, for a book can fall into anyone's hands. In writing, then, some things must be hidden by verbal obscurity in such a way as to be beneficial to the wise who can understand them and hidden from the simple who cannot. No one is put upon by this: those who do understand are caught up in their reading and those who do not are not forced to read.[6]

Socrates, from what he says in the *Phaedrus,* would seem to have regarded dialectic as an essentially private kind of teaching.

[5] *Super Boetium De Trinitate,* q. 2, a. 4 (Leonine ed., 50:101.53-79): "Dicendum, quod uerba docentis ita debent esse moderata, ut proficient, non noceant audienti. Quedam autem sunt que audita nemini nocent, sicut ea que omnes scire tenentur, et talia non sunt occultanda, set manifeste omnibus proponenda. Quedam uero sunt que proposita manifeste auditoribus nocent.

"Quod quidem contingit dupliciter. Vno modo si archana fidei infidelibus fidem abhorrentibus denudentur: eis enim uenirent in derisum; et propter hoc Dominus <licit Mat. VII 'Nolite sanctum dare canibus', et Dionisius <licit c.II Celestis ierarchie 'Que sancta sunt circumtegens ex immunda multitudine tamquam uniformia custodi'. Secundo quando aliqua subtilia rudibus proponuntur, ex quibus perfecte non compreensis materiam sumunt errandi; uncle Apostolus <licit I Cor. III 'Ego, fratres, non potui uobis loqui quasi spiritualibus, set tamquam paruulis in Christo lac potum uobis dedi, non escam'. Vnde Exo. XXI, super illud 'Si quis aperuit cisternam' etc., <licit Glosa Gregorii 'Qui in sacra eloquio iam alta intelligit, sublimes sensus coram non capientibus per silentium tegat, ne per scandalum interius aut fidelem paruulum aut infidelem qui credere potuisset interimat'. Hee ergo ab his quibus nocent occultanda sunt."

In *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Blackwell: Oxford, 2006), 170-85, Mark D. Jordan discusses Aquinas's citations of Matthew 7:6 ("Nolite sanctum dare canibus") here and in other texts.

[6] *Super Boet. De Trin.,* q. 2, a. 4 (Leonine ed., 50:101.80-102.102): "Set in colloqutione potest fieri distinctio, ut eadem seorsum sapientibus manifestentur, et in publico taceantur .. . . Set in scribendo non potest talis distinctio adhiberi, quia liber conscriptus ad manus quorumlibet uenire potest; etideo suntoccultanda uerborum obscuritatibus, ut per hoc prosint sapientibus qui ea intelligunt, et occultentur a simplicibus qui ea capere non possunt. Et in hoc nullus grauatur, quia qui intelligunt lectione detinentur, qui uero non intelligunt non coguntur ad legendum .... "

His practice of private teaching certainly made him the target of such accusations as those of Callicles in the *Gorgias.* Aquinas, on the other hand, seems to have preferred public teaching, and in fact his famous challenge to the Averroists to "go public" at the end of *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas* makes him sound a bit like Callicles accusing Socrates of whispering in corners with boys.[7] In the article of the *Summa Theologiae* just before the one we are going to examine, Aquinas argues, with qualification, that Christ taught publicly. There are, he says, three ways in which someone's teaching may be said to be concealed *(in occulto).* One is with respect to the intention of a teacher who does not want to share his knowledge with the many either because he wishes to be superior to others in his knowledge or because of something shameful in his teaching, and such was certainly not the case with Christ. A teaching may also be called concealed because it is presented to only a few, and neither was this the case with Christ, who presented all of his teaching either to the whole of the crowd or to all his disciples in common. But a teaching may also be concealed with respect to the mode of teaching, and in this sense Christ did teach something hidden inasmuch as he spoke to the crowds in parables, thereby proclaiming to them spiritual mysteries that they were unfit or unworthy to understand. Aquinas says that it was better for them to hear the teaching about spiritual things under cover of parables than to be deprived of it altogether, and that Christ also explained the truth of the parables to his disciples, through whom it would reach others who were suited for it.[8] This theme of a mediated teaching also occurs in the

[7] *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* 5 (Leonine ed., 43:314.431-41). Cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 485d.

[8] *STh* III, q. 42, a. 3 (Leonine ed., 11:412b-413a): "Dicendum quod doctrina alicuius potest esse in occulto tripliciter. Uno modo, quantum ad intentionem docentis, qui intendit suam doctrinam non manifestare multis, sed magis occultare. Quod quidem contingit dupliciter. Quandoque ex invidia docentis, qui vult per suam scientiam excellere, et ideo scientiam suam non vult aliis communicare. Quod in Christo locum non habuit. . . . Quandoque vero hoc contingit propter inhonestatem eorum quae docentur .... Doctrina autem Christi *non est neque de errore neque de immunditia* . ... Alio modo aliqua doctrina est in occulto, quia paucis proponitur. Et sic Christus etiam nihil docuit in occulto: quia omnem doctrinam suam vel turbae tori proposuit, vel omnibus suis discipulis in communi .... Terrio modo aliqua doctrina est in occulto, quantum ad modum docendi. Et sic Christus quaedam

first article of the same question, which presents several arguments for the fittingness of Christ's having preached to Jews, not Gentiles. One reason is so that his coming would be shown to be from God. As St. Paul says, "whatever is from God is ordered" (Rom 13:1), and due order required that Christ's teaching first be presented to Jews, who by their faith in and cult of the one God, were closer to the one God, and that through them it be transmitted to Gentiles.[9] The teaching of Christ, then, manifests three overlapping sequences of orderly transmission: through Jews to Gentiles; through disciples to others; and, as we will see shortly, from Christ's spoken words, through the spoken and written words of disciples and others, to everyone.

III. THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* ON WRITING AND BOOKS

The difference between the spoken and the written word has been a prominent theme in philosophy, theology, and other disciplines in recent decades.[10] If we take up Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* with this theme in mind, we notice several things at

turbis loquebatur in occulto, parabolis utens ad annuntienda spiritualia mysteria, ad quae capienda non erant idonei vel digni. Et tamen melius erat ei vel sic, sub tegumento parabolarum, spiritualium doctrinam audire, quam omnino ea privari. Harum tamen parabolarum apertam et nudam veritatem Dominus discipulis exponebat, per quos deveniret ad alias, qui essent idonei .... "

The topic of concealed teaching in the case of esoteric writing has been much discussed recently thanks largely to the work of Leo Strauss, who ensured that what he called this forgotten kind of writing would, at least in certain circles, never stop being remembered. In "Esoteric versus Latent Teaching," *The Review of Metaphysics* 59 (2005): 73-93, Frederick J. Crosson makes an important distinction between the "esoteric" way of writing, which is meant to conceal its teaching from, and in fact deceive, the majority of readers, and a "latent" teaching that presents a meaning that is concealed but discoverable in principle by everyone. Aquinas, Crosson argues, did not know of the tradition of esoteric writing, but was well aware of a Latin and Christian tradition of latent teaching.

[9] *STh* III, q. 42, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 11:410b): "Secundo, ut eius adventus ostenderetur esse a Deo. *Quae enim a Deo sunt, ordinata sunt,* ut dicitur *Rom.* XIII.1. Hoc autem debitus ordo exigebat, ut Iudaeis, qui Dea erant propinquiores per fidem et cultum unius Dei, prius quidem doctrina Christi proponeretur, et per eos transmitteretur ad gentes .... "

[10] One reason for this, as Walter Ong plausibly suggests, may be technological: "Contrasts between electronic media and print have sensitized us to the earlier contrast between writing and orality" (Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* [London and New York: Methuen, 1982], 3).

once. The prologue, which mentions both written "expositions of books" and oral "occasions of disputation," immediately presents us with the peculiarly scholastic mixture of the spoken and the written. Each of the more than two thousand articles that make up the work is a miniature drama, an imitation in writing of an oral exchange motivated by a desire for understanding-that is, a sort of briefer, more formal version of the Platonic dialogue. And, apparently by coincidence, one article in each of the *Summa's* three parts makes the art of writing thematic.

In the first part, the article concerning writing is on the meaning of the scriptural image of "the book of life." Aquinas distinguishes interpretations of this term on the model of the term "book of knighthood" *(liber militiae),* of which he distinguishes three senses: a book in which the names of those chosen for knighthood are written, a book in which the military art is transmitted, and a book in which deeds of knights are recounted. Correspondingly, "book of life" may refer to God's knowledge of those he has chosen for eternal life, to the Bible's teaching of the actions that lead to eternal life, or to God's power to recall to the memory of the blessed the actions that they have performed in reaching eternal life.[11] This comparison between senses of "book of knighthood" and those of "book of life" would seem to suggest a division of books in general, according to their different relations to time and action, into memoranda for the future, textbooks for transmitting arts from past to future in the present, and records of past deeds. In any case the principal sense of "book of life" for Aquinas is God's knowledge of his predestination of

[11] *STh* I, q. 24, a. 1, ad 1 (Leonine ed., 4:286b): "Ad primum ergo dicendum quad *fiber vitae* potest dici dupliciter. Uno modo, conscriptio eorum qui sunt electi ad vitam: et sic loquimur nunc de libro vitae. *Alia* modo potest dici liber vitae, conscriptio eorum quae ducunt in vitam. Et hoc dupliciter. Ve! sicut agendorum: et sic novum et vetus Testamentum dicitur liber vitae. Ve! sicut iam factorum: et sic ilia vis divina, qua fiet ut cuilibet in memoriam reducantur facta sua, dicitur liber vitae. Sicut etiam *fiber militiae* potest dici, vel in quo scribuntur electi ad militiam, vel in quo traditur ars militaris, vel in quo recitantur facta militum." On Aquinas's many and various remarks concerning knighthood, see Edward A. Synan, "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Profession of Arms," *Mediaeval Studies* 50 (1988): 404-37. Synan discusses the distinctively medieval use of *miles* as meaning "knight" (ibid., 418) and the senses of *liber militiae* (ibid., 430).

the elect. As he explains, it is customary for the names of those who are chosen for something such as knighthood or a senate to be written in a book (senators were once called *patres conscripti);* by extension, the names of those chosen by God for eternal life are said to be "written" on his knowledge. And because things are sometimes written in books as *aides-memoire,* something that a person holds firmly in memory is said to be "inscribed" on his intellect, or, as is said in the book of Proverbs, on his heart; thus, again by extension, God's firmly fixed knowledge of those he has predestined to eternal life is called the book of life. In the sense in which writing in a book may be an indication of something to be done, as in a memorandum to oneself, God's knowledge is, as it were, an indication to himself of those whom he is to lead to eternal life.[12]

In the second part of the *Summa* writing is often mentioned in the treatise on law. For example, Aquinas says that it is essential to law that it be promulgated, and not only in the present, but also, by means of the fixity of writing, in the future, and it is because law is written that the very word for law, *lex,* is, according to an etymology of Isidore, derived from the word for reading, *legere.*[13] The eternal law is promulgated both by the divine word and by the book of life, that is, by a kind of divine

[12] *STh* I, q. 24, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 4:286a-b): "Respondeo dicendum quod *libervitae* in Deo dicitur metaphorice, secundum similitudinem a rebus humanis acceptam. Est enim consuetum apud homines, quod illi qui ad aliquid eliguntur, conscribuntur in libro; utpote milites vel consiliarii, qui olim dicebantur *Patres conscripti*. ...

"Dicitur autem metaphorice aliquid conscriptum in intellectu alicuius, quod firmiter in memoria tenet, secundum illud *Prov.* III, *ne obliviscaris legismeae, et praecepta mea car tuum custodiat;* et post pauca sequitur: *describe illa in tabulis cordis tui.* Nam et in libris materialibus aliquid conscribitur ad succurrendum memoriae. Uncle ipse Dei notitia, qua firmiter retinet se aliquos praedestinasse ad vitam aeternam, dicitur liber vitae. Nam sicut scriptura libri est signum eorum quae fienda sunt, ita Dei notitia est quoddam signum apud ipsum, eorum qui sunt perducendi ad vitam aeternam .... "For further considerations of the nature of books, see the parallel texts: III *Sent.,* d. 31, q. 1, a. 2 *(Scriptum super libros sententiarum,* ed. Pierre Mandonnet and M. F. Moos, 4 vols. [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929-194 7], 3:973-78); *De Veritate,* q. 7, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 23.1:197-201).

[13] *STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 4, ad 3 (Leonine ed., 7:152b): "Ad tertium dicendum quod promulgatio praesens in futurum extenditur per firmitatem scripturae, quae quodammodo semper earn promulgat. Uncle Isidorus <licit, in II *Etymol.,* quod *lex a legendo vocata est, quia scripta est."*

"speaking" and "writing. "[14] Other kinds of law are either literally or metaphorically written. Human positive law and the old law are literally written. Natural law and the new law are both primarily unwritten, being in different ways *indita*, "inscribed," as it were, on man himself. Natural law pertains to human nature, from which its primary and universal precepts cannot be, so to speak, "deleted. "[15]

The first article on the new law brings the theme of writing to the fore by arguing that the new law is not literally written but rather "inscribed" on the hearts of the faithful. The argument is that a thing appears as what is most important in it and what is most important in the law of the new testament, what its whole power consists in, is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given through faith in Christ. Primarily, then, the new law is something unwritten, or rather "written" on the heart. But in addition to the grace it gives, the new law includes certain secondary matters concerning predisposition to or use of grace, and the faithful have to be instructed about these matters through speech and writing about what should be believed and what should be done.[16] In the following article, on whether the new law justifies, an objection argues that justification is the proper effect of God, and that the old law was no less from God than the new. Aquinas answers that the sa.me God gave the old and the new laws, but in significantly different ways: he gave the old law as something written on

[14] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 1, ad 2 (Leonine ed., 7:153b): "Ad secundum dicendum quod promulgatio fit et verbo et scripto; et utroque modo lex aeterna habet promulgationem ex parte Dei promulgantis: quia et Verbum divinum est aeternum, et scripura libri vitae est aeterna."

[15] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 6 (Leonine ed., 7:173a-b).

[16] *STh* I-II, q. 106, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 7:273a-b): "Respondeo dicendum quod *unaquaeque res illud videtur esse quod in ea est potissimum,* ut Philosophus dicit, in IX *Ethic.* Id autem quod est potissimum in lege novi testamenti, et in quo tota virtus eius consistit, est gratia Spiritus Sancti, quae datur per fidem Christi. Et ideo principaliter lex nova est ipsa gratia Spiritus Sancti, quae datur Christi fidelibus ....

"Habet tamen lex nova quaedam sicut dispositiva ad gratiam Spiritus Sancti, et ad usum huius gratiae pertinentia, quae sunt quasi secundaria in lege nova, de quibus oportuit instrui fideles Christi et verbis et scriptis, tam circa credenda quam circa agenda. Et ideo dicendum est quod principaliter nova lex est lex indita, secundario autem est lex scripta."

tablets of stone, but the new law "on the tablets of flesh of the heart," as St. Paul says (2 Cor 3:3). [17]

The only other occurrence of this Pauline verse in the *Summa* is in the article that concerns writing in the *Tertia Pars,* that is, the one in question 42 on Christ's not having written. The subject of question 42 is not the content of Christ's teaching but its manner, audience, and order of transmission. The question's four articles argue that it was fitting for Christ to have preached to Jews, not Gentiles; that his teaching inevitably offended the leaders of the Jews; that his teaching was public, although hidden in parables; and that it was fitting for him not to have transmitted his teaching in writing. These conclusions touch on two subjects of great contemporary interest, namely, Jewish-Christian relations and means of communication.

Modern editors of the *Summa* indicate no parallels in the Thomistic corpus to the last article of question 42. The question it asks seems to have been suggested to Aquinas by a passage of Augustine's *De consensu evangelistarum* that also supplied him with three extensive quotations for the article.

IV. QUOTATIONS FROM AUGUSTINE

De consensu evangelistarum is an attempt to harmonize the four gospels, but it begins by addressing a preliminary question posed by some of Augustine's contemporaries, namely, why did Christ not set his teaching down in writing? [18] Most of the first book of this work is taken up with this excursus or *quaestio,* a digression from Augustine's main concern that provoked the remark, later repented of, by Henri Marrou that "St. Augustine writes badly" ("Saint Augustin compose mal"), a professedly

[17] *STh* I-II, q. 106, a. 2 (Leonine ed., 7:274b): "Ad tertium dicendum quod legem novam et veterem unus Deus dedit, sed aliter et aliter. Nam legem veterem dedit scriptam in tabulis lapideis: legem autem novam dedit scriptam *in tabulis cordis carnalibus,* ut Apostolus <licit, II *ad Cor.* III." This article complements an article in Aquinas's early *Sentences* commentary on the necessity of the old law, and especially the Decalogue, having been a written law: III *Sent.,* d. 37, a. 1 (Mandonnet and Moos, eds., 3:1234-36).

[18] Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1.7-35 (ed. F. Weihrich, *CSEL* 43/4: 11-61).

modern and French judgment of taste on Augustine's insertion, in writing about writings about Christ, of a discussion concerning Christ's not having written at all.[19]

The third objection of Aquinas's article quotes from the beginning of the excursus, where the question is introduced. Augustine says that before treating his main point he must first discuss a question that is regularly asked, namely, why the Lord himself wrote nothing, so that one must believe others who did write about him. The askers of this question are pagans who dare not make accusations or blaspheme against Christ, to whom they attribute the highest wisdom, but only a human wisdom, and of whom they say that his disciples made of him more than he was, calling him the Son of God, and the Word of God through whom all things were made. Augustine comments that these questioners would seem to have been prepared to believe what Christ had written about himself but not what others preached about him by their own decision. It would seem, then, that, as the objection in Aquinas's article concludes, Christ ought to have handed on his teaching in writing. But Aquinas answers, in the spirit of Augustine's response, that those who are unwilling to believe the writings of the apostles about Christ would not have believed Christ himself if he had written.[20]

[19] Henri Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: Boccard, 1983), 61, 665. This book was first published in 1938; the second edition, published in 1949, included a *Retractatio* in which the author withdrew his original condemnation of Augustine's style.

[20] *STh* III, q. 42, a. 4, obj. 3 (Leonine ed., ll:414a): "Praeterea, ad Christum, qui venerat *illuminare his qui in tenebris et in umbra mortis sedent,* ut dicitur Luc. I, pertinebat erroris occasionem excludere, et viam fidei aperire. Sed hoc fecisset doctrinam suam scribendo, <licit - enim Augustinus, in I de Consens. Evang., quod *solet nonnullos movere cur ipse dominus nihil scripserit, ut aliis de illo scribentibus necesse sit credere. Hoc enim illi vel maxime Pagani quaerunt qui Christum cu/pare aut blasphemare non audent, eique tribuunt excellentissimam sapientiam, sed tamen tanquam homini. Discipulos vero eius dicunt magistro suo amplius tribuisse quam erat, ut eum (ilium Dei dicerent, et verbum Dei, per quad facta sunt omnia.* Et postea subdit, *videntur parati fuisse hoc de illo credere quad de se ipse scripsisset, non quad alii de illo pro suo arbitrio praedicassent.* Ergo videtur quod Christus ipse doctrinam suam scripto tradere debuerit." Ibid., ad 3, 414b: "Ad tertium dicendum quod illi qui Scripturae apostolorum de Christo credere nolunt, nee ipsi Christo scribenti credidissent, de quo opinabantur quod magicis artibus fecisset miracula." Cf. Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* l.7 (CSEL 43/4: 11.16-23, 12.5-7).

The corpus of Aquinas's article mentions another opinion reported by Augustine in his excursus, namely, the view that Christ did write some books containing the magic by which he supposedly performed his miracles, a view that, as Aquinas says following Augustine, Christian teaching condemns. Augustine observes that those who say they have read such books by Christ do not perform the miracles he did. He also says that holders of this view have been deceived by fictitious pictures showing Christ with Peter and Paul, and they claim that the books in question were dedicated to these two disciples. With a characteristic rhyme he comments, "No wonder if dreamers *[fingentes]* were deceived by painters *[a pingentibus]*."[21] The odd detail of misleading pictures of Christ having brought about belief in the existence of writings by him complicates the background of the question faced by Augustine and taken up again by Aquinas.

The two quotations mentioned so far are from near the beginning of Augustine's excursus. In the reply to the first objection Aquinas includes a third quotation from later in the excursus. The first objection introduces the article by saying that writing was invented so that teaching could be committed to a sort of memory for the future, but the teaching of Christ is to endure forever, and therefore it seems he should have handed it on in writing. Aquinas's reply quotes from the end of Augustine's excursus. Christ is head of all his disciples, they being like the members of his body. Therefore, since they wrote what he made manifest and said, it should not be said that he did not write, since the "members" produced what they knew because the "head"

[21] *STh* III, q. 42, a. 4 (Leonine ed., 11:414b): "Sciendum tamen est, sicut Augustinus dicit, in I de Consens. Evang., aliquos gentiles existimasse Christum quosdam libros scripsisse continentes quaedam magica, quibus miracula faciebat, quae disciplina Christiana condemnat. *Et tamen illi qui Christi libros tales se legisse affirmant, nu/la talia faciunt qualia ilium de libris talibus fecisse mirantur. Divina etiam iudicio sic errant ut eosdem libros ad Petrum et Paulum dicant tanquam epistolari titulo praenotatos, eo quod in pluribus locis simul eos cum Christo pictos viderunt. Nee mirum si a pingentibus fingentes decepti sunt. Toto enim tempore quo Christus in came mortali cum suis discipulis vixit, nondum erat Paulus discipulus eius."* Cf. Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1.9-10 (CSEL 43/4: 14.20-16.16). On the pagan view of Christ as magician, see Goulven Madec, "Le Christ des pa!ens d'apres le *De consensu euangelistarum* de saint Augustin," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 26 (1992): 3-67.

dictated it, for he commanded them to write whatever he wanted us to read of his actions and speech, they being like his hands. [22]

Aquinas uses quotations from *De consensu evangelistarum*, then, to make three points. To the objection that Christ should have written his teaching to preserve it, the answer is that he did, via his disciples. To the assertion that he wrote books of magic, the answer is that this is contrary to Christian teaching and is based on a deception by pictures. To the objection that he should have written in order to remove occasion of error and open the path of faith, the answer is that those who are unwilling to believe the writings of the apostles about Christ would not have believed Christ himself if he had written. Still, the burden of Aquinas's article is not that Christ did in fact "write" via his disciples, nor that he did not write books of magic, nor that any writings of his would not have been believed-but that it is fitting, *conveniens*, that he himself did not commit his teaching to writing. [23] Before returning to Aquinas's three arguments for this *convenientia*, let us consider the article's *sed contra*, and some implications of the question being asked.

V. IMPLICATIONS OF THE QUESTION

The *sed contra* breaks with the usual pattern of Scholastic *sed contras* that refer to Scripture: instead of offering an authoritative quotation it simply says that no book by Christ is included in the

[22] *ITh* m, q. 42, a. 4, obj. 1 (Leonine ed., 414a): "Videtur quod Christus doctrinam suam debuerit scripto tradere. Scriptura enim inventa est ad hoc quod doctrina commendetur memoriae in futurum. Sed doctrina Christi duratura erat in aeternum, secundum illud Luc. XXI, *caelum et terra transibunt, verba autem mea non transibunt.* Ergo videtur quod Christus doctrinam suam debuerit scripto mandare." - Ibid., ad 1 (Leonine ed., 11:4l4b): "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, sicut Augustinus dicit, in eodem libro, *omnibus discipulis suis tanquam membris sui corporis Christus caput est. Itaque, cum illi scripserunt quae ille ostendit et dixit, nequaquam dicendum est quad ipse non scripserit. Quandoquidem membra eius id operata sunt quad, dictante capite, cognoverunt. Quidquid enim ille de suis factis et dictis nos legere voluit, hoc scribendum illis tanquam suis manibus imperavit."* Cf. Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* l.35 (CSEL 43/4: 60.16-61.2).

[23] On Aquinas's arguments from *convenientia*, see Gilbert Narcisse O.P., *Les raisons de Dieu: Argument de convenance et Esthetique theologique selon saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs van Balthasar* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1997), 72-73 and 485, which refer to *STh* III, q. 42, a. 4.

canon of Scripture. Here it is the absence of an authoritative text that authoritatively decides the question about the appropriateness of Christ's not having written.

The implication of this negative fact is that Christ's act of teaching was originally not the making visible of something on a writing surface but "an event within the history of sound," to borrow a fine phrase from Stephen H. Webb.[24] The circumstances attendant on this event must loom large for any Christian thinker, as they did for Augustine and Aquinas. Christ taught orally and publicly for just a few years, two thousand years ago. His voice was male and he spoke principally in Aramaic. There are written records of his speech in the Gospels, but they are, for the most part, translations; a few of his Aramaic words remain, but otherwise he is represented as speaking Greek. Different Gospels sometimes present what seem to be different versions of the same speech, and modern Scripture scholars claim that Christ did not say much of what is attributed to him by the evangelists. In view of all this, why did he not commit his teaching to writing? Did he not in any case, as Augustine and Aquinas indicate, intend that the words be written by someone? Why did he himself not set down, or cause to be set down, a written composition by him teaching, for example, among other things, that "Blessed are the poor in spirit," so that everyone might read copies of "what he wrote," or copies of copies, or translations of copies of copies? Would not the words have more authority that way? His teaching would seem to be disadvantaged by the fact that he himself neither set it down, nor caused it to be set down, in a composition of his own, a written work "by Christ."

These questions call for comparison not just between the effects of the spoken word and those of the written word, but also between the activities and intentions of speakers on the one hand and those of writers on the other.[25] A speaker may assert in his

[24] Stephen H. Webb, *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2004), 103.

[25] In some of the following remarks I draw on distinctions and suggestions made by Robert Sokolowski in "Quotation," in *Pictures, Quotations, and Distinctions. Fourteen Essays in Phenomenology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 27-51; and in "Predication as a Public Action," *Acta Philosophica* 14 (2005): 59-76.

own name or quote someone else. If he asserts, he may make a simple or a declarative assertion, the latter being an assertion in which he emphatically declares himself as the one who is asserting, and in which he becomes, as it were, more emphatically himself, more unified as a speaker, than when he simply asserts. Again, a declarative assertion may be complete in itself, or it may be intended to be quoted by others, whether in their speech or in their writing. If a speaker quotes someone else, he may do so without agreement or with agreement; in the latter case two persons become, as it were, one. To schematize this division of speaking:

- Assertion
  - Simple assertion
  - Declarative assertion
    - Simple declarative
    - Declaring so as to be quoted by others
      - in their speech
      - in their writing
- Quotation
  - without agreement
  - with agreement

Christ, it seems, spoke in all of these ways, but Augustine and Aquinas especially stress his speaking so as to be quoted by others in their writing. Also striking is his repeated combination of quotation and declaration: "You have heard it said ... " (or "It is written . . ."), "But I say to you . . .".

The various intentions of writers seem to correspond to those of speakers. One may write in one's own name or one may write to report, with or without agreement, what another has said. Writing in one's own name tends to be declarative, emphasizing the author as the one asserting, and it always presents itself as quotable by others, whether in their speech or their writing. Writing in one's own name makes one person become, as it were, two, in the division between the body of the writer and the body of the writing surface. To write in one's own name is to double

oneself, to quote oneself, to perform a kind of ventriloquism with a page or screen. This is what Christ, according to Augustine and Aquinas, emphatically did not do, although neither of course did he write to report what someone else had said. The latter is so evidently a servile activity that it is immediately intelligible that he, as teacher, would not give himself to it. But why did he not write in his own name? After all, "Writing is the clearest form of that detachment which makes a speech available again and again as the same, holding out invariant against modifications. "[26]

Each of Aquinas's three arguments for the fittingness of Christ's not having written is incomplete and demands supplementation by the reader. Whether they are intended or not, these incompletenesses draw attention to the art of writing itself, showing that a writing may hint at more than is contained by the letter and that a reader must be active in bringing the letter to life agam.

VI. WRITING ON THE HEART

The first reason for the fittingness of Christ's not having written is his dignity. A more excellent teacher should have a more excellent mode of teaching, and Christ, as the most excellent teacher, had to use the mode by which he would imprint his teaching on the hearts of his hearers, which is why he is said to have taught as one having power. Likewise the most excellent teachers among the Gentiles, Pythagoras and Socrates, wished to write nothing, since writing is ordered to the impression of a teaching on the hearts of hearers as its end. The incompleteness here is in this last inference. Aquinas does not say so, but he seems to imply that oral teaching accomplishes directly and so in a better way what writing aims at but can achieve only indirectly.

The image of writing on the heart was widespread in the ancient world. [27] As we have seen, Aquinas knew the image from

[26] Thomas Prufer, *Recapitulations* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 59.

[27] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, trans. and abridged by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1985), s.v. tyypa<jiw.

passages in Scripture, including 2 Corinthians 3:3, which he quotes here in response to the second objection. The objection is that the old law, which came first and as a figure of Christ, had to be written by God, and that therefore Christ too should have written his teaching. Combining 2 Corinthians 3 :3 with Romans 8:2, Aquinas answers that because the old law was given in perceptible figures it was appropriately written with perceptible signs, but the teaching of Christ, as the law of the spirit of life, was written not with ink but with the spirit-that is, the "breath" -of the living God, and not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of flesh of the heart. [28]

Aquinas's reference to Pythagoras and Socrates is apparently borrowed from Augustine's response to those who ask why Christ wrote nothing. Augustine says that these people would seem to have been prepared to believe what Christ had written about himself but not what others preached about him by their own decision. But I ask them back, Augustine goes on to say, why, in the case of some of the noblest of their own philosophers, they believe the written recollections of them by their disciples even though the philosophers themselves wrote nothing about themselves. Pythagoras, the Greek most famous for contemplative virtue, is believed to have written nothing whatsoever; Socrates, the first in practical virtue and the wisest of men according to Apollo, did, it is true, adapt some of Aesop's fables to verse, but he wrote only because he was forced to do so by his daimon, and, being forced to write, he preferred to embellish someone else's thoughts rather than his own. Why then do the questioners believe what the disciples of these men have written about them but not what the disciples of Christ have written about him? [29]

[28] *STh* III, q. 42, a. 4, obj. 2 (Leonine ed., 11:414a): "Praeterea, lex vetus in figura Christi praecessit .... Sed lex vetus a Deo fuit descripta .... Ergo videtur quod etiam Christus doctrinam suam scribere debuerit." Ibid., ad 2 (Leonine ed., 414b): "Ad secundum dicendum quod, quia lex vetus in sensibilibus figuris dabatur, ideo etiam convenienter sensibilibussignis scripta fuit. Sed doctrina Christi, quae est lex spiritus vitae, scribi debuit, *non atramento, sed spiritu Dei vivi, non in tabulis lapideis, sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus,* ut apostolus <licit, II Cor. III."

[29] "Cum ergo quaerunt, quare ipse non scripserit, videntur parati fuisse hoc de illo credere, quod de se ipse scripsisset, non quod alii de illo pro suo arbitrio praedicassent. A quibus quaero, cur de quibusdam nobilissimis philosophis suis hoc crediderint, quod de illis eorum

Aquinas reduces this elaborate Augustinian passage to a mere reference to Pythagoras and Socrates as great, nonwriting pagan philosophers, thereby establishing that the superiority of oral to written teaching is not peculiar to the case of Christ but is rather in the nature of things. The use of speech is naturally superior to the use of script in teaching because it is closer to the end of teaching, which is to impress a teaching on the hearts of an audience.

Incidentally, Aquinas knew from Augustine's *City of God* that Pythagoras was held to have been the coiner of the word "philosopher" and thereby the source of the word "philosophy," [30] Greek words that have been transliterated, rather than translated, into Latin, Arabic, English, and many other languages. It's strange to think that when we say these words we are imitating in the accents of our language sounds said to have been first uttered in Greek by a man who famously wrote nothing. It is in no small part thanks to writing that the "spirit" of whoever did coin these words-both in the sense of his mind or thought and in the sense of the sound of his breath-continues to move through the world in these words. [31]

Aquinas's adoption of Augustine's comparison between Christ and Socrates as nonwriting teachers touches on one element of a

discipuli scriptum memoriae reliquerunt, cum de se ipsi nihil scripsissent? Nam Pythagoras, quo in ilia contemplativa virtute nihil tune habuit Graecia clarius, non tantum de se, sed nee de ulla re aliquid scripsisse perhibetur. Socrates autem, quern rursus in activa, qua mores informantur, omnibus praetulerunt, ita ut testimonio quoque dei sui Apollinis omnium sapientissimum pronuntiatum esse non taceant, Aesopi fabulas pauculis versibus persecutus est verba et numeros suos adhibens rebus alterius, usque adeo nihil scribere voluit, ut hoc se coactum imperio sui demonis fecisse dixit, sicut nobilissimus discipulorum eius Plato commemorat, in quo tamen opere maluit alienas quam suas exornare sententias. Quid igitur causae est cur de istis hoc credant, quod de illis discipuli eorum litteris commendarunt, et de Christo nolint credere quod eius de illo discipuli conscripserunt; praesertim cum ab eo ceteros homines sapientia superatos esse fateantur, quamvis eum fateri Deum nolint?" (Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1.7 *[CSEL* 43/4: 12.7-13.12]). The story of Socrates versifying Aesop evidently derives from Plato, *Phaedo* 60d-6lb.

[30] *STh* II-II, q. 186, a. 2 (Leonine ed., 10:488b). See also *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio* l.3 (Rome: Marietti, 1950), n. 56. Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 8.2 (ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCL 47:217.5-12).

[31] For a recent review of the ancient evidence concerning Pythagoras's authorship of the word *philosophy,* see Christoph Riedweg, *Pythagoras: His Life, Teaching, and Influence,* trans. Steven Rendall (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 90-97.

topos with a long history in Christian thought, namely, the similarity between the two eminent cases of oral teaching, both involving execution of the teacher for his teaching, transmission of the teaching through several written accounts, and a long success in the world. Eventually, of course, the continuation of Christ's teaching in various ways competed with, conflicted with, agreed with, and partly absorbed the continuation of that of Socrates.

VII. WHAT CANNOT BE CAPTURED IN LETTERS

Aquinas's second argument is based on the excellence not of the teacher but of the teaching. This *excellentia* or "loftiness," Aquinas says, "cannot be captured in writing" *(litteris comprehendi non potest);* but if Christ had committed his teaching to writing, people would think nothing "loftier" *(nihil altius)* about the teaching than what the writing contained; it was, then, fitting for him not to have committed his teaching to writing, Aquinas implies, because he thereby obviated the possibility of this mistake. Evidently this argument turns on the danger of underestimating a teaching that has been put into writing, a danger particularly acute in the case of the teaching of Christ. But the mechanics of the syllogism are less than perfectly clear. Let us consider each of the premises.

Aquinas establishes that the *excellentia* of Christ's teaching escapes capture in writing by quoting the last verse of the Gospel of John and Augustine's comment on it. "There are also many other things Jesus did which, if they were each written down, I suppose that even the world itself could not take in *[capere]* the books that would have to be written" (John 21:25). Augustine explains that "It is not to be thought that the world could not spatially 'take in' *[capere]* the books, but rather that they could not be 'taken in' *[comprehendi]* by the 'capacity' *[capacitate]* of their readers."[32] At first sight this bit of wordplay seems to mean

[32] Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV,* 124.8 (ed. D.R. Willems, *CCL* 36/8:688.6-9): "Non spatio locorurn credendurn est rnundurn capere non posse, quae in eo scribi quomodo possent, si scripta non ferret? Set capacitate legentium cornprehendi fortasse

that the finite capacity of human readers could not take in the many things that might be said about Christ's deeds. What Christ "did," however, includes his teaching, the loftiness of which was mentioned at the beginning of the argument. This loftiness escapes being put into writing because it escapes the capacity of readers to comprehend it. But what about that part of his teaching that *was* put into writing by his disciples? According to this first premise, the loftiness of the teaching must escape being put into writing by *anyone*. Why, then, permit anyone to put any of Christ's teaching into writing? On the other hand, if any of it is going to be put into writing, why should it matter who does the writing?

This last question is presumably resolved by the minor premise, which is that if Christ had put his teaching into writing, people would think nothing loftier about the teaching than what the writing contained. Aquinas does not say why this is so. In part, perhaps, it has to do with the very nature of writing. Because, as the *Phaedrus* says, it "speaks" but does not answer questions, a piece of writing always seems to insinuate its own completeness, suggesting at the end that nothing remains to be said on the subject. To counter this feature of writing, forms of writing such as dialogue and aphorism have been used to draw attention to the incompleteness of the written word by emphasizing precisely its having been written and thereby reminding readers of the spoken word.[33] Aquinas seems to imply that the written word's

non possent."

[33] "Paul Friedlander's remark 'The dialogue is the only form of book that seems to suspend the book form itself' could perhaps be elaborated on as follows: a (Platonic) dialogue has not taken place if we, the listeners or readers, did not actively participate in it; lacking such participation, all that is before us is indeed nothing but a book" (Jacob Klein, *A Commentary onPlato'sMeno* [Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965], 6. Francis Bacon praises aphorisms over the apparently exhaustive expositions, which he calls "methods," because aphorisms do not allow readers to think that everything has been said: "Aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to enquire farther; whereas Methods, carrying the shew of a total, do secure men, as if they were at furthest" *(The Advancement ofLeaming* 2 *[TheWorks ofFrancisBacon,* 14 vols., ed. J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis, and D. Heath (London: Longman, 1857-74), 6:292]). On the oral origins of the Scholastic *quaestio-another* written form that evokes the spoken background of writing-see Bernardo C. Bazan, "Les questions disputees, principalement dans !es facultes de theologie," in Bernardo

presumption of completeness is particularly strong when a teacher writes in his own name. The fact that our knowledge of Christ's teaching comes from writings that quote or report, rather than "declare," in their own names, leaves room, so to speak, for recognition of the incompleteness of our knowledge and for reflection on the loftiness of the teaching that escapes the grasp of lowly letters.

VIII. UNDERSTANDING MEDIA

Aquinas's first two reasons are introduced with a *propter* ("on account of") indicating causes of which Christ's not having written is the effect, namely, the excellence of the teacher and that of the teaching. The third reason is introduced with an *ut* ("in order that") indicating an intended effect of his not having written, namely, that his teaching would reach everyone in a certain order in which he himself taught his disciples immediately or without mediation, and they would then teach others in speech and writing. If he himself had written, Aquinas says, his teaching would have reached everyone immediately, which, it is implied, would have been a bad thing. But why? Would it not seem to a Christian to be the contrary of objectionable for the words of Christ to reach everyone immediately in this way? There seems to be a missing further premise, and it seems to be the statement of St. Paul quoted earlier in question 42 that whatever is from God is ordered. [34] Because of its divine character, it was appropriate that Christ's teaching not be written, that is, that it not be made available to everyone immediately or without mediation, but that it rather be spoken immediately, without mediation, to his hearers, who would then transmit it to everyone else by speech and writing, so that it would go forth according to an order. The

C. Bazan, John F. Wippel, Gerard Fransen, Danielle Jacquart, *Les questions disputees et les questions quodlibetiques dans les facultes de theologie, de droit et de medicine: Typologie des sources du moyen age occidental, Pase. 44-45* (Turnhout-Belgium: Brepols, 1985), 13-149, at 25-48.

[34] *STh* III, q. 42, a. 1, commentaria Cardinalis Caietani (Leonine ed., 11:410b): "'Quae enim a Deo sunt, ordinate sunt,' ut dicitur *Rom.* XIII.1."

written word by itself is lacking in order not because it is *disordered* but because it reaches everyone according to *no* order, that is, immediately or without mediation.

Cajetan proposes the objection that Aquinas's first and third arguments contradict one another, the first suggesting that oral teaching is superior because it is immediate, the third that it is superior because it is mediated. In answering his own objection Cajetan argues that both arguments are good but in relation to different persons. The first concerns the teaching of Christ in relation to his disciples, who were taught immediately out of the mouth of Christ himself. The third concerns the teaching in relation to everyone, which calls for order and therefore mediation. [35] Cajetan's objection and response draw attention to Aquinas's awareness of the combination of immediacy and mediation in teaching in general and Christian teaching in particular. The combination is obviously pertinent to the theological theme of "Scripture and tradition" and to contemporary concern with "media" of communication. It seems clear that since Aquinas objected to the immediacy that would have resulted from Christ's having written, he would argue *a fortiori* against the greater immediacy, and therefore the greater impropriety, of Christ's teaching by means of a printed book or electronic communication. The immediate writing, publishing, or broadcasting of what comes from God would preclude its proceeding in an order.

I close with two final observations. One is that it is striking how much Aquinas's three arguments are anticipated by the

[35] *STh* III, q. 42, a. 4, commentaria Cardinalis Caietani (Leonine ed., 11:415a): "Sed occurrit hie dubium, quia tertia ratio adversatur primae. Nam tertia fundatur super ordine quo Christi doctrina pervenire quo Christi doctrina pervenire debet ad omnes, scilicet, mediantibus quibusdam: prima autem fundatur super immediatione inter doctorem et discipulum. Haec enim sibi invicem adversari patet: nam, si immediate, ergo non ordine quodam; et si ordine quodam, ergo non immediate.

"Ad hoc dicitur quod utraque ratio vera et efficax est, ad diversos relata. Nam prima ratio respicit doctrinam Christi respectu discipulorum, qui ex proprio Christi ore edocti sunt. Tertia autem respicit doctrinam Christi respectu universorum, quocumque tempore a Christo discunt. Etrespectu illorum, immediatio excellentior est: ut prima ratio sonat. Respectu autem universorum, ordo excellentior est ut ad alios mediantibus quibusdam perveniat doctrina: ut tertia assumit ratio. Nulla ergo est controversia inter rationes sane intellectas."

Phaedrus, which also speaks of an elevated teacher and teaching, and which also describes a chain of transmission and mediation of a teaching.

The other point is that the order by which Christ's teaching spreads out to everyone includes the *Summa Theologiae* itself. The unwritten *doctrina Christi* that is the subject of question 42 of the *Tertia Pars* is transmitted through the written *doctrina Christiana* of which the *Summa Theologiae* is meant to be an exemplary case.[36] In composing-and, by the way, dictating, not manually "writing" -article four, Aquinas must have been conscious that he himself was acting as a mediator, using the written word to perpetuate and defend the teaching that had, long before, come from the mouth of Christ.[37]

[36] See the prologue of the *Summa Theologiae* (Leonine ed., 4:5a-b).

[37] On Aquinas's use of secretaries, see Torrell, *Initiation a saint Thomas d'Aquin: Sa personne et son oeuvre,* 350-57.

A draft of this article was read at a session on Thomas Aquinas held on 6 May 2006, during the 41" International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University. The session was organized by John F. Boyle of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The Thomist 71 (2007): 529-54

THE NATURAL MOTION OF MATTER IN NEWTONIAN AND POST-NEWTONIAN PHYSICS

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IN THE CENTURIES since Isaac Newton delivered modern science into an astonished world, the great unanswered question remains: what do its suppositions and abstractions mean in terms of common human experience? The critical problem remains how to incorporate science's valid insights into a well-grounded philosophy of nature.

Certainly the rise of modern science has been the most jarring intellectual movement in history. The dislocations sprung from this science originate not only in its technology, but even more in its concepts and discoveries that are ostensibly at odds with traditional natural philosophy. Natural philosophy is the basis of Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics and ethics, "because it is through the senses that we are open to things, and something enters us, according to our natural mode of knowing."[1] As theology makes use of philosophy, natural philosophy also makes an indirect contribution to theology.[2] Modern science and Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy claim the same sensible world as their home territory.[3] Science's tremendous successes advertise

[1] Jacques Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), 35.

[2] Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. E. I. Watkin (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), 87.

[3] Benedict M. Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom: An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 90-91.

that it has some real claim to truth about this world, so 1t 1s difficult to blame the world for failing to take seriously a philosophy that, while claiming to be grounded in sense experience, fails to account for the real aspects of nature that modern science has discovered. In the absence of such an accounting, inferior philosophy readily occupies the vacancy. It is incumbent on the perennial philosophy to provide an adequate account of the sensible world-all of it. The task of the present inquiry is to begin to pay part of this centuries-old debt by resolving Newtonian and post-Newtonian physics in terms of traditional natural philosophy.

The chasm that separates science from natural philosophy runs between their understandings of nature. At the beginning of book 2 of the *Physics,* Aristotle defines nature as "a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily. "[4] Nature is an inherent source of motion and rest. In his discussion of chance, Aristotle emphasizes the purposefulness of nature's acts: "action for an end is present in things which come to be and are by nature. "[5] In stark contrast, modern physics[6] restricts itself to the mathematical principles of nature. Since quantity is most closely related to matter, which is inactive and undetermined insofar as it is material, modern physics is blind to purpose, as well as to closely related substantial form.[7]

It is instructive to examine how modern physics treats Aristotle's four kinds of causal explanation. Nature, as Aristotle wrote, includes four causes and "it is the business of the physicist to know about them all."[8] Modern physics, by reducing all of nature to the quantifiable and measurable, has effectively

[4] Aristotle, *Physics* 2.1.192b21-22 (trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, ed. Mortimer]. Adler, in *Great Books of the Western World* 8 [Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952], 257-355; this translation is used throughout this article).

[5] Ibid., 2.8.199a6-7.

[6] Modern physics here means (modern) mathematical natural philosophy, not quantum mechanics.

[7] David L. Schindler, "Introduction: The Problem of Mechanism," in David L. Schindler, ed., *Beyond Mechanism: The Universe in Recent Physics and Catholic Thought* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986), 4.

[8] Aristotle, *Physics* 2.7.198a23.

eliminated all but one of the four causes. Matter exists not as analogical potency, but (since quantity is the only recognized accident) univocally as the ultimate actuality beneath all things.[9] Formal causality persists but accidentally through mathematics (e.g., the form of "roundness" makes a ball round). Substantial form is completely excluded,[10] as is intrinsic final causality, its correlative. Final causality in general defies quantitative description and finds in a purely quantitative description no anchor intrinsic to individual things. What remains is only one narrow kind of efficient causality-the quantifiable, such as forces.[11] A comprehensive knowledge of nature will require not only resolving the modern notion of matter into Aristotelian terms, but even more the recovery of undiluted formal and final causality.[12]

Recovery of substantial form and intrinsic final causality has the additional benefit of allowing modern science to assimilate into the whole of human knowledge. The end of a natural substance is its limit. Just as limiting points not only set boundaries between one part of a line and another but also unite the parts, so also establishing the ends of matter will allow the incorporation of physics into the hierarchy of other disciplines and resumption of its foundational role for ethics and metaphysics.

The intention of the present inquiry is to begin a recovery of a more complete conception of nature, which includes formal and final causality. The method is to use the real features of the world uncovered by modern science to recover the closely related notion of natural motion with regard to matter in the modern sense. Unfortunately, the great mass of unwarranted baggage surrounding this notion needs to be unloaded before we turn to its recovery.

[9] Schindler, "The Problem of Mechamism," 3.

[10] John Goyette, "Substantial Form and the Recovery of an Aristotelian Natural Science," *The Thomist* 66 (2002): 519-20.

[11] "The efficient causality of the teacher in directing the activity of the artist, however cannot be so [quantifiably] described" (Michael J. Dodds, "Science, Causality and Divine Action: Classical Principles for Contemporary Challenges," *C1NS Bulletin* 21, no. 1 [2001]: 3-12, at 5).

[12] In natural things, the formal and final causes coincide (Aristotle, *Physics* 2.7.198a25).

Natural motion and "natural place" are part of Aristotelian physics, prominent pieces of which are outdated if not outright wrong. In Aristotle's cosmology, the four elements had specific places to which they naturally moved: earth at the center of the universe and fire to the outer sphere, with intermediate spheres occupied by water and air. When displaced from its respective sphere, an element would return through natural motion. [13] These ideas were swept aside when Copernicus and his intellectual heirs located the sun at the center of the cosmos, and Lavoisier, Mendelev, and their allies replaced the classical four elements with the modern periodic table.

Despite these legendary victories of the scientific revolution, the core of Aristotle's physics remains inviolate, and in fact forms the foundation of the modern scientific enterprise. A prime example is teleology, which remains one of the most controversial philosophical topics in modern science. The controversy is unmerited. At the heart of the modern scientific conception of the world is the assumption that nature is a knowable order. Without this belief, Galileo would never have troubled himself to roll balls down inclined planes. Chemical reactions would be pointless to investigate. Geneticists would have no reason to take pains sequencing nucleic acid bases. What modern scientists take for granted was established by reasoned observation in the ancient world. In book 2 of the *Physics,* Aristotle establishes that nature's obvious regularities-its tendency to act in particular ways (which itself maintains the good of the cosmic order)-reveal an ordering to specific ends. That things happen "always or for the most part" indicates finality or purpose.

The only alternative to purpose is chance [14] and, although chance events often obtain, the natural world is inherently teleological. Scientific laws, modern and ancient, physical, chemical, and biological, capture nature's regularities and im-

[13] Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 4.3.

[14] Aristotle, *Physics* 2.8.199a3-8; also 198b34. Cf. Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom,* 324.

plicitly testify to teleology. [15] That baking soda and vinegar react expansively, and that confetti is normally attracted to the static electric charge on a balloon show the order and purpose of nature. Far from being opposed to modern science, teleology is its *conditio sine qua non.*

The ascendance of the Darwinian narrative leaves the situation unchanged. Natural selection's more evolved twentieth-century descendant, Neo-Darwinism, encompasses two pieces, chance mutation and natural selection: genetic novelty originates in chance, and (2) novel forms less suited to existence tend to fail in passing their genes to posterity. Being a teleological process, "survival of the fittest" reveals order, and so contributes to the scientific understanding of the world, but chance mutation simply attaches a name to an unknown. As Aristotle's classic definition observes, chance is the intersection of two otherwise unrelated lines of causality. Chance is not a *per se* cause; to invoke chance is not to explain without qualification. [16] To the extent that any theory relies on chance, that theory is no causal explanation, but simply a chronology of historical events. [17]

The champions of chance argue that teleology is an intellectual opiate that kills the quest for the agents of change. This error may find justification in the misconception that Aristotle's teleological "natural places" exert a pseudo-efficient pull on their elements. [18]

[15] Aristotle writes that ends must be not only final states, but also goods *(Physics* 2.2.194a30-34). Whatever scientists may say about the goods to which nature moves, science itself as presently constructed cannot speak about goods one way or the other, even though the lawfulness of nature that science discovers is itself good. The present argument is not that science endorses teleology, but that it evidences teleology, much as a convict witnesses to the existence of the justice of law whether or not he cares to admit it. Further, it is unnecessary to identify a particular good to which a motion tends in order to conclude that it is purposeful-the fact that it happens "always or for the most part" indicates purpose as opposed to chance, as we read in Aristotle, *Physics* 2.8.199a3-8. Regularity is by itself ample evidence that a motion is directed toward some good and is thus a natural motion, even if it is not clear what that good is. Of course, identification of that good perfects knowledge of the motion.

[16] Aristotle, *Physics* 2.5.197a12-14.

[17] Cf. Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom,* 273.

[18] Benjamin Morison attributes the belief to the commentators *(On Location* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002], 49-50). Similarly, attributing efficient causality to all four causes seems to have become the *modem* scholarly consensus, as Thomas Larson documents

On the contrary, teleology does not make the efficient cause redundant, as Vincent Smith writes:

> The final cause is not another quasi-efficient cause, as Descartes [and the mechanists] would have said, but the very determinant of the efficient cause, the cause of the efficient cause, the correlative to it. Efficient and final cause are two moments of one effect, the one accounting for the production of the effect and the other accounting for its determination to be this rather than that. [19]

A blueprint has no power to construct a house without the builder, nor can a builder realize a form as his end without the blueprint. Similarly, a final cause has no causal power without an efficient cause, but neither does an efficient cause have a determination without a final cause. The distinction is less clear in living things, because the form constitutes the efficient and final causes, but these causes are still distinct principles. In growth, for example, an organism's immature form works as an efficient cause toward the end of realizing its mature form. [20] Grasping the inner unity that characterizes the form of a horse does not substitute for knowledge of the mechanical forces that maintain its form; conversely, accounting for all mechanical forces in a horse does not dispose of the need to grasp its form. [21] Teleology compliments the other three modes of explanation, and a complete explanation requires all four.

As we have seen, purpose is central to Aristotle's philosophy of moving substances. In a profound way, natural motion is at the heart of his view of nature. To reestablish a footing for natural motion in the modern natural sciences, we look to the teleology implicit in them, and we find two ready examples. Preliminary to our main considerations, we must establish the relationship between matter in the modern physical sense and matter in the classical Aristotelian sense. We shall then contrast the unnatural

in the present issue (Thomas Larson, "Natural Motion in Inanimate Bodies," *The Thomist* 71 [2007]: 555-58).

[19] Vincent E. Smith, *The General Science of Nature* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1958), 217; cf. Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom*, 323.

[20] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.1.193b13.

[21] Cf. Goyette, "Substantial Form," 531.

(violent) motion of Newtonian force with the natural motion manifested in Einstein's general relativity. Using these categories, we shall turn to the fundamental forces as understood in modern physics and find that gravity is a natural motion and that violent motion is a manifestation of electromagnetic contrariety. The result of this contrariety is the world of matter and magnitude, which allows the natural, dissociative motion characteristic of entropy. Finally, we shall summarize our considerations while further tying the two natural motions of mass-energy to Aristotelian form and matter.

I. A MATTER OF TERMINOLOGY: THE TERMINOLOGY OF MATTER

Matter in the original Aristotelian sense is the constant component underlying substantial change. It is an analogous notion correlative to the two substantial forms it successively instantiates-the least common denominator, so to speak. For example, in turning a tree into a rocking horse, the carpenter reduces the tree to its material component (wood) and turns the material into the horse; the wood is the substratum of change. In digesting an apple, the body breaks down the substance of the apple into its component biological macromolecules (proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, nucleic acids), which it then incorporates into its own substance. The matter successively loses the form of the apple and takes on that of the body.

For Aristotle, matter exists relative to form and "to each form there corresponds a special matter."[22] The Scholastics came to speak of this sensible kind of matter as *secondary matter*, to contrast it with the insensible *primary matter* which is known only through analogy. Primary matter is pure potentiality and, lacking all actuality, it is insensible and unintelligible of itself. In contrast, secondary matter on its own is sensible and intelligible because it possesses at least a minimum of actuality and can be conceived as a form instantiated by a lower level of matter.[23] For example,

[22] Aristotle, *Physics* 2.2.194b9.

[23] Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals* 2.1.646a13-24; *Meteorology* 4.12.

while biological macromolecules are the matter of the body, they can also be regarded as a natural form whose material is atoms. Prime matter, as the lowest conceivable level of matter, is the universal material substrate of any conceivable substantial change or series of changes. While its reality is inextricably intertwined with the substances that actualize it, it is definitionally unconnected to any particular substance: it is univocal, the same for all substances.

All material beings have prime matter and all have matter in the modern sense,[24] but it would be a mistake to confuse modern matter (mass-energy) with prime matter. Mass-energy shares with primary matter its univocal definition, and with secondary matter its actuality and sensibility (some properties of which persist through substantial change). Though an opponent of atomism, Aristotle himself admits that there must be smallest physically realizable parts of matter.[25] Similarly, we can say that mass-energy is the closest physically realizable approximation of prime matter, and the lowest physically realizable form of secondary matter. "Matter" in this article refers generally to this modern, scientific notion; exceptions should be clear from context (e.g., matter when contrasted with form is Aristotelian matter).

In modern science, though volume is often important, mass is the primary measure of quantity (of matter). There are two forms of mass, inertial and gravitational. Inertial mass is a measure of the dynamical being of a physical body. Just as being resists change, so inertial mass resists alteration of its state of motion (i.e., velocity). Gravitational mass is the "charge" (analogous to electrical charge) through which the force of gravity draws bodies together.[26] Einstein's general relativity postulates the "equivalence

[24] This includes particles like photons which are said to have "zero rest mass," a phrase that simply indicates an inability to be at rest (and to move at other than the speed of light). David Bohm calls rest mass an "inner" movement, so that light is purely "outward" movement (David Bohm, *The Special Theory of Relativity* [New York: Routledge, 1996], 118).

[25] Called *"minima"* by his commentators; cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.4.187b13-21.

[26] Charge primarily refers to electrical charge. When used in an extended sense for gravitational mass, it will be enclosed in quotation marks. Also, the standard terminology in physics is to refer to a charged particle as "a charge"; thus we speak of matter simply as a charge as well as carrying a charge.

principle": the two kinds of mass are numerically equivalent, which experiment has confirmed to high precision. [27]

II. SENSES OF "NATURAL," NATURAL AND FORCED MOTIONS

Like "matter," the word "nature" is analogous according to Aristotle. He defines nature as "a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily." [28] There are two intrinsic sources for nature's motion and rest: "the shape or form which is specified in the definition of the thing" and "the immediate material substratum of things." [29] But, he says, nature refers preeminently to form, which is the principle of perfection and persistence, "for a thing is *more* properly said to be what it is when it has attained to fulfillment than when it exists potentially."30 So there are two main senses of "nature," form and matter, with form being the primary sense. [31]

With regard to motions, "natural" can likewise take on different meanings. The present considerations concern the natural motion of matter in the modern physical sense: material things insofar as they are material. While mass is an essential property of matter, (electrical) charge is purely accidental, and so outside the primary interest of the present inquiry. [32] Being less essential, (electrical) charge is not as integrally related to the nature (form) of matter: it is relatively unnatural. And indeed we shall find that the motions to which charge gives rise are less natural than those of gravity. [33] As we shall see, the more natural

[27] Presently, a few parts in a trillion; see Clifford M. Will, "Relativity at the Centenary," *PhysicsWorld* 18, no. 1 Oanuary 2005): 27.

[28] Aristotle, *Physics* 2.1.192b21-22.

[29] Ibid. 2.1.193a28-31.

[30] Ibid. 2.1.193b8.

[31] Cf. ibid. 2.8.199a31: "'nature' means two things, the matter and the form."

[32] Mass cannot be reduced to charge, but neither can charge be reduced to mass. In nature, matter is more fundamental, while materially, since all massive (baryonic) particles are composed of charges, charge is more fundamental.

[33] This result does not make the motion of (electrical) charges unnatural in an absolute sense, but simply in one sense less natural than the motion of gravity. All motions in nature are natural, but some spring more intimately from the natures of things.

motions are related to mass-energy's inherent form, while the less natural motions come from its correlative material principle.

In book 8 of the *Physics,* Aristotle discusses the natural motions of the four classical elements, and he contrasts their natural motions with violent, unnatural motions: "So when fire or earth is moved by something the motion is violent when it is unnatural, and natural when it brings to actuality the proper activities that they potentially possess."[34] In *On the Heavens,* Aristotle further explains the difference:

> But since 'nature' means a source of movement within the thing itself, while a force is a source of movement in something other than it or in itself *qua* other, and since movement is always due either to nature or to constraint, movement which is natural, as downward movement is to a stone, will be merely accelerated by an external force, while an unnatural movement will be due to the force alone.[35]

On the one hand we have the operations of nature and intrinsic principles of motion; on the other hand, we have the operation of the unnatural, the violent or destructive, and forces or constraints (acting from without).

Furthermore, natural motions cause acceleration, as Aquinas most clearly states, "And insofar as anything is closer to its perfection, it is proportionately more powerful and more intense. Hence it follows that the motion by which rest is generated becomes proportionately faster as it approaches nearer to the state of rest. This is quite clear in natural motions."[36]

Natural motions are therefore not violent or destructive, but actualize the proper potencies of what locomotes. And bodies in natural motion accelerate as they near their end.

[34] Aristotle, *Physics* 8.4.255a29-30.

[35] Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 3.2.301b18-22 (trans. J.L. Stocks, in *Great Books of the Western World* 8, ed. Mortimer J. Adler [Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952], 357-405). See also *Physics* 5.6.230b10-21.

[36] Aquinas, V *Phys.,* lect. 10 (Marietti ed., 743); cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 5.6.230b24-25. In modern terms, a positive feedback process, of which the contractions of childbirth are an example.

III. NATURAL MOTION AND FORCE IN MODERN MECHANICAL PHYSICS

In Newtonian mechanics, only inertial motion is strictly speaking natural. Newton calls inertia the "innate force of matter ... a power of resisting, by which every body, inasmuch as in it lies, continues in its present state, whether it be of rest, or of moving uniformly forwards in a right line." [37] Newton's first law of motion, in its modern formulation, says that a body in motion tends to maintain its state of motion (direction and speed) unless it is acted on by an outside force. Only forces cause deviations from a body's inherent uniform, straight-line motion. For Newton, all forces are violent: that is to say, they interfere with what a body would 'naturally' do left to itself.

In one sense, gravity is a force, but in another, it is not. Newton's *Principia* is also famous for establishing the law of universal gravitation, which treats gravity as a force that imparts the same motion (acceleration) to all bodies regardless of mass. In contrast, Einstein's general relativity treats gravity not as a force, but as the curvature of space-time. We need not discuss the meaning of "curvature of space-time" to take up the suggestion that while gravity causes acceleration, it is not a force in the usual sense of the word. How can this be? Consider why astronauts orbiting the Earth seem to float within their spacecraft. Clearly it is gravity that curves the path of the ship around its orbit. Is there no gravity within the ship? Does the ship somehow shield its occupants from gravity? The explanation is that the astronauts appear to float within the ship because they are falling around the Earth at exactly the same rate as the ship: everything moves together. All matter in freefall-that is, moving solely under the influence of gravity-accelerates at the same rate. This is called Galileo's Law of Falling.

Now, consider someone waking inside a windowless, elevator-sized room and finding that he experiences no apparent

[37] Isaac Newton, *Philosophiae Natura/is Principia Mathematica,* definition III, trans. Andrew Motte (1729) in *Great Books of the Western World* 34, ed. Mortimer J. Adler (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 1-372, at 5).

gravitational pull. A ball released in mid-air seems to float. Has he somehow been transported to deep space beyond all influence of gravity? Or is the room merely a free-falling elevator? Because of the Law of Falling there is no way to tell without looking outside. Einstein called this the Equivalence Principle, which forms the basis of his general theory of relativity. In his conception, a free-falling object defines an inertial reference frame.

Objects in freefall behave as if they are undergoing inertial motion: things seem to float relative to each other as if unperturbed by any force. What is true of multiple bodies is also true of parts of a single body. Textbooks typically describe a force as "a push or a pull." Whereas forces affect the closer side of the body before the farther, gravity affects all parts of a body uniformly. [38] For example, in being hit by a truck (imagined in slow motion), the proximate side of one's body is compressed before the force can propagate to the far side. Such violent forces can crush or rend. By contrast, if one were to fall out of a plane the only force would be air resistance; without it, one would feel as if one were floating. We shall return to the deeper mechanisms behind this difference later. The point for now is that gravity is not a source of violent motion (force), but of natural motion.

How does this definition of natural motion compare with Aristotle's discussion of the natural motions of the four classical elements? By the definition we have just uncovered, only the downward motions of the elements are natural, because insofar as they are downward, they are purely gravitational. The upward motions are due to buoyant forces which, although they result from gravity, nevertheless are themselves forces: as the heavier element sinks, it displaces the lighter element, pushing it upward. That buoyancy is a force is reflected in the fact that a single body can be composed of parts with different buoyancies. For example, in an emergency, a buoyant submarine might inflate even more buoyant balloons to take it to the surface more rapidly. The tethers to these balloons would have to be sufficiently strong to prevent the balloons from tearing themselves free. In other words,

[38] We ignore tidal forces, which are the result of action on extended bodies.

there is a violent, differential [39] force between the parts that can tear them asunder.

IV. GRAVITI VS. ELECTROMAGNETISM

Of the four fundamental forces described by modern physics, two rule the macroscopic, human-sized world: electromagnetism and gravity. [40] Electromagnetism mediates any (nongravitational) macroscopic force. As we have seen, these forces are unnatural and violent compared to gravity, which is a natural motion.

A) Electromagnetism and Volume

The source of this violence is the dual polarity of electric charge (positive and negative), which makes possible (electrically) charge-neutral, voluminous conglomerations of matter. Like-polarity charges repel and opposite-polarity charges attract. Two charges of identical magnitude but opposite polarities combine into a charge-neutral whole. (Indeed, the electromagnetic force is so strong that unbalanced charge always quickly neutralizes itself by attracting the opposite polarity-sometimes violently, as in the case of lightning. Charge imbalance exists in nature rarely.) The typical arrangement of neutral matter is the atom: a negatively charged cloud of electrons surrounds and exactly complements the positive charge of the compact nucleus.

To see how neutral matter produces voluminous quantity, consider two helium atoms on converging paths. At large distances, their charge neutrality makes them utterly indifferent to each other. At close range, their electron clouds begin to

[39] Reichenbach's terminology: "universal" vs. "differential" forces (Hans Reichenbach, *The Philosophy of Space and Time,* trans. Maria Reichenbach [New York: Dover Publications, 1958], 13).

[40] Strong and weak nuclear forces are of very short range; they operate on the length scale of the atomic nucleus, 10^{-15} meters, and consequently their influence is less apparent. Whereas awareness of gravity as a force goes back to Galileo and Newton, and Maxwell summarized electromagnetic forces in the mid-nineteenth century, the nuclear forces were only discovered at the turn of the previous century.

overlap to the point that their nuclei can "see" each other: the positive nuclei, no longer shielded by the electron clouds, repel each other. Thus the two atoms cannot occupy the same region of space.[41] Other elements combine in more complicated arrangements, but always to produce charge-neutral configurations in sum. By similar means all matter repels other matter, but only at short ranges. The result is that a body can act on the proximate part of another body more than on the distant part: hence, the electromagnetic mediation of violent, unnatural forces, as we saw in the slow-motion example of the crashing truck.

On the level of individual charges, the action of electromagnetic forces tends toward the natural end of (electrical) charge neutrality. Holding only for charged matter, electromagnetic motion is unnatural in comparison with gravitational motion, which holds for matter *per se*. It is also less natural than electromagnetic radiation (light), which moves without acceleration or resistance. Nature prefers to dissipate applied forces as radiation rather than to accelerate charges: the acceleration of charges by electric and magnetic forces gives rise to radiation reaction forces that oppose changes in acceleration by radiating away part of the added energy.[42] In other words, electromagnetic acceleration is inherently self-opposing.[43] Despite the relative violence of electromagnetic forces, that charges move each other toward definite natural ends (in the broad sense) is undeniable.[44]

[41] This conclusion only concerns the immediate *efficient* cause of the impenetrability of atoms and the things they compose. See Aquinas, *In Boet. De Trin.*, q. 4, aa. 3-4 for St. Thomas's insightful formal demonstration of corporeal impenetrability.

[42] Richard P. Feynman, Robert B. Leighton, and Matthew Sands, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*, vol. 2, *Mainly Electromagnetism and Matter* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1964), chap. 28.

[43] Atomic electrons in stationary states about the nucleus have qualities analogous to motion (angular momentum, kinetic energy), but are not, properly speaking, in motion.

[44] The finality of the natural motions of charges, channeled through the quantum mechanical rules for combining atomic electrons, supports the higher finality of chemistry, which supports that of biology.

B) Gravity and Mass

Unlike electromagnetism, gravity's one "charge" makes shielding matter from gravity impossible. Gravitational mass has no opposite "charge" to neutralize its influence. Gravity only attracts, and a uniform gravitational field imparts the same motion to all things and all parts of a given thing.

Newton's law of universal gravitation describes gravitational motion as a force drawing two masses together that is proportional to the product of the two masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.[45] The force's proportionality to the attracted inertial mass gives gravity the property we have already seen: it accelerates all bodies, and all parts of all bodies, in the same way. This uniformity of motion means that an object or a person acted upon only by gravity feels no force, in the sense of violent influence (as we saw in the previous section with regard to freefall). A gravitating body does not draw other matter to itself through some sort of extrinsic agency or force, but through the very matter itself. Gravity is the kind of motion that Aristotle describes in book 8 of the *Physics* as "bring[ing] to actuality the proper activities that [material bodies] potentially possess." It is a natural motion-a natural motion toward physical or spatial unity, a surrender of the masses' separate existences to a greater participation in the transcendental perfection of unity. The more matter they contain, the more they are already united in sharing a sympathy of being, and the more strongly (i.e., with greater force) they are drawn together still.

Near the surface of the Earth, falling bodies accelerate downward: their motions hasten as they descend. Such acceleration is characteristic of natural motions, as we saw in the previous quotation from Aquinas. This hastening is even truer over astronomical distances, where the universal law of gravitation applies. The force's inverse proportionality to the

[45] Mathematically the force is written as $F = G\, m_1 m_2 / d^2$, where m_1 and m_2 are the two masses and d is the distance between them; G is an experimentally determined proportionality constant, whose small magnitude reflects the small degree of formation inherent to mass-energy.

square of the distance means that the force is stronger and the acceleration faster as the two bodies draw together. In other words, the more spatially united the masses are, the stronger still their tendency to unite.

We can summarize these findings on gravity working to unite matter by means of the matter itself and of its proximity with the formulation: Matter has the inherent tendency to seek further unity to the degree that it already possesses unity.

Gravity, then, is a natural motion because it is inherent to the things it moves, is not destructive but rather perfective, and furthermore accelerates as it moves bodies to this perfection of spatial unity.

C) Summary

We have seen that gravity is a natural motion that draws matter together into association. Gravity's single "charge" means that it does not oppose itself, as electromagnetism's two charges do; the former has a unity lacking to the latter. Gravity acts in a single direction, making it more 'time-like'. Electromagnetism, with its back-and-forth contrarieties, is more 'space-like'.

While gravitational mass lacks an opposite "charge," the electrostatic charges together, in a sense, fulfill the role of opposing gravity. The two electrical charges are analogous to the two sexes present in most higher creatures. The duality of sexes makes possible families, which knit individuals into communities. Notice that marriage unites not only two individuals, but also two families. Likewise the sexes in organisms in general unite each species into a whole (by enabling the flow of genetic material). If only like sexes of a species mated, the result might more accurately be described as two separate species, not one.

The same motif of "opposites attract" holds with electric charges. The duality of charges knits together material things and in some sense constitutes the universe into a whole. If instead opposite charges repelled and like attracted, the result would merely be two gravities with entirely separate spatial

domains-effectively separate universes. Charges, like sexes, make possible union in extension.

The mutual attraction of opposite electrical charges (instead of like to like) is a teleological contrariety that underlies the contrarieties [46] so characteristic of nature. It is the 'twist' in creation that ties together opposite places within a single universe and opposite parts within a single body. This spatial extension opens the way for the dissociation characteristic of entropy.

V. DISSOCIATION AND ENTROPY

A) Spatial Dissipation

Dissipation is another natural motion of matter. Imagine, for example, steam [47] expanding from the funnel of an old locomotive and disappearing into the air. Why do the water molecules separate?

It is easy to show that a collection of noninteracting particles (as water droplets in steam are essentially) with arbitrarily assigned velocities (such as exist in a hot gas) will inevitably separate. This is more obvious when one examines the simplified case of a pair of particles with arbitrarily assigned velocities. There are two initial cases: they are moving either toward each other or away from each other. If converging, they can only do so for a finite time before they pass each other, but they can separate indefinitely. So the predominant motion must be separation.

The principle holds more strongly for larger collections of particles. For example, red dye molecules naturally diffuse from an open bottle throughout a swimming pool; once they have diffused, they do not spontaneously gather back into the bottle. The places and motions allowed inside the bottle are so limited compared to those allowed outside that the molecules eventually migrate outside. To put it in terms of probability and

[46] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.6.

[47] Actually water vapor: steam is invisible but at common air temperatures quickly cools and condenses into a vapor of microscopic water droplets that are collectively visible and commonly called "steam."

configurations: since all configurations (collections of positions and velocities) of molecules occur with equal probability, the system will naturally tend to assume one of the vastly more numerous configurations outside the bottle than one of the limited number of configurations inside. The system inevitably and spontaneously moves from one of the few "organized" states (inside) to one of the much more numerous "disorganized" states (outside) simply through the greater probability for disorder.[48] The odds of standing unchanged or going in reverse are essentially nonexistent, making molecular diffusion irreversible. There is no force involved. The natural diffusion of smoke or steam is like that of dye in a pool: there are so many more configurations of the individual molecules in occupying a large volume than a small volume that the system naturally evolves to occupy the larger volume. The same principle explains visible material things' natural disintegration to dust, which Aristotle notes is so inherent to them that it is often attributed to time itself.[49]

B) Generalized Dissipation: Entropy

What is true of spatial dissipation also holds for other modes of corruption. The temperature (average kinetic energy) of a collection of particles is one basic example. Separation between hot and cold is a form of order; the natural tendency is for the hot and the cold to blend together to a uniform temperature, as when a hot cup of coffee cools to the temperature of its surroundings, or an ice cube warms and melts into a drink. The reverse tendency-for hot and cold to separate from uniformity-never happens spontaneously. This is why lakes fail to freeze on a warm day, and why a refrigerator requires energy input to keep its inside cooler than its outside. A quantity called *entropy* parameterizes the disorder associated with the movement of heat energy; entropy, like disorder, always increases for an isolated system. Without treating the lengthy, mathematical treatment of

[48] This is not to say the cause is random; the motions of the individual particles are simply innumerable.

[49] Aristotle, *Physics* 4.13.222b16-26

this,[50] we may merely note that, analogous to spatial dissipation, there are many more configurations for all the particles in a collection to have a middling amount of energy than for, say, half of the particles to have high energies while the other half have low. For any characteristic, the mediocrity of disorder always prevails because these states so greatly outnumber the ordered, divergent states.

Order dissipates in any process consisting of more than a few things. The minimal requirements are that the bodies (or parts) are multiple, finite, and not directed by an immaterial intelligence. There is no force acting to increase entropy; the effect is purely a result of the probability distribution which itself comes from the structure of space:[51] there are simply more places for the particles to be that are distant than near. Even with attractive influences present, the only requirement is that these influences have a finite range (as all do).[52] As theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking famously found, even an object as compactly bound as a black hole decays.[53]

On the question of whether dissipation accelerates as it progresses I shall not provide a conclusive answer, but merely some preliminary considerations, as the answer is not completely clear. There seem to be two classes of dissipation. As an example of the first, consider than after a certain degree of decrepitude, a weakened or diseased organism (e.g., missing teeth or with a compromised immune system) more readily contracts further damage that hastens its demise. As an example of the second class, consider that the temperature change of a warm body slows as it

[50] For a very readable popular explanation of the statistical origin of the second law of thermodynamics, see Alan Lightman, *Great Ideas in Physics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), chap. *2;* see also Richard Morris, *Time's Arrows: Scientific Attitudes Toward Time* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985); Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam, 1990), chap. 9.

[51] Either physical or configuration space.

[52] That is, $F(r) \to 0$ in the limit as $r \to \infty$. Macroscopic forces typically diminish as $1/r$ with distance. *r.*

[53] Hawking, *A Brief History of Time,* chap. 7; Stuart L. Shapiro and Saul A. Teukolski, *Black Holes, White Dwarfs, and Neutron Stars* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983), 364-69. It must be emphasized that Hawking's conclusion is purely theoretical and has yet to receive observational confirmation.

approaches the ambient temperature. [54] In the first example, the accelerating dissipation occurs to a substantial form (through its accidents, of course). In the second example, the form dissipating is purely accidental. Once a substance ceases to be, the remaining form is accidental, and its dissipation then proceeds as with the second example. In contrast to gravity which moves toward a definite unity, dissipation continues even after passing this natural ontological limit of the substance. The underlying principle is that, though corruption moves toward an end, it does not move toward a unique end. There is no unique state of decomposition of a carcass, for example. There are many states of disorder in contrast to the few states of order. It is instructive to compare this nonuniqueness to the movement of Aristotle's element fire to the lunar sphere-a definite end, though not a unique point-and to contrast this with the uniqueness of the end of the element earth.

With this caveat on the indefiniteness of end in mind, it seems that at least in some cases the separation of bodies leads to increasing disunity, so that matter tends toward further disunity insofar as it already possesses disunity.

But how does dissipation perfect matter? In addition to the perfection of unity, matter also manifests the lesser accidental perfection of magnitude-and in fact quantity is the first property of changeable substances. [55] That large quantities are greater than small quantities is immediately obvious, but they also posses a greater being, albeit of a crudely material sort. Not only is a large apple greater than a small apple, but it also participates more in the perfection of being. The same holds for discrete quantity: a larger number of apples has a greater being than a small number. In expanding, a gas seeks greater magnitude. Matter strives for the perfection of greater magnitude, but, because of the privation of its physical limits, instead of growing, it dissipates.

Entropy, then, is a natural motion in an extended sense because it is inherent to the parts of the thing it dissociates, and more fully actualizes the corporeal perfection of magnitude.

[54] It asymptotically approaches the ambient temperature as a decaying exponential.

[55] Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom,* 88. Quantity is not *much* of a perfection, which may explain the paradoxical naturalness of dissipation.

C) Objection 1: Dissolution Is Unnatural

It might be objected that natural substances tend to their own preservation, not dissolution. In *On Generation and Corruption,* Aristotle writes that "Nature always strives after 'the better,'" [56] and preservation is better than dissolution for natural substances. Also supporting this view he writes that "not every stage that is last claims to be an end, but only what is best."[57]

Contrary to the objection, it is clear that dying of old age results from an intrinsic corrupting cause and so is natural. [58] Aristotle supports this observation in book 5 of the *Physics:* "it is not true that becoming is natural and perishing unnatural (for growing old is natural). . . . We answer that if what happens under violence is unnatural, then violent perishing is unnatural and as such contrary to natural perishing."[59] The corruption of aging is inherent to material things.

Just as there is natural perishing, there is also natural dissolution. We have already seen that nature has two senses: formal and material. Dissolution is natural [60] to material things insofar as they are material, though not insofar as they are substances. Materiality is the seat of privation and the potential to change, and, as Aquinas explains, "mutation in itself is destructive and corruptive ... [f]or when a thing is moved, it recedes from [i.e., loses] a disposition that it formerly had." [61] Natures in our material world are material natures; they are subject to change and thus naturally lose their qualities. Dissolution is thus natural to material things.

[56] Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* 2.10.336b28 (trans. Harold H. Joachim, in *Great Books of the Western World* 8ed. Mortimer].Adler [Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 407-41).

[57] Aristotle, *Physics* 2.2.194a30-34.

[58] Cf. Aquinas, IV *Phys.,* lect. 22 (Marietti ed., 622). Revelation might seem to imply that immortality is in some sense more natural than decay and death, but the laws of such a prelapsarian nature are certainly very unlike our own.

[59] Aristotle, *Physics* 5.6.230a28-32.

[60] Of course, this is the secondary, material sense of nature, as in Aristotle, *Physics* 2.1.193a28-31.

[61] Aquinas, IV *Phys.,* lect. 22 (Marietti ed., 621).

We shall see in the response to the second objection that dissolution is in fact essential to the workings of living things.

B) Objection 2: Organisms Defy Entropy

It might further be objected that living things defy the inexorable growth of disorder.

While appearances certainly support this claim, organisms constitute no exception to the law of entropy. The resolution of the paradox is that the second law of thermodynamics postulates increasing entropy only for isolated systems, and living things are not isolated systems. In fact, shortly after an organism ceases to exchange matter and energy with its environment-through feeding, breathing, and excreting-it ceases to be an organism, that is, it dies. The entropy of a nonisolated system can decrease, so long as the entropy of its environment increases by at least an offsetting amount.

The classic technological example is a refrigerator: it pumps heat from its interior to its environment, decreasing the internal entropy, but correspondingly increasing the external. Heat is a degraded form of energy. In the process of pumping, the refrigerator does work, and, as any real, imperfect machine necessarily dissipates part of the ordered work-energy as additional heat-energy. Thus the entropy within the refrigerator decreases, but only by increasing the total entropy (as well as the heat) of the refrigerator plus its environment. [62]

Life similarly increases its internal order at the expense of external order. Extensive empirical studies bear out this conclusion by showing that (1) living things conserve energy-they do not produce more energy than they consume-and (2) part of the energy they consume is given off as heat (energy no longer useful for work). [63] As Erwin Schrodinger

[62] This is why on a hot day opening the refrigerator will not cool the room containing it. The refrigerator merely moves heat, but to accomplish this it produces more heat. At best it can briefly cool part of the room until the hot air combines to raise the net temperature.

[63] E.g., W. A. Atwater and F. G. Benedict, *Metabolism of Matter and Energy in the Human Body* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903); F. G. Benedict and R. D. Milner, *Experiments on the Metabolism of Matter and Energy in the Human Body*

famously wrote, "Life feeds on negentropy" [64] or negative entropy. The increase of order or negentropy on our planet feeds off the vast increase of entropy from the dissipation of the sun's energy into interstellar space.[65]

Far from defying the law of entropy, life depends on it. The workings of life are not only built around the unavoidable reality that unusable energy (heat) requires dissipation; rather, all the workings of organisms depend on the conversion of usable energy to unusable. Chemical reactions that increase order of the body (or of any system) must be coupled to reactions that decrease the system's order by at least a corresponding amount.[66] Organisms depend on this principle to control their body chemistry. Rather than being unnatural to living substances, dissipation is integral to their natures, which, insofar as they exist in the world, are necessarily tied to matter.

C) Objection 3: The Reversibility of Newtonian Mechanics

Newtonian mechanics describes the motions of individual bodies, while statistical mechanics describes with parameters like entropy the motions of large collections of bodies. The widespread belief is that the Newtonian mechanics that rule the microworld are more fundamental than statistical mechanics. Therefore since micromechanics fails to capture dissipation in time, the argument goes, such dissipation is not inherent to the physical world.

To understand this objection, we need first to understand the difference between reversible and irreversible processes. Imagine watching a film of a steam locomotive traveling backward, say Buster Keaton's 1927 film *The General.* ls it possible to tell if the direction of movement results from the train actually running backward or from the film running backward? By concentrating

(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1907); Kenneth Blaxter , *Energy Metabolism in Animals and Man* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[64] Erwin Schrodinger, *What Is Life?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1945).

[65] The sun's order originated ultimately in the order inaugurated at creation.

[66] Precisely speaking, for all spontaneous processes, the (Gibbs) free energy available to the system to do useful work decreases.

solely on the locomotive engine itself, it is impossible to know: the machine runs substantially the same backward as forward. But the steam is the giveaway: common experience has taught us that steam doesn't collect itself back into the smokestack, so the film must be running backward if the steam moves so.

The locomotive illustrates the two alternatives for physical processes: reversible and irreversible. The bulk motion of the engine exemplifies a reversible process: a film of the engine moving backward is indistinguishable from viewing in reverse the film of the engine moving forward. The dissipation of steam is an example of an irreversible process: a backward film of the steam is easily distinguishable from a forward film because steam's spontaneous action is exclusively expansion.

Newtonian mechanics is reversible because it is the science of bulk motion; its equations are the same backward as forward because Newton deals with few bodies at a time and treats them as simple, permanent, and isolated from the rest of the universe: all capital abstractions. In reality, every ordinary-sized object we encounter is composed of countless parts with the potential to break apart.

Newton's simplification has the great virtue of allowing the mind to focus on the most important relations in an interaction. Its vice is masking the relative unimportance of composition and spatial extension as complete inconsequence. As we have seen, the composition of things and the relations among their numerous parts make the increase of entropy inevitable.

Thus we see that the growth of entropy, far from being a foreign, "unnatural" principle added on to the truly "fundamental" laws of Newtonian mechanics, is inherent to the extension of matter and its existence within a much larger umverse.

SUMMARY

We have seen that gravity is a natural motion toward unity, while electromagnetic forces produce the violent motions that

endow matter with voluminous quantity and contrariety. Quantity and contrariety make possible the self-antagonism that underlies natural motion toward disunity. These contrary motions toward unity and disunity provide the basis of the dynamism that enriches nature, but ultimately leads to its dissolution. Thus gravity is natural and the electromagnetic forces are comparatively violent; given the existence of violent forces, entropic movement to disunity is natural.

Again, the term "natural" is used analogically here. There can be no doubt that electromagnetic forces are an intrinsic part of nature and essential to her workings. The claim is simply that their influence is unnatural compared to that of gravity.

The ends of Aristotle's four elements were absolute places like the center of the universe and the lunar sphere. Our reflection on the results of modern science indicates that the ends of matter are not absolute places, but rather relative places or states: the acquisition of spatial unity and disunity.[67] Matter seeks further unity insofar as it is already united, and (it seems to a limited extent) further disunity insofar as it is already disunited. These extremes are two sides of the same coin. Spatial unity is a physical participation (albeit limited) in the transcendental perfection of unity. Aristotle's maxim that nature strives toward perfection[68] refers preeminently to living things, whose corruption springs not from their unity in form but from the privation of their matter. Analogously mass-energy's tendency toward disunity (which rests on the teleological disunity of charge) reflects the privation of its primary matter,[69] while its tendency toward unity reflects its inherent form and finality. Since mass-energy is the most basic form of actual matter, it is clear that natural teleology extends even to the lowest levels of physical existence.

[67] Natural motion elaborated here is more faithful to Aristotle's relative notion of place in *Physics* 4.4.212a20 than his own conception of natural motion elaborated in *De Caelo* 2.14.296b7ff. The former is the surroundings of the body (i.e., relative to the body), while the latter is relative to the whole of the cosmos (i.e., absolute)..

[68] Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* 2.10.336b28, cf. Aquinas V *Phys.*, lect. 10 (Marietti ed., 739).

[69] We have already seen that corruption lacks a definite end; here we see that it is not natural in the full sense of springing from the nature (form) of things.

From the point of view of natural philosophy, that uniting and disuniting are opposite motions of matter is unremarkable. What is new here is the connection of these motions to the empiriometric concepts of universal gravitation and entropic dissipation. To describe gravity and entropy as comparable influences, let alone as inverses, is unexpected from a modern scientific standpoint, but we have recognized its roots in the two macroscopic fundamental forces.

The rediscovery of undiluted formal and final causality begins to fill out the causal picture that a comprehensive knowledge of nature demands. Just as the spatial unity and disunity to which nature tends would have no way of being realized without the efficient causes that modern empiriometric science discovers, so the physical forces modern science describes have no direction or meaning without ends. Far from supplanting the efficient explanations of modern physics, such as gravitons and space-time curvature, recognition of formal and final causes complements the explanatory modes traditional to modern science and further guides our exploration of the natural world.

More importantly, we have begun to resolve into terms common to all human experience the motions of the macroscopic world that have until now been systematically expressed only in the abstractions of Newton, Maxwell, and Einstein. Thus, we can begin to see how to integrate the valid insights of modern science into an adequate philosophy of nature, one that fits organically into the unified view of reality presented in the perennial philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas.

The Thomist 71 (2007): 555-76

NATURAL MOTION IN INANIMATE BODIES

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I. INTRODUCTION: A STRONG TREND IN MODERN ARISTOTELIAN SCHOLARSHIP

WHAT DOES ARISTOTLE MEAN when he says in the second book of the *Physics* that nature is a principle of motion belonging to a body essentially? Among modern scholars of Aristotle there exists a good deal of disagreement on this point. One trend is to understand the internal source of motion as a kind of efficient cause. Daniel Graham is one scholar who clearly articulates this position. For example, Graham claims that, according to the second book of the *Physics*, "[w]hile forced motions are brought about by external agents, natural motions are brought about by the agency of the thing itself."[1] According to Graham, "[a]s an inherent source of change and rest, a nature is already an efficient cause."[2] Graham claims that the teaching of the second book of the *Physics* is that nature is a principle, belonging essentially to a body, that "originates" the motion of the body,[3] and he thinks that only self-motion qualifies as natural motion.

T. H. Irwin also takes "origin" (his translation of *"arche")* of motion as an efficient cause that initiates a change. He notes, for

[1] *Aristotle's Physics: Book VIII*, trans. with commentary by Daniel Graham (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1999), xiii.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., xv.

example, the difficulty that Aristotle (in *Physics* 2.1) seems to imply two things: on the one hand, he seems to imply that form and matter are efficient causes, *"since* they are origins of change"; on the other hand, he makes a clear distinction between formal and material causes, and this would imply that form and matter are not efficient causes.[4] According to Irwin, *since* matter and form are principles of change, they must be taken as efficient causes of motion.

According to John M. Rist, book 2 of the *Physics* presents nature as a principle of life and self-motion. Rist notes that in book 8 (255a5ff.), Aristotle says that though elements and inanimate bodies are natural, they are not self-movers, "[b]ut in *Physics* 2, the elements are included with living things without comment, as containing the principle of motion within themselves and intrinsically."[5] The two passages are the source of the following issue:

> although in *Physics* 2 the study of nature deals with those subjects which contain the principle of motion and rest within themselves intrinsically, Aristotle does not identify a class of self-movers (animals and men) within 'nature' and treat them separately from plants and the four elements. Yet, according to *Physics* 8, these last groups, though natural and containing the principle of motion and rest within themselves, are not self-movers. *Once Aristotle has made this distinction, of course, he should tell us in what other sense plants and animals "contain the principle of motion and rest within themselves intrinsically."*[6]

[4] T.H. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 9 (emphasis added). Irwin goes on to argue for interpreting matter, form, and final causes as abbreviated accounts of efficient causality: "The appearance of four causes instead of one seems to result from incomplete specifications of the causes and effects. If nothing more can be said for Aristotle's doctrine of four causes, then it does not describe four objectively different causes, but only four ways to describe the cause; and three of these ways are mere abbreviations of the fourth cause." According to Irwin, Aristotle cannot defend the claim that "the formal and material causes are different types of causes from the efficient cause", but "he can still reasonably argue that they are different types of efficient causes, differing from each other, though not from all types of efficient cause" (ibid., 96).

[5] John M. Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle: A Study in Philosophic Growth* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 123.

[6] Ibid., 124 (emphasis added).

Note that in this passage Rist takes it as obvious that in book 2 of the *Physics* nature is an intrinsic efficient cause of self-motion belonging at least to animals and men; he then states that there needs to be some other (and less obvious) way nature can function as a principle of motion for non-self-movers like plants and inanimate natural bodies. Rather than opt for nature as a passive principle of motion to solve this problem (as I shall in this article), Rist argues that for Aristotle all matter, and hence all material things, are possessed of *"pneuma,"* in virtue of which they tend and strive, both individually and communally. [7]

Helen S. Lang summarizes the arguments of a number of other scholars who take the position that nature is an active, efficient cause of self-motion in the natural body: [8]

Guthrie argues, "In this first chapter of *Phys.* B, Aristotle has already given a rough preliminary description of what he means by natural objects-those, namely, which seem able to initiate their own motions of growth, etc. From which it follows that *phusis* itself is to be described as that within objects by virtue of which they move or grow." [9] --- In his commentary on *Physics* II, 1, Charleton contends that "despite his general protestation" (presumably *Physics* VIII, 4), Aristotle would argue that the elements are self-moved. [10] Likewise, for Waterlow nature is a self mover, and she concludes that there is a major problem between *Physics* II, 1, and *Physics* VIII, 4. [11] Waterlow's argument is criticized (as

[7] Rist states: "plants grow, or as Aristotle might put it, they strive for the perfection of their form even though they have no desiring faculty. So they must contain something which will account for this tendency, and in Aristotle's view this 'nutritive soul' is similar to the 'origin' of the nutritive soul possessed by female animals. This origin can, in fact, be nothing more than *pneuma,* that common *pneuma* which somehow exists even among the four elements. Hence they too 'tend' or 'strive' both individually and 'communally'; for all things 'in a way' are full of soul; not soul itself, of course, but of 'soul-heat', which is *pneuma"* (ibid., 133).

[8] The following quotation and all citations and references contained within it are from Lang's, *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 41-42.

[9] W. K. C. Guthrie, "Notes on Some Passages in the Second Book of Aristotle's Physics," *Classical Quarterly* 40 (1946): 70-76.

[10] *Aristotle's Physics: Books I, II,* trans. with introduction and notes by William Charleton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 92.

[11] Sarah Waterlow, *Nature, Change, and Agency: A Philosophic Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 192, 240, and chap. 5 *passim.*

is her conclusion) by Furley in his review of this book.[12] Witt agrees with Waterlow "that natural beings are self-sufficient to determine the pattern of their typical changes."[13] More recently, Cohen asks how a motion caused externally can be natural *(Physics* VIII) if being natural implies "an internal principle for natural motions."[14]

II. DIFFICULTIES FACING THE MODERN TREND

There are, however, several important difficulties that result when the principle of nature is understood as an efficient cause of motion. For one, this interpretation runs into problems when it comes to book 8, where the natural motion of inanimate bodies is treated. There Aristotle draws a clear distinction between self-motion on the one hand and non-self-motion which is nonetheless natural. Reading book 2 as saying that nature is an efficient cause of self-motion, however, requires that all natural motion be self-motion; that is, every natural substance would be a self-mover, since each one has, essentially, an efficient cause of motion. Such an understanding of nature leads one to understand Aristotle to have in some way animated all of nature.[15]

Some of the above commentators, noting that book 8 cannot be squared with the interpretation of the principle of nature as an efficient cause of motion, opt to conclude that the doctrine of

[12] David Furley, "Review of *Nature, Change, and Agency* by S. Waterlow," *Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1984): 110.

[13] Charlotte Witt, *Substance and Essence in Aristotle: An Interpretation of Metaphysics VII-IX* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1989), 69 n. 6.

[14] Sheldon Cohen, "Aristotle on Elemental Motion," *Phronesis* 39 (1994): 152-53.

[15] Rist seems to takes this path with his reading of the role of *pneuma:* "One of Aristotle's very !ates works, the *De generatione Anaimalium,* sheds light on the final stages of Aristotle's development of such ideas: 'Animals and plants are found in the earth and in that which is wet because water is present in earth and *pneuma* is present in water, and in all *pneuma* there is present soul-heat, so that in a way *all* things are full of soul' (3.762a18-22). To say, as Skemp [citing "The Activity of Immobility," in *Etudes sur la Metaphysique,* ed. P. Aubenque (Paris, 1979), 229-41] did, that this passage 'is closely related to the biological priority of the *to thermon* and the doctrine of *sumphuton pneuma'* [ibid., 236] is of course true; but that is not to suggest, as Skemp holds, that it does not support 'the case for a kind of teleological "hylozoisim".' . . . *pneuma* is not itself soul, let alone Mind .... It is only the bearer of soul. 'In a way', though, *pneuma* is a partial substitute for a discarded 'immanent God' or nature as Mind of Aristotle's earlier physics" (Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle,* 131).

nature set forth in book 2 is set aside, or replaced by book 8.[16] Graham, for example, maintains:

> According to Book II [of the *Physics],* a natural body originates its own motion; according to Book VIII, no body in motion originates its own motion. Indeed, it is precisely the ability of natural bodies to move by themselves that distinguishes their motion from forced motion, caused by an external agent.[17]

This reading suggests that the two texts cannot be reconciled. Graham himself concludes that the theory of natural motion in book 8 is a drastic revision of the original theory put forward in book 2, and that the two conflict:

> If we push the claim that every moved body requires an external mover, we would be compelled to erase the distinction between natural and forced motions, and ultimately to treat natural motion as no different from forced motion.[18]

We see then that a tension between the second and eighth books of the *Physics* results when book 2 is taken to define "nature" as an efficient cause of motion. Such an interpretive move has an enormous effect on the way one approaches the *Physics.* For example, it raises the question of the coherence of the text: does the *Physics* present a coherent doctrine, or does it present a series of inconsistent doctrines that manifest different stages of Aristotle's thought?

Another result of regularly taking the principle of nature as an efficient cause is a general neglect of the role form and matter might play as principles of motion. By looking for an efficient cause of motion, commentators such as Graham tend to avoid asking and investigating how form and matter might serve as principles of motion in some way other than as efficient causes. It is obvious from the first and second books of the *Physics* that

[16] Graham identifies Hans Von Arnim *(Die Enstehung der Gotteslehre des Aristoteles[Vienna:* Hiilder-Pichler-Tempsky A.-G., 1931]) and Friedrich Solmesen*!,Aristotle's System of the Physical World* [Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1960], 232-34, 100-101) as examples of scholars who take the doctrine of book 8 to be inconsistent with the doctrine of book 2. See Graham, *Aristotle's Physics: Book VIII,* xiii.

[17] Graham, *Aristotle's Physics: Book VIII,* xv.

[18] Ibid., xvi.

form and matter are intrinsic principles of natural bodies, but to many it is not obvious whether-and if so, how-matter and form might be principles of motion.

III. NATURE AS A PRINCIPLE OF BEING MOVED

In light of this trend in Aristotelian scholarship, and the serious implications it has on understanding several important aspects of Aristotle's thought, another look at the relevant passages is called for. I intend in this article to provide an exposition of book 8, chapter 4 that supports the doctrinal unity between books 2 and 8. The crucial place to start, however, is with Aristotle's definition and initial discussion of nature in book 2, chapter 1. Consider the following three statements: [19] "All things existing by nature appear to have in themselves a principle of motion and standstill, whether with respect to place or increase or decrease or alteration" (192b13). "So nature is a principle and a cause of being moved *[kinesthai]* or of rest in the thing to which it belongs primarily and in virtue of that thing *[kath' auto]* but not accidentally" (192b21ff.). "Indeed, the form is a nature to a higher degree than the matter" (193b7). In light of the trend in scholarship discussed above, two points must be stressed. First, nature is defined in the passive voice *(kinesthai)* as a principle, not of moving but of *being moved.* [20] Second, the two contenders for the title "nature" are the intrinsic principles of matter and form, and in the final analysis form proves to be nature more than matter, though matter remains essential. One should seek to understand precisely how Aristotle understood form and matter to function as principles of being moved and standstill.

It is helpful to recall that, for Aristotle, physics is a science of movable being, or beings in motion. As such, it is a very general science, for the class or genus of beings that are in motion is very

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

[20] Helen Lang has a strong argument showing that *kinesthai* must be read as passive voice, and not middle; see Lang, *The Order of Nature,* 42-44.

large and contains within itself a large number of species that differ in important ways. For instance, the general science of physics considers both living and nonliving bodies; these two classes of beings are treated specifically by the more specific sciences of biology and chemistry, respectively.

As a science, physics attempts to see and articulate the intelligible causes and principles that belong commonly to all beings in motion. In this regard, Aristotle's *Physics* was a very daring work, for it emerged from the shadow of Parmenides (who judged motion to be unintelligible and, hence, impossible) to claim that, since motion obviously *is*, there must be intelligible principles and causes in the orderly motions of natural beings. The motions of natural bodies are not chaotic; if they were, a science of nature would be impossible. Instead we find, for the most part, that bodies exhibit motions that tend to be both regular and orderly. The human mind comes to understand the nature of bodies by attending to their characteristic behaviors, and trying to see the intelligible order of such motions. In sum, Aristotle was convinced that because motion exists it can and must be explained.

For Aristotle, matter and form are the intrinsic principles that render motion intelligible. He does not intend either of these principles to be taken as efficient causes of motion. Rather, as the passive form of the verb *kinesthai* implies, they are passive principles of motion. They are sources that serve to render intelligible a body's natural motions; we will see that they do this by determining the passivities of the body to which they belong. The questions addressed in book 8, chapter 4 of the *Physics* are such that Aristotle is forced to provide a more complete articulation of these principles.

IV. *PHYSICS* 8.4: CLARIFYING THE PROBLEM OF NATURAL MOTION OF INANIMATE NATURAL BODIES

By Aristotle's own admission (see *Physics* 8.4.254b34ff.), the motion of inanimate natural bodies is perhaps the most difficult

issue he faces in the *Physics.* Book 8 of the *Physics,* as a whole, is ordered toward proving the existence of an unmoved mover that is ultimately responsible for the motions of the entire cosmos. In order to prove an unmoved mover, however, Aristotle must first establish the fact that no being independently moves itself, but, rather, that everything in motion is moved by some other. This is the purpose of chapter 4. In the background are two questions: how can Aristotle's definition of nature as articulated in book 2, chapter 1 of the *Physics* apply to both living and nonliving natural bodies, while at the same time preserving their differences? and how does natural motion of inanimate bodies differ from violent motion if both are efficiently caused by an external agent?

A) Self-Motion vs. Being Moved by Another; Natural vs. Violent

Aristotle begins by distinguishing two classes of movable beings: "Of things which are in motion according to themselves, some are moved by themselves, and some are moved by others, and some are moved by nature but others by force or contrary to nature" (254b12-14 [translation emended]). Reiterating that natural things are moved or in motion "according to themselves," which is to say that they possess a nature, or some kind of an intrinsic "source" *(arch§)* of motion, [21] Aristotle goes on to make two key points. The first is that while some things, by nature, move themselves (as in the case of animals), [22] others, also by

[21] It is important to recognize a difference between motion "according to itself" *(kath' hauto,* commonly translated as "essentially") and motion "by itself" *(hauto).* This difference will be discussed in what follows.

[22] Later in the text (see 257a33-258b9) Aristotle argues that even self-moving bodies (viz., animals) require heterogeneous parts which act upon one another, thereby preserving the distinction of mover and moved, and ruling out the possibility of simple self-motion. Further, at *Physics* 8.6.259b2-18, he points out that animals "helped create the opinion that in a thing a motion which did not exist at all [before] may arise ... for it seems that at one time they [i.e., animals] are without motion, but later they are moved." This opinion, however, he goes on to say, is the result of a failure to recognize that "self-movers" are not as independent as they seem: "This must be granted, then, that such things do cause in themselves one [kind of motion] but that *they do not cause it independently;* for the cause [of their motion] is not from them, but there are other natural motions which animals have, but not through themselves, such as increase, decrease, respiration .... The cause of these [motions] is the surrounding

nature, are moved by others: "And of things which are moved by others, some are moved by nature" (254b20-22 [translation emended]). The second point is that natural things (whether self-movers or not) are sometimes subjected to unnatural or violent motions. The classification of movers and bodies in motion is as follows:

Bodies in Motion
- I. Moved by nature
  - A. self-movers
  - B. non-self-movers moved by something else
- II. Moved by force
  - A. self-mover moved entirely by something else
  - B. non-self-mover moved by something else

What is the importance of these distinctions? First of all, we note an important distinction between types of motion; some motions are said to be "natural," while others are said to be violent, compulsory, or "contrary to nature." But what is it that makes a motion natural, and what makes a motion unnatural? Before we give a positive answer, it is important to recognize that, according to the passage above, "violent motion" is not synonymous with "being moved by another," nor is "natural motion" synonymous with "self-motion."[23]

environment, and many things which enter the animal, such as food .... But the first source of these motions comes from the outside" (translation emended and emphasis added). These passages demonstrate adequately enough that Aristotle's account of self-motion is far from simple.

[23] Graham seems to miss this very point. According to Graham, the discussion of *Physics* 8.4 threatens the doctrine of *Physics* 2.1: "Note that if Aristotle were right in his present analysis of motion [that is, in *Physics* 8.4], he would be forced to abandon his distinction between nature and power. Nature [according to book 2] is an internal source of change, power is an external source of change. But it will turn out [in 8.4] that every nature is really a passive power; hence there really is no internal source of change in the world, only patently external sources of change and latently external sources of change. Some external agent is needed to originate motion even in natural substances. Thus a basic distinction between natural motion and non-natural motion collapses" (Graham, *Aristotle's Physics: Book VIII,* 86). One notes that if Graham were correct, not only would *Physics* 8.4 contradict *Physics* 2.1, but the second half of *Physics* 8.4 would undermine the first half. After all, the distinction between natural and violent motion is explicitly made in *Physics* 8.4, and it serves as the

For Aristotle, as this passage makes clear, being moved by another can be, and in fact often is, fully in keeping with a body's nature. Hence, being moved by another is simply not sufficient grounds for naming a motion "violent"; rather, some further qualifier is needed.

A passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics* proves very helpful in providing the needed qualifier to designate a motion as violent. [24] In this passage, Aristotle provides a definition of "force" *(bia)* as it pertains to human action: "It seems … that what forces a man is that whose moving principle is external, *without the man who is forced contributing anything.* "[25] There are two criteria for a human action to be "by force": first, there must be an external moving principle, and second, the man being moved must "contribute" nothing. Thus, we can infer that if the man "contributes" something to the motion, his motion is not entirely forced. When these conditions are met, however, the resulting motion will either be contrary to nature, or at least not by nature.

From the discussion of human actions, we can easily abstract the criteria for judging any motion to be violent: first, the mover must be an external agent; and second, the body being moved must not contribute anything to the resulting motion. Violent and natural motion may be alike in that both may have an external source of motion, but in natural motion the motion caused is "according to" the nature of the body being moved, whereas in a violent motion the resulting motion either is "contrary to" the nature of the moved body, or the nature of the substance being moved contributes nothing to the character of the resulting motion. What determines a motion as "violent" or "natural" is

starting point of the current difficulty.

[24] I was first referred to this connection years ago by James A. Weisheipl's "Natural and Compulsory Movement," in *Nature and Motion in the Middle,* ed. William E. Carroll (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 1985), 29; the article was originally published in *The New Scholasticism* 29 (1955): 50-81.

[25] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1.111 Ob15 (translation emended and emphasis added). See also ibid. 3.1.1110a2; and Aristotle, *De Caelo* 3.2.301b18ff.

not whether the body is moved by another or by itself, but, rather, whether the motion is in keeping with the body's nature. [26]

The question remains, however, in light of these distinctions, as to how a motion whose efficient cause is "in another" can at the same time be in accordance with the nature of the substance being moved. What does Aristotle have in mind when he says that a body, though being moved by another, can none the less "contribute something" to its motion, and thus render the motion "natural"? I will argue that the contribution in question is grounded in the body's proper, determined passivities; passivities, that is to say, that are established and defined by the body's first *entelecheia,* or substantial form. At this point in the analysis, however, it is enough to underscore Aristotle's point that both self-movers, on the one hand, and bodies that by nature are moved by others, on the other, are subject to motion that is *natural* and motion that is *violent.* The point to note is that motion from another is clearly not synonymous with violent motion.

While Aristotle does say that an animal, as a whole, can move itself by nature, this does not mean that the principle "everything moved is moved by another" does not apply to living things. However, it must be remembered that a living thing is made up of heterogeneous parts that are capable of moving and being moved by one another, thereby causing the whole to move. Upon examination, it becomes clear that even in self-movers there is always a distinction between mover and moved, though in living things it is at times not clear "how to distinguish in them that which causes motion and that which is *moved"(Physics* 8.4.254b29).

It is in violent motions, or motions contrary to nature, that mover and moved are most easily distinguished, since in such cases the motion is clearly caused by another, the moved object

[26] For this reason, I prefer to translate *"kath' hauto"* literally as "according to itself." A body can be moved by another, but so long as the resulting motion is in accord with its own fundamental nature, the motion is natural. Such motions, we will see, are grounded in the body's natural *"pathe"* which are themselves grounded in the body's fundamental substantial order.

clearly contributing nothing to the motion. The most difficult case, however, is that of the natural motions of inanimate substances. Nonliving natural bodies-bodies, that is, that are in motion *kath' hauto-are by nature* moved by another:

> The greatest difficulty, however, lies in the remaining part of the last division; for of things moved by others, some on the one hand were posited by us as being in motion contrary to nature: and opposed to these, on the other hand, there remain those that are in motion by nature. The latter are those (such as light and heavy objects) that would cause the following difficulty: By what are they moved? For each of these is moved to its opposite place *[antikeimenoustopous]* by force, and to its proper place *[oikeinoustopous]* by nature (the light moves up, the heavy moves down), but that by which they are moved is not quite so evident as it is in a thing which is moved contrary to nature. *(Physics* 8.4.254b34-255a6)

The question is clear: By what are these bodies moved when they are moved "by nature"?

As Aristotle begins to address this question, he expresses an important assumption that underlies his considerations, namely, that natural bodies have proper and opposite places. Fire, it appears, would rather be up, and earth would rather be down. The validation for the claim of "natural places" comes principally from the observation of regular behaviors of bodies. Fire, for example, regularly goes up. From this we infer that up is the proper place of fire. Aristotle is not thinking of place principally as a designated location in the universe, but rather as a surrounding environment, the quality of which is constituted by the bodies that make it up. What he means is that a natural body regularly moves towards and comes to some sort of rest in proper, natural places (places, we may say, that are hospitable to its nature) and away from opposite, unnatural, or improper places (places, that is, that are inhospitable to its nature.) Such a regularity found in natural phenomena is the basis for the claim that substances have natural places.[27]

[27] See Thomas Larson, "Aristotle's Understanding of Place," *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 439-62.

B) Inanimate, Homoeomerous Bodies Cannot be Self-Movers

Aristotle's question, then, is the following: what naturally moves an inanimate body, with observable regularity, away from inhospitable surroundings and towards its natural place? For Aristotle, the inanimate body moves "according to" its nature *(kath' hauto),* and therefore not by force; but the inanimate body does not move itself. In fact, Aristotle rules out the possibility that the inanimate body could cause itself to move or stop, and this for two reasons. The first reason is that self-motion is recognized in the power of living things to control and govern their own motions. Nonliving bodies, however, simply are not found to be capable of governing their motions. Instead we find that they always move in the same direction and stop in the same conditions or circumstances, whereas living things are capable of moving naturally in different, even opposite, directions. Aristotle's objection here hinges on the "unreasonableness" of the claim that something that causes itself to move would have only one natural motion. If earth had the independent power to make itself go down, it must also have the power not to go down, or even to make itself go up. Absent these latter two capacities, there are no rational grounds for saying earth moves itself down.

The second reason Aristotle gives against the self-motion of inanimate bodies provides a stronger foundation for his first:

> Again, how does something which is continuous *(sunexes)* and has a natural unity *(sumphues)* admit of causing itself to be moved? For in so far as a thing is one and continuous but not in contact, it is *apathes;* but in so far as separation has been made, one [part] can by nature act *(poein)* and the other, be acted upon *(pasxein).* So none of these things causes itself to be moved (for each has a 'uniform nature' *[sumphue]),* nor does anything else that is continuous, but in each case the mover must be divided from that which is being moved, as in the case of lifeless things when observed to be moved by living things. *(Physics* 8.4.254b34-255a18 [translation emended])

Here we encounter an important feature of his consideration of inanimate substances. For Aristotle, inanimate substances differ from living substances by having what he calls a "natural unity"

(sumphues). In other passages he says that such substances are "homoeomerous," meaning that the substance is such that "we can apply the same name in the same sense to a part of it as to the whole."[28] Each and every part of a nonliving body is made up of the same stuff; that is to say, in more precise language, the material possesses the very same fundamental substantial order throughout, and there is thus no distinction of parts. Water is water throughout; if one were to designate parts in a body of water by dividing it up into various smaller quantities, one would find that the substantial order of each part is identical with the substantial order of all other parts, and of the whole.

Living things, on the other hand, are made up of heterogeneous parts: bones, marrow, lungs, heart, etc., all of which are organs (working parts) that perform distinct operations (works). The heterogeneous parts and their operations are, in turn, all ordered toward the good of the whole organism. In light of this heterogeneity, the matter-form relationship in living things becomes very complex; one must consider a hylomorphic unity that accounts for the variety of fundamental formal orders found in the diverse parts of the organism, while at the same time preserving the oneness of substantial form of the whole-no small task. The matter-form relationship in nonliving, homoeomerous substances, by contrast, should appear simple. In these substances, all of the matter-of whatever part, or whatever designated quantity-shares the same substantial order; each part has the identical formal definition as the whole. The result is that each part behaves and reacts in the very same manner as the whole; that is to say, in more Aristotelian language, each part, having the same substantial order, has the same defined work *(energeia, ergon).*

In homoeomerous substances, it is impossible for one part to act upon and hence change another part. The reason is that no one part has anything that the other parts do not also have.[29] Motion always involves contraries: white becomes tan, what is up

[28] *On Generation and Corruption* 1.1.314a19.

[29] See Dennis Des Chene, *Physiologia: Natural Philosophy in Late Aristotelian and Cartesian Thought* (Ithaca & London: *Cornell* University Press, 1996), 230.

comes down, heavy becomes light, hot becomes cold, wet becomes dry; and the cause of such changes must, in some way, possess the contrary perfection that is brought about.

In order for a motion to take place, then, at least two things are necessary. First, the body to be moved in a certain way must be capable of being moved in that way; pale skin is able to become tan skin, but it is not capable of becoming perfectly transparent. There are limits to what changes a given substance can undergo and still remain itself. Second, and more technical, a motion always requires a mover that already possesses the perfection towards which the moved body is being moved. For motion, as Aristotle defines it, is *entelecheia* of *dunamis qua dunamis* (see *Physics* 3.1.201a9ff). So, for example, if the skin on an arm is able to become tan, but presently is pale, Aristotle would say that the surface of the skin has a certain order *(morphe* or *eidos)* that gives the skin the perfection, or actuality *(entelecheia)* of being "pale"; but that same skin can be reordered in such a way that it will have the perfection of being tan. *Dunamis* is this ability to be reordered, which in this case belongs to the surface of the skin. Note, however, that pale skin could not itself be the cause of the skin becoming tan. Even though pale skin is potentially tan skin, it cannot cause itself to become tan, for it does not have the perfection necessary to be a sufficient efficient cause. Every change must have a sufficient cause, and the result of the change will bear some semblance to the cause. The pale (the order on the surface) of the skin cannot cause the skin to become tan (a different order in the same surface). The white of a surface cannot cause the surface to become black. One order cannot itself be the cause of its own destruction and the generation of a new order. One or more other causes are needed.

This is precisely why homoeomerous bodies cannot move themselves. Each part possesses the same formal order; formal order is what engenders the body with its active and passive properties. Since each part has the same active and passive properties, no part can act upon or initiate a change in any other part. There 1s no contrariety (heterogeneity) m the

homoeomerous substance, and thus there is no possibility of self motion.

To return to our initial question: how can we say both that nonliving substances are always moved by another and that their motions can be "by nature," as opposed to violent? We can see that we are not to think of the principle of nature as an efficient cause of motion, or as a little imp inside the body causing the body to move. Nor can we say that the body moves itself. Aristotle denies that inanimate bodies are self-movers since they do not seem to move themselves with any independence and their homoeomerity makes self-motion impossible. Instead, the natural inanimate body, according to Aristotle, is moved naturally by others. But what exactly does this mean?

C) Aristotle's Solution-Distinguishing the Levels of Dunamis

Rounding out the difficulty, Aristotle makes one final point:

> But it happens that these things [i.e., inanimate substances] are always moved by something; this would become manifest if we were to distinguish the causes. It is possible to take the things said [about the things being moved] and [apply them] also to the movers; for some of them are movers contrary *[para]* to nature (for instance, the lever *[moluxos]* is not by nature a mover of heavy things); some things by nature (for example, the hot in-work *[energeia]* is the mover of that which is hot potentially *[dunamis].* And the same holds similarly for other such things. *(Physics* 8.4.255a18-24)

This passage does two things. First, it reinforces the points Aristotle has been making previously, namely, that of things moved by another, some are moved naturally, and some by force. The same distinctions can be applied to the extrinsic agents of motions: some extrinsic movers cause motion by force or violence, such as a lever; other extrinsic movers cause motion by means of nature, as for example, the actually hot moving the potentially hot. Here, again, is the source of our question: how are we to distinguish, in a rigorous fashion, natural motion from violent, in a way that preserves the reality of both, when some natural motions are indeed caused efficiently by an exterior agent?

Second, Aristotle has begun to solve the problem. The key to his distinction between natural and violent motion, we shall see, lies not in the false dichotomy of self-motion and violent motion; rather, it is found in the *cooperation* between the agency of another, on the one hand, and the naturally defined, limited, and, in some cases, elevated potency *(dunamis)* of the body moved, on the other.

Aristotle asserts that the source of difficulty in identifying the cause of inanimate natural motion lies in the complexity of the principle of *dunamis:* "Since *dunamis* is said in many ways, the cause of the being moved of such things [i.e., inanimate substances] is not manifest" *(Physics* 8.4.255a30-32). He then provides an example that connects his analysis of inanimate natural motion to his analysis of living natural motion:

> The learner is potentially a scientist in a different way from the man who has [the knowledge] already, but is not in work. Always, whenever at the same time *to poetikon* and *to pathetikon* are, the thing in *dunamis* comes to be in work, as for instance, the learner from being in potency comes to be in a different potency (he who has the science but is not contemplating is, in a way, in potency to being a scientist, but not in the same way as before he learned [the science]), whenever in this way he holds, if something does not impede, he will be in work and contemplate, or he will be the contradictory and in ignorance. *(Physics* 8.4.255a33-b5)

In this example (which is very similar to the example he uses in *De Anima* [2.1] to explain his definition of the soul as a first actuality of a body with the potential for life), we find two distinct levels of *dunamis.* First, there is a student who currently has no knowledge of a particular science. The student is not "disabled" in any way; he just has not, at this time, acquired the information. He is not a knower, but he has the ability to be. Next there is a somewhat complicated form of potency: namely, a man "who has the science but is not contemplating" it. The scientist, like the student, is not currently "contemplating," which is to say, he is not in-work *(energeia)* as a scientist; but we know that the scientist can contemplate his science, and so he is a potential knower. We can also recognize, however, that the potencies for contemplation

are different in the noncontemplating scientist and in the ignorant student. The scientist "has" something that the student does not. The scientist has the knowledge; his intellect has been "in-formed." Being "in-formed" puts the scientist's intellect in a more immediate potency for contemplation than the student's. Thus, there is a formal difference between these two I hasten to add, both remain potencies.

D) Form and Matter as Co-Principles of Natural Motion of Inanimate Bodies

Although this discussion of cognitional potencies has much more to offer in its own right, we must keep in mind that it is offered as an example, a means for helping us understand the motion of inanimate natural bodies. How does such an example help in this regard? Aristotle explains as follows:

> These things hold similarly for natural things; for the cold is potentially hot, and whenever it changes, it is already fire, and it burns, unless something prevents and impedes; these things hold likewise for heavy and light things; for light things come to be from heavy-for example, air comes from water (for this is first in potential) and when it is light, it goes to work immediately, unless something obstructs. The being-in-work of light things is to be in a certain 'where' and up, and it is obstructed whenever it is in its opposite place. And this holds in the same way for quantity and quality. *(Physics* 8.4.255b5-13 [translation emended])

The basic point of this complicated passage can be stated in this way: There are at least two important levels of potency when we consider potency in relation to *energeia,* or "being in work," and the difference between the two potencies is due to the differing formal order, which limits, defines, and, in some cases, elevates one of them. Taking Aristotle's first example, we have something cold, which is potentially hot, or potentially fire. A change takes place, the matter is in some way reordered, and now what was cold and potentially hot is now something hot. Notice, however, that the subject now being hot is not the end of Aristotle's account; rather he points to a further completion, namely,

"burning." While it is the case that something hot is ordered towards burning, a strict reading of the text implies that burning does not necessarily follow upon something being hot; for, as Aristotle points out, something could impede or prevent the hot body from burning. This is similar to what we saw before in the scientist. Though he had the knowledge in question, he was not necessarily functioning as a scientist; having the knowledge rendered him more immediately capable (potency) of contemplating. Having the formal order making it to be hot does not necessarily lead the body to work (burn) as a hot thing, but the formal order does put the body into a more immediate potency for such activity (since the formal order actually orders the body towards that activity).

The same reasoning applies to a light body; it comes to be from something heavy, yet even when light it can be prevented from acting or working in accordance with its nature. When prevented, the light body is still in potency to its own proper activity or work; and this potential is a result of its having a specific formal order that makes the body to be light. Certain conditions must be met if the ordered potential of the body is to be brought into complete functioning. That is to say, in order for a body to act or work in accordance with its specific potential, it must have impediments removed; the body must be in "a place" where the surroundings do not inhibit, but rather, foster its being in work.

Aristotle is now in a position to draw his conclusion:

> This, however, is what is sought, [for the original question was,] on account of what are the light things and heavy things moved to their place? The cause is their natural 'where', and this is the to-be of light and heavy, the one is defined by "up," and the other by "down." Something is potentially light and heavy in many ways, as was said; for whenever something is water, it is in a way potentially light, and when something is air, it is still potentially light (for it admits of being impeded and not being up); but if the impediment is taken away, it comes to be in work, and is always upward. Similarly, the quality changes to being-in-work *(energeia);* for the scientist immediately contemplates unless something impedes; and a quantity expands unless something obstructs. *(Physics* 8.4.255b13-24 [translation emended])

Aristotle has been trying to explain how inanimate bodies move 'naturally'. The solution to this problem, he tells us, lies in the right understanding of *dunamis.* Both water and air, he says, are light, but in different ways. Water does not possess the quality of lightness, but there is an underlying potency to water that can be changed, or reordered, in such a way that the body takes on the property of lightness. Should the body of water be reordered in such a way as to lose the quality of heaviness, and take on the quality of lightness, the body is no longer water, but now is air. Since water can be changed into a light thing, it is potentially light. But air, too, according to Aristotle, is potentially a light thing. This may surprise us, since it seems that once a body is air, it is already light. Not so. It is now potentially light, but potentially light in a way different from the way water is potentially light. The key to understanding this new potential is to recognize that towards which the potency is ordered.

A body of air has a basic substantial order that makes it to be air. One of the essential attributes, or properties, of air is the quality of "being light." Now "lightness" clearly corresponds to a specific behavior, or natural motion-namely, moving upward. But neither the basic substantial order, which grants the quality of lightness, nor the quality of lightness itself, is completely or independently responsible for the upward motion of the body. It must be recognized that the surrounding environment either impedes or engenders the motion of the body. The immediate surroundings of the place in which the body is found are essential for explaining its motion. This explains why Aristotle always refers to a body "being moved" upward, rather than simply "moving upward."[30] Again, immediately following the above quoted passage, we find Aristotle reasserting a general but essential point: "It is clear that none of these things moves itself by itself; but they do have a principle of motion, not of moving or

[30] It is worth noting that the Greek word Aristotle uses for locomotion, *phord* (see *Physics* 3.1.208a31-32) is related etymologically to the verb *phero,* "to carry." In light of Aristotle definition of nature as a principle of being moved *(kinesthai),* and Helen Lang's argument that *kinesthai* is a passive, and not a middle, verb (Lang, *The Order of Nature,* 42-44), it is likely that *phord,* as well, is to be understood as passive.

of acting, but rather, of being-acted-upon *[pasxein]" (Physics* 8.4.255b29-31).

V. *PHYSICS* 2.1 AND *PHYSICS* 8.4 COMPARED

According to book 2 of the *Physics,* both matter and form serve as intrinsic principles of motion, and form is nature to a higher degree than matter. In book 8, chapter 4, Aristotle provides a complex example of how these intrinsic principles serve as sources of natural motion. What is now absolutely clear is that neither matter nor form functions as efficient causes of motion, nor must they in order for the resulting motion to qualify as natural. Rather, matter provides potential, an.d form renders that potential determinate. (One might say that matter makes motion possible, while form makes it intelligible, hence making form "nature" to a higher degree.) Motion that is natural arises from these two intrinsic sources; but while these sources are necessary, they are not sufficient. It is vital to keep in mind that nature is a principle of being acted upon; hence form, as a substantial order, establishes specific and proper *pathB--species* specific passivities, or potencies. Form orders the very passivities and potencies of matter, rendering them capable of being affected by other correlatively defined agencies. The surrounding environment, or place, is essential to natural motion, and hence an essential extrinsic principle of natural motion. It is place that functions as the efficient cause of the natural motions of inanimate natural bodies. According to Aristotle, place is made up of bodies which possess sundry forms of agent power; such surrounding agencies act upon the passivities of a body, thereby moving a body in accordance with the body's own specific nature. This is a natural motion.

If a body is acted upon by the surrounding environment in such a way that the specific potencies are not brought into work, but instead the body is moved contrary to its specific natural potencies, we recognize the motion as forced or violent. Hence, by clarifying how matter and form function as passive principles

pf motion, we are in a better position to understand the difference between forced and natural motion.

VI. CONCLUSION

I believe that the exposition and analysis provided in this paper offer an superior alternative to those readings that, by taking nature in book 2, chapter 1 of the *Physics* as an efficient cause of motion belonging essentially to a body, pit the doctrines of book 8 against the doctrines of book 2. As I have shown how the arguments of book 8, chapter 4 are consistent with book 2, chapter 1, my reading supports a unified reading of the *Physics.*

My reading has a further advantage. If one compares the *Physics's* discussion of the levels of potency (in 8.4) with *De Anima's* discussion of the levels of actuality *(entelecheia,* in 2.1), one immediately sees similar themes. I cannot here take up the comparison in any detail, but I believe that when the comparison is carried out one comes away with the conviction that notion of first *entelecheia* is the heart of Aristotle's understanding, not only of the soul, but of nature in general. Anyone trying truly to understand Aristotle ought to try to see how the general concept of nature can be applied to both living and nonliving natural bodies without animating the nonliving and without killing the living.

The Thomist 71 (2007): 577-608

WAS AQUINAS AN EGOIST?

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WHILE ARISTOTLE HAS BEEN the primary historical source in the recent revival of virtue ethics, Aquinas has played an important role in his own right, especially with such philosophers as Philippa Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, and Alasdair Macintyre. [1] Virtue ethicists have drawn on and developed many aspects of the ethical thought of Aristotle and Aquinas. One point to which they have not paid sufficient attention is whether the classical and medieval conception of the moral life as the pursuit of happiness *(eudaimonia, beatitudo)* amounts to a (perhaps very subtle) form of egoism. Yet there are philosophers who have argued that eudaimonistic approaches like those of Aristotle and Aquinas are indeed egoistic.

Strangely, it is often sympathetic commentators who make these arguments. They then go on to maintain that the theory in question is only "formally egoistic" or some such, and to suggest that this is not objectionable. Scott MacDonald and John Langan, [2] whose views I shall consider below, take largely this approach to interpreting Aquinas. I find this problematic because it seems to

[1] See Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and Alasdair Macintyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).

[2] Scott MacDonald, "Egoistic Rationalism: Aquinas's Basis for Christian Morality," in Michael Beaty, ed., *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 327-54, at 332; John Langan, S.J., "Egoism and Morality in the Theological Teleology of Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 16 (1991): 411-26. Langan, I think, finds the egoism objectionable, but thinks we can salvage a substantial part of Aquinas's theory despite it.

me that "egoism" is "said together with the bad." Instead, I advocate an interpretation according to which Aquinas is no sort of egoist at all, but rather a perfectionist.

After defining some key terms, I shall sketch a preliminary case for taking Aquinas to be an egoist, and then outline my own interpretation of him as a perfectionist who sees well-being as part of human perfection properly understood, and as choiceworthy precisely as perfective. Following this I shall set out arguments drawn from MacDonald and Langan, together with other arguments based on passages drawn from Aquinas's writings, that seek to show that, despite the reasons adduced for my interpretation, Aquinas was an egoist (or perhaps that he waffled between perfectionism and egoism). I shall respond to each of these arguments in turn, endeavoring to show how each *prima facie* plausible case for egoism collapses under the weight of closer scrutiny of the textual evidence. I accept the principle that inconsistency should be attributed to a great philosopher only when absolutely necessary; here is where I shall show that the attribution is not necessary even for the most "egoistic-sounding" passages of Aquinas.

I. DEFINITIONS AND PRELIMINARY CLARIFICATIONS

I use *perfectionism* in a nonconsequentialist way, such that a theory is perfectionist if it recommends to each agent that he or she pursue, as a primary and overriding goal, his or her own perfection. [3] For human beings perfection consists, essentially, in virtuous activity; it is about being the best person one can be, acting well and "being good." *Egoism,* on the other hand, is about "well-being." It is the doctrine that each agent takes as his primary, overriding goal the achievement of his own welfare.

This might initially seem to be a distinction without a difference: Is it not the case that in both doctrines the agent takes as his primary goal what is good for him? There is, however, a

[3] The term "perfectionism" is often associated with Thomas Hurka'a agent-neutral version of the theory; not so here (the view I attribute to Aquinas is closer to what Hurka calls agent-relative perfectionism).

crucial difference of emphasis. The perfectionist takes as his primary overriding goal what is *good* for him-the "for him" is necessary because what it is to be good varies across persons (e.g., a man who has children cannot be good without being a good father, whereas as a childless man can). As the true athlete is committed to excellence in sport and not to feelings of exhilaration, so the perfectionist is committed to living a successful human life and not to the pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction for their own sakes. Of course, given certain assumptions about human psychology, it is surely the case that excellence in sport turns out to involve feelings of exhilaration. And similarly, given similar assumptions, a successful human life will involve pleasure and satisfaction-pleasure in being good, for example, and satisfaction with how one's life is going. The point, however, is that such feelings are consequent to, not the ground for, the excellence of which they are the enjoyment.

This crucial relationship between "being good" and "well-being" is reversed for the egoist, who takes as his primary goal his own welfare, what is good *for him* (pursued precisely as what is good for him). It may well turn out the world is such that the best way to pursue one's own welfare is to lead a life that seems quite unselfish from the outside. It may even be that the prudent egoist will foster habits of fairness and feelings of concern for others (so that the good of others, or some others, may come to be partly constitutive of the agent's own good, as some of those who interpret Aristotle and Aquinas as "formal egoists" claim). The egoist, that is to say, might look rather like the perfectionist. Still, the relationship between perfection and welfare is reversed. Ultimately, the egoist does not enjoy or take satisfaction in things or in his life because they are valuable, but values them because they satisfy him.

Some may still insist that (agent-relative) perfectionism is egoistic (although perhaps in a nonobjectionable way) because the agent's primary object of concern is still his own life and activity. With these, my dispute may ultimately be terminological-they are simply using the terms differently. But terms can be important,

especially terms with such connotations as "egoism" has. To see this, consider first the testimony of Henry Sidgwick, Aquinas's unlikely ally on this point:

> [W]e must discard a common account of Egoism which describes its ultimate end as the 'good' of the individual; for the term 'good' may cover all possible views of the ultimate end for rational conduct. Indeed it may be said that Egoism in this [to be discarded] sense was assumed in the whole ethical controversy of ancient Greece; that is, it was assumed on all sides that a rational individual would make the pursuit of his own good his supreme aim: the controverted question was whether this Good was rightly conceived as Pleasure or Virtue, or any *tertium quid*.[4]

Sidgwick's view is that the term "egoism" will become useless if we allow it to cast too wide a net-so wide as to capture, for example, the pursuit of virtue and perfection. Here I think he is absolutely right. Secondly, "self-centeredness" seems a more promising label than "egoism" for a primary concern with one's own life that does not take the form of myopic concern with one's own welfare. The allegation that a theory endorses self-centeredness may well imply an objection, but it would be a different objection.[5] Finally, understanding egoism in terms of the pursuit of one's own welfare dovetails with common usage (an egoist is generally taken to be a selfish person, one driven solely

[4] Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 91-92.

[5] Bernard Williams illustrates the distinction between egoism and (mere) self-centeredness with characteristic clarity and crispness in a discussion of his notion of ground projects: These projects "do not have to be selfish.... Nor do they have to be self-centered, in the sense that the creative projects of a Romantic artist could be considered self-centered (where it has to be *him*, but not *for* him)" (Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality," in *Twentieth Century Ethical Theory*, ed. Steven Cahn and Joram Haber (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995), 642.

Although this is not my chief concern in this paper, let me suggest why I think this objection fails. There seems good reason to think that pursuit of one's own perfection need not be, in fact needs not to be, self-centered, just as excellence in sport typically involves excellence in teamwork. We shall see in sections 3 and 4 that concern with one's own life, as Aquinas understands it, is in large part to direct it toward, and in service of, others and ultimately God (see Christopher Toner, "The Self-Centredness Objection to Virtue Ethics," *Philosophy* 81 [2006]: 595-617).

by self-interest) and with that of recent writers on welfare, such as L. W. Sumner. [6]

But how are we to understand welfare, or well-being? Sumner himself defines it as "authentic happiness," where happiness comprises cognitive and affective satisfaction with one's life as a whole, and authenticity ensures that the satisfaction does not rest upon compulsion or deception. Others may prefer to define it in terms of, for example, a pleasant life, or a life experienced as worthwhile. Still others may insist that not only must a life of well-being involve satisfaction or pleasure, but it must also be the case that what pleases, or what satisfies, be itself objectively good: Robert Adams, for example, defines welfare as "a *life* characterized by *enjoyment of the excellent.* "[7] Wherever we might come down on these details, however, Sumner seems to have his finger on something important: namely, that, however we go on to amplify or qualify it, the core of our notion of well-being or welfare (the state of things going well for the agent) is the agent's satisfaction with his condition. For our purposes, if we can convict Aquinas of recommending to the agent the pursuit of what is good *for him,* the pursuit of his own welfare conceived in any of a range of plausible ways, and conceived as his final end, then the case for an egoistic interpretation will be made. The arguments I shall consider will interpret Aquinas as recommending the pursuit, as the agent's final end, of what is in the agent's interest, of the agent's own fulfillment, of complete satisfaction, of the agent's own private good. The arguments characterize

[6] See L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 13.

[7] See Robert Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 93. Given Aquinas's Aristotelian notion of pleasure, according to which pleasure-which will involve enjoyment of something and satisfaction with it, or repose in it-varies in quality and desirability with the quality of the pleasing object, Adams's more objective account of welfare seems initially much more compatible with Aquinas's outlook than does Sumner's. See, e.g., Aquinas, X *Nie. Ethic.,* lect. 6 *(In Decem Libras Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Expositio,* Raymundi Spiazzi, O.P. [Rome: Marietti, 1949], para. 2038; parenthetical numbers in references to this text refer to paragraph numbers in the Marietti edition). (While I shall refer to this text frequently, I shall not rest any controversial claim about Aquinas's doctrine solely on it.) Yet, we shall see that in certain passages Aquinas does seem to lean toward understanding beatitude in terms of the complete satisfaction of the will, simply.

beatitudo, the agent's final end, to varying degrees of specificity, but in each case as a plausible characterization of welfare, of what is good *for the agent-and* therefore we can interpret these arguments as allegations that Aquinas was an egoist.

We need to note one last distinction, made by Shelly Kagan between normative factors and foundations.[8] We may call *normative factors* those features of the moral environment that help make actions have the moral status they do (right or wrong, good or bad, virtuous or vicious). Factors are what moral agents should see as salient to deliberation. Standard examples of normative factors include special obligations, consequences, duties such as nonmaleficence and promise-keeping. Most moral theorists will agree that such and other factors are indeed salient to moral deliberation, but they will disagree on why, and on how they are to be ranked. To take up such questions is to move into the realm of *normative foundations*, which provide the justification (and in some cases the motivation) for the agents' regard for factors. Different ethical theories appeal to different foundations: overall consequences, the universalizability of maxims, a social contract, individual welfare, or perfection.

Normative theories may variously combine foundations and factors. Rule-utilitarianism, for example, gives priority to rule-following at the factoral level, while grounding the rules, at the foundational level, in their expected consequences. Many other combinations are possible, including a normative theory that recommends the cultivation of certain traits and direct concern for friends and civic duties at the factoral level while justifying these, at the foundational level, on the grounds that according deliberative weight to such factors is the best way to achieve one's own welfare. The advocate of such a theory would certainly escape any charge of "factoral egoism," but would still be a "foundational egoist."[9]

[8] Cf. Shelly Kagan, *Nonnative Ethics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

[9] It would certainly be more difficult for a foundational egoist to acquire and exercise other-regarding virtues than, say, to adopt and follow other-regarding rules. But not impossible: we can imagine a father realizing that things are more pleasant for him when his children are contented and that his children are more contented when he controls his temper,

At the factoral level, Aquinas is a pluralist, for although "the force of the first intention, which is in view of the ultimate end, remains in the desiring of anything," very often when one acts in given situations "one is not actually considering the ultimate end, just as when going somewhere we do not have to think of the end at every step."[10] Aquinas admits all sorts of factors as relevant to concrete decisions: pleasure, relaxation, or knowledge (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 6, ad 1 and 2), or the good of another (the aim of just acts; cf., e.g., *STh* 1-11, q. 56, a. 6). The fact that among the normative factors that, according to Aquinas, we take into account are such things as the good of others and the common good indicates that the charge of factoral egoism cannot even get off the ground. Yet Aquinas is a eudaimonist at the foundational level. This is so clear and so universally accepted that I shall simply point to a few passages that illustrate this: "All things which man desires he necessarily desires for an ultimate end" *(STh* 1-11, q. 1, a. 6); "all desire their good to be complete" *(STh* **1-11,** q. 1, a. 7); and "Man's ultimate end is happiness" *(STh* **1-11,** q. 1, a. 8, sc).

This helps us clarify our question, was Aquinas an egoist? Whether he was or not depends upon whether *beatitudo* can be fairly translated as "welfare." It is not enough to clear him simply to point to things he says about friendship or justice because these might obtain only at the factoral level.[11] Neither is it enough to

who therefore seeks to develop patience. We can, with difficulty and over time, work to develop our own character with a view to enhancing our own welfare or, of course, our own perfection. For different, not necessarily incompatible, accounts of this kind of foundational reflection, see Macintyre, *Dependent Rational Animals,* 112-13 on the "theoretical level" of reflection, and Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics,* 165-66 on the "Neurathian procedure."

[10] Aquinas, *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 6, ad3. The Latin text consulted is in *Summa Theologica, editio altera romana* (Rome: ex Typographia Forzani et S., 1894). The principal translation consulted is *Summa Theologica,* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947). I have also consulted John Oesterle's translation of 1-11, qq. 1-21 *(Treatise on Happiness* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983]). Unless otherwise noted, I use Oesterle's translation when quoting from this "treatise."

[11] Of the virtue ethicists mentioned, Macintyre is the most self-conscious about clearing his Thomistic account of the charge of egoism (cf. Macintyre, *Dependent Rational Animals,* 160-61). But his remarks, I think, remain at the factoral level; for all he says there, his account could still be foundationally egoistic (although I do not think it is in fact). (The same, incidentally, can be said of Edmund Santurri's "Response to Langan," *Journal ofPhilosophical Research* 16 [1991]: 427-30.)

condemn him to point out that he construes the moral life as the pursuit of happiness-"happiness" *(beatitudo)* is a place-holder for the final end, whatever that is. We want to know the nature of this end, and particularly whether it is perfection, welfare, or any *tertium quid.*

II. GRACE AS PERFECTING NATURE

Before assessing the nature of the human end we must touch on the relationship between nature and grace in Aquinas. In asking whether he was an egoist, the evidence reviewed will include things he says about the aims and actions of charitable persons. Aquinas, relying on Scripture (2 Pet 1:4), insists that in being reborn through grace we participate in and in some sense receive a new (divine) nature *(STh* I-II, q. 110, a. 3). It is important to make clear is that this "new nature" is not utterly alien to the old, that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.

Happily, Aquinas says just this in the very first question of the *Summa:* "grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it *[Cum igitur gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat]" (STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2). Question 12 of the *Prima Pars* also speaks to this point. We have a natural desire to know God as the first cause of things *(STh* I, q. 12, a. 1); we know God better by grace than by natural reason *(STh* I, q. 12, a. 13), but faith still falls short of the vision and understanding we seek (ibid., ad 3); we know God as he is in himself only when he himself directly actualizes our intellects strengthened by "the light of glory" *(STh* I, q. 12, a. 5; ibid., ad 3). This nicely illustrates Aquinas's view of the tendency of human development: from first to second nature (e.g., from the capacity for and love of knowledge to the virtue of wisdom), from second nature to grace (from natural wisdom to the gift of wisdom), and from grace to glory (the beatific vision). Always the higher stage elevates without eliminating the lower: "But the first must ever be preserved in the second. Consequently nature must be preserved in beatitude *[natura salvetur in beatitudine]" (STh* I, q. 62, a. 7).

In the moral realm, Aquinas insists that we can achieve some goodness without grace, but will always fall short of perfection without grace (cf. *STh* **1-11,** q. 109, a. 2). We see this too in Aquinas's adoption of Macrobius's division of the four kinds of virtues: exemplary, purified, purifying, and political (naturally acquired). Political virtues such as justice "exist in man according to the condition of his nature" *(STh* 1-11, q. 61, a. 5). Aquinas later clarifies that while true, perfect moral virtue cannot be acquired by human acts without grace, virtues "productive of good works ordered to an end which does not surpass the natural capacity of man, can be acquired by human actions. And acquired in this way they can be without charity, as has happened with many pagans *fgentilibus]" (STh* **1-11,** q. 65, a. 2).[12] Grace need not start from scratch; rather, it perfects the work nature is already attempting.

III. A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE CASES AGAINST AND FOR AQUINAS

As I stated above, that Aquinas sees the moral life as the pursuit of happiness is not enough to convict him of egoism. Yet, when we find him saying things like, happiness "must so entirely satisfy man's desire that there is nothing left for him to desire" *(STh* 1-11, q. 1, a. 5) and "to desire happiness is simply to desire that one's will be wholly satisfied" *(STh* 1-11, q. 5, a. 8), we may seem forced in this direction, for this sounds very much as though Aquinas does see happiness as welfare or overall satisfaction. The impetus toward an egoistic interpretation is further strengthened by consideration of his claim that man naturally wills his own good but requires virtues such as justice or charity to will the good of others or of God (cf. *STh* **1-11,** q. 56, a. 6)-especially when we combine this with his further contention that charity as love of God follows upon our belief that God will enable us to attain happiness (cf. *STh* 1-11, q. 62, a. 4), so that even charity can seem motivated by self-interest.

[12] Here I follow Brian Shanley, O.P., "Aquinas on Pagan Virtue," *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 553-77.

I shall return to a fuller discussion of these passages, but right away, given the description of the way grace perfects rather than destroys nature, we should suspect that there is something wrong here, at least with the egoistic interpretation of the latter pair of passages. If charity is a love of God, in which God is loved as a friend and for his own sake (see *STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 1; II-II, q. 26, a. 3), and if grace in the form of charity perfects rather than destroys the nature of the will, then surely it must be the case that in orienting the will to the love of God for his own sake (and for that matter to the love of neighbor for his or her own sake) the virtue of charity is amplifying and perfecting an other-regarding tendency that is already natural to the will. As Etienne Gilson puts it:

> [For Aquinas] man naturally loves God more than himself. This love which puts God above all things is not yet charity, but the natural dilection to be perfected and fulfilled by charity. To suppose the contrary, to admit that man naturally loves himself more than God … would be to admit that grace, in order to make the love of God prevail over love of self in the soul, would have to destroy nature instead of perfecting it.[13]

It seems clear that the love under discussion here is the love of friendship, as it is slated to be perfected by charity, the highest form of the love of friendship. This suggests two points. First, we seem not to need grace, although we may need virtues like justice, to love others and to will their good; in other words, loving others for their own sake is within our natural power. Second, "natural dilection" prior to the advent of grace is not egoistic. To love another for that other's sake-especially when one loves that other more than one loves oneself-is inconsistent with egoism, which insists that the agent's overriding goal be what is good *for himself.* As Aquinas puts it, the agent "does not naturally love God for his own good, but *for God's sake."*[14]

[13] Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 282. Gilson is commenting on *STh* I, q. 60, a. 5.

[14] *STh* I, q. 60, a. 5, ad 2 (emphasis added). Aquinas is speaking here of an angel, but the context makes it clear that he thinks the same holds for human beings: In the body of the response, he had said "from natural love angel and man alike love God before themselves and

Looking back to the pair of passages cited at the beginning of this section which seem to imply that happiness, for Aquinas, consists in satisfaction, we may note the profound inconsistency of this (egoistic) interpretation with Aquinas's contention that "fault *[culpa]* is a greater evil than pain *[poena]" (STh* I, q. 48, a. 6, sc). As he goes on to explain in the body of the article, "Fault has the nature of evil more than pain has; not only more than pain of sense ... but also more than any kind of pain, thus taking pain in its most general meaning, so as to include privation of grace or glory." Failing at "being good" seems worse than being deprived of "well-being" or welfare (to return to the terms used in distinguishing perfectionism from egoism in section I). Or, sin and vice are worse than misery or even hell (if *per impossibile* one could be there without sin). This would be an odd position for an egoist to take!

That Aquinas was not an egoist may be shown by the following argument. I shall first simply set it out, and then explain Aquinas's view of human perfection, and in particular how it is not the same as welfare in the sense required for an egoistic interpretation, but does contain it as a proper part. [15]

with a greater love."

[15] Aquinas seems to use no concept just like our concept of "welfare" or "well-being." I shall be making the case that some concepts that one might think would be equivalent to "welfare" in fact are not: e.g., happiness *(beatitudo),* one's private good *(bonum privatum),* or what is good for an agent *(bonum sibi).* If I am right about this, it helps undermine any case for interpreting Aquinas as an egoist, for if he has no concept of welfare, it would be very difficult to convict him of recommending its pursuit. But I shall not be resting my case on this, for some of his concepts are close, and it is plausible to maintain that from them we could put together a "Thomistic" concept of welfare. My case instead will rest on showing that welfare thus understood is not the final end of the Thomistic agent. The concept of his that probably comes closest to "welfare" is *delectatio,* and I have seen no serious case made out that Aquinas was a hedonist. (Even Cornelius Williams's article "The Hedonism of Aquinas" *[The Thomist* 38 (1974): 257-90] does not actually argue that Aquinas was a hedonist!) It might be thought "satisfaction of the will" is the same as "welfare" in our sense. I shall later discuss at length passages in which he says things in the neighborhood, so to speak, of "satisfaction of the will," but to my knowledge the phrase itself does not appear in Aquinas's writings. He rather says things like, "happiness must completely satisfy the will." Perhaps this is close enough to say that he does have the concept, or perhaps one could argue that peace *(pax)* or repose *(quietatio)* are equivalent to that concept. In any event, the point I shall be stressing is that saying that happiness *does* satisfy the will is very different from saying that happiness *is* the satisfaction of the will. Satisfaction of the will seems to be mentioned (or almost mentioned)

(1) A doctrine is egoistic if and only if it holds that agents are to pursue their own welfare as their ultimate end (as discussed in section I above).

(2) Aquinas's doctrine holds that agents are to pursue their own perfection as their ultimate end. He writes, for example, that "all desire their own perfection *[omnia appetunt suam perfectionem]" (STh* I, q. 5, a. 1), where perfection consists in being in act, being fully what one is (cf. *STh* I, q. 4, a. 1). He ratifies this in the human case: "happiness," which is man's ultimate end, "is man's ultimate perfection *[Est enim beatitudo ultima hominis perfectio]" (STh* 1-11, q. 3, a. 2).

(3) But perfection as Aquinas understands it is not in essence the same as welfare.

(4) Thus, Aquinas's doctrine does not hold that agents are to pursue their own welfare as their ultimate end.

(5) Therefore Aquinas's doctrine is not egoistic.

The obvious question is, can this perfectionist interpretation accommodate the welfarist elements of happiness that form the basis of the egoistic interpretation sketched above (e.g., the apparent concern for satisfaction), or is Aquinas's normative theory not fully consistent? To answer this question we need to look at some of the details of Aquinas's conception of human perfection.

Aquinas tells us "the ultimate end of things is to become like God," [16] and "each thing imitates the divine goodness according to its measure" *(ScG* III, c. 20). Yet he also says that God is the ultimate end of all things *(ScG* III, c. 17; cf. *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 8), and that "man's ultimate end is an extrinsic good *[bonum extrinsecum]-God" (STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 5, ad 3). The ultimate end seems to be both God and the imitation of God appropriate to that particular imitator. And so it is. Aquinas draws a distinction between the ultimate end as object *(res, objectum)-call* this UE_0-and as the attainment of the object (or possession, use, or enjoyment *(adeptio, vel possessio, seu usus, aut fruitio ejus* rei)-call this UEA-(cf. *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 1). Creatures, Aquinas is

only as an effect of the attainment of the final end.

[16] *ScG* III, c. 19 (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles,* trans. Vernon Bourke [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975]). Cf. also *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 5, obj. 1 and ad1.

saying, attain their ultimate end of perfection (UEA) by imitating God (UE_0).

Each creature imitates God "according to its measure." Nonrational creatures imitate him by participating in some likeness of him, insofar as they exist, live and reproduce, and know (by their senses). Human beings attain their ultimate end by knowing and loving God (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 8). Now the very essence of human happiness is knowing God (I shall return to this shortly); therefore, knowing God is also imitating him, in the way appropriate to an intellectual creature such as man. Aquinas considers *(STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 5, obj. 1) the claim that happiness consists in activity of the practical intellect rather than the speculative, on the grounds that our ultimate end is to become like God, and the practical intellect is the cause of the things it thinks, as is God. Here is his response in full:

> The likening *[similitudo]* of the practical intellect to God, spoken of in the objection, is according to proportionality, that is, the practical intellect is related to what it knows as God to what He knows. But the likening *[assimilatio]* of the speculative intellect to God is according to union or representation *[unionem, vel informationem*], which is a much greater likeness. In addition, we may answer that with respect to the principal thing known, which is His essence, God has only speculative knowledge, not practical.

It is by knowing God that we become like him according to our measure, become perfect instances of ourselves.

Aquinas makes the point that our perfection lies in contemplation in another way too. He holds that our perfection lies in knowing God because perfection "must be man's highest activity *[optima operatio*]; his highest activity is that of his highest power in relation to its highest object[17] *[optimae potentiae respectu optimi objecti]"-and* that is the speculative intellect contemplating God *(STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 5).

How are delight and satisfaction, what I called the welfarist elements, to be fitted into this rather intellectual conception of beatitude? Happiness (as UEA) is essentially the contemplation of

[17] This essentially relational nature of human perfection or beatitude is also central to defending Aquinas against the broader charge of self-centeredness.

God (the UE_0), which perfects the intellect *(STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8). The delight and satisfaction of the will follow upon the intellectual attainment as a *"per se* accident" *(STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 4), such that happiness "cannot be without a concomitant delight" *(STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 1), for the will rests in the highest good when it is attained, and this repose of the will is just what delight is (cf. ibid., ad 1); peace also follows *(STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 4, ad 1). Let me stress that, although delight is in some sense a consequence of happiness, it is also a part of it (it is not simply an accident, but a per se accident). The repose of the will in something good is itself desired; the will does in fact seek to rest in the activity of contemplation: "it seeks to be at rest in the activity because that is its good" *(STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 2). We may say that the repose of the will that is delight is also desired.[18] The welfarist elements of happiness follow upon the essence of beatitude necessarily *(per se* accidents as tightly bound to the essence as powers-a kind of accident-of the soul are to its essence).

What of virtue? As we have noted, happiness for Aquinas *is* virtuous activity, in essence intellectually virtuous activity (the main virtue here being wisdom, not just natural but also the wisdom granted by grace, the gift of wisdom).[19] Also, rectitude of the will is required for happiness, not only concomitantly or as a *per se* accident, but also antecedently (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 4). Lack of moral virtue, and the inappropriate desires or fears attendant upon such a lack, would prevent an agent from fully dedicating himself to the final end. (Notice that rectitude of will involves not

[18] Cf. X *Nie. Ethic.,* lect. 6 (2036 and 2038), where Aquinas insists that we do seek pleasure as perfecting life, but also that the activity rather than the pleasure taken in it is principal.

[19] It is worth noting that the gift of wisdom is tied, not to any intellectual virtue, but to charity, and the knowledge it imparts is not abstract intellectual knowledge, but knowledge that flows from loving acquaintance with a friend (cf. *STh* 11-11, q. 45, a. 2). It is connatural knowledge involving affection as well as apprehension. Aquinas's theory of beatitude might be less intellectualist than it seems on its face. Indeed, Jacques Maritain goes so far as to attribute to Aquinas the doctrine that contemplation is not its own end, but "the most excellent of means and already united to the end," the end of a union of "loving attentiveness to God," citing in support *STh* I-II, q. 68; II-II, q. 45, a. 2; and 11-11, q. 180, a. 1 (see Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge,* trans. under Gerald Phelan [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995], 344 and 344 n. 35).

just the virtues of the will-justice, hope, charity-but also fortitude, temperance, and their associated virtues, since the passions can influence the will.)

In sum, our ultimate end (taken as UEA) is perfection, which for us as creatures is our highest activity in relation to the highest object, God. Put differently, our end is to stand in the right relation to God. It follows that our perfection involves the virtuous integration and direction of the whole person toward friendship with God; but also, or rather as a small but significant part of this, *our perfection includes our welfare.*[20] It is good to be at peace and satisfied with being good and acting well, and it is an excellence to enjoy excellence.[21] Such feelings are consequent to, not the ground for, the excellence of which they are the enjoyment. We do not see the crucial reversal made by the egoist, who does see such feelings as the ground for the value accorded to being good and acting well.

IV. OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

In this section I shall present the strongest case I can for the claim that Aquinas was an egoist of some sort. Now, the argument of the previous section makes it clear that such an interpretation cannot be vindicated. What could be maintained with much more plausibility, though, is the claim that Aquinas was inconsistent, that he waffled between perfectionism and egoism. If this claim could be established, it would then be a matter for argument which elements preponderate, how to clean up the mess, and so forth. The case for Aquinas's egoism, or at least for the presence in his moral theory of important egoistic elements, here takes the form of five different arguments; perhaps it should be seen as

[20] Or, perfection includes those things-peace, delight, well-judged satisfaction-that we would consider to be constitutive of welfare.

[21] Of contemporary virtue ethicists, Philippa Foot is particularly strong on this point (see e.g. Foot, *Natural Goodness,* 79, 98). See also Aristotle, *Nie. Ethic.* 1.8.1099a15-21 and Aquinas's commentary on this passage (I *Nie. Ethic.,* lect. 13 [157-58]). I discuss this further in "Aristotelian Well-Being: A Response to L. W. Sumner's Critique," *Utilitas* 18 (September 2006): 218-31.

"five ways" of seeing him as an egoist. In each instance Aquinas is interpreted as recommending that agents pursue what is good *for them,* their own welfare. These five ways are compatible, with some being more specific about the character of *beatitudo* (interpreted as welfare) and how it is good *for the agent* (e.g., the satisfaction argument) and others less so (e.g., the private good argument). In each case, though, I believe we would intuitively agree that an agent who followed Aquinas's (alleged) recommendation was egoistic.

The latter three of these "ways" are basically "anticipated objections" to my interpretation of Aquinas as a perfectionist, objections I have formulated based on a number of passages from Aquinas's writings that do seem, or can seem, to support an egoistic reading. The first two arguments are drawn from articles by Scott MacDonald and John Langan. I am not concerned here to offer a comprehensive assessment of MacDonald's and Langan's larger projects, with some aspects of which I am in sympathy. Instead, I draw on these articles simply to present arguments, which have been made by contemporary commentators on Aquinas, in favor of interpreting him as an egoist. As always in such cases, there is some danger that their use of certain terms, and in particular of "egoism," will not line up exactly with mine. There is some danger, then, that my dispute with these authors may turn out to be largely verbal. I believe it will become clear that Langan's use of "egoism" does line up quite closely enough with mine for a substantive dispute; with MacDonald's use there will be some question, and I shall address this issue explicitly below. In the end, I am not primarily concerned with an exegesis of Langan and MacDonald; the main function of my reference to these articles is to help me construct the strongest case I can for an egoistic interpretation of Aquinas. By responding successfully to the strongest case for egoism I shall more effectively support my own perfectionist interpretation. Following the presentation of each "way," I shall defend an alternative reading of the passages invoked that shows how they can fit quite

snugly into a nonegoistic, perfectionist understanding of Aquinas's moral theory.

A) MacDonald's Interest Argument

Scott MacDonald argues in "Egoistic Rationalism: Aquinas's Basis for Christian Morality" that Aquinas's natural teleology yields in human beings a kind of "psychological egoism." MacDonald's chief goal in this essay is to advance, as a foundation for Christian morality, an alternative to a divine command metaethics, what he calls "egoistic rationalism," and he holds up Aquinas as an exemplar of this approach. This approach is "rationalist" in that, roughly, its content is determined by, and accessible to, reason. It is "egoistic" in that it portrays human beings as seeking their own perfection or complete actuality-he calls this "Aquinas's metaethical egoism."[22] But why think this is a form of egoism? Seeking one's own perfection sounds like perfectionism. Indeed, some of MacDonald's remarks suggest that my disagreement with him may be chiefly terminological (see below). Yet others point toward a more substantive dispute; for example:

> Aquinas's natural teleology applied to human beings appears to yield a sort of psychological egoism. According to Aquinas, a human being naturally pursues (wills) its perfection or good (the human good) in virtue of the sort of soul (psyche) it has.... it seems natural to assume that what perfects a human being or what a human being's good consists in is what is in that human being's interest. Hence, Aquinas's claim can be reformulated as the claim that human beings always pursue their own interest as a matter of psychological necessity.[23]

We naturally pursue our own good, which is what is in our interest. Here our interest and what is in it are left undefined, but other remarks MacDonald makes suggest how it might be understood. He tells us that Aquinas thinks "the concept of the good is the concept of what is desirable and the concept of the complete human good, happiness, is the concept of what

[22] MacDonald, "Egoistic Rationalism," 331.

[23] Ibid., 332.

completely satisfies human desires";[24] elsewhere MacDonald speaks of Thomistic practical rationality as allowing the agent "to maximize satisfaction of her desires."[25] Such passages could be understood as interpreting Aquinas to be recommending the pursuit of our own welfare, seen in terms of our complete satisfaction. To the extent that this is right, MacDonald's interpretation will link up with arguments discussed below (subsections B and C). But we might also take phrases like "our own interest" to be synonymous with what is good *for us*, or with our private good simply (so that the exact character of that good, or of our welfare, is left unspecified)-to the extent that this is so, other passages treated below (subsections D and E) will provide some further support for his view.

However fleshed out, the pursuit of one's own interests as an overriding goal smacks of egoism. This interest argument, seemingly grounded firmly in Aquinas's natural teleology, promises to support a variety of egoistic interpretations. A closer look at the argument, however, shows that it cannot keep such promises. We can reformulate the argument thus:

Premise: All human beings naturally pursue their own perfection.
Premise: Their own perfection is what is in the interest of human beings.
Conclusion: All human beings naturally pursue their own interest.

If we take "interest" here to be synonymous with "welfare" in our sense, the conclusion means that Aquinas sees all human beings as psychological egoists, as MacDonald said. But notice that this argument is invalid. All that really follows from the premises is that all human beings pursue *what is in* their interests. The loving contemplation of God that is our perfection will completely satisfy us, and is the only thing that will. In pursuing contemplation we therefore pursue *what is in* our interest. But this is not egoistic unless we pursue perfection only *because* it is in our

[24] Ibid., 335.

[25] Scott MacDonald, "Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas's Aristotelian Moral Psychology and Anscombe's Fallacy," *The Philosophical Review* 100 (1991): 31-66, at 56.

interest (or in other words, for the sake of welfare). But, for Aquinas, we do not: We pursue perfection for its own sake: "Nor does the will seek good for the sake of repose" *(STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 2).

Three options are open to MacDonald. He could call our attention back to his remarks about satisfaction and his citation of passages like question 5, article 8 of the *Prima Secundae.*[26] He could, second, move in the direction of the private good argument.[27] These sorts of moves would make clear that the allegation is that we pursue what is in our interest *because* it is in out interest (they are addressed in the following sections). The third option would be to insist that he is using the term "egoism" differently than we are. Some passages certainly suggest this might be the case. MacDonald holds that, for Aquinas, humans do seek only their own interests, but that "their own interest is not narrowly individualistic .... Hence, when human beings seek the good of the family or the city they seek it as *part* of their own good."[28] MacDonald goes on to explain, this "does not mean that one does not seek the good of others for its own sake but only for the sake of one's own good. One can seek the constituents of one's own good for their own sakes, and also for the sake of the good of which they are constituents."[29]

Obviously, MacDonald is not trying to answer my questions in my terms, but I do think he has left unresolved questions about how to understand some of his claims. It could turn out that my disagreement with MacDonald is essentially terminological. But even if so, it is an important one as such disagreements go. If nothing else, labeling Thomistic ethics a kind of "Egoistic Rationalism" seems an unpromising way to make it inviting to contemporary Christian philosophers (one goal of MacDonald's paper)-"Rational Perfectionism" or even "Agent-Relative Perfectionism" strike me as more inviting and more accurate, both

[26] MacDonald, "Egoistic Rationalism," 335, 351 n. 20; MacDonald, "Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning," 55 n. 45.

[27] MacDonald, "Egoistic Rationalism," 331-32 could be read in this way.

[28] Ibid., 339.

[29] Ibid., 352 n. 35.

on this third understanding of MacDonald and on what I think is the right understanding of Aquinas.

B) Langan's Fulfillment Argument

In "Egoism and Morality in the Theological Teleology of Thomas Aquinas," John Langan interprets Aquinas as "a long-range supernatural egoist" who "treats morality as a means to attaining an ultimate good."[30] Part of his brief is to show how such an egoism can ground an approach to life that has recognizably moral and even ascetic contours, and to suggest that these contours, constituting Aquinas's normative ethics (which occupies the "space between" its egoistic foundation and its theological *telos)*[31] may be of interest even to those who reject Aquinas's egoism and theology. My concern will be with his argument for attributing the egoistic foundation to Aquinas's ethics in the first place.

Langan bases this attribution on his interpretation of Aquinas's notion of the final end. He quotes Aquinas's remark that "All desire their complete fulfillment, which, as we have noted, is what the final end means" *(STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 7), and goes on to speak of "the condition of complete fulfillment or satisfaction of a person's desires,"[32] clearly taking fulfillment to be the same thing as satisfaction. Key to his argument is his reading of Aquinas's distinction between the ultimate end as object and as attainment: "a) as a definite thing or condition or activity the attainment and realization of which is completely satisfactory, b) as the complete satisfaction of one's desires."[33]

Along these lines, Langan says of Aquinas that "he shares Hobbes's understanding of good as the object of appetite or desire,"[34] and that "Hobbes and Aquinas both hold that all human persons . . . desire the satisfaction of their desires and a life of

[30] Langan, "Egoism and Morality," 424.
[31] Ibid., 424-25.
[32] Ibid., 413.
[33] Ibid., 412-13.
[34] Ibid., 421.

sure contentment. "[35] In my terminology, the ultimate end for both is welfare. All that distinguishes them is the kind of natural inclinations they attribute to human beings[36] and the fact that Aquinas thinks that there is in fact an object (God) which can satisfy our desires, and turns out to be such that we must rectify our will (or, become morally good) in order to attain it.[37] As important as these differences are metaphysically speaking, they do not alter the basic goal of the agent, which is welfare in a roughly Sumnerian sense of complete satisfaction. Thus does Aquinas turn out to be some sort of foundational ("long-range") egoist for whom moral concerns are ultimately instrumental.

Langan's interpretation of Aquinas is in the end insupportable, due to three related mistakes that he makes.[38] The most important is his claim that Hobbes and Aquinas share an "understanding of good as the object of appetite. "[39] Both agree that the good is the object of appetite, but that is as far as their agreement goes. Hobbes thinks that we call something good because we desire it, not because it is inherently valuable. For Aquinas we desire something because we think it good: "a thing is desirable only insofar as it is perfect" *(STh* I, q. 5, a. 1; see also I *Nie. Ethic.*, lect. 1 [9]). Aquinas is diametrically opposed to Hobbes on this point. This sheds light on Langan's other mistakes, for they too tend to treat desire and its satisfaction as primary when they are actually secondary to goodness.

The second mistake is the following. Langan writes, "Hobbes and Aquinas both hold that all human persons . . . desire the satisfaction of their desires and a life of sure contentment. "[40] Yes, but not in the same way. For Hobbes, desire satisfaction and contentment, and the quieting of the fear of death, are together the essence of the felicity we seek (without real hope). This is not

[35] Ibid., 420-21.

[36] Ibid., 423.

[37] Ibid., 421.

[38] Langan himself admits "there are moves available to Thomas and his defenders that would open the way to a non-egoistic interpretation of his views" (ibid., 425).

[39] Ibid., 421.

[40] Ibid., 420-21.

the case for Aquinas, according to whom we do seek, to be sure, the satisfaction of our desires and the resulting contentment, but we do not seek these things exclusively or even primarily. Rather we seek first perfection and then these things insofar as they are part of our perfection (see above). We desire things, even our own satisfaction and contentment, because they are good. There can be no good argument from this superficial agreement with Hobbes to the conclusion that Aquinas is an egoist.

Langan's third (closely related) mistake lies in his interpretation of Aquinas's distinction between the ultimate end as object and as attainment, in terms of "a) as a definite thing or condition or activity the attainment and realization of which is completely satisfactory, [and] b) as the complete satisfaction of one's desires."[41] Langan is paraphrasing rather than quoting here, and does not give a citation, so it is difficult to know just where he thinks Aquinas says this. Aquinas draws a distinction between two senses of the ultimate end (which we have called UE_0 and UEA) in a number of places in the *Prima Secundae* (e.g., q. 1, a. 7; q. 1, a. 8; q. 3, a. 1; and q. 5, a. 8, with the last one coming closest to Langan's formulation). Langan had been talking about question 1, article 5, where the distinction is not drawn, but he shortly afterward does cite question 1, article 7, where the distinction is cast in terms of the notion *(ratio)* of the ultimate end (UEA), and that in which the notion is realized (UE_0). Langan quotes Aquinas as saying there, with regard to the UEA: "All desire their complete fulfillment, which, as we have noted, is what the final end means *(est ratio ultimi finis)*."[42] I believe the translation is his own, but at any rate I should like to quarrel with it. The word translated as "fulfillment" -which seemingly has the sort of connotations needed by one who is trying to establish that Aquinas understands the UEA as desire satisfaction (Langan goes on to speak of "the condition of complete fulfillment or satisfaction of a person's desires" as though the disjuncts were equivalent)[43]-is *perfectio,* which does not have these

[41] Ibid., 412-13.

[42] Ibid., 413.

[43] Ibid.

connotations. Langan's argument is that in seeking the attainment of the ultimate end the Thomistic agent seeks satisfaction, and therefore is an egoist of some stripe. But the argument falls flat because the UEA is not satisfaction, but is that perfect activity which will, as a matter of fact, satisfy.[44]

C) The Satisfaction Argument

These arguments drawn from Langan and MacDonald do not successfully convict Aquinas of egoism. Still, it is possible to cite texts supporting the idea that Thomistic agents pursue their own satisfaction, and that can seem to call for an egoistic interpretation. Langan and MacDonald cite some, but I do not think they exploit these and other passages to the fullest extent. Here are some of the starkest. Our ultimate end, happiness, "must so entirely satisfy man's desire that there is nothing left for him to desire" *(STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 5). Again, "Each thing desires its own fulfillment and therefore desires for its ultimate end a good that perfects and completes it" (ibid.). Perhaps most damning, "Hence to desire happiness is simply to desire that one's will be wholly satisfied, and this everyone desires" *(STh* I-II, q. 5, a. 8). Moreover, Aquinas indicates that the ultimate end understood as object (money, or whatever object an agent takes as his ultimate end) is ordered to the agent's possession and enjoyment of that object; in this sense the agent uses even the ultimate end (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 16, a. 3; and ibid., ad 1 and 2). Thus the ultimate end in terms of attainment is the satisfying repose of the will in a fitting object, and so morality is a means to the ultimate end of the agent's own welfare (here again understood in terms of complete satisfaction), a useful instrument for the enlightened egoist-so Langan and {perhaps) MacDonald argue, and so many passages in the *Summa* seem to indicate.

These are tough passages for the perfectionist. The gist of the reply, however, should be clear from what I have said above:

[44] I think that Langan gets the first horn of his distinction wrong too: his description of the first horn includes both horns of Aquinas's distinction, object and activity. In *STh* 1-11, q. 3, a. 1 and 1-11, q. 3, a. 2, we see that the UE_0 is God, and the UEA an activity.

perfection includes welfare within it, so of course it will satisfy, delight, and so forth. Still, the passages cited demand individual attention. The claim that happiness must completely satisfy man's desire *(STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 5) looks to be giving an account of the essence of happiness. But this would be odd, given that Aquinas later *(STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 5) states explicitly that the essence of happiness consists in an activity of the speculative intellect. Indeed, close attention to the context of the former passage shows that it is not so. Aquinas has just said that each desires a good that perfects him; the passage cited in the objection is preceded by *"Oportet igitur"*—**it** is *therefore* necessary that happiness completely satisfy man's desire and so forth. The satisfaction is necessary for happiness because it is a consequence of it, as heat is needed for fire (as Aquinas explicitly says of pleasure *[STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 1]).[45]

The other passage quoted from question 1, article 5, in which Aquinas says that each "desires its own fulfillment" and for this reason desires a good that "perfects and completes" him is easily dealt with, along the same lines as we dealt (in the previous section) with another passage involving the term "fulfillment." The objection is based on a misunderstanding of the term; what Aquinas actually says is that each desires his own perfection *(suam perfectionem)* and thus desires a good that will in fact perfect him.

What of the passage from question 16, article 3, suggesting that the UE_0 is ordered to the agent's use and enjoyment of it? Aquinas points out that the end of the miser is not money simply, but his possession of it. In the same way, we cannot speak of a man aiming at God, full stop, as though he were a clay pigeon. The man must be aiming at a certain relationship with God-namely, the relationship that perfects the man, making him to be as he should. God is willed in the willing of a certain relationship with him, and so in a sense God is willed as "part" of a whole (man in the right relation to God). But a part is for the sake of the whole, a (constitutive) means to the whole, and thus

[45] See also *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 4, ad 1 where peace, which involves satisfaction, receives a similar treatment: peace is consequent to happiness "inasmuch as man is at peace when he has attained the ultimate end, all his desires being at rest."

the part is "applied to" the whole or "used" in the sense Aquinas has in mind here. The language he employs in this article would be unfortunate, and would have to be judged very poorly chosen, had he been concerned here with fending off charges of egoism (he speaks of possession and enjoyment of the UE_0, and so forth). But this was not his concern. We-or at any rate the blessed-do enjoy God, and do in some nonexclusive sense possess him, and Aquinas has no desire to hide this. But we also serve, contemplate, worship, and love him as a friend. Indeed, as we saw above, we love God for his own sake, and more than we love ourselves. All of this is part of the "right relationship to God" that perfects rational creatures, but not all of this can be mentioned in every article in which the last end is mentioned.

What of Aquinas's claim that "to desire happiness is simply to desire that one's will be wholly satisfied"? Here is the context:

> The common notion of happiness is that it is a perfect or complete good, as we have said. Now *since* the object of the will is the good, the perfect good for a man is that which wholly satisfies the will.[46] *Hence* to desire happiness is simply to desire that one's will be wholly satisfied, and this everyone desires. *(STh* I-II, q. 5, a. 8 [emphasis added]).

This is a different spin on the argument from that which we find in question 1, article 7, where Aquinas argues that all desire happiness from the premise that all desire their complete perfection *(omnes appetunt suam perfectionem adimpleri).* The argument here *(STh* I-II, q. 5, a. 8) is this. Good is the natural object of the will and thus a perfect good perfectly satisfies the will. Happiness or beatitude is a perfect good and thus will perfectly satisfy the will. *Therefore* to desire happiness is at the same time, *per se* accidentally, to desire the complete satisfaction of one's will.

[46] With the Dominican Fathers, I say "that which" where Oesterle has "whatever" (which I find potentially misleading). The Latin reads: "Cum autem bonum sit objectum voluntatis, perfectum bonum est alicujus, *quad* totaliter ejus voluntati satisfacit." Aquinas's point is that the perfect good satisfies the will because it is the will's natural object, not that the perfect good is the will's object because it satisfies-it is "that which" *(quad)* satisfies, not "whatever" *(quidquid)* satisfies.

As we saw above, the repose of the will in something good is itself desired; the will seeks to rest in good activity: "it seeks to be at rest in the activity because that is its good" *(STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 2). But in saying this Aquinas cannot mean what the objection requires him to mean, namely, that this repose or satisfaction is all that we desire at the ground-floor level. By saying that to desire happiness is "simply," or better and more literally "nothing other than" *(nihil aliud est),* to desire that the will be satisfied, he must mean that the desire for happiness is not other than the desire that the will be satisfied because the former *contains* the latter, and satisfaction of the former *entails* satisfaction of the latter. He cannot mean that the desire for happiness simply *is* the desire that the will be satisfied, for this would blatantly contradict other things he had already said. "It is impossible that the primary thing desired, which is the end, be the act itself of willing" *(STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2); even more tellingly, "the will rests in something only because of the goodness of that in which it rests .... Nor does the will seek good for the sake of repose *[Nee voluntas quaerit bonum propter quietationem],* for if this were the case the very act of the will would be the end, which has already been disproved" *(STh* I-II, q. 4, a. 2). So despite appearances, this passage, like the others, provides no ammunition for the charge of egoism.

D) The Private-Good Argument

If the case cannot be made out that Aquinas understands beatitude in terms of satisfaction, another group of passages may still seem to lend some support to MacDonald's more generic description of the final end as whatever is in the agent's interest. For example, Aquinas seemingly endorses Aristotle's claim in the *Ethics* that even in leaving virtuous actions to friends, "the virtuous person takes what is better for himself *[accipit sibi id quad est melius]"* (IX *Nie. Ethic.,* lect. 9 [1883]). Earlier Aquinas had followed Aristotle by saying that "the lovable for each man is that which is good for him *[ita unicuique amabile est illud quad*

est sibi bonum]" (VIII *Nie. Ethic.,* lect. 2 [1554]). And as I noted above, when speaking of the necessity of grace Aquinas writes of "the appetite of his [man's] rational will, which, unless it is cured by God's grace, follows its private good *[bonum privatum]" (STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 3). Similarly, as also noted, he says the good of another exceeds what is proportionate to the will, so that virtues such as justice and charity are needed; but the will naturally desires one's own good *(bonum proprium)* (see *STh* I-II, q. 56, a. 6; ibid., obj. 1 and ad 1). All of this sounds much in tune with the initial, generic description of egoism as the agent's overriding commitment to the attainment of what is good *for him,* his own welfare, however we may go on to define that.

Now, it is undoubtedly true that, for Aquinas, the agent seeks what is good for him (as he has it, *"illud quad est sibi bonum").* But the question must be, "good *for him"* in egoistic fashion, or *"good* for him" in a perfectionist fashion (i.e., being good in the way appropriate to him given his unique situation in creation)? Alternatively, is the emphasis on the *sibi* or the *bonum?* The passage from the commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* cited in question 3, article 4 gives us a clue, for there Aquinas goes on to say that "every faculty tends to the object proportionate to itself. Thus everyone's vision sees what is visible to it *[sibi visibile]"* (VIII *Nie. Ethic.,* lect. 3 [1554]). The same reflexive pronoun, *sibi,* is used, and this helps make its meaning clear: the object sought is one that is fitting for the seeker. We do not see what is visible *for us,* as though we possess some exclusive vision; we see what is *visible,* for us-the "for us" or *sibi* here indicating that our vision is limited in some way. In the same way we seek what is *good,* for us.[47] We are creatures located in a particular place and time, and the good with which we can enter into the right relation (in this life, at least) is circumscribed by our finitude. We find this ratified in the *Summa:* arguing that the will wills only the good (as it is known), Aquinas holds that the appetite tends toward something only if it is "like or suitable to it *[simile, et conveniens]" (STh* I-II,

[47] The same reading should be applied to IX *Nie. Ethic.,* lect. 9: each agent takes what is "better for himself"-i.e., what is *"better,* for himself."

q. 8, a. 1). The emphasis is on the *bonum,* as required by a perfectionist interpretation.

What of the "private good" language? Aquinas's admission that without grace the will tends to its private good seems to support the egoistic interpretation. But again, his insistence that grace perfects rather than destroys nature should raise our suspicions about this interpretation. A careful reading of the cited passages shows that they do not support it. We are more focused on ourselves than we should be, certainly, but what sort of focus is this? Even in this disordered case (which is now "natural" to us), the goal remains perfection rather than (just) welfare. The disorder lies in the way we now seek perfection, and the disordered way most relevant to the present argument is that, through ignorance and pride, we seek our perfection as individuals, for example, at the expense of the family, or as family members at the expense of the community. It is in this sense that the will seeks "its own good" *(STh* I-II, q. 56, a. 6) or "follows its private good" *(STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 3).

This is nicely illustrated by an example Aquinas gives *(STh* I-II, q. 19, a. 10). A judge justly wills a certain criminal to be executed. Meanwhile his wife and son will him not to be executed "because it is an evil for the family"; Aquinas calls the criminal's survival a "private domestic good *[bonum privatum familiae]."* The wife's desire is private, relative to the good of the state, but it is not selfish-she is worried about the family's good, not just her own welfare. Indeed Aquinas actually calls her will good, provided that, he goes on to qualify, she "refers it to the common good as an end." However much she may lament the judge's ruling, she must yield to it (and not, e.g., try to "spring" her husband). And, the will must ultimately be ruled by the common good that God wills for the universe.[48] This much is clear: The will can be disordered in willing the private good, but the disorder need not be one of selfishness. Indeed, the virtues of the will such as justice and charity do not reorient the will from welfare to perfection (as

[48] Cf. *STh* I, q. 49, a. 3, where Aquinas clarifies that "the goodness of anything" depends upon "what it is in itself, and on its order to the whole universe, wherein every part has its own perfectly ordered place."

the objection supposes), but from partial to full perfection-from the person's perfection *qua* individual to his or her perfection *qua* member of an ordered hierarchy of societies (family, local community, state, universe). Virtues are in some sense the forerunners of grace;[49] they too perfect nature, or at least tend toward its perfection. Aquinas makes just this point at the outset of the article from which the second passage cited in the objection is drawn: "habits perfect powers" *(STh* I-II, q. 56, a. 6; see also I-II, q. 55, a. 1). The point is ratified when Aquinas insists that we have a natural inclination to live in society (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2); justice is simply the virtue that perfects this inclination. In saying that the good of others exceeds what is proportionate to the will, Aquinas must mean only that this natural inclination stands in need of development. Thus, the private-good argument fails to show that Aquinas's ethical theory is egoistic.

E) The Order-of-Virtues Argument

Aquinas's insistence that charity is the form and root of all true virtues (e.g., in *STh* I-II, q. 62, a. 4) and that charity involves loving God above all things and neighbor as self present a stumbling block to any egoistic interpretation of Aquinas. Indeed I have drawn on this consideration several times to suggest that, since the life of grace is not egoistic, the life of nature is not either. A final objection seeks to turn the tables, maintaining in effect that the life of nature is egoistic, and so we should expect to find that the life of grace is as well. Furthermore (it is objected), we *do* find this when we attend to how human beings reach the high plateau of charity. We begin by believing with faith that God will enable us to attain happiness, then we come to hope for this good from him, and only then do we come to love him with charity (see *STh* I-II, q. 62, a. 4). Thus it seems that even charity is motivated by self-interest. In this interpretation, happiness is equated to welfare, which itself is left unspecified.

[49] On this point see Shanley, "Aquinas on Pagan Virtue," 572-77.

There are three points to be made in response. First, whatever the motivation that leads us to become charitable, we do after all become so. This is to say, in part, that we come to love God for his own sake and more than we love ourselves (see *STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 1; II-II, q. 26, a. 3). So, even if we did start out as egoists, we seem to end up otherwise. Given this, we can fall back on Gilson's point that this would be odd, for grace would seem in this case to destroy or replace nature, and also the earlier grace of hope.

Happily, and second, this is not so. The objection misunderstands the character of hope, for "the proper and principal object of hope is eternal happiness" *(STh* II-II, q. 17, a. 2). But as we have seen, happiness or beatitude is, for Aquinas, not welfare but perfection. We hope in God because he perfects us: "we derive from God both knowledge of truth and the attainment of perfect goodness *[adeptio perfectae bonitatis]";* God is the principle of perfect goodness in us *(in nobis principium perfectae bonitatis) (STh* II-II, q. 17, a. 6).

Third, although hope leads to charity in part for the reason stated in the objection (as Aquinas says, one who hopes for good from God is set on fire with love for him *(accenditur ad amandum Deum [STh* II-II, q. 17, a. 8]), it should be noted that charity is itself part of the perfection hoped for (charity is first in the order of perfection, and the most excellent of all the virtues; see *STh* ibid.; II-II, q. 23, a. 6). Gratitude and love of friendship for a benefactor, as well as the gracious acceptance of the gift, are part of standing in the right relation to the benefactor-in this case God.[50] Our perfection consists in standing, as creatures, in the right relation to God: part of the grace we hope for just is to be able, sincerely, wholeheartedly, to love God more than we love ourselves. The progression in virtue from hope to charity, then, in no way shows that Aquinas's ethical theory is egoistic.

We can get at this point another way. Aquinas notes that "the movement of love has a twofold tendency": first, we love

[50] Macintyre makes a similar point, on the natural level, in his discussion of the "virtues of receiving;" (cf. Macintyre, *Dependent Rational Animals,* chap. 10, esp. 126-27).

someone with the love of friendship *(amor amacitiae)* and thus wish good to him; second, we love some good thing with the love of desire *(amor concupiscentiae)* for that person *(STh* I-II, q. 26, a. 4). Although in this passage Aquinas indicates that the love of friendship may be directed toward oneself or another, if we combine this passage with the passage under consideration *(STh* I-II, q. 62, a. 4), we face another version of the argument that we begin loving only ourselves as friends and loving all other things only for ourselves, and only later come to love others with a love of friendship when they promise us good things (as hope begets charity). But although Aquinas often speaks of concupiscence as a principle of sin (see, e.g., *STh* I-II, q. 77, aa. 4 and 5), it is a natural appetitive principle and is not disordered in itself. Aquinas later says that "the concupiscible regards as proper to it the notion of good, as something pleasant to the senses and *suitable to nature [delectabile secundum sensum, et conveniens naturae]."*[51] And as we saw above (section III), delight follows upon, is secondary to, what perfects nature. Concupiscence tends not only to delight but principally to perfection, in the sense of standing in a right or fitting relation to some good. To bring this back around to hope and charity, we might say that hope perfects the will in its capacity as the seat of *amor concupiscentiae,* charity in its capacity as seat of *amor amacitiae.*[52] This is perfectly consistent with the argument of the foregoing paragraphs that what we hope for is perfection because concupiscence is not limited to love of pleasure (or even, more broadly, to what is good *for the agent,* to welfare). The *amor concupiscentiae* is initially self-regarding, but it is essentially perfectionist rather than merely egoistic, and it is of its own nature apt to open up into other-regardingness (as we saw Aquinas point out in *STh* I-II, q. 62, a. 4).

[51] *STh* I, q. 82, a. 5 (emphasis added). Aquinas makes this remark about the sensitive appetite, not because he thinks the will different in this respect, but because he thinks that since the will regards the good under its common notion it is not diversified into distinct concupiscible and irascible powers, as is the sense appetite, which is diversified by different notions of particular goods.

[52] See his discussion, at *STh* II-II, q. 17, a. 8, of charity and hope as, respectively, "perfect" and "imperfect" forms of love.

V. CONCLUSION

In saying that "all desire their own perfection" Aquinas is clearly a perfectionist, and none of the objections succeed in showing otherwise. I spoke in the introductory section of fitting the odd pieces into a coherent structure, and I hope I have succeeded in doing this. But putting things this way is unfair to Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologiae* is, after all, a coherent structure already. It can look incoherent, or at least in need of serious tidying up and clarification of the sort I have undertaken here, because we make assumptions that he did not. After Hobbes, Kant, and Sidgwick, we tend to see selfishness, the inordinate desire for one's own welfare, as the root of all evil. But for Aquinas, the first principle of sin is not selfishness but pride.[53] Some passages strike us as clearly perfectionist, others as obviously egoistic (I chose many of the passages cited in sections IV.C-IV.E because for a long time they struck me that way), because we have largely lost sight of the old idea, almost universally accepted by moralists from Plato through Aquinas, that perfection includes welfare, or, being good includes well-being. The story of how this changed is a fascinating one involving such characters as Anselm and especially Duns Scotus, but it cannot be told here.[54] For the moment, I can conclude that, for virtue ethicists struggling today to put the two pieces back together, Aquinas can be an invaluable help-and we need not be put off by allegations of egoism.[55]

[53] See Paul Weithman, "Thomistic Pride and Liberal Vice," *The Thomist* 60 (1996): 241-74, for a penetrating discussion of Aquinas's account of pride. It is revealing that Aquinas identifies pride (which involves self-centeredness but not, essentially, selfishness) with both the inordinate desire for excellence (that part of perfection which involves excelling others), and with inordinate self-love. That is, he sees self-love not in terms of desire merely for one's own welfare, but for one's own perfection (see e.g. *STh* II-II, q. 162, a. 1, ad2; I-II, q. 84, a. 2, ad3).

[54] I try to tell an important part of this story in "Angelic Sin in Aquinas and Scotus and the Genesis of Some Central Objections to Contemporary Virtue Ethics," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 79-125.

[55] I would like to thank an anonymous referee for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

The Thomist 71 (2007): 609-31

THE MORAL STATUS OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF PRACTICAL REASON IN THOMAS'S NATURAL-LAW THEORY

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IN QUESTION 94, ARTICLE 2 of the *Prima Secundae,* Thomas Aquinas gives the following well-known formulation of the first principle of practical reason: "Bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum" ("Good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided"). [1] Though apparently to the point, this statement is anything but straightforward. The crux of the problem is what exactly Thomas means by *bonum* and *malum.* Does he mean "moral good" and "moral evil," or does he mean something more generic, "good" and "evil" taken in their widest sense? If he means the former, then the first principle of practical reason amounts to a moral imperative, a command to do and pursue morally good things and to avoid morally bad things; if the latter, then it means something else.[2]

[1] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes,* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminister, Md.: Christian Classics, 1981). All quotations of the *Summa* are from this edition.

[2] One possible alternative, championed by the so-called new natural-law theorists, is that the first principle of practical reason is a prescriptive principle of practical rationality having nothing to do with morality so that practical rationality in itself is neutral with respect to ends. "[T]he first principle of practical reason hardly can be understood in the first instance as an imperative. As we have seen, it is a self-evident principle in which reason prescribes the first condition of its own practical office" (Germain G. Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa theologiae,* 1-2, Question 94, Article 2," *Natural Law Forum* 10 [1965]: 182). "Aquinas, Grisez argues, did not propose his first principle of practical reason as a moral imperative. Rather, Aquinas supposed that such a principle controls

The main purpose of this article will be to argue that *bonum* and *ma/um* should be taken in their moral sense. For lack of a better term, this view will be referred to as the imperativist interpretation. The first section will be used to touch upon an important criticism. Viewed against the backdrop of this criticism, it will be easier to see the essential features of the imperativist interpretation. In order to provide the philosophical setting for Thomas's discussion of the first principle of practical reason, the second section will be devoted to providing a general overview of the teaching found in the body of question 94, article 2. In the third section, an argument in favor of the imperativist interpretation will be presented. The last section will be taken up with a defense of the imperativist interpretation against the criticism laid out in the first section.

At stake in the dispute between the imperativist interpretation and its critics is more than the moral status of the first principle

all coherent practical thinking-whether morally good or evil. 'Good,' as Grisez understands Aquinas's formulation, refers not only to what is morally good, but to whatever within human power can be understood as intelligibly worthwhile; 'evil' refers to any privation of intelligible goods. Interpreted in this way, the principle neither presupposes a knowledge of right and wrong nor, *a fortiori*, enjoins us to choose the morally upright course of action. The work done by the first principle is more primitive. It states a condition of any coherent practical thinking, viz., that one's reasoning be directed toward some end that is pursuable by human action. Even morally wicked choices, to the extent that they are intelligible, meet this condition (although, as we shall see not so well as morally upright choices). Consider, for example, a choice that treats another person unfairly. To the extent that such a choice has an intelligible point, it will be consistent with the first principle of practical reason, despite its immorality. Understood as a directive, the first principle is weak: It requires only coherence, not full moral rectitude" (Robert P. George, *In Defense of Natural Law* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 37). A controversial view, the new natural-law interpretation has been much debated. For representative articles, see in addition to the works quoted above the following: Ralph Mclnerny, "The Principles of Natural Law," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 25 (1980): 1-15; John Finnis and Germain Grisez, "The Basic Principles of Natural Law: A Reply to Ralph Mclnerny," *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 26 (1981): 21-31; Janice L. Schultz, "Is-Ought: Prescribing and a Present Controversy," *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 1-23; Brian V. Johnstone, "The Structures of Practical Reason: Traditional Theories and Contemporary Questions," *The Thomist* 50 (1986): 417-46; Russell Bittinger ,*A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Germain Grisez, "A Critique of Russell Hittinger's Book, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory," NewScholasticism* 62 (1988): 438-66; Germain Grisez, "The Structures of Practical Reason: Some Comments and Clarifications," *The Thomist* 52 (1988): 269-91.

of practical reason. It is the very horizon of human responsibility. Do freedom and intelligence place every human action within the horizon of the ethical or are there human actions that fall outside it? Hanging in the balance is not only a proper understanding of Thomas's natural-law theory but an adequate appreciation of the fact that every choice is a hinge on which our lives may turn radically for the better or the worse.

I. A CRITICISM OF THE IMPERATIVIST INTERPRETATION

Of all the criticisms that could be leveled against the imperativist interpretation, perhaps the most compelling is based on the observation that some, if not most, of our deliberations, decisions, and choices are made without a thought being given to their morality. Decisions about what to eat for breakfast, when to schedule a meeting, or where to go for dinner would seem to have nothing at all to do with morality. But if this is so, then the first principle of practical reason cannot be a moral imperative.

This objection becomes even more pointed when applied to choices of a patently immoral cast, since immoral choices would appear to be impossible on the imperativist view. As a prominent critic of the imperativist interpretation has argued, "if the first principle of practical reason were Do *morally good acts,* then morally bad acts would fall outside the order of practical reason."[3] There could be no such thing as moral responsibility for wicked deeds since these would fall outside the ambit of practical reason. As such, they would be on the same level as the actions of a madman, in no way freely chosen. But since Thomas considers

[3] Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason," 189. "Not only virtuous and self-restrained rnen, but also vicious rnen and backsliders make practical judgments. Indeed, if evildoers lacked practical judgment they could not engage in human action at all. It follows that practical judgments made in evil action nevertheless fall under the scope of the first principle of the natural law, and the word 'good' in this principle must refer somehow to deceptive and inadequate human goods as well as to adequate and genuine ones" (ibid., 187). "[I]f 'good' denoted only moral goods, either wrong practical judgments could in no way issue from practical reason or the formula we are examining would not in reality express the first principle of practical reason" (ibid.). For further discussion of Grisez's views on this matter by an important new natural-law theorist, see George, *In Defense of Natural Law,* 36-42.

human beings to be capable of sinning, of choosing freely and intelligently to act wickedly, "the first principle must govern the practical reasoning of people who do evil,"[4] not just those who do good. As such, the first principle of practical reason cannot be limited to commanding us to make morally good choices and avoid morally bad ones. If it were, no one could ever freely and rationally choose or intend to do evil. *Bonum* and *malum*, the objection concludes, must therefore be taken in a sense wider than the moral.

In what follows, I hope to show that this criticism is mistaken, not only because the imperativist reading corresponds exactly to Thomas's understanding of the first principle of practical reason, but because this criticism does not provide an adequate account of deliberation and choice.

II. A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* I-II, Q. 94, A. 2

Although the article in question contains Thomas's most mature treatment of the first principle of practical reason, he manages to say just enough there to establish the broad outlines of an important doctrine without saying enough to avoid controversy concerning some of its essential details.[5] In the interest of clarity, I shall begin by stating what is more or less clear and unambiguous about the teaching contained in the article before taking a closer look at the passages that make it so difficult to say exactly what *bonum* and *malum* mean in this context.

In this article, Thomas asks whether the natural law contains several precepts or just one. The article comes in the only question in the entire treatise on law (*STh* I-II, qq. 90-108) devoted to natural law. The question posed in article 2 flows logically from the answer given to the question posed in article 1

[4] Finnis and Grisez, "The Basic Principles of Natural Law: A Reply to Ralph Mcinerny," 27. In "The Principles of Natural Law," Mcinerny also challenges the new natural-law interpretation of *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2. However, he argues along different lines to the conclusion that the first principle of practical reason is a moral imperative.

[5] See n. 2 above for more on the controversy.

about natural law and its relation to habit. There, Thomas argues that natural law, although not a habit in the strict sense of being "that by which one acts," may be said to be a habit in an analogous sense since it is by means of habit that the precepts of the natural law are possessed by rational men when they are not explicitly thinking of them. Granted this conclusion, one might wonder just how many precepts the natural law contains, the question posed in article 2.

Thomas begins his response in article 2 by saying that the first precepts of the natural law are to practical reason as the first principles of demonstration are to the speculative intellect since both sets of principles are self-evident *(per se nota).* A proposition may be said to be self-evident in two ways: in itself *(secundum se)* and with respect to us *(quoad nos).* What makes a proposition self-evident in itself is that the meaning or intelligibility *(ratio)* of the predicate is contained in the meaning of the subject. If the definition of the subject of a self-evident proposition is unknown to us, we shall fail to apprehend its truth. Although the proposition will be self-evident in itself, it will not be self-evident to us. Propositions such as "Every whole is greater than its part" and "Things equal to another are equal to each other" are self-evident in themselves and to all because everyone, educated or not, can grasp the intelligibility of their terms and therefore their truth. Other propositions, however, contain terms that are not readily apprehended by all because they require much study to be known. As an example, Thomas gives the proposition "An angel is not circumscriptively in a place," which though self-evident in itself *(secundum se),* is self-evident not to all but only to the educated.

In the speculative intellect, the first self-evident proposition is the principle of noncontradiction. This is so, Thomas explains, because the first concept to enter the speculative intellect is the concept of a thing precisely as that which has being *(ens).* In apprehending this concept (and hence at least some of its intelligibility), the speculative intellect naturally grasps the truth that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the

same respect. In the case of the practical intellect, the first self-evident proposition is the principle that good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided. This is because the first concept apprehended by the practical intellect is the concept of the good understood as that for which all things strive. In grasping this concept, the intellect also grasps the self-evident truth of the first principle of practical reason. It does so because the intelligibility of that which is to be done and pursued is seen to belong to the concept of goodness *(bonum),* and the intelligibility of that which is to be avoided is seen to belong to the concept of evil *(malum),* the contrary of goodness.

Reason is able to function in a practical capacity precisely because it grasps the good under the formality of "that for which all things strive." *AB* Thomas puts it:

> Now as "being" is the first thing that falls under the apprehension simply, so "good" is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action: since every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good. [6]

It is because reason apprehends goods under the formality of ends that it has a practical as well as a theoretical mode of operation. This apprehension is the spark that gets the whole decision-making process going. It is also the root and stem of the natural law, since from it we proceed directly to a judgment whose product in addition to being the first principle of practical reason is also the first precept of the natural law.

Having shown that practical reason is grounded in the first principle of practical reason, Thomas is now in a position to argue that the natural law comprises more than one precept, a conclusion that follows from the fact that human beings naturally apprehend more than one thing as good and therefore more than one thing as an end, that is, as something to be done and pursued.

He begins the argument by distinguishing three kinds of natural inclination. Each comprises a number of specific inclinations which man experiences by nature, inclinations to

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

pursue human goods.[7] To the first ("first" because common to all things) belong natural inclinations for goods that belong to man merely by virtue of his being a substance. Corresponding to these inclinations are precepts concerning all those things that are necessary for preserving and defending life, such as the precept commanding us to care for our bodily health and to defend ourselves against disease and violent force. To the second kind belong natural inclinations for goods that belong to man by virtue of his having an animal nature. Corresponding to these inclinations are precepts concerning things nature teaches all animals to do, such as to propagate their species and to educate their offspring. To the third kind belong natural inclinations for goods that belong to man by virtue of his having a rational nature, such as living in society with others and the knowledge of the truth about God. Corresponding to these inclinations are such precepts as to avoid offending those with whom we must live and to shun ignorance.

The moral status of these multiple precepts appears to be bound up with the moral status of the first precept of the natural law.[8] If that precept is a moral imperative, then each of the natural inclinations experienced by man will result in the apprehension of a self-evident moral precept. If it is not, however, we shall have to look elsewhere for the moral law. In the following section, I shall attempt to show that the first precept of the natural law, and therefore the first principle of practical reason, is a moral imperative commanding us to do and pursue only goods that are compatible with moral uprightness as well as to avoid every evil that is not.

[7] "Natural law precepts relating to such goods must envisage them as human goods: the precept is a directive of reason as to how we should pursue such goods. Thus goods which are not peculiar to men come to be constituents of the human good insofar as they come under the sway of the distinctive mark of human agent, reason. Sex is a human good not just as such, but as engaged in consciously and purposively and responsibly. That is how it becomes a human evil too; there is no way in which humans can engage in sexual activity other than consciously which is why the 'animal' part of our nature is always a layer and never autonomous" (Mcinerny, "The Principles of Natural Law," 4-5).

[8] See *ITh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, ad 1: "All these precepts of the law of nature have the character of one natural law, inasmuch as they flow from one first precept."

III. AN ARGUMENT FOR THE IMPERATIVIST INTERPRETATION

I propose to argue for the imperativist interpretation in the following way. First, I shall argue that, on Thomas's view, the natural law directs and guides every human being to beatitude. Second, I shall argue that in directing us towards beatitude, the natural law is thought by Thomas to direct us both to our moral perfection as to our last end, and to morally good actions, the only means by which our last end may be attained. By far the longer and more difficult of these two steps will be the second.

In order to show that the natural law directs and guides every human being to beatitude, we must start by looking at question 91, article 2 of the *Prima Secundae,* where Thomas argues that the natural law is the rational creature's participation in the eternal law. There we are told that the natural law is that part of the eternal law-God's providential plan for all creation-which is expressed in rational creatures not merely as a set of natural inclinations, as in brute animals, but as commands of practical reason arising from rational deliberation and free choice. This is not to say that we are subject only to that part of the eternal law which we can know and choose freely to obey. Digestion, breathing, and growth, to mention only a few examples, obey the eternal law naturally, the powers with which we perform these actions having the eternal law impressed upon them as biological instincts and urges. But not all our powers are similarly governed. Reason and will working together enable us to move ourselves freely and knowingly without compulsion, giving us the ability to participate freely in God's governance of the world. [9]

In question 93, article 1 of the *Prima Secundae,* Thomas argues that the eternal law directs all things to their last end. God governs the world according to his wisdom, commanding each creature to do those things that are good not only for itself but for creation as a whole. These commands have the character of law, for as Thomas maintains (*STh* I-II, q. 90, a. 4), a law is nothing

[9] For an excellent discussion of the role played by providence in Thomas's natural-law theory, see Russell Hittinger, *The First Grace: Rediscovering the Natural Law in a Post-Christian World* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2003), esp. chaps. 1 and 2.

other than a command of reason for the common good promulgated by one who has care of the community. Hence, since the commands by which God directs each thing to its last end are in fact precepts of the eternal law, it follows that the eternal law directs all things to their last end.

Much earlier (in *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 7), we find Thomas arguing that all human beings by nature have one and the same last end. Although he does not name it explicitly in this article, it is clear from the prologue to the question, as well as from his discussion of happiness in the following question and other places, that the last end is beatitude. [10] Some might object that the wide divergence of opinion that exists among people about the nature of the good life gives the lie to this idea. Aware of this objection, Thomas bolsters his position by using it to account for the very divergence of opinion which is thought to tell against it. He begins by distinguishing two ways that we may speak of the last end: "first, considering only the aspect of last end; secondly, considering the thing in which the aspect of last end is realized." [11] Everyone agrees that the aspect of the last end is happiness since, as Thomas explains, "all desire the fulfillment of their perfection, and it is precisely this fulfillment in which the last end consists." [12] Yet to someone who does not know that in which the last end is actually realized, a thing might appear falsely to have the aspect of the last end. So, while one person might devote his life to the pursuit of wisdom, another fame, and yet another wealth, each will do so for the sake of happiness.

It follows that the natural law directs and guides every human being to beatitude. That is to say, the purpose of the natural law is to direct human beings to the perfect happiness of complete fulfillment and to instruct them on how to attain it. As Thomas says in the prologue to his treatise on law, the external means by which God moves man to the good is law. [13] Moreover, since man wills everything for the sake of the last end, as Thomas argues

[10] "There is but one last end of human wills, viz., happiness" *(STh* I-II, q. 12, a. 2).

[11] *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 7. See also *STh* I, q. 26, a. 3.

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

[13] *STh* I-II, q. 90, proe.

(STh I-II, q. 1, a. 6), it follows that the natural law is intended to guide and direct every one of our choices. We must not suppose him to mean that in every choice a person expressly intends beatitude. Nearly always his intention of beatitude will be merely habitual, in much the same way that a student's intention to graduate or a traveler's intention to arrive safely at his destination is habitual, only occasionally expressly articulated but always present behind the scenes, guiding and motivating all of his choices in the pursuit of a degree or his arrival at his destination. [14] And since the only philosophically satisfactory explanation for any of our choices, even the most mundane, turns out to be our ultimate willing of beatitude through intention, this intention must be operative in every one of our choices, if only habitually. [15] No one can choose to cast his net on the waters or break bread with his friends without at least habitually intending beatitude.

So far, I have shown that the natural law on Thomas's own reckoning directs us towards beatitude, our true good and last end. What remains to be shown is that in directing us towards our last end, the natural law directs us both to our moral perfection, as to our last end, and to morally good actions, by means of which we must attain our last end.

Regarding the first point, Thomas tells us quite plainly, in response to the question whether an effect of law is to make men

[14] See *STh* I-II, q. 50, a. 5, ad 1 and 3.

[15] We find the basis of this doctrine in *STh* I-II, q. 12, a. 4, where Thomas argues that every choice includes the intention of some end. For example, we choose to drive to the theater because we intend to see a performance of *Henry V.* Now if someone were to ask why we intend to see the play, we might say that it is because earlier in the day we chose to spend the evening in some form of entertainment. And if the questioning were to be taken a step further, we might say that we chose to spend the evening in some form of entertainment because we had decided that going out was preferable to staying in. If continued, the questioning would eventually have to reveal the intention of some end which was not itself the result of a prior choice. It would have to, for in the absence of an intention that was not the product of a prior choice, it would be impossible to make any choices at all. Since choice is always for some intended end, every choice is dependent on some intention. And in a chain of choices, the first is the cause of all the others. But in any causal chain, the removal of the first results in the removal of all the rest. Hence, without a first intention there can be no first choice. Consequently, the first act of the will must be the intention of some good taken as the ultimate end of all our striving, namely, beatitude, "the vision of the divine essence" *(STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8) and man's last end.

good, that God's purpose in making law is to make men good simply *(bonum simpliciter).*[16] The argument he employs to arrive at this conclusion is illuminating. He begins by noting that law is a dictate of the ruler's reason by which his subjects are governed. In order for his subjects to be governed by the law, however, they must be obedient to the ruler's reason. The virtue of a subject *qua* subject, therefore, is to be well subjected to one's ruler. Thomas then observes that every law aims at being obeyed by those who are subject to it. For this reason, "the proper effect of law is to lead its subjects to their proper virtue."[17] Therefore, "since virtue is *that which makes its subject good,* it follows that the proper effect of law is to make those to whom it is given, good, either simply or in some particular respect."[18] Man's simple good is the effect of law when the intention of the lawgiver is directed towards the true good, which Thomas says is "the common good regulated according to Divine justice."[19] The effect of law is something other than his simple good when the intention of the lawgiver is directed towards something that is "useful or pleasurable to himself, or in opposition to Divine justice."[20] But man is simply good only when he is virtuous *qua* man, that is, when he is perfectly obedient to the law and hence morally perfect.[21] Therefore, the good or last end towards which man is

[16] *STh* I-II, q. 92, a. 1. Earlier, in *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 5, Thomas says that, among other things, it belongs to law "to be directed to the common good as to its end," as well as "to direct human acts according to the order of righteousness."

[17] *STh* I-II, q. 92, a. 1.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] In *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 3, where Thomas asks "whether all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law," we read the following: "ad legem naturae pertinet omne illud ad quod homo inclinatur secundum suam naturam. Inclinatur autem unumquodque naturaliter ad operationem sibi convenientem secundum suam formam, sicut ignis ad calefaciendum. Uncle cum anima rationalis sit propria forma hominis, naturalis inclinatio inest cuilibet homini ad hoc quod agat secundum rationem. Et hoc est agere secundum virtutem. Uncle secundum hoc, omnes actus virtutum sunt de lege naturali: dictat enim hoc naturaliter unicuique propria ratio, ut virtuose agat." Clearly, then, the natural law directs man to the moral good, not just any good, where "good" is understood as an intelligible end. Or, rather, we might say that "intelligible end" when it is understood, that is, when it is grasped by the intellect, is anything compatible with the simple good of the agent whose intellect it is. For a comprehensive

directed by natural law is moral goodness and perfection, his *bonum simpliciter.*

Regarding the second point, namely, that the natural law directs us to morally good actions without which we cannot attain our last end, we should start by noting a very important distinction that appears at the beginning of the *Prima Secundae.* In question 1, article 1, where Thomas shows that every one of our actions is done for some end, he distinguishes between actions that are freely chosen, such as winking and eating, and actions that are not, such as blinking and digesting. The former he calls *human actions (actus humanus)* since they proceed from reason and will, the powers which distinguish man from all other animals; the latter he calls *actions of a human being (actus hominis).* This is not to say that a human action does not count as an action of a human being; rather, human action is a species of the more generic action of a human being.[22] Every action performed by a human being is an action of a human being; only those actions proceeding from a deliberate will are human actions. Therefore, an action is truly human only to the extent that it proceeds from reason and will.

Granted that all human actions, properly speaking, proceed from reason and will, it might seem ridiculous to suppose that humdrum actions like picking up straw or walking through a field (Thomas's examples) are moral actions. This sentiment was mentioned in section I when we looked briefly at an important criticism of the imperativist interpretation. Thomas himself shows sympathy with it when he argues that some actions are morally indifferent in their species, the aforementioned being but two examples *(STh* 1-11, q. 18, a. 8). They are indifferent in their species because, considered abstractly, they include in themselves nothing that is either in harmony with reason or opposed to it. Keeping in mind that every moral act involves an object, an

treatment of the notion of moral goodness and its different analogous senses in Thomas, see David M. Gallagher, "Goodness and Moral Goodness," in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy,* ed. David M. Gallagher (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 37-59.

[22] See *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2.

intention, and the circumstances (of the act),[23] we might say that an indifferent act is one that, when taken simply in terms of its object, contributes nothing to the moral status of the act.

The fact that some acts are morally indifferent in their species, however, does not entail that there can exist morally indifferent, concrete human actions. Thomas is quick to point this out in the very next article (*STh* I-II, q. 18, a. 9) where he argues that individual actions cannot be morally indifferent. Following a line of reasoning found also (in greater detail) in *De Malo* (q. 2, a. 5), Thomas maintains that every individual action must be morally good or bad. Since every individual action is necessarily performed under a particular set of circumstances with a particular intention in mind, and either of these must render the action good or bad, it is impossible to have morally indifferent concrete actions. So although picking up straw abstractly considered in its species is morally indifferent, every concrete instance of straw picking must be either morally good or bad since it is always performed by a person under a particular set of circumstances with a particular intention in mind. No doubt, this will strike some as a "hard teaching." It is therefore worth quoting Thomas at length on this point:

> And they have spoken rightly about this who have divided acts in a threefold way, affirming that some are good, some evil, some indifferent. But if we speak about the moral act as an individual act, in this way every particular moral act is necessarily good or bad by reason of some circumstance. For no singular act can be performed without circumstances which make it right or wrong, for if any act whatsoever be done when it ought and where it ought and as it ought and so on in respect to the other circumstances, such an act is well-ordered and good; but if any of these circumstances be not as it ought, the act is disordered and evil. And this can be noticed especially in the circumstance of the end: for what is done on account of just need or on account of pious usefulness is done laudably and is a good act; but what is done without just need or pious usefulness is considered idle, as Gregory says. And even an idle word is a sin and much more so an idle deed: for it is said in Matthew (12, 36) "... of every idle word men speak, they shall give an account." So accordingly, a good act and an evil act by reason of their genus [i.e., by reason of their belonging to the genus of moral acts], are opposites that admit of an intermediate, and there is an act which

[23] See *STh* 1-11, q. 18. See also *De Malo*, q. 2, a. 5.

considered in its species is indifferent; but good and evil from the circumstances do not admit of an intermediate because they are distinguished according to the opposition of affirmation and negation, namely, from this that the act is as it ought to be, and it is not as it ought to be according to all the circumstances. But this good and evil is proper to the singular act; and therefore no singular human act is indifferent. [24]

Having said this, it is important to avoid putting too sharp a point on it. Not everything we do falls within the moral ambit. Thomas is well aware that we sometimes do things unthinkingly, as when we tap our fingers or scratch our nose. These he considers to be indifferent, not because they are inconsequential but because they do not proceed from a deliberate will, making them merely actions of a human *(actus hominis).* Every properly human action *(actus humanus),* however, proceeding as it does from a deliberate will, is a moral action. [25]

The above conclusions are brought together very nicely in another text *(STh* I-II, q. 21, a. 2, ad 2), where Thomas shows that reason in its relation to moral action differs from reason in its relation to the productions of art by being directed to man's general *(communis)* end, which, as we have already seen, is beatitude, rather than some lesser good, such as bodily health or the product of some craft. Art, being concerned with particular goods and not the general end or good of man, is therefore subordinate to morals. Since everything is done for the sake of the ultimate end, it follows that man cannot reason about particular acts without also considering (at least habitually) the general end of a human life taken as a whole. [26] Consequently, reason cannot arrive at a conclusion about some concrete action in the realm of

[24] *De Malo,* q. 2, a. 5 (St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil,* trans. John A. Oesterle and Jean T. Oesterle [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995], 67). Parenthetical note in translation.

[25] Thomas makes this point explicitly in *STh* I-II, q. 1, a. 3: "And since, as Ambrose says *(Prolog. Super Luc.)* 'morality is said properly of man,' moral acts properly speaking receive their species from the end, for moral acts are the same as human acts *[actus humani]."*

[26] *STh* I-II, q. 21, a. 2, ad 2: "Reason stands in different relations to the productions of art, and to moral actions. In matters of art, reason is directed to a particular end, which is something devised by reason: whereas in moral matters, it is directed to *the general end of all human life."* Emphasis added.

art without also taking its moral dimensions into consideration. In the sphere of human action *(actus humanus),* there can be no such thing as a morally indifferent human action. Contrary to what has been said by some critics of the imperativist interpretation, [27] prudence is wider than art. [28]

Further confirmation of this reading is found in Thomas's later treatise on virtue, where he explains the sense in which the intellect may be the subject of virtue. Granted that "virtue is a habit by which we work well," [29] Thomas distinguishes two ways that a habit may dispose a person to act well. It may simply cause a person to have an aptness for certain kinds of action but not necessarily the morally correct use of that aptness. Marksmanship is such a habit, one that a person may choose to employ in the defense of his country or in the commission of a crime. Other habits not only confer a certain aptness but also the tendency to use them rightly. "For instance, justice not only gives man the prompt will to do just actions, but also makes him act justly." [30] Of the two, only the latter make men good simply, for as Thomas explains, "since good, and, in like manner, being, is said of a thing simply, in respect, not of what it is potentially, but of what it is actually: therefore from having habits of the latter sort, man is said simply to do good, and to be good." [31] To be good at something, such as metaphysical speculation or playing the lute, is to be good in a qualified way, only. Art, therefore, does not concern the unqualified good *(bonum simpliciter)* of man but only the qualified good *(bonum secundum quid)* of the things he is able to cause or make. Only prudence concerns man's proper good, and that good is the good of virtue or, as we have been calling it, moral goodness. [32]

If the terms of the first principle of practical reason did not refer to man's simple and unqualified good, it would be possible

[27] See n. 2 above.

[28] I am indebted to Lawrence Dewan, O.P for this important insight.

[29] *STh* I-II, q. 56, a. 3.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] See also *STh* 1-11, q. 57, a. 3, ad 2.

to give a complete description of the reasons for a person's choice without any reference to his final end. On this view, the purpose of the first principle of practical reason would be to direct man to do and pursue what is good *secundum quid*, rather than what is good *simpliciter*. This would amount to saying that one end is as good as another, since the only purpose of the first principle of practical reason would be to direct man to act for some intelligible end, regardless of its suitability or unsuitability to his ultimate end.

This, as we have seen, is impossible on Thomas's understanding of human nature and the nature of the human act. Humans choose to act as they do not only because they judge their actions to be good in a qualified sense, useful for attaining this or that intermediate end, but also (and ultimately) because they judge them to be useful for attaining moral perfection and happiness. In order to avoid misunderstanding, it is worth noting that nothing more than a habitual intention of the final end is demanded by this doctrine. There is no question of a person consciously intending his final end in every one of his choices. But intend it he must. For this reason, it is impossible for a person to intend some lesser good, the production of some art, for example, without also intending his ultimate end, his *bonum simpliciter*. A person's every deliberation, be it ever so mundane, must in the final analysis be about the means to his final end,[33] the perfection of his nature, which consists in moral goodness.

The good at which the first principle of practical reason commands us to aim must and can only be the good *simpliciter* of a life well-lived, not merely the good *secundum quid* of a well-executed act, much less the good *secundum quid* of an action directed towards an intelligible end, good or bad. If Thomas is correct on this point, it would explain why those who commit evil acts either repent or seek to justify themselves. There is no neutral ground for them to stand on because such a thing cannot be conceived; from the first they knew themselves to be under an

[33] Seen. 17.

obligation to do and pursue moral good and to avoid moral evil. Rationalization is the lie vice tells itself.

In conclusion, since a moral precept is for Thomas simply a law directing man to his last end-which, as we have seen, consists in a fullness of being that is for man one and the same with his moral perfection-and each of the precepts of the natural law is derived from the first precept of natural law, it follows that none of the precepts could be moral precepts unless the first precept were itself a moral precept. The *bonum* of the first precept of natural law and the first principle of practical reason, therefore, must signify the *bonum simpliciter* of man, and as such direct him to do and pursue what is morally good and to avoid the contrary. The first principle of practical reason is, therefore, nothing other than a moral imperative.

IV. RESPONSE TO A CRITICISM

In section I, I asserted that of all the criticisms that could be leveled against the imperativist interpretation perhaps the most compelling is the one based on the observation that some, if not most, of our deliberations, decisions, and choices are made without a thought being given to their morality. Decisions about what to eat for breakfast, when to schedule a meeting, or where to go for dinner seem to have nothing at all to do with morality. For this reason alone, the objection went, it would seem that the first principle is not a moral imperative. As a criticism of the imperativist interpretation, it attempts to distinguish Thomas from a supposedly discreditable moral doctrine. But having argued in favor of the imperativist interpretation in section III, I must take the criticism as having far great significance than that; it strikes at the very root of Thomas's natural-law theory. What follows, therefore, is a defense not only of the imperativist interpretation, but of Thomas's natural-law theory construed along imperativist lines.

In arguing for the imperativist interpretation, I have already touched on the response to this criticism. Simply put, and in

partial agreement with the criticism itself, there is no need to suggest that all our choices are explicitly concerned with morality. The contention that people often make choices with no explicit concern for morality is perfectly compatible with the imperativist interpretation. All that is needed for a choice to be concerned with morality is that it be habitually directed towards it. And that is precisely what Thomas teaches. A person does not have to intend moral perfection explicitly in every one of his choices; it is enough that he do so habitually.

But what are we to make of the person who sins, whose choices seem directed towards wickedness rather than righteousness? How can he be said to will his own moral perfection, even habitually, in such choices? Or, to ask the question as it was formulated in section I, how can the first principle of practical reason be a moral imperative given the fact that it may be used to arrive at immoral decisions?

The challenge posed by this objection is to explain how a person may arrive at a sinful choice notwithstanding the fact that the first principle of practical reason is a moral imperative. In order to do just that, we must turn to Thomas' s treatment of the causes of sin (*STh* 1-11, qq. 75-81).

Fallowing a longstanding tradition, Thomas takes sin at bottom to be an inordinate act originating in an inordinate choice of the will,[34] one that runs counter to the rule of reason or the divine law.[35] Now, on Thomas's view, choice follows necessarily upon judgment, and only upon judgment.[36] Hence, the only way a person can make a sinful choice is by first arriving at a judgment that contradicts the rule of reason or the divine law. But that will happen only if he fails to apply one of these rules in his deliberations, or fails to give them their due weight.[37] If a person sins, it is because he fails in some respect (i.e., totally or partially) to apply the rule of reason or the divine law in his deliberations.

[34] See *STh* I-II, q. 78, a. 4.
[35] See *STh* I-II, q. 75, a. 1.
[36] See *STh* I-II, q. 13, a. 1, ad 2.
[37] See *STh* I-II, q. 75, a. 1.

Thomas gives a number of different reasons why this might happen.[38] Ignorance of a fact might result in a failure to apply the moral principle necessary to arrive at a correct judgment.[39] Passion might blind one temporarily to a moral precept.[40] One might elect to lose a spiritual good in order not to lose a temporal one.[41] In any case, the precept forbidding the choice fails to enter into one's deliberations, leading to a judgment which in turn results in a sinful choice. Given the limited scope of this article, I must limit my discussion to only one of these causes-the one that, I believe it is fair to say, is the cause of a great number, if not most, of the sins we commit, namely, passion. A demonstration that the imperativist interpretation is able to yield a coherent account of sin with respect to even one of its causes will be sufficient to overcome the objection that the first principle of practical reason could not be used to arrive at immoral choices if it were a moral imperative.

Thomas considers the role of passion in sin in question 77 of the *Prima Secundae*. Most interesting for our purposes is the second article, where he shows that although sin involves some sort of ignorance or error, such things usually cannot excuse culpability for sin altogether, since "experience ... shows that many act contrary to the knowledge that they have."[42] Thomas begins his reply by noting that Socrates was somewhat correct in holding that sin is a kind of ignorance because "since the object of the will is a good or an apparent good, it is never moved to an evil, unless that which is not good appear good in some respect to the reason; so that the will would never tend to evil, unless there were ignorance or error in the reason."[43] Since the judgment that leads to action includes both universal and particular knowledge, Thomas concludes that a defect in either will prevent the will

[38] See *STh* I-II, q. 75, a. 2; I-II, q. 76, a. 1; I-II, q. 77, a. 4; I-II, q. 78, a. 3.

[39] See *STh* I-II, q. 76.

[40] See *STh* I-II, q. 77, esp. a. 2 where Thomas explains the ways "reason can be overcome by a passion, against its knowledge."

[41] See *STh* I-II, q. 78.

[42] *STh* I-II, q. 77, a. 2.

[43] Ibid.

from being rightly ordered. However, in his reply to the first objection, Thomas says that particular knowledge, not universal, "hold[s] the foremost place in action," since, as he puts it, "actions are about singulars."[44] Under the influence of a passion, a person may fail to apply a universal to a particular if his attention is drawn away from those elements of the particular to which the universal is applicable.

To use one of Thomas's examples, a person might have knowledge of the universal truth that no fornication is lawful, but lack the knowledge that this particular act is one of fornication, resulting in a failure to follow the universal dictate. He might make a choice that is contrary to reason only because some hindrance prevents him from calling to mind and considering something he knows habitually. This might come about for a number of reasons, including passion. Passion, Thomas maintains, is able to hinder the consideration of a habitually known universal truth, so that what should be seen as a clear instance of sin might not appear to be one under the influence of passion. This might happen because a passion suggests another universal proposition. For example, a strong desire for a woman with whom it would be illicit to have sexual relations might suggest that pleasure is to be pursued, and if it manages to tie up reason, it will hinder it "from arguing and concluding under the [proposition that no fornication is lawful]; so that while the passion lasts, the reason argues and concludes under the [proposition that pleasure is to be pursued]."[45]

Notwithstanding passion's influence, however, it is rarely so great as to remove all culpability. The influence of passion, though strong, is usually not so strong that it *causes* reason to arrive at judgments that are opposed to known universal principles; rather, Thomas maintains that passion "draws" *(trahere)* reason to do so. Difficult though it may be to counteract the effects of passion, a person, provided that he has not lost the

[44] Ibid., ad 1: "Universal knowledge, which is most certain, does not hold the foremost place in action, but rather particular knowledge, since actions are about singulars.."

[45] Ibid., ad 4.

use of reason, may do so by turning his mind to something else. This is the fact that is assumed when, for example, in a gloomy mood, we are admonished to count our blessings. Thomas says as much in article 7 of this same question where, in explaining under what conditions sin is altogether excused on account of passion, he says that "[s]ometimes ... the passion is not such as to take away the use of reason altogether; and then reason can drive the passion away, by turning to other thoughts, or it can prevent it from having its full effect; since the members are not put to work, except by the consent of reason."[46] As long as a person has the use of reason and is aware of the influence of passion, he can do something to mitigate its effects and thus guard against making choices he will later regret.

As long as a man retains the use of reason, therefore, he will know that he should only do and pursue goods consonant with his true good. Yet passion might hinder him from giving due consideration to one or another precept of the natural law, making it possible for him to judge something to be good which, once passion has subsided, he will realize was not consonant with his true good, after all. At the level of the particular, his action will therefore be somewhat irrational, at least insofar as it goes against a dictate of reason and his true good. Nevertheless, because he will have arrived at the judgment through the employment of at least the first principle of practical reason (otherwise he would have no reason to arrive at a judgment about what to do rather than no judgment at all), his subsequent choice will be rational, or at least sufficiently rational to render his action one for which he may be held responsible. When a person chooses to sin under the influence of a passion, he chooses an action that

[46] *SI'h* I-II, q. 77, a. 7. Cf. *STh* I, q. 81, a. 3: "Therefore it is clear thatthe universal reason directs the sensitive appetite, which is divided into concupiscible and irascible; and this appetite obeys it. But because to draw particular conclusions from universal principles is not the work of the intellect, as such, but of the reason: hence it is that the irascible and concupiscible are said to obey the reason rather than to obey the intellect. Anyone can experience this in himself: for *by applying certain universal considerations, anger or fear or the like may be modified or excited"* (emphasis added).

appears to him to be morally good or, at the very least, not morally evil.

Far from necessitating the moral neutrality of the first principle of practical reason, the rational origin of sin requires that it be charged with moral significance. Paradoxically, sin is possible only because it is possible for one and the same choice to be rational in certain respects and irrational in others. Under the influence of a passion, an evil action might appear to be good or, at least, not bad, and hence agree with the first principle of practical reason, all the while being "against the order of reason," as Thomas puts it,[47] and hence morally bad.

CONCLUSION

The only way the first principle of practical reason could be anything other than a moral imperative is if there could be human actions that were not morally significant; or, to hearken back to an earlier discussion, if art were wider than prudence. But as we have seen, it is impossible even to deliberate about concrete, individual actions, actions to be performed by a person-an *I* who is by nature concerned with his own well-being-without at least habitually intending beatitude and moral excellence. As we have seen, a central tenet of Thomas's philosophical psychology is that every decision to act, be it ever so mundane, must be directed towards man's ultimate end. Not only is moral neutrality a fiction, it is an impossibility. Every choice is a hinge on which our lives may turn radically for the better or the worse. For the moment one begins to deliberate about anything to be done or pursued, the principle of practical reason comes into play, setting the bar of practical rationality at the level of moral excellence, one's good *simpliciter*. This fact alone is sufficient to compel the conclusion

[47] *ITh* I-II, q. 71, a. 2, ad 3.

that the first principle of practical reason is and must be a moral imperative. [48]

[48] This paper could not have been written without the generous support of The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, where as the Gilson Postdoctoral Fellow I received invaluable guidance and patient mentoring from Rev. Lawrence Dewan, O.P. To him and to all the faculty and fellows of the institute, I am deeply indebted. I am also indebted to a number of my colleagues in the department of philosophy at Providence College for helpful comments made on an earlier draft of this paper. Special thanks go to Dr. Andrew Peach for his careful reading and insightful criticism. Finally, I would like to thank the anonymous reader for *The Thomist* whose comments helped me to fully articulate the significance of the thesis defended in these pages.

BOOK REVIEWS

Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers. By RALPH MCINERNY. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007. Pp. 313. $34.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8132-1458-0.

Ralph Mclnerny's Gifford Lectures, *Characters in Search of their Author* (1999-2000) examined criticisms of natural theology posed by various practitioners of modern philosophy. *Praeambula Fidei* is a more technical, broad, and ambitious attempt to analyze the internal structure of Thomistic natural theological reasoning. It also seeks to respond to thinkers who (according to Mclnerny) sought to marginalize the place of this doctrine in modern Catholic theology.

The book is polemical in that it takes issue with interpretations of Aquinas developed by such influential figures as Etienne Gilson, Henri de Lubac, and Marie-Dominique Chenu. Simultaneously, however, the presentation is expository, offering a counterproposal based upon the Aristotelianism of Aquinas. Mclnerny's defense of a distinctly philosophical theology in Aquinas, and of the profound strands of continuity between Aquinas's metaphysics and that of Aristotle, will leave no Thomist indifferent. For contemporary theologians, the book offers interesting arguments about fundamental theology, stressing oft-forgotten truths worthy of serious (re)consideration.

The book proceeds in three parts. In the first section the author exposes the doctrine of the *praeambula fidei*, those truths revealed by God that are also accessible to human reason. Such truths denote even to the philosophical intellect the potential truth of the Catholic faith: truths such as the existence of the soul, the rationality of the natural law, and, in particular, the philosophical demonstrability of the existence of God. Here Mclnerny articulates eloquently the Thomistic distinction between knowing by reason and believing by faith. His attentiveness to Aquinas's philosophy of first principles, self-evident propositions, and demonstrative reasoning toward non-self-evident rational truths (7-17) allows him to identify clearly the character of philosophical knowledge of God he wishes to defend. God may be known *a posteriori,* indirectly, as a cause is known from its effects, even while his existence is not self-evident to us *a priori.* This genuine form of rational knowledge is absolutely distinct from the revealed truths of divine revelation, which in turn have their own "principles" and (eventual) propositional articulation (20-23). The latter are accepted in love by an act of the will, based upon the authority of God revealing himself. These

two ways of knowing God are not alien to one another, however, since "the bulk of things we hold as true is based on trust" (16) and, consequently, trust in the word of another is a necessary dimension of human reason. The study of the *praeambula fidei* guarantees a sense of the potential harmony between faith and reason, since it demonstrates that there exists for natural reason a final term (knowledge of the existence of God) which revelation both complements and completes. In the twentieth century, however, the pursuit of this harmony has been attenuated by "flawed understandings of the nature of Christian philosophy, a tendency to disparage the natural in favor of the supernatural, [and] the suggestion that the philosophy of St. Thomas is to be found only in his theological works, and cannot be separated from them" (32).

In the second section of the book, the author goes on to analyze critically the interpretations of Aquinas offered by Gilson, De Lubac, and Chenu. It is their works in particular that contributed to the above-mentioned problematic tendencies. Mclnerny sees particular evidence of this in their respective treatments of Cardinal Cajetan, and the Dominican commentary tradition more generally. What follows in the second section, then, is an extended defense of Cajetan's reading of Aquinas concerning the metaphysics of *esse,* the final end of man, and the integrity of philosophical theology as distinct from *sacra doctrina.* This defense is conducted in dialogue with the writings of Gilson, De Lubac, and Chenu, sequentially.

Mclnerny first studies Gilson's claim that Aquinas' doctrine of *esse* (as existence "beyond" essence) was deemphasized or forgotten by the Thomistic school, and principally by Cajetan (39-68). Examining in particular Gilson's "Cajetan et !'existence" *(Tijdschriff voor Philosophie* 15 [1953]: 267-86), Mclnerny shows multiple ways in which Gilson misinterpreted the sixteenth-century commentator. For example, in his criticism of Cajetan's treatment of *esse* as perfection (in his commentary on *STh* I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3), Gilson ignores the Dominican's earlier statement (on *STh* I, q. 3, a. 4) that "existence is the actuality of every form and that no nature is signified in ultimate act except insofar as it is signified as actually exercising existence" (51). In contrast to Gilson's genealogy of the forgetfulness of *esse* in Western metaphysics, Mclnerny argues that Cajetan's understanding of Aquinas insists quite plausibly on the compatibility between Aquinas's Aristotelianism and his metaphysics of existence. Despite the appropriateness of these criticisms, Mclnerny's treatment of Gilson is not always magnanimous in tone (e.g., "The effect of this scorched earth policy [of Gilson toward other commentators] is to turn our attention more and more toward the one operating the flame thrower" [68]).

Mclnerny then examines De Lubac's conception of the final end of man in *Surnaturel* and *Le mystere du surnaturel.* At issue is De Lubac's criticism of Cajetan's theory of nature and grace as a two-storied, extrinsicist model. Here (69-76, 80-90) Mclnerny's tone is at time excessively shrill. He makes scant reference to actual texts of De Lubac and his presentation is too dependent upon secondary scholarship. Nevertheless, as he goes on to defend Cajetan's own views of the final natural end of man as *distinct* from the supernatural end

designated by grace (76-90), he makes several substantive points. First, clearly there is in Aquinas a notion of the obediential potentiality of human nature, capable of the supernatural in the *moral domain* and not only in the miraculous (contra De Lubac's interpretation, and as Cajetan rightly notes). This suggests that human nature can have a certain kind of autonomous teleological structure, according to Aquinas. Second, Cajetan's interpretation of Aquinas in no way implies that man is a being "closed in on himself"; that is, there is in Cajetan no pure nature/grace extrinsicism. On the contrary, Cajetan (commenting on *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8) argues explicitly that the human person has a natural desire to know God's essence immediately. This stems not from a response to supernatural revelation, but from the fact that created intellect has a natural desire to know the first cause of created effects, God (85). Mcinerny argues that this interpretation has a basis in Aquinas's own texts that is more historically defensible than the views of De Lubac. Third, Aquinas has an unambiguous doctrine of a twofold final end of man, one natural and imperfect (with reference to Aristotle) and the latter supernatural and perfect (see *STh* I, q. 62, a. 1). Such texts suggest that for Aquinas the natural end of the human intellect is realized in philosophy, exemplified by the *praeambula fidei.*

Mcinerny notes the emergence of Chenu's critique of neo-Scholastic Thomism as a "rationalizing, propositional, essentialist system" in his *Le Sau/choir: Une ecole de theologie* (1937). When philosophy is co-opted for the purposes of the *praeambula fidei* it becomes, according to Chenu, "a series of propositions, premises, or conclusions, which function as the least common denominator of philosophical [thought]" (116). Along with Gilson, Chenu portrayed Cajetan as an interpreter guilty of the "forgetfulness of being." Neo-Scholasticism denatures philosophy by instrumentalizing the latter systematically toward a merely apologetical end. In response, Mcinerny notes tendencies in Chenu's own thought toward an anti-essentialist historicism that cannot easily sustain any form of transhistorical doctrinal truth (118-19). Here more inquiry into Chenu's writing would have aided Mclnerny's argument. For example, an examination of Chenu's doctrinal writings in the postconciliar period could have provided yet more evidence of antimetaphysical, historicist tendencies, and allowed Mclnerny's defense of legitimate concerns in *Humani Generis* (120) to be presented more poignantly.

The third part of the book is an impressive depiction of "Aristotelian Thomistic" reasoning, attempting to show how Aquinas presents a way of progressive philosophical argumentation that passes from basic human experience to the eventual affirmation of the existence of God. This constructive presentation forms the heart of the book. Here Mcinerny focuses in particular upon Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle's philosophical theology. "The assumption of this study is that the native habitat of the *praeambula fidei* is the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle, and that its recovery can only be accomplished in that setting" (167-68). The book goes on (169-87) to examine Aquinas's treatment of major Aristotelian themes: the nature of a science, the mind's commensurate object (beings undergoing change), the principles of form and matter, analogical

predication, and substantial change. The goal is to introduce terms that are propaedeutic to the science of metaphysics. Mclnerny then goes on to propose (like Charles De Konnick and Benedict Ashley) the controversial idea that metaphysics as a science is possible only once one has demonstrated the existence of immaterial substances. This is achieved by the first-mover argument, as the culmination of a philosophical investigation of nature (188-96). "The predicable range of 'being' is maximal; it can be said of whatever is. But until and unless it is known that there is immaterial being, the predicable range of 'being' will be material things" (190). The perspective contrasts, of course, with the Thomistic interpretations of scholars such as Owens, Wippel, Dewan, and Aersten, as the author is well aware. He defends his interpretation by recourse to numerous statements from Aquinas's commentary on the *Metaphysics.* After a somewhat extended discussion (196-209) of Aquinas's doctrine of *separatio,* (that judgment whereby one may affirm that there exist separate substances, distinct from material being), Mclnerny affirms that "the aim of metaphysics as the culminating science of philosophy is knowledge of the divine. This aim is the key to understanding everything that is undertaken in the science of being as being" (210). In studying the ultimate causes of being, one is engaged in a divine science and a natural theology that perfects philosophy.

After an extended defense of the unity of the *Metaphysics* as a text (against Jaegar and by appeal to Reale and Aquinas), Mclnerny offers a helpful exposition of Aquinas's interpretation of book 12 of the *Metaphysics* (245-82). Of particular interest is the treatment of the universality of causal principles of all material substances *(Metaphys.* 12.5). All substances imply "matter, form, privation, and the moving cause" (253-54) and these principles are "proportionally the same" in each existent. This analogically "universal" perspective on interdependent, physical beings allows one to develop a further argument. The existence of moving beings requires a primary, universal cause that is beyond all movement and temporality, a pure actuality that is the ultimate source of all changing beings (258-63). Mclnerny does an excellent job of showing how, according to Aquinas, Aristotle's understanding of the composition of act and potency in secondary substances, and the ontological primacy of actuality, permits in turn a demonstration of God's existence and a study of divine attributes. The God of book 12 of the *Metaphysics* is pure actuality, immobile, immaterial, eternal, sovereignly good, perfect life, and self-knowledge (263-82). "That is, the God of Aristotle, knowledge of whom is derived from knowledge of things around us and who is magnificently described in his perfection and operation by an examination of human intellection, is the same God Thomas worships as a Christian and who, through revelation, has made known to us things about himself undreamt of in philosophy. It is because those mysteries of faith involve *praeambula* that Christian theology, however formally different from philosophy, cannot flourish independently of it" (282).

Mclnerny's book is a powerful and controversial restatement of a classical Thomistic doctrine concerning the relations between faith and reason, philosophy and theology. In the hands of generous readers, it will lead to fruitful

debate about the place of Aristotle in the interpretation of Aquinas (and vice versa), the perennial importance of Vatican I, and the strengths and weaknesses of *la nouvelle theologie.* Thomists of vibrantly Aristotelian provenance will find it refreshing (with inevitable partial reservations). In our metaphysically tone-deaf age, the book reopens important discussions on the topic of fundamental theology, and ought to be read by all those seriously interested in the renewal of genuine ontological reflection within Christian theology.

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Norms of Liberty: A Perfectionist Basis for Non-Perfectionist Politics. By DOUGLAS B. RASMUSSEN and DOUGLAS J. DENUYL. University Park, Penn.: Penn State Press, 2005. Pp. 358. $25.00 (paper). ISBN 0-271-02701-0.

Douglas Rasmussen and Douglas Den Uyl's *Norms of Liberty: A Perfectionist Basis for Non-Perfectionist Politics* provides a seminal contribution to liberal political thought that will be of significant interest to Thomists as well as other classically trained Aristotelians and natural law theorists. The book's argument, although occasionally repetitive, is characterized by uncommon rigor and clarity. It suggests a unique approach to the defense of political liberalism that draws upon Aristotelian virtue ethics. The authors contend that contemporary liberal theorists who embrace conventionalism and relativism do so because they misuse the principle of the primacy of political liberty as the basis for a comprehensive ethical doctrine. Rasmussen and Den Uyl agree with critics of liberalism, such as Alasdair Macintyre, who insist that procedural political theory without a more substantive deep ethical structure is untenable. Contrary to these critics, however, the authors hold that Aristotelian virtue can provide liberalism the defense that it requires. Furthermore, they assert that Aristotelian principles properly applied to the heterogeneity of modern life entail a version of political liberalism.

Three key premises ground this conclusion: (1) there are many different forms of human excellence and as a consequence excellence is radically individualized, (2) liberty or "self-direction" is an essential constitutive feature of human flourishing, but (3) flourishing is "profoundly social." From these premises the authors infer that the protection of certain natural rights is grounded in "metanormative" political principles, rather than ethical norms. Governments and political communities should neither coerce nor encourage the pursuit of human excellence, since doing so would be contrary to the requirements of self-direction. The problem of constructing a political system that permits the pursuit of diverse forms of flourishing that do not conflict with each other the authors call "liberalism's problem."

Aristotelians and Thomists will find the book's central arguments agreeable in some respects and problematic in others. On the one hand, Rasmussen and Den Uyl grant that the natural right to political liberty must be grounded in an ethical account of the human good. They also endorse metaphysical realism and maintain that human nature has objective significance for ethics. They place principled as opposed to merely pragmatic limits upon the role of state authority, a point they rightly insist is found in Aquinas's distinction between moral and legal obligations. On the other hand, they propose a form of radical individualism that appears deficient as an account of human nature and the moral preconditions for the exercise of liberty in a free society. While some Aristotelian critics of liberalism fall into the utopian tendency of yearning for the homogeneity of the ancient polis, the authors' rejection of concrete political norms besides liberty tends to the opposite extreme. They draw a sharp dichotomy between private morality and political authority. This diminishes the significance of intermediate social and political institutions, such as the Church, which can shield individual liberty from the absolute power of the state and foster the common good. To their credit, Rasmussen and Den Uyl are not unaware of these types of criticisms of their position and treat them thoughtfully and extensively.

The key to the book's unique defense of liberalism, and a principal strength, is the distinction that is made between certain necessary and unnecessary features of the theory. The authors accept that contemporary liberalism is in crisis for the very reasons stipulated by many of its critics, but they maintain its fundamental soundness as a political approach. In particular, they observe that many liberals erroneously embrace an Enlightenment conception of rationality, which requires them to reject the traditional teleological account of human nature. In so doing they place the right before the good and maintain this view as the basis for a comprehensive set of ethical norms. Paradoxically, by making Enlightenment skepticism and relativism the deep ethical structure for liberalism, liberalism's most ardent proponents become its worst enemies.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl challenge the notions that liberalism requires the rejection of Aristotelian teleology, and that contemporary Aristotelians can endorse a political approach other than liberalism. Aristotelians such as MacIntyre, for instance, have argued that procedural liberalism is untenable because it lacks a substantive theory of the good. Because the authors think that Enlightenment rationality is merely incidental to the core of liberal political theory, they can grant MacIntyre's objection and embrace Aristotelianism, while simultaneously maintaining the superiority of liberalism and natural rights doctrine.

Whereas Macintyre insists that liberalism's official neutrality with respect to competing views of the human good renders it shallow, the authors contend that their commitment to Aristotelian ethics allows them to make a morally relevant distinction between the neutrality of politics and the emphatic non-neutrality of ethical principles. This leads to what they describe as a "structural paradox." Liberalism has no ethical foundations of its own, because it is strictly a political theory. It must borrow its ethical foundations from outside. Once liberals

recognize this structural feature of their theory they need not embrace ethical minimalism. Central to this notion of the distinction between politics and ethical reflection is the idea that political principles are "metanormative." They guide community choices and standards, but they are not a sufficient basis for the guidance of individual conduct. Rasmussen and Den Uyl point out that this unique proposal is characteristic of neither contemporary left nor right-wing political ideology, and that in fact it undermines both programs. Contemporary left-wing liberals fail to recognize liberalism's dependence upon Aristotelian ethical perfectionism. Some conservatives on the right fail to make the necessary distinction between politics and ethics, insisting falsely that the political sphere ought to be governed by more substantive moral principles. Both groups fail because they assume in Platonic fashion that politics is "ethics writ large."

Perhaps the most insightful and compelling part of the book's argument is the careful analysis of the historical relationship between liberalism and normative ethics, and the prescriptive recommendations made concerning the reconceptualization of that relationship. The authors observe that there is significant historical ambivalence in liberal thought about this relationship, from which an apparent paradox concerning the individual emerges. On the one hand, liberals have tended to reject classical ethical perfectionism, not only because they believe it depends upon a questionable teleological conception of human nature, but also because they think it expects too much. The gap between reality and the attainment of moral virtue is deemed to be too wide. Liberals want "workable principles" that acknowledge human beings' limitations. In addition, moral exhortations seem to be of limited usefulness in effecting transformations of character as compared to political and economic institutions. On the other hand, liberals have been committed to the doctrine of human rights and the protection of individual liberty. They see this stance as evidence of the moral superiority of their position. There appears to be an incongruity between the liberal commitment to rights and ethical minimalism.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl enumerate several unsuccessful approaches to explaining this incongruity within the liberal tradition. State-of-nature theories attempt to derive liberalism's focus upon the right and rights from a minimalist conception of the good (self-interest). This effort has encountered many difficulties. The perceived lack of success in social-contract theory has led other liberal theorists to focus more exclusively upon the centrality of the notion of the right, and to minimize the problematic role of the good by privatizing it. Thus, many liberals have treated the right as rational and universal, and the good as particular "interested, and hence amoral" (23). Since the good has to do with the interests of particular individuals, and rights apply universally to no one in particular as such, the shift in emphasis from the good to the right leads to the apparently paradoxical conclusion that liberal theory is not really concerned with individuals.

Remarkably, the authors endorse this aspect of liberal theory as both factual and appropriate, with one important qualification. Liberals ought to "ignore the individual and be universalistic in [their] outlook," but only if they recognize that

liberalism is not an ethical philosophy (27). Historically, proponents of liberalism have neglected the importance of prudence and attempted to reduce ethics to justice and the social virtues. The authors cite several examples, including: Hobbes, Hume, and Kant. The problem with this reduction is that it leads to minimalism in moral theory because it fails to recognize the "metanormative" relationship between liberty and other ethical principles. Claiming that liberal principles are political metanorms entails that we cannot derive ethical norms directly from them although they may limit or rule out certain ethical norms that are incompatible with those principles.

According to Rasmussen and Den Uyl, we can recognize the dividing line between ethical norms and political metanorms by considering the purpose of a norm. If a norm concerns personal conduct relating to self-perfection it is a moral norm. Norms that do not directly concern self-perfection, including in particular those norms that deal with our duties to others, are not moral norms but political "metanorms." As the authors conclude, "ethical flourishing and ethical conduct are to be found elsewhere than in politics" (40).

This assessment of the relationship between liberalism and ethics is informative and insightful. The "metanormative solution" to the apparent incongruity between liberalism's universalism and ethical concern for the individual offers a novel and intriguing approach. There are several points in this analysis that may be challenged, however. First, the claim that only norms concerning self-perfection are properly moral seems deeply problematic. It rests upon the assumption that liberals correctly privatize the good and that the good must be reduced to self-perfection. Just because the good is always a good for persons and not an impersonal abstraction, does this entail that all goods are private goods or can some goods be genuinely common or communal? As Macintyre and Henry Veatch have argued, there appear to be goods for persons that cannot be reduced to the good of any one person or a mere aggregation of private goods. Second, the authors assert that liberalism does not imply an ethics, but it does exclude any ethical system that identifies the good with a particular form of life and is incompatible with openness in principle to all forms of flourishing. This principled commitment to unlimited openness excludes many forms of community, especially many traditional communities, and we must wonder whether it engages in a kind of false universalism and abstraction that is contrary to the limited openness that is required for ariy real community. These issues will be given further consideration below.

Having considered how most liberals historically characterized the relationship between liberalism and ethics, Rasmussen and Den Uyl also point out that, despite its uniqueness, their defense of liberalism has various historical precedents. The thinker whose approach most resembles theirs is Spinoza, who claimed that the purpose of politics is to insure "secure and comfortable living" (42) and that "politics is not suited to the production of virtue" (45). Rasmussen and Den Uyl, following the lead of Spinoza, characterize themselves as ethical but not political perfectionists.

Most liberals, by contrast, either neglect moral virtue and excellence or define it down by reducing the good to the right. The authors cite Kant and Rawls as examples. The Kantian view resembles their own insofar as Kant thinks politics can promote peace but not moral perfection. Kant's position, however, depends upon his fundamentally pessimistic view of human nature's perfectibility. The authors share Kant's conclusions about the limits of politics, but do so on account of the premises of moral pluralism and individualism. They do not share Kant's pessimism about human nature and his legalism. In his later work John Rawls rejected Liberalism's claim to be a comprehensive ethical doctrine and insisted that political norms must be neutral among all theoretical accounts of the good. The authors assert that, contrary to Rawls, they are comprehensive liberals, because their view is "clearly not neutral between theories .... If there is neutralism in our approach at all, it does not come because the theory transcends the good, but rather from an understanding of the nature of the good in practice" (56).

One must wonder how significant these differences are in the final analysis. Kant, for instance, regards the legislative realm of morality to be strictly universal, agent-neutral, and largely interpersonal. The realm of self-interest and desire is transmoral, and is not governed by the legislative approach. Rasmussen and Den Uyl hold moral norms to be primarily about self-interest and self-perfection, whereas political metanorms are universal and concern interpersonal relations. They do certainly disagree about the terrain covered by "morality," but not about the fundamentally limited and legislative character of the realm of interpersonal relations. Similarly, John Rawls' position is neutral between theoretical conceptions of the good because he thinks political theory transcends particular conceptions, while the authors are neutral because they hold that goods themselves are irreducibly plural. This appears to be a theoretical distinction without a practical difference. Both views require political neutrality in principle with respect to particular substantive conceptions of the good, except any substantive conception of the good that is incompatible with such principled neutrality. Such incompatible views include most traditional substantive moral and political theories.

A case in point is natural-law theory, in both its traditional and its more recent forms. The authors discuss the work of Heinrich Rommen, Henry Veatch, and John Finnis, as well as Brian Tierney's analysis of Christian Wolff's early rights theory. They concede that proponents of modern natural-rights theories, due to the influence of Enlightenment rationalism, have neglected the teleological dimension of human nature. In other respects, however, they insist that natural-rights theory is superior to all versions of natural-law theory because it recognizes the plural and individual nature of human goods and the irreducible character of natural rights. With respect to the former point, natural-law theorists postulate certain generic basic goods. In the case of so-called "new natural-law theory" a single predetermined hierarchy of goods is rejected. The authors contend that even these contemporary natural-law theorists fail to recognize the need for openness to the essentially diverse, individual, and

prudential ordering of goods that is required for human flourishing. Whether a realistic account of the plurality of forms of the good life is incompatible with the substantive moral and political norms these theories propose can certainly be contested. The authors' more fundamental argument against natural-law theories, however, is that in predicating natural rights upon prior moral obligations they fail to recognize the fact that the necessity of self-direction entails that rights are irreducible.

Finnis, for instance, argues that the language of rights adds an important dimension to the natural law because it brings the requirements of justice into sharper focus than the traditional language of moral duties. The authors prefer what they regard as the even stronger position of Veatch, who maintains that the distinctive role of natural rights is founded upon the duty to self-perfection. Veatch asserts that this duty entails a correlative right to noninterference in the pursuit of that perfection. The authors admire Veatch's attempt to ground rights language upon self-perfection, but they insist that he and Finnis ultimately fail to avoid reducing rights to duties. In doing so they commit the "moralist fallacy," which involves failing to distinguish "having a right from doing what is right" (66). Natural-law theory in the authors' view fails to protect the right to moral failure and even self abuse. Natural-law theorists like Veatch and Finnis can of course counter that there is no absolute moral right to failure. Traditional presentations of natural-law theory, such as that of Thomas Aquinas, concur with this view, arguing that human law has the authority to prohibit and even to restrain the commission of some vicious and self-destructive acts. There is only a right to the room for failure that is conditionally required by the freedom needed for moral excellence, and such freedom is not absolute or unlimited.

This, however, is precisely the disputed point, according to the authors. They concede that Christian Wolff probably came closest to an acceptable form of the natural-law position when he argued that the pursuit of self-perfection necessitates a certain domain of freedom, which is an indispensable means to the pursuit of the end of human flourishing. Wolff conceptualized this distinct means as an inherent capacity possessed by the agent. The authors remain unconvinced, insisting that Wolff's moral capacity is ultimately reducible to the concept of moral obligation and that it "does not truly give an independent role to the realm of natural rights" (70).

What appears to be driving the authors' view is a radical conception of the "self-direction" required for human flourishing. Negative natural rights trump every other moral requirement. This includes not only a right not to be coerced into acting virtuously, but also the right not to be compelled to fulfill one's moral duties, and even the right not be restrained from committing moral evil (77). This radical defense of liberty rights is necessitated as a solution to "liberalism's problem." Because human sociality must be open in principle to any human being and any form of flourishing, public norms of conduct cannot guide individual choice or prefer any particular form of flourishing. They may only set the context in which moral action can take place. The protection of individual liberty turns out to be the only primary "metanorm" according to the authors,

because only it is consistent with the irreducible plurality of forms of human flourishing (88).

Several concerns can be raised about this line of argument. First, it may just be false that human flourishing concretely requires openness to a limitless range of possibilities for human social relationships. Indeed, it is quite possibly the case that genuine sociality and flourishing in real political communities is incompatible with such abstract theoretical neutrality. Actual political communities are not abstract forms, but societies with histories that establish substantive goods and a limited range of compatible forms of life. Claiming this is not the same as asserting naively that modern political communities need to be characterized by the homogeneity of ancient societies. Furthermore, the inability to experience the self-limiting pull of these social forms may be contrary to the moral development that is required for full moral agency. That is, the exercise of moral freedom may require the experience of the priority of certain moral and social obligations. The authors concede the importance of this objection, but it merits further scrutiny.

Another question worth asking is, what is the authors' normative basis for the prescription that we must find a solution to liberalism's problem as it is formulated? While any concrete individual's self-perfection may require openness to a range of potential forms of flourishing, it may not require openness that is unlimited in principle. Metanorms are not self-justifying, but are justified as necessary conditions for the pursuit and attainment of self-perfection. We may not be able to choose a finite range of forms of flourishing from an abstract and agent-neutral point of view. From the agent-relative and self-interested point of view, however, one does not have an interest in making flourishing possible for every other human being unless failing to do so makes flourishing impossible for oneself, which seems unlikely. It would appear that an agent-neutral principle such as the Golden Rule is functioning as a suppressed premise in the argument. But that would be inconsistent with the authors' rejection of deontological justification in favor of individualistic perfectionist teleology.

A more general concern with the authors' modified approach to liberalism is that they acknowledge very little if any public significance, not to mention sanction, for the fostering of virtue and the political relevance of moral norms concerning human flourishing. While they rightly claim that political life cannot produce virtue directly, they insist upon the opposite extreme that it should be limited exclusively to the protection of liberty. Is there not the possibility of a sensible middle ground that acknowledges that we cannot mandate every virtue and prohibit every vice, but that some things are concretely forbidden and promoted by moral norms? Actual political communities may require the existence of plural but limited forms of human flourishing arising from a set of substantive shared conceptions of the good. The genuine interests of concrete individuals for self-perfection and the common good of political communities may not coincide with the abstract theoretical requirements of the authors' position.

A case for this argument can be found in the work of political theorists such as Pierre Manent. In his recent book *A World beyond Politics? A Defense of the Nation State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), Manent offers a trenchant criticism of liberal democracy's tendency towards individualism and the "empire of consent" (ibid., 116) He observes that individualism is a "system of separations" (ibid., 13) that threatens as Tocqueville says "to confine [man] solely in the solitude of his heart" (ibid., 113). Paradoxically, individualism deprives human beings of the full exercise of their freedom through genuinely political commitments and activities. The retreat to the private sphere eventually leaves no room for the citizen's public agency and responsibility. Manent observes that modern democracies find it hard to justify compulsory military service, for example, because it is contrary to the principle of consent. Despite Rasmussen and Den Uyl's rejection of "state-of-nature" theories, Manent argues that the individualistic premise of consent ultimately reduces all political arrangements to an imaginary and impossible state of nature because it requires continuous individual consent.

While contemporary liberal democracies aim to reduce all social and political bonds to constructions of human choice, premodern societies accepted that certain prior obligations conditioned the exercise of human freedom. The individual was a debtor to the political community and to intermediate institutions such as the family and the Church. These institutions shaped character, but they also made possible individual agency within the public sphere. Could it be that individualism makes individual flourishing impossible because it lacks the necessary priority of certain political and social commitments, and it corrodes the respect for objective moral truths that protect the individual's freedom of action? Critics of Rasmussen and Den Uy! may contend that individualistic perfectionism fails to account for the common goods that must be prior to individual freedom for the wellbeing of the community in which human flourishing must be situated.

Rasmussen and Den Uy! do reasonably urge against the premodern view that, whereas ancient political communities were more homogeneous, modern life is characterized by greater diversity and a real plurality of viable conceptions of the good life. Manent's criticism of liberal individualism, however, does not rest upon a nostalgic desire for the return to the homogeneity of the ancient polis. Such nostalgia is equally as impossible as the dream of a political community constructed entirely by continuous consent. What Manent recommends is that we must elevate liberal democracy's more fractious tendencies by appealing to resources within democracy itself, and in order to do so we must avoid the excesses of radical individualism. None of this is inconsistent with recognizing real but finite as opposed to theoretically unlimited and abstract plurality.

Alexis de Tocqueville worried that the acid of democratic individualism would corrode public-spiritedness and the cultivation of civic virtues. Manent suggests that we can counter this tendency by defending democratic institutions that require individuals to be engaged politically and socially in their communities at the local level (ibid., 113). Participation in democracy is the key

to avoiding the isolation and solitude that the democratic "system of separations" enforces upon modern life. Such participation, however, requires that one be able to give consent that is durable over time. The problem is not that premodern societies entirely lacked a notion of consent, but that our contemporary view makes very little room for the durability of permanent or quasi-permanent promises. We are political existentialists according to Manent, who see consent as a continuous act of sustaining a choice that can be withdrawn at any moment. Hence, Rasmussen and Den Uy! insist upon principles of radically free entry to and exit from social and political ties.

Manent asserts, on the other hand, that consent is transformative: "The person who gives consent is different from what he was before giving consent. In the social and political context, he has become part of a whole" (ibid., 119). The transformative capacity of consent is what makes genuine political liberty and civic or social engagement possible. Paradoxically, it is only in appearing to lose some of our freedom through a durable promise that we gain the capacity to be real participants in the public sphere. In this way, the notion of the common good, which has a normative priority over our choices, can be defended even within a conception of liberal democracy that depends upon the principle of consent. This criticism of liberal individualism raises serious concerns for a theory of individualistic perfectionism like that of Rasmussen and Den Uy!. The deep structural defense of their political proceduralism rests upon a teleological conception of human nature. They concede that liberalism cannot be sustained without such a new deep structure. If individualism stands in the way of the attainment of human flourishing, because it neglects the necessary priority of certain civic commitments to individual choice, then their defense of political principles as "metanorms" and the absolute priority of political liberty must be questioned as well.

Notwithstanding the foregoing concerns, natural-law theorists and classically trained Aristotelians would do well to pay careful attention to the exceptionally thoughtful and detailed argument of this important book. Rasmussen and Den Uyl's command of and respect for a wide range of traditions in political theory, including Aristotelian virtue ethics and the Thomistic natural-law tradition, is evident. Their defense of liberalism provides a seminal argument that attempts to embrace and yet answer the objections of Aristotelians critics of liberalism such as Macintyre. This argument cannot easily be dismissed. The authors also defend moral and metaphysical realism, including the objective significance of human nature for ethics. While readers should question whether Aristotelian ethics requires radical individualism, the authors offer us a salutary reminder that traditional morality must account for the pluralism of modern life and the centrality of human freedom to human excellence.

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The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken. By S. *J.* MCGRATH. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006. Pp. 268. $69.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-8132-1471-8.

S. *J.* McGrath's insightful new study of the early Heidegger begins with the observation that Heidegger (much like Wittgenstein) "silenced any philosophy that presumed to speak of God" (ix), only to conclude with the judgment that *Sein und Zeit* belongs to the history of Jewish-Christian literature (albeit "unwittingly and under protest" [255]). In the pages that intervene, McGrath explores the young Heidegger's relationship to medieval thought, both to the Scholasticism and to the mysticism of the middle ages. The burden of McGrath's argument is to show that the early Heidegger's philosophy was anything but theologically neutral. Indeed, while dramatic shifts did occur in his thinking between 1916 and 1919, these do not mark the secularization of his thought; rather, it is during this period of time that "he became Luther's silent partner" (208). It is a Lutheran theology of "Godforsakeness" that Heidegger comes to embrace in preference to the Scholastic theology on which he had been steadily nurtured as a young man. On McGrath's account, this early shift in Heidegger's thought is not so much a matter of his forsaking God as it is of his coming to portray our human condition as "Godforsaken." This shift is from a Roman Catholic to a Lutheran theological perspective and not, despite appearances, from a religious to a nonreligious one. Having already "situated himself within a certain form of Christian faith," McGrath contends, the question for Heidegger (which only appears to have been "left open") of *"Dasein's* relation to God ... has been decided in advance" (12).

It is no simple task to explicate Heidegger's philosophy-early, middle, or late-in terms that will render it somewhat accessible to readers while also supplying the backdrop to an argument about how that philosophy ought to be evaluated. McGrath succeeds admirably in this regard; his book is one of the most clearly written, lucid treatments of Heidegger to have been published in recent years. He begins by supplying a sketch of the "medieval theological paradigm," the worldview that Heidegger abandons as he sheds his early Catholicism. McGrath's argument, at least in part, takes the form of a defense of that worldview, even as it shows how Heidegger's rejection of it was problematic.

Interestingly, that medieval paradigm is portrayed here as being essentially Thomistic, despite the fact that McGrath perceives the diversity of philosophical perspectives in the middle ages as being so great that "there is some question whether there is any sense in speaking of Scholasticism as a unity" (4). It is Duns Scotus, after all, who preoccupied Heidegger as the subject of his *Habilitationsschrift*, his first book-length philosophical treatise. Yet it is Thomism, organized around the doctrine of the *analogia entis*, that is taken by McGrath to represent the kind of Scholasticism most clearly rejected by Heidegger (see 22-23). Despite having an entire chapter (chap. 4) devoted to the

assessment of Duns Scotus's influence on the young Heidegger, this book is very much about the relationship between Heidegger and Aquinas.

This is not to suggest that Scotus and Scotism are insignificant in McGrath's account; indeed he explains that Scotus actually may have helped to supply some of the impetus for Heidegger's rejection of certain basic Thomistic ideas. As early as 1909, for example, Heidegger encountered a modified form of Scotism in the teaching of Carl Braig, one of his instructors at the University of Freiburg. Like Scotus, Braig rejected the doctrine of *analogia entis* on essentially epistemological grounds-he was convinced that such a doctrine undermines the possibility of any real knowledge of God (31). Of course, the Scotist alternative of the *univocatio entis* was hardly embraced by Heidegger, as he repudiated it in the opening pages of his *Sein und Zeit* (35). Nevertheless, his perspective is closer to this latter doctrine than it is to Thomism. As McGrath concludes, "Heidegger wants a Scotus whose *univocatio entis* has no infinite mode" (117). Had Heidegger not decisively broken with Scholasticism, McGrath speculates, "he would have been a Scotist" (119).

Of course, the Modernist crisis, the sterile nature of much of the neo-Scholasticism to which the young Heidegger was exposed, his reading of Augustine and of Luther, are all factors that helped to facilitate his break with the medieval Catholic tradition. But the early study of Duns Scotus was an important catalyst for this change. Although the author of that study understood himself to be engaged in the task of appropriating the resources of medieval philosophy for contemporary purposes, this work marks a point of turning away from Scholastic metaphysics and towards the development of the outlines of an existential phenomenology (with Husserl also supplying insights that were crucial for this transformation). In McGrath's view, "Heidegger reorients the whole of Scotus's metaphysics away from infinite being toward finite being" (102), with the latter conceived as essentially individuated (Scotus's *haecceitas)* and thoroughly historical. For Scotus, God as infinite being and the finite self determined in its *haecceity* are the "two extreme poles of the universe of being" (100). Heidegger rejects the former and dramatically accentuates the significance of the latter. Consequently, his "hermeneutics of facticity began as an exploration of ontology grounded in a *univocatio entis* but restricted to the finite" (116).

Heidegger's encounter with medieval mysticism, most especially as it was mediated in the writings of Meister Eckhart, was equally important a factor as was his wrestling with Scholastic philosophy for the development of his early thought. Having begun his study of mysticism as early as 1910, Heidegger characterized it, in his *Habilitationsschrift* on Scotus, as "the living heart of medieval Scholasticism" (120). At that point in time, Heidegger was still able to conceive of the relationship between medieval metaphysics and mysticism as being complementary. But while the significance of Scholastic philosophy gradually diminished for Heidegger with the passing years, mysticism remained for him a lifelong preoccupation. Mystical theology came to supply a paradigm of "meditative thinking" in contrast to the "calculative thinking" exemplified by

Scholastic metaphysics (121, 135). The mystic is orientated to the nothingness of the *Gottheit* in a way comparable to *Dasein's* orientation toward the indeterminate nothingness that is the horizon for all human experience. The focus on interiority and subjectivity in mystical theology prefigures a similar emphasis in Heidegger's mature existential phenomenology. Certain fundamental intentional acts explored in that theology-such as *Gelassenheit* (letting be), *Abgeschiedenheit* (detachment), *andHingabe* (devotion)-become key elements in Heidegger's later thought (134).

All of these insights gleaned from the study of medieval mysticism between 1910 and 1919 bear fruit in Heidegger's later writings, albeit significantly transformed. The cultivation of detachment through spiritual exercise, for example, is replaced in his phenomenology by an attentiveness to what is disclosed by certain basic human moods, such as anxiety or boredom (134-38). A profound boredom, not a boredom with this or that particular thing but rather a mood in which we ourselves are bored, is disclosive of nothingness for Heidegger, reveals being itself precisely because particular "beings no longer speak to us" (138). Similarly, he elaborates the mystical concept of devotion *(Hingabe)* in phenomenological terms by correlating it with Husserl's turning "back to the things themselves" (139).

Despite the importance both of Duns Scotus and the medieval mystics, it is Martin Luther who is the key figure in McGrath's account and the book's sixth chapter is devoted to an assessment of his influence on the young Heidegger. By 1919 Heidegger was thoroughly immersed in the study of Luther's theology, to which he had been introduced at least a decade earlier. In McGrath's view, Heidegger's phenomenological attack on the ontological tradition parallels and was inspired by Luther's earlier critique of the Aristotelian-Scholastic elements in theology (151). Luther's return to Christian sources is mirrored in Heidegger's recovery of historical life. Heidegger "conceives the hermeneutics of facticity as an atheological complement to Luther's *theologia crucis"* (153); philosophy ought to be preoccupied with our human condition as "Godforsaken." For Luther, this fallen, Godforsaken creature, completely incapable of any natural knowledge of God, must patiently wait for the hidden God to appear. So, too, Heidegger's philosophy becomes a philosophy of waiting, a "being-toward-the-future that recapitulates the past" (160).

This is a philosophy that Heidegger presumes to be divorced from theology, to remain silent on theological questions, but it is this presumption that McGrath evaluates as problematic. Indeed, "a hidden theological agenda appears all the more likely the louder Heidegger denies it" (169). *Sein und Zeit* is "mired," according to McGrath, "in the theological tradition it seeks to overcome" (173). Yet that is not quite accurate, because the argument here is that Heidegger employs freshly acquired Lutheran insights in order to undermine a Scholastic philosophical theology. Luther's original sin becomes transmuted as Heidegger's inauthenticity, while Luther's conscience becomes *Dasein's* choice of authenticity. Both thinkers conceive of human existence as a being-unto-death. The resulting ontology is only masked as being theologically neutral. Rather, echoing

earlier critiques of Heidegger (Scheler, Arendt, Derrida), McGrath sees ethical and religious ideas as permeating *Sein und Zeit.*

McGrath turns from his discussion of Heidegger's Lutheranism to a consideration of his treatment of early Christianity (including both the New Testament and Augustine), a process facilitated by Heidegger's relationship with Rudolf Bultmann. Then, in the final two chapters, McGrath offers a reconsideration of the Scholastic worldview that Heidegger has rejected, a retrieval and defense of that tradition. These chapters are intrinsically fascinating but bear a somewhat odd relationship to the rest of the book. I share McGrath's deep appreciation of medieval thought (although I probably find more of value in Scotus and Scotism than he would be inclined to do). I also embrace the Scholastic view in which "living is understood as being-held-in-being by a Creator God, whose glory shines through creation," a perspective "censured by Heidegger's ontology" (177). I agree that the experience of boredom can be a potential sign of "religiousness" (which motivated me to write a book about this topic) and not merely a symptom of the emptiness of human existence (251). And I find more that is *theologically* compelling in Karl Rahner's use of Heidegger than in Heidegger himself. McGrath characterizes the contrast between these two thinkers succinctly when he states that: "For Heidegger, transcendence is at root an experience of nothingness; for Rahner, transcendence is an experience of God" (237). Finally, I share McGrath's suspicion of certain postmodern philosophers who interpret the later Heidegger as a negative theologian incognito.

But this is just to say that I am still not inclined, McGrath's analysis notwithstanding, to think of Heidegger as a theologian at all or of his philosophical arguments as being religiously motivated (which is different, I agree, from claiming that they are religiously neutral, but that seems like a rather stringent requirement). It is just as possible for Heidegger to have gleaned insights from Scotus, Eckhart, and Luther for specific philosophical purposes as it was for Rahner to employ Heidegger's ideas for the purposes of his theology. Heideggerians are typically annoyed by Rahner's project in the same way that Heidegger bothers McGrath. Such an observation, however, does not support the claim that we should be suspicious of Heidegger when he frames his project as "atheological"; it certainly does not warrant the labeling of Heidegger as a "theological terrorist" (177). And it is probably unfair to Luther for Lutheranism to be regarded as the primary catalyst for the changes that produced such alleged acts of terror.

This is an interesting reading of Heidegger and an important study for philosophers or theologians who care about the contemporary relevance of "the medieval theological paradigm." I just wish that McGrath had portrayed Heidegger as being a bit less disingenuous, the differences between them as being a little more straightforward.

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The Specification of Human Actions in St. Thomas Aquinas. By JOSEPH PILSNER. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. xi + 273. £55.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-19-928605-1.

In Aquinas's ethics, the moral character of an action depends above all on what kind of action it is. "Specific *kinds* of human actions must be pursued to achieve certain specific ends in the moral life" (29). This fundamental characteristic of Aquinas's teaching distinguishes his ethics from any consequentialist or utilitarian ethics and from an ethics of intention: if the action is evil in kind, it does not become good if it has good consequences or if it is done with a good intention.

Aquinas's account of the specification of human, that is, moral actions is one of the most ingenious and difficult aspects of his moral writings. The *locus classicus*, questions 18-21 of the *Prima Secundae*, frequently leaves the reader puzzled. The difficulty of interpretation is due to Aquinas's nonuniform terminology, his elliptical writing style, and his parsimonious use of examples. The best way to achieve clarity is to read this key text in the context of the entire corpus of Aquinas's writings, above all the *Secunda Secundae*, where he discusses his moral principles in connection with concrete situations or specific virtues and vices. Just this sort of study is what Pilsner has provided: his discussions are never kept within the narrow bounds of a specific text, but take all of Aquinas's works into account. Pilsner intends to show that Aquinas's account of specification, despite contrary appearances, is fundamentally coherent (6).

Before summarizing parts of this fine book, I will briefly mention a few points of minor criticism. Regretfully, Pilsner does not pay sufficient attention to previous medieval debates, in light of which Aquinas's personal achievement would appear more clearly. A further complaint regards a certain lack of attention to using the latest critical text. The Latin texts Pilsner uses are taken from Roberto Busa's CD-ROM, which provides the best texts that were available during the course of the creation of this database, yet are not always the best texts today. Also, when citing Aristotle's *Ethica Nicomachea* in Latin translation, Pilsner does not recur to the critical editions by Rene Gauthier, but simply cites it from a nineteenth-century edition and refers to it as "old Latin translation" (179, 225). This label obscures the fact that Aquinas used not only the complete translation by Robert Grosseteste, but also the earlier, partial translations called *Ethica vetus* and *Ethica nova.* These minor issues do not diminish the value of Pilsner's book.

The study is divided into ten chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. In addition to the introduction, chapters 2 and 3 have introductory value, providing a summary of Aquinas's ethics (ch. 2) and discussing specification generally in natural things and natural motions (ch. 3). Six chapters examine the five specifying factors of human actions: end, object, matter, circumstance, motive (chs. 4-9). In what follows I will concentrate on chapters 4-6 and 9, where Pilsner discusses the most important specifying factors: end, object, and matter.

What Aquinas refers to as end *(finis)* is either "what one wants" or "why one wants something." Only when a thing is willed for its own sake do these two coincide. Otherwise, proximate and remote end are distinct. If I want money to buy a house, then "what I want" are both the house and money, and the remote end, the house, is "why I want" the proximate end, money. Pilsner explores the relationship between proximate and remote end in chapter 9.

In chapter 4, Pilsner examines the role of the end apart from the distinction of proximate and remote end. The end is what constitutes a human action: if one does not pursue an end, one does not act at all (51). An analogy illustrates the fundamental specifying role of the end for human action: what the substantial form is with regard to a corporeal substance, giving it its being and determining its species, is what the end is to a human action (48-51; cf. 30-37). The specifying role of ends can also be seen when human actions are considered as a special kind of motion. Motions receive their species from their term; therefore acts of will, which are a kind of motion, receive their species from their term, which is their end (52; cf. 39-44). (As Pilsner points out, Thomas is using the word "motion" here in the broad sense of change or action.) The most important argument for the specifying role of the end focuses on the fact that ends are freely and consciously pursued by the will and are in this way the principle of human acts (55-60). It is because of this preeminent role of the end in human action that Aquinas innovatively holds that the primary division of human actions is into good and evil: good and evil ends divide human actions primarily into good and evil actions (61-66). An end is evil, and hence a human action is evil, if it lacks due order to an appropriate end (68). How appropriate ends are distinguished from inappropriate ones is part of the discussion of chapter 5.

In chapter 9, Pilsner presents and solves a puzzle of interpretation: when something is done as a proximate end in order to achieve a remote end, which one specifies the action? Seemingly contradictory statements can be found in Aquinas. On occasion, he holds that the proximate end specifies, while at other times he argues that the remote end specifies. Yet as Pilsner shows, the answer to this problem depends on whether Aquinas considers human actions according to their kind or as individual actions. In the first perspective, the remote end is incidental to the species of action; in the second, the remote end is the crucial factor. When one commits adultery in order to steal, then the further end of stealing does not alter the nature of adultery when considered as a kind of action. Conversely, when considered from the perspective of the acting person, the focus is on the remote end as the object of his will, and his action is to be described as theft (by means of adultery). Said in another way, the external act is specified by the proximate end, whereas the internal act, that is, the act of the will, is specified by the remote end (234-38).

Chapter 5, which accounts for almost a third of the entire book, investigates the role of the object in specifying human actions. Pilsner distinguishes three meanings that the term "object" takes on in Aquinas's writings: (1) that to which an action relates; (2) a formal aspect which is crucial in determining an action's species, such as taking *one's own* or *another's* thing; (3) the proximate end, that

is, when something is done for the sake of something else, as when someone steals in order to commit adultery (72). The first meaning of object, that to which an action relates, is the most difficult to interpret. When someone sets out to buy bread, which one of these three is the object of his action: the bread (the thing related to an external action), buying bread (the external action), or the effect accomplished by buying bread (the action's effect)? According to Pilsner, depending on the context and the viewpoint, Aquinas can be found to interpret "object" in any of these three ways (77-91).

The key question is what accounts for an object's function in specification? This is not a physical aspect, but rather a "formal aspect" of the object at hand. The way the formal aspect (or formal *ratio)* of an object accounts for the specification of human actions is analogous to the formal aspect of an object that specifies the powers of the soul. For example, what specifies an action as either legitimate intercourse or adultery is a formal *ratio* of the object, that is, whether the woman is one's own wife or another's. "In a way analogous to what happens when 'coloured' or 'sensually attractive' identifies a distinct object for a human power, 'one's own' or 'not one's own' is a *ratio* which gives formal completion to this object of human action" (105). Since it is the formal *ratio* and not the material thing that specifies human actions, a single thing considered materially can be the object of two different species of actions or habits when considered formally; vice versa, two different things, materially speaking, can be considered as the same species of human action. An example of the first is when money is either the object of liberality or justice, depending on whether the money is given out of generosity or on account of obligation. An example of the second is pride, which can take as its foundation many different things (knowledge, possessions, etc.) (106-7). How is the formal aspect of an object identified, so that an action can be specified and hence morally evaluated? It is a comparison of the object to right reason that allows for this to happen. It is the standard of right reason that determines that the essential condition of adultery is the formal aspect that the woman is another's wife, rather than her height, etc. (118-21). The standard of right reason, that is, the rule for human actions, is discovered either by reason itself (natural law) or by revelation (divine law) (126-33).

The third meaning of object found in Aquinas is the proximate end. This meaning of "object" is usually found in contexts where he discusses means-end relationships. For example "fighting well" (= object or proximate end) is related to "victory"(= remote end) (133-34). This use of "object" is to be distinguished from the object as what is constituted by a formal *ratio.* For example, the virtue of religion is about offering things to God. "What is offered" is the object in the sense of proximate end, whereas the fact that it is offered to God constitutes the formal *ratio* (137-40).

A term that Thomas at times uses interchangeably with the term "object," to which however in many contexts he gives a specific meaning, is "matter." Matter as a specifying element in human action is either "matter about which" *(materia circa quam)* or "due / undue matter." According to Pilsner, '"matter about which' is what the action or habit is particularly engaged with or specially related to

during its operation, especially what is the direct recipient of the motion or activity" (148). For example, the "matter about which" for a carpenter is certain types of wood; for a clergyman, sacred things; for fortitude, dangers of death, etc. (149). "Matter about which" specifies when it is taken in the sense of the "end" (166). The other sense of "matter" that Thomas uses at times as an equivalent of "object" is "due / undue matter" (151). For example, the due matter of buying or selling is one's own thing, whereas undue matter is, for example, a spiritual thing; the due matter of intercourse is one's own wife as opposed to another's wife, etc. (152).

Although Pilsner discusses key issues of Thomistic casuistry, he avoids engaging himself in applied ethics. Important topics for such an enterprise, such as the notion of unintended side-effects and the doctrine of the double effect, are not discussed in his study. He also steers clear from recent debates regarding the moral object. Yet by offering a detailed and insightful study of the specification of human actions, Pilsner provides not only a very useful resource for the advancement of current debates, but also a book that is well suited to nonspecialists who are interested in Thomas's ethics.

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Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family. By MARC CARDINAL OUELLET. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006. Pp. 242. $26.00 {paper). ISBN 0-8028-2833-7.

Anthropology ("what it means to be human") is becoming the first area of Christian concern. It has always been true that 'growth in Christ" requires growth in humanity, of which Christ, *perfectus homo,* is the exemplar. In our contemporary world not only personal spiritual growth but the whole work of evangelization requires a new understanding of "what it means to be human." That brings us to Christ and indeed, through him, back "to the beginning" {the anthropological point of reference to which Pope John Paul II gave such importance). If, as we read in Genesis, man is made in the "divine likeness" ("ad imaginem Dei" [Gen 1:27]), the more his life develops in a truly human way the more "visible" or identifiable God becomes through that life; conversely, the less human that life, the less it leads him (and others) to God.

If the dehumanization of modern life is a powerful obstacle to evangelization, it follows that evangelization depends on the rehumanization of the lives of the evangelizers. Only if contemporary man, in some way inevitably aware of his tottering humanity, meets men and women who are strongly human precisely because they are Christian, can he be led by them to the God whom they truly (however imperfectly) image.

The contemporary and growing loss of awareness of the nature and dignity of human realities is nowhere more evident than in the devaluation of marriage and the family. Forty years of conciliar and postconciliar magisterium have repeatedly issued the challenge posed by all of this, a challenge summed up in *Familiaris Consortia* (para. 17): "Family, become what you are." The present book by Marc Cardinal Ouellet seeks to deepen the theoretical-theological basis to this pastoral challenge, while centering its analysis (as the subtitle implies) on "a Trinitarian anthropology."

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26); "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). These verses are the basis for the Judaeo-Christian belief that "man" (male-female), alone in visible creation, uniquely "images" God, and that our first understanding of God should arise from the contemplation of man. Again, only when rooted in this concept of man's being an *imago Dei* can natural anthropology establish man's nature and dignity as a thinking-willing being.

In the words of Genesis 1:26 ("ad imaginem ... *nostram")* Christian thought has also discerned an underlying Trinitarian reference. From this, one might think, does it not follow that "man" is also an "image of the Trinity"? Theology however has not made much progress toward any precise analysis of what this could imply. It has at times been suggested that an *imago Trinitatis* could be found in the family. This suggestion seems initially tempting, since the triad of "father-mother-child" does indeed appear as a trinity where love is ideally the creative and unitive factor. But endeavors to establish a meaningful analogy between the family and the Trinity have never prospered.

A first impression from Ouellet's book is that he wishes to re-proposes the "family as *imago Trinitatis."* While he acknowledges the difficulties of applying a "fully trinitarian logic" to the human reality of the family (18), he nevertheless sets out initially to follow a perspective which "invites us to study the relationship between Trinity and family from a theological point of view" (5). Practically speaking, however, he touches on this only in his second chapter, and one fails to find there any real development of the thesis.

Chapter 2 is entitled, "The Family, Image of the Trinity." It opens by invoking the "bold words" of John Paul II in his 1994 *Letter to Families:* "The original model of the family must be sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life" (LF 6). Ouellet appeals to the pope's idea of the Trinity as *model* of the family as if it lent support to the thesis of the family as *image* of the Trinity. While he acknowledges that this latter thesis is "still far from being unanimously welcomed," he does suggest that John Paul's words may hint at a radical departure from traditional views rooted in St. Augustine. "Has John Paul II taken the risk of rehabilitating an analogy set aside as inadequate for so long?" We should "[n]ote the pope's extreme prudence in affirming what he knows to be in contrast with a predominant tradition .... Has personalist philosophy, which nourished John Paul's thought.. finally overcome the objections of the great African master ... ?" (20-21).

As Ouellet himself recognizes (20), St. Augustine is in "total opposition" to the proposed thesis. It might have been helpful to the reader if Augustine's objections had been recalled-that is, that the implications of the thesis wreak havoc with Trinitarian dogma, inevitably presenting the Holy Spirit as in some way the spouse of the Father, or the Son as the offspring of the love between the Father and the Spirit (cf. *De Trinitate* 12.5-7).

Returning to the "image-model" question, we can say that the *model* the Trinity gives to the family is that of a communion of persons and of the creative nature of love. The *image* the family presents it is indeed one of creative love, but one in which the communion of two persons becomes a community of four, five, six, or more persons-so many separate expressions of the spouses' union and love.

This important distinction between communion and community is clearly expressed in John Paul's *Letter to Families.* "I have spoken of two closely related yet not identical concepts: the concept of 'communion' and that of community. 'Communion' has to do with the personal relationship between the 'I' and the 'thou.' 'Community' on the other hand transcends this framework and moves toward a society, a we.... The communion of the spouses gives rise to the community of the family" *(LF* 7). Ouellet does not bear these distinctions sufficiently in mind. Therefore a first assessment of his work must be that in what appears as its key chapter, the theme proposed in its title is not convincingly expounded.

That said, one could suggest that the fault in fact lies with the title, which does not do justice to the book. Properly speaking, apart from the 18 pages of chapter 2 (out of a total of 234 pages), the rest of the work, rather than treating of the title thesis, develops a series of rich and suggestive reflections on marriage itself, on its sacramental nature, on marital spirituality, and on the ecclesial mission that the family-spouses and children-has in the contemporary world.

Chapter 5 gives a splendid summary of salvation history as "a spousal drama of Trinitarian revelation: A God who is Bridegroom seeks after his unfaithful bride, he regenerates her in the suffering of humbled love and lifts her up in his glory. The Father sends his Son as the Bridegroom, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, who prepares the bride for the encounter with the Bridegroom and the fulfillment of the eschatological wedding" (80-81).

A very precious contribution of the work is the study of the role of the Holy Spirit within the conjugal covenant. Chapter 5, "The Holy Spirit: Seal of the Conjugal Covenant", sums this up: "The Holy Spirit, 'seal' of Trinitarian love, is given to the spouses as the 'seal' of their conjugal covenant, in prolongation of his spousal gift as the 'seal' of the covenant between God and humanity in Christ" (79).

Ouellet defends and develops the notion of marriage as a "permanent" sacrament (and hence a constant source of grace), and not a merely transient ceremony (cf. 127, 167, 200, 212). I thoroughly agree, though I would have liked to see more precise ascetical and pastoral conclusions drawn from theological statements such as, "Matrimonial grace primarily consists in

participating in the spousal love of Christ and the Church" (91). An effective catechesis on marriage needs to help the spouses be aware that the sacrament they have received entitles them to everyday aid for their practical task of loving each other and their children.

Ouellet gives a deep theological analysis of the sacramental basis for the spouses' ecclesial mission, very perceptively showing that the mutual love of husband and wife must be open to a third. In giving themselves, they go beyond themselves. From this he develops the further necessary openness of conjugal love to others beyond the family. Hence the social and evangelizing mission of the family. "openness to the 'third' ... therefore includes not only an openness to the child but also the missionary openness to society" (70).

Combining Pauline doctrine on the nuptial mystery of Christ and the Church (151) and modern personalist reflections on the theology of the gift, Ouellet shows how the mutual self-giving of the spouses should be seen as intimately connected with the Eucharist, the gift "par excellence." This is finely brought out, though there is perhaps an over-insistence on the importance of the liturgical setting for the celebration of marriage, suggesting that the celebration is only fully meaningful and effective when accompanied by a sense of ecclesial mission and participation given by the Eucharist (222-23). No doubt this is valid for specially well-disposed or formed groups. Yet one can wonder if it is equally valid for "those who are not yet initiated into this ideal" (222). It is debatable whether the ecclesial significance of marriage-the mission of the spouses-is driven home more by a liturgical ceremony (in a moment when most couples are in a highly emotional state), or should rather be the consequence of thorough premarital catechesis given over a period when the couple are more likely to weigh the deeper sacramental and ecclesial significance of their marriage.

Ouellet takes the undoubted sacramentality of marriage to suggest an analogous "sacramentality of the family" (51-54; 233). The sacramentality of marriage is unquestioned and fruitfully developed here. The idea of the sacramentality of the family, proposed in a tentative and undeveloped way, may be useful for broad pastoral work but its theological meaning is not clear.

A particular spirituality generally derives from a consciousness of a particular vocation. It is clear that one can speak of, analyze, and develop a conjugal spirituality derived from the sacrament of marriage (always with care not to submerge the individual life of each spouse into an abstract "couple." One spouse can live a deep conjugal spirituality even if the other does not.) It is not so easy to spell out the content of family spirituality, and even less so to give it a specific sacramental origin. So while Ouellet's comments on marital spirituality are profound, one finds a weakness in his attempts to develop the idea of familial spirituality based on the family as a "sacrament of the Trinity." "[T]he whole life of the couple and the family becomes, in Christ and in the Church, a *sacramentum Trinitatis* that lets the gift of divine unity and fecundity pass through the life of the world" (172). Insofar as one wishes to use the term *sacramentum Trinitatis* to describe the role of the family, one would have to

extend it equally to the ecclesial mission of the priesthood, religious life, and indeed each of the faithful.

Ouellet insists as a main point on "the sacramental grace of marriage as it grounds the ecclesiality of the couple and the family" (168). No doubt one can relate the ecclesial mission of the spouses to the sacrament of matrimony they have received, though it is perhaps more clearly grounded in their baptism. One undoubtedly can and should speak of the ecclesial mission of the family; but in this case the sacramental ground for this mission would seem to lie in baptism, common to all the family members, rather than in matrimony, peculiar to the spouses.

It would not be right to end without drawing attention to what may be a typographical oversight but is nevertheless regrettable: the fact that a translation (198) from the *Supplementum* to Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* identifies the *bona* of marriage and its ends. This is not consistent with the mind of St. Augustine or St. Thomas. The *bona* refer to the distinctive characteristics of the conjugal covenant (exclusiveness, permanence, openness to life). To confuse them with its ends (the good of the spouses and the procreation/education of children) makes any logical analysis of marriage impossible. This is all the more important in that no small amount of confusion has been created over recent years, in both theological and canonical writing, by a failure to distinguish properties and ends.

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Human Embryo Adoption: Biotechnology, Marriage, and the Right to Life. Edited by THOMAS V. BERG, L.C., and EDWARD J. FURTON. Foreword by ROBERT P. GEORGE. Philadelphia: The National Catholic Bioethics Center; Thornwood, N.Y.: The Westchester Institute for Ethics & The Human Person, 2006. Pp. 347. $24.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-935372-50-2.

Such an extraordinary book cannot easily be laid down. It contains a wealth of bioethical thinking on a question that the Magisterium of the Church has not yet pronounced upon (as of the writing of this review): namely, whether it is licit for a woman, married or not, to rescue by a medical transfer into her womb an abandoned embryo that has been frozen by a process of cryopreservation after in-vitro fertilization. Written by sixteen scholars, this brilliant work takes into account both sides of the question and seemingly exhausts all possible arguments. Each of the authors attempt to think with the Church, and argue politely for or against each others' positions. Perhaps the best book review is found in the

preface and the afterword of the book, crafted as much intelligence as the essays themselves.

With different nuances, six authors defend the liceity of heterologous embryo transfer (hereafter HET) and six others attempt to show that HET is intrinsically evil. It is taken for granted that this embryo is a human person by both sides, based upon both science and philosophy. The "Afterword" attempts to show why a theologian or counselor cannot impose his view of the question on women considering this procedure but must give both views as objectively as possible and let the women (with their husbands' consent, if they are married, or even single women) make the decision themselves. The theologian is not the Magisterium and lacks the authority to advise in its name when the Church's official teacher remains silent.

Summarizing both positions of this book, pro and con, is difficult because each author adds some distinctions which are not always commented upon by others. Notwithstanding, these subtleties in turn make the text very rich reading indeed. Hence, I will attempt to give the major viewpoints of both sides of the debate, even at the risk of oversimplification.

Those authors in favor of the process of adopting embryos (May, Brugger, Ryan, et al.) begin with the notion that the object of the act is bringing a person into the womb of the mother as a home, and its intent is to save the life of a human being. These persons who are frozen have been placed unjustly in a canister filled with nitrogen, and if someone has the courage and generosity to save them, the moral object is merely to transfer them to a hospitable womb where they can be nurtured, and thereby saved from death and hopefully be born. The opposing side would naturally say this is begging the question by merely describing what happens and claiming to have a moral species. Many of the authors in favor of this procedure base this overarching idea on the teaching of Pope John Paul II, as contained in *Veritatis Splendor* (78):

> *The morality of the human act depends primarily and fundamentally on the "object" rationally chosen by the deliberate will,* as is borne out by the insightful analysis, still valid today, made by Saint Thomas. In order to be able to grasp the object of an act which specifies that act morally, it is therefore necessary to place oneself *in the perspective of the acting person.* The object of the act of willing is in fact a freely chosen kind of behaviour. To the extent that it is in conformity with the order of reason, it is the cause of the goodness of the will; it perfects us morally, and disposes us to recognize our ultimate end in the perfect good, primordial love. By the object of a given moral act, then, one cannot mean a process or an event of the merely physical order, to be assessed on the basis of its ability to bring about a given state of affairs in the outside world. Rather, that object is the proximate end of a deliberate decision which determines the act of willing on the part of the acting person.

The evil of procreating a human being without authentic conjugal intercourse but by technology has already occurred. Further, the second evil of freezing these

tiny human persons also exists. Since the possibility of transferring embryos to a mother's womb outside of the marriage act is relatively new, Church teaching has not historically addressed the morality of this transfer. However, the Church has spoken about generation and procreation as the sexual act of parents together with God who creates and infuses the soul. Likewise, if the child exists for one minute, the couple are parents. Paradoxically, if no conjugal or sexual act occurs, the child has no parents, strictly speaking, because he has been the product of science not of a loving act. Therefore, nothing prohibits the liceity of this transfer, since the act of procreation has already happened. That this transfer is a new way of gestation, namely, that someone can become pregnant without conjugal intercourse, means it is an act which is indifferent *per se,* and linked with a desire for saving a life, an act of generous love.

Whether or not the woman who chooses to bring an embryo into her womb to save it has the resources to do this must also be taken into account for this act to be virtuous. Other due circumstances must be considered as well, including possibility of scandal since one has to go to IFV clinics to make arrangements for the act of embryo adoption. All things considered, May, Brugger, and Ryan argue persuasively that the moral species of the embryo transfer is objectively good, given the correct motives, intentions, and due circumstances included.

On the other hand, the opponents (Pacholczyk, Tonti-Fillipini, Austriaco, et al) claim that the act of transfer is intrinsically evil because it violates the inseparability principle of the conjugal act. Husband and wife together must generate or procreate. Implanting an embryo into a woman without the act of conjugal intercourse objectively impales, in the order of abstraction, the would-be self-donation that should take place in the one-flesh union of marriage. So, even if a couple chooses this act with the husband's consent, it violates the principle of inseparability of the conjugal act, which is to be unitive and procreative in principle.

Further, normally after fertilization gestation takes place in the woman. These authors maintain that this period of nine months in the womb is intrinsically linked to procreation or generation of a human being as a necessary property flowing from procreation which is successful in terms of producing an embryo. In other words, conception, pregnancy, and giving birth is the only way someone should morally be a mother. The opponents of this position would claim that this view is physicalism because it claims that what seems to happen in the physical order is morally normative. Yet while *Veritatis Splendor* teaches that the moral object or species depends "primarily" and "fundamentally" on the acting person, this does not preclude secondary reasons, based upon science, to discover what is the "right" reason for the morality of an act either.

Austriaco further asserts that the future father renders his wife immunologically ready to accept a child by an authentic conjugal act, which is another segment of the father's contribution to procreation that science has only recently discovered. Moreover, HET renders the father/husband useless and isolates him because the child has no direct relationship with him coming from a sexual act. For Pacholczyk, Tonti-Fillipini, Austriaco, and others, HETwillfully

breaks the one-flesh union of husband and wife. These authors essentially base their arguments on *Donum Vitae* which says:

> For human procreation has specific characteristics by virtue of the personal dignity of the parents and of the children: the procreation of a new person, whereby the man and the woman collaborate with the power of the Creator, must be the fruit and the sign of the mutual self-giving of the spouses, of their love and of their fidelity [Footnote 34. GS 50]. The fidelity of the spouses in the unity of marriage involves reciprocal respect of their right to become a father and a mother only through each other. (A. lb)

Germain Grisez, in his third volume of *The Way of the Lord Jesus,* gave certain key reasons for the liceity of adopting embryos, thereby bringing to debate this new problem to the Tradition and challenging moralists to come up with arguments either in favor or against the process. In the present volume, those in favor of the liceity of HET would assert that their opponents have redefined procreation to include gestation, a position not be found in the Tradition. The pro-HET school of thought would also argue that while the attempt to save some embryos is not the best solution to the problem, it at least potentially would save some human lives, the value of which are immeasurable. The best solution, of course, would be to bring these embryos into the womb of the original mother, provided she repents of the whole *NF* process (the position of both sides with some exceptions). Finally, these scholars and theologians seem to assume that since there is no clear prohibition of this procedure by the Magisterium, HET is morally indifferent rather than a grave evil. This last assertion, of course, begs the question. Apparent built-in purposes, at least, hinting at the teleology of an action are also part of an analysis to discover "right reason" or the morality of a human action. They may not be primary, but they are for Thomists (being moderate realists) at least part of the equation-in addition to the immediate intention of the acting person-to discover moral species.

Underlying the main arguments of all authors are side-line considerations about the morality of adoption in general, the consent of a husband to the procedure, the wet-nursing analogy, the issue of surrogacy, possible use of artificial wombs if they ever become available, and whether or not even a religious group of sisters could be founded, which would do the work of gestating the lives of the embryos and then letting other people adopt these babies.

The intensity of the debate makes the reading of this book exceedingly interesting. If one takes a side on the question, it does not mean that the opposing position is void of all merit. Now, we wait for the Church to give its guidance for the individual Catholic conscience.

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