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MERCY IN AQUINAS: HELP FROM THE COMMENTATORIAL TRADITION

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Omnes semitae Domini misericordia et veritas (Psalm 24:10)

IN QUESTION 21, article 3 of the first part of the *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas outlines the dynamics of mercy:

A person is said to be merciful [*misericors*], as being, so to speak, miserable at heart [*miserum cor*]; being affected with sorrow [*tristitia*] at the misery of another as though it were his own. Hence it follows that he endeavors to dispel the misery of this other, as if it were his; and this is the effect of mercy.[1]

However, when explaining the mercy of God, Aquinas carefully distinguishes the *effective* and the *affective* within mercy: "Mercy is especially to be attributed to God, as seen in its effect, but not as an affection of passion."[2] "It does most properly belong to Him to dispel that misery," but "to sorrow, therefore, over the misery of others belongs not to God." How then can one claim that God is merciful? Aquinas locates the formal nature of God's mercy within his power to relieve the misery of the miserable: "in so far as perfections given to things by God expel defects, it [i.e., the communication of perfection] belongs

[1] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 3. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the *Summa theologiae* are taken from the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948; repr. Christian Classics, 1981).

[2] Ibid.

to mercy."[3] Aquinas, therefore, situates the divine mercy within the divine perfection—a perfection powerful enough to remove all defects.

Contemporary theologians may find this account of the divine mercy somewhat unsatisfying. In our conception, a sharing in the misery of another stands as an essential element of authentic mercy. Hence, our untutored experience may incline us to press Aquinas and to ask, Why, exactly, does sorrow over the misery of others not belong to God? If one seeks clarification regarding this point within the above-mentioned passage, one does not find it. Aquinas does not here expound at any length upon the reasons why God does not share the misery of the miserable.

Thankfully we are not the first students of theology to approach the writings of Aquinas. Nor are we the first to observe the *prima facie* oddness of a seemingly impassive God within Aquinas's consideration of mercy. Throughout history, theologians of profound elegance and insight have sought wisdom from the Angelic Doctor. Some have even devoted their academic lives to the task of studying, expounding, and "commenting" upon the Thomistic text. In this essay, we intend to rely upon—and thereby highlight—a few of the valuable insights into divine mercy these Thomist commentators offer within their commentaries. Because the Thomist commentatorial tradition includes far too many figures to summarize in a few pages, we have decided to draw from only a small handful of the major Thomist commentators within a limited period of theological history, roughly from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries.[4] Moreover, while the Thomist commentators exhibit a wide range of uniqueness and nuance amongst themselves, we might observe in our analysis a fundamental first principle uniting these major figures: the real distinction between act and potency (as well as between form and matter).

[3] Ibid.

[4] For a fuller summary of the Thomist commentatorial tradition, see Romanus Cessario, O.P., *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

While *philosophical* in nature, this key Thomistic principle serves as the hermeneutical key for understanding what drew the commentators to Aquinas and the essential unity of their *theological* project.

I. Infinitely Powerful Mercy

Why does God's mercy lack any misery? The sixteenth-century Thomist commentator Thomas de Vio Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534) explains that "misery" implies some defect in the commiserating subject.[5] God is *actus purus*. His being admits to no potentiality and no passivity within himself. The seventeenth-century Carmelite commentators, the Salmanticenses, note the relevance of the act-potency distinction for understanding the divine mercy: "In God, mercy is not given through the mode of a potency, but through the mode of the highest actuality . . . which extends to the relieving of all misery."[6] The defect of misery requires some degree of potentiality and passivity within its subject. Therefore, God can experience no misery—or even co-misery.[7]

The seventeenth-century French Dominican Jean-Baptiste Gonet (1616-81) quotes with approval Cardinal Cajetan's commentary on question 30, article 4 of the *Secunda secundae* ("Whether mercy is the greatest of the virtues?").[8] Gonet then adds: "sadness and compassion are acts or affections of the

[5] "Quoad ly *miseria*, ut scilicet sonet defectum quemcumque" (Cajetan commentary on *STh* I, q. 21, a. 3). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Latin texts of the Thomist commentators are our own.

[6] "In Deo non datur misericordia per modum potentiae; sed per modum ultimae actualitatis: quae quantum est ex se, extenditur ad sublevandam omnem miseriam" (*Cursus theologicus*, tract. 4, disp. 2, dub. 2, no. 1 [Paris: Victor Palmé, 1876], 2:18).

[7] The last major contemporary Thomist commentator, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, reiterates this point: "St. Thomas most correctly distinguishes between the virtue of mercy and the emotion of commiseration, which is a praiseworthy inclination of the sensitive appetite, and is not a virtue" (*The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1943], 617).

[8] *Manuale Thomistarum seu totius Theologiae brevis cursus* (Venencia: Typographia Balleoniana, 1778), §4.

sensitive appetite, which are not able to be found in God, because that which is sensible is absolutely from something foreign [*alienum*]."[9] Gonet's slightly older contemporary, John of St. Thomas (1589-1644), confirms the truth of this claim. John of St. Thomas maintains that sadness (*tristitia*) and anything else pertaining to movements of the sense appetites (*passiones*) are "in no way able to be attributed to God," and that one only thinks they are with "grave error" because the sense appetites require bodily existence, which God absolutely does not have.[10] He invokes the real distinction between the rational appetite and the sense appetites. Sense appetitional movements are intrinsically bodily. Rational appetitional movements are spiritual.[11]

> Sadness [*tristitiam*] does not exist in God, because the feeling of sadness arises from those things which happen to us without us having willed them, and against our will [*contra propriam voluntatem*]. However, nothing is able to happen without God having willed, ordained, or permitted it. Therefore, there is nothing that is able to sadden God. All things are in his hand, and he is able to do what he wills [*facere quod voluerit*], without any resistance, and therefore without any sadness, because sadness supposes resistance to the will.[12]

Sadness does not exist within God. However, the loving inclination to alleviate the cause of sadness does.[13] The

[9] "Tristitiam enim et compassio sunt actus seu affectus appetitus sensitivi, qui non possunt reperiri in Deo, quia quod est sensibile, ab illo prorsus alienum est" (ibid.).

[10] "Supponimus tanquam rem clarissimam, quod si loquamur de istis affectibus, ut pertinent ad appetitum sensitivum, et vocantur passiones, nullo modo possunt Deo attribui, nec aliquis potest id cogitare, nisi errore maximo, putando Deum corporeum esse" (*Cursus theologicus*, t. 2, disp. 6, art. 2).

[11] "Loquimur de istis affectibus prout ad voluntatem pertinent, et spirituales sunt" (ibid.).

[12] "In Deo tristitiam non esse, quia affectus tristitiae est de his quae accidunt nobis nolentibus, et contra propriam voluntatem: nihil autem accidere potest nisi Deo volente, et ordinate, vel permittente: ergo nihil est quod Deum contristare possit: omnia enim in manu eius sunt, et potest facere quod voluerit, sine ulla resistentia: ergo et sine tristitia, quia tristitia resistentiam supponit erga voluntatem" (ibid.).

[13] "The holy doctor [St. Thomas] distinguishes in human mercy towards those who are in misery between being affected with sorrow at the misery of another and dispelling the misery of the other. But this sorrow, by reason of the subject of this sorrow,

eighteenth-century commentator Charles-René Billuart explains the difference between human and divine mercy: "For us the good of being merciful arises from the sadness of someone else in misery [*ex tristitia miseriae alienae*], which sadness is not possible for God, and relates materially to mercy and is the *ratio* of the subject in which it is found."[14] The sadness of those requiring mercy stands as the material principle of mercy. Both Billuart and the Salmanticenses approach the dynamics of divine mercy through the form-matter / act-potency distinction. The human recipient supplies the potential or material principle of the mercy. God serves as the formal and (pure) active principle. The miserable subject requires loving trans-*formation* that only the merciful impartation of grace can bring about.[15]

To summarize: The affective element that characterizes human mercy arises from the imperfect (i.e., potential) nature of the merciful person. Because potency has no place within God, sorrow has no place within God. However, the perfecting element within mercy not only applies to God but, indeed, it constitutes the formality of his very essence: his infinitely powerful, divine goodness. He is goodness.[16] "Therefore mercy, according to its formal signification, belongs properly and not merely metaphorically to God."[17]

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constitutes the *material part of mercy*; whereas, on the other hand, by reason of the object of this sorrow, the inclination of the will to alleviate the misery of another constitutes the *formal element* in sorrow" (Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 616-17).

[14] "Quod vero in nobis haec bona miserendi voluntas nascatur ex tristitia miseriae alienae, quae tristitia non competit Deo, id se habet materialiter ad misericordiam, et ratione subjecti in quo reperitur" (*Summa Sancti Thomae hodiernis academiarum moribus accommodata; sive cursus theologiae juxta mentem, et, in quantum licuit, juxta mentem Divi Thomae: insertis pro re nata digressionibus in historiam ecclesiasticam* [Paris: Victorem Lecoffre, 1886], t. 1, 395-96).

[15] Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 109.

[16] "The motive of divine mercy is not properly the misery of the creature (this being the matter about which it is concerned), but it is God's goodness to be made manifest in the alleviation of a person's misery" (Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 618).

[17] Ibid., 617. Garrigou-Lagrange explains the analogy of mercy: "Mercy in this sense is a most beautiful example of the analogy of proper proportionality. There is a relation of proportion between God's merciful attitude toward sinners imploring His pardon and that of man toward those who are in misery, all imperfections being removed, such as sorrow or a feeling of compassion" (ibid.).

The denial of any affective or "miserable" element within the God who is merciful may strike some of our generation as coldhearted or aloof. However, upon further inspection, one discovers that the commentatorial distinction between the *formality of mercy* and *materiality of misery* actually preserves the universal applicability of God's mercy to all those who need it—no matter what their state or condition. Rather than limiting its range and power, the immunity of the divine mercy from suffering any misery of its own actually serves as the foundation for its applicability to all forms of misery. Here Cardinal Cajetan offers a perspicacious explanation in his examination of the virtue of mercy:

> From its act, it appears that mercy in itself requires an immunity from misery. For if we distinguish between mercy *simpliciter* and mercy with respect to one or another kind of misery, we discover why mercy with respect to a particular kind of misery [is free from the misery it seeks to relieve]. For example, mercy for the poverty-stricken is, as such, immune from poverty because it seeks to give poverty relief. For the same reason, mercy is simply and absolutely free from misery, because mercy relieves misery [in general]—not [only] this or that kind of misery. And since every potentiality is a certain kind of misery (because every creature is subjected to some kind of misery in some way), it follows that as mercy in itself requires such and so great a superiority that it would be pure act [*actus purus*], that it would be the highest nature, that it would be God. Therefore, it properly pertains to God to be merciful and [thereby] to manifest his omnipotence, which is founded upon his pure actuality.[18]

God's own being (*actus purus*) explains his immunity from misery (whether felt or suffered). However, God's pure

[18] "Ex actu autem eius apparet quod misericordia in seipsa exigit immunitatem a miseria. Nam si distinguamus misericordiam in misericordiam simpliciter et misericordiam respectu talis vel talis miseriae, inveniemus quod qua ratione misericordia respectu talis miseriae, puta paupertatis, immunis est ut sic a paupertate, quia ad ipsam spectat dando sublevare paupertatem; eadem ratione misericordia simpliciter et absolute libera est a miseria, quia eius est sublevare a miseria non hac vel illa. Et quoniam omnis potentialitas miseria quaedam est (propter quod omnem creaturam miseriae alicui subiectam esse aliquo modo oportet), consequens est ut misericordia secundum se exigat in seipsa superioritatem talem ac tantam ut actus purus sit, ut summa natura sit, ut Deus sit. Et propterea Deo proprium ponitur misereri; et eius omnipotentiam, quae super actualitate eius pura fundatur, manifestare" (Cajetan commentary on *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 4, n. 4).

actuality is also the reason why God can remove the misery of those who are not pure act, those who do experience passivity, and those who do suffer the defects associated with contingent being. Because God is *actus purus*, he is omnipotent. And because he is omnipotent, he can be mercy.

When we extend this reflection outside of God himself, to the troubled realities of the human condition, we arrive at a most consoling truth. *God's mercy reaches all forms of struggle.* It applies to all miseries. Because God is pure act—and suffers no passivity—divine mercy admits to no material limitations or restrictions. All forms of misery are potential recipients of the all-powerful, all-actual mercy of God.[19] Hence, one understands why Aquinas maintains that mercy is the greatest virtue only if it is possessed by the greatest being—"surpassed by none and excelling all."[20]

In other words, by removing the element of passivity—even the shared passivity of "co-miseration"—from divine mercy, Aquinas and his major commentators illuminate the limitless range and power of God's mercy.

II. God's Wise Justice, Truth, and Mercy

Within the careful division and architecture of question 21 of the *Prima pars*, truth (a. 2) literally stands as the link between

[19] Cajetan also explains that, in God, charity is higher than mercy: "Because it is better for God to love himself than to relieve others from their misery [*quia melius est Deo diligere se quam sublevare cetera a miseria*]. However, because God's love serves as the foundation for mercy and extends his love to the benefit of all, mercy is greater *simpliciter* [*ideo simpliciter loquendo, misericordia Dei, etiam in ipso Deo, melior est quam caritas, utpote extendens suppositam caritatem suam ad benefaciendum omnibus*)" (Cajetan commentary on *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 4, n. 7). Garrigou-Lagrange also maintains this position: "All God's works have their foundation in His love for creatures, and it is manifested first by mercy, either in the broad or in the strict sense of the term, rather than by justice, which may be considered the branch in this tree of God's love; whereas mercy is, as it were, the principal part of the tree, its trunk, so to speak, which comes directly from the root. . . . [M]ercy is the first manifestation of love, whereas justice is, so to speak, its second manifestation" (Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 620).

[20] "Sed quoad habentem, misericordia non est maxima, nisi ille qui habet sit maximus, qui nullum supra se habeat, sed omnes sub se" (*STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 4).

God's justice (a. 1) and his mercy (a. 3). Aquinas always carefully considers what he treats. In their exposition of the Thomistic texts, moreover, the Thomist commentators frequently advert to this careful consideration. Aquinas does not believe that divine justice and divine mercy stand in tension with each other. Divine justice and divine mercy maintain their union in the divine truth.

In his consideration of divine justice, Aquinas observes that there are two types of particular justice, but only one is applicable to God. The first type of justice is commutative justice. This justice involves "mutual giving and receiving, as in buying and selling, and other kinds of intercourse and exchange."[21] Unsurprisingly, Aquinas denies that this type of justice is applicable to God (citing Rom 11:35). Commutative relationships of alterity are impossible with respect to him who is infinite, *per se*, and pure act. Such would pose a metaphysical impossibility.[22]

However, the second type of justice is applicable to God: distributive justice "whereby a ruler [*gubernator*] or a steward [*dispensator*] gives to each what his rank deserves."[23] Here Aquinas offers a key metaphysical insight often overlooked in considerations of divine justice and divine mercy: "the order of the universe, which is seen both in natural things and in volitional things, demonstrates the justice of God."[24] God's universal order of all of reality—both natural and volitional (i.e., moral) being—manifests his justice. His divine ordering extends to all parts of reality.[25] *No created being can stand outside of God's divine order.*

Moreover, Aquinas highlights the importance of the divine wisdom in the just execution of the divine order.[26] God is his

[21] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 1.

[22] See Cajetan commentary on *STh* I, q. 21, a. 1, n. 4., as well as the commentaries of Bañez and John of St. Thomas.

[23] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 1.

[24] "Ita ordo universi, qui apparet tam in rebus naturalibus quam in rebus voluntariis, demonstrat Dei iustitiam" (*STh* I, q. 21, a. 1 [n. 4]); translation ours.

[25] Cf. Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, 395.

[26] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 2.

own law—an infinitely wise and just law. And as infinitely just, God gives to each creature that which is its "due" in his wise providential plan. *Nothing escapes the "suaviter et fortiter" governance of the divine, providential wisdom*.[27]

Aquinas continues: "God's justice, which establishes things in the order conformable to the rule [*ratio*] of His wisdom, which is the law of His justice, is suitably called truth."[28] Truth is the law of God's justice. Both justice and truth conformingly terminate in the real order of his divine wisdom. There is no imaginary or illusory justice and truth within the sapiential order God establishes. *No being can claim immunity to divine truth*.

This order of divine wisdom serves as the essence of every law that claims God as its origin.[29] Therefore, Cajetan invites the student of theology to understand the "truth of justice" (*veritas iustitiae*)—a truth which the human person receives.[30] While all contingent creatures are subject to defects of various sorts, only creatures of a rational nature experience the "misery" of their defect.[31] The just truth proper to the human person also establishes the human need for mercy.

Within the sapiential order of truth, justice and mercy embrace. Divine wisdom establishes the just and true distributive order all creatures receive. Divine wisdom also serves as the foundation for the reestablishment of this true order through God's mercy. The wise—truthful—order of all of reality is present in justice and mercy. Justice establishes a being as the kind of being that it is, in truth. Mercy reestablishes the truthful order forfeited through sin. Here one recalls the sacrament of God's mercy (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* §1422) and

[27] Cf. *STh* I, q. 22.

[28] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 2.

[29] "Iustitia Dei facit ordinem in rebus conformem sapientiae suae, quae est omnium lex" (Cajetan commentary on *STh* I, q. 21, a. 2).

[30] "Et confirmatur tota manifestatio ex eo quod etiam in nobis sic invenitur veritas iustitiae" (ibid.).

[31] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 4.

God's divine work of image-restoration and image-perfection within the human creature, created *ad imaginem Dei*.[32]

Perhaps now we can begin to recognize the integral union of the topics Aquinas and his commentators examine: reality, truth, justice, mercy. God creates us with a certain kind of "truthful" existence—an existence that exists in conformity to the proportions his divine wisdom establishes in reality. God alleviates the misery of those who have fallen into the unhappiness that necessarily accompanies moral vice. His *misericordia* really, truly, actually, alleviates their *miseria*. Because of the creative and re-creative power of God's loving wisdom, justice and mercy meet in the reality of truth: "God acts mercifully, not indeed by going against His justice, but by doing something more than justice; thus a man who pays another two hundred pieces of money, though owing him only one hundred, does nothing against justice, but acts liberally or mercifully."[33] With this, Aquinas can conclude without any hesitation or reservation: "it is clear that mercy does not destroy justice, but in a sense is the fullness thereof."[34]

In justice, God creates us in the truth. In mercy, God restores us to the truth.

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It is little wonder that the sixteenth-century Thomist Domingo Bañez (1528-1604) begins his commentary on this question with the remark that those consecrated to the Holy Preaching should pay special attention to all that Aquinas says in question 21 of the *Prima pars*, "On the Justice and Mercy of

[32] See Romanus Cessario, O.P., "Sonship, Sacrifice, and Satisfaction: The Divine Friendship in Aquinas and the Renewal of Christian Anthropology," in *Theology and Sanctity*, ed. Cajetan Cuddy, O.P. (Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press, 2014), 69-98.

[33] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 3, ad 2.

[34] Ibid.

God."[35] What else does the authentic preacher of grace do than proclaim the real and true power of God's mercy?

"Mercy is accounted as being proper to God: and therein His omnipotence is declared to be chiefly manifested."[36] With their master, St. Thomas Aquinas, the members of the Thomist commentatorial tradition cease not to rejoice in the truth: God's omnipotent mercy suffers no limitations in its power to save the miserable. [37]

[35] "Haec tota quaestio notetur pro praedicatoribus" (Bañez commentary on *STh* I, q. 21, a. 1). Bañez certainly has in mind the *praedicatores* of the Ordo Fratrum Praedicatorum.

[36] *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 4.

[37] A version of this paper was delivered in the Aquinas Group of the Catholic Theological Society of America convention (June 9-12, 2016) in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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THE DIFFERENCE DIVINE MERCY MAKES IN AQUINAS'S EXEGESIS

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IN THEIR ESSAY, "Mercy in Aquinas: Help from the Commentatorial Tradition,"[1] Romanus Cessario and Cajetan Cuddy have masterfully performed the task of presenting the rich and voluminous commentatorial tradition on Aquinas, distilled into central philosophical and theological themes. In particular they identify the "real distinction between act and potency (form and matter)" as "the key philosophical principle" that created the "essential unity of their theological project." This principle expresses the fundamental distinction between God and creation. Yet the prominence of this philosophical principle in Aquinas and his commentators raises a question: To what extent can a philosophical principle be prior to a theological project?[2] Would not it be more faithful to the witness of Scripture and the creeds to begin with revealed theological principles and then adopt philosophical principles that fit within that theological worldview?

[1] This paper originated as a response to Romanus Cessario, O.P., "Mercy in Aquinas: Help from the Commentatorial Tradition" given in the Aquinas Group of the Catholic Theological Society of America convention (June 9-12, 2016) in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[2] Terence Tilley's *Inventing Catholic Tradition* follows a similar order of procedure, although he begins with a different philosophical principle along the lines of what might be called a constructivist view of truth. For example, in his introduction on the character of tradition as both handing on and handing over (as in treason), he writes that "Congar misses something that subsequent poststructuralists might have noted," citing the "brilliant and provocative work of Jacques Derrida" (*Inventing Catholic Tradition* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000], 9 n. 21).

This way of approaching the problem reveals both a profound misunderstanding and a profound concern. First, nervousness over philosophical principles reveals a profound misunderstanding since human beings always remain within language and the world and thus the meaning of that language and its references to the world around us must necessarily be part of the reception and transmission of divine revelation. To avoid philosophical principles would be tantamount to adopting a philosophical principle of pluralism or eclecticism.[3] Second, there is a legitimate concern that some philosophical principles or understandings of God and human beings could constrain the newness of divine revelation along the lines of a rationalistic deism as was attempted by Locke and others. This concern also takes the form of the desire to bring theology back to its central relationship with sacred Scripture, with the concern that a philosophically determined theological hermeneutics would distance theology from the world of biblical revelation.

Aquinas's presentation of theology, or *sacra doctrina*, as a *scientia* helps here by distinguishing between philosophical truths about God and human beings and philosophical principles by which human beings receive theological truths about God and human beings.[4] Aquinas shows that the principles of the *scientia* of *sacra doctrina* are taken properly from divine revelation received by the faith.[5] Thus, the principled understandings of God and the human creature come from revelation, not from natural reason or philosophy, by which only a few could come to know some truths, after a long time, with an admixture of error.[6] Nonetheless, the human creature cannot but receive this revelation as true. As Aquinas says, the virtue of faith attains to God as the *prima veritas*. The judgment that something is true and not false presupposes the application

[3] For an extended analysis of this theme, see Charles Morerod, O.P., "All Theologians Are Philosophers, Whether Knowingly or Not," in *Theology Needs Philosophy: Acting against Reason Is Contrary to the Nature of God*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 3-18.

[4] For example, see *STh* I, q. 1.

[5] See *STh* I, q. 1, a. 3; II-II, q. 1, a. 6.

[6] See *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1.

of philosophical principles about the nature of the human intellect and the nature of the intelligibility of that which the intellect apprehends. The key philosophical principles here would be, first, the principle of non-contradiction and, second, the real distinction between act and potency. The first is necessary for the human intellect to reach a true judgment; the second is necessary for that judgment to be a trustworthy judgment about a constantly changing world.[7] By making this distinction between philosophical truths about God and human beings and philosophical principles by which human beings receive theological truths about God and human beings, the Thomistic tradition avoids the deistic rationalism that occludes the biblical revelation.

Even if philosophical principles are necessary for the human reception of revelation, there remains the concern that emphasizing the philosophically laden superstructure of the theological project obscures or weakens the ability of the theological project to attend to the biblical witness and the existential situation of human beings. To address this concern, I want to examine Aquinas's own practice of biblical interpretation as it applies to questions of God's mercy. This examination will also consider how the philosophical principle of the distinction between God and his creation, highlighted by Cessario and Cuddy, illumines the biblical revelation. I will examine three occasions on which Aquinas speaks about mercy in its biblical context: first, his commentary on Ephesians 2:4, which describes God as "rich in mercy"; second, his commentary on Matthew 5:7, which speaks of "Blessed are the merciful"; and, third, his commentary on Psalm 50, which begins, "Have mercy on me, O God." Then, I will consider briefly the Thomistic commentator Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange to see how his comments on mercy complement the insights gained from Aquinas's exegesis. This exploration of Aquinas's biblical commentaries on the theme of mercy will show him to

[7] See Josef Pieper, "The Hidden Element in Aquinas' Philosophy of Creation," in *The Silence of St. Thomas Aquinas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J., and Daniel O'Connor (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 43-71.

be attentive to the newness of revelation and its central relationship to sacred Scripture, notwithstanding his use of philosophical principles. In fact, his philosophical distinction between act and potency is crucial to understanding the full import of the biblical revelation of God's mercy, insofar as God's full actuality is what makes him able to be merciful without limit.

In Ephesians 2:4-5, Paul teaches, "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ [by whose grace you have been saved]." Aquinas attends to the connection that Paul draws between God being "rich in mercy" and the claim that this is out of "the great love with which God loves us."[8] Aquinas thus begins his treatment of God's mercy by attending to God's love. In his division of the text, he writes, "The efficient cause of the divine blessing of justification is God's charity."[9] Aquinas then identifies a fourfold goodness and efficacy of the divine love, which (1) brought us into existence; (2) made us in God's image, capable of enjoying his beatitude; (3) renewed us when corrupted by sin; and (4) gave over his own Son for the salvation of the human race.[10] In this way, Aquinas recalls the unity of creation and redemption as manifestations of the goodness and efficacy of God's charity. The love that redeems is the same love that creates.

[8] The relationship of God's mercy to his love is another topic addressed frequently in the commentatorial tradition. See Garrigou-Lagrange's treatment in *The One God* (*The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1943]).

[9] *In Eph.*, c. 2, lect. 2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are taken from Aquinas's *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. and intro. by Matthew L. Lamb (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, Inc., 1966). Although the dating, composition, and redaction of this commentary is complicated and imprecise, it is generally held that it is part of the entire *Expositio et lectura super Epistolas Pauli Apostoli* that was carried out during Aquinas's time at regent-master in Rome (1265-1268); see Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, trans. Joseph Trabbic and Roger Nutt (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 188-90, 441-42.

[10] *In Eph.*, c. 2., lect. 2.

Aquinas then turns to the phrase "rich in mercy." Again, he grounds mercy within charity by speaking first of love and then of mercy. In both cases he highlights the difference between what is human and what is divine. First, he distinguishes the human creature's love from God's love (*amor*). Human love is caused by the goodness of the one who is loved and, as such, proceeds by way of justice. God's love, however, is the cause of the goodness in the one who is loved and, as such, proceeds not by way of justice but by way of mercy.[11] God's love must be considered through the understanding of his creative activity. He does not cease to be the creator when he loves. Instead, his love is but another perfection of his creative act. Here Aquinas describes mercy as "the root of divine love" (*quasi radix amoris divinis*). When God's love causes goodness in the fallen human creature by means of his redemptive activity, it restores the order of the universe by bringing adopted children into right relation with him. As such, the love is ever merciful. The contrast with human love is insightful since it shows that human love is actually less merciful than divine love, for human love is a just response to the goodness of the other person. The absence of imperfection in God does not imply that God's mercy is less than human mercy because it lacks misery or the passion of mercy. It is rather human mercy that is less than divine mercy because it lacks the full efficacy of mercy to heal and elevate the wounded human nature in another person.

Continuing to unfold Paul's description of God as rich in mercy, Aquinas draws a fuller contrast between human mercy and divine mercy. He distills the differences by affirming that human mercy is restricted and bounded and that divine mercy is infinite and unlimited. Human mercy is restricted (1) by the amount of one's possessions, (2) by the fact that one can only pardon offences against oneself and that not too much for fear of recurrence, and (3) since the human being's ability to remit a punishment is limited by a higher divine law. God's mercy, however, is not limited by any scarcity of his wealth, fear of

[11] Ibid.

repeated injury, or any higher law.[12] As we saw before, the balance between human and divine mercy tips definitively in God's favor. The human ability to suffer with another via the embodied creature's sensitive appetitive is not the chief element in mercy. Mercy is primarily the ability to help another, to restore to another the integral goodness to which the rational creature has been called. In terms of efficacy, human mercy is simply too limited to restore fully proper order; only divine mercy can do so.

The insight that divine mercy is the exemplar of which human mercy is only an imitation is echoed and illuminated by the extended quotation from Cardinal Cajetan in Cessario and Cuddy's essay: "mercy in itself requires an immunity from misery" and "mercy is simply and absolutely free from misery, because mercy relieves misery [in general]—not [only] this or that kind of misery." Although the commentatorial tradition introduced the language of the "formality of mercy" and the "materiality of misery," one can judge that this distinction is central to Aquinas's practice of biblical interpretation through his consistent adversion to the contrast between divine and human mercy.[13] Markus Barth in his *Commentary on Ephesians*

[12] Ibid.

[13] See Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*, Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 218-19, in which he strongly contrasts God's mercy with human impotence. Commenting on Eph 2:4, "rich in mercy—for he loves us with all his love," Barth writes, "An allusion is made to OT passages such as Exod 34:6 and Deut 7:7-9 that speak of the riches of God's mercy, the motivation of his action by love alone, and the identity of God in his essence and his manifestation. The frequent allusion to the 'riches' of God is a peculiarity of Ephesians. An elaboration upon the blessedness of the poor might correspond to it beautifully, but it is not found in this epistle. Those granted God's mercy are dead in sins, 2:5, not just poor. A poor man may still cry and beg; he has the God-given right to be granted *sedaqah* (meaning 'righteousness' in the OT; 'charity,' 'giving alms' in Matt 7:1 and rabbinic literature). But the dead have neither right nor hope, and yet God's riches are such that he calls the dead to life. Mercy (*eleos*) is the LXX and NT translation of the OT term *hesed*. The RSV rendering of this noun is 'steadfast-love' and suggests that *hesed* is the stable loyal way in which God keeps the covenant. The KJ version 'loving-kindness' may still be preferable because it conveys the meaning of 'undeserved mercy' or 'prevenient grace.' Though 'love' belongs in Deuteronomy to the covenant terminology, Ephesians does not make use of specific covenant language. In this epistle

likewise interprets the Pauline reference to God's being "rich in mercy" as a contrast to human poverty. Barth goes even further to argue that the difference is greater for two reasons: first, God's riches mean that he acts by the motivation of his love alone (similar to Aquinas's observation that God loves not out of justice, but out of mercy); and, second, human beings are not merely poor, but are dead, as described in Ephesians 2:5, "dead through our trespasses." Thus, the term "mercy" as applied to God reveals his unilateral gift of salvation, the dead being brought to eternal life. This is the efficacious mercy of God.

Aquinas also treats mercy in his commentary on the beatitudes. Here too he contrasts human and divine mercy. Following the tradition of Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, he sees the beatitudes not as randomly ordered aphorisms, but as an ordered ascent to happiness with God.[14] In this way he comments about why the blessing on the merciful follows upon that of those who mourn. Just as those who mourn do not feel physical hunger, so those who are in sin do not feel spiritual hunger. The necessary path to awaken spiritual hunger is through the practice of forgiving sins. Aquinas notes that Jesus "continues at once: Blessed are the merciful, because justice without mercy is cruelty, while mercy without justice is the mother of destruction."[15]

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the father-child relationship between God and man, which is first praised in 1:4ff., supersedes the contracted covenant bond and its legal implications as much as it does in Rom 8." Note that this final contrast between the covenant and the father-child relationships seems to impose a restricted understanding of the covenant that excludes the dynamic aspect associated with the promises of the new covenant in Jeremiah and the institution of the new covenant in the Gospels.

[14] See Michael Dauphinais, "Languages of Ascent: Gregory of Nyssa's and Augustine of Hippo's Exegeses on the Beatitudes," *Nova et vetera* (English ed.) 1 (2003): 141-63.

[15] *In Matt.*, c. 5, lect. 2. J.-P. Torrell, O.P., locates the *Lectura super Matthaeum* during Aquinas's second period in Paris and dates it as most likely from 1269-70. According to Torrell, the commentary on Matt 5:11-6:8 and 6:14-6:18 has been interpolated from a later Dominican author of the thirteenth century. This does not impact, however, the section under consideration in this essay. See J.-P. Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. R. Royal (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 55-57, 339.

Aquinas continues to examine the full saying "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He connects human mercy not only to the misery we experience at the misery of others, but also and primarily to the effort to remove that misery. He makes a twofold distinction in our neighbor's misery: first, that which comes from the lack of temporal things, and, second, that which comes from the lack of spiritual things through sin.[16] With respect to the first, Christians are called to share their temporal goods with their brothers and sisters in need as indicated in 1 John 3:17; with respect to the second, Christians are called to admonish the fallen to return, as in Matthew 9:36 when Jesus saw the crowds "like sheep without a shepherd" and had compassion on them. This is the path by which we show mercy to others. How then shall the second half of the beatitude be fulfilled and the merciful obtain mercy themselves? Aquinas turns to the dissimilarity between God and human beings. He first observes that "God's gifts always exceed our merits." Thus, he continues, "the mercy God bestows on us is much greater [*multo maior*] than that which we bestow on others."[17] He then explains that this mercy begins in this life in two main ways: God alleviates our misery, first, by forgiving our sins and, second, by removing even temporal imperfections, such as making the sun rise to dispel darkness. The removal of temporal imperfections, of course, will only be perfected in the eschatological future when all misery will be removed. Mercy primarily manifests itself in the removal of misery, both in its spiritual and physical dimensions. Those who attempt to remove these miseries in others are said to be merciful. Yet their mercy is not self-generating; it is a response to the mercy of God. It involves sharing the temporal gifts of creation with those who lack temporal goods and sharing the spiritual gifts of forgiveness of sins with those who lack divine

[16] *In Matt.*, c. 5, lect. 2.

[17] Ibid. "That mercy begins in this life in two ways: first, because our sins are forgiven: 'Who forgives all your iniquity' (Ps 103:3). Secondly, because he removes temporal imperfections, so that he makes his sun to rise. This will be perfected in the future, when all wretchedness, both of guilt and punishment, will be removed: 'Your mercy, O Lord, is in heaven' (Ps 36:6). And this is because they shall obtain mercy."

grace. The limited and partial mercy of the merciful participates in the perfect mercy of God. Their happiness in turn comes in the mercy they receive from God, who alone can alleviate every misery.

Aquinas's commentary on Psalm 50 provides yet another worthy consideration of the interplay between divine and human mercy.[18] Aquinas divides the psalm into two parts: the beseeching of mercy and the promising of correction. He comments on the opening of the psalm, "Have mercy on me, O God," by noting that there is no argument for God to grant mercy, but simply a plea for mercy.[19] He defends hope in God's mercy by adducing the perfect goodness of the divine nature. He begins by reflecting upon the divine nature, which he understands as goodness itself, explicitly referring to Boethius. He then describes mercy as "nothing other than goodness referred to the driving away of misery."[20] He further describes the divine mercy as "great" in its "incomprehensibility," "sublimity," "power," and "effect." One of the reasons he offers to expound the sublimity of divine mercy is that "mercy does not refer to a passion of the soul in God, but to goodness driving away misery."[21] Mercy's essential characteristic thus is the removing of misery and the perfecting of the creature.

Aquinas develops his understanding of the power of divine mercy when he comments on the psalm verse, "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and a right spirit." He first attends to the word "create" in the context of nature and grace. In "the *esse* of nature," to create means to bring into being something from nothing (*ex nihilo*) as in Genesis 1:1. In "the *esse* of grace," to create means to justify the sinner as in Ephesians 2:8, "For we

[18] This is Psalm 50 in the Vulgate or Psalm 51 in the RSV Catholic Edition. Porro dates the *Lectura* or *Postilla super Psalmos* during Aquinas's time as regent master in Naples, 1272-73 (*Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, 443).

[19] *In Psalm 50*. Citations refer to the commentary on the entire psalms since there are no subdivisions. The Latin version of the text and the English translation, with slight modifications, are taken from the Dominican House of Studies website (www.dhspriory.org/thomas/psalmsaquinas).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., translation modified. "Nam misericordia non signat in Deo passionem animi, sed bonitatem ad repellendam miseriam."

are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works." By attending to the connection between mercy and creation, Aquinas emphasizes the miraculous character of mercy by which human beings are freely restored to the grace of being in right relation to God. In this manner, not only is a "clean heart" required, but also a "right spirit." Aquinas argues that one of the effects of sin is "the disorder of the mind" that occurs when the mind turns away from its proper end to a "changeable good" (*commutabile bonum*).[22] Mercy thus not only removes the misery of separation from God and the stain of the soul, but also restores a "right spirit" so that the person may properly love God as the highest good. Although Aquinas does not use the language of "a new creation," he illustrates the theme by which the act of divine mercy is to renew creation to its perfection.

The difference divine mercy makes comes to the fore in Aquinas's comments on "Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy holy spirit from me." Here he emphasizes the restoration of grace and the effect of grace as becoming pleasing to God, which allows us to see God and to be seen by him. Aquinas explicitly contrasts God's grace with human grace. While we are pleasing to other human beings on account of our goodness, it is God's goodness that makes us good and thus pleasing to him.[23] Aquinas says this is why we speak of divine grace as "grace which makes pleasing" (*gratia gratum faciens*).[24] Of central importance is God's ability to effect mercy by restoring us to his presence.

The difference with divine mercy, however, is not so great that it may not inspire human mercy. Thus, in the second part of the psalm, which Aquinas identifies as promising correction,

[22] Ibid. In the same section, Aquinas refers to the second effect of sin first as the *inordinatio affectus* and second as the *inordinatio mentis*. The second is likely an echo of the subsequent citation of Eph 4:23, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (*Renovamini spiritu mentis vestrae*). Aquinas lists the first effect of sin as the "pollution of the soul" (*inquinatio animae*).

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. This Latin expression is often translated into English by the phrase "sanctifying grace," for example, *STh* I-II, q. 111, a. 5.

the readers who have sought God's mercy are now invited to practice mercy themselves. Psalm 50 closes with a promise of a new sacrifice, "Deal favourably, O Lord, in thy good will with Sion; that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up. Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole burnt offerings." Aquinas sees this promised sacrifice as having a threefold reference: first, to the sacrifice of Christ as the only true "sacrifice of justice"; second, to "works of justice and of mercy" as offered by those he has justified; and, third, to the "heavenly Jerusalem" in which all of the saints shall offer a just sacrifice of praise.[25] In this manner, the work of God's mercy in Jesus Christ leads to the works of mercy by Christians in this world, which in turn lead to the eternal worship in heaven. In other words, God's alleviation of our misery calls us to alleviate the misery of others while trusting that God will eventually alleviate all misery in heaven.

In his commentaries on Ephesians 2, Matthew 5, and Psalm 50, Aquinas emphasizes the difference between God's mercy and human mercy as an occasion for thanksgiving. The difference between God's mercy and human mercy is not to be downplayed or reduced to equality since it is the difference of God's mercy that makes it saving. God's perfection as the creator is what allows him to be the redeemer.

We may now turn to the last Thomistic commentator identified by Cessario and Cuddy, the sometimes-caricatured Dominican Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. Since Aquinas's biblical commentaries have emphasized the contrast between human and divine mercy, it is appropriate to consider how he characterizes the application of the language of mercy to God. Aquinas says that the passion of mercy may be applied only metaphorically to God since the passion of mercy is found in the sensitive appetite of the human creature.[26] Nonetheless, the virtue of mercy as found in the will may be properly attributed

[25] Ibid.

[26] Note that Aquinas affirms that metaphorical language remains "necessary and useful" to the project of *sacra doctrina*. See *STh* I, q. 1, a. 9, ad 1.

to God since it is the virtue by which one heals the misery of another.[27]

Garrigou-Lagrange employs analogy to show that this difference in mercy is not total:

> Mercy in this sense [as in perfect goodness that removes defects] is a most beautiful example of the analogy of proper proportionality. There is a relation of proportion between God's merciful attitude toward sinners imploring His pardon and that of man toward those who are in misery, all imperfections being removed, such as sorrow or a feeling of compassion.[28]

The perfection of mercy consists in the alleviation of misery; thus, human mercy as a virtue is analogous to and properly points to God's mercy. Divine mercy thus serves as a useful example for imitation by others. Garrigou-Lagrange describes the infinite mercy of God as "the foundation of our hope, and . . . a most remarkable example for us of mercy and compassion toward our neighbor, being in agreement with the Gospel, which says, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'"[29] The passionless perfection of God's mercy is not rooted in his indifference to the world, but in his perfection as the creator of the world. As Aquinas had observed in commenting on Ephesians, God's love causes goodness by way of mercy. Garrigou-Lagrange echoes this efficacy of divine charity:

> God takes pity on us through love alone, inasmuch as He loves us as belonging to Him. . . . Consequently, there is neither anthropomorphism nor sentimentality in this, but purely revealed truth that has been theologically explained. The motive of divine mercy is not properly the misery of the creature (this being the matter about which it is concerned), but it is God's goodness to be made manifest in the alleviation of a person's misery.[30]

And, yet, analogical speech is not univocal. Garrigou-Lagrange emphasizes that, although we are convinced through faith that justice, mercy, and liberty are ultimately reconciled in God, we

[27] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 1.
[28] Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 617.
[29] Ibid., 618.
[30] Ibid.

do not fully know how they cohere in God: "as long as we are in this life we always make use of limited analogical concepts, and these represent God's spiritual attributes after the manner of a mosaic, the little colored stones of which cannot express its charm or appeal."[31]

I have sought to show that an explicit reliance on central philosophical principles does not limit the reception of the biblical revelation to a kind of rationalistic deism or a nonbiblical philosophical distortion of *sacra doctrina*. In his biblical commentaries Aquinas develops the theological theme of God's mercy as presented in biblical revelation. In his comments on Ephesians, Matthew, and Psalm 50, he follows the biblical authors by distinguishing between God's mercy and human mercy, a distinction that follows from God's existence as pure act and human existence as limited act. Thus, in these biblical contexts, it is God's mercy that is mercy's exemplar and perfection, and human mercy that participates in that perfection.[32]

[31] Ibid.

[32] Note that Aquinas's theocentric approach does not regard human misery or sadness as central to the perfection of mercy. When feelings of sadness tend to replace the will to alleviate the misery of another, then there may arise a tendency to remove feelings of sadness through the elimination of the person suffering. Consider the phenomenon of "mercy" killings and legalized assisted suicide. Flannery O'Connor addresses this theme by writing, "the kindness when removed from the source of that kindness in Christ may result in the gas chamber," paraphrased from her "Introduction" to *A Memoir of Mary Ann: By the Dominican Nuns Who Took Care of Her* (1961). Mary Ann was a 12-year-old with an inoperable and terminal facial tumor who was taken care of by the Dominican Nuns in Louisville, Kentucky for the last six months of her life.

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A NOTE ON THOMAS AND THE DIVINE MERCY

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A PUZZLING THING about the topic of the divine mercy as presented in the early part of the *Prima pars*, especially in light of the detailed commentaries presented by Cessario and Cuddy,[1] is how relatively little Thomas speaks about it. Pope Francis devoted the entire 2016 year to a Jubilee of Mercy. The Catholic Theological Society of America followed suit by devoting its 2016 conference to the topic. Yet Thomas does not devote a single Scholastic question to it in the *Summa*. The topic of the divine names gets question 13 (12 articles), the divine knowledge gets question 14 (16 articles), and the divine will gets question 19 (12 articles). Our anchor text, question 21, is a four-article-long question that emerges from the larger issue of God's will in itself (*absolute*). Yet the question is *not* about the divine mercy on its own, but is rather about features or properties of the divine act of love, a topic to which the whole of question 20 is devoted. God's justice and mercy are considered in question 21 as quasi-virtues that perfect the divine act of love (question 20), which in turn is the proper act of God's will (question 19).[2] The divine will of question 19

[1] This paper originated as a response to Romanus Cessario, O.P., "Mercy in Aquinas: Help from the Commentatorial Tradition" given in the Aquinas Group at the Catholic Theological Society of America convention (June 9-12, 2016) in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[2] *STh* I, q. 20, pro.: "Thereafter we should give consideration to those things that absolutely pertain to the will of God. Now, in the appetitive part in us there are found both the passions of the soul (like joy, love, and things of this sort), and the habits of

is Halley's Comet, and mercy is the tail of dust trailing in its wake. When God's mercy does appear it seems to vie with God's justice for our attention.

Cessario and Cuddy help us understand why this is, both with their two-part structure and with the sources they employ, the commentators. My focus here will be on the original text in its own light, before the varnish of the commentators. Thomas's original is a dense *chiaroscuro*, which both raises questions and offers opportunities.

First, while Thomas is still well within the consideration of the divine being and action (*STh* I, qq. 3-26), he is sensitive to our human understanding. For us humans an element of suffering seems to be built into any consideration of mercy. It is the first hurdle that needs to be jumped in question 21, article 3; objection 1 frets about mercy because it is a subset, a species, of sorrow—and that cannot be in God. In the body of the article, Thomas alludes to sorrow via a consideration of the *quid nominis* of mercy. The term *misericordia* means having a *miserum cor,* a heart afflicted by the sufferings of another. Thomas dismisses this right away; in the body of the article he says "being saddened at the misery of another does not befit God" (*tristari . . . de miseria alterius non competit Deo*). He does not say more. Similarly, in addressing the first objection he notes that the objection was invoking mercy as a kind of "being affected by suffering" (*obiectio illa procedit de misericordia, quantum ad passionis affectum*). Again, he gives no further commentary.[3]

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moral virtues (like justice, fortitude, and things of this sort). Hence we will first give consideration to God's love, second to the justice of God and to his mercy."

Thomas uses our human constitution and our awareness of it as a way to lay out a presentation of these features that we know are in God. Knowing that habits are cultivated dispositions of operative powers and their acts, he starts with love, akin to the passion of love (see *STh* I, q. 20, a. 1, ad 1; *STh* I-II, q. 28, a. 6, ad 1); then justice and mercy, akin to the cardinal virtue of justice (found in the concupiscible appetite); and then mercy (a motion against the bad occurring to another that is regulated by reason [see *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 3]).

[3] Further commentary by Cajetan, Garrigou-Lagrange, Billuart, Gonet, Bañez, John of St. Thomas, and the Salmanticenses is presented in Cessario and Cuddy's article. These commentators fill the silence, as it were, with insights explaining precisely why it

With the concern about God's "co-suffering" with us dispatched, Thomas addresses a second objection, the satisfying of which will allow for the existence and procedure of the next article (a. 4). The objection focuses upon the divine justice and worries that mercy seems to mean some kind of "loosening up" of the divine justice (*relaxatio iustitiae*), in which God seems to act contrary to himself, to his utterances or dictates (*dicta sua*). Thomas addresses this concern head-on; there is no loss or relaxation of the divine justice, but rather a fulfilling and indeed exceeding of the dictates of divine justice. An example both explains and foreshadows: the man who owes someone a hundred dollars but who fulfills the debt when he pays him two hundred dollars of his own money, has both met the demands of justice and acted with liberality and mercy. He has acted above and beyond justice (*supra iustitiam operando*). [4] Remembering that objection 2 had included a concern about acting against one's own self and dictates, Thomas adds that remitting an offense made against oneself by another—he may have had *peccatum originale originans* in mind—has the character of a giving of sorts; here, too, merciful giving fulfills justice and does not void it by ignoring it.[5] So after clearing the brush and providing the needed distinctions, it seems that the main point of article 3 is this: God's mercy effects the just goodness of removing defects.

How pervasive is God's justice and mercy? It is everywhere and in everything, Thomas says in article 4 of question 21.

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is that God does not—because he cannot—undergo suffering. In particular, Cajetan's explanation of why it would be unhelpful to require that the one showing mercy need suffer from the very ailment needing merciful treatment is spectacular.

[4] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 3, ad 2: "Ad secundum dicendum quod Deus misericorditer agit, non quidem contra iustitiam suam faciendo, sed aliquid supra iustitiam operando, sicut si alicui cui debentur centum denarii, aliquis ducentos det de suo, tamen non contra iustitiam facit, sed liberaliter vel misericorditer operatur."

[5] Ibid.: "And similarly if someone forgives [*remittat*] an offence committed against himself. For the one who forgives something in a certain way gifts it; hence the Apostle calls forgiving a 'gifting' [*donantio*], in Ephesians 5: 'gift one another, just as Christ also gifted to you.' From which it is clear that mercy does not do away with justice, but is a certain fulfilling [*plenitude*] of justice. Hence it is said in James 2 that 'mercy triumphs over the judgment' [*misericordia superexaltat iudicium*]."

Justice and mercy are found in every work of God. While this assertion might touch upon questions like whether God is bound to create,[6] the part that is most important is Thomas's emphasis upon final causality in article 4: the divine mercy is the root (*prima radix*) of every divine action, since before its existence no thing has a claim to anything. Once it does exist, God fills its natural needs to meet the order of justice, but he also provides even more than the creature requires, and more vehemently, because of the ends to which creatures are ordained.[7] Thomas goes on to illustrate the chain of final causality by the primacy of human nature—but that, too, is ordered to God's goodness. A hand, he says, exists because of the rational soul (*propter animam rationalem*), the rational soul exists so that there may be man, and man exists for the sake of

[6] For more on the topic of God's morality in creating, see Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, God's Goodness, and God's Morality," *Modern Schoolman* 70 (1992): 45-51; and idem, "St. Thomas, Norman Kretzmann, and Divine Freedom in Creating," *Nova et vetera* (English ed.) 4 (2006): 495-514.

[7] *STh* I, q. 21, a. 4: "I respond that it should be said that mercy and truth are found in every work of God (so long as 'mercy' is taken to mean 'the removal of any defect whatsoever'; though not every defect can rightly be called a misery, but only a defect of the rational nature, the one that can be happy—for misery is opposed to happiness). Now the reason for this necessity is because, when a debt is paid back out of God's justice, the debt is either owed to God or is a debt to some creature; and neither can be neglected in any work of God. For God cannot do anything that does not befit his wisdom or goodness (according to which manner we said that God has a debt (a. 1, ad 3). So also whatever God does in created things he does according to the appropriate order and proportion (in which also consists the notion 'justice'). And so it must be that in every work of God there is justice. Now, the work of divine justice always presupposes the work of mercy, and finds its foundation there. For to creation nothing is owed, except on account of something preexisting, or pre-considered, in it; and likewise, if something is owed to creation, this will be because of something prior. And since this is no proceeding to infinity, it is necessary to arrive at something that depends on the goodness of the divine will alone, which is the ultimate end."

For Thomas's purposes here the object of God's mercy is any sort of defect ("si tamen misericordia pro remotione *cuiuscumque defectus* accipiatur")—a rather wide construal of the usual object of mercy. True misery can be felt only by a rational creature, capable of knowing its own defect, particularly the defect of not possessing happiness.

the divine goodness.[8] God's goodness gives more than what the preservation of justice requires.[9]

If we survey the fruit of these two articles, it could seem that we have a small yield. God effects goodness in things and attends to their natures with a certain primacy being given to liberality, to giving more. Against the backdrop of the way mercy seems to function in our understanding of the Christian life Thomas's comments may appear paltry and even aloof. Yet with Thomas it is often not the quantity of a treatment that matters, but rather its location. By not speaking overmuch concerning mercy here, or bogging it down with anthropomorphic intrusion, he is able to locate mercy at the heart of the divine action, all divine action.

His parsimony leaves room for other manifestations and instruments of the divine goodness. Later in the *Summa theologiae* divine power and attention to human nature join together in an act of mercy that would expel the protest that Thomas's account of God's mercy is insufficiently attentive to our frail humanity, to our misery. The rational creature's nonpossession of its fulfillment, its happiness, would be the greatest of all defects—the rational creature is the one who suffers misery in the highest sense. Thomas's use of the passage from Ephesians 4, "forgive one another, just as Christ has also forgiven you" (*donate invicem, sicut et Christus vobis donavit*) suggests that, even early in the *Summa*, he is planning to tell the story of how Christ will meet the dictates of divine justice for fallen man, a gift (*donatio*) that removes man from true misery, and brings him to a fulfillment that is beyond the proportion of

[8] Ibid.: "Utpote si dicamus quod habere manus debitum est homini propter animam rationalem; animam vero rationalem habere, ad hoc quod sit homo; hominem vero esse, propter divinam bonitatem. Et sic in quolibet opere Dei apparet misericordia, quantum ad primam radicem eius."

[9] Ibid. (*in calce*): "Et propter hoc etiam ea quae alicui creaturae debentur, Deus, ex abundantia suae bonitatis, largius dispensat quam exigat proportio rei. Minus enim est quod sufficeret ad conservandum ordinem iustitiae, quam quod divina bonitas confert, quae omnem proportionem creaturae excedit."

his human nature.[10] Is it too much to say that the whole *Tertia pars* of the *Summa* is question 21 of the *Prima pars* writ large?

There are passages in the *Tertia pars* where Thomas speaks of Christ's incarnation as a mercy,[11] and descriptions of Christ's activities discussed in the *Tertia pars* correspond to the constitutive elements of mercy that Thomas had detailed back in the *Prima pars.*[12]

Thomas's insistence that mercy is essentially "meeting the requirements of divine justice or truth with a goodness that exceeds," coupled with his illustration of how a man who forgives an offense committed against him can be said to have made a gift (i.e., via a fulfilling of goodness), calls to mind his

[10] See *STh* I, q. 21, a. 3, ad 2, where Thomas explains Paul's wording: "Qui enim aliquid remittit, quodammodo donat illud, *unde apostolus remissionem donationem vocat*, Ephes. v, donate invicem, sicut et Christus vobis donavit."

[11] *STh* III, q. 1, a. 6, ad 1. An objection urges that the Incarnation should have taken place towards the end of the world, quoting Psalm 91's "senectus mea in misericordia uberi." Thomas responds: "To the first it should be said that that Glossa is expounding the mercy that leads to glory. On the other hand if it refers to the mercy administered to the human race through the incarnation of Christ [*ad misericordiam exhibitam humano generi per incarnationem Christi*], then know that, as Augustine says in the *Retractations* . . .". See also *STh* III, q. 19, a. 1, ad 1 (invoking pseudo-Dionysius): "it is plain from the things [Dionysius] says in chapter 2 of the *Divine Names*, where he says that the Father and the Holy Spirit do not communicate with those things that pertain to <Christ's> human activity, unless someone should say 'according to his most benign and merciful will,' insofar namely as the Father and the Holy Spirit out of their mercy [*ex sua Misericordia*] wanted Christ to do and undergo human things." See also *STh* III, q. 41, a. 1; and *STh* III, q. 46, a. 1, ad 3.

[12] The prologue to the *Tertia pars* speaks of the Savoir of all and "his benefits that are bestowed upon the human race," and that "God became man for our salvation (or, literally, our "health" [*salus*])." See *STh* III, pro.: "Because our lord and savior Jesus Christ—as the angel bears witness, 'making his people saved [*salvum*] from their sins'—showed us the way of truth in himself, through which by rising (from the dead) we might be able to arrive at the beatitude of eternal life, it is necessary that, as the complement of the whole theological business, after the consideration of the ultimate goal of human life, and of the virtues and the vices, a consideration should follow through concerning the savior of all himself, and the benefits of his given to the human race [*beneficiis eius humano generi praestitis*]. . . . Concerning the first there occurs a twofold consideration, the first of which is the mystery of the incarnation itself, insofar as God for our health came to be man [*Deus pro nostra salute factus est homo*]; the second of this is those things that were done or undergone by our savior, that is, God incarnate."

teaching regarding the "need" for the incarnation, addressed in question 1, article 2 of the *Tertia pars*: "Whether it was necessary for the reparation of the human race for the Word of God to be incarnate?" When contrasting Thomas with Anselm I had for many years been thinking of Thomas's account of the incarnation in almost purely utilitarian, pedagogical terms: "Christ did not have to come in order that man be saved, but it is most instructive and useful that he did come."[13] I then made the inference that because there did not have to be an incarnation, strictly speaking, that meant that God could have simply just forgiven Adam and Eve's sin: a sort of *acceptatio divina*. This seems incorrect.

Question 1, article 2 of the *Tertia pars* is not asking whether, in the specific instance of reuniting sinful man with God, there needs to be a meeting of the requirements of the divine justice or truth. Indeed, it seems that the message of question 21 of the *Prima pars* is that *any act of divine mercy* regarding creation already in existence requires that the *dicta* of divine justice be met. Rather, the issue in the *Tertia pars* is whether the incarnation is the *only* way to accomplish the meeting-of-the-divine-justice, and here Thomas insists "there were many other ways" in which God could have repaired human nature; it just happens that the incarnation—God becomes man—was the best and most fitting way.[14] But at no point does Thomas contend that God's justice, through the repairing of human nature, need not be met. The subtext of the entire *Tertia pars* seems to be that, since God loves sinful man and would bring him to the goal originally intended for him, the divine mercy must first effect a return of sorts of sinful man to the fullness of human

[13] *STh* III, q. 1, a. 2: "I respond that it should be said that something is said to be 'necessary for an end' in two ways: in one way, 'without which something is not able to exist,' as food is necessary to the conservation of human life; in another way 'through which one better and more fittingly attains to the end,' as a horse is necessary for a journey."

[14] Ibid.: "Primo modo Deum incarnari non fuit necessarium ad reparationem humanae naturae. Deus enim per suam omnipotentem virtutem poterat humanam naturam multis aliis modis reparare. Secundo autem modo necessarium fuit Deum incarnari ad humanae naturae reparationem." See also *STh* III, q. 46, a. 1.

nature by some means (a genuine *modus*, and not a mental nod, or acceptance).

On the supposition of this goal, then, Christ by his passion effected the "freeing of human kind" by bringing man back to the truth of his human nature (meeting the thing's justice or truth as established by God) so as the bring man to eternal life (the exceeding good). One wonders how different Thomas's soteriology is from that of Anselm.

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GENDER IDEOLOGY AND THE "ARTISTIC" FABRICATION OF HUMAN SEX: NATURE AS NORM OR THE REMAKING OF THE HUMAN?

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Until quite recently," the famous English novelist C. S. Lewis remarked in 1959, "it was taken for granted that the business of the artist was to delight and instruct his public": that is to say, to address simultaneously their passions and their intellects. "There were, of course, different publics. . . . And an artist might lead his public on to appreciate finer things than they had wanted at first; but he could do this only by being; from the first, if not merely entertaining, yet entertaining, and if not completely intelligible, yet very largely intelligible." This constraint—let us call it *intelligent* (or purposeful) *design*, in keeping with a basic analogy that we will draw upon in these pages—had however been lost, Lewis observed. Hence, even "in the highest aesthetic circles one now hears nothing about the artist's duty to us. It is all about our duty to him. He owes us nothing; we owe him 'recognition,' even though he has never paid the slightest attention to our tastes, interests, or habits."[1] In short, the artist of modernity need not pay the slightest attention to an intention, not even his own. Modern art need not be an expression of intelligence or

[1] C. S. Lewis, "Good Work and Good Works," in *The World's Last Night and Other Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt and Brace, 1987), 78-79. This essay was originally published in 1959.

understanding; it is *expression* as such (*tout court*): personal and autonomous.[2]

Lewis's remarks do not point merely to the increasingly relativist tendencies of art in the Western world, to the lack of objective criteria or norms governing the artistic disciplines. They also point to the growing disregard among artists for the sociocultural expectations of their *publicum*. Mediating between the two is, without a doubt, the basis upon which both artistic and social norms were traditionally founded: nature, which served as a classic analogy for both art (understood in the broad sense, so as to include not only the fine arts, but also technology and practical sciences) and ethics in virtue of nature's intrinsic inclination towards its defining end and perfection.

With regard to the first of these analogies (that of art and nature), Mark Schiefsky explains that although art does bring about "results that nature itself cannot," it does so in the classic understanding "by acting in a natural way—the way nature *would* act if it could generate the products of art."[3] As for the difference between the two, nature is moved to its specifying end by way of intrinsic inclinations that are implicit to it, whereas a work of art is moved to its end extrinsically, and thus with more or less violence.[4] A sculptor, for example, who introduces a form into a piece of marble, does so by chiseling

[2] As Melissa Ho, assistant curator at the Hirshhorn Museum (Washington, D.C.), puts it, "It doesn't have to exist for any kind of utility other than its own existential reason for being," whence the popular maxim: "art for art's sake." The emphasis lies on "being original and doing something innovative." As if to echo Lewis, Ho thus points to the underlying idea: "I am the artistic genius and you need me" (http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/ask-an-expert-what-is-the-difference-between-modern-and-postmodern-art-87883230/?no-ist) (posted on September 22, 2011).

[3] Mark J. Schiefska, "Art and Nature in Ancient Mechanics," in Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and William R. Newman, eds., *The Artificial and the Natural: An Evolving Polarity* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2007), 67-108, at 72.

[4] Such, more specifically, is the distinction between immanent and transitive actions. "Immanent action takes place within the agent. Examples are knowledge, love, willing, intention. Its effect is to transform or qualify the person who acts. Transitive action transforms material outside of the agent and could be called production or fabrication" (Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics,* trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble [Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995], 85).

and hammering away at the fine stone.[5] "Art is," Aristotle explains, "the principle and form of the thing that comes to be [let us say, a sculpture]; but it is located elsewhere [in, for example, the artist's mind or in a sketch that he has made] than in that thing, whereas the movement of nature is located in the thing itself that comes to be [a tree, for example, or a baby], and is derived from another natural organism [a tree or human parents] which possessed the form in actuality."[6]

This classic distinction between art and nature parallels the distinction between art and ethics. Ethics "does not affect human action in the same way as do art and technique," Servais Pinckaers explains. Unlike art and technique, which are concerned with "the external work produced by human action"—this painting or that machine, for example—ethics is concerned with an immanent principle, qualifying the actor as such: the stable dispositions (or *habitus*: virtues or vices) at the origin of "the active willing that is the principle source of the action."[7] This immanent principle at the source of ethical action is—to complete our analogy—creative in only a limited sense. The human person is indeed free to choose, but he or she is not free to decide "what is good or evil" as such, nor what is "good or bad for him [or her]."[8] In other words, the human person exercises his or her power to will within the context of what is perfective of the human person as such: "the good life as befits a human being who has developed to the fullest his human

[5] See the example of Michelangelo by Pierre-Marie Emonet, in idem, *The Dearest Freshness Deep Down Things: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Being*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999), 55.

[6] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* [*De generatione animalium*] 735a2-4 (in Jonathon Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol. 1 [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984]).

[7] Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics,* 85.

[8] Joseph-Marie Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue thomiste* 74 (1974): 533-90, at 566. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

potential," as Yves Simon puts it.[9] It follows, as Lewis says, that "The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value, than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in."[10] Indeed, the difference between the ethicist who recognizes natural inclinations as prescriptive for human behavior, and the one who would invent a whole new moral code, is like the difference between the man who says, "'You like your vegetables moderately fresh; why not grow your own […]?' and a man who says, 'Throw away that loaf and try eating bricks […] instead.'"[11]

In short, the analogy between art and ethics invites us, as Lewis suggests, to consider the "problem of values": a "problem," Simon explains, which merits utmost "caution" today, because "more often than not [the] consideration of 'values' . . . takes place within the framework of an idealistic, mechanistic philosophy whose vision of the world excludes finality."

> In this [modernist and now post-modernist] vision, things including man, have no ends and have, therefore, to be assigned "values" from outside. Without a nature of his own that would determine what is good and bad for him, man has no other choice but to let his imagination create his own "values." . . . In a world devoid of finality, all values must of necessity be both subjective and artificial; and when these "values" collapse, despair is all that is left. By contrast, in a world of natures, values reside in the nature of things. Thus if man has a nature, he also has a destiny, and we can relate what is right and wrong for him to do to his nature and to his end objectively.[12]

Perhaps nowhere is the weight of Simon's words more apparent, as I will argue in these pages, than in the inversion of

[9] Yves R. Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 118-19. Simon continues: "Understanding human nature, we can train ourselves in virtues according to objective standards" (ibid., 119). As for art, "like any other human activity," it is "not an absolute end in itself, but is ordered to and ennobled by the ultimate end of man" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2501).

[10] C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man: Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (New York: Bollier Books / Macmillan Publishing Company, 1947), 56-57.

[11] Ibid., 58-59.

[12] Simon, *Definition of Moral Virtue*, 107.

the analogy of art and ethics by gender ideology, based upon the Sartrian presumption that there is no human nature. Ethics becomes an "art," akin to the "art" of transforming the human body according to one's particular self-image, subjective desire, or so-called sexual "orientation"—a highly ironic term insofar as it denies the "*psychological and biological structure*," which Pope John Paul II recognizes as proper to human sexuality and which aims (whence the proper notion of "orientation") "at both communion between man and woman and at the birth of new persons."[13] In the absence of nature-based inclinations toward nature-specified ends, sexual "orientation" signifies little more than an attempt to reify concupiscent desires: to "essentialize"[14] *dis*oriented tendencies or to "enflesh" radically *non*-oriented tendencies (i.e., what Judith Butler presents, as we shall see, as fluid). In both cases—that of "essentializing" concupiscent desires and that of "enfleshing" them—we are confronted with an attempt to reverse the traditional metaphysical order between nature and its appetites, inclinations, or desires. Whereas these desires or inclinations have traditionally been understood as rooted within nature and as serving nature's movement toward its perfecting end—so as also to be judged by reason accordingly, that is, as fitting to this movement and thus to be fostered, or as opposed to this movement and thus to be checked—the rhetoric of sexual orientation seeks to dethrone

[13] Pope John Paul II, "As Part of God's Original Plan, Sexuality Must Not Be Trivialized," *L'Osservatoire Romano*, English Edition (June 29, 1994), 1-2, at 1. "Respecting this structure and this unbreakable connection is not," John Paul II continues, "'biologism' or 'moralism', but concern for the *truth of what it means to be human, to be a person*. In virtue of this truth, which can also be grasped by the light of reason, so-called 'free love', homosexuality and contraception are morally unacceptable. It is really a question of behavior that distorts the essential meaning of human sexuality, preventing it from being put at the service of the person, of communion and of life" (ibid., 1-2).

[14] See Michael W. Hannon, "Against Heterosexuality," *First Things* (March 2014): http://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/03/against-heterosexuality; and idem, "Against Obsessive Sexuality: A Reply to My Critics," *First Things* (August 13, 2014): http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/08/ against-obsessive-sexuality.

nature and set concupiscent inclinations in its place. From this is born a whole androgynous anthropology.[15]

As Lewis predicted in his book appropriately entitled *The Abolition of Man*, "[I]f man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be: not raw material to be manipulated, as he fondly imagined, by himself [as, that is to say, a rational being], but by mere appetite, that is, mere Nature."[16] Indeed, as he foresaw already in 1947, the "rebellion" of certain "new ideologies" against natural law is "a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could succeed they would find that they had destroyed themselves."[17]

In this way, the tables are being turned on sexual realists—those who believe that sex is more than skin deep—by so-called "theorists,"[18] who would disembody human sexuality and propose a new, (presumably) better (because custom-made) way of being "gendered." Hence Judith Butler, who is commonly regarded as the mastermind behind this trend, confronts us with a much-too-subtle shift in meaning. Throughout much of the history of the English language, *gender* was simply synonymous with sex, pointing, by way of its common root (*gyn*), to the reproductive potentialities and thus also to the socio-historical dimensions of sex in virtue of which it necessarily transcends the individual/subjective domain.[19] It is thus only recently[20]—

[15] See David S. Crawford, "Liberal Androgyny: 'Gay Marriage' and the Meaning of Sexuality in our Time," *Communio* 33 (2006): 237-65.

[16] Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 84. Similarly, "If you will not obey the *Tao* [that is, natural law], or else commit suicide, obedience to impulse (and therefore, in the long run, to mere 'nature') is the only course left open" (ibid., 79).

[17] Ibid., 56-57.

[18] In using the term "theory," its proponents would have us believe that the so-called theory of gender is an already validated scientific hypothesis. "But, this so-called theory is apparently an opinion at best, an ideology at worst" (Élizabeth Montfort, *Le genre démasqué. Homme ou femme? Le choix impossible…* [Valence: Peuple Libre, 2011], 15).

[19] See Sr. Mary Prudence Allen "Gender Reality vs. Gender Ideology: Ransoming the Concept of Gender," *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 4, no. 1 (2014), esp. 14-19, http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/solidarity/vol4/iss1/1/.

[20] As recently as 1976, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* still presents the word *gender* in purely grammatical terms and only secondarily as

after the sexual revolution had widely exercised its influence throughout the Western world—that the word *gender* has been used to refer to the social dimension of our sexual identity: to the sociocultural *expression* of the masculine or the feminine sex, whence the legitimate *distinction* between nature (in this case sex) and nurture (here gender). Still more recently, however, it has come to denote—thanks largely to Judith Butler, whose important book *Gender Trouble* was first published in 1990[21]—an actual *separation* between the two in view of reducing the former (sex) to the latter (gender). Rather than referring—even culturally—to the concretely embodied and culturally rooted person, *gender* has thus become a sort of catchword for an uninhibited "freedom" to sexual self-determination: a license freely to determine not only one's own sexual inclination, but also one's own sex in the absence of both natural and sociocultural factors.[22]

Fighting against all forms of determinism—whether natural, biological, or cultural—recent gender "theorists" thus seek independence, or autonomy, with respect to faith and reason, nature and education, God and the human community. Because, it is reasoned more specifically, both the human body and the human community limit the exercise of freedom, we must be

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synonymous with sex. The social connotation is entirely absent. See *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, based on *The Oxford English Dictionary and its Supplements,* sixth edition, ed. J. B. Sykes, first edited H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, 1976).

[21] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

[22] "*Gender* was the magic word" that made all of this possible, Gabriele Kuby explains. "The word sex had to be replaced; for prior to that, if someone was asked, 'What is your sex?,' they could answer only one of two things: man or woman" (Gabriele Kuby, *The Global Sexual Revolution: Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom*, trans. James Patrick Kirchner [Kettering, Ohio: LifeSite / Angelico Press, 2015], 44). See also Michele M. Schumacher, "The Nature of Nature in Feminism, Old and New" in Michele M. Schumacher, ed., *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism* (Grand Rapids, Mich., and Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 17-51, esp. 17-28; and Beatriz Vollmer Coles, "New Feminism: A Sex-Gender Reunion," in Schumacher, ed., *Women in Christ*, 52-66.

liberated from anything resembling a created world—a world composed of beings who are bound to one another by relations that are not of our making and in relationships that are simultaneously given and realized. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, whose philosophy is foundational for this ideology, not excepting the mediating role of Simone de Beauvoir, "there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be. . . . Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself."[23] There is thus "no determinism": "no explaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature."[24] Because, furthermore, "there is no human nature," there is also, as Beauvoir reasons, "no 'feminine nature.' It's not something given." Instead, the human person—whether male or female—is "defined by his presence to the world, his consciousness, and not a nature that grants him *a priori* certain characteristics."[25] In short, to admit that man is free means, as Sartre summarizes, that "man is freedom."[26]

[23] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions,* trans. Bernard Frechtman and Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 15. Similarly, "Man makes himself. He isn't ready made at the start" (ibid., 43). "[M]an is constantly out of himself; in projecting himself . . . he makes for man's existing. . . . There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. . . . [W]e remind man that there is no law-maker other than himself, and that in his forlornness he will decide by himself" (ibid., 50, 51). On the connection between Sartre's philosophy and that of Simone de Beauvoir, whom Sr. Prudence Allen qualifies as providing "the first articulation of existentialist feminism," see her "Can Feminism be a Humanism?" in Schumacher, ed., *Women in Christ*, 251-84, at 270.

[24] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions,* 22-23.

[25] Margaret A. Simons, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jane Maine Todd, "Two Interviews with Simone de Beauvoir (1982)," *Hypatia* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1989), 11-27, at 19. Or, as Sylvie le Bon perfectly summarizes Beauvoir's thought, "Far from being at the start point of history, the reality of woman is situated at its completion. It is always praxis, singular ideologies that have modeled this completely historical reality which is proposed as an Idea, a Being, a Fact" (Sylvie le Bon, "Le deuxième sexe, l'esprit et la lettre," *L'Arc* 61 [1975]: 55-60, at 56).

[26] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions,* 23. Such, in short, is nothing other than "an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position" (ibid., 51; cf. ibid., 15). Hence, as Pope John Paul II diagnosed the situation, it "ultimately means making freedom self-defining and a phenomenon creative of itself and its values. Indeed, when all is said and done man would not even have a nature; he would be his

This is not to say that gender "theorists," who build upon this philosophy, recognize themselves as divorced from the world in which they live. Their final goal, after all—and this is what ultimately qualifies their work as an "ideology"[27] and simultaneously likens it to Sartrian doctrine[28]—is precisely *to transform this world* by establishing a new set of norms. This goal of reorganizing society, if not the world itself, is sought by means of a reconceptualization of human sexuality so as also to transform the manner in which we conceive of marriage and family, as well as human rights.[29] Not surprisingly, then, legal and juridical systems, which act as guarantor of these rights, are also targeted, as is the educational system, by which these new concepts and ideas are diffused.

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own personal life-project. Man would be nothing more than his own freedom!" (*Veritatis Splendor* 46).

[27] See Montfort, *Le genre démasqué. Homme ou femme ?,* 15; Jutta Burggraf, "Gender," in Pontifical Council for the Family, ed., *Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions* (Virginia: Human Life International, 2006), 399-408; and most especially Kuby, *Global Sexual Revolution*. Marguerite Peeters, on the other hand, argues that gender is "not an ideology in the proper sense of the term," since the word "evokes systems of thought linked to Western modernity," and gender is, she insists, "a postmodern phenomenon" (Marguerite A. Peeters, "Gender: An Anthropological Deconstruction and a Challenge for Faith," in Pontifical Council for the Laity, ed., *Woman and Man: The "Humanum" in its Entirety*, International Congress on the 20th Anniversary of John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem,* 1988-2008 [Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010], 289-99, here 289, 290). For a concrete example of this ideology at work, see Mickey L. Mattox, "Marquette's Gender Regime," *First Things* (April 2016): http://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/04/marquettes-gender-regime.

[28] "For us . . . man is in an organized situation in which he himself is involved. Through his choice, he involves all mankind, and he can not avoid making a choice" (Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions,*, 41). "When I declare that freedom in every concrete circumstance can have no other aim than to want itself, if man has once become aware that in his forlornness [that is to say, in the absence of God] he imposes values, he can no longer want but one thing, and that is freedom, as the basis of all values" (ibid., 45).

[29] See Kuby, *Global Sexual Revolution*; Michele M. Schumacher, "A Plea for the Traditional Family: Situating Marriage within John Paul II's Realist, or Personalist, Perspective of Human Freedom," *Linacre Quarterly* 81 (2014): 314-42.

In an effort to argue against the inversion—by gender ideology and the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre upon which it is based—of the classic analogy between divine knowledge and art, on the one hand, and human knowledge and art, on the other hand, this essay will begin by sketching an important practical consequence of gender ideology: the rapidly growing trend of sexual reassignment surgery, whose long-term effects are highly problematic, as researchers have shown. This introduction to the practical stakes of gender ideology will serve as a springboard for my exposition of the theoretical aspect of this ideology, as it has been articulated by Judith Butler. So-called gender theory maintains, more specifically, that the divine prerogative of creating nature has been replaced by social norms, which are said to grant even materiality, or corporality, to human bodies. In this way, the basis is laid for an "artistic" reversal of norms, such that what was traditionally ascribed to nature is awarded instead to the human will. Hence, as Bérénice Levet has recognized, the gradual replacing of the notion of sexual *identity* with that of sexual *orientation* in our public vocabulary has allowed for "the introduction of the voluntary precisely in that domain where the subject experiences the involuntary."[30] Such is the replacing of God's art (nature) with human "art" (manipulation): the "reduction of nature," as Joseph Ratzinger has remarked, "to facts that can be completely grasped and therefore controlled" and the reduction of morality to that which is entirely "posited by man."[31]

In contrast to this characteristically modern trend of reducing nature to what is vulnerable to human manipulation and human sexuality to what is ironically called "orientation," I

[30] Bérénice Levet, *La théorie du genre ou le monde rêvé des anges* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2014), 91.

[31] Joseph Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe? The Church in the Modern World: Assessment and Forecast,* 2d ed., trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 37. Hence, morality "does not precede vis-à-vis us: we precede it and fashion it" (ibid.). Similarly, C. S. Lewis observes that "We reduce things to mere Nature *in order that* we can 'conquer' them. We are always conquering Nature, because 'Nature' is the name for what we have, to some extent, conquered." Hence, just as the stars are considered "nature" when "we can weigh and measure them," the human soul is likewise when "we can psycho-analyse her" (*Abolition of Man*, 82-83).

will emphasize its traditional meaning as pointing to necessity and purposefulness, which in the Christian tradition is explained by the doctrine of creation.[32] This, in turn, will serve as the context wherein I will point to the classic, Aristotelian-Thomistic notion of art as imitating nature in its internal directedness, or orientation, to precise ends, or goods; whence also the presentation of nature as the "irrevocable origin and precondition of all that we ourselves are capable of achieving."[33] In this way, I will make a plea for a return to the classic understanding of nature as norm: a norm that is invested with positive value prior to the influence of the human will and even that of our concupiscent appetites; a norm that can, in fact, inspire the human will to act in accord with nature's own intrinsic order and goodness.

Within this context of arguing for the normative value of nature, I will also point to the distinction between biology and morphology and thus also to the distinction between, on the one hand, nature's own powers and intrinsic directedness to the specific good of reproduction (or, in the case of the human being, to *pro*creation) and, on the other hand, the manipulation of nature by recent surgical intervention to (externally) reinvent the body or to invest it with new "artistic" design, in accord with ever-changing patterns of human fancy, which have been dubbed "sexual orientation." Finally, I will conclude that a

[32] Josef Pieper points out that "there exists a current in Western thought, extending from St. Augustine to, let us say, Immanuel Kant, in which the meaning of the phrase 'by nature' is identical to that of 'by virtue of the created state'" (Josef Pieper, "Future without a Past and Hope with No Foundation?," trans. Jan van Heurck, in Josef Pieper, *An Anthology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 207-21, at 211). Because, on the other hand, much of modern philosophy is "defined as rejections of both Christianity and antiquity . . . nature is not seen as the pattern of necessities in man and the world; it is rather taken [in the opinions that are dominant in the Western world] as that which is to be mastered and transformed by man. Nature is defined in function of technology and the human projects technology serves" (Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* [Notre Dame, Ind., and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982], 22).

[33] Pieper, "Future without a Past and Hope with No Foundation?," 211.

proper understanding of the analogy between divine art and human art necessarily entails that we respect the "ever-greater difference" between God and man, including the important distinctions between God's knowledge and ours, and thus also between the natural creature and the artisanal fabrication.

I. The Practical Fabricating of Bodily Sex: Transgender "Madness"[34]

True to the goal of changing cultural norms, recent developments in gender "theory" are not meant to remain in discussion among intellectuals in ivory towers. As a case in point, *The Boston Globe*[35] reported in December 2011—nearly four years before gold-medal Olympian Bruce Jenner's famous transition to "Caitlyn"—the instance of twin boys, who "were identical in every way but one. Wyatt [whose name has since been changed to Nicole] was," the reporter explains, "a girl to the core, and now lives as one with the help of a brave, loving family and a path-breaking doctor's care."

It is well worth noting that against all (now sadly "outdated") arguments of early gender theorists, who claimed that we choose sexual behaviors according to our education—that, in other words, we are programmed to behave in certain ways in accord with social expectations—Wyatt had to surmount his mother's insistence that he change out of his princess dress, before presenting himself to guests in the family home, and his father's tears when, at the age of four, he admitted that he hated his (now "her") penis and wanted to get rid of it. "Even when we did all the boy events to see if she would 'conform,'" writes Wyatt's (that is to say, Nicole's) mother, who has since accepted that he is a girl, "she would just put her shirt on her head as hair, strap on some heels and join in. It wasn't really a matter of

[34] I wish to express my sincere thanks to Paul Gondreau of Providence College for bringing to my attention important references and developments that I touch upon in this section and for sharing with me a still unpublished manuscript that he has authored.

[35] Bella English of the Globe staff, "Led by the Child Who Simply Knew," *The Boston Globe*, December 11, 2011; http://articles.boston.com/2011-12-11/lifestyle/30512365_1_twin-boys-transgender-jonas.

encouraging her to be a boy or a girl. That came about *naturally*."[36] Indeed, as if to stress the fact that there is no question of these parents socially programming Wyatt, *The Globe* entitles this story, "Led by the Child Who Simply Knew."

"I have always known I was a girl," says Nicole, aged 14 when the article was published. "I think what I'm aiming for is to undergo surgery to get a physical female body that matches up to my image of myself." Although the article claims that so-called "sexual reassignment" surgery is difficult to obtain for those under the age of legal consent in the U.S. and Europe—noting the exception of a hospital in Montreal and another in Philadelphia—a more recent *New Yorker* article reports the case of a plastic surgeon in Springfield, Massachusetts named Melissa Johnson, who is willing to perform this surgery on youth.[37] Since the age of 11, Nicole has joined thousands of American teens—not to mention those in Europe, which set the trend[38]—in taking puberty blockers: drugs that suppress the release of testosterone in "her" body.[39] The "next step," the *Globe* article reports, "is to add female hormones so that Nicole will undergo puberty as a girl and develop as a woman, with breasts and

[36] Emphasis added. The use of the word "naturally" in this context might serve to highlight the fact that it has become "natural" to separate the human body from the realm of affectivity.

[37] See Margaret Talbot, "About a Boy: Transgender Surgery at Sixteen," *The New Yorker* (March 18, 2013); http://www.newyorker.com/magazine /2013/03/18/about-a-boy-2.

[38] See L. E. Kuper, "Puberty Blocking Medication, » Clinical Research Review IMPACT LGBT Research Review, 2014 : http:// www.impactprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Kuper-2014-Puberty-Blockers-Clinical-Research-Review.pdf.

[39] Margaret Talbot reports that Boston's Children's Hospital was the first to offer these in 2009, but Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Seattle soon followed; and Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia were lined up to do the same. She also reports the caution of Eli Coleman, the psychologist who drafted the latest guidelines of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, approving the use of puberty blockers: "We still don't know the subtle or potential long-term effects on brain function or bone development. Many people recognize it's not a benign treatment" (Talbot, "About a Boy").

curvy hips," a treatment which will, however, likely leave "her" infertile.

Such a practice, says Paul R. McHugh, former psychiatrist-in-chief at John Hopkins Hospital and its current Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry, is "close to child abuse." After all, eighty percent of children who make claims like Nicole's will "abandon their confusion and grow naturally into adult life if untreated."[40] McHugh, who helped put a stop to sex-reassignment surgery at John Hopkins, has heard it all. "Not uncommonly" people come to his clinic saying, "As long as I can remember, I've thought I was in the wrong body." When, however, "you discuss what the [male] patient means by 'feeling like a woman,' you often get," he explains, "a sex stereotype in return—something woman physicians note immediately is a male caricature of women's attitudes and interests."[41] One can hardly help but think of Caityln Jenner's remark that "the hardest part of being a woman is figuring out what to wear": a remark that so infuriated the widower of Moira Smith, a female police officer killed in the 9/11 attacks, that he returned her

[40] Michael W. Chapman, "John Hopkins Psychiatrist: Transgender is 'Mental Disorder'; Sex Change 'Biologically Impossible'," posted June 2, 2015: http://cnsnews.com/news/article/michael-w-chapman/johns-hopkins-psychiatrist-transgender-mental-disorder-sex-change. The same statement appears in the article authored by Paul R. McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution: A Drastic Physical Change Doesn't Address Underlying Psycho-Social Troubles," *The Wall Street Journal* (June 12, 2014); http://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120. See also Walter J. Meyer III, MD, "Gender Identity Disorder: An Emerging Problem for Pediatricians," *Pediatrics* 129, no. 3 (March 2012); http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/571. Meyer notes an increase in pediatric referrals, due to high media coverage. "[A] lot of children seem to be experimenting with cross-gender behavior, but very few are following through to request gender change as they mature." He concludes that "very little information in the public domain talks about the normality of gender questioning and gender role exploration and the rarity of an actual change."

[41] Paul R. McHugh, "Psychicatric Misadventures": http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/mchugh.htm (first published in *The American Scholar* (Autumn 1992), 497-501. See also idem, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution."

2001 "Woman of the Year" award when Jenner received the same in 2015.[42]

Jenner also corresponds to McHugh's observation that post-surgical transgendered subjects tend to wear "high heels, copious makeup, and flamboyant clothing," to speak of themselves as freed to express "their natural inclinations"[43]—inclinations which do *not* include a desire for children (whom, after all, they cannot conceive within themselves as do natural women) but *do* include typical stereotypes of women, such as that of being more "invested with being than with doing"[44]—and to present themselves as "lesbians," because they remain attracted to women.[45] Although most of the adult men who had undergone sexual reassignment surgery as adults at John Hopkins did not express regret for having done so, they did, McHugh explains, continue to experience the same psychological problems that had haunted them prior to their surgery.[46]

[42] See Katia Heller, "Widower of 9/11 Cop Returns Glamour Award over Caitlyn Jenner" (November 17, 2015); http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/16 /living/widower-911-officer-glamour-award-caitlyn-jenner-feat/index.html.

[43] Paul R. McHugh, "Surgical Sex: Why We Stopped Doing Sex Change Operations," *First Things* (November 2004): http://www.firstthings.com /article/2004/11/surgical-sex.

[44] McHugh, "Psychiatric Misadventures."

[45] Margaret Talbot reports, "In trans circles, it is a given that sexual orientation and gender identity are separate matters." A so-called "Genderbread Person" (resembling a gingerbread man), which is a pictorial designed by trans activists, points to the following distinctions: "sexual orientation" is depicted by the heart; "gender identity" is depicted by the brain; "biological sex" is depicted by the sexual organs; and "gender expression" (the manner that one presents oneself to others, in terms of behavior and dress) is depicted by a dotted line surrounding the figure (Talbot, "About a Boy").

[46] See McHugh, "Surgical Sex." To be more specific, McHugh's colleague Jon Meyer, who conducted a follow-up study of adult men who had undergone sexual reassignment surgery, observed that these patients fell into two groups: (1) homosexual men, "who saw sex-change as a way to resolve their conflicts over homosexuality by allowing them to behave sexually as females with men," and (2) heterosexual (and some bisexual) men, "who found intense sexual arousal in cross-dressing as females," an illness known as "autogynephilia" (ibid.). See Jon Meyer, M.D., and Donna J. Reter, "Sex Reassignment Follow-up," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 36, no. 9 (1979): 1010-15; http://archpsyc.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=492177. See also Richard

Hence McHugh's conclusion that the psychiatric department at John Hopkins had been "cooperating with a mental illness":[47]

> It is not obvious how this patient's feeling that he is a woman trapped in a man's body differs from the feeling of a patient with anorexia nervosa that she is obese despite her emaciated, cachectic state. We don't do liposuction on anorexics. Why amputate the genitals of these poor men? Surely, the fault is in the mind not the member.[48]

Like those who are "dangerously thin" and who nonetheless believe that they are overweight or those otherwise "consumed by the assumption 'I'm ugly'," the transgendered suffer "a disorder of 'assumption' . . . that departs from physical reality," McHugh explains. Because, however, sexual orientation is falsely equated with *the feeling* of "gender," which in turn is said to be subjectively determined, its defenders argue that it cannot be called into question; whence the now common practice of publically defending "the right" of each citizen to change his or her physical sex accordingly, even with the help of public funding.[49] Those funds would be far better spent, McHugh argues, treating the illness instead of dismembering the body.[50] In one of his more recent articles, he cites a 2011

P. Fitzgibbons, Philip M. Sutton, and Dale O'Leary, "The Psychopathology of 'Sex Reassignment' Surgery: Assessing Its Medical, Psychological and Ethical Appropriateness" (The National Catholic Bioethics Center 2009); http://ncbcenter.org/document.doc?id=581.

[47] McHugh, "Surgical Sex."

[48] McHugh, "Psychiatric Misadventures."

[49] McHugh notes that on May 30, 2014, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services review board ruled that Medicare can pay for the sexual reassignment surgery. See Paul McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution"; and Stephanie Armour, "Medicare Ban on Sex-Reassigment Surgery Lifted," *The Wall Street Journal* (May 30, 2014); http://www.wsj.com /articles/medicare-ban-on-sex-reassignment-surgery-lifted-1401478303. See also the extensive and well-documented argument to this effect by Kuby, *Global Sexual Revolution.*

[50] The "most astonishing" example cited by McHugh is that of a surgeon in England "who is prepared to amputate the legs of patients who claim to find sexual excitement in gazing at and exhibiting stumps of amputated legs" (McHugh, "Surgical Sex"). As for the categorizing of transgenderism as an illness, McHugh argues that it "constitutes a mental illness is two respects": (1) the idea of sex misalignment "does not correspond

study by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden that followed 324 sex-reassignment patients over a period of thirty years (1973-2003). The study revealed that the patients began to experience mental disorders about ten years after their surgeries and that their suicide rate was twenty times above that of the general (nontransgendered) population.[51]

Not unlike the regrettable effects of sexual-reassignment surgery on adults are those of castrating male infants having sexually ambiguous genitalia and raising them as females, a practice that was almost universally conducted in the 1970s. Both illustrative and innovative was the famous John/Joan case: a pseudonym for Bruce/Brenda/David Reimer, "the boy who was raised to be a girl,"[52] in accord with the advice of psychologist John Money. This famous predecessor of Paul McHugh at John Hopkins found in Bruce Reimer the perfect subject to confirm his hypothesis that "like hermaphrodites, all the human race follow the same pattern, namely, of psychological undifferentiation at birth."[53]

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with physical reality" and (2) "it can lead to grim psychological outcomes" (McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution").

[51] See McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution." For more information concerning the study, see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed /21364939. See also Clara Moskowitz, "Transgender Americans Face High Suicide Risk," NBC News.com (updated 11/19/2010); http://www.nbcnews.com/id/40279043/ns/health-health_care /#.VsIZg_HVCt8. Likewise striking is the review by the University of Birmingham's Aggressive Research Intelligence Facility (ARIF) of over 100 international medical studies of post-operative transsexuals, a review that found "no robust scientific evidence that gender reassignment surgery is clinically effective." See David Batty, "Sex Changes Are Not Effective, Say Researchers," *The Guardian* (July 30, 2004); http://www.theguardian.com/society/2004/jul/30 /health.mentalhealth).

[52] See John Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised to Be a Girl* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000, 2001).

[53] John Money, "Cytogenetic and Psychosexual Incongruities with a Note on Space Form Blindness," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 119, no. 9 (4/1963), 820-827, at 820; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/9631137_Cytogenetic_and_Psychosexual_Incongruities_with_a_Note_on_Space_Form_Blindness. For a critique of Money's false reasoning "from the exception to the rule," see Allen, "Gender Reality vs. Gender Ideology," 6-7. Similarly, Milton Diamond and H. Keith Sigmundson make reference to six articles critiquing the theory that hermaphrodites and pseudohermaphrodites offer a

Following a botched circumcision, Reimer underwent a sex-change operation at the age of 22 months and was raised as a girl, in complete ignorance of his birth sex, while his twin brother acted as the control subject. Despite repeated—and unretracted[54]—claims in print by Money of the success of his experiment,[55] Reimer did not adjust to "being" a girl. He rejected girl's toys, clothes, and activities. He imitated his father in shaving, rather than his mother in applying make-up. He refused to use the girl's bathroom, and he urinated standing up. Finally, at the age of 14, he discovered the truth about his sex-reassignment and asked to reappropriate surgically and socially his male identity.[56] He eventually married, but he remained massively depressed and committed suicide in 2004.[57]

Given the notoriety of the Reimer (John/Joan) case, combined with its false claims, it is not surprising that subsequent researchers had a wide body of case studies to draw upon in conducting sex-reassignment follow-up studies.[58] They con-

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model for normal human sexual development, including a reply by Money. See references no. 19-24 of Milton Diamond, Ph.D., and H. Keith Sigmundson, M.D., "Sex Reassignment at Birth: A Long Term Review and Clinical Implications," *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 151 (March 1997): 298-304; http://hawaii.edu/PCSS/biblio/articles/1961to1999/1997-sex-reassignment.html.

[54] See Milton Diamond, "Money's Sex Claims," Letter to the Editor, *The Listener*, September 5, 1998; http://hawaii.edu/PCSS/biblio/articles /1961to1999/1998-listener.html. See also Allen, "Gender Reality vs. Gender Ideology," 11-12.

[55] See, for example, John Money and Anke A. Ehrhardt, *Man & Woman Boy & Girl: The Differentiation and Dimorphism of Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity* (New York and Scarborough, Ontario: New American Library Mentor Book, 1972).

[56] As Diamond and Sigmundson put it, "The contrast between the female gender-typical behaviors the child was being asked to accept and his inner directed behavior preferences presented a discordance that demanded resolution." (Diamond and Sigmundson, "Sex Reassignment at Birth").

[57] See John Colapinto, "Gender Gap: What Were the Real Reasons behind David Reimer's Suicide?," *Slate* (June 3, 2004), available at: http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2004/06/gender_gap.html.

[58] See especially William G. Reiner and John P. Gearhart, "Discordant Sexual Identity in Some Genetic Males with Cloacal Exstrophy Assigned to Female Sex at Birth," *New England Journal of Medicine* 350 (January 22, 2004), 331-41, http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa022236. Also worth noting is the fact that Diamond and Sigmundson make reference to seven articles (see references nos. 19, 32, 58-62 at the conclusion of their article, "Sex Reassignment at Birth") reporting

cluded that "there is no known case where a 46 chromosome, XY male, unequivocally so at birth, has ever easily and fully accepted an imposed life as an androphilic female regardless of the physical and medical intervention." Indeed, "The sex reassignment did nothing to effect sexual orientation," because "sexual orientation is prenatally organized or at least predisposed."[59] If not for the fact that it is easier to surgically construct a vagina than to correct a malformed or damaged penis, and significantly less expensive,[60] one might even question why sex-reassignment was ever performed in the first place. On the other hand, despite amazing gains in surgical practice in the interim—one need only consider the fact that Reimer eventually had penal reconstruction and was capable of "coital orgasm with ejaculation"[61]—these gains continue to serve the same "trendy idea" that provided the initial zeal for sexual reassignment surgery in the seventies: "not [one] derive[d] from critical reasoning or thoughtful assessments," McHugh reports, but from the "if it feels good, do it" philosophy, which for surgeons meant: "if you can do it and he wants it, why not do it?"[62] This philosophy, in turn, was parasitic of the notion that "nature is totally malleable" and that sexual identity is primarily determined by "postnatal, cultural,

cases, including the Reimer one, in which males lacking a normal penis were reassigned as girls, but eventually switched back to live "successfully" as males.

[59] Diamond and Sigmundson, "Sex Reassignment at Birth." See especially nos. 33-40 of the references listed at the completion of the article. Similarly, McHugh argues, based on studies by Reiner (Reiner and Gearhart, "Discordant Sexual Identity") and Meyer (Meyer and Reter, "Sex Reassignment Follow-up"), that "human sexual identity is mostly built into our constitution by the genes we inherit and the embryogenesis we undergo" (McHugh, "Surgical Sex").

[60] Margaret Talbot report in 2013 that the construction of a vagina, by inverting the penis, costs approximately fifteen thousand dollars, whereas phalloplasty (the surgical construction of a penis) can cost more than a hundred thousand dollars. See Talbot, "About a Boy."

[61] Diamond and Sigmundson, "Sex Reassignment at Birth."

[62] McHugh, "Psychiatric Misadventures."

nonhormonal influences"[63]—whence also the portrayal of the body as "a suit of clothes to be hemmed and stitched to style."[64] Meanwhile, this spirit of extreme subjectivism distracted the medical community, McHugh believes, from conducting "genuine investigations" into the cause of the distress and torment, as testified by the patients themselves,[65] that prompted them to undergo such radical surgical interventions. Indeed, the very fact that Boston Children's Hospital, among others, is still encouraging young patients like Wyatt to change their physical sex by way of hormone treatments and in view of reassignment surgery—despite ample research pointing to the devastating long-term effects thereof—stands as proof of the "power of cultural fashion to lead psychiatric thought and practice off in false, even disastrous, directions"[66] and even to "collaborate with madness."[67] As for those flirting with transgenderism—thanks, no doubt, to "a flurry of mostly positive media [including popularized internet] attention"[68]—would it not be better, as the mother of a transitioning art student suggested, to encourage budding young artists to find an artistic medium other than that of their own bodies? "[M]any teen-agers," she remarked, seem "to regard their bodies as endlessly modifiable, through piercings, or tattoos, or even workout regimens." Hence, she wondered "if sexual orientation was beginning to seem boring as a form of identity; gay people were getting married, and perhaps seemed too settled." Within this cultural climate it is indeed difficult to recognize, as Margaret Talbot notes, "what a radical social experiment" this really is.[69]

[63] McHugh, "Surgical Sex."

[64] McHugh, "Psychiatric Misadventures."

[65] See, for example, the important testimony of Walt Heyer, a reverted transsexual, and others at http://www.sexchangeregret.com/.

[66] McHugh, "Psychiatric Misadventures."

[67] Cf. McHugh, "Surgical Sex."

[68] Talbot, "About a Boy." See also Margaret Talbot, "Being Seen: Video Diaries of Transgender Youth," *The New Yorker* (March 11, 2013); http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/being-seen-video-diaries-of-transgender-youth.

[69] Talbot, "About a Boy."

II. The Gendering of Sex, or Its Fabrication: The Philosophical Ideology of Judith Butler

This almost "imperceptible" madness is what Sr. Prudence Allen seems to have in mind when she speaks of gender ideology as "going viral."[70] Such, more specifically, is the "artistic" attempt to revolutionize the world by changing the meaning of reality and ultimately by reinventing the human body-person. As Pope Benedict expressed it in his Christmas address to clergy in 2012:

> [I]t is now becoming clear that the very notion of being—of what being human really means—is being called into question. . . . According to this philosophy [of gender], sex is no longer a given element of nature, that man has to accept and personally make sense of: it is a social role that we choose for ourselves, while in the past it was chosen for us by society. . . . People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves.[71]

We are thus witnessing an evolution—or more appropriately, a "corruption"[72]—of thought and language, such that the social

[70] "An analogy with the way a virus spreads and the contemporary expression about an electronic photo or story 'going viral' seemed to apply. A virus has to find a willing host cell to attach itself to, and it usually destroys the host cell or ends its normal activities before moving on to infect another cell." (Allen, "Gender Reality vs. Gender Ideology," 14-15).

[71] Pope Benedict XVI, "Address of his Holiness Benedict XVI On the Occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia" (December 21, 2012); http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia.html.

[72] Pieper addresses the "abuse of the word" by reason of its detachment from the notions of truth and reality: "To be true means, indeed, to be determined in speech and thought by what is real." "[W]e speak in order to name and identify something that is real, to identify it for *someone,* of course—and this points to the second aspect in question, the interpersonal character of human speech." It is, in short, the "reality of the word" that makes "in eminent ways . . . existential interaction happen. And so, if the word becomes corrupted, human existence itself will not remain unaffected and untainted" (Josef Pieper, *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*, trans. Lothar Krauth [San

construction of *gender* has given place to the social construction of *nature*, and thus of sex. The recent trend, which was initiated by Judith Butler—who, not surprisingly, teaches rhetoric among other disciplines—is now to argue for a reversal of the so-called patriarchal or heterosexual ordering of the relationship between culture and nature, politics and physiology. Hence, as Elaine Graham explains, "the constructs of human *culture* may be seen as defining our concepts of '*nature*', and not the other way around."[73] The God-made universe is being replaced by a man-made one; virtual reality is becoming chillingly real.

Butler thus reasons far beyond the gender-sex distinction proposed by Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 classic, *Le deuxième sexe* (*The Second Sex*): "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman."[74] "For Beauvoir," Butler explains, "gender is 'constructed,' but implied in her formulation is an agent, a *cogito,* who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and

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Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992], 17, 15). This corruption of speech is recognized by Louis Dupré as due to "the impoverished interpretation of *logos* as residing exclusively in the human subject and depriving all other being of its inherent meaning" (*Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999], 24). In this way is "disjoined the order of nature from that of culture and convention" (ibid., 25). On the specific application to gender ideology, see Kuby, *Global Sexual Revolution*, 44.

[73] Elaine Graham, *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood and Technology* (New York: Mowbray, 1995), 84. Graham refers here to S. Cucchiari, "The Gender Revolution and the Transition from Bisexual Horde to Patrilocal Band: The Origins of Gender Hierarchy," in Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, eds., *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 31-79.

[74] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 267 (original: *Le deuxième sexe* I: *Les faits et les mythes*; II: *L'expérience vécue* [Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 1976]). Similarly: "Biology is not enough to give an answer to the question that is before us: why is woman the *Other?*" (ibid., 37). Donna Haraway fittingly refers to Beauvoir's famous formulation as the origin of all feminist accounts of gender. See Donna Haraway, "'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word," in Donna Haraway, ed., *Simians, Cybourgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 131. See also Michele M. Schumacher, "A Woman in Stone or in the Heart of Man? Navigating between Naturalism and Idealism in the Spirit of *Veritatis Splendor*," *Nova et Vetera* (English edition) 11 (2013): 1249-86, esp. 1255-65; and "The Nature of Nature in Feminism, Old and New."

could, in principle, take on some other gender." There is nothing in Beauvoir's account, Butler continues, "that guarantees that the 'one' who becomes a woman is necessarily female."[75] In other words, a male could opt *to be* (and not merely to identify as) a "woman," just as well as (if not "better"[76] than) a natural woman (i.e., a woman born as such). As far as Butler herself is concerned, gender is "radically independent from sex . . . a free floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and a *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one."[77] In fact, "there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings." Hence, sex is not to be understood "as a prediscursive anatomical facticity." Rather, "sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender [that is to say, fluid] all along."[78]

[75] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 8. See also ibid., 111-12.

[76] Not surprisingly, this is a claim that rightfully infuriates certain feminists. Germaine Greer, for example, objected to Caitlyn Jenner's nomination by *Glamour* as Woman of the Year in the following manner: "I think misogyny plays a really big part in all of this, that a man who goes to these lengths to become a woman will be a better woman than someone who is just born a woman" (Euan McLelland, "Feminist Germaine Greer Accuses Caitlyn Jenner of 'Wanting to Steal the Limelight' from Female Kardashians" (October 24, 2015); http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3287810/Germaine-Greer-accuses-Caitlyn-Jenner-wanting-steal-limelight-female-Kardashians.html.

[77] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 6.

[78] Ibid., 8. Butler's claim that gender precedes and produces sex is supported, at least implicitly, by Thomas Laqueur, who seeks to "offer [historical] material [or accounts] for [demonstrating] how powerful prior notions of difference or sameness determine what one sees and reports about the body," and thus for "deciding what counts and what does not count as evidence" (Thomas Laqueur, *The Making of Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* [Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1990], 21). Laqueur thus makes "every effort," as he puts it, "to show that no historically given set of facts about 'sex' entailed how sexual difference was in fact understood and represented . . . and I use this evidence," he continues, "to make the more general claim that no set of facts ever entails any particular account of difference" (ibid., 19). Anne Fausto-Sterling argues that "labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only

As for gender, this term must not be understood as being related to culture "as sex is to nature," Butler argues. Rather, gender should be understood as "the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts."[79] As such, gender should be conceived not "as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker," but rather as a verb: "a kind of becoming or activity," "an incessant and repeated action of some sort."[80] Sex, in other words, is thought to have no intrinsic meaning or content that is not first given to it by culture. Indeed, even "the materiality of sex" is, Butler claims, "constructed through a ritualized repetition of norms."[81]

This assertion that *even the corporal* nature of sex is constructed "is hardly a self-evident claim," Butler avows. "For surely bodies live and die; eat and sleep; feel pain, pleasure; endure illness and violence; and these 'facts,' one might protest, cannot be dismissed as mere constructions. Surely," she declares, "there must be some kind of necessity that accompanies these primary and irrefutable experiences. And surely there is." Such necessity—even "irrefutability"[82]—need not, however, Butler insists, be due to what we habitually refer to as a created nature. Indeed, the very concept of nature itself is, she seems to imply, merely a cultural construction.

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our beliefs about gender—not science—can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place." (Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* [New York: Basic Books, 2000], 3). In other words, scientists "create truths about sexuality," which are subsequently incorporated and confirmed by our bodies (ibid., 5).

[79] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 7.

[80] Ibid., 112.

[81] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), x. Hence, as Fabienne Brugère explains, the body is understood as the "passive contents of a determined [*inexorable*] cultural law, that of gender, which operates like a sexual police" ("'Faire et défaire le genre'. La question de la solicitude," in Fabienne Brugère and Guillaume le Blanc, eds., *Trouble dans le sujet, trouble dans les normes* [Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2009, 69-88, at 78).

[82] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, x, xi.

Admittedly, the presentation of nature as a "blank and lifeless page," or as "that which is, as it were, always already dead" is, as Butler puts it, "decidedly modern, linked perhaps to the emergence of technological means of domination."[83] This accurate acknowledgement by Butler hardly betrays, however, a preference on her part for a more classic understanding of nature and thus of the human body *qua natural*: an understanding of the human body as intrinsically orientated from within to its own specifying perfection by reason of its substantial form, namely, the human soul.[84] On the contrary, she refutes the notion of bodily sex as existing "prior to [social] construction," for there is "no access to this 'sex,'" she reasons, "except by means of its construction." Sex, in other words, is understood as "absorbed by gender,"[85] and cultural discourse, or human words, are said to produce material bodies.

From this perspective, it is not surprising that Butler should ask, "why is it that what is constructed is understood as [having] an artificial and dispensable character?" Or to put the question more directly, "Are certain constructions of the body constitutive in this sense: that we could not operate without them, that without them there would be no 'I', no 'we'?" This "question" is, in fact, posed rhetorically, for after suggesting in the following sentence that we need to rethink "the meaning of construction itself," she argues: "if certain constructions appear constitutive," this is due to the fact that "bodies only appear,

[83] Ibid., 4.

[84] See the excellent presentation of the relation between the human body and the soul by Gilles Emery, "The Unity of Man, Body and Soul, in St. Thomas Aquinas," chapter 8 of idem, *Trinity, Church, and the Human Person: Thomistic Essays* (Naples, Fla.: Sapientia Press, 2007), 209-35; and Marie-Joseph Nicolas, "Le corps humain," *Revue thomiste* 79 (1979): 357-87.

[85] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 5. "[T]he presumption that the symbolic law of sex enjoys a separable ontology prior and autonomous to its assumption . . . is contravened by the notion that the citation of the law is the very mechanism of its production and articulation" (ibid., 15).

only endure, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas."[86]

In short, the prerogative of nature has been assumed by culture, for "the constitutive claim [of the body and its human sex: the claim that they are endowed with a specific ontology or nature] is always to some degree performative." The latter claim, in turn, is not—it bears repeating—to be understood as implying that the body might be understood as possessing within itself the principle of its own movement, in accord with a classic understanding of human nature. Rather, Butler specifies that "there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body."[87]

> [Social] construction has taken the place of a godlike agency which not only causes but composes everything which is its object; it is the divine performative, bringing into being and exhaustively constituting that which it names, or, rather, it is that kind of transitive referring which names and inaugurates at once. For something to be constructed, according to this view of construction [which is that of Butler], is for it to be created and determined through that process.[88]

III. From Resistance of the Trend to Reversing the Norm: Gender Ideology

In precisely this way, Butler makes a parody of the creation story of Genesis, for she forthrightly denies the distinction between God who creates by his word—"God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Gen 1:3)—and Adam, who recognizes and affirms God's creation in the process of naming the animals: "God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name" (Gen 2:19). In the end, however, the joke is on us, because unlike the Sartrian man, who "is

[86] Ibid., xi.

[87] Ibid., 11, 10. "[A] performative," she specifies, "is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (ibid., 13).

[88] Ibid, 6.

[fully] responsible for himself,"[89] the Butlerian subject (whether "woman," "man," or "other") acts under the constraint of a normative "law," namely the "heterosexual imperative," which is brought into being by its citation.[90] Hence, although Butler claims to rehabilitate "the voluntarist subject of humanism"[91]—presumably the subject who is free with respect to both nature and God[92]—the human actor is said to operate within a sociocultural context, which sets limits to subjectivity (and thus to individual freedom) by setting "the limits to intelligibility."[93]

"What I call my 'own' gender" is in fact, Butler maintains, not my own creation, for its terms lie "outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author."[94] Hence, there is "no 'I' that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence."[95] More radical still, Butler claims that "the 'I' neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves."[96] Indeed, even the desires that some so-called theorists consider as determinative of gender "do not originate with our individual personhood," Butler maintains, but rather within the context of the social norms "that constitute our existence."[97] Hence, gender is rendered "a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint."[98] Indeed, even "the viability

[89] "But if existence really does precede essence [as Sartre maintains that it does], [then] man is responsible for what he is. Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him" (Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions,* 16).

[90] See Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 14.

[91] Ibid., 6.

[92] Humanism, as it is presented by the philosopher and political scientist Michael Allen Gillespie, "put man first and interpreted both God and nature on this basis" (*The Theological Origins of Modernity* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008], 17).

[93] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xi.

[94] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 1.

[95] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 7.

[96] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 7.

[97] Butler, *Undoing Gender,* 2.

[98] Ibid., 1.

of our individual personhood is fundamentally dependent on these social norms."[99]

When Butler teaches that social norms set "limits to intelligibility," and even to subjectivity, she means, more specifically, that the culturally *impermissible* (homosexuality, bisexuality, trans-sexuality, etc.) becomes, in virtue of the meditative function of discourse, *impossible to imagine* and is thus considered the "constitutive outside." Cultural construction is thus rendered "constitutive constraint": it produces "a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies." Inversely, the so-called heterosexual imperative—thou shalt be straight!—also operates positively to produce "the domain of intelligible bodies."[100] It determines, more specifically, which bodies "come to matter." By this phrase ("come to matter"), which is purposefully ambiguous,[101] Butler means that sociocultural pressures invest certain bodies not only with "significance" but *also* with "materiality," while others are denied the latter precisely by the negation of the former. This is perhaps the most radical example to date of the "mind over matter" philosophy of the Enlightenment.

As I put it in another context,

> The delicate balance between nature and nurture—already upset (if we accept the feminist critique) by patriarchy's reduction of the former to the [purely] physiological [that is to say, material] realm—is further threatened (this time in the other direction) by feminism's insistence [willingly akin with gender theory, or ideology, on this point] upon the overbearing power of culture. For a majority of feminists [and gender "theorists"] today, human nature is no longer regarded as *human*—and thus as the seat of self-determination—except in its origin: the human being who creates himself and thus his nature. Within the context of a male- [and, again, heterosexually] dominated society, it is

[99] Ibid., 2.

[100] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xi.

[101] This form of word play is evident in the French translation of the one word (matter) by the two words: "une matérialité et une importance" (*Ces corps qui comptent: De la matérialité et des limites discursives du 'sexe,'* trans. Charlotte Nordmann [Paris: Editions Amsterdam, 2009], 38). Cf. ibid., 23.

reduced to a patriarchal construct designed to keep women [as well as homosexuals, bisexuals and transsexuals] in their "place."[102]

It is thus not surprising that Beatriz Vollmer de Coles regards this novel understanding of gender "theory" as a "new gnosis":[103] a sort of mystical knowledge, which is not to be found in any common human experience of reality, namely, the observation (however subjective or engaged) of an objective fact (i.e., sexed being), but only in a revelation made known to a certain elect group "in the know." Only those, to be more specific, who are considered as having been awakened to the "cunning tactics" of the ruling class of oppressive heterosexuals can recognize "the falsity" of the "so-called" ontological connection between biological sex and sexual identity.[104] This connection is said, more specifically, to be merely a sociocultural construction in view of promoting the patriarchal subjection of women to men, on the one hand, and heterosexuality as the norm, on the other. The concept of a God-given nature is thus considered a man-made instrument by which "so-called" deviant sexual orientations and behaviors are checked, along with strong-willed women, by this same ruling class of heterosexual men.[105]

[102] Schumacher, "The 'Nature' of Nature in Feminism," 23-24. For a concrete example other than that of Butler, see Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5 (1980): 631-60. On the connection between feminism and gender theorists, see Allen, "Gender Reality vs. Gender Ideology," especially 14-19; and chapter 3 of Kuby, *Global Sexual Revolution*, 42-48.

[103] See Beatriz Vollmer de Coles, "New Definition of Gender," in Pontifical Council for the Family, ed., *Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions,* 625-41; and Benjamin D. Wiker, "The New Gnosticism," *The Catholic World Report* (May 2, 2011); http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/514/the_new_gnosticism.aspx.

[104] In contrast, the Holy See understands gender "as grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female" (Jane Adolphe and Robert L. Fastiggi, "Gender (in International Law)," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Supplement* 2012-13: *Ethics and Philosophy*, 2:612-14, at 613).

[105] Hence, Butler reports Monique Wittig as understanding "'sex' to be discursively produced and circulated by a system of significations oppressive to women, gays, and

Far from calling into question the materiality of the body, however, Butler seeks "to establish the normative conditions under which the materiality of the body is framed and formed, and, in particular, how it is formed through differential categories of sex."[106] Hence, as Sylviane Agacinski perfectly synthesizes Butler's thought, "sex has no role to play in the subject's desire before the intervention of the law [of heterosexuality], a law whose effect is the (naturalized) institution of heterosexuality, and even the production of the material body."[107] We are thus confronted with what Butler considers a "full *de*substantiation . . . from a materialist point of view" of sex by gender.[108]

Butler's purpose, however—and this is what finally marks her philosophy as an ideology—is not merely to expose the all-pervasive role of culture upon what we understand as "sex." Ultimately, she seeks *to change the regulatory norm*: "to understand how what has been foreclosed or banished [by the so-called heterosexual imperative] from the proper domain of 'sex' [i.e., the homosexual, the transsexual, and the bisexual]" might reemerge "as a troubling return": as an "*imaginary* contestation," which rearticulates "the symbolic horizon in which bodies come to matter at all."[109] Or as Fabienne Brugère has put it, Butler proposes a sort of "gender game (*jeu sur le genre*)," which is transferred "from the domain of art to that of feminism . . . a deviation [*un écart*] from sexual norms," likening feminism and art by way of "a common recourse to a

lesbians. She refuses to take part in this signifying system or to believe in the viability of taking up a reformist or subversive position within the system; to invoke a part of it is to invoke and confirm the entirety of it. As a result, the political task she formulates is to overthrow the entire discourse on sex, indeed, to overthrow the very grammar that institutes 'gender'—or 'fictive sex'—as an essential attribute of humans and objects alike (especially pronounced in French)" (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 113).

[106] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 17.

[107] Sylviane Agacinski, *Femmes entre sexe et genre* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2012), 115.

[108] While gender is thus said to "absorb and displace 'sex'," the latter "becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 5).

[109] Ibid., 23.

subversion that is not . . . a forgetting of norms, but . . . a work upon the norms, an artist's game upon gender."[110]

In this way, Butler's position again approaches that of Sartre, for "in creating the man that we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts," the French philosopher maintains, "which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be." In fact, this is how the so-called heterosexual imperative was created in the first place, Sartre seems to admit:

> if I want to marry, to have children; even if this marriage depends solely on my own circumstances or passion or wish, I am involving all humanity in monogamy and not merely myself. Therefore, I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of man of my own choosing. In choosing myself, I choose man.[111]

Or, to put it still more straightforwardly, it is the individual self who creates the essence of the human: "there is a universality of man; but it is not given, it is perpetually being made. I build the universal in choosing myself; I build it in understanding the configuration of every other man."[112]

Ultimately, this philosophy is much more radical than the culturally prevalent relativist position, which holds that each individual is "faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others."[113] For, as Sartre would have it, *his* (subjectively determined) truth is true *for everyone*:

> if we grant [in holding to a profoundly atheist position] that we exist and fashion our image at one and the same time, the image is valid for everybody and for our whole age. Thus, our responsibility is much greater than we might have supposed, because it involves all mankind.[114]

A great responsibility indeed, for "to choose" means, in Sartre's system, to make right, to create values: "To choose to be this or

[110] Brugère, "Faire et défaire le genre," 81.
[111] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 17-18.
[112] Ibid., 39.
[113] John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* 32.
[114] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 17.

that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all."[115] Again, this does not mean that we simply agree to a timeless truth, because Sartre holds as the "starting point" of his atheistic position that "man is forlorn": "neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to." Hence, everything is both "possible" and "permissible."[116] In subscribing to this philosophy, Simone de Beauvoir is thus ironically willing to sacrifice even women's freedom to choose in order to establish a new normative pattern: "No woman should be authorized to stay at home to raise her children," she holds. "Society should be totally different. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one."[117]

In short, "what existentialism shows"—not only as it is proposed by Sartre, but also as it is adopted by Beauvoir and finally (at least implicitly via Beauvoir) by Butler—"is the connection between the absolute character of free involvement, by virtue of which every man [or woman] realizes himself [or herself] in realizing a type of mankind, and the relativeness of the cultural ensemble which may result from such a choice."[118] Individual human freedom is thus said to reign over both nature and culture. In the words of Beauvoir, "It is male activity that in creating values has made of existence itself a value": a value "which prevailed over the confused forces of life" in order to subdue both "Nature and Woman."[119]

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid., 22-23.

[117] Simone de Beauvoir, "Sex, Society, and the Female Dilemma" (a dialogue between Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir), *Saturday Review,* (June 14, 1975), 17-20, at 18; https://docs.google.com/viewer?url= http://64.62.200.70/PERIODICAL/PDF/SaturdayRev-1975jun14/14-24/

[118] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 40.

[119] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 65.

IV. Willed Chaos or Purposeful Art?

This strategy of changing norms by way of our personal or cultural choices and behaviors presupposes what Georges Cottier describes as the blurring of the distinction between what the ancient and medieval traditions referred to as *praxis*—the action whereby the human subject governs him- or herself in the movement toward his or her end (that is to say, ethical action)—and *technè* (or art): the action whereby he or she modifies things and produces technical objects.[120] Missing, in fact, is an appreciation for the natural qualities (and thus the natural norms)[121] of human nature itself, which in turn is far too often reduced in our present cultural situation to behaviorism or, still worse, sacrificed to the "god" of subjective human freedom. In Sartre's own very matter-of-fact formulation, which bears repeating in this context, "there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it."[122]

> When we conceive God as the Creator, He is generally thought of as a superior sort of artisan. Whatever doctrine we may be considering . . . we always grant . . . that when God creates He knows exactly what He is creating. Thus, the concept of man in the mind of God is comparable to the concept of paper-cutter in the mind of the manufacturer, and, following certain techniques and a conception, God produces man, just as the artisan, following

[120] See Georges Cottier, "Nature et nature humaine," *Nova et Vetera* 4 (1991), 57-74, at 69. Hence, as Cottier diagnoses the situation, "man affirms himself in creating and he creates himself in dominating the world and society" (70).

[121] Thus is signaled an additional confusion: that of the so-called normal and the normative. When, as Cottier explains more specifically, certain behaviors or manners of acting are observed with frequency among a given population, they are regarded as lying within "the norm," regardless of the consequences that they have upon the social order and human lives. Such, he suggests, is the result of the uprooting of cultural norms from human nature so as to be placed instead under the sway of public opinion. See Georges Cottier, *Défis éthiques* (Saint-Maurice, Switzerland: Editions Saint-Augustin, 1996), 90ff. Cf. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* 46.

[122] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 15.

a definition and a technique, makes a paper-cutter. Thus, the individual man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence.[123]

From this point of view, it is obvious that once God is abandoned, the role of crafting man is accorded to man himself, with the result that ethics is likewise understood as a human work in the making: "[L]et us say that moral choice is to be compared to the making of a work of art," Sartre suggests.

I ask whether anyone has ever accused an artist who has painted a picture of not having drawn his inspiration from rules set up *a priori*? Has anyone ever asked, 'What painting ought he to make?' It is clearly understood that there is no definite painting to be made.

Similarly, "It is clearly understood that there are no *a priori* aesthetic values, but that there are values which appear subsequently in the coherence of the painting, in the correspondence between what the artist intended and the result."[124]

Before we entertain Sartre's analogy between art and ethics, however, we ought to examine more carefully the question of the normative value of art. In fact, although it might well be the

[123] Ibid., 14. We are not far from the logic of St. Thomas when he teaches: "God is the first exemplar cause of all things. In proof whereof we must consider that if for the production of anything an exemplar is necessary, it is in order that the effect may receive a determinate form. For an artificer [*artifex* = craftsman or artist] produces a determinate form in matter by reason of the exemplar before him, whether it is the exemplar beheld externally, or the exemplar interiorly conceived in the mind. Now it is manifest that things made by nature receive determinate forms. This determination of forms must be reduced to the divine wisdom as to its first principle, for divine wisdom devised the order of the universe, which order consists in the variety of things. And therefore we must say that in the divine wisdom are the types of all things, which types we have called ideas—i.e., exemplar forms existing in the divine Mind (*STh* I, q. 44, a. 3 [*Summa theologiae*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alacon, vols. 13-20 of the *Works of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Lander, Wyo.: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012)]). "And these ideas, though multiplied by their relations to things, in reality are not apart from the divine essence, according as the likeness to that essence can be shared diversely by different things. In this manner therefore God Himself is the first exemplar of all things" (*STh* I, q. 44, a. 3; cf. q. 45, a. 6; q. 15, a. 1).

[124] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 42.

case that the modern conception of art is as Sartre describes it—without *a priori* values—the classic tradition *did* in fact recognize normative qualities by which to judge art,[125] and it faulted the artist who practiced it with excess or defect,[126] or who did not attain the end that he sought thereby.[127] Hence, we are reminded of Lewis's statement that "until quite recently . . . the business of the artist was to delight and instruct his public." The drastic change in public attitudes toward art's purpose was due, Lewis thought, to "our changed attitude to work." After all, there was a growing "tendency," already in his lifetime, "to regard every trade as something that exists chiefly for the sake of those who practice it."[128] In short, the evolution in the attitude toward art, not unlike that toward work, is such that it is now—and only recently, Lewis reminds us—thought to be *without objective norms* beyond those dictated by the subjective interests or desires of the one practicing it.

Lewis's likening of our attitude toward art and our attitude toward work is of particular importance given the unity of the two in the classic (ancient and medieval) sense of the term "art" (*ars*), by which was understood "not so much every sort of symbolic representation of reality," Hermann Otto Pesch reminds us, as instead "craftsmanship." Hence pharmaceutics and shipbuilding were considered art forms just as much as were the "liberal arts" (and these in turn were "philosophical

[125] "[F]or a flute-player, a sculptor, and any artist, and, in general for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7.1097b [trans. W. D. Ross, in Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* [New York: Random House, 1941], 942).

[126] Cf. *Nic. Ethic.* 2.6.1106b (McKeon, ed., 958).

[127] "Now mistakes come to pass even in the operations of art: the grammarian makes a mistake in writing and the doctor pours out the wrong dose" (Aristotle, *Physics* 2.8.199a [trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in McKeon, ed., *Basic Works of Aristotle*, 250]). Here, of course, the meaning of art (*ars*) is taken in a large sense to include, as we shall see in what follows, what is commonly known as craftsmanship.

[128] Lewis, "Good Work and Good Works," 78-79.

disciplines" to be studied).[129] From this point of view, the arts were obviously not considered to be produced haphazardly, or by chance, but were carefully—that is to say, *intelligently*—directed in view of a purpose or an end conceived in the artist's mind in accord with the rules of his art.[130] In the classic formulation of St. Thomas Aquinas, "all things wrought by art are subject to the order of that art."[131] Hence, the gifted artist of antiquity was one capable not only of conceiving an artistic idea (the concept of the paper-cutter in Sartre's example above) with brilliant imagination, but also of effectively introducing into matter (marble, clay, canvas, or wood, for example) the image thus conceived.[132]

To do so—to introduce effectively a creative form into matter—required that the artist or craftsman be trained according to the norms of his discipline, which de facto included an understanding of the natural properties of the materials employed by his discipline: wood for the carpenter, iron for the blacksmith. Hence the trained carpenter, for example, knows which wood best serves the goal of creating a chair or that of building a house, a nuance that might not be evident for one who has not been initiated into the art of carpentry. This requirement of ancient and medieval art, or craftsmanship—namely, that creative ingenuity be matched by practical knowledge of one's art, including knowledge of the natural properties of the materials employed therein—thus points to natural limitations. The forms invented by man are, after all, limited by the forms created by God, whence the classic distinction between *res artificiales* and *res naturales*. "[I]f you planted a bed and the rotting wood acquired the power of

[129] Otto Hermann Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin. Grenze und Grösse mittelalterlicher Theologie. Eine Einführung* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewlad-Verlag, 1988), 345-46.

[130] It seemed obvious enough to St. Thomas, for example, that "every artist intends to give to his work the best disposition; not absolutely the best, but the best as regards the proposed end" (*STh* I, q. 91, a. 3).

[131] *STh* I, q. 22, a. 2.

[132] Hence, Aristotle argues that "it is part of the same discipline to know the form and the matter up to a point" (*Phys.* 2.194a [McKeon, ed., *Basic Works of Aristotle,* 239]). This also serves as the distinction between material and formal causality. See *Phys.* 3.194b (McKeon, ed., 240-41).

sending up a shoot," Aristotle explains by way of an example, "it would not be a bed that would come up, but *wood*." This, he suggests, demonstrates that the organization that is effected by the rules of art "is merely an incidental attribute," whereas the order attributable to nature "persists continuously through the process of making."[133] In short, whereas "art imitates nature,"[134] the reverse is not the case: Nature does *not* imitate art. Both human art and ethical action are necessarily, that is to say, naturally, limited by divine art; for God "alone can produce a form in matter, without the aid of any preceding material form."[135]

V. Nature and Art: Imitating or Supplanting the Divine Artist

In keeping with the distinctions exposited above, it is evident that the things of nature and the things of art are distinguished in classic philosophy not only by their matter, but also by their forms: by, that is to say, their specific orientations, directedness or purposefulness and more specifically by the manner in which these orientating forces are exerted or realized.[136] The human artist, to be more specific, is one who introduces a form into matter from without (and thus with more or less violence), whereas the divine Artist does so from within. As the Creator of natures,[137] he directs things according to nature's own direction.[138] "If the ship-building art were in the wood, it would

[133] Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1.193a (McKeon, ed., 237).

[134] See for example, Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.2.194a (McKeon, ed., 239).

[135] *STh* I, q. 91, a. 3.

[136] "Upon the form follows an inclination to the end, or to an action, or something of the sort; for everything, in so far as it is in act, acts and tends towards that which is in accordance with its form" (*STh* I, q. 5, a. 5).

[137] "All natural things were produced by the Divine art," St. Thomas holds, "and so may be called God's works of art" (*STh*, I, q. 91, a. 3).

[138] "For those things are natural which, by a continuous movement originated *from an internal principle*, arrive at some completion" (Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.8.199b [McKeon,

produce the same results *by nature*," Aristotle maintains.[139] It follows, in due respect for this analogy, that "art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish [namely, by working upon nature from without], and partly imitates her."[140]

The most talented artists of the classic tradition were those, therefore, who not only conceived marvelous new forms by way of their imaginations, but who also introduced these imaginative forms into matter in the most natural possible manner, that is, in a manner respecting nature's *own* forms. In the words of Pierre-Marie Emonet:

> The divine artist does not work "on" matter, as if this divine cause were somehow external to it. . . . As the greatest of all artists, this one brings forth the forms corresponding to the divine ideas from "within" matter itself, matter with its limitless capacity to be shaped and molded. What is beautiful in God's activity, and in the work of the greatest artists [whence the continuation of the classic analogy], is that they do not superimpose a form on matter as one forces clay into a ready-made mold. No, the art of both is to invite a form by which the matter becomes intelligible and sensible to the mind.[141]

The human artist is thus invited by the classic tradition "to imitate nature" also in this: that he or she respect nature's characteristic properties in employing them. In this way, he or she capitalizes on nature's *own* (i.e., intrinsic) orientation or purposefulness.[142] In short, the artist of antiquity, and even of

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ed., 251]; emphasis added). On the violent manner of moving things, see, for example, *STh* I, q. 105, a. 7, ad 1.

[139] Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.8.199b (McKeon, ed., 251).

[140] Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.8.199a (McKeon, ed., 250).

[141] Pierre-Marie Emonet, *The Dearest Freshness Deep Down Things: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Being*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 54. Similarly, as Servais Pinckaers would have it: "[T]he ideal, in the arts, is to achieve the natural. We do not appreciate a work that seems contrived and artificial and is not inspired by a natural sense of beauty. Condillac wrote, 'The natural . . . is art become habitual. The poet and dancer are each natural when they achieve that degree of perfection where their conformity to the rules of art appears effortless.' And again, 'Natural means everything that is not inhibited, strained, artificial, pretentious'" (*The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 403).

[142] As St. Thomas puts it: "Man is not the author of nature; but he uses natural things in applying art and virtue to his own use. Hence human providence does not

much of the medieval and romantic periods, does not only act with purpose, or intent; he or she also recognizes nature's *own* purpose at work within things, so as to collaborate with her. The human being, after all, "is not the author of nature," as St. Thomas observes, "but he uses natural things in applying art and virtue to his own use."[143] And in so doing, he himself remains a work of the divine Artist, so as to be simultaneously "artist and artifact."[144]

The implication of this statement is, of course, that the human person likewise has a nature with a specific end, wherein resides his or her perfection.[145] Indeed, his or her causality—artistic or otherwise—is never exercised in the absence of the divine causality.[146] Like all created things, we too are subject to

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reach to that which takes place in nature from necessity; but divine providence extends thus far, since God is the author of nature" (*STh* I, q. 22, a. 2).

[143] *STh* I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 3. Or, as Pope John Paul II has put it, "everything that comes from man throughout the whole process of economic production, whether labour or the whole collection of means of production and the technology connected with these means (meaning the capability to use them in work), presupposes these riches and resources of the visible world, riches and resources *that man finds* and does not create. In a sense man finds them already prepared, ready for him to discover them and to use them correctly in the productive process. In every phase of the development of his work man comes up against the leading role of *the gift made* by 'nature', that is to say, in the final analysis, by *the Creator*. At the beginning of man's work is the mystery of creation" (Encyclical Letter "On Human Work," *Laborem Exercens* [Sept 14, 1981] 12). As for God, he creates, *ex nihilo*: out of nothing. See *STh* I, q. 45, a. 5.

[144] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982, 1989), 221.

[145] "Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none?" Aristotle asks. "Is he born without a function? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these?" The answer, the Greek philosopher suggests, is not surprisingly that which is supplied by the particular form specifying the human being as such: "[H]uman good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete," for the duration, he adds, of "a complete life[time]" (*Nic. Ethic.* 1.7.1097b, 1098a: [McKeon, ed., 942, 943]).

[146] As St. Thomas affirms, "God works in every agent," because he "not only gives things their form, but He also preserves them in existence, and applies them to act [as,

divine providence, not excepting the most "excellent manner" of being subjected, namely, "by being provident" both for ourselves and for others. We too have, more specifically, received on our very being the imprint of that law whereby all things "derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends."[147]

It follows as a consequence of our own subjection to eternal (divine) law—however unique the manner—that we cannot simply project upon nature "the process of finalization proper to human actions." In other words, we must guard against thinking that nature (God's work) imitates art (our work). On the contrary, it is human reason, as Jean-Hervé Nicolas insists, "that follows and imitates nature"[148]—in, that is to say, its intelligent design, and thus also in its specific orientation to an end.[149] "Now intelligent action is for the sake of an end," Aristotle reasons; "therefore the nature of things also is so. Thus if a house, e.g., had been a thing made by nature, it would have been made in the same way as it is now by art; and if things made by nature were made also by art, they would come to be in the same way as by nature. Each step then in the series is for the sake of the next."[150]

Rather than conceive of the Creator "as a super engineer" (as in the mocking attitude of Sartre), we should thus recognize, Nicolas argues, the human engineer as attempting, ever so

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he specifies in the corpus of the article, 'the workman applies the ax to cut'], and is moreover the end of every action" (*STh* I, q. 105, a. 5, ad 3). Similarly, "not only is every motion from God as from the First Mover, but all formal perfection is from Him as from the First Act. And thus the act of the intellect or of any created being whatsoever depends upon God in two ways; first, inasmuch as it is from Him that it has the form whereby it acts; second, inasmuch as it is moved by Him to act" (*STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 1).

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

[148] Jean-Hervé Nicolas, *Synthèse dogmatique. Complément. De l'univers à la Trinité* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne; Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg, 1993), 49.

[149] As James V. Schall has put it, "bricks and stones are necessary for the house to be, but the house, the end, is only present because someone chose it and knows what a house is" ("Nature and Finality in Aristotle," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 45 [1989], 73-85, at 79). Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.9.200a (McKeon, ed., 252).

[150] Aristotle, *Phys*. 2.8.199a (McKeon, ed., 250).

"distantly and awkwardly, to walk in the Creator's footsteps."[151] Or, to express this same insight from the perspective of St. Thomas, as he is read by Josef Pieper: "creative knowledge of God gives measure but receives none (*mensurans non mensuratum*)." As for natural reality, it is simultaneously "measured and itself measuring (*mensuratum et mensurans*)," while human knowledge is "measured and does not give measure (*mensuratum non mensurans*)": at least, that is to say, "it is not what gives measure with respect to natural things, although it does so with regard to *res artificiales*, artificial things."[152] Or, again, as Hans Urs von Balthasar puts it still more straightforwardly, "God alone primarily possesses knowledge that is not an image but the archetype of reality whose truth is not measured by things."[153]

If there is anyone who understood the important implications of this thinking, Pieper suggests that it is, ironically enough, Sartre.

> From Sartre's radical negation of the idea of creation (he declares, for example that "Existentialism is nothing more than an attempt to draw all the conclusions from a consistently atheistic position") it is suddenly made evident how and to what extent the doctrine of creation is the concealed but basic foundation of classical Western metaphysics. If one were to compare the thought of Sartre and St. Thomas and reduce both to syllogistic form, one would realize that both start with the same "major premise," namely from this principle: things have an essential nature only in so far as they are fashioned by thought. Since man exists and has a constructive intellect, which can invent and has in fact invented, for instance, a letter opener, therefore, and for no other reason, we can speak of the "nature" of a letter opener. Then, Sartre continues, because there exists *no* creative intelligence which could have

[151] Nicolas, *Synthèse dogmatique. Complément,* 49. Cf. *STh* I, q. 4, a. 3, ad 4: "a statue is like a man, but not conversely; so also a creature can be spoken of as in some sort like God; but not that God is like a creature."

[152] Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, trans. John Murray and Daniel O'Connor (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 54. Cf. *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4. See also Josef Pieper, "Things Are Unfathomable because They Are Created," trans. Lothar Krauth, in Pieper, *An Anthology*, 98-99.

[153] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 1, *Truth of the World,* trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 119.

designed man and all natural things—and could have put an inner significance into them—therefore there is *no* "nature" in things that are not manufactured and artificial. . . . St. Thomas, on the contrary, declares: Because and in so far as God has creatively thought things, just so and to that extent have they a nature.[154]

When, on the other hand, one is unwilling, as was Sartre, to admit to God and thus to the purposefulness, or inner-directedness, of nature, the world itself becomes dis-enchanted.[155] Hence, as Emonet describes the vision of Sartre:

[He] begins by emptying things of their dynamic, of the surge that carries them to their purposes. He [Sartre] has no use for their youthful energies. He blinds himself to the happy thrust that leads them to their flowers and their fruits. But this radical evacuation of essences leads him fatally to underestimate existence: "These trees—they had no desire to exist; they simply could not prevent it. There you have it. Yes, they did all their little recipes quietly, without zest. The sap runs slowly in their ducts, and reluctantly." In Sartre's kitchen, unlike that of Heraclitus, we never meet the gods![156]

In short, because Sartre's "kitchen" is not enchanted, it cannot supply the "magical" forces that the ancients call *forms*: those directive powers that work *from within* matter—as differing from the man-made versions which work upon matter *from*

[154] Pieper, *Silence of St. Thomas,* 52, 53. Pieper refers to Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanism* (Paris, 1946), 94 (cf. *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 51: "Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position"). Hence St. Thomas holds, for example, that "God knows all things, both universal and particular. And since His knowledge may be compared to the things themselves, as the knowledge of art to the objects of art, all things must of necessity come under His ordering; as all things wrought by art are subject to the order of that art" (*STh* I, q. 22, a. 2). See also *STh* I, q. 9, a. 2, ad 2. Pieper's insight is proof of the fact, as Robert Sokolowski observes, that "the denial of Christian belief is to some extent defined by Christian notions and permeated by them" and that "many of the teachings we find in modernity could hardly be understood except as subsequent to Christian belief" (Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason*, 21, 22).

[155] See the long reflection to this end in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

[156] Emonet, *Dearest Freshness Deep Down Things*, 84-85. The reference is to Jean Paul Sartre, *La nausé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 133.

without—pushing each nature to its proper perfection and thus also to its growth, maturity, and reproduction, when that nature is living. Nor—and this is perhaps still more fundamental—can it supply the notion of ends or goods, which define both nature and the art of antiquity.[157] "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit," Aristotle writes at the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim."[158]

It is thus perhaps not surprising that St. Thomas, in his appropriation of this teaching,[159] should present sin as "a departure from the order to the end," whence also his distinction between a bad artist and a bad man:

> [S]in may occur in two ways, in a production of art. First, by a departure from the particular end intended by the artist: and this sin will be proper to the art; for instance, if an artist produce a bad thing, while intending to produce something good; or produce something good, while intending to produce something bad. Second, by a departure from the general end of human life: and then he will be said to sin, if he intend to produce a bad work, and does so in effect, so that another is taken in thereby. But this sin is not proper to the artist as such, but as man.[160]

Corresponding to this distinction—that of the good artist and the good man—is thus the distinction between two disciplines, each with its own governing principle: art and ethics. Whereas the former provides "right reason" with respect to things that are made, the latter provides "right reason" about things to be done. As such, ethics necessarily solicits the virtue of prudence,

[157] For a succinct presentation, see Schall, "Nature and Finality in Aristotle." *ScG* III, cc. 1-2 (*Summa contra Gentiles,* Leonine edition, vols. 13-15 [Rome: Editori di San Tommaso, 1918, 1926, 1930]; English trans. by Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, Vernon J. Bourke, and Charles J. O'Neil (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997)

[158] Aristotle, *Nic. Ethic.* 1.1.1094a (McKeon, ed., 935).

[159] See, for example, *ScG* I, c. 37; *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4; q. 6, a. 1; I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

[160] *STh* I-II, q. 21, a. 2, ad 2. In short, "to sin is nothing else than to fail in the good which belongs to any being according to its nature" (*STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2).

providing the rectitude of the doer's will—a rectitude that is not necessary to the production of art.[161] Hence, unlike the good of art that is found in its product (the book, chair, or picture, for example) and not in its producer (the artist or craftsman), the goods of ethics and prudence concern the actor as such. It is necessary so that he or she might "lead a good life" and ultimately be a good man or woman.[162] As such, it qualifies the person "comprehensively," in contrast to art, which qualifies him or her "only partially," namely, within the context of practicing his or her art. One might be a fine musician, a great poet, or a gifted carpenter and still remain an unjust and dishonest human being.[163] In both cases, however—that of the actor, considered as an artist, and that of the actor considered as simply human—we might judge him or her as more or less "disposed with regard to the [predetermined] ends,"[164] and in this sense as good or bad.

VI. A Plea for Normalcy: Nature as Norm

The point that I wish to emphasize from the foregoing—contra Sartre, Beauvoir, and Butler—is, of course, that human nature, like human art, really was considered normative—even in an ethical sense—throughout much, if not most, of the philosophical tradition.[165] For those of the Judeo-Christian

[161] See *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 4. Such is also the idea of Aristotle, as he is summarized by Yves Simon on this point: "When you have art, you still need virtue to make a good human use of it; but if you have prudence, you do not need an extra virtue to make good use of it, because prudence, being a moral as well as an intellectual virtue, supplies this good use of itself. And that is also why practical wisdom depends directly on a person's inclinations and disposition." (*Definition of Moral Virtue*, 98). Cf. *Nic. Ethic.* 6.5.1140a-1140b (McKeon, ed., 1026-27).

[162] *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 5, ad 1.

[163] See Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics,* 84.

[164] Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 4.

[165] Pinckaers argues that the principle *sequi naturam* was a "common basis for discussions between Peripatetics, Stoics, Academicians, Epicurians and others" (*Sources of Christian Ethics*, 334). As for the natural law, this was traditionally considered "the first foundation of the moral life" (Servais Pinckaers, *Morality: The Catholic View*, trans. Michael Sherwin, pref. Alasdair MacIntyre [South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2001], 96). Or, as Aristotelian ethics is summarized by Louis Dupré, "The more virtuous

tradition, this was the case because nature was said to reveal the Creator's mind and thus also his intentions for the creatures he has made. As for the ancients, once they had dismissed their mythical gods as mere human projections, they attributed necessity to nature: to "the way things were born to be." The deity nonetheless remained as "the governing part" of nature who ruled by causation: by setting things into motion and development and by "draw[ing] other beings to imitate, in their own appropriate ways, its [the deity's] permanence and independence."[166] Unlike the Greek deity, however, who moves other beings in an external manner, the Christian Creator was understood as moving each being from within, by way of the creature's natural appetites or inclinations, to specific ends that simultaneously define and perfect nature itself, including human nature.[167] In this way, nature was viewed as normative not so much in the negative sense of *constraint*—as if natural law sets limits from without—but rather in the positive sense of *attraction*. In other words, natural law was envisioned as

(that is, 'excellent') we grow, the more we allow ourselves to be guided by nature and the more aptly we discern the course of action appropriate in each particular instance. Ultimately what ought to be coincides with what a person or any organic being is according to its true, fully developed nature" (*Passage to Modernity*, 26).

[166] Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason*, 15. See also ibid., 81 for more explanation of the differences between the ancient Greek and the Christian understandings of teleology. As for James V. Schall, he argues that Aristotle "did suggests the possibility of the origin the universe from a cause which stands to the universe as the human artist to the work of art, that is, as creator of the ends and means of the created product, which then continues to exist in its own right with its own capacities" (Schall, "Nature and Finality in Aristotle," 83).

[167] This precision is of capital importance in light of the nominalist challenge, which would have us believe that there is no correspondence between God's creative will and the good, as such. What was willed by the capricious God of nominalism "was necessarily just and good precisely because [and only because] he willed it," and there was "no guarantee that the divine will might not change tomorrow" (and with it, the designation of the good) (Pinckaers, *Source of Christian Ethics*, 247). We could hardly be further from the Aristotelian presentation of the good as "that at which all things aim." For a very thorough development of nominalist principles and their influence upon the Western philosophical tradition, see Gillespie, *Theological Origins of Modernity*.

exercising its influence by way of the creature's own inclinations to its proper end, or perfection.[168] Saint Thomas could hardly be more explicit when he writes, "all those things to which man has a natural inclination are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance."[169] Conversely, a thing is considered good for St. Thomas not "simply because it is an end, or because it has achieved the end," but also because it is "ordered to the end," that is to say, "precisely because of this relation [of inclination, or orderedness, to the end]."[170]

To speak of nature as normative thus means that there is a built-in harmony between nature's end and its specific inclinations to (or desires for) that end, because these are of the essence of nature itself.[171] Indeed, nature, in the traditional

[168] See Pinckaers, *Morality: The Catholic View*, 97. This is obviously not to deny that the human being (like other beings with sensation) might also be naturally inclined *away* from what is evil or dangerous. However, "the movement from within tends to what is suitable more than it recedes from that which is unsuitable" (*STh* I-II, q. 35, a. 6, ad 2). Hence "the inclination of the appetitive power is, of itself, more eager in tending to pleasure than in shunning sorrow" (*STh* I-II, q. 35, a. 6). See also the International Theological Commission, "In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law" (2009), no. 43; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html

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

[170] *ScG* III, c. 20.

[171] When, therefore, we speak of inclinations, desires or appetites, these are not to be understood as "special 'facult[ies],'" Michel Labourdette explains with regard to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. Nor are they operations. Rather, they are "the form itself, precisely as orientated, as inclined to its end" (Michel Labourdette, *Cours de théologie morale* I: *Morale Fondamentale* [Paris: Editions Parole et Silence, 2010], 83). Similarly, Pinckaers notes in his commentary on *STh* III, q. 2, a. 1, where St. Thomas treats the meaning of the word *nature*, within the context of his Christology: "We note especially the dimension of interiority as essential to the concept of nature. What characterizes 'natural' action is that it proceeds from inner principles or sources. Thus nature is different from technology: it acts from within" ("Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural," trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, in *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005], 359-68, at 361). See also Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 544; and Georges Cottier, "Le concept de nature chez Saint Thomas," in idem, *Le désir de Dieu: Sur les traces de Saint Thomas* (Paris: Editions Parole et Silence, 2002), 149-72.

sense of the term, "does not exist without interiority," Pinckaers instructs us. "The term 'nature' [from *natus* = born] signifies the cause of birth, the source of life in the heart of interiority," whence also the natural inclinations that he presents as "the intimate springs that water the human mind and heart. . . . They are like a primal spontaneity that we can discern in the intuitive flashes of our minds or in the original vitality of our loves," and thus also "at the foundation of our freedom." Hence, "inclinations, like the natural law," are recognized as "God's most precious work in the human person, a direct, unique participation in his own wisdom, goodness, and freedom and the emanation of the eternal law."[172]

It is thus not surprising that Pinckaers presents St. Thomas's entire moral theology as "based largely on his teaching on natural inclinations and on the freedom for the good that activated them."[173] To the spiritual nature of the human person is accredited "the very source of free and moral actions. . . . We can also say that the human person is moral 'from birth,' possessing within, by nature, the primitive criteria of morality and the seeds of the moral life, the *semina virtutum*."[174] In fact, St. Thomas teaches, it is "according to the order of natural inclinations" that is to be found "the order of the precepts of the natural law."[175]

Of course, admitting to this unity of natural inclinations and morality does not necessarily entail that natural law can be reduced to desire, even if the latter notion is used interchangeably by St. Thomas and Aristotle with the notions of appetite and inclination. After all, "all the inclinations of any parts whatsoever of human nature"—such as, St. Thomas specifies, "the concupiscible and irascible parts"—are said to belong to the natural law "in so far as they are ruled by

[172] Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 405.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Pinckaers, "Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural," 362.
[175] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

reason."[176] The latter, in turn, is said to "direct all things regarding man, so that whatever can be ruled by reason, is contained under the law of reason."[177] When, therefore, the Angelic Doctor explains that the precepts of the natural law are ordered according to the order of the natural inclinations, he would have us understand that the higher inclinations rule over the lower, that those which are proper to the human being as spiritual (such as the desire to know God and to live in society) give direction to those which we share with all material creatures (such as the inclination to preserve our being and thus to ward of danger) and those which we share with other animals (such as the inclination to reproduce and to raise offspring).[178]

If, moreover, the higher inclinations rule the lower, this is not only because God profoundly respects human liberty, giving us dominion over our own acts.[179] This "rule" of the higher inclinations is also due (as part of the same divine intention)[180] to the fact that the specifically spiritual inclination of the human being to truth and goodness[181] renders us capable of ordering, or directing, our other inclinations to their proper ends. This is not to say that nature dictates morality. It is, however, as Marie-Joseph Nicolas notes with respect to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, "the only criterion to discover and apply it."[182] To be more specific, because reason is able to discern the natural ends of created things and thus also God's purpose for them (including our own human nature, short of its supernatural end;

[176] Ibid., ad 2. See also *STh* I-II, q. 17, a. 7.

[177] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, ad 3.

[178] See *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2; q. 17, a. 7. See also my application of this reasoning in Michele M. Schumacher, "Woman's Self-Interest or Sacrificial Motherhood: Personal Desires, Natural Inclinations and the Meaning of Love," *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 71-101.

[179] Rational creatures "are so controlled by God," St. Thomas teaches, "as objects of care for their own sakes; while other creatures are subordinated, as it were, to the rational creatures" (*ScG* III, c. 112).

[180] In one act God wills the end and the means. See *STh* I, q. 19, a. 5.

[181] See, e.g., *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 1, ad 3.

[182] Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 569. As such, it is "a question that seeks a response" (ibid.).

cf. 1 Cor 2:9), it also belongs to reason to command the will.[183] Because the will in turn "relates to the end as to its proper object," it is also by the will "that we employ whatever powers we may have," and this accounts for the fact that "a man is said to be good, not by his good understanding; but by his good will."[184] The power of the will is, after all, natural to the human being, which is to say that it is "rooted in a 'nature,' which is inseparable from its fundamental inclinations."[185]

Differing, therefore, from Judith Butler, who holds that nature "assumes its value [and its intelligibility] at the same time that it assumes its social character,"[186] the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition holds that nature does have a value—a value which is defined by its specific end—*prior* to the influence of human culture and even prior to the operation of the human

[183] See *STh* I-II, q. 17, a. 5.

[184] *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4. The first part of this affirmation does not deny that "we have free-will with respect to what we will not of necessity, nor by natural instinct" (*STh* I, q. 19, a. 11).

[185] Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 553. On the power of the will as natural to the spiritual being, see *STh* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 3. Hence, as St. Thomas specifies, "in man, nature can be taken in two ways. First, inasmuch as intellect and reason is the principal part of man's nature, since in respect thereof he has his own specific nature. And in this sense, those pleasures may be called natural to man, which are derived from things pertaining to man in respect of his reason: for instance, it is natural to man to take pleasure in contemplating the truth and in doing works of virtue. Second, nature in man may be taken as contrasted with reason, and as denoting that which is common to man and other animals, especially that part of man which does not obey reason. And in this sense, that which pertains to the preservation of the body, either as regards the individual, as food, drink, sleep, and the like, or as regards the species, as sexual intercourse, are said to afford man natural pleasure" (*STh* I-II, q. 31, a. 7).

[186] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 5. Butler specifies that there is "no access" to nature "except by means of its construction" (ibid.). She thus continues the nominalist understanding of meaning as "first established by the mind and subsequently expressed in conventional signs," as well as the trend—recognized by Louis Dupré as belonging to the early humanists—of regarding "language itself as creative of meaning. Reversing the traditional order of reference, they began to envision reality itself through the prism of language" (Louis Dupré, *Metaphysics and Culture*, The Aquinas Lecture, 1994 [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994], 7).

will. "[I]n every thing, being itself, which is from nature, precedes volition, which is from the will," St. Thomas holds. Because, therefore, "the will is founded on some nature [that is to say, *human* nature, which is simultaneously spiritual and corporal], it is necessary that the movement proper to nature be shared by the will, to some extent: just as what belongs to a previous cause is shared by a subsequent cause."[187] In other words, as Nicolas has perfectly expressed it, "Every free action has a rule, a criterion of rectitude [*justesse*], and that criterion is the end, the objective end of the free nature, and not the end chosen by [the will] itself."[188] Hence, the "fundamental movement" of the human will, "anterior to all the determinations that it gives to itself and always present interiorly to each of them" is "its necessary and constitutive object," which is identified as the good.[189] It is thus not surprising that the correlation between the end and freely willed action is viewed by this tradition as "the foundation of all morality."[190]

VII. Morphology or Biology?

It is certainly no coincidence with regard to the confrontation between gender ideology and the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition that the inclination to reproduce and raise offspring is regarded as one of the five natural inclinations that provide order to the natural law precepts.[191] Aristotle teaches that

[187] *STh* I-II, q. 10, a. 1, ad 1.

[188] Marie-Joseph Nicolas, "Introduction à la Somme théologique," in Thomas Aquinas, *Somme théologique*, trans. Albert Raulin (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 13-66, at 41.

[189] Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 553.

[190] Nicolas, "Introduction à la Somme Théologique," 41.

[191] See *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2. This natural inclination is preceded by (1) the natural yearning for the good and (2) the inclination to preserve one's being, and it is followed by (4) the yearning for truth and (5) the natural inclination to live in society. Pinckaers points out that "Thomas' perspective is already substantially present in Cicero in a text that Thomas seems never to have read (*De officiis* 1.4)" (*Morality: The Catholic View*, 98).

The most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive. . . . Since then no living thing is able to partake in what is eternal and divine by uninterrupted continuance, it tries to achieve that end in the only way possible to it . . . so it remains not indeed as the self-same individual but continues in something like itself—not numerically, but specifically one [that is to say, of the same species].[192]

In short, a thing is considered "perfect" by the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition "when it can reproduce its like."[193] So fundamental to nature and thus to natural law is the inclination to generate—or, in the case of the human being, to *procreate*[194]—that the word *nature* has, as Nicolas observes, "come to designate that which is the very end of generation, that is to say, the essence of the species that is communicated by generation."[195]

[192] Aristotle, *De Anima* (*On the Soul*) 2.4.415a28-415b3 (trans. J. A. Smith, in McKeon, ed., *Basic Works of Aristotle*, 561).

[193] *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4.

[194] Nicolas has good reason to argue, with reference to St. Thomas, that "the intention of nature in human sexuality is not like that of animal sexuality to safeguard the species: it is to procreate a human person who is significant in him- or herself (*etiam individua sunt de principali intentione naturae*), and consequently to lead him or her to full stature and autonomy by means of education" (Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 571). Cf. *STh* I, q. 98, a. 1. Similarly, Pinckaers argues that sexual inclination in the human being, as differing from that of animals, "is not solely biological, even though this component is a characteristic feature of it. It engages the entire personality through the bonds of affection," whence the distinction between the two ends of marriage: the procreative and the unitive ends of marriage. These Pinckaers recognizes as "naturally aid[ing] each other" (*Morality: The Catholic View*, 103, 104).

[195] Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 543; cf. *STh* III, q. 2, a. 1. Similarly, the word *gender* "binds the resemblance among individuals to their generation [*engendrement*]," as Agacinski fittingly points out. "The word *gender* is tied to generation and generality, as words of the same family (generic, genetic, genital, gene, genius, genesis, *gens* and *gent*, genealogy, and let us not forget generosity)" (*Les femmes, entre sexe et genre*, 61).

What we might draw from this understanding of perfection[196] is that the natural inclination to reproduction—not unlike the other natural inclinations—implies a real power that is not reducible to morphology, as the transsexual lobby would have us believe. As Agacinski observes with regard to so-called sex-change operations,

> Medicine does not construct; it reconstructs. Much more, it reconstructs in an approximate manner and, in the end, fabricates only morphological appearances, without functional biological powers. Surgery can suppress the organs of generation, but it does not know how to construct them, nor how to create *their powers*.[197]

It is not the case, Agacinski specifies, "that one [sex] disposes of a power lacking to the other (according to androcentric or phalocentric logic)." Rather, "the power that they have in common—that of engendering—is shared between them" and the power of each "is not the same [as the other]."[198] In short, although social organization can compose certain human relations in accord with biological organization, it cannot create them "any more than formal logic can construct the schema of generation."[199] Neither desire nor appetite can be understood in terms of their object, Agacinski explains, unless we take into account "the 'forces' that animate bodies."[200]

In this way the question of sexual differentiation reemerges within the study of life (biology), as differing from the physiochemical study of matter (anatomy and physics).[201] When sexual differentiation is thus understood in terms of a complementary differentiation of biological powers, as it is in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, sexual attraction (desire) or

[196] See Oliva Blanchette, "The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas," in David M. Gallagher, ed., *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 107-30.

[197] Agacinski, *Les femmes entre sexe et genre*, 131.

[198] Ibid., 153. It is thus "difference [*altérité*] that creates the dynamic," and this difference affects every sexed being, who is "always *the other of the other*." (ibid., 107).

[199] Ibid., 68.

[200] Ibid., 152-53.

[201] As Agacinski puts it, "sexual distinction is deduced from the conditions in which individuals are engendered one from another" (ibid., 61).

sexual inclination is not simply an end in itself. On the contrary, both sexual inclinations and sexual powers are specified by the natural end of procreation. In keeping with his presentation of sin as "a departure from the order to the end,"[202] Thomas thus presents homosexual desire ("unisexual lust") as receiving "the special name of the unnatural crime" because it is "contrary to sexual intercourse,"[203] whose specific end includes fruition, as well as unity.

Conclusion: Respecting the Analogy between Divine Art and Human Art

The analogy of art that we have drawn upon in these pages to clarify the ancient and medieval presentation of the human person as one who, like God, "is the principle of his action, as having free-will and control of his actions,"[204] is one which requires that "no similitude can be expressed" between Creator and creature, "without implying a greater dissimilitude."[205] Hence unlike God, who "by one act understands all things in His essence" and "wills all things in His goodness,"[206] we know only in virtue of the fact that we are ourselves known and willed by God. This accounts for the fact that the human word is, as we have seen, a "measured" word: it necessarily expresses (and thus corresponds to) the real world that God has created.[207] In this way it radically differs from the Word of God

[202] *STh* I-II, q. 21, a. 2, ad 2.

[203] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 3, ad 2.

[204] *STh* I-II, prologue.

[205] The Fourth Lateran Council, DZ 806 (Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd edition, revised, enlarged and, in collaboration with Helmut Hoping, edited by Peter Hünnermann in the German edition and edited in English by Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012]).

[206] *STh* I, q. 19, a. 5.

[207] As St. Thomas puts it, "The Word is specified by the object which is named, and not by him who names it, unless he names himself" (*De natura verbi intellectus* [*Opuscules de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, III (Paris: J. Vrin, 1984), 142]).

in whom all things were created (cf. Col 1:16). Whereas human knowledge follows upon the existence of things,[208] divine knowledge causes things to exist. For "all those things which are made by God have pre-existed in the Word of God even before they are in their own proper nature," just as "the house exists in the understanding of the architect before it is brought to actuality."[209] Or again, as the knowledge of the artisan is to the artifact he produces, so is God's knowledge to all that exists.[210] God therefore "does not gather knowledge from things [as we do]; rather, by His knowledge He produces things [including the human intellect] in being"[211] and consequently renders human knowledge and creativity possible.

[208] "[T]hings are knowable" by us, Pieper explains regarding St. Thomas's teaching, "because they have been created" (*Silence of St. Thomas*, 56).

[209] *ScG* IV, c. 13. Similarly, "the wisdom of God is related to his created works just as the art of the builder is to the house he has made. Now this form and wisdom is the Word; and thus in him all things were created as in an exemplar: *he spoke and they were made* (Gen 1)." (*Super Col.*, c. 1, lect. 4 [*Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Colossenses lectura*, in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, vol. 40 of the Latin / English edition of the *Works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Biblical Commentaries,* trans. Fabien R. Larcher, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon (Lander, Wyo.: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 86]).

[210] See *STh* 1, q. 22, a. 2.

[211] *ScG* IV, c. 13. Similarly, "our word is first of all in potency and then in act, but the divine word is always in act" ("Sic ergo verbum nostrum prius est in potentia quam in actus. Sed Verbum divinum semper est in actus" [*De differentia divini verbi, et humani* (*Opuscules de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, III, 139)]). Hence, as differing from the circular movement of the human intellect and will, which tend to what is exterior to them—"the external good moving the intellect and the intellect moving the will, and the will by appetite and love tending to the external good"—in the case of God "the circle ends in him [that is to say, in God himself]. For God, by understanding himself, conceives his word which is the type of all things understood by him, inasmuch as he understands all things by understanding himself, and from this word he proceeds to love of all things and of himself" (*De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 9 [*Quaestiones disputatae,* vol. 2, ed. Pio Bazzi (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1965); English trans. by the English Dominican Fathers (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004)]). Similarly, "God does not know himself and creatures through two different sources; he knows all things in his own essence, as in the first efficient cause. The Son, however, is the intellectual concept or representation of God insofar as he knows himself, and, as a consequence, every creature. Therefore, inasmuch as the Son is begotten, he is seen as a word representing every creature, and he is the principle of every creature." (*Super Col.,* c. 1, lect. 4).

> Now, just as an intellectual agent, because of the account he has in himself, produces things in being, so also a teacher, because of the account he has in himself, causes science in another, since the science of the learner is drawn from the science of the teacher, as a kind of image of the latter. God is not only the cause by His intellect of all things which naturally subsist, but even every intellectual cognition is derived from the divine intellect. . . . Necessarily, then, it is by the Word of God, which is the knowledge of the divine intellect, that every intellectual cognition is caused. Accordingly, we read in John (1:4): "The life was the light of men," to wit, because the Word Himself who is life and in whom all things are [sic] life does, as a kind of light, make the truth manifest to the minds of men.[212]

This important distinction between God's knowledge and ours is denied by Butler's insistence that there is no prediscursive corporality. To hold to Butler's assumption is moreover to forget, as Agacinski points out, that those who speak are "living bodies." Hence, "when Aristotle defined man as 'a being endowed with *logos*, the *logos* . . . appeared as a power of these particular living beings whom we are. Inversely, an *a priori* spiritualized or logo-centric position leads to the integral subordination of the living being to the speaking being."[213] In that case, the difference between a natural creature and an artisanal fabrication is simply obliterated, as is the difference between the Creator and the creature. When, on the other hand, we hold to this difference, we are reminded that the relation between matter and form is not the same for a body endowed with certain natural potentialities as it is for one that is organized from without by way of human intervention.[214] Although, to be more specific, an animated being "acts and lives by actualizing . . . its natural and organic power," it does "not," Agacinski continues, "fashion or produce its own body."[215] Nor, we are reminded, does it fashion or produce the powers whereby it acts, whether in an artistic or in an ideological mode.

[212] *ScG* IV, c. 13.
[213] Agasinski, *Les femmes entre sexe et genre*, 146.
[214] See ibid., 143.
[215] Ibid., 144.

What I am suggesting that we might retain from this important analogy (between God's creation and ours) is that common to both is the notion of purposefulness and thus also that of ends—and these notions are likewise present in the ancient and medieval sense of the term "art" (*ars*).[216] As for the "art" of acting and living well, which is the specific domain of ethics, it too is measured by a specific end, namely, the good of the human being as conceived by the Creator. The human person is not, in other words, his or her own creator. He or she is, rather, a responsible agent who creates within God's creation and who perfects his or her own natural powers and inclinations with respect for nature's own powers and inclinations, including those of his or her own bodily and spiritual nature.

It is thus "natural to man," as St. Thomas reasons in union with the Aristotelian tradition, "to take pleasure in contemplating truth and in doing works of virtue."[217] Indeed virtue is fostered by the contemplation of truth—the contemplation, that is to say, of God's intentions, including his specific purpose and intention for human nature. Such, as we have seen, is the foundation of a classical understanding of morality. In fact, as Joseph Raztinger has remarked, it was a common conviction of "almost the whole of mankind before the modern period . . . that man's Being contains an imperative." This, in turn, means "that he does not himself *invent* morality on the basis of calculations of expediency but rather *finds* it already present in the essence of things."[218] Parallel to this is the conviction that "the *language of nature* (in our case, two sexes complementary to each other yet quite distinct) is *also the language of morality* (man and woman called to equally noble destinies, both eternal, but different)."[219] If moreover this is the case—that a classic

[216] See Stephen A. Hipp, "Nature's Finality and the Stewardship of Creation according to Saint Thomas Aquinas," *Nova et Vetera*, English ed., 10 (2012): 143-91.

[217] *STh* I-II, q. 31, a. 7.

[218] Ratzinger, *Turning Point for Europe?*, 34.

[219] Joseph Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison

understanding of morality entails a correlation between human nature and its end—this is not due to an arbitrary declaration on the part of God, as would befit the nominalist vision of divine causality, whose influence sadly continues to pervade contemporary thought.[220] Indeed, there is "nothing so far" from the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition as "the conception of an arbitrary God, deciding without reason what is good and what is bad."[221]

Because, on the contrary, God is held by this tradition to create with purposefulness, or intent, all beings—not least of all *human* beings—are recognized as created in view of certain ends and thus endowed with the powers to achieve those ends in accord with "his [God's] good purpose" (cf. Phil 2: 13). In the reasoning of St. Thomas,

> If therefore we consider the order of things depending on the first cause, God cannot do anything against this order; for, if He did so, He would act against His foreknowledge, or His will, or His goodness. But if we consider the order of things depending on any secondary cause, thus God can do something outside such order; for He is not subject to the order of secondary causes; but on the contrary, this order is subject to Him, as proceeding from Him, not by a natural necessity, but by the choice of His own will; for He could have created another order of things.[222]

Saint Thomas thus explains how God allows the human person to create within the realm of his own (divine) causality, without challenging God's absolute sovereignty. God "operates immediately in every operation," St. Thomas holds, "without excluding the operation of the [human] will and [human] nature."[223] In other words, he "works in things in such a

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(San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 97-98. Hence, "To respect biology is to respect God himself, hence to safeguard his creatures" (ibid., 98).

[220] See Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*; idem, *Morality: The Catholic View*; Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*; and Gillepsie, *Theological Origins of Modernity*.

[221] Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 564.

[222] *STh* I, q. 105, a. 6.

[223] *De Pot*, q. 3, a. 7. "God moves all things," St. Thomas argues, "but in diverse ways, inasmuch as each is moved in a manner befitting its nature. And so man is moved

manner that things have their proper operation," namely, in virtue of the forms that he has given them. Again it is with recourse to the analogy of art that St. Thomas clarifies this distinction between first (divine) and second (human) causality: "For the craftsman is moved to action by the end, which is the thing wrought, for instance a chest or a bed; and applies to action the axe," which cuts in virtue of "its being sharp." Similarly, God "moves things to operate" by "applying their forms and powers to operation." God's intention in creating thus extends to the causal action of the beings that he creates. Unlike the workman, however, who does not necessarily create the particular effect of the axe that he employs (he need not cause it to be sharp, even if he causes it to cut), God gives natural forms, or "principle[s] of action," to all the agents that he creates and likewise "preserves them in being." He might thus be said to work in all agents by bestowing "active powers" upon them in virtue of which they act for specific ends, which characterize them as such (as agents and as created).[224]

As for the specific power of the human will, it too "is natural, and [thus] necessarily follows upon the nature"[225] that God has given it; which means not only that "it is not free to not be free," but also that like other natures, it too has fundamental inclinations, including that of conscience. Hence,

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by God to will and to perform outwardly in a manner consistent with free will. Therefore, willing and performing depends on man as freely acting; but on God and not on man, as initial mover" (*Super Rom*,, c. 9, lect. 3 [*Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanus lectura,* in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. Fabien R. Larcher, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon, *The Latin/English Edition of The Works of St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 37 (Lander, Wyo.: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012)]).

[224] *STh* I, q. 105, a. 5. Hence, as T. L. Short has argued: "Final causes are required to explain what mechanical causation by itself cannot explain, namely, the emergence of order from disorder or of uniformity from variety. (Thus Aristotle argued from uniformities in organic growth to there being final causes controlling these processes; and Newton argued that God created the solar system, on the grounds that the laws of motion and gravity could not themselves account for the emergence of so harmonious an order)" ("Teleology in Nature," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 [1983]: 311-20, at 311). See also Charles Morerod, "A World of Natures and the Presence of God," *Nova et Vetera*, English ed., 10 (2012): 215-31.

[225] *STh* III, a. 18, a. 1, ad 3.

although the spiritual creature "does not give its nature to itself," it really does choose "this or that possibility of its nature."[226] It follows that the distinguishing characteristics of human persons, who share a common human nature, cannot be attributed uniquely to the Creator's intentions, nor to the external causes of heredity or culture. Rather, "it is by his free acts, the only ones that are properly human, that man assumes and appropriates or, on the contrary, refuses the given [aspects of the nature (*le donné*)] that he has received with his specific and individual nature."[227]

Because, in other words, God profoundly respects human freedom, the latter implies "the power to assume or not [to assume] the end of one's own nature and consequently [to assume] this nature itself." In short, the spiritual nature of the human being implies the power to transform "general inclinations into precise and concrete desires [*vouloirs*]," [228] whereby it realizes itself in contributing to its culture. In virtue of the fact that the human will is defined by its nature, however, it necessarily follows that "its fundamental movement, anterior to every determination that it gives to itself and ever present within each of them" is "its necessary and constitutive object," namely, "*the good.*"[229]

It follows that just as the natural inclinations that we share with other material beings are not limited to the preservation of our being and the avoidance of evil but more positively include the seeking of the good and even—at the height of its perfection—the passing on of the good (identical with being) by way of reproduction or generation,[230] so also the natural inclinations of a spiritual nature are not limited to knowing the truth, but include actively seeking it out and even sharing it: whence the natural inclination to live in society and to educate

[226] Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 553.
[227] Ibid., 560.
[228] Ibid., 553.
[229] Ibid., 554.
[230] "[T]he good is diffusive of itself and of being" (*ScG* I, c. 37).

our offspring.[231] Thus Nicolas recognizes an analogy between the perfection of a material nature in physical generation and the perfection of a spiritual nature in intellection. In both cases, he explains, we speak of a conception.[232] With due respect, however, to the difference between the Creator and the creature, the intellectual conception (or word) of the human being neither originates within the human intellect, nor remains therein. Rather, it is an expression of the real beyond itself (or in the case at hand, the real of its own spiritual-corporal essence), and it is the knowledge of this created good, that incites the will to seek it out.

In this way, human culture is achieved by the collaborative efforts of human persons, who—it bears repeating—transform general inclinations "into precise and concrete desires [*vouloirs*]" by the choices they make.[233] In the words of the Second Vatican Council, "it is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture,"[234] by which is meant "all those things which go to the refining and developing of man's diverse mental and physical endowments," or "through the cultivation [and not the manipulation] of the goods and values of nature. Whenever, therefore, there is a question of human life, nature and culture are intimately linked together."[235]

Hence, as Louis Dupré has put it, "culture performs its active function inadequately if it does not adopt a listening as well as a speaking role with regard to a given nature. Ideally it displays the creative give-and-take of a good conversation: we allow our ideas, values, and customs to be shaped by a given order, in the very process of transforming that order."[236] The alternative—the absolutizing of the human will in its function of self-

[231] "Even other animals have not at birth such a perfect use of their natural powers as they have later on. This is clear from the fact that birds teach their young to fly; and the like may be observed in other animals" (*STh* I, q. 101, a. 2).

[232] See Nicolas, "L'Idée de nature dans la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin," 552.

[233] Ibid., 553.

[234] Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* 53, §2.

[235] Ibid., §3.

[236] Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 11.

determination, whether in the Butlerian mode of crafting one's own sex in an effort to avoid cultural determinism or in the Sartrian mode of inventing one's own nature and ethic in a conscious effort to usurp the Creator's prerogative—is to invite the destruction of the human person by the human self. As Lewis predicted, the "final victory" of "Man's struggle with Nature" will be won when "the ultimate springs of human action are no longer . . . something given." Instead, conscience itself will be "*produce[d*]," as will human persons, who will henceforth resemble "artifacts" more than men. "They are . . . not men (in the old sense) at all," Lewis foretold.

> They are, if you like, men who have sacrificed their own share in traditional humanity in order to devote themselves to the task of deciding what "Humanity" shall henceforth mean. "Good" and "bad," applied to them, are words without content: for it is from them that the content of these words is henceforward to be derived.

In short, "Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man."[237]

[237] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 74, 77, 76, 77.

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"THE BLESSED IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WILL SEE THE PUNISHMENTS OF THE DAMNED SO THAT THEIR BLISS MAY BE MORE DELIGHTFUL TO THEM": NIETZSCHE AND AQUINAS

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NO DECENT HUMAN BEING can read those words of St. Thomas Aquinas, which Frederick Nietzsche quotes in *On the Genealogy of Morals*[1] (*GM*) without feeling horror, shock, and disgust: "'The blessed in the kingdom of heaven,' he [Aquinas] says meek as a lamb, 'will see the

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all Nietzsche references will be to *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1992). The German original, *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift*, is in *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [KGW] VI/2, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), 259-430. Citations of Kaufmann's translation will use Roman numerals for the Treatises and Arabic numbers for the individual sections; Nietzsche's "Preface" will be designated by "P." The whole passage which Nietzsche cites at *GM* I.15 reads: "Denn was ist die Seligkeit jenes Paradieses? . . . Wir würden es vielleicht schon errathen; aber besser ist es, dass es uns eine in solchen Dingen nicht zu unterschätzende Autorität ausdrücklich bezeugt, Thomas von Aquino, der grosse Lehrer und Heilige. 'Beati in regno coelesti,' sagt er sanft wie ein Lamm, 'videbunt poenas damnatorum, *ut beatitudo illis magis complaceat*'" ("For what is it that constitutes the bliss of this paradise. . . . We might even guess, but it is better to have it expressly described for us by an authority not to be underestimated in such matters, Thomas Aquinas, the great teacher and saint. 'The blessed in the kingdom of heaven' he says, meek as a lamb, 'will see the punishments of the damned *so that their bliss might be more delightful to them*'").

punishments of the damned so that their bliss might be more pleasing to them.'" Nietzsche scholars regularly notice and comment on this passage from the *Summa theologiae*.[2] The typical gloss takes it to show the spirit of hatred that lies at the heart of Aquinas's Christianity. Thus Walter Kaufmann reads the quotation as showing how the Christian faith enables its adherents "to indulge their lust for revenge by hoping for the eternal torture and destruction of their persecutors."[3] Weaver Santinello echoes this sentiment when she claims that "'the great teacher and saint [Aquinas]' had a 'bloodthirsty vision of Hell.'"[4] Even so sensitive a Christian as Merold Westphal reads Nietzsche's Aquinas in this way. "[I]t is hard to deny that the spirit of resentment and longing for vengeance burns hot in these passages . . . in them the final judgment makes the Final Solution seem almost moderate."[5] Similar comments and observations so abound in the scholarship that they form a virtual consensus on this *Summa* passage's teaching.[6]

This proliferation of such statements on Aquinas's meaning, however, contrasts sharply with the absence of careful analyses

[2] The Aquinas references are to the *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas* trans. and ed. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), 3 vols. Latin quotations will be taken from *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Summa Theologiae* (Rome: Editiones Paulinae, 1962). The quotation itself is from the "Supplement to the Third Part" (*STh* III, q. 94, a. 1). As Thomas himself did not complete the *Summa*, the *Supplementum* comes to us from one or more of his disciples (perhaps Reginald of Piperno), who composed it with materials taken from Aquinas's early *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*. See J.-P. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 147. The *Summa* passage is taken word-for-word from IV *Sent*., d. 50, q. 1, a. 4, qcla. 1-3. The three *quaestiunculae* exactly parallel the three articles of question 94.

[3] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, *Psychologist*, *Antichrist* (4th ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 347 (cf. ibid., 275).

[4] Weaver Santinello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 94.

[5] Merold Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 257.

[6] Charles Natoli, *Nietzsche and Pascal on Christianity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 175 n. 9, is a very rare dissenting voice who maintains that Nietzsche has caricatured Aquinas in his use of this quotation. Since, however, Natoli writes on Pascal rather than Aquinas, he does not develop this point beyond his brief footnote.

of the passage. I do not know, in fact, of a single article, book chapter, or study that takes Nietzsche's quotation of Aquinas for its theme. More generally, despite the vast literature on Nietzsche and Christianity, comparative studies of Nietzsche and Aquinas are rare.[7] The absence of substantive studies on the *Genealogy*'s use of the Aquinas quotation is doubly unfortunate. First, it silences or at least muffles the voice of Nietzsche. He cites Aquinas's text in the specific context of Treatise I of the *Genealogy*. The quotation reveals the full meaning that Nietzsche intended it to convey only when it is read in that context. Second, it obscures and distorts the thought of Aquinas: the quotation must be read in its own context in the *Summa theologiae* to grasp the teaching that Aquinas intended his words to express.

In light of Aquinas's importance as a Christian theologian and the crucial role he plays in the *Genealogy*'s critique of moral values, I intend to examine Nietzsche's presentation of this text. Careful study of this matter can shed light on a key question which has long been discussed and debated: Is Nietzsche's account of Christianity as life-inimical rooted in an extraordinarily perceptive reading of the Christian psyche? Or is it based, rather, on a profound misunderstanding of that psyche? I will argue for two points: (1) that Nietzsche has utterly misconstrued Aquinas's teaching; and (2) that Aquinas's Christian morality, far from being life-inimical, is life-affirming.

[7] Important studies of the two thinkers include the following: Erich Przywara, "Thomas v. Aq., Ignatius v. Loyola, Fried. Nietzsche," *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* 11 (1936): 257-95; W. Schöllgen, "Die Lehre von der Tugend bei Thomas v. Aq. und die Kritik Nietzsches an der Christlichen Ethik," *Catholica* 6 (1937): 62-80; idem, "Friedrich Nietzsche und Thomas von Aquin als Deuter Christlicher Lebensideale," *Theologie und Glaube* 35 (1943): 61-73; Frederick Copleston, *St. Thomas and Nietzsche* (London: Blackfriars, 1944); Joseph McBride, "Christianity, Ethics, and Alienation in Contemporary Atheistic Humanism: Frederick Nietzsche and St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Philosophy and Totality*, ed. J. McEvoy (Belfast: The Queens University of Belfast Press, 1977, 111-31); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); and Walter Thompson, "Perspectivism: Aquinas and Nietzsche on the Intellect and Will," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1995): 451-73. None of these studies, however, takes the Aquinas quotation as its theme.

More specifically, I will show not only that Aquinas is completely free from the hatred, envy, and vengefulness that Nietzsche attributes to him, but also that the virtues and beliefs he embraces, such as meekness, mercy, and divine justice, are strong and supportive of human flourishing.

I will proceed in the following steps. First, I will investigate Nietzsche's understanding of the Aquinas quotation in terms of the role it plays in the *Genealogy*'s First Treatise. As already noted, recognizing Nietzsche's purpose in quoting Aquinas requires understanding the objections he develops to Christianity throughout that Treatise. Hence I will highlight the principal criticisms of Aquinas's Christianity found there. Second, I will analyze the quotation from Aquinas in its own context in the *Summa theologiae*. Lastly, I will compare and contrast Nietzsche and Aquinas in terms of those issues which the quoted passage has brought to the fore. Nietzsche's take on Aquinas, however, is the only question I will address. I do not intend to explore issues raised in the book's Second or Third Treatises. I will cite them only insofar as they bear the quotation from Aquinas in the First Treatise. Similarly, I will examine other teachings and writings of these two thinkers only insofar as they touch issues raised by that quotation.

I

Unlike almost all previous philosophers, Nietzsche does not assume that "morality" is good, right, or perennially true. His predecessors and contemporaries from Plato to Schopenhauer, Paul Rée, and the "English psychologists" never questioned the value of "pity, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice" (*GM* P.5) and "harm no one, but rather help all as much as you can."[8] Rather, they tried in different ways to justify and explain the "unegoistic" values they had assumed. The English psychologists claimed, moreover, that these values lie at the historical origins of morality (*GM* I.1). Nietzsche, however, questions both

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Works of Nietzsche,* 186.

claims. Did moral values historically originate with unegoistic utilitarians? And are these values helpful or harmful to human beings? Genealogical analysis is needed to address both of these questions.

Genealogy becomes necessary because every interpretation of the world arises from a particular vantage point.[9] Since there is no interpretation from a "universal perspective," no interpretation of facts can be an adequate or accurate representation of reality. Rather, all interpretations arise from seeing the facts from one's own perspective. Since the same facts can be interpreted from vastly different perspectives, the interpretations are governed by and reflective of the sentiments and root values that generate those perspectives. Thus metaphysical and moral truth claims are merely perspectival interpretations of the world (*GM* I.13). Interpretations of reality by metaphysicians and moralists reveal far more about the purposes and interests of those who make such claims than they do about the realities they purport to express. Genealogy's goal, then, is to uncover both the historical origins and the real worth of these root values and interests.[10]

[9] Nietzsche gives the explanation for his genealogical method in GM II.12. The origin of any fact must be distinguished from its final meaning or interpretation. Since the meaning is merely a sign that a new will to power has triumphed over a preceding one, genealogy is necessary to discover the real interests of the victorious will to power.

[10] While Nietzsche denies the existence of "truth" (*Wahrheit*)—see especially *GM* III.24—he emphatically affirms the knowledge of facts. He maintains, moreover, that facts as such need to be interpreted, for they are mute and "stupid to all eternity" without interpretations ("Denn man muss diesen Thatbestand erst interpretiren" [*GM* III.7]). Suffering is a fact; it is interpreted as salvific by Christians (*GM* II.7). Physical depression is a fact; Christians interpret it as sin (*GM* III.20). The asceticism of philosophers is a fact; it needs an interpretation (*GM* III.7). So, too, the "concealed land of morality" is a "documented," "ascertained" fact that "has really existed"; but because its history is recorded in a "hieroglyphic writing so hard to decipher, it likewise needs an interpretation" (*GM* P.7). The English psychologists erred precisely because their purely psychological interpretations of morality ignored the historical facts. See Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 21-23, 198-203; Robert Solomon, "Nietzsche *ad hominem*: Perspectivism, Personality, and Ressentiment Revisited," in *Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, 180-222; Robert Guey, "The Philosophical Function of Genealogy," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); and

This two-part genealogical program is announced in the book's Preface: *"The value of these values must be called into question*—and for this we need a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances out of which they have grown, under which they have shifted and developed" (*GM* P.6). As a good physician wishing to diagnose a sickness takes the patient's medical history, so Nietzsche needs to discover the "moral history" of our contemporary values. Still, such a history is a means to an end, not an end in itself; Nietzsche has no interest in "hypothesis mongering" about the origin of moral values for its own sake (*GM* P.5). Genealogy is needed, rather, to raise the question of the worth of these values. "What value do these [moral values] have? . . . Are they a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life? Or, conversely, do they betray the fullness, the power, the will to life, its courage, its certainty, its future?" (*GM* P.3). Nietzsche writes the *Genealogy of Morals* to show the value of these values.[11]

In the First Essay Nietzsche carries out his initial genealogical analysis of morality. In sections 1 through 9 he recovers the lost historical facts and the different interpretations put on them by the nobles and slaves. He argues that these two groups developed different moralities.[12] Drawing on Homer, Hesiod, Thucydides, and philology, he argues that noble morality originated with the strong and happy warrior aristocrats who, knowing that they were excellent, styled themselves "good." They called "bad" those lacking their excellences, the mediocre commoners and slaves. The "slave revolt" in morality began when the oppressed priestly Jews—and especially the most Jewish of Jews, the Christians—with a stunning creativity born out of impotent hatred took their "most spiritual revenge" by creatively revaluing the nobles' values (*GM* I.8). Too feeble to overcome the warrior aristocrats, Christians in their very oppression and suffering imagined that they were blessed as

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Walter Thompson, "Perspectivism: Aquinas and Nietzsche on the Intellect and Will," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 58 (1995): 451-73.

[11] These two questions ask about the "descriptive" and "normative" components of morality. See Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* (London: Routledge, 2002), 78.

[12] *Beyond Good and Evil*, 260.

"good" by a loving God. But they called their "cruel, lustful, insatiable, godless" oppressors "evil" (*GM* I.7)—and God would damn them to hell for all eternity. Though this slave revolt began two thousand years ago, its morality has vanquished noble morality even till today.

In sections 10 through 14 Nietzsche moves to the second and most important part of his genealogical analysis. He reveals the worth of Christian morality by attending to its psychological root, *ressentiment*.[13] He shows its mode of evaluation [10], its perspective [11], its effects [12], its metaphysical inventions [13], and its psychic processes [14]). Through a series of comparisons between the nobles and Christians, Nietzsche shows that *ressentiment* has three dimensions: (1) reactive sentiments, which root (2) passive values, which in turn give rise to (3) "other-worldly" beliefs.

First, the Christian mode of evaluating human life and the world is negative and "reactive" rather than active (*GM* I.10). Unlike the nobles who actively affirm themselves and evaluate all things in relation to themselves, the impotent and oppressed Christians only gain a sense of themselves by their negation of that which is other than themselves. This reactive "no" explains their festering sentiments of "hatred, envy, jealousy, mistrust, rancor, and revenge" (*GM* II.11) against the excellence and strength of the truly vital nobles. Finding nothing in themselves worthy of love, Christians turn with infinite fury against the nobles who know their own great worth. Nietzsche is by no means blind to the "barbaric" qualities of these "blond beasts" (i.e., strong lion-like warriors): they have left a "disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture" wherever they have gone (*GM* I.11). Though their excellence needs to be

[13] At *GM* I.10 Nietzsche introduces his crucial teaching on *ressentiment*. He employs and develops this notion throughout the *GM*, especially in the context of the ascetic priests' activity (III.15). Though the literature on this topic is enormous, especially fine analyses are found in Max Scheler, *Ressentiment* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press], 1994 [orig. pub. 1912]) and Robert Solomon, "One Hundred Years of *Ressentiment*: Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schact (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 95-126.

carefully monitored, it is still a thousand times better than the mediocrities produced by Christian morality (*GM* I.12).

Second, impotence-rooted passivity leads to the adoption of weak and passive values rather than to powerful activity and the adoption of noble values. Thus obedience, patience, forgiveness, meekness, and humility (*GM* I.14) are exalted at the expense of pride, courage, and magnanimity. Such weak values not only mask the inability of the psychologically feeble truly to act but they also offer them incentives to be passive. Thus the helpless lambs (an obvious Christian symbol) denounce the birds of prey as "evil" and then reactively pronounce themselves as "good." Although these lambs have dressed up their pusillanimity and meekness in the new suit of "virtue" (*GM* I.14), underneath it they remain powerless, passive, and cowardly.

Third, *ressentiment* fosters belief in "metaphysical" entities such as God, heaven, hell, damnation, free will, and the personal subject (*GM* I.13). Such beliefs disvalue human existence in this world. Seeing life as a vale of tears to be endured rather than celebrated, Christians imagine heavenly rewards from God in the "other world" (*GM* I.14). Moreover, these "just" Christians look for the "Just God's" victory over their enemies. Faith, hope, and love are the names Christians use to sanctify belief in the unending punishment of hell that "the holiness of God, God the Judge, God the Hangman" (*GM* II.22) inflicts on "sinners" whose "guilt" lies in having animal instincts. Nietzsche names this belief Christianity's "masterpiece" (*Meisterstücke*) because it turns justice, the impersonal assessment of guilt, into its exact opposite—the personal revenge of *ressentiment* (*GM* II.11). Unmasking the "worth" of such values and beliefs affirmatively answers the Preface's second question, "Are [moral values] a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life?" (*GM* P.3).

Thus by the end of section 14 Nietzsche has accomplished both of the goals he had set for himself: he has tracked down the historical origin of slave morality, and he has brought to light the worth of the values it conceals. Sections 16 and 17 draw the conclusions that follow from these analyses: the "more spiritual nature[s]" today are conflicted over the claims of the

"opposite values" represented by "Rome" (noble but cruel) and "Judea" (hateful but creative). The First Essay's ultimate point of reference is the "order of rank among values" (*GM* I.17, note).

But what is section 15 doing here? Notwithstanding his documentation of the facts and interpretations from secular sources, Nietzsche has analyzed the origins and worth of Christian morality in the first fourteen sections without citing a single Christian author or writing. Where is the Christian equivalent of his citations from Homer, Hesiod, Thucydides, and others? Where is the documentation from Christian authors which proves that Christian morals are rooted in *ressentiment*? Heretofore Nietzsche has given his reader no warrant to believe that his claims against Christianity are valid, no reason to think that they are true.[14] Fully aware of this difficulty, he pens section fifteen to supply the evidence that the bitterest spirit of hatred lies at the heart of the Gospel's "faith . . . love . . . hope."[15]

In *Genealogy* I.15 Nietzsche not only quotes Aquinas but also similar passages in Dante and Tertullian. He notes that Dante inscribed "I too was created by eternal love" above the portals of the *Inferno*; and he quotes at great length Tertullian's exulting in the thought that he will see the pagan monarchs, governors, philosophers, poets, dramatists, actors, and athletes

[14] Far from employing a purely psychological analysis of moral phenomena, Nietzsche (as mentioned above in note 10) insists on basing any such analysis on an accurate knowledge of the historical facts. Central to his criticism of the "English psychologists" who have written the histories of morality is the very worthlessness of their "histories." Lacking the "historical spirit," they have read their own unegoistic morals into the origins of morality (*GM* P4, I.1-4). Nietzsche addresses the question of the historical origins of the two moralities before treating the question of their worth precisely to correct this error. Hence the quotations from Dante, Aquinas, and Tertullian are introduced to establish the historical fact that Christianity is the religion of *ressentiment*.

[15] This is not to say that Nietzsche's documentation from either secular or Christian sources is adequate to uphold his "facts." His documentation of the "facts" in the First Essay is extremely thin; it is non-existent in the Second and Third Essays. See Peter Berkowitz *Nietzsche: the Ethics of an Immoralist* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996], 68-69.

writhing in agony on judgment day. The Aquinas quotation is a one sentence epitome of Tertullian's Christian hate. The amassing of direct quotations from Christianity's premier poet, one of its greatest theologians, and a very important early Church writer provides the evidence of Christianity's inherent rejection of human nobility and excellence. Nietzsche's point, then, is not primarily that Aquinas is one deranged human being, but that the Christian religion itself is a cancer of the human spirit. Thomas Aquinas is the central witness convicting Christianity of the charges Nietzsche has leveled against it.

Nietzsche's critique of Aquinas may be summarized in the three concrete indictments sketched above, reflective of *ressentiment*'s reactive sentiments, passive values, and other-worldly beliefs. (1) Aquinas's very words manifest the reactive and negative sentiments of hatred, envy, and revenge which lie at the core of the Christian interpretation of life. (2) The conscious fruit of this unconscious hate ripens into the exaltation of passive values such as humility, meekness, and patience as well as the correlative demeaning of the active values of courage, magnanimity, and so on. (3) Aquinas's "metaphysical" belief in that "justice" which the "other worldly" kingdom of God inaugurates not only perverts justice by condemning those who are strong and magnanimous to hell, but also it disvalues "this world" with its becoming, suffering, and change. Since Nietzsche quotes Aquinas to provide the crucial piece of evidence supporting these charges, the rest of this article will examine Aquinas's teaching on these three issues.

II

A single sentence taken out of context lays a very thin foundation for the weighty judgments Nietzsche asks it to bear. An adequate understanding of Aquinas's values needs to strike root in a richer account of his thought. To this end we must examine Aquinas's thought in the light of Nietzsche's genealogical questions: what are his values and what is the worth of his values?

Nietzsche takes the Aquinas quotation from the *Summa theologiae*'s concluding questions, which examine the resurrection of the dead to life everlasting (*STh* Suppl., qq. 69-99). The broad context of the quotation is the final series of eight questions (*STh* Suppl., qq. 92-99) which contrast the future states of the blessed and the damned. This brings the *Summa theologiae* full circle back to—or, better, up to—its opening questions: God is the end as well as the beginning of all creation. The quotation's immediate context is the three questions on the saints' relations to God, to each other, and to the damned. More precisely, Aquinas argues that the saints' bliss will come solely and wholly from the vision of God (*STh* Suppl., q. 92), and that all will be perfectly happy but each in proportion to his own measure of charity (*STh* Suppl., q. 93). In treating of the saints' relations to the damned (*STh* Suppl., q. 94], Aquinas is completing that part of his inquiry which will make it a whole. The final questions of the *Summa theologiae* examine not only the "last things" but the ultimate relations of all things to God and to each other.

What, then, are the saints' relations with the damned? In the three articles of question 94 Aquinas respectively affirms that the blessed in heaven will see the sufferings of the damned (a. 1); he denies that they will pity the unhappiness of the damned (a. 2), and he distinguishes the senses in which they will and will not rejoice in the punishment of the wicked (a. 3). The words Nietzsche quotes occur in the corpus of the first article. The actual words are as follows:

> *I answer that*, Nothing should be denied the blessed that belongs to the perfection of their beatitude. Now everything is known the more for being compared with its contrary, because when contraries are placed beside one another they become more conspicuous. Wherefore in order that the happiness of the saints may be more delightful to them *and that they may render more copious thanks to God for it*, it is given to them to see perfectly the punishments of the damned. (Emphasis added)[16]

[16] Nietzsche quotes Aquinas accurately, though not exactly; what he omits from the quotation, however, completely changes its meaning. The *Summa*'s precise words are "Respondeo dicendum quod a beatis nihil subtrahi quod a perfectionem beatudinis eorum pertineat. Unumquodque autem ex comparatione contrarii magis cognoscitur:

As Aquinas has previously argued, the happiness of the saints in heaven is completely due to the beatific vision of God himself (*STh* I, q. 89, a. 8; I-II, q. 3, a. 8; Suppl., q. 92, a. 1, corp. and ad 8, 15). Why, then, should they "see perfectly" the sufferings of the damned? How can this sight contribute to their happiness? As one objection argues, such a horrible sight would detract from the saints' beatitude (*STh* Suppl., q. 94, a. 1, obj. 2). The key lies in the words which Nietzsche omitted in quoting the text. The blessed see those sufferings so "*that they may render more copious thanks to God.*" This becomes even clearer in the third article's response to the question whether the vision of the damned gives joy to the blessed. Aquinas distinguishes two ways of rejoicing: "directly" (*per se*) and "indirectly" (*per accidens*). The saints do not rejoice directly at the torments of the lost: "To rejoice in another's evil as such belongs to hatred" (*STh* Suppl., q. 94, a. 3, ad 1). Such hateful rejoicing is by its very nature sinful; it constitutes no part of the saints' bliss. Such rejoicing, in fact, is incompatible with being a saint. Indeed, neither God nor the saints in heaven nor Christians on earth rejoice at anyone's ill—much less damnation—as such (*STh* Suppl., q. 94, a. 3, ad 1, 2, 3). Rejoicing indirectly, however, is another matter; and the saints in this way do rejoice at the sight of the damned. The direct rejoicing of the saints is caused solely by the intellect's vision of God; annexed to this joy, as a contrary, is the joy of seeing the punishments of the reprobate. Aquinas explains that the saints will rejoice in those punishments "by considering therein the order of divine justice and *their own deliverance* [*suam liberationem*], which will fill them with joy. And thus the divine justice and their own deliverance will be the direct cause of the joy of the blessed, while the punishment of the damned will cause it indirectly" (*STh* Suppl., q. 94, a. 3 [emphasis added]). The blessed, then, in seeing the horrors of the damned as that from which they have been delivered will give "more copious

quia contraria iuxta se posita magis elucescunt. Et ideo ut beatitudo sanctorum eis magis complaceat, *et de ea uberiores gratias Deo agant*, datur eis ut poenam impiorum perfecte intueantur." I have emphasized the omitted words.

thanks to God." The point of seeing the punishment of the lost is to heighten the gratitude toward God by making "more conspicuous" the vision of his glory, as the words immediately preceding the text quoted by Nietzsche make clear. Just as fireworks on the Fourth of July are better known, more conspicuous, and more delightful when viewed against the dark night sky, so the vision of God stands out against the backdrop of the everlastingly lost. Aquinas's point is similar to the one Lucretius makes in *De rerum natura* II.1-4: "Pleasant it is, when over a great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation, not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant."[17] In this way alone will seeing the pains of the damned be delightful to the saints. Nietzsche's own analysis of the nobles who seek out the bad "only to say 'yes' to [their lives] more gratefully and jubilantly . . . 'bad' [being] only an afterbirth, a pale contrast image" (*nachgebornes blasses Contrastbild*) (*GM* I.11), bears a striking resemblance to Aquinas's saints who view the damned as a "contrast image." Aquinas's attitude, then, far from showing the self-deception of unrecognized sadistic hatred, poisonous envy, or any spirit of revenge—all of which he explicitly condemns—is one of thanksgiving. Gratitude, not hatred, lies at the heart of the text Nietzsche quotes: it may be paraphrased as "Thank you, God, for saving me from such a horror."[18]

The unconscious sentiments Nietzsche attributes to the saints in heaven are in fact the very ones that Aquinas quite consciously attributes to the damned in hell. Hatred and envy in the highest degree characterize them.

> Even as in the blessed in heaven there will be the most perfect charity, so in the damned there will be the most perfect hate. Wherefore as the saints will rejoice in all goods, so will the damned grieve for all goods. Consequently . . . they will wish all the good were damned. (*STh* Suppl., q. 98, a. 4)

[17] Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, II.1-4, in Loeb Classical Library, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 85

[18] The issue of the saints rejoicing over divine justice will be discussed below in section V.

According to Aquinas, then, not only are hatred, envy, and revenge completely absent from the saints in heaven, but were they present, the saints in heaven would neither be saints nor in heaven. It is the damned that are filled with *ressentiment*; it is they who as much wish that the "good," as well as the "evil," were damned. Nietzsche's picture of the blessed in the kingdom of heaven, in fact, bears a relation to Aquinas's portrait of envious Satan (*STh* I, q. 63, a. 2). The facts, in short, do not bear the interpretations Nietzsche puts on them.

Inseparable from Christian hatred and envy are love and compassion or pity. According to Nietzsche, love and pity on the one hand and envy and hatred on the other are not "opposite values" but the former grows out of the latter as an oak tree from an acorn (*GM* I.8). Nietzsche castigates pity as an assault on life: the one who pities regards life itself with its exuberance and necessary suffering as the problem. Such a sentiment degrades suffering by considering it as an evil rather than as the opportunity for self-overcoming that it truly is. Compassion debases both the one who pities and the one who is pitied. The one who pities fails to seek his own good, despises and protects degenerate life, harms strong life, and obstructs the self-overcoming of the one pitied. Strong and magnanimous human beings exult in the passions and appetites of life; they find in the sufferings of life an occasion to know the happiness of overcoming resistance, of growing in strength, and of creatively affirming their lives (*GM* P.5, 6; I.8; III.14). Still, Nietzsche draws a crucial distinction: while the truly strong and vital feel no pity, they are not without mercy. Mercy is a product of strength not of weakness. "The self-overcoming of justice: one knows the beautiful name it has given itself—mercy [*Gnade*]; as goes without saying, it remains the privilege of the most powerful, better still, his beyond the law" (*GM* II.10). In sum, Nietzsche believes he has shown that Christian compassion is the sweet mask of a bitter life-rejecting *ressentiment*.[19]

[19] On the relation of pity and *ressentiment*, see Martha Nussbaum, "Pity and Mercy: Nietzsche's Stoicism," in Schact, ed., *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, 139-67; Michael Green, "Nietzsche on Pity and *Ressentiment*," *International Studies in Philosophy* 24

In light of his critique of pity and his praise of mercy, it is amazing that Nietzsche fails to cite the very next article, following the one he quotes, in the *Summa*'s same question (*STh* Suppl., q. 94, a. 2). That article asks, "Whether the blessed pity [*compatiantur*] the unhappiness of the damned?" In addressing this question Aquinas distinguishes between pity as a passion and mercy as a rational choice.[20] As a passion, pity is the sorrow one feels at the evil another suffers—a sorrow one feels as if the evil suffered were one's own (*STh* II-II, q. 36, a. 3, ad 3). Mercy, on the other hand, arises from the judgment of reason, not passion; it is the deliberate choice of the rational will to remove another's evil which prevents that person from attaining his own good. As such, it is a sign of strength, not weakness. Should someone suffer an evil which is necessary for the avoidance of a greater evil or for the attaining of a greater good, removing that evil would not be merciful. Under such circumstances, acting to relieve one's own sorrow for another would be harmful both to the pitied and to the one pitying (*STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 3, corp. and ad 1, 2). Still, the passion of pity may accord with the judgment of the rational will and thus be a spur to removing an evil that truly hinders the attainment of a worthy good—for example, when one both feels pity and mercifully resolves to do what is possible to remove another's great evil (*STh* I-II, q. 24, a. 3, corp. and ad 1).

The saints in heaven, however, will have a different relation to the damned. They will have full possession of their passions so that these will arise only in accord with and at the command of the rational will, not without or against it. In the future state where each receives what befits him, the saints shall be without

(1993): 63-70; Robert Solomon, *The Passions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 341-45; Max Scheler, *Ressentiment* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 63-110.

[20] Aquinas's Latin does not distinguish "pity" and "mercy" clearly as the German (*Mitleid, Gnade*) does: "misericordia" can mean either. Still, Aquinas makes the conceptual distinction between them clear: see *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 3; and Suppl., q. 94, a. 2. On the relation of pity and mercy, see Anthony Keaty, "The Christian Virtue of Mercy: Aquinas's Transformation of Aristotelian Pity," *Heythrop Journal* 46 (2005): 181-98.

the will to act contrary to reason and justice, and hence they will not choose to pity the damned. This question, then, shows that irrational and unmerciful pity is not a Thomistic virtue; and that, in any case, the saints will no more pity the damned than they will hate them. It is remarkable, indeed, that in the very text which Nietzsche quotes to prove that Christian pity is rooted in hatred, Aquinas explicitly and specifically denies both to the saints in heaven.[21]

Aquinas, thus, introduces distinctions that Nietzsche does not make. Pity or compassion that is rooted in the merciful judgment of reason is praiseworthy. Indeed, it is superior to mercy alone for it is fully human: human beings are both rational and passionate.[22] The pity, however, that either precedes reason or is without it may well be harmful and, in any event, is not praiseworthy (*STh* I-II, q. 24, a. 3 corp. and ad 1). While Aquinas judges that in the best cases mercy and pity go together, Nietzsche in all cases contrasts them as strength and weakness. For Nietzsche, moreover, mercy allows the malefactor to escape punishment when society is strong enough to bear his injury (*GM* II.10); for Aquinas mercy is the strength that enables one to aid another in attaining his good—not the permitting of the criminal to escape just punishment.

III

Since Aquinas is no apostle of hatred, envy, revenge, or even unalloyed pity, Nietzsche's questions to him take on heightened significance: What are his values? And what are they worth? Nietzsche clearly prizes noble values such as courage, magnanimity, self-overcoming, mercy, and pride; so also he clearly disvalues cowardice, humility, meekness, and charity. The former are active and enhance life, just as the latter are passive and diminish it. Yet while Nietzsche writes of "values"

[21] I will discuss the inability of the damned to receive mercy in section V.

[22] Elizabeth Uffenheimer-Lippens, "Rationalized Passion and Passionate Rationality: Thomas Aquinas on the Relation between Reason and the Passions," *Review of Metaphysics* 56 (2003): 554-55.

(*Werthe*), Aquinas speaks of "virtues" (*virtus*). The term "virtue" (*Tugend*) in any positive sense is absent from the *Genealogy*,[23] just as Aquinas seldom or never uses the Latin terms for "value" (*valor, pretium, aestimare, pendere*) in any ethical sense. The roles that life-enhancing and life-hindering values play in Nietzsche's thought are held by virtue and vice in Aquinas's understanding, the acts of vice being "sins" (*peccata*).[24]

Nietzsche's avoidance of "virtue" and Aquinas's silence on "values" are not accidental. By Nietzsche's time, two hundred fifty years after the triumph of unegoistic morality during the Thirty-Years War (*GM* P.4), the term "virtue" had received a new coloration. It referred to rules of behavior or to the motivation for obeying such rules. In Aquinas, however, that term retains its classical (in Nietzsche's language, its "nonmoral" or nobly moral) sense of excellence, strength (*vir*-tus), perfection. For Aquinas, vice or sin is negative rather than positive; it is the absence or privation of a due good. In the same way, virtue as the habit and act perfecting its possessor is positive and active rather than reactive.[25]

[23] Since this article's scope is limited to *GM* I, I cannot develop Nietzsche's entire teaching on virtue here. His derogatory references to virtue (in *GM* I.14 and III.8), however, are by no means his final words on the subject. And even in *GM* he praises such classical virtues as justice, mercy, courage, and magnanimity. Robert Solomon and Michael Platt, among others, persuasively argue that Nietzsche is in his own way a virtue ethician.

[24] More precisely, sinful acts are acts of vice. Since vice is contrary to virtue, and since faith, hope, and charity are virtues, acts contrary to them are vicious or sinful. See *STh* I-II, q. 71, *passim*, especially aa. 1 and 6.

[25] Alasdair MacIntyre has played a major role in the recovery of Aquinas's virtue teaching. See his *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1990). See also James Lehrberger "Deontology, Teleology, and Aquinas' Virtue Ethic," in *Saints, Sovereigns, and Scholars: Studies in Honor of Frederick D. Wilhelmsen*, ed. Robert Hererra, M. E. Bradford, and James Lehrberger (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 107-22; Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Presss, 1990). Porter evaluates select writings which mark the recovery of Aquinas's virtue-centered approach to morality in "Recent Studies in Aquinas' Virtue Ethics: A Review Essay," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 26 (1998): 191-215. For an excellent analysis of the moralities of happiness (especially that of St. Thomas) and the moralities of duty, see Albert Ple, *Duty or Pleasure? A New Appraisal of Christian Ethics*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New

Aquinas's very definition of the term as a good habit of mind by which one lives rightly and which cannot be used badly (*STh* I-II, q. 55, a. 4) spotlights that which makes its possessor and his acts "good"—that is, excellent, whole, integral, strong. The four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude) and three theological virtues (faith, hope, charity), along with their allied virtues, are neither rules of behavior nor motives of action, but rather principles of human activity which make possible an entire way of living. Aquinas understands them to include habits which unite the passionate and rational sides of human beings, the principles by which human beings live and act well rather than ill. They so guide their possessors' lives that they act at peak power, in a whole and integral way, with skill and relish in the multiple spheres of human life, for truly choiceworthy goals.[26] Concretely, courageous, temperate, and just people accomplish courageous, temperate, and just ends by means of courageous, temperate, and just acts. Conversely, cowards and the unjust perform their acts for their ends. Precisely because Aquinas's ethic is one that looks to the perfection of the human being, he writes of "virtues" rather than "values." The distinction between "unegoistic" and "egoistic" values echoes nothing in his thought or vocabulary; the dichotomy between "selfish" and "selfless" behavior is completely alien to his understanding. "Altruism" and "egoism" not only fail to express his understanding, they are not even categories of his thinking. They are based on conceptions of well-being and love of self[27] that oppose "my good" to

York: Paragon House, 1987). Schöllgen, "Die Lehre von der Tugend bei Thomas v. Aq. und die Kritik Nietzsches an der Christlichen Ethik," calls attention to the active and dynamic character of Aquinas's virtue teaching as opposed to the formulations of Christian ethics rooted in Stoicism and Neo-Platonism. These are, he thinks, the conceptions of virtue that Nietzsche attacked.

[26] This description of human flourishing has been taken from James Lehrberger, "Deontology, Teleology, and Aquinas' Virtue Ethic," in Herrera, Bradford, and Lehrberger, eds., *Saints, Sovereigns, and Scholars*, 111.

[27] Aquinas affirms the necessity of true and proper, as opposed to false, self-love. I will develop this distinction in section V. While Nietzsche considers Aquinas a prime witness to unegoistic morality, in recent years discussion has centered on whether or not he is an egoist. See R. Mary Hayden, "The Paradox of Aquinas' Altruism: From Self-

"another's good." Values and vices make for such opposition, virtues do not.

The very fact that Nietzsche and Aquinas each understand human action in terms of a category—virtue, value—which the other does not acknowledge pinpoints the most fundamental difference between them: they understand very different things to be "life-affirming" and "life-hindering." Both thinkers look to the full flourishing of human life, but their respective interpretations of it differ sharply. Aquinas maintains that there are permanent goods to which human beings have "natural inclinations" (*naturales inclinationes*), the attainment of which constitutes human fulfillment. This is the core of his teaching on human nature and natural law (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2). His praise of the virtues stems from the way they order human life to the achievement of the goods that fulfill and perfect human nature: the preservation of one's being, the preservation of the species, the quest for knowledge (especially knowledge of the first truth), and living in society. All human goods derive from these foundational goods. Nietzsche, though he also emphatically affirms the existence of "natural inclinations" (*natürlichen Hänge* [*GM* II.24]), denies both that there is any human nature and that there are any perfective goods. Rather, he interprets life as the will to power (*GM* II.12) whereby the dominant passion overcomes everything that impedes its full realization. Thus he lauds strong values precisely because they enable this realization, and so they are life-affirming. He denies, for example, that justice or injustice in themselves exist, "since life operates *essentially* [*essentiell*], that is, in its basic functions, through injury, assault, exploitation, destruction and simply cannot be thought of at all without this character" (*GM* II.11). This fact gives rise to the contrary modes of evaluation and to the different values of lambs and birds of prey. Since life itself at all levels is will to power operating through assault and injury,

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Love to Love of Others," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 63 (1990): 72-83; Scott MacDonald, "Egoistic Rationalism: Aquinas's Basis for Christian Morality," in *Christian Theism and the Problem of Philosophy*, ed. Michael Beaty (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 329-54; Christopher Toner, "Was Aquinas an Egoist?" *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 577-608.

the values of the strong necessarily differ from those of the weak. For this very reason Nietzsche berates those who are ashamed of "natural inclinations" and who are attached to "[whatever is contrary to] sense, instinct, nature, animal" (*GM* II.24): they object to life itself. In short, the status of nature, the natural, and natural inclinations lies at the root of the differences between the two thinkers' accounts of that which helps or hinders human life.

Granted this difference, one may still wonder whether Aquinas's virtue ethic would impress Nietzsche. Since he *a priori* denies metaphysical and moral truths, he explains them genealogically. Does not Aquinas's understanding really demean as "vice-ridden" the strong, passionate, and truly vital, while exalting the cowardly and pusillanimous as "virtuous"? This is most clearly seen in the parable of the lambs and the birds of prey (*GM* I.13). The lambs reject "this life" in favor of the next due to the sufferings they undergo in this "vale of tears." Nourished by envy and revenge, the lambs imagine a subject, the eagle, who is free to prey upon them or not. The lambs cannot see that there is no "doer" behind the "doing." As the lightning is the flash, so both they and the eagles are what they do (*Das Thun ist Alles*). The lambs not only deceive themselves by believing that the eagles freely choose to prey, but also by believing that they themselves voluntarily do no violence, injure no one, neither attack nor retaliate, and leave vengeance to God. They call their impotence voluntary, "something chosen, a *deed*, a *merit*" (*GM* I.13). The parable makes clear that Christian values are intrinsically passive, self-deceptive, and hindrances to the fullness of life.

Aquinas takes a dim view of Nietzsche's understanding of natural inclinations. Its principal difficulty, he implies, lies in inadequately distinguishing human from subhuman life. He judges that human life is more than—not other or less than—"sense, instinct, animal." Lambs and eagles are biologically determined in a way that human beings are not. He implicitly rejects as question-begging the analogy based on "the lightning is the flash" that "the doer is the doing": Nietzsche fails to provide any analysis which shows that his lightning-and-flash

example can account for personal agency. Unlike Nietzsche, then, Aquinas holds that the human animal is also an intelligent, personal subject with free will—that is, a "rational animal," or incarnate spirit. The human being is composed not only of bodily instinct and passion, but also of reason and will by which he exercises agency. And (in Nietzsche's language) "[the human being] . . . simply cannot be thought of at all without this character." Thus, for example, he observes that well-tempered anger is "conducive to the more prompt execution of reason's dictate: *else* (as Aristotle says) *the sensitive appetite in man would be in vain*: *whereas nature makes nothing in vain*" ("Alioquin, frustra esset in homine appetitus sensitivus: cum tamen natura nihil faciat frustra" [*STh* II–II, q. 158, a. 8, ad 2 (emphasis added)]). Aquinas is unwilling to sacrifice either human passion or reason: the good of the whole human being is to be served, insofar as it possible. The integration of these diverse elements, however, is a task to be accomplished, not a foreordained given; the different virtues perform this operation. Temperance, courage, and their allied virtues integrate the instincts and passions with reason; justice and charity direct the will in interpersonal and social relations; and prudence enables the mind to discover the appropriate mean and means by which the other virtues can enact their unification and integration of the human being. In short, from Aquinas's perspective Nietzsche's view of man is too narrow: Aquinas emphatically sees human nature as including passion and instinct and (as I will show immediately below) as requiring injury and assault, but it is not reducible to them.

Aquinas, indeed, does uphold as virtues such qualities as humility, patience, meekness, and the love of enemies which Nietzsche denounces as passive and life-hindering. While a comparison of Nietzsche's complete list of these values with Aquinas's roster of such virtues would take this article far beyond all due bounds, we can examine one item that figures prominently in both thinkers' consideration: meekness. This is the very value that Nietzsche specifically attributes to Aquinas when he interjects into the quotation "[Aquinas] says, meek as a lamb." Is "meekness" a mask for life-hindering passivity? Or is

it an active virtue that fosters strength, excellence, and human flourishing?

Aquinas indeed sings the praises of meekness (*mansuetudo*, Nietzsche's *sanftmut*) and of the one who is meek (*mitis*, *sanft*). But he understands it to be a virtue that mediates between the irascible passion of anger and reason, and as that part of temperance which allies with courage and justice (*STh* II-II, q. 157, aa. 2-4; cf. q. 123, a. 10, corp. and ad 3; and q. 158, a. 2).[28] As one of the cardinal virtues, courage in certain respects reaches its perfection in magnanimity (*STh* I-II, q. 61, a. 3; II-II, q. 129, a. 5). These virtues bestow firmness of purpose and strength of character in pursuing or protecting goods in the face of difficulty or danger (*STh* II-II, q. 123, a. 1). They also oppose the vices of cowardice and pusillanimity (*STh* II-II, qq. 125 and 133). Courage in particular involves aggression against an enemy in pursuing some good or defense against his attacks on it. While reason recognizes the good to be pursued or protected, anger is the passion that drives the aggressive attack, the "injury and assault," on that which threatens the good. Anger is evil only if it is directed against the wrong object or when "one is angered more or less than accords with right reason. If one is angered in accordance with right reason, that anger is praiseworthy" (*STh* II-II, q. 158, a. 1). Anger, then, as aggression joins with courage, "since it belongs to anger to

[28] Aquinas draws on Aristotle's discussion of *mansuetudo* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.5. In IV *Nic. Ethic.*, lect. 13 (Marietti ed., 800-815), he categorizes it as a virtue, a mean between irascibility and inirascibility. In his commentary on the second beatitude, he distinguishes between the virtue of meekness, by which one has anger in moderation, and the blessedness of being beyond anger. For anger is usually about earthly possessions which the first beatitude shows are to be held of little account; hence the object of anger is removed. So also the reward of "inheriting the land" is promised. See *Super Matt.*, c. 5, lect. 2 (Marietti ed., 419-21). At *STh* I-II, q. 69, a. 3, he observes that meekness is both a virtue (well-tempered anger) and a gift (detachment from wealth and hence freedom from the anger aroused by desire for it). In article 4 of the same question, he points out that eternal goods are its promised reward. In the following question, on the fruits of the Holy Spirit (*STh* I-II, q. 70, a. 3), he notes that the meekness of curbing our anger is a fruit which well disposes us to our neighbor. But the most explicit discussion of *mansuetudo* is at *STh* II-II, q. 157, where it is linked with *clementia*.

strike at the cause of sorrow, so that it directly cooperates with fortitude in attacking" (*STh* II-II, q. 123, a. 10, ad 3; cf. I-II, q. 24, a. 2; and q. 47, a. 3). Aquinas, then, far from endorsing lamb-like "passivity," calls for eagle-like aggression in the pursuit or defense of a threatened good.

Still, as anger spurs on aggression, injury, and assault, it needs perfecting virtues to keep it from becoming senseless rage. Meekness and clemency do this. *Clementia* looks to the act of punishing the malefactor. While pity or compassion can root that vice which refrains from punishing when punishment is warranted, clemency is the virtue which ensures that the punishment is not more than that which is deserved.[29] Excessive punishment, itself rooted in anger, is a mark of cruelty and hatred (*STh* II-II, q. 157, a. 1, corp. and ad 2; and II-II, q. 159, a. 1). The blazing anger itself which generates such punishment is mitigated by meekness: it properly "tempers [*diminuit*] the passion of anger" (*STh* II-II, q. 157, a. 1), directing it to its specific target in the manner that reason indicates.

As is the case with all other passions, the quantity of anger can be "more or less" than accords with right reason. Meekness ensures that the passion errs neither by defect nor by excess. Though the mean between inirascibility and irascibility has no proper name, the mean is more opposed to the excess, and so the term *mansuetudo* is taken from the defect (*STh* II-II, q. 157, a. 2, ad 2]—*mansuetus*, *manu assuetus*, "accustomed to the hand" like a tamed or a trained animal. Inirascibility is the vice of not being angered when it is reasonable to become so (*STh* II-II, q. 158, a. 8). Inirascibility is a vice precisely insofar as it undercuts the aforesaid "passions and instincts, injury and assault."

The principal vice of anger, however, is irascibility. Unbridled anger clouds the mind, corrupting good judgment. Meekness enables the one who possesses it to maintain his self-possession ("fecit hominem esse sui compote" [*STh* II-II, q. 157, a. 4]). As there are three species of *iracundia*, meekness is contrary to all of them. The "hot-tempered" (*acutus*) succumb

[29] See below on the sense in which Aquinas judges punishment to be life affirming.

to anger easily but also recover from it easily; the "sullen" and "bitter" (*mania*, *amari*) hold on to the memory of perceived injuries; the "ill-tempered" (*furor*, *difficiles*) also retain the memory of injury, but especially with a view to punishing the offender (*STh* I-II, q. 46, a. 8; II-II, q. 158, a. 5). The three sins of being hot-tempered, sullen and bitter, and ill-tempered ascend in gravity: whereas the hot-tempered can repent quickly, the sullen and bitter nurse their injuries, and the ill-tempered maintain their anger until they see their hated enemy fully punished.[30] The one who is meek, however, does not flare up in an undue manner, is not consumed by memories of old injuries, and does not hatefully wish to punish the malefactor. In this sense, meekness as a potential part of temperance is a bridge virtue between the concupiscible and irascible passions (*STh* II-II, q. 157, a. 3). Thus it aids the integration of the passions and instincts with reason, and so it enables the person to act in its sphere in a whole and integral way. Far from being a life-hindering weak value, meekness for Aquinas is a life-affirming virtue which ensures one's strong self-possession and a truly appropriate response to injury.

In contrasting the weak and vengeful lambs with the strong and courageous eagles, Nietzsche lauds the vitality of the latter as opposed to the "worm . . . tame . . . hopelessly mediocre . . . deformed, sickly" character of the former (*GM* I.11). Still, he is fully aware of the dangers, limits, and defects of the aristocratic nobles. As already noted, they all too easily reverted to that "disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture":

> The deep and icy mistrust the German still arouses today whenever he gets into a position of power is an echo of that inextinguishable horror with which Europe observed for centuries that raging of the blond Germanic beast. . . . One may be quite justified in continuing to fear the blond beast at the core of all noble races and in being on one's guard against it. (Ibid.)

The real sense of Nietzsche's praise of noble values lies not, then, in some call to resuscitate the Teutonic warrior with his

[30] Aquinas's quality of being "ill tempered" (*furor*) comes close to the sense of Nietzsche's *ressentiment*.

jungle morality; rather, it lies in saving Europe's vitality, courage, and magnanimity from its metastasizing cancer of mediocrity and decadence.

It is instructive to compare the two thinkers on the ways that they view meekness and *ressentiment*. For Aquinas, meekness lies in the mean between inirascibility and irascibility; for Nietzsche, *ressentiment* combines elements of both inirascibility and irascibility. The lamb is at least outwardly inirascible—it is "tame, mediocre, insipid." But the lamb also holds a burning anger that thirsts for revenge—it is "ill tempered" in its irascibility. Where Aquinas sees extremes contrary to each other as well as to the mean, Nietzsche sees inirascibility in the foreground and irascibility in the background. While Nietzsche cautiously but clearly prefers Roman eagles to Judaean lambs, Aquinas rejects the dichotomy itself. He desires the weak to become strong, and the strong to become moderate. For him, courage and meekness are not values of the two different moralities, noble and slave, but two virtues perfecting the same person in different and complementary ways. Like Nietzsche, he upholds courage and magnanimity while opposing cowardice and pusillanimity; again like Nietzsche, he deplores the savage rage which leads to that "disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture." Although Nietzsche deplores the blond beast's raging, he can provide no remedy for it. Indeed, as we have seen, he does not think that such injury and exploitation are fundamentally wrong. Legal attempts to prevent such injustices can only be "exceptional," for otherwise law would be "hostile to life" (*GM* II.11). Going beyond Nietzsche, however, Aquinas sees a way to moderate rage, "injury and insult," and to guide the strength of the truly vital; and that way is the strong and active virtue of meekness.[31]

These considerations bring us back to Nietzsche's question implicitly posed by the lambs-and-eagles parable. Does Aquinas uphold the rational personal subject and free will in order to hold accountable and punishable the strong and vital while

[31] The nobles' savagery is related to the values they hold which Aquinas rejects: pride, lack of charity, etc.

blessing the impotent and cowardly? Considered psychologically, Aquinas's belief in reason and free will upholds strength, courage, magnanimity, and mercy, while condemning both the warriors' savagery and the slaves' pusillanimity. Aquinas thinks in terms of virtues rather than values because he thinks that human flourishing is possible for all to the extent that their instincts, passions, reason, and will are harmoniously integrated—and this is the effect of acquiring the virtues.

Still, the difference between the two thinkers' interpretations of life, while very real, is by no means the whole story. In important, even crucial ways, Nietzsche and Aquinas complement more than contradict each other. Both exalt active strength and courage, not savagery; both extol mercy and justice, not hatred nor merely reactive pity. Even their profound disagreement on the personal subject and free will should not obscure the fact that both interpretations of human life evince a concern for human nobility and greatness. Although it is not possible to further pursue here their analyses of the particular "values" and "virtues," enough has been brought to light to affirm that what Nietzsche calls "good/bad" noble morality is closer to Aquinas's morality than that which he styles "good/evil" slave morality. Indeed, a case can be made that Aquinas has made a better case for a life-affirming ethic than has Nietzsche himself.

IV

Nietzsche believes that Christian "other-worldly," "metaphysical" beliefs in God, divine punishment, salvation, and damnation disvalue "this world" of becoming, change, suffering, and self-overcoming. This is his most important objection to Christianity. The lambs imagine heavenly rewards as their recompense for their self-negation here below. The ascetic priest evaluates the whole sphere of "transitoriness and becoming," indeed life itself, as a "wrong road" in comparison with the other world (*GM* III.11). Even more pointedly, Nietzsche writes of "The concept of 'God' invented as the counterconcept of life. . . . The concept of the 'beyond,' the 'true world' invented in order to devaluate the only world there

is—in order to retain no goal, no reason, no task for our earthly reality!"[32]

Do Aquinas's Christian beliefs in sin, God, divine justice, and retribution disvalue this world and leave "no task for our earthly reality"? Or do they affirm life and this world? In the act of sinning, the sinner always and primarily injures *himself*; sin above all deprives the one committing it of his own true good. "To sin is nothing else than to fail in the good which belongs to any being according to its nature" (*STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2). This is so whether the sin injures another or not (*STh* II-II, q. 33, a. 1). By deliberately choosing a hateful sentiment, vice, or unbefitting good over perfection in virtue (e.g., temperance and courage, meekness and mercy, gratitude and charity), the sinner self-ignorantly loves and hates against his own true good.

Divine retribution or punishment for sin, far from being an act of hatred toward the sinner, is above all an act of mercy, for it is directed to healing the sinner's will (*STh* I, q. 45, a. 6, corp. and ad 2). Satisfactory punishments also serve the purpose of undoing the consequent damage that remains even after the diseased will is cured (*STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 7, corp. and 2)—for example, the developing of degenerate sentiments and habits that hinder "self-overcoming." Like a good physician providing the necessarily painful remedy for a deadly disease (e.g., chemotherapy for cancer), Aquinas's God acts to cure disordered "values" through an involuntary but health-restoring therapy (*STh* I, q. 48, a. 5). Far from being rooted in personal hatred or revenge (*STh* II-II, q. 108, aa. 1 and 2), such punishment is the expression of mercy: love for the sinner necessarily entails hatred for the sin by which he harms himself (*STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 6; q. 34, a. 3; cf. I, q. 20, a. 1, ad 3).

In a curious way, then, Aquinas agrees with Nietzsche's view that Christian love is inseparable from hate—but he reverses the relation. While Nietzsche believes that the love of the weak is rooted in hatred of the strong, Aquinas teaches that the love for all roots the hatred for anything that can truly harm them. In

[32] *Ecce Homo*, "Destiny," 8.

this sense Aquinas understands such suffering-causing punishment as a good, not an evil. His God chastises the sinner so that he may know and will his own true good, virtue; his loving Father spares not the rod lest the child be spoiled. Still, as previously noted, God's action is in no way "pitying": leaving the sinner unpunished, uninstructed, and uncorrected out of such compassion is no mercy.

There is more. Nietzsche's ascetic priest teaches his wretched flock that they "suffer for their sins" (*GM* III.15). Interpreting suffering in terms of guilt or sin, which Christians believe is its "sole cause" (*GM* III.20), enables the weak to see meaning in their inherently meaningless suffering. Although the ascetic priest teaches his sick flock self-overcoming, he treats only the symptoms but not the physiological depression which causes their suffering (*GM* III.16). Nietzsche makes it clear that "sin" is moralized bad conscience, "feeling guilty" for our animal instincts, cruelty directed inwards; it is a psychological-moral interpretation of the physiological fact of suffering. "I suffer: someone must be to blame for it" (*GM* III.15). According to Aquinas, however, sin lies in the failure to act in accord with virtue: envy, hatred, revenge, murder, arson, rape, and so on are sins whether or not one "feels guilty" about them. While the former sees sin as the expression of an unhealthy constitution, the latter finds it in a person's disordered life, "values," and will. Again, Aquinas explicitly denies the ascetic priest's interpretation of suffering as produced solely by sin: while all sin is punished, by no means is suffering caused solely by the sufferer's sins. When Nietzsche's ascetic priest preaches to his sheep that they suffer for their sins, he rehearses the answer that Job's three "friends" gave him as he sat on the ash heap. A key point of Aquinas's *Literal Exposition of Job* (e.g., 23:10ff.) is that Job and the saints may suffer, but they do *not* suffer for their sins.[33] Elsewhere Aquinas also denies or seriously qualifies the ascetic priest's explanation of suffering; he teaches, in fact, that the virtuous *as virtuous* may intensely suffer. "It belongs to

[33] Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job*, ed. M. Yaffe (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 302-3.

divine justice to give spiritual goods to the virtuous, and to award them as much [in the way of] *temporal goods or evils* [*temporalibus bonis vel malis*] as suffices for virtue" (*STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 7, ad 2 [emphasis added]). Again in his *Commentary on the Gospel according to John* (at 9:2-3), Aquinas lists five possible sources of suffering, only one of which is punishment for sin.[34] Suffering need not be meritorious and it is not if received in a bitter spirit (*STh* Suppl., q. 15, a. 2, corp. and ad 2). Aquinas, then, preaches to his sheep no such correspondence of sin and suffering as Nietzsche claims; to the contrary, he explicitly denies it. Moreover, while the ascetic priest "alters the direction" of the sheep's *ressentiment* from the eagles back to themselves (*GM* III.15), Aquinas allows no hatred, envy, or revenge against either oneself or another. In sum, his "other-worldly" beliefs in God, sin, divine punishment, and divinely willed suffering are life-affirming rather than life-denying.

Still, Nietzsche's view of suffering is closer to Aquinas's than he realizes. For Nietzsche, suffering is necessary in that human beings will not act to affirm their lives without it (*GM* II.19). Moreover, he is the only modern philosopher to affirm suffering's goodness rather than to see it simply as an evil to be abolished. Similarly, though according to Aquinas suffering serves different goods, they revolve in one way or another around growth in *vir*-tue and the corresponding elimination of vice. For Aquinas, this is the human being's "earthly task" and reason for existence. Aquinas's "supernatural" and "other-worldly" beliefs support rather than oppose or negate the importance of the "natural" and "this worldly" order. Once again, the ways the two men view suffering are by no means identical: the one sees it as inherently meaningless, the other understands it as meaningful. Still, these very real differences should not be absolutized: both thinkers understand suffering as an opportunity for attaining excellence through "self-overcoming."

[34] *Super Ioan.*, c. 9, lect. 1 (Marietti ed., 1293-1302).

V

Nietzsche, it will be recalled, denounced the notion of divine justice culminating in perpetual damnation as the "masterpiece" of *ressentiment*. His own genealogical account of the origins and worth of real justice (*GM* II.8-11) shows the reason why he so strenuously objects to this belief. He discovers the origin of justice in the primeval debtor-creditor relation. The injured creditor in punishing the defaulting debtor gains the equivalence in pleasure to the loss he has suffered (*GM* II.8). When this relation is transferred from the state of nature to the emergent civil society, the "creditor" primitive society expels the outlaw "debtor" from its midst, thus depriving him of its protections and benefits (*GM* II.9). But as nascent civil society matures in power and waxes strong, such severe punishments are no longer necessary; justice therefore overcomes itself in mercy when those who are unable to discharge their debt are set free (*GM* II.10). The point, then, is that the real worth of justice lies in the impersonal assessment of injury and harm—an assessment that does not have its provenance in any spirit of guilt and ill will, of hatred and revenge (*GM* II.14). *Ressentiment*, however, is far more interested in "punishing the guilty" than in rectifying the injury. Similarly, the real value of law lies in its power to establish justice which directly opposes *ressentiment*'s desire for personal revenge. Indeed, the ultimate triumph of law and justice will be their conquest of the "last ground," *ressentiment* (*GM* II.11). In light of his genealogy of justice, the reason for Nietzsche's outrage at Aquinas's Christian conception of divine justice becomes clear. Divine justice is the "masterpiece" of Christian *ressentiment* precisely because it perverts the meaning of justice, turning it into its opposite. Such "justice," Nietzsche believes, dwells in the lambs' burning thirst for revenge, for punishment—eternal punishment—of the "godless sinners." No wonder, then, that Nietzsche concludes that where justice truly rules, *ressentiment* is declared an outlaw (*GM* II.11) which is to be forever banished.

By tracing the origins of all justice back to the primeval creditor-debtor exchange relation (*GM* II.5), Nietzsche locates

its taproot in what Aquinas, following Aristotle, calls "commutative justice."[35] Aquinas, however, denies that commutative justice alone can subsume the entire complexity of social bonds and duties. Rather, he distinguishes commutative justice, which orders the individual members of society in their exchanges with each other, from distributive justice, by which society as a whole (or in its governing principle) gives to each individual his right or due (*STh* II-II, q. 61, a. 1). While commutative justice is, as Nietzsche notes, strictly impersonal (*GM* II.11), distributive justice is necessarily "personal"—that is, it is proportional to the courage, magnanimity, nobility, or to the cowardice, hatred, ignobility, and so on, that the individual whom society honors or disgraces has shown. Military decorations for valor, for example, are rooted in distributive rather than commutative justice; punitive damages awarded in civil lawsuits have the same provenance. In his teaching on salvation and reprobation, Aquinas understands the divine activity not in terms of the debtor-creditor relation of commutative justice but in terms of distributive justice (*STh* I, q. 21, a. 1). From Aquinas's vantage point, Nietzsche ignores distributive justice when he roots all justice in the impersonal equivalence in pain which the injured creditor inflicts on the defaulting debtor. Since Aquinas's God not only creates all *ex nihilo* but also freely offers to each person the grace to attain beatitude,[36] the equivalence of the debtor-creditor exchange appeals to a category inapplicable to the case. Aquinas implicitly rejects the "Maximum Creditor / infinite debtor" analysis (*GM* II.19-20) because it confuses a generous and merciful gift with an unpayable bill.

The distributive justice by which Aquinas's God orders the world has its provenance in divine goodness, liberality, mercy, and wisdom (*STh* I, q. 21, a. 4)—and not vice versa. Like justice, mercy is an attribute analogically predicated of God; as noted above, it refers to the determination to remove from

[35] *STh* II-II, q. 61, a. 1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.7 [in the Latin version of Aquinas], 1131b25-1132b20; V *Nic. Ethic.*, lect. 6-7 (Marietti ed., 947-64).

[36] This free offer of grace, as Aquinas makes clear, may be refused (*ScG* III, c. 159).

another an evil which keeps that person from attaining his good. Since both creation and redemption are sheer, bounteous gifts—the one bestowing life, the other mercifully removing hindrances to the plenitude of life (*STh* I, q. 21, a. 3)—God's mercy and liberality go far beyond distributive justice; they allot to each person everything *including* that which is his due (i.e., befitting the person) by nature. Such mercy, then, in no way abrogates or "overcomes" divine justice: human beings never receive less good than they merit (*STh* I, q. 21, a. 3, ad 2). By anchoring God's justice in his love and mercy, Aquinas provides the relevant context not only for his commendation of praise and gratitude, but also for his teaching on salvation and damnation.[37] Aquinas's God freely offers redemption both to slaves imbued with *ressentiment* and to merciless nobles. In the "kingdom of heaven," the whole human being—soul united to its resurrected body with reason, will, and passions completely integrated (*STh* Suppl., qq. 79-80, *passim*)—will praise and thank God (*STh* Suppl., q. 91).

Such a gift (and such a Giver), however, might not be received with praise and gratitude. The grateful acceptance of this gift benefits the receiver; its refusal or abuse may well result in its withdrawal and loss. Divine punishment, as noted above, is primarily medicinal, but there is an ultimate punishment which is purely retributive to the one who suffers it. The very core of this punishment, the deepest meaning of damnation, is the withdrawal of the gift from the one who will not receive it. This is the "infinite loss" brought on by the sinner's rejection of the infinite gift (*STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 4], by his conversion to a finite good as though it were the infinite good. Such goods may be external (e.g., wealth), bodily (e.g., food, drink, sex), or of the soul (e.g., fame and glory) (*STh* I-II, q. 2). These give rise to such passions as love, hate, and desire. Since these goods are, of their nature, finite and imperfect, they can either befit or harm

[37] See *STh* I, q. 21 where he treats the justice and mercy of God together.

those who pursue them (*STh* I, q. 5, a. 6; II-II, q. 145).[38] The pursuit of these goods is therefore either virtuous or sinful. The root of the former is properly ordered self-love, while that of the latter is disordered self-love (*STh* I-II, q .77, a. 4). Self-love for Aquinas is primary (*STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 4): we are to love our neighbor "as ourselves." By disordered self-love, however, sinners reject their own perfective good for the sake of that which is not truly their good. This is, literally, a form of self-deception and self-hatred (*STh* I-II, q. 29, a. 4; II-II, q. 25, a. 7). By no means, then, does one sin by embracing "natural inclinations . . . sense, instinct, nature, animal . . . life" (*GM* II.24]; rather, one sins by turning to them in some kind of intemperance (e.g., unmitigated savagery), cowardliness, injustice (e.g., hatred, envy, revenge), or imprudence. In sum, Aquinas argues that both the things of this world and the desire for them are good, not evil, and that such goods are known as goods by our *inclinationes naturales* to them. Sin does not lie here. But it does lie in pursuing these goods by acts of vice or as the ultimate goals of human existence. Vice and sin, in short, are life-hindering weaknesses rather than the strengths which make for human flourishing.

Aquinas's understanding of divine justice and everlasting damnation flows from his understanding of virtue and vice. Divine corrective punishment may fail to bring the vice-ridden to virtue. The envious slave and the savage warrior may not allow themselves to be healed, but rather may choose to remain estranged from their own perfection (*STh* I-II, q. 72, a. 5; III, q. 86, a. 4; Suppl., q. 98, a. 4, ad 2; q. 99, aa. 1 and 2). Sinners, then, seek not simply a good of passion or instinct, but of passion and instinct without or against reason's direction to their good. Sinners who refuse to be brought to repentance by medicinal punishment continue to will against their infinite good; they obstinately choose to remain perpetually in that state. "Now those who are in hell retain their wicked will which

[38] Aquinas's teaching on the evangelical counsels should be compared and contrasted with that of Nietzsche's philosopher: the latter maintains that the philosopher's optimal conditions for his life are poverty, humility, and chastity (*GM* III.8).

is turned away from God's justice since they love the things for which they are punished [and] would wish to use them if they could" (*STh* II-II, q. 13, a. 4). Again, "[the one who is damned] from the very fact that he fixes his end in sin has the will to sin everlastingly" (*STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1). He continues to love with infinite and unrequited love the finite and partial, hence disordered, object of love. And for this very reason, God and the blessed in the kingdom of heaven cannot show mercy to him. Since mercy is the virtue that removes an obstacle keeping another from attaining his good, the damned cannot receive it precisely because they do not wish the obstacle to be removed; they have no desire to abandon their sin. In other words, God allows those who in this life will not permit themselves to be brought to salutary repentance to follow their own will everlastingly.[39] Damnation, accordingly, consists not of God the Hanging Judge casting "guilty sinners" into hell, but of God's allowing and permitting those who reject him to do so (*STh* I, q. 19, a. 9, ad 3; I-II, q. 39, a. 2, ad 3). God's abandonment (*STh* I, q. 23, a. 3) of them to themselves is just precisely because it gives to them "their own." In this sense Dante's inscription over the portals of hell, "I, too, was created by Eternal Love," well expresses Aquinas's teaching: the damned *continue* to reject their perfective good in favor of their disordered love for a partial, imperfect, finite good as though it were infinite. Thus the core of hell's punishment and real source of the agony of the damned lies in the loss of the vision of God.[40] That good for which human beings have their most fundamental "natural desire" is eternally frustrated.[41]

[39] Medicinal punishment can fail to bring about the salutary repentance which arises from a change in the disordered will. Aquinas contrasts this with the unfruitful repentance which is rooted only in regret for the punishment (*STh* III, q. 86, a. 1; Suppl., q. 98, a. 2).

[40] Hell's "pain of infinite loss" is rooted in the sinners' aversion from God; the finite "pain of sense" is proportioned to the finite objects to which the sinner has turned (*STh* I-II, q. 87, a.4, co. and ad 3; q. 87, a. 5, co. and ad 1).

[41] "omnis intellectus naturaliter desiderat divinae substantiae visionem" (*ScG* III, c. 59).

Nietzsche, it will be recalled, cited Aquinas for evidence that "other worldly" beliefs in the personal subject, free will, God, divine justice, heaven, and hell reflect the pathology of *ressentiment*. Aquinas, indeed, holds these beliefs, but his psychological motivation is the very opposite of such cruelty by the weak against the strong. In discussing the ways in which God draws good out of evil, he notes the ways that damnation serves the good. It not only satisfies the order of divine justice and serves to make the vision of God's glory "more conspicuous" and "more delightful," but it also serves as a medicinal warning to the vice-ridden who now live. In this sense it is truly life-affirming. His teaching on heaven and hell not only is free of *ressentiment* but targets those who are imbued with it. Of course Aquinas is well aware that acting from fear is hardly virtue: the one who practices honesty because it is the "best policy" or expedient is not for that reason honest. But the servile fear of punishment may awaken in the self-deceived, vice-ridden person a reflection on his own real good and thus lead to virtue (*STh* III, q. 85, a. 5, corp. and ad 1). Just as Aquinas's teaching on the personal subject and free will support rather than undermine human flourishing, his teaching on divine justice and the possibility of damnation does the same.

Conclusion

In this article I have tried to show that, by underquoting and decontextualizing the above-quoted passage from the *Summa theologiae*, Nietzsche has badly misconstrued Aquinas's teaching. A proper reading shows that Aquinas is the very opposite of the *ressentiment*-drenched hater that the *Genealogy of Morals* portrays him as being, that he fully supports the active virtues of human flourishing rather than passive life-negating values, and that his Christian belief in God, divine justice, suffering, salvation, and damnation operate to the same end.

These points invite a larger consideration. Nietzsche cites not only Aquinas but also Dante and Tertullian for evidence that Christian morality is rooted in *ressentiment*. Yet after citing

Dante's inscription over the portals of Hell that "I too was created by Eternal love" Nietzsche proceeds to accuse Dante of committing a "crude blunder" (*gröblich vergriffen*) for failing to inscribe over the portals of Paradise "I too was created by Eternal hate." The very absence of such an expression indicates that Dante was moved by no such sentiment. As we have seen, the damned continue to love with unrequited love the unbefitting object of their affection. By accusing Dante of committing his "crude blunder," Nietzsche back-handedly witnesses to the absence of *ressentiment* in the great Christian poet. The lengthy quotation from Tertullian, however, is a very different matter. Still, that hideous quotation comes from the pen of one who never has been known to the Christian tradition as "Saint Tertullian." He certainly joined a sect that eventually was excommunicated and he may have died outside the Church. In any event, the Church has disassociated herself from many of his teachings, including this one. In short, a nonsainted sectarian who held views ultimately condemned as heretical makes a very poor witness to Christian thinking. The point, then, is that not one of the witnesses whom Nietzsche summons for proof of Christian *ressentiment* provides evidence supporting his claim: the representative Christian thinkers, Aquinas and Dante, do not hold the view Nietzsche attributes to them, while the one who does hold such a view, Tertullian, is not representative of the Christian understanding of these matters. As we have seen, moreover, Nietzsche himself has testified that "good" and "bad" were not "moralized" until the Thirty Years' War of the seventeenth century. This was nearly four hundred years after Aquinas. We must wonder what happened in Christianity between the time of Aquinas and the Thirty Years' War to bring about that sea-change which Nietzsche perceived. In any event, it cannot be laid at the doorstep of Aquinas (or Dante, or even Tertullian).

Nietzsche accuses Aquinas's Christianity of imagining a "good" world of unchanging Being in order to disvalue this world of becoming and suffering. That is, he attributes to Christianity the dualistic beliefs of the Gnostics, Manicheans, and Albigensians. They condemned and disvalued "natural

inclinations," the body, sex, marriage, and procreation in favor of the "other world" of the spirit. The early Church Fathers and medieval Dominicans waged a life-and-death struggle against these dualisms. As we have seen, Aquinas's "supernaturalism" upholds and validates, rather than denies or diminishes, the goodness of this changing "natural" world as well as the passions, actions, and virtues proper to it.

According to Nietzsche, the early seventeenth century, the moment when "good" and "bad" were finally "moralized," marked a crucial moment in the bimillennial-long struggle between noble and slavish values (*GM* I.4). This was the very time that Bacon and Descartes were reorienting philosophy away from the concern for human excellence (wisdom, virtue) to the relief of the human estate. Their successors—Hume, Kant, and the English psychologists—altered the very meaning of "virtue." Nietzsche may well be the sole first-order thinker of the modern era to challenge this orientation in philosophy. He eagerly desires to recover human flourishing, nobility, and excellence. The principal difficulty with this project is that his anti-metaphysical "naturalism" poses difficulties for praising noble values or condemning slavish ones. Why praise or blame lambs and eagles who cannot help being what they are? On what basis does he praise life-enhancing values and condemn life-diminishing values? Why, in fact, does he embrace life rather than nihilism? A critical problem Nietzsche needs to address is the basis of his judgments on the "value of values." On the basis of his "supernaturalism," however, Aquinas provides principled support for nobility and excellence.[42]

In sum, both thinkers condemn *ressentiment*-laden "values" and both support those strong, life-affirming values or virtues which make for human flourishing. Both uphold courage, magnanimity, justice, and mercy; even the "values" and beliefs which Nietzsche condemns Aquinas for holding (e.g., meekness,

[42] See Walter Thompson, "Perspectivism: Aquinas and Nietzsche on the Intellect and Will," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 58 (1995): 451-73 for a critique of Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical perspectivism; Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 42-72 shows how the Christian faith supplies that which Nietzsche's account of man cannot.

divine justice, being and becoming) on careful examination show themselves to be strong and life-affirming. None of this is to say, of course, that all differences between the two are the result of some unfortunate misunderstanding; the differences between them on matters such as the character of the "natural inclinations" are, as already noted, fundamental. But it is to say that Nietzsche's noble morality resonates much more closely with Aquinas's natural law, virtue, and Christian ethic than he realizes. Could Nietzsche have taken another look at Aquinas, he might have found an interlocutor and companion worthy of discussing these things, above all the status of "nature," the "natural," and "natural inclinations" in their multiple dimensions and implications.[43]

[43] Earlier versions of this article were read at the American Academy of Religion (Southwest Division), the University of Dallas, Baylor University, and St. Johns College in Santa Fe. I am grateful to James Carey, David Horcott, Joshua Parens, Michael Platt, Philipp Rosemann, Lance Simmons, Janet E. Smith, Robert Wood, and the three anonymous reviewers of *The Thomist* for their helpful and often detailed comments on the drafts of this text.

BOOK REVIEWS

On the God of the Christians: And on One or Two Others. By RÉMI BRAGUE. Translated by PAUL SEATON. South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 160. $26.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-1-58731-345-5.

Rémi Brague holds professorial positions at the Sorbonne in Paris and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. He is perhaps best described as a philosophical theologian and historian of ideas, and has published widely and deeply in these fields, writing mostly in French. A good portion of his work has, during the last two decades, been translated into English, and there are now half-a-dozen books and many essays by him available in that language. The book here under review was published in French in 2009.

The book's title aptly indicates one of its main themes, which is the deep and distinctive difference between the God of the Christians and other gods, especially the God of Islam. Brague does not like—and wishes to place under the ban—ways of characterizing Christianity and Islam that suggest or imply that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, and that they are each monotheistic, Abrahamic, and a people of the Book. Furthermore, he advocates such a ban, sometimes in excitable language, because of deep differences in Christian and Muslim ways of understanding, depicting, and analyzing God.

Brague seems to think that difference in predicatively identifying, describing, and responding to something requires, if it reaches a certain level, the conclusion that what is being identified, described, and responded to is not the same thing. Such difference makes, for example, shared reference impossible. If the predicate list I supply for something I wish to talk about is sufficiently different from the predicate list you supply for something you wish to talk about, the conclusion Brague prefers is that we are not talking about the same thing—that we are not referring to the same thing.

But there are problems here. Imagine the following case. I speak of someone who is female, sixty-eight years old, lives in Bangalore, writes in English, and has published seventy-four essays and thirteen books. You speak of someone who is male, seventy-three years old, lives in Montréal, writes in French, and has published thirty-nine books and more than one hundred essays. The predicates have little in common. It might seem reasonable to say

that we are and must be referring to different people because no one person could share this predicate list: the list contains noncompossibles. But a little discussion shows that we each understand ourselves to be speaking about the most eminent living philosopher; that is a description each of us applies to the person thus predicatively identified.

What to say about this? Perhaps that each of us is speaking of (referring to) the most eminent living philosopher, but that one (or both) of us has identified that person wrongly. On this understanding—not one, I think, that Brague would prefer—there is no failure of reference. Rather, there is error, more or less widespread, in specifying the properties belonging to the individual to whom the overarching predicate ('most eminent living philosopher') applies. Alternatively, one might say that only one—or perhaps neither—of us is speaking about the most eminent living philosopher, and that failure to do so is guaranteed by a sufficient number of mistakes in the predicate list. That is the line Brague would prefer.

But it is easy enough to see that such an interpretation is not necessary and may be confused. We might, after all, be in substantial agreement as to what it would take to be the most eminent living philosopher. We might, that is, give largely the same sense to that expression, even if we disagree massively as to the particulars of the person who meets the case. And if so, the proper conclusion is not that neither of us is talking about the most eminent living philosopher; it is rather that we are talking about just that person but disagreeing as to who it is.

Suppose we apply this line to the question of the God of the Muslims and the God of the Christians. Suppose, too, that we discover *prima facie* commonalities in understanding what it would take to be God sufficient to make it reasonable to say that a concept with the same sense is in play. Let us imagine that those commonalities include the following: x is God if and only if x created all that is, and x is God if and only if x called Abraham. And then let us imagine that we also discover deep differences (of the kind that interest Brague) about how further to specify who God is. For instance, God for Christians is triune, but not for Muslims; God speaks the words of the Qur'an to Muhammad for Muslims, but not for Christians; and so on. What to say? That Muslims and Christians identify and worship different gods, that they are in disagreement at the level of both sense and reference? Or that they agree to some degree in sense—in the contours of the concept deployed—while deeply disagreeing about reference? Or that they significantly agree in both sense and reference—they are both speaking of God, and they deploy at least some of the same predicates in identifying who that God is?

There is no obviously correct answer here, that is, no answer clearly right in the order of judgment. It is the principal confusion of Brague's book to think that there is. Of course, there is a right answer to one fundamental aspect of the question of reference to God in the order of being. It is that there is only one God (only one LORD, I would prefer to say, following

Exodus 3:14—*Dominus* being the name and *Deus* the kind-term), and so it is not possible to refer to another one simply because there is not another one to refer to. One may fail to refer to that one, the only one there is; or one may succeed in doing so while still making mistakes in the particular predicates one applies to the LORD being referred to. Christians, for example, disagree deeply and irreducibly about whether it is proper to apply to the LORD of Christian confession the predicate "the one whose existence cannot be coherently denied," and about whether it is proper to apply to the LORD the predicate "the one to whom no temporal predicate is applicable." But it does not follow from this disagreement that those on each side are not referring to the same LORD. For most purposes, it is better to say that they are, but that someone is making a mistake about a particular claim.

Another line to take about reference, at least when speaking of persons—and this one, too, I think Brague finds attractive—is that if I do not know your name I cannot refer to you. If, then, a Muslim does not take the name given in Exodus 3:14 (*ego sum qui sum*) to be the LORD's name, or does not take Jesus to be a name of the LORD, then, ipso facto, reference to the LORD is not possible. But that cannot be right, either. I can perfectly well refer to you without knowing your name and even if I deny that your name is your name. I can, for instance, indicate you ostensively and can utter many truths about you, whether or not I know your name and whether or not I deny that your name is your name. The example of the most eminent living philosopher applies here, too.

How, then, better to approach the question of the God of the Christians and the God of the Muslims? It is simple enough, I think. The first move is ascetically to renounce the thought that success in reference is an on/off toggle, a matter of the yes/no binary. That thought should be replaced with the idea that success in reference is a spectrum concept, a matter of more or less, and that judgments as to when success has occurred are always indexed to particular local interests and concerns. There is no truth of the matter (remembering always to rule out the thought that anyone can refer to another God than the only one there is). For some purposes, it is entirely reasonable to say what Brague in this book takes himself to have disposed of as a possible view, namely, that Muslims and Christians refer to (and worship) the same God. This is reasonable because the sense of the concept(s) they deploy is sufficiently similar. For other purposes, it is entirely reasonable to say what Brague in this book says, which is that the difference between the sense of the concept(s) they deploy is sufficient to make it proper to say that they are not talking about the same thing—and, therefore, not worshipping the same thing, either. What it is not proper to say is that there is a right answer to the question.

Nostra aetate is useful here: "They [Muslims] worship one God [*unicum Deum adorant*], living and subsistent [*viventem et subsistentem*], merciful and omnipotent [*misericordem et omnipotentem*], creator of heaven and earth

[*creatorem caeli et terrae*], who has spoken to humanity [*homines allocutum*], and to whose decrees, even the hidden ones, they seek to submit themselves wholeheartedly, just as [*sicut*] Abraham, to whom the Islamic faith [*fides islamica*] freely relates itself, submitted himself to God [*Deo se submisit*]" (§3). We see here a predicate list that gives sense to a concept, the concept in question being that of God (*Deus*). An *ad litteram* reading suggests that there is substantial and significant overlap between the sense of the Islamic concept and that of the Christian concept—some of the phraseology used is (for Christians) creedal, for instance. If that reading is followed, it is reasonable enough (though by no means required) to say that Muslims and Christians refer to and worship the same God, even though they do not identify that God identically or without disagreement. Brague would parse the predicate list finely and show differences, more or less deep, in the understandings given to each—his third chapter, for instance, does this with "*unicum*." He would then conclude that difference in sense requires difference in reference. That conclusion is not warranted. What would be warranted is that difference in sense might be taken, for particular local purposes (I wish Brague had been clearer about what his purposes are), to suggest difference in reference.

Brague's difficulties with sense and reference are intimate with another set of confusions that surfaces at many points in the book. These have to do with classification or, we might say, with the proper application of sortals. Brague, as noted, does not like (for instance) the sortal "Abrahamic religion" to be applied to Christianity and Islam as a means of differentiating them—sorting them—from other religions. The principal reason he gives for not liking this is that Christianity and Islam understand Abraham/Ibrahim very differently: the sense they give to the name, Brague thinks, is not the same. Different narratives are used to identify him, and different concepts used to theorize his significance. Brague is, I expect, quite right about this. But it does not remotely follow from such differences that the sortal in question should be renounced. Everything depends on what the sortal is intended to do. If it is intended to indicate that Christianity and Islam have an identical understanding of Abraham, then that is a purpose difficult to sustain. But if the sortal is intended to indicate, by way of example, that Islam and Christianity are more closely intertwined than, say, Islam and dge lugs Buddhism, then it is entirely defensible to use it for that purpose. The presence of the name of Abraham in both traditions is among the many evidences of intertwining, just as its absence in, say, the scholastic works of Tsong kha pa is among the many evidences of a lack of historical connection between his work and anything Christian (or Islamic). The truth is that sortals like "Abrahamic religion" do not pick out natural kinds (or if they do, we cannot easily tell that they do—or do not); they are heuristic devices and should be deployed and analyzed as such. Brague seems not to think so.

Brague is, therefore, often confused about the fundamental and central questions of his book. Nonetheless, he is, as always, very much worth reading.

The bulk of his book, if not its main purpose, indicates and emphasizes the distinctive character of Christian understandings of the LORD by contrasting them with incompatible Islamic understandings, for example, about knowing God, God's speech, God's oneness, and God's ethical demands. I am not competent to comment on Brague's claims about the substance of Islamic understandings of these matters. But about the Christian side of things, he is almost always right (so far as I can judge) and very often profoundly suggestive. His analysis of the idea that the LORD has nothing more to say to us than has been said in Jesus (chap. 5), and of the idea that the LORD asks nothing of us in the same way that the LORD owes us nothing (chap. 6), is illuminating, and, for this reviewer at least, productive of new thoughts. There are deep clarity and much intellectual and spiritual nourishment in Brague's treatment of the idea that the LORD remits our sins (chap. 7). By the time he gets to that, he has almost forgotten the enterprise of distinguishing the God of the Christians from one or two others. And that is just as well.

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From Passion to Paschal Mystery: A Recent Magisterial Development concerning the Christological Foundation of the Sacraments. By DOMINIC M. LANGEVIN, O.P. Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2015. Pp. x + 403. 69,00 CHF (paper). ISBN 978-3-7278-1728-3.

The "magisterial development" of the title of this monograph consists of the move from binding the efficacy of the Mass and sacraments exclusively to the Passion of Christ to the recognition of the efficacy and exemplarity of the Lord's Resurrection as well. Langevin also traces the increasing recognition of the Mass and sacraments not only as empowered by but also as signifying the paschal mystery of Good Friday and Easter and memoralizing both.

Part 1 is a long series of readings of strategically chosen texts from Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* (1947), from the Second Vatican Council's *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), and from John Paul II's *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997) on the Mass and sacraments and liturgy. These texts are *very* closely read, and the reading is a sort of model of how the inquiring theologian should approach magisterial sources. The first chapter of part 2 charts the soteriological effects of both the Passion and the Resurrection according as they are extended to us in baptism and the Eucharist. The second and last

chapter of part 2 does two things. First, it explains the motion charted in part 1 by adducing some of its historical causes. Second, it provides systematic insight into the term of the motion.

Mediator Dei appreciates Christ especially as offering sacrifice and the Mass especially as the memorial and application of that sacrifice. As Christ's sacrifice is an exercise of the virtue of religion, so also is our participation in that sacrifice: we render the debt of justice we owe God, and in the way exclusive to rendering a debt to God, by way of sacrifice. Salvation is configuration to Christ—to his Passion. However, while the very sacrifice of Christ is made present, it must be the *risen* Christ who acts now in the Mass, and communion is reception of the Body and Blood of the *risen* Christ, though the encyclical rather emphasizes that the signification of the Mass is the signification of the passion. Generally, "for Pius, the Passion is more important and active than the Resurrection in the sacramental economy." The encyclical's discussion of the liturgical year is more expansive, however, since the year renders all the mysteries and not just the Passion present and in their saving effects. The encyclical is thus open to a further reflection on the Resurrection that it itself does not take up.

Sacrosanctum Concilium teaches that baptism gives us to participate in the *entire* paschal mystery. Its insistence that the Mass is principally to be understood in a sacrificial key follows Pius, but it is more open to seeing the Mass and the sacraments as also memorializing the Resurrection and bringing it to bear on our salvation. For one thing, it drops the framework according to which the liturgy is understood first and foremost as an exercise of the virtue of religion, which allows other aspects more easily to come to the fore. Thus the Mass and the sacraments are seen in relation to the entire paschal mystery, now appreciated in its unity, and not only to the meritorious work of the Passion and sacrifice of the Lord, for it is the entire paschal mystery that works salvation, going beyond the mode of merit that is exclusive to the Passion. Even in *SC* 47, the principal text on the Mass, which came to assert the sacrificial nature of the Mass at the insistence of many council fathers, there is an express connection of the Mass with the Resurrection such that the relation of the Mass to the entire paschal mystery comes to expression. The text states that the Lord instituted the Eucharist "in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross . . . *and even more* to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection." "And even more" renders *atque adeo*. A "close reading," indeed! Langevin: "the 'perpetuation' of the Passion is somehow more real, actual, and direct than the Eucharist's memorial aspect, but the full Paschal mystery—Passion and Resurrection—is a broader and more general possession of the Church in the Eucharist." The council later extends this hospitality to all the sacraments, without specifying differences in how they do this.

The *Catechism* continues in the path of the council. It adds material from the Eastern theological tradition, and this aids in appreciating the role of the

entire paschal mystery in the liturgy. Once again, all the sacraments signify and make present the mystery—but also, again, it is not said that each does so in the same way or to the same extent. The greater role the council accords the idea of memorial is continued as well.

The first chapter of part 2 begins with the large task of sorting out the material so painstakingly accumulated in part 1. If we are to think in terms of the relation of the sacraments more to the paschal mystery than just to the Passion, still, what is the paschal mystery itself, since there are various magisterial determinations of it? Does it include the Ascension and even Pentecost, as some dicta indicate? Langevin takes it to include the Passion and Resurrection, not as a theological determination, but by way of a prudential decision. Then also for the sake of manageability, the enquiry is limited to baptism and the Eucharist. To summarize: The soteriological effect of the Passion is chiefly liberation from sin; the soteriological effects of the Resurrection are first the resurrection of the soul and second, eschatologically, the resurrection of the body. The Passion causes what it causes efficiently, exemplarily, and also by way of merit. The Resurrection causes what it causes efficiently and exemplarily, and as God's act alone, does not operate by way of merit. As to baptism, its waters signify principally the death of the Christian as sharing in the death of the Lord and so effect liberation from sin and open the doors to heaven. But the waters also connote life, and through baptism, the Lord's Resurrection efficiently (but only in the longest term) causes our own resurrection; baptism inserts us now and eternally into the exemplar of graced life, which is Christ himself. The Eucharist's principal signification is also the death of the Lord in the double consecration and the separately signified Body and Blood, and its effects are the effects of the sacrifice it makes present: the expiation of sin, and our own praise and prayer and thanksgiving as sharing in Christ's. As a sacrament, the Eucharist delivers to us a greater share in the charity by which Christ united himself to the disciples at the Last Supper. The Eucharist is also the bread of life and the medicine of immortality, and in the end makes us to share in the Resurrection of the Lord whose risen Body and Blood we share in the sacrament.

In sorting out and shaping this material, Langevin not only relies on the bare words of the magisterial texts, but also finds help in St. Thomas and many distinguished Thomist sacramental theologians. Does this impose a foreign conceptuality on the liturgical, scriptural, and patristic material the council, especially, brings to the fore? Not according to the first part of chapter 5, the explanatory chapter.

The historical transition from a more exclusive post-Tridentine focus on the Passion to a comprehensive embrace of the pascal mystery was a result of four factors. First, there was the liturgical movement, especially in the person of Odo Casel, who celebrated the Fathers' sense of the rites of the Church as making present Christ and his historical saving action. The renewal of patristic scholarship in the twentieth century was a second factor. Third, the

importance of the Resurrection became more deeply appreciated, no longer merely as confirmation of the claim of Christ, but as the *telos* of the Incarnation, the exemplar of our own Christian end, and as intrinsically related to the mysteries of the Church and the sacraments. Influential here was F.-X. Durrwell. Last, there was in some Thomist scholarship a growing awareness of the hospitality Thomism could extend to the findings of all these currents of thought and research. For St. Thomas, the sacraments are not only remedies for sin but perfections of man in the supernatural order, and the exemplar of this perfection is, of course, the Resurrection. The recovery of the role of exemplar causality in Thomas, a fruit of the recovery of his debt to neo-Platonism, Langevin finds especially noteworthy as complementing the post-Tridentine insistence of Thomists on the instrumental efficiency of sacramental action. Langevin has something important to say at this point about the course of the conciliar reception of twentieth-century renewals of the theology of the Resurrection, of the paschal mystery as a whole and in its unitary nature when he points out that conciliar thinking and criticism and debate occurred *within* the idiom of Thomist sacramental theology. Overall, from Pius XII to the council to John Paul II, "the role of Aquinas was essential in the twentieth century magisterial teaching on the Paschal mystery–sacraments connection." At the council, the drafters of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the members of the theological commission, and the council fathers themselves all thought in terms of St. Thomas on the Mass and the sacraments, although the final text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* shed the working references to Thomas and cited only the Fathers and Scripture—a decision one imagines Thomas himself would have approved. Langevin's own use of Thomas and Thomist sacramental theology in organizing and making sense of the magisterial deposit is quite in order and in harmony with the texts and their history. It is hard to imaging another systematic theological regime that could bring as much sense to the magisterial texts. Langevin's monograph is in this way a sort of demonstration of the utility of the hermeneutics of continuity.

The systematic section addresses four issues: the nature of sacramental grace, the causality of Christ's mysteries and the sacraments, theological hope, and the motives of the Incarnation. This is not a loose collection of topics, since they spring from and are informed by the positive theological study of part 1. What are we speaking about when we speak of the principal effect of the sacraments? Fundamentally, we are speaking about habitual grace, and properly sacramental grace is understood as a mode thereof. As such this grace can only be caused by God, but it is caused through created instruments: first, generally, through the humanity of Christ; second through his saving acts, where the Passion acts efficiently, exemplarily, and meritoriously, and the Resurrection efficiently and exemplarily, as has been said. Langevin concentrates on the exemplary nature of the causality of the redemption, because it includes an understanding of the end to which the Lord's work

moves us. The removal of defect is appropriated to the Passion and the bestowal of supernatural gifts is appropriated to the Resurrection, as efficient causes. Our adoption by God is appropriated exemplarily to the Son. But the exemplary causalities of the Passion and Resurrection have proper effects: in our suffering for the sake of the Gospel, we really are conformed to the Passion, and the Resurrection is the complete exemplar of our final estate, anticipated in some respects even now. For St. Thomas (*STh* III, q. 60, a. 3), sacraments signify our sanctification and touch on "the very cause of our sanctification, which is the Passion of Christ, and the form of our sanctification, which consists in grace and the virtues, and the ultimate end of our sanctification, which is eternal life"; they are signs "rememorative of the Passion," "demonstrative of grace," and "prognostic of future glory." At the end of this monograph, and remembering exemplarity, we can write as follows: sacraments are signs by which the Passion that merits and causes, and the Resurrection that causes salvation, are moved by them in their liturgical memorial to cause grace within us, conforming us to the exemplar of redeemed humanity, Christ, in his person and in the very mysteries that move us to this conformation. Baptism and the Eucharist can then rightly be described as instruments (in the order of efficiency) of an exemplar (which includes the complete pattern of the final end of redemption and the sacramental economy).

The discussion of theological hope enters in because the exemplary causality of Christ and his mysteries makes us appreciate the distance the sacraments are ordained to help us traverse. Last, the discussion of the motive of the Incarnation is warranted insofar as Langevin wants to do justice to the insight that the mysteries of Christ's life—and, by extension, the sacraments—convey both negative and positive benefits: they free us from sin and elevate us with supernatural perfections.

Langevin's work, originally a dissertation written under Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole, O.P., is yet another contribution to the reflorescence of the Dominicans in Fribourg in the New World.

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Dieu comme soi-même: connaissance de soi et connaissance de Dieu selon Thomas d'Aquin: l'herméneutique d'Ambroise Gardeil. By CAMILLE DE BELLOY, O.P. Paris: Vrin, 2014. Pp. 297. €32.00 (paper). ISBN: 978-2-7116-2605-2.

This book is a discussion of *La Structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique* (1927) by Ambroise Gardeil (1859-1931). In this two-volume work of mystical theology, Gardeil explains the material cause of the experiential knowledge that comes from the gift of wisdom, which is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. *La Structure* is the third book in a trilogy that focuses on the supernatural knowledge of God, beginning with apologetics in *La Crédibilité et l'apologétique* (1st ed. 1908), and continuing with the nature of revelation in *Le Donné révélé et la théologie* (1st ed. 1910). In *La Structure*, Gardeil develops the thesis that there is an analogy between experiential self-knowledge and the mystical experiential knowledge of God. In the course of his inquiry, Gardeil touches upon philosophical and theological problems concerning self-knowledge, intentionality, the structure of the mind (*mens*), God's indwelling in the souls of the just, and the relationship between faith and the gift of wisdom. De Belloy's new volume is on Gardeil's presentation of this analogy and its reception by his contemporaries.

De Belloy considers largely the issues that surround self-knowledge, the structure of the soul, and mystical experience. He draws together material from Gardeil's own sources, Gardeil's contemporaries, and subsequent Thomistic scholarship. He sheds light on the issues themselves, the historical context, and different hermeneutical strategies in Thomism. According to De Belloy, this twentieth-century Thomistic and largely Dominican discussion is important for contemporary philosophers and theologians. To shed light on the context, De Belloy considers a lengthy three-part "Examen de conscience" in *Revue Thomiste* (1928-29), in which Gardeil responded to published and unpublished comments by his fellow Dominicans Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange (a former student), Marie-Dominique Roland-Gosselin (Le Saulchoir), and Albino González Menéndez-Reigada, as well as a young student, Jean Daujat. De Belloy remarks that Maritain's discussion of Gardeil in *The Degrees of Knowledge* to some extent attempts to harmonize the substance of Gardeil's work with Garrigou-Lagrange's critical comments. De Belloy emphasizes the interaction between Gardeil and Roland-Gosselin, and at the end of his volume, includes their previously unpublished correspondence.

Although De Belloy often notes the difficulty of reading Gardeil's neo-Scholastic prose, it seems to me that the non-native French reader will find Gardeil more accessible than De Belloy, especially when the latter draws on writers such as Henri Bergson and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Moreover, De Belloy's discussion is easier to follow if one has already read and is familiar with the four parts of Gardeil's *La Structure*. In part 1, Gardeil addresses the structure of mind or spirit (*mens*), and in particular considers Augustine's

three main, threefold divisions of the soul in *De Trinitate* (*mens*, *notitia*, *amor*; *memoria [sui], intelligentia, voluntas*; *memoria [Dei], intelligentia, amor*) and Aquinas's own interpretation and appropriation of these divisions. In part 2, Gardeil describes the way in which sanctifying grace, a created quality that is distinct from the infused virtues, causes the soul's conformity to God's essence. In part 3, he discusses God's presence within the souls of the just and agrees with previous Thomists that God is especially present to the just as an object of faith and love. In part 4, he applies the previous discussion to the structure of mystical knowledge. This last part is the culmination of the entire work, as it addresses the analogy between self-knowledge and the knowledge of God that was defended by earlier Dominican Thomists such as John of St. Thomas (1589-1644) and Thomas de Vallgornera (c. 1595-1665).

Part 4 of *La Structure* contains most of the material that is relevant to De Belloy's work. Gardeil explains how our ordinary human self-knowledge is distinct from that of separated souls or angels, who know themselves clearly and intuitively. At least in question 10, article 8 of *De Veritate*, Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of individual or particular self-knowledge, namely, the habitual self-knowledge that involves the soul's presence to itself and the actual self-knowledge by which the intellect knows that it knows something. With respect to the universal or general knowledge of the soul, Thomas distinguishes primarily between two kinds of such self-knowledge, namely, that which the soul acquires through inquiry into its acts of knowing other natures, and a kind of knowledge we have through the natural judgments of truths that are known on account of their terms (*per se nota*). Gardeil argues that Aquinas does not abandon this schema in the apparently simpler discussion of question 87, article 1 of the *Prima pars*, which primarily distinguishes between the universal knowledge that is acquired through inquiry and the soul's self-knowledge that is the root and principle of its own operations. The universal knowledge obtained through inquiry is clearly the same in both works. The knowledge of the soul as the root and principle is the same as what Aquinas earlier called actual particular self-knowledge. The self-presence that makes this knowledge possible in the later work is described in the earlier work as habitual self-knowledge.

Dominican Thomists had previously argued that even though God is present to everyone by his immensity, God as a Trinity of divine persons makes himself present by being known and loved through a living faith and charity, which presuppose sanctifying grace and presence by immensity. This supernatural presence as an object of faith and charity explains how God can be experientially known. Through the gift of wisdom, the soul experientially knows God and even individual divine persons as the root and principle of his own supernatural acts. This experimental knowledge of God is distinct from the knowledge of God through faith even though it presupposes such knowledge. Gardeil develops this analogy at greater length than his

predecessors by explaining how God's presence in the just is in many ways similar to the self-presence of the soul in habitual self-knowledge.

De Belloy discusses these themes in four chapters. In chapter 1, he considers Gardeil's account of self-knowledge. In chapter 2, he considers Roland-Gosselin's criticisms of this account in light of an earlier Scholastic contrast between Thomas de Vio Cajetan and John of St. Thomas. In chapter 3, he addresses part 1 of Gardeil's work, using Gadamer's account of hermeneutics in order to consider Gardeil as a reader of Aquinas's interpretation of Augustine. In chapter 4, De Belloy invokes the neglected Dominican Dominique Dubarle in order to describe Gardeil's account of religious experience as a response to Kant and to Modernism. The introduction and the conclusion attempt to place Gardeil in a wider context in part through a discussion of Henri Bergson.

Chapters 1 and 2 taken together are a unified discussion of self-knowledge. In chapter 1, De Belloy explains Gardeil's account of experiential self-knowledge as nonabstractive and ultimately based on the habitual self-knowledge that is the soul's own presence to itself. In chapter 2, Gardeil discusses Roland-Gosselin's criticisms of Gardeil. Although Roland-Gosselin had written a short review of *La Structure*, his interaction with Gardeil was mostly through private correspondence and Gardeil's own published "Examen de conscience." After Gardeil's death, Roland-Gosselin also published a discussion of intuitive knowledge that contained a brief reference to John of St. Thomas. De Belloy suggests that Gardeil was a target of this article even though he is not mentioned by name. According to De Belloy, Gardeil and Roland-Gosselin represent rival hermeneutical approaches that are based on alternative philosophical choices. These approaches can be seen in the work of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas. Almost in passing and often in the footnotes, De Belloy makes many insightful remarks on more recent scholarship, such as that by François-Xavier Putallaz.

Although De Belloy sheds great historical and scholarly light on Gardeil's account of self-knowledge, it seems to me that he fails to convince the reader that the private correspondence with Roland-Gosselin involves much more than a misreading of Gardeil. For instance, Roland-Gosselin argues that all our knowledge, including self-knowledge, is abstractive, and consequently that there can be no experiential self-knowledge. In response, Gardeil points to his own clearly stated position that experiential self-knowledge presupposes the knowledge of another object. Experiential self-knowledge is simply the knowledge that one is knowing something else. In addition, Roland-Gosselin states that Aquinas's account of habitual self-knowledge is metaphysical and not relevant to epistemology. Gardeil responds by explaining that the soul's self-presence is epistemological not as actual knowledge, but as the presence that makes actual knowledge possible. De Belloy refers to Roland-Gosselin's article on intuitive knowledge without convincingly showing its significance for Gardeil's work. Gardeil explicitly distinguishes between the intuitive

knowledge discussed by Roland-Gosselin and our experiential knowledge of self and God in this life.

In chapter 3, De Belloy defends Gardeil's interpretation and adoption of Aquinas's incorporation of Augustine's discussion of the soul's threefold structure. For example, consider Augustine's first trinity: *mens, notitia, amor*. In his *Sentences* commentary, Thomas interpreted the distinction between knowledge (*notitia*) and love (*amor*) as a distinction between habits and not between acts or their principles. On this interpretation, *notitia* is the mind's knowability, and *amor* is the mind's lovability. This interpretation of Augustine's *notitia* supports Gardeil's understanding of the soul's habitual self-knowledge. De Belloy is aware of the chronological differences in Aquinas's interpretation of Augustine and contemporary scholarly alternatives to Aquinas's reading(s). Nevertheless, by developing and applying at length some themes from Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, De Belloy generally defends Gardeil's hermeneutical approach. It seems to me that Gardeil and Aquinas can be defended on more straightforward grounds of plausibility and philosophical sense. By invoking Gadamer, De Belloy perhaps makes neo-Scholastic readings of Aquinas and Augustine more acceptable in some Continental circles. Similarly, De Belloy's comments on Gardeil's originality in reading Augustine seem to me more justified as a sweetener for contemporary *ressourcement* theologians than as an accurate historical description of Gardeil.

In chapter 4, De Belloy draws on Dubarle's reading of Gardeil's *La Structure* as a response to Kant's view that religious experience is impossible and to the Modernist overreliance on such experience. On this reading, Gardeil's work in mystical theology has a wider dogmatic and even philosophical importance. Although De Belloy gives a substantial argument in favor of Dubarle's approach, he does concede that, from Gardeil's own view, the experiential knowledge of God is unavailable to those who lack faith and even to those who have faith but lack charity. Mystical experience is available to relatively few. Gardeil's limitation of such experience seems sensible to me. In addition, Dubarle's emphasis on Kant and Modernism seems unlikely in light of Gardeil's modest aim of contributing to our understanding of the material cause of mystical experience. Moreover, Gardeil's overall approach is rooted not only in Thomas but more proximately in seventeenth-century Dominican mystical theology. Gardeil presents himself more as continuing this earlier tradition than as responding to Kant's treatment of religious experience or even to Modernism.

In general, De Belloy's book draws welcome attention to Gardeil's work. Probably no contemporary Thomist has Gardeil's command of Aquinas's work, its roots in Augustine, and the contributions of later Thomists to theology. De Belloy focuses less on explaining Gardeil's own philosophical and theological contributions to Thomistic thought than on developing Gardeil's appeal to a contemporary francophone audience. De Belloy's

approach is to comment on selected broad philosophical themes, and consequently he does not indicate in detail how Gardeil advanced the science (*scientia*) of mystical theology. Nevertheless, De Belloy's treatment of these chosen themes can be insightful, even in passing. My attention was often turned away from the text to illuminating (and lengthy) discussions in the footnotes.

De Belloy may exaggerate Gardeil's originality. Moreover, he overemphasizes Gardeil's interaction with Roland-Gosselin at the expense of neglecting perhaps more interesting comments by Jacques Maritain and others. Nevertheless, the book is the best single source of information for Gardeil's *La Structure* and its reception. Although this book is not written for North American Thomists, it is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in Thomistic accounts of self-knowledge, the mind's structure, and mystical theology.

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The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism (1350-1550). By BERNARD MCGINN. New York: Crossroad, 2012. Pp. xiv + 721. $70.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8245-9901-0.

This fifth volume of McGinn's *Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* covers the Dutch, Italian, and English vernacular mystics of the late Middle Ages. In previous volumes, the author treated the *Foundations* (vol. 1), *Growth* (vol. 2), *Flowering* (vol. 3), and *Harvest* (vol. 4) of Western Christian mysticism from its roots in the Jewish matrix and the Greek ideal to its fruition in the German vernacular writings of Meister Eckhart and his students. In this latest volume, he continues his history of Western Christian mysticism by focusing on varieties of vernacular mysticism in the Low Countries, Italy, and England from 1350 to 1550.

Conscious of the dangers of historical periodization and regional classification, as well as the relationship of mysticism to the greater ecclesiastical world, McGinn takes pains to show the distinctive character of each mystic under consideration, while at the same time pointing out appropriate parallels with Western and Eastern Christian mystics from past historical epochs and those contemporary voices from both within and

without each mystic's linguistic region. In his preface, he apologizes to his readers for the long gestation of the present volume and offers a brief account of how his original plan of writing a three-volume history of Western Christian mysticism evolved into a series of seven, due in large part to the sheer wealth of sources and his desire to give them a thorough treatment. Rather than following his original intention of including other vernacular traditions in his previous volume on German mysticism, he wisely chose to devote an entire volume to these other important strands (ix-x).

Instead of writing a general introduction to the volume, McGinn decides to give a brief introduction to each of the three major parts. He divides his work into thirteen chapters constructed along the following lines: (1) "Late Medieval Mysticism in the Low Countries" (chaps. 1-5), (2) "Mysticism in Late Medieval Italy" (chaps. 6-9), and (3) "Mysticism in Late Medieval England" (chaps. 10-13). The volume closes with a brief conclusion (491-94), extended annotations (495-661), an extensive bibliography (662-704), and indices for Scripture references (705-6), names (707-12), and subjects (713-21). The book's organization reflects the theme of diversity highlighted in its title. Although each part has its own internal structure and stands on its own as a survey of the material at hand, it also fits well into the volume's overall plan of pointing out the distinctiveness and great variety of the vernacular mysticisms produced during this period. Taken individually, each part can be considered a probing monograph on the vernacular mysticism in each region. Taken together, the parts offer a unique glimpse into the mystic and literary creativity that sets this period apart as one of the most fertile periods in the history of Christian mysticism.

In part 1, "Late Medieval Mysticism in the Low Countries," McGinn notes that "the period ca. 1350 to ca. 1550 is the central era for Dutch mysticism" and "witnessed a florescence of mystical authors writing in the Dutch-Flemish language" (1). Although he hesitates to refer to a Dutch "school" of mysticism and thinks that "Ruusbroec should not be made the yardstick by which all later Dutch mystics are measured," he has no reservations about considering him "a gravitational center in the history of Dutch mysticism" (2). This section of the book begins with an in-depth look at the mystical writings of Jan van Ruusbroec (1293-1381) (chap. 1) and continues with a study of Goenendaal mysticism after Ruusbroec (chap. 2). It then turns to a treatment of the mystical aspects of the *Devotio Moderna*, with a special emphasis on *The Imitation of Christ* and some vernacular mystics numbered among the Devout, such as Hendrik Mande (ca. 1360-1431, Gerlach Peters (ca. 1375-1411), and Alijt Bake (1415-55), and adds a brief note on the nominalistic mysticism of Gabriel Biel (chap. 3). It goes on to consider three other late-medieval Dutch mystics: the hermit Gheraert Appelmans, the Franciscan Hendrik Herp (ca. 1400-1477), and the recluse Sister Bertken (1427-1514) (chap. 4). Part 1 concludes with a study of the mystical renaissance in the Eastern Netherlands, where it focuses on the work of the Charterhouse of St. Barbara in Cologne,

the beguine mystic Maria van Hout (ca. 1500-1547), and the "Arnhem Mystical Sermons" (chap. 5).

In part 2, "Mysticism in Late Medieval Italy," McGinn writes, "The two and a half centuries between ca. 1300 and 1550 in Italy were a time of turmoil and triumph" (177). This period saw "the removal of the papacy to Avignon in 1309," its return to Rome in 1377, the Great Western Schism from 1379-1415, and Italy increasingly becoming a target of major powers north of the Alps (177-78). "In the midst of this confusing, yet dynamic, time in the history of Italy and of the Italian Church," McGinn writes, "we find some of the greatest figures in the history of late medieval mysticism" (178). This part begins with a treatment of the mysticism of the poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and the prophetess Birgitta of Sweden (1303-73) (chap. 6). It continues with a look at Catherine of Sienna (chap. 7) and the Renaissance mysticism of Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), along with reflections on the influence of the *prisca theologia* and the Cabala on late medieval mysticism (chap. 8). It concludes with a treatment of a number of other late medieval women mystics such as Catherine of Bologna (1413-63) and Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) and her mystical circle (chap. 9). In addition to these major figures, McGinn treats a number of lesser-known Italian mystics such as Camilla Battista da Varano (1458-1524), Domenica Narducci da Paradiso (1473-1553), and Lucia Broccadelli (1476-1544). He points out that with the exception of Dante and the voices of Renaissance mysticism, the Italian mystics of this period were primarily women, some of whom, like Catherine of Siena, played important roles in the politics of the time.

In part 3, "Mysticism in Late Medieval England," McGinn warns of the "danger of homogenizing" when trying to lump a wide "variety of figures" into a particular mystical "school" (331). "This is especially evident," he writes, "in the case of England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, where a number of major vernacular writers on contemplation display such differences in teaching, even when touching on common themes, that it is not possible to think of them as forming a single or uniform group" (331). This last and final section of the book focuses on what has been called the "Golden Age of English Mysticism." It takes a close look at the four "classic" fourteenth-century English mystics—Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and Julian of Norwich—each of whom makes a distinct contribution and whose mystical teachings span the gamut from an intense affective mysticism to the apophatic. The section opens with a treatment of the sensate affective mysticism of Rolle (ca. 1300-1349) (chap. 10), who wrote in both Latin and the vernacular and who was "the most widely read and influential medieval English mystical writer" (339). It continues with an examination of two mystical masters of late medieval England, the Augustinian Hilton (ca. 1340-96) and the anonymous *Cloud* author (chap. 11). From there, it goes on to treat the "showings" of the late

medieval anchoress Julian of Norwich (ca. 1342 to sometime after 1414) (chap. 12), and concludes with a chapter on some lesser-known mystics of the fifteenth century such as Margery Kempe (1373- ca. 1440) and the English Carthusians Nicholas Love (d. 1424) and Richard Methley (ca. 1451-1528). According to McGinn, the English mystics of this period are characterized by a "dissimilar similarity" to one another (331) and, when taken together, embody a form of mysticism that "was insular not only in terms of having its own vernacular world but also because of its relatively modest impact on the broader mystical tradition of the late Middle Ages and early modernity" (337).

The book provides a masterful treatment of late medieval Christian mysticism and continues the excellent quality of the previous four volumes in the series. McGinn has done scholars of this period a great service by gathering in a single volume the most current scholarship on late medieval Christian mysticism in general and a wide selection of individual authors. This reviewer was particularly impressed by McGinn's expansion of the study beyond major mystics of the period to a number of lesser-known authors who, despite their relative obscurity, have made genuine (albeit modest) contributions to the history of Christian mysticism. In doing so, McGinn underscores the great variety of vernacular mysticism in the period, thereby emphasizing one of the major themes of the volume.

It has been said that the study of spirituality involves three distinct yet closely related levels: the experiential, the instructive, and the analytical. When applied to the study of Christian mysticism, this translates into the experience of the mystics themselves (level 1), the teaching either they or their followers imparted to others (level 2), and the academic and scientific analysis of levels 1 and 2 (level 3). McGinn's work is firmly rooted in level 3 and ranks among the best of its kind for its breadth and analytical depth. It would be difficult to find a more competent and measured treatment of late medieval Christian mysticism that recognizes the similarities among the various mystics involved yet underscores the distinctive qualities of each. The mysticism of the period was so vital and creative precisely due to this tension-filled interplay between the similar and dissimilar.

It has also been said that, when done well, the analytical study of spirituality (level 3) often contributes to deeper insights into the understanding of spiritual experience itself (level 1) and into the teachings flowing from that experience (level 2). When applied to the study of Christian mysticism, this would mean that McGinn's volume could become a resource for those who stand in the tradition of the mystics of this period and who seek to impart their teaching not for the sake of mere academic knowledge but as a means of arriving at a deeper understanding of one's own experience of the transcendent and perhaps even giving them insights into their teaching derived from that experience. The proponents of the Centering Prayer Movement or of Benedictine John Main's meditation techniques, for example, may draw great benefit from McGinn's insightful analysis of the *Cloud* author's

apophatic practices (396-423). At the same time, the anti-intellectual posture of many of the mystics treated by McGinn may very well counsel against such an appropriation by their present-day followers. One wonders, in fact, what the mystics he writes about would themselves have thought of any attempt to subject their teachings to the scrutiny of scholarly investigation, let alone an entire project dedicated to studying the history of Western Christian mysticism. Be that as it may, the focus of McGinn's work falls squarely within the competence of academic analysis (level 3), yet remains sensitive to the experience of the mystics themselves (level 1) and the teachings they sought to convey (level 2) because of its respect for the integrity of its sources. For this very reason, his work stands out in its comprehensive treatment of the mystics of the period, its respect for their distinct characteristics, and its sensitivity to the nature of mystical experience.

It would be impossible in a review of this kind to comment in a more than cursory manner on many of the volume's strengths. Three areas in particular, however, deserve some brief remarks. One is the way McGinn recognizes the limitations of his material and organizes it accordingly. Doing so required strength, insight, and a generous dose of candor. He admits in his preface that he was not able to integrate some of these vernacular traditions into the previous volume of the series (x). Respect for the material and recognition of its intrinsic worth led him to opt for writing another volume. Having reached this decision, he avoids the temptation of integrating the various vernacular traditions into a homogenous blend of general characteristics that would detract from the distinctiveness of each individual voice. His decision to organize the book around three independent monographs of late medieval Dutch, Italian, and English mysticism respects the unique contribution of each linguistic region and reinforces the theme of variety as set forth in the book's very title.

A second strength concerns McGinn's hesitant yet measured use of historical periodization to present his material. Although the period between 1350 and 1550 is typically referred to as the late Middle Ages, he is conscious that the term "Middle Ages" is itself an invention and that dividing history into clear and distinct periods can detract from the dynamic flow of historical events, many of which have roots deep in the past and have consequences for the future that remain in many cases yet unseen (491). McGinn's use of George Kubler's distinction between chronological and systematic time (491) and his reference to John Van Engen's term the "long fifteenth century" (492) to describe the nexus of events occurring between the 1370s and the 1520s show that, despite his measured use of such historical timeframes, he recognizes the importance of holding such categories loosely and presenting them with care. Related to this important process of reinterpretation are his hesitancy to refer to specific "schools" of late medieval mysticism yet, at the same time, his pragmatic willingness to employ other metaphors that capture the impact of a particular mystic on his or her circle of followers (e.g.,

"gravitational center" [2]). Doing so runs the risk of blending lesser-known voices with larger ones and diluting the richness and variety of the mysticisms under consideration. His decision, moreover, to organize his material according to three linguistic regions stems more from a practical need for an organizing principle than a desire to impose ill-fitting historiographical labels.

A third strength pertains to the author's concern for detail, which is likely one of the reasons why the volume was long in its gestation (ix). Reading through the text and referring to its prodigious annotations, one cannot help but feel that McGinn has left no path untrodden and no rock unturned. In a book of 721 pages, 167 of them present an abundance of explanatory notes and references that complement the text and demonstrate the theme of variety to an even greater degree. To cite but one example, note 14 of chapter 9 offers a long list of Italian women mystics born between 1380 and 1500, only some of whom could be included in the chapter (592-93). This single note demonstrates both an awareness of the daunting task of writing a comprehensive history of late medieval Italian mysticism and a determination at least to point out areas still in need of cultivation.

It is difficult to highlight the book's flaws because in this reviewer's opinion, there are very few, if any, worth mentioning. *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism (1350-1550)* represents a welcome addition to *The Presence of God* volumes. The volume rises to the level of scholarly output that has come to be expected from its author and is sure to continue in the final volumes on *Mysticism in Divided Christianity* (vol. 6) and *Crisis and Renewal in Western Mysticism* (vol. 7). May these concluding tomes come to fruition.

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An Integrative Habit of Mind: John Henry Newman on the Path to Wisdom. By FREDERICK D. AQUINO. DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012. Pp. x + 129. $29.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-87580-452-1.

Frederick Aquino has spent a number of years digesting Newman's thought and interfacing it with a number of facets of modern epistemology that cover both the subjective and social conditions of knowledge. In this volume he focuses on qualities that lead to an integrative habit of mind specific to a pluralistic world filled with seemingly incommensurable horizons. Aquino

thinks that this integrative habit is the key to how we can live together in such a pluralistic context.

The introduction identifies the meaning of an integrative habit of mind. It requires informed judgment and a growing understanding of the unity of things. To be clear, Aquino does not want to present the outlines of a perfected mind, one characterized by a particular set of judgments and beliefs. Rather, his point is that the human mind is always developing, and he is seeking what promotes that ongoing development in a pluralistic context. He gleans and develops these characteristics from Newman, whose lifelong work as an educator and pastor provides a fertile field of thought on this topic. Aquino dwells on three texts written by Newman: the *University Sermons*, *The Idea of a University*, and *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. These three texts especially are rich in describing the interior and social conditions of the development of the human intellect.

The first chapter examines a wide umbrella of elements that fall under the heading of the personal and social conditions required of an integrative habit of mind. It starts with a need to attend to the particular way that a person has developed within a tradition because from that tradition the mind pushes forth to broaden its horizon within a fruitful matrix of interlocutors. Aquino describes this path as a sacramentally embodied integration of the mind. His formulation of the sacramental highlights how this knowledge of the world is a pointer to reality, but not the same as reality. Knowledge here is a kind of allegory.

The second chapter explores how one comes properly to exercise the mind in real-world situations. Aquino notes that it is not always possible or reasonable reflectively to articulate the subjective and social conditions in which one reaches beliefs and judgments. So, how does one navigate this in life? The answer is a proper fit. All human beings have some innate capabilities or faculties, such as reason, memory, and the senses. Moving from an unreflective to a reflective use of these—or to use Newman's language, from an uncultivated to a cultivated illative sense—depends upon a number of factors (e.g., who one has become, what one is doing, and the world in which one lives). One individual may be too young to shift to this reflective mode; another may be in the midst of a battle or asleep. The union of these personal and social conditions into a whole that determines whether one shifts into a reflective mode or not is the discovery of a proper fit. Again, recognizing this proper fit is the act of an integrative habit of mind.

The third and final chapter introduces the last key facet of the integrative habit that leads to wisdom and a right use of the illative sense, namely, a "connected view." Such a view brings together into relation a multitude of data and ideas. A connected view is one of the primary concerns in Newman's *Idea of a University*, and it is essential to a university education. This is why Aquino spends a good portion of the chapter exploring practical ways within

the university that one can awaken and sustain this quest for a connected view.

Throughout the book, the method used by the author strikes one as a manifestation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's fusion of horizons, in this case the author's horizon with that of John Henry Newman and a number of contemporary epistemologists. As one finds in many of the latter, there are concerns about presuppositions, especially those of modernity, along with a concern for the subjective, though in this case not in a Kantian style so much as a phenomenological and personalist vein. As with some postmodern thinkers, Aquino agrees about the need to correct modern biases against tradition and to correct biases for the autonomous quest for understanding. Both are needed for the intellectual life. One can simply not operate outside of a tradition, and that tradition is what forms one into a thinker. Interestingly, the context of morality and faith so important to life for Newman, including the intellectual life, is treated sparsely in the book.

Throughout the book, Aquino relates Newman to some contemporary discussions in epistemology. Terms he uses regularly are "unreflective" and "reflective," "externalists" and "internalists," and "unconscious" and "conscious," all of which he parallels to Newman's uncultivated and cultivated illative sense, as well as simple and compound assent. At times Aquino also introduces classical notions, especially the virtues, the most frequent being the intellectual virtues: knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. He sometimes expands these habits with some descriptive characteristics such as honesty, a concern for evidence, a capacity to listen and follow counter arguments, humility, courage (in relation to the intellectual life), and being open-minded. He never spends much time explaining what he means by these terms, and he notes that his intention is not to do so.

If one is looking for a traditional account of anthropology in this discussion (agent intellect, phantasm, potential intellect, abstraction of a species, will), it does not exist. Aquino is trying to work through the contemporary state of epistemic theory, which many would agree is riddled with confusion. He does so by leaning on Newman but, as he says, not in such a way as to resolve adequately some of the "meta" questions on authority and autonomy, nor upon the nature of the mind and its activities. His focus is upon what he thinks are some epistemic characteristics that will allow us to engage one another in a confusing pluralistic world.

There are some serious problems that seem to emerge in the text in this fusion of Newman with contemporary epistemologists. Aquino translates or reads Newman in a manner that I do not think is adequate to his project. He needs to develop Newman's "view" more comprehensively and, likewise, that of the contemporary epistemologists in order to allow for a more complete meeting of minds and a development of the issues at hand. A good example is the use of the terms "conscious" and "unconscious." "Conscious" in this book includes a kind of deliberateness and freedom. "Unconscious" is more

instinctual and lacking in freedom. Aquino allows for a reading of the uncultivated illative sense (in addition to simple assent) as unconscious and almost automatic, and of the cultivated illative sense (in addition to complex assent) as conscious and, hence, free. Newman simply would not agree with this, since one of his points in the *Grammar*, which Aquino regularly highlights, is to show the reasonable nature of assents that are not explicit and formal. Such assents are far from instinctual and automatic, especially those that are religious beliefs.

I said "seem" at the beginning of the last paragraph because I found myself repeatedly asking what Aquino meant by a variety of terms, including some basic ones such as "judgment," "knowledge," and "understanding." Hence, I am not sure if I was able to understand Aquino well enough to criticize his position with any philosophical depth. For example, I think he might hold that all knowledge is provisional at best. If he does, that is serious, because Newman would not do so, for good reason. Dogmas are not provisional. I also wonder if Aquino has any clear distinction between animal cognition and human cognition. Newman would, and for good reason, because human beings can seek and find wisdom, but animals cannot. To be fair, Aquino says at the beginning of the book that he is not going to analyze the nature of the mind, belief, judgment, or justification, but rather that he wants to explore and articulate the concrete and performative qualities of the intellectual agent that would be helpful in encouraging the movement toward an integrative habit of mind in a pluralistic context. Hence, questions about the provisionality of knowledge or the distinction between animal and human cognition are not his concerns in this text, even though he mentions these things. At the same time, what he means by cognition has ramifications, and if he holds that all knowledge is provisional, this says something crucial about what he means by terms such as "judgment" and "belief." I would argue that his understanding of the nature of these acts directly impacts his understanding and formulation of the evaluative qualities and regulative principles of the epistemic life that he is advocating. It may be that his intended audience would know what he meant, but that audience was not someone like me. My inability to figure out what he meant by some of these basic terms kept me from understanding how the integrative habit would provide a way forward in our pluralistic world. If the author could provide a few more examples and further clarifications of repeated terms, then I suspect these interpretative difficulties would dissolve.

It is worth noting that Aquino is right in some important ways. The conversation between Newman and contemporary epistemology is worthwhile. Few have done it—Aquino has. I applaud him for his struggles. And for this reason alone, he is worth reading by anyone trying to work through contemporary problems in epistemology. However, one needs to be versed in Newman and contemporary epistemology to read this book in an engaged manner. Aquino may convince some that Newman has a significant

contribution to make (which, indeed, Newman does). Aquino is right as well that the concrete way that Newman engages epistemic questions is fruitful. It allows for a recovery of religious belief, everyday belief, and common sense as epistemically valid, something for which our world is in dire need.

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One Body: An Essay in Christian Sexual Ethics. By ALEXANDER R. PRUSS. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 465. $45.00 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-268-03897-7.

As a professor of moral theology in general and of sexual ethics in particular, I found Alexander Pruss's largely philosophical account of sexual ethics to be refreshing. As much as I try to dissuade my students from using religious legalism to justify the rightness or wrongness of certain sexual practices, I find it almost impossible to break them of the bad habit of using such phrases as "Because the Church teaches . . ." or "Because the Bible says . . .". Even when I counter by saying, "The Church teaches that something is good because it is good and not because the Church says it is good, and such goodness is grounded in the natural law and a sound anthropology," such legalism still persists. And so, to read Pruss's extensive analysis of sexual ethics using both personalist and Thomistic principles as well as what we have received from divine revelation is a much-needed tonic not only for students of theology and philosophy but for all those interested in discovering the role of human reason and biology in crafting a sexual ethic.

After an introduction, the proper beginning of Pruss's analysis is found in chapter 2. Here, the author discusses love and its forms with a particular focus on the meaning of *agapē* in the New Testament. Pruss argues that, philosophically speaking, we should love everyone. But love should not be understood as monolithic. There are various kinds of love: *agapē*, *philia*, and *erōs*. The New Testament understanding of *agapē* contains the other two, for it is love itself. This kind of love is a love that loves the other as the other is, for the other's sake, and in a way that is appropriate to that person in the light of objective facts. Moreover, this kind of love is not simply a feeling or an emotion but is concentrated in an action that is an expression of one's will.

In chapter 3, Pruss takes up the issue of desire. He evaluates desire in two ways: (1) desire and libido, and (2) sexual desire, need, and pleasure. He

concludes that sexual desire is not a need in the same way that we desire food, drink, communication, love, and to be loved. Without these latter, human life would be seriously lacking or, in the case of food and drink, quickly cut short. Second, he observes that circumstances may not be appropriate for fulfilling one's sexual desire. Finally, while human life would be seriously compromised by the lack of food, drink, communication, love, and the need to be loved, abstaining from the fulfillment of sexual desire even over a long period of time would not be detrimental to human well-being in the same way.

Pruss does not imply by the preceding that sexuality does not matter. Chapter 4, in fact, deals with the meaningfulness of sexuality. There are two sets of rules regarding sexuality and its expression. Some rules are moral in nature, like the prohibition against rape. Other rules are customs, for example, the exchanging of rings after the exchange of marital vows. With respect to the moral rules regarding sexuality, Pruss highlights casual sex, sexual assault, gay rights, and romantic love. Apart from sexual assault and rape—both of which lack consent—casual sex, homosexual sex, and romantic love have the following in common, namely, that sex is indeed innately important to human beings and that sex aspires to be romantic in nature. While, as in the case of casual sex, romantic love does not necessarily give rise to true love, romantic love is often the prelude to a deep and unique form of love. Why this is so has to do with the meaning of sexual union.

Sexual union is the topic of chapter 5, presented under the title "One Flesh, One Body." Scripture, Pruss affirms, describes the person as a body-soul unity. Normative sexual activity involves the union of a married couple becoming one body. Even apart from Scripture, the sexual union of a married couple as one body is the kind of union that would be involved in the sexual activity that fulfills romantic love. The question that Pruss answers in this chapter is, what could sexual union as one body reasonably be taken to be? He argues that sexual union does not *literally* produce one body, but the couple involved in sexual activity can be seen to have the crucial *biological* characteristics possessed by a single body. Thus, the couple can be *biologically* or *organically* one body even if they are not literally or metaphysically so. Pruss claims that in the union of two bodies as one organism, the two will be united in a striving that does not simply benefit themselves and each other, but is also a striving for some further goal, a goal of the whole *as a whole*. The first possible goal, he suggests, is pleasure. But pleasure can be experienced even outside of the sexual union of husband and wife. Pleasure is a reward for some activity, either good or bad, so it makes little rational sense to have pleasure as the primary goal of sexual activity. What about higher goals then? Once again, Pruss argues that higher goals can be achieved outside of sexual activity. Sexual activity, he insists, is principally biological in nature even if such activity also produces psychological, emotional, and even religious ends (e.g., the Pauline understanding of the sexual union of husband and wife as a revelation of Christ's love for the Church). The one goal that accounts for the

essentially biological nature of sexual activity is reproduction. This end need not be consciously or deliberately pursued during sexual activity. But the striving for reproduction, even if thwarted by infertility, age, or some other cause, is part of the loving sexual act itself since true love (e.g., the kind of love that obtains in the Trinity both *in se* and *ad extra*) is diffusive of itself. True love does not obviate either desire, pleasure, or some higher goal. Rather, all of these may precede or be concomitant with true love and its desire to go outside of itself. Before considering the moral implications of his position, Pruss examines union, commitment, and marriage.

Chapter 6 covers a broad range of issues. Unconditional love can be seen as a general duty toward all persons, or maybe even all creatures of God. But the unconditional nature of love does not imply a particular form of love. The love between spouses is different from the love of fathers and mothers toward their children. Even the unconditional love of spouses ends with death. But before death, a couple ought to have a committed relationship with each other and with the offspring that they produce. Therefore, sexual union without a committed union of persons is incomplete. To hold back from marriage while engaging in sexual activity is to hold back from something that is normal to human beings, whether that marriage is one of the natural law or a sacramental Christian marriage. Premarital intercourse, at least as a habitual practice, is wrong because of the risk of pregnancy. There is very good reason, Pruss concludes, for abstaining from sex until marriage. Because of the spousal love of a married couple, polygamy and prostitution have no place in the Christian vision of the exclusiveness of marital love. In light of the Christian vision of marriage as a commitment lasting until death, divorce, in general, does not end such a marriage unless it can be ascertained that the putative marriage is invalid.

In chapters 7-10, Pruss discusses, in turn, contraception and natural family planning, sexual pleasure and noncoital sexual activity, same-sex attraction, and reproduction and technology.

Pruss argues that positive marital contraception, that is, the attempt by persons engaging in sexual activity to ensure that the act of sexual intercourse will not result in reproduction, is morally wrong since it is opposed to the nature of marital love. Over and against Grisez and others who argue that contraception is morally wrong even when practiced by unmarried couples, Pruss counters with the argument that while contraception does not add to the gravity of nonmarital sex, its use highlights that there is something wrong with this activity in the first place. Nor does Pruss accept the argument that the natural purpose of sex is only generation since, at least for married couples, sex also has an interpersonal component, which is absent in a nonmarital sexual relationship.

Adverting to Aristotle, Pruss suggests that the focal point of sex, properly understood, is intercourse between a husband and wife. Noncoital activities,

therefore, such as oral sex, anal sex, and mutual masturbation, are not compatible with the meaning of sexual activity between a married couple.

Regarding same-sex attraction, Pruss poses some interesting questions before dealing with the morality of same-sex sexual activity: Is homoerotic love a "standard" nonerotic form of love? Is homoerotic love *sui generis*? He concludes that same-sex sexual activity is not the consummatory union proper to romantic love even if, for those so engaged, it feels as if it is. Even if genuine erotic love can exist between two persons of the same sex, this love is mistaken on its own terms, since it is the essence of erotic love to seek sexual union as one body. Persons of the same sex lack the biological complementarity that would make such a union possible.

In his penultimate chapter, Pruss discusses the whole range of issues associated with reproductive technologies. He concludes that whatever reproductive technology is chosen, the principle must remain that the reproductive intervention is a way of helping and not replacing normal coition so that the child remains the fruit of a marital act. This would exclude heterologous forms of reproduction as well as *in vitro* fertilization and its cousins.

Pruss concludes his study with a short chapter on celibacy. He argues that the celibate person ought to practice—albeit in a different way—the same virtues practiced by a married couple. While marriage is the normal state for human beings, celibacy signifies the living out on earth of the heavenly life that Christ has made possible for us. Celibacy needs to be lived not from an unwillingness to make the sacrifices that marriage involves, but from the willingness to live the spirit of fruitful marital self-loving within a broader context.

Reading Pruss's book is not for the faint of heart. It is lengthy and tightly argued. The few observations I have to make do not take anything away from the quality of Pruss's work. Pruss frequently uses examples to illustrate his main points. I have no problem with this, as they do serve a useful didactic purpose. But often his illustrations are quite lengthy and can detract from the main point he is trying to make. He also frequently plays devil's advocate against his own positions. This is fine, too. But in my experience, even college-aged readers are not always equipped to distinguish between the author's voice and the voice of the devil's advocate. For many, if it is in the book, that is what the author means. In terms of substance, I am somewhat bewildered at the chapter dealing with same-sex attraction. Pruss devotes five pages to a digression on sexual reassignment surgery. He asks, could a homosexual couple, one of whom "changes his sex to become a woman," achieve the kind of consummation found only in heterosexual couples? Until recently, a person who wanted to undergo a sex-change operation in order to be the "woman" in a homosexual relationship was excluded from the diagnosis of gender dysphoria. A few scholars have reexamined this and believe it is possible to include such a person within that diagnosis. But more work needs to be done.

This is not the most important issue in sex-reassignment surgery. Pruss leaves unaddressed a host of other issues facing those with true gender dysphoria.

All of this being said, the book is a remarkable achievement. Pruss analyzes systematically, both philosophically and theologically, the main issues in sexual ethics. His method of leading the reader from the simple to the complex, both in the book as a whole and within each chapter, is convincing and, at the same time, avoids the language of religious legalism that has too often guided the discussion. No college or university library should be without it. This is a wonderful source for scholars and graduate students. I would, however, be more reluctant to use this at the undergraduate level.

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Aquinas on the Beginning and End of Human Life. By FABRIZIO AMERINI. Translated by MARK HENNINGER. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013. Pp. xxii + 260. $29.95 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-674-07247-3.

This book provides a comprehensive and textually grounded presentation of Thomas Aquinas's teaching on embryology and an assessment of its bioethical implications. Despite (what I regard as) some mistakes on the application of that teaching to contemporary embryological data, it is an invaluable sourcebook for Aquinas on this issue. At times, Amerini's "aporetic" style makes for convoluted arguments, but it raises challenging questions and thus will assist anyone working through these issues. (As the title indicates, it also treats the end of life—but only very briefly, in a couple of pages near the end of the book.)

The first two chapters examine Aquinas's general principles regarding matter, form, and substantial generation (the coming to be of a substance), and his positon on the human soul as both subsistent and the substantial form of the human body. Amerini's treatment is thorough and provides an extensive bibliographical guide to this issue. However, it seems to me that Amerini is less than clear on the distinctiveness of substantial change. Since there are (according to Aquinas and Aristotle) no degrees in the category of substance, generation is not a process but an instantaneous change. Amerini's frequent use of the term "process of generation," as well as the position he later proposes on the identity of the embryo, seems to conflict with that point.

Chapters 3 and 4 contain detailed exposition of Aquinas's basic embryological position, and chapter 4 raises various questions about this position (including doubts that Amerini evidently has about the unicity of the human being's substantial form). Applying his basic metaphysical principles to what he at the time believed were the embryological facts, Aquinas concluded that the human being with a rational soul is not present until forty days after fertilization for males or ninety days for females. The father and the mother generate the offspring, but the mother provides only the material cause in the form of menstrual blood; the father is the efficient and formal cause, acting through the semen as an instrumental cause. With the power (*virtus)* of the principal cause in it, the semen gradually organizes the menstrual blood provided by the mother to form, first, a being with a vegetative soul, then an animal, and finally an animal with a body suited to be formed by a rational soul, which God then infuses into it. Aquinas holds that, unlike a sensitive or vegetative soul, a rational soul must be directly created by God, since the rational soul is the source of operations that are independent of matter, that is, performed by the human being but without a bodily organ. Only matter that is suited to a form can receive it. Therefore the matter must be suitably disposed. Just as one can make a knife only with matter capable of supporting its function—and so the matter must be hard and capable of being sharp—so only a body with sense organs, and thus capable of supporting those actions prerequisite to rational operations, can receive a rational soul.

Chapter 5 sets out in detail Amerini's exposition and interpretation of Aquinas on the identity of the embryo. Amerini recognizes, of course, Aquinas's mistakes and ignorance regarding basic embryological facts—inevitable given the time in which he wrote. Still, Amerini holds that Aquinas's main conclusion regarding delayed hominization is still valid. He agrees with Aquinas that the general proportionality requirement implies that the embryo/fetus must first possess sensory organs to have a body apt for the reception of a rational soul.

On the other hand, Amerini also advances what he believes is a *via media* between proponents of delayed hominization and proponents of immediate hominization. He argues that although the embryo is not numerically identical with the human being (which comes to be only with the infusion of the rational soul), nevertheless, the embryo from fertilization on is the same *subject,* or the same *entity,* as the human being after the infusion of the rational soul. Amerini thinks it is clear that in some sense the embryo persists through gestation and then becomes a human being (103).

How should one understand this persistence or identity? It is not (he says) a sameness of matter, since the embryo grows and acquires new matter. Nor is it identity of form, since before the rational soul's infusion there are several distinct souls or substantial forms. Amerini concludes that although Aquinas has not explicitly said so, there is a type of identity midway between specific and numerical:

> We can look upon the embryo as that which is in potency a human being and upon a human being as that which the embryo is, but in act, because once the process of generation is set in motion the embryo is that which naturally and of itself becomes a human being, and the human form is that which, as the goal toward which the process tends, retrospectively directs the entire process of generation. As a consequence, the unity of the subject is drawn from the simple stipulation that what is in potency and what is in act must be numerically identical, although what is in potency, insofar as it is potency, and what is in act, insofar as it is in act, express, with respect to the final form, only a proportional or analogous unity. (123)

In my judgment, however, this answer is circular. Amerini is asking in what respect the embryo can be the same entity throughout a series of changes, without having the same matter, form, or substance. His answer: it is a distinct type of identity consisting in being the same subject. And how is it the same subject? Because the goal of the process (or series of changes) is the actualization to which that process tends. However, a persisting tendency toward a term *presupposes* sameness of subject rather than constituting a distinct type of persistence or identity. If that tendency inheres in the thing undergoing the change, then the change must be an accidental one. If it is a substantial change, then that tendency to the term of the change must inhere in an extrinsic agent. If the tendency inheres in the thing undergoing change, then it is that thing's nature (or part of its nature) and so constitutes sameness of substance. And yet, following Aquinas, Amerini denies sameness of substance. His proposal seems to me incoherent.

The confusion is Amerini's, not Aquinas's. Aquinas is quite clear that in the series of generations and corruptions leading up to a body suited to a rational soul, there is no identity of subject. The generative series contains (according to Aquinas) many substantial generations and corruptions, and thus many distinct substances. What unifies it for Aquinas is the persisting *semen* engaging in an act that is, from *its* side, a single generative act.

According to Aquinas's position, the embryo does not become a human being. Rather, each new substantial form actualizes the *matter* of the being that is alive at that point, and so there are several living beings, and so different subjects, each with a new substantial form. Likewise, with the infusion of the rational soul, *the matter* of the embryo—not the embryo itself—becomes informed by the rational soul.

This point also indicates a profound difficulty for Amerini's claim that Aquinas's metaphysical principles when applied to contemporary embryological data still imply the delayed hominization position. Even Aquinas in his day saw that there is a regular and predictable unity in the process of gestation—the complexity of which is much more appreciated today—and

that this unity requires explanation. Aquinas's explanation was the persistence of the semen (as an instrument of the father) gradually forming the embryonic body. We now know that the semen or sperm does not persist as a distinct agent, that it ceases to be when it unites with the oocyte, its constituents entering into the makeup of a new organism, the one-cell embryo or zygote. Thus, Aquinas's hypothesis (that the unity of the gestational process is explained by the persistence of the semen, acting as instrument of the father) has been falsified. The explanation for the unity of the gestational process must be the internal constitution or nature of the embryo itself. And since the effect must be proportionate to the cause—and since the embryo is not acting as an instrument for any other agent—the embryo must already be a human being, albeit at an immature stage.

From the requirement that the matter be proportionate to the form, Aquinas inferred that the fetus must have distinct sensory organs before its body is suited for a rational soul. But if, from fertilization on, the intrinsic constitution of the embryo provides it a disposition to develop in itself organs that can support such operations, then this fact seems to satisfy the proportionality principle.

In chapters 6 through 8, Amerini argues for what he claims is a novel conclusion on the moral status of the embryo, based on his position that while the human embryo is not a full human being, it is the subject that later becomes one. He points out that one can deny that the human embryo is a completed human being and yet hold that abortion is wrong. Aquinas held that contraception (which is what early abortion would be if the embryo is not a human being) is intrinsically immoral. Amerini mentions this point in passing but does not emphasize it. Instead, he says that on Aquinas's view, since the embryo is not a full human being, its moral status is not the same as a complete human being, but the embryo's continuity with the generated human being is ground for attributing to it some degree of respect. What this means, as far as I can see, remains ambiguous.

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Explorations in the Theology of Benedict XVI. Edited by JOHN C. CAVADINI. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. Pp. viii + 318. $30.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-268-02309-6.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is arguably the greatest theologian to ascend to the chair of St. Peter in centuries. His theological output even prior to becoming pope is staggering. It is thus fitting that an edited volume examine his theological oeuvre; there is a need for many more such volumes. The essays collected in this book were originally presented at a conference on the theology of Pope Benedict at the University of Notre Dame. Each contribution brings something insightful and unique to the volume. The book is divided into three sections: "The Dynamic of Advent," encompassing chapters 2-5; "Caritas in Veritate," encompassing chapters 6-7; and "God is Love," encompassing the remaining chapters 8-11. The initial chapter-length introduction and the first chapter fall outside of this division because in many ways they set the stage for the entire volume.

John Cavadini's introduction (1-20) could serve as a useful overview of the theological work of Pope Benedict. Cavadini provides a preview of each chapter but also underscores the significance of Benedict's theological work. He emphasizes how "one of Benedict's major achievements is the demonstration of Augustine's original insight into the unity of the theological tasks of understanding and of engendering understanding" (3).

Cyril O'Regan's very fine essay, "Benedict the Augustinian" (21-60), examines the Augustinian nature of Benedict's theology. O'Regan maintains, "throughout his career Benedict not only turns again and again to Augustine as his theological model, but also . . . in Benedict's self-understanding[,] the basic figuration of his theology is Augustinian" (22). This Augustinian texture to Benedict's theology involves, among other things, his "real familiarity with and admiration" for "the classic" works of Augustine, his use of Augustine's "theological style," his use of shared themes, and the manner in which he consciously "articulates substantive theological positions" typical of Augustine. Moreover, O'Regan points to "Benedict's sense that he is living in a time of crisis and senescence similar to that of Augustine" (21-22). Some of the similarities O'Regan observes in the theological work of Augustine and Benedict pertain to eschatology, the relationship between faith and reason, biblical interpretation, culture, the role of the liturgy, and the centrality of prayer. O'Regan's essay is undoubtedly the best piece I have read on the importance of Augustine for Benedict.

The thesis of Peter Casarella's "Culture and Conscience in the Thought of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI" (63-86) is that for Benedict, "the witness to truth is the key to seeing how culture and conscience are necessarily intertwined" (64). Casarella initiates his investigation with the pope's critique of relativism. The first major section examines what he terms Benedict's "theology of culture." For Benedict, this has a moral dimension, and thus

Caserella spends the entire second portion of his essay looking at conscience and its formation in the context of culture. This is a very helpful essay that makes an important contribution to Benedict's thought as it relates to moral theology.

The late Fr. Edward Oakes's contribution, "Resolving the Relativity Paradox: Pope Benedict XVI and the Challenge of Christological Relativism" (87-113), explores Benedict's problem with relativism, but homes in on relativism in the context of Christology. Oakes argues, "the challenge of relativism cannot be met unless it is done first and foremost in Christological terms" (93), and he thinks Benedict does precisely this. Oakes's overview of Ernst Troeltsch's discussion of historical criticism as corrosive to Christology is enlightening:

> what most undermines Christocentrism is the historical-critical method, not so much because of the results arising from that method as from its very use. . . . Historical criticism . . . is marked by three key methodological principles: (1) the principle of *criticism*, that no historical document . . . can be taken on its own terms as automatically reliable but must be subjected to skeptical treatment; (2) the principle of *analogy*, which says that events of the past must be similar to those of the present if they are to be at all understandable, which calls into question the element of the supernatural in historical narratives; and (3) the principle of *correlation*, that all historical events are caught in a complex cause-effect nexus, meaning that they must be interpreted in terms of antecedents and consequences and so are in some sense not surprising but predictable. (94)

Benedict's work helps clear the path of such obstacles by pointing out the problems inherent in such methodologies.

Robert Gimello's essay, "A Depth of Otherness: Buddhism and Benedict's Theology of Religions" (114-41), was for me the most interesting in the entire volume. Gimello applied his expertise in Buddhism to Benedict's work on interreligious dialogue. Contrary to so many critics of Benedict—mainly Catholic theologians as opposed to specialists in other religious traditions—Gimello argues quite persuasively that Benedict's approach to interreligious dialogue is on the right path and has the potential to be quite fruitful. He underscores:

> in his insistence on the fundamental differences between Christianity and Buddhism Benedict XVI has actually been paying generous twofold tribute to Buddhism—first by acknowledging its genuine otherness and refraining from hasty, ultimately condescending assumptions of similarity, and second by following, even if unintentionally, the model of fidelity cum creativity that Buddhism itself has offered in its own historical engagement with

> the indigenous religions of China and of the other cultures it penetrated. (122)

Gimello walks through some of the specific history of Buddhism's encounter with Chinese culture, and points to some lessons Catholicism can learn from that example. In the end, Gimello concludes, "Benedict, in *Dominus Iesus* and other of his teachings on the subject of other religions, is advocating that Christianity do the same thing [i.e., faithfully engage with other religions without falling into the temptation of altering its own teachings], not only for its own sake, but also for the sake of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and all the other religions" (138).

Lawrence Cunningham's "Reflections on *Introduction to Christianity*" (142-54) provides a wonderful look into one of Benedict's most enduring theological works. Cunningham fleshes out the historical context in which Benedict wrote his *Introduction*, and traces many of the influences on the work (e.g., Newman). Cunningham shows the *Introduction* to be a profoundly Christocentric work, much as Benedict's theology is Christocentric.

Daniel Philpott's "God's Saving Justice: Faith, Reason, and Reconciliation in the Political Thought of Pope Benedict XVI" (157-86) takes a look at Benedict's call to reconciliation and argues that "reconciliation . . . not only complements the synthesis of faith and reason but reflects and embodies it as well" (158). Philpott shows how, for Benedict, faith and reason need each other and are coordinated together in a synthesis that is embodied in reconciliation. Moreover, reconciliation is a deeply political act that promises to facilitate authentic peace.

Simona Beretta's "Development Driven by Hope and Gratuitousness: The Innovative Economics of Benedict XVI" (187-211) focuses especially on Benedict's final papal encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*. Beretta explains how, according to Benedict, "all persons are called to live their daily lives in charity and in truth" (189). She examines Benedict's economic analysis through his discussion of Christian hope and gratuitousness, and how his work points the way forward to authentic development within the global economy.

Francesca Aran Murphy's "Papal Ecclesiology" (215-35) situates Benedict's ecclesiological vision within its ecumenical context, in light especially of the fact that so much of his formal theological work was undertaken in a context in which Lutheran and Catholic theologians were in constant fraternal dialogue. Murphy emphasizes, rightly I think, that "Ratzinger is a fundamentally pastoral theologian" (216). She describes "three paths on which Ratzinger's theology circles," identifying them as tradition, Scripture, and the Church (217). I think the liturgy should be added to this list, making it four "paths." Murphy has an enlightening presentation of Ratzinger's ecclesiology as one of communion, and of his understanding of the episcopacy, the papacy, and the hope for unity between East and West. Her essay is a careful and nuanced discussion of Benedict's ecclesiological work.

Gary Anderson's "The Baptism of Jesus: On Jesus' Solidarity with Israel and Foreknowledge of the Passion" (236-53) is a marvelous example of what happens when a premier biblical scholar, an expert on early Jewish and Christian biblical exegesis, examines the biblical interpretive work of Benedict, himself conversant in traditional Jewish and especially Christian biblical exegetical traditions. Anderson's examination of Benedict's discussion of Jesus's baptism in *Jesus of Nazareth* pays very close attention to the subtleties in Benedict's text. Anderson's discussion of Tobit, bringing it to bear in this context, is first-rate, as one would expect from such a masterful reader of Tobit (especially pronounced in Anderson's 2013 work *Charity*). Anderson notes how Benedict explains Jesus's baptism in a way that does not necessitate Jesus's admission of any personal sins of his own, but rather as his expression of solidarity with sinners. Anderson demonstrates how this claim of Benedict "is not some sort of apologetic veneer awkwardly pasted over the more sober and searing historical judgment proposed by Hollenbach [who thinks Jesus is admitting his personal sinfulness]; it is rather the likeliest historical reading of the event" (246). He disagrees with Benedict on the question of Jesus's knowledge of his future crucifixion and its connection with his baptism at the time of Jesus's baptism, but argues that such lack of complete knowledge can be read as "congruent" with Benedict's work.

Kimberly Hope Belcher's "The Feast of Peace: The Eucharist as a Sacrifice and a Meal in Benedict XVI's Theology" (254-75) does a very good job of explaining Benedict's theological discussions of the Eucharist as his thought developed especially in response to the theological controversies of his time. Belcher shows how a number of his early writings on the Eucharist emphasized the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist over and against the Eucharist as a communal meal, particularly because theologians were ignoring or arguing against the traditional view of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. She also walks through his later works where there is less of an emphasis on the Eucharist as a sacrifice more than as a meal, and where there is more of a unified vision of the Eucharist as a sacrificial meal. As she explains at the outset, "The festal dimension of the Eucharist, recovered in the high levels of eucharistic reception in contemporary Roman Catholicism, is integral to its sacrificial dimension" (254). Her conclusion truly captures Benedict's mature theological thought in his first papal encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, and his first post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Sacramentum caritatis*: "the Eucharist has become the self-gift of the Trinity come to dwell at home with human beings. In it, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross has given itself over and become complete in the community meal, and in it the eschatological call to community with God is recognized also as the moral call to be one in Spirit with my brothers and sisters" (272).

Finally, Matthew Levering's "Mary in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI" (276-97) follows Benedict's work on Mary in his interviews in *God and the World*, portions of his *Eschatology*, and in

Daughter Zion. Levering captures well the place of Mary in Benedict's thought, rooted in Scripture and the Church's rich tradition. For Benedict, Mary is the paradigmatic example of Jesus's redemption, and in her we catch a glimpse of the Church's glorious future in heaven.

This volume is a truly beautiful and deep look at the theological work of one of the Church's greatest living theologians. Although not exhaustive, which would be impossible in a single volume devoted to such a wide-ranging theologian as Benedict, it is thorough and reflects the breadth of its subject.

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