The Thomist 64 (2000): 499-519

BALTHASAR AND THE THEODRAMATIC ENRICHMENT OF THE TRINITY

GUY MANSINI, O.S.B.

Saint Meinrad School of Theology
Saint Meinrad, Indiana

The *Theodrama* of Hans Urs von Balthasar is the middle section of his theological trilogy. It is the section about the Good, following the one about the Beautiful and preceding the one about the True. *The Glory of the Lord* studies the form and splendor of revelation, its perception (*aisthesis*) in and across and beyond the forms and splendors of the world, its reduction to an inner-Trinitarian form and splendor. The *Theologik* studies the truth of this same revelation, leading it back to a truth within God. But the *Theodrama* studies how revelation is manifested, and how its truth is constituted, in action, in a dramatic encounter between God and man, an encounter also in its turn led back to a prior and inner-Trinitarian one.[1] If we de-italicize the word, then, Theodrama is the drama between God and man reflecting the inner-Trinitarian drama of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Is the drama between God and man also constitutive of the inner-Trinitarian drama? That is the aim of this essay—to think about Balthasar's affirmative but subtle answer to that question.

[1] See "Dramatic Theory between Aesthetics and Logic," in *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. I (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 15-23. *Theo-Drama* vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1998), are hereafter *TD* 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, which correspond to *Theo-Dramatik*, Vol. I, *Prolegomena*; Vol. II/1, *Die Personen des Spiels: Der Mensch in Gott*; Vol. II/2, *Die Personen in Christus*; Vol. III: *Die Handlung*; and Vol IV: *Das Endspiel* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1980). Hereafter, parenthetical references, with roman numerals for volume numbers, are to the German edition.

He would have it not only that there can be no true drama between God and man if there is not an inner-Trinitarian drama to be manifested, but also that there can be no drama between God and man unless it really and truly can be said to constitute the inner-Trinitarian drama.

In order to see the novel and, so far as I know, unique way Balthasar has discovered to express the way in which the world matters to God, we will compare him at a key point to St. Thomas, and in this way attempt to further the sort of inquiry into the relation of St. Thomas and Balthasar that James Buckley has called for, and the difficulties of which he has called attention to, in these pages.[2]

I. The Aim of the *Theodrama*

The second edition of *Mysterium Paschale* contains a preface, written after the *Theodrama,* in which Balthasar offers a short statement of the theological issue the much-larger work addresses. He draws two positions into opposition, that of the "older dogmatics" and that of certain moderns. Moderns assert the pain of God (K. Kitamori), have God develop (process theology), or constitute the Trinity in dependence on the economy (Hegel and J. Moltmann).[3] To the contrary, the older dogmatics affirms the immutability of God and relegates the effect of the kenosis of the Son of God to the human nature of Christ, "the divine nature remaining inaccessible to all becoming or change, and even to any real relationship with the world."[4] In so doing, Balthasar tells us, it runs the risk, paradoxically enough, of both Nestorianism and monophysitism at once. By relegating suffering to Jesus, this dogmatics courts a Nestorianism in which an immutable Son of God must be distinct from the suffering Jesus. On the other hand,

[2] James J. Buckley, "Balthasar's Use of the Theology of Aquinas," *The Thomist* 59 (1995): 517-45.

[3] *Mysterium Paschale* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), vii. *Mysterium Paschale* is the translation of chapter 9 of *Mysterium Salutis*, ed. J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, Vol. III/2, *Das Christusereignis* (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1969).

[4] Ibid., viii.

in restricting suffering to the lower faculties of Christ's soul, it suggests a monophysitism of the "higher faculties," which enjoy the vision of God just as does God.

The way forward, according to Balthasar, "relates the event of the Kenosis of the Son of God to what one can, by analogy, designate as the eternal 'event' of the divine processions."[5] For this, Balthasar takes as a clue the Scholastic assertion of the divine processions as the condition of the possibility of creation. The upshot is twofold, one in the order of manifestation or revelation, and the other in the order of being. In the order of revelation, we understand that the economy, and within the economy especially the Cross, simply manifests modalities of love already enjoyed eternally among the persons. In the order of being, while it is true that God does not change by dependence on the world such that without the world there would be something in him there is not, it is nevertheless the case that he does change, with a change already forever "included and outstripped in the eternal event of Love."[6] It is this solution, though not always so compactly expressed, and with an appeal to the same clue, that Balthasar develops at length in the *Theodrama*.[7]

The foregoing puts the issue in terms at once of the history of Christian thought and of "theology," where the term denotes a doctrine of divinity, the divine nature. But the *Theodrama* has several ways of casting the issue.[8] A favorite and only slightly different way of stating the problem, a way which of its nature a

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., ix.

[7] For the processions as the condition of creation in the *Theodrama*, see *TD* 5:61-65, 75-76 (IV:53-57, 65-66).

[8] For a brief overview of the *Theodrama*, see Gerard O'Hanlon, "Theological Dramatics," in *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Bede McGregor and Thomas Norris (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 92-101; and idem, *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 110-36. Both of these texts deal with the central argument of the TD. See also Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Continuum, 1994), part 3; and especially part 2 of Thomas G. Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

"theodrama" suggests,[9] is that of the dilemma of choosing between the God of the philosophers and the God of myth.[10] A God involved in the world and who reacts as an actor within a drama that includes him and the world is mythic. But a transcendent divinity, a divinity acceptable philosophically, seems religiously inadequate. Again, Balthasar expresses the issue from its anthropological pole, as a question regarding finite freedom in a world created by absolute freedom. In such a world, is finite freedom really real? And does it count for anything if it has no impact on absolute freedom?[11] Otherwise expressed, and in terms of Trinitarian theology, how shall we express the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity in a non-Hegelian way?[12] And yet again, in the Christological specification of the Trinitarianly expressed question, how shall we find a position between, or above, those of K. Rahner and J. Moltmann on the relation of the Cross to the Trinity?[13] To understand Balthasar is in large part to see how for him all these questions are aspects of one central issue.

The constantly re-expressed dilemma, this one central issue, is brought to a final—and one cannot help saying, climactic—expression in the eschatology with which the *Theodrama* concludes. What does God gain from the world?[14] Is God plus the world more than God alone? If one chooses the "God of the philosophers," and says no, then the world is ultimately illusory. If one says yes, then one will also say that God needs the world. What is the way between, or above, these alternatives, which present us with but an "apparent contradiction?"[15] In fact, the world plus God is "more," but on the understanding that the

[9] O'Hanlon, "Theodrama," 94.

[10] *TD* 1:131 (I:118); 2:9, 125, 191-94 (II/1:9, 112, 172-175); 4:319f. (III:297f.); *The Glory of the Lord,* vol. 4: *The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 216f.; Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter,* 55, 162.

[11] *TD* 1:255, 495-96 (I:236, 465-66); 2:72 (II/1:64-65); 4:328-29, 377ff. (III:305-6, 352ff).

[12] *TD* 1:69, 131 (I:64, 118).

[13] *TD* 4:322 (III:300); and 2:49 (II/1:44-45), closely related to the issue of myth.

[14] *TD* 5:508 (IV:464-65).

[15] Ibid. (IV:464).

world is enfolded into the relations of gift-giving, of the Trinitarian persons.

The way forward is thus a Trinitarian way, just as the assertion of the Trinity is originally the way between the One of the philosophers and the many gods of paganism.[16] The Trinitarian relations, the exchanges between the persons, would of course occur even without the world. Thus Balthasar can write:

> The whole thrust of this book has been to show that the infinite possibilities of divine freedom all lie *within* the trinitarian distinctions and are thus free possibilities within the eternal life of love in God that *has always been realized.*[17]

Having the world's response to God occur within the Trinitarian relations is the way to overcome the dilemma of choosing between myth and philosophy. Balthasar thinks its advantages significant. First, the gratuitousness of creation is grounded in the ever greater gratuity of Trinitarian life.[18] Second, where the "participation of creatures in the life of the Trinity becomes an internal gift from each Divine Person to the other," the appearance of a kind of divine solipsism is removed, as if God made the world for his extrinsic glory.[19]

It is just this "inclusion" of the world within the Trinitarian relations that will explain how the world matters to God. This, Balthasar's most original move in the *Theodrama,* will be taken up below, but we need first at least some attempt at a comprehensive sketch of how Balthasar executes the aim of the *Theodrama.*

[16] O'Hanlon, *Immutability,* 110. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Cat. Orat.*, no. 3.

[17] *TD* 5:508 (IV:465): "Der ganze Denkzug dieses Buches strebte dahin, zu zeigen, daß die unendlichen Möglichkeiten der göttlichen Freiheit alle *innerhalb* der trinitarischen Differenzen liegen, somit freie Möglichkeiten innerhalb eines immer *verwirklichten* ewigen Liebeslebens Gottes sind."

[18] *TD* 5:507 (IV:464).

[19] Ibid.: "... von der *gloria Dei* in der Schöpfung aber wird jeder Verdacht eines göttlichen Solipsismus abgewehrt: die innere Teilnahme der Geschöpfe am trinitarischen Leben wird zu einem inwendigen Geschenk jeder göttlichen Person an die andere, womit jeder Anschein einer bloß äußerlichen 'Verherrlichung' überwunden wird."

II. The Argument of the *Theodrama*

The following sketch of what I call the argument of the *Theodrama* is not a summary of the *Theodrama* just as such; that would be something fuller and more difficult than anything that could be attempted here. It would be fuller, for it would relate the properly dramatic resources that Balthasar brings to his work and the theological transformation he works on them.[20] It would be more difficult, for the transformation just mentioned involves questions of theological method, and these would need to be addressed in detail. I propose here a statement only of the dogmatic theological argument of the work, at the inevitable risk of distortion and for the purposes and convenience, as it were, of those still beholden to what Balthasar labeled "theological epic."[21]

The more modest project is ambitious enough. It is an attempt to present the chief and all-informing theological intelligibility of the work. Given the place of the *Theodrama* in the oeuvre, this is tantamount to grasping the central argument of Balthasar's work as a whole.[22]

The chief axis of understanding on which the *Theodrama* as a whole depends is the relation between the Cross, which reveals the Trinity, and the Trinity, which founds the Cross.

(1) The Cross reveals the Trinity.[23] For Balthasar, it does so in a way than which no greater could be thought: the greatest imaginable distance, that between sin and the holy God, is discovered to be out-distanced, and encompassed, by the distinction between Father and Son.[24] No greater way of revealing the Trinity in the created order could be thought, for the opposition between the sinner and God is seemingly the greatest imaginable. It supposes the infinite distance between creature and Creator, and then multiplies that distance by the factor of rebellion. And yet, as Balthasar has it, this "distance" is out-

[20] See here especially Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter*, chap. 4.

[21] See *TD* 2:43 (II/1:39).

[22] See O'Hanlon, "Theological Dramatics," 93.

[23] See, e.g., *TD* 5:120-24 (IV:104-7).

[24] *TD* 4:325-27, 333-34 (III:302-4, 310-11).

distanced by the distinction between Father and Son—meaning that the distance between sinful creature and holy God can be "contained" and so rendered neutral by the greater distinction within unity of Father and Son.[25]

Dramatically, this point can be expressed by saying that the economic drama between Christ and God reveals the immanently Trinitarian play between Father and Son.[26]

The Cross reveals the Trinity, of course, in that the Trinity is the ground of the Cross and enables the Cross: that is, it enables precisely this form, the crucified Christological form, of the redemption of sinful humanity, the reconciliation of finite and infinite freedom.

More pointedly and exactly expressed for Balthasar, the Trinity is the ground of the Cross in that the Cross happens and could happen only within the personal relations defined by the Trinity. It is not just that, since Christ offers himself to God in the Spirit, and since in that same Spirit God raises Christ, therefore we learn that the one who offers himself and is raised must be distinct from the one to whom he offers himself and who raises him, as also from the one in whom he offers himself and in whom he is raised. Rather, the very offering is a manifestation of the relation of Son to Father; it is an economic mode or extension of it.[27] The economic drama between Christ and God can take place only within the personal transactions already and eternally actualized in the Trinity.

As the ground of the Cross, however, the Trinity is not also at the same time constituted just as such by the Cross. The position that the Cross not only manifests, but manifests because it constitutes the Trinity, such that without the Cross there would be no Trinity, is the position of Hegel and Moltmann, and Balthasar rejects it.[28] The absolute, "immanent" Trinity is eternal

[25] See Dalzell on the "distance" metaphor (*Dramatic Encounter,* 146-51); swallowing up the distance of sin in the greater distance between Father and Son who are yet united by the Spirit means the offer of the Spirit to the sinner, in virtue of which his heart is transformed.

[26] *TD* 1:20, 129 (I:19-20, 116-17); 2:72 (II/1:64-65); 4:322-25, 327 (III:300-303, 304); Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter,* 114.

[27] *TD* 3:157 (II/2:143-44); 4:326 (III:303).

[28] *TD* 5:224-27 (IV:202-4) (Hegel); 5:227-29 (IV:205-7) (Moltmann).

and is not constituted as such by the economy or any event within it. And yet, there is another form of constitution of which one can speak, as we shall see.

(2) While it is true to say, then, that God would be triune even were there no creation by the Word and no created world to redeem by the Incarnation of the Word and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Cross nevertheless "enriches" the Trinity.[29]

This is something distinctively Balthasarian. That the event of the Cross reveals the Trinity, as its ground, is not distinctive. And that Balthasar wants to deny that the Cross constitutes the Trinity is nothing except Nicene Christianity. But that nevertheless the Cross "enriches" the Trinity—this is proper to Balthasar; it is how he thinks he will be able to insert modern concerns into the framework of the ancient dogmatics.

The modern concern is to make the world matter to God, and to ensure the truth of this by making the world really change God. The modern concern would have finite freedom make a difference not only to God, but in God. Of course finite freedom matters to infinite and immutable Love—what we do is either in accord with or contrary to God's will, and it "matters" to him in this sense. But the modern concern wants God to be different than he would have been as a result of finite freedom.

On the other hand, Balthasar's thesis can be said to maintain the ancient framework for three reasons. In the first place, the "enrichment" in question is predicated of the persons, not of the divinity. In the second place, Balthasar wants to say that this is not a becoming like an earthly becoming, not a passage from potency to act, but rather a matter of a supraworldly Trinitarian "event."[30] In the third place, the enrichment is a gratuitous enrichment; that is, it is so to speak a contingent means by which the persons glorify one another, a means enfolded in an eternal conversation, glorification, and enrichment that takes place among the persons, and would take place, whether the world existed or not, and whether the world was redeemed in the way

[29] *TD* 5:514-15 (IV:470-71).

[30] *TD* 5:512 (IV:468); see Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter,* 178, 207.

that it in fact is or not.[31] We will return to this most important point.

(3) Further, and on the strength of the view of the relation of the economy to the persons just outlined, Balthasar thinks to have a Trinitarian overcoming of a supposed dilemma generated by the doctrine of creation: Does the world "add" anything to God or not? If not, then the world seems to be not really real. If so, then God cannot be immutable.[32] But if the persons glorify and enrich themselves through the economy, then the world really does matter; it is no charade. On the other hand, and for the reasons already given just above, we remain with a God than whom nothing greater can be conceived, the transcendent and absolutely perfect God of classical theism. This is the cardinal point, with which, if Balthasar can really have it, he has all the rest.

Before we go on to consider this point, however, it would be good to illustrate the claim that the intelligibility expressed above in (1) through (3) informs the entire *Theodrama*. I pick out two important points where this can readily be seen.

First, the economic revelation of the Trinity is given particularly pointed form in the characteristically Balthasarian Christological position that the person of Christ is his mission. Already, given what was said in (1), above, we have it that the mission is the economic manifestation of the person, and so of the procession (since the Son is his being generated and so is his proceeding from the Father). The idea that the person of Christ is his mission is a function not simply of the dialogical conception of the person to which Balthasar is indebted,[33] nor alone of the identity of person and role-mission which dramatic theory makes possible, nor again of the Thomist thesis of the identity of mission and procession, nor of all three together. Rather, it is the notion of person that the Trinitarian resolution of the dilemma between mythology and philosophy needs. It is the notion of person that the Trinitarian resolution of the question of creation's "addition"

[31] *TD* 5:507-9, 514-15 (IV:463-65, 470-71).

[32] *TD* 5:508 (IV:464-65).

[33] *TD* 1:626-43 (I:587-603); see also Hans Urs von Balthasar, "On the Concept of Person," *Communio* 13 (1986):18-26.

to God requires. For it is maintained that just as purely immanently Trinitarian exchanges would enrich and ever more fully constitute the persons, so now in fact do economic exchanges enrich and ever more fully constitute the persons. These "economic exchanges," however, are simply matters of the missions. The enrichment and continuing constitution of one person by another via the economy occurs through the missions. This is to say, then, that the mission is the person, and the person is the mission. The missions turn out to be the vehicle by which the persons in fact enrich one another.

Second, there is Balthasar's soteriology. Why is it that St. Thomas's theology of satisfaction is wanting according to Balthasar? The fundamental reason is not that St. Thomas asserts the continuance of the *visio beatifica,* nor that Christ does not sufficiently take on our sin, for Balthasar himself, when pressed, confines the Son's "becoming sin" to taking on the effects of sin.[34] He finds St. Thomas's soteriology lacking because it confines the effects of Christ's passion and death to the economy. The "wonderful exchange" is so profound for Balthasar that the passion is taken into the modalities of the Trinitarian relations—it "enriches" them.[35]

The governing theological intelligibility of the *Theodrama* may be summed up, then, as follows. If creation is really to count and add something to God, if created freedom is to be in real dialogue with God, if the event of the Cross is really to matter to the interior life of God, then the reality of God must be such as to be an ever-more increasing event of Trinitarian exchanges. We must locate the world, not outside of God, and relative to the immutable and eternal divinity of God, for in that way it will never be made good that the world matters to him in the relevant way. Rather, we must locate the world—not in the divinity just as such (Hegel)—but within the Trinitarian relations. For only thus can we say that the economy really effects something in God, and yet at the same time maintain that, since this effect would exist

[34] *TD* 4:337-38 (III:314).

[35] For an exposition of Balthasar's soteriology, see G. Mansini, "Rahner and Balthasar on the Efficacy of the Cross," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 63 (1998): 232-49.

anyway, God remains transcendent in the way philosophy, as Balthasar understands the term, requires.[36]

III. The Economic "Enrichment" or Constitution of the Trinity

In order to appreciate the key and unprecedented solution Balthasar offers to the manifold dilemma that is its point of departure, it is helpful to compare two series of texts within his final treatment of the central question of the *Theodrama,* that is, within the concluding section of the last volume, entitled "What Does God Gain from the World?" The citations all occur within a few pages of one another, and this is important to remember. A first series declares that God does not need and is not affected by the world, which is related to him as manifesting, not constituting him. A second series seems straightforwardly to contradict this in asserting that the world affects God and changes him. The resolution is to see that God's being affected by the world, or rather the result of this, is something that would happen even did it not happen through the agency of the world. It is a result that would occur simply in virtue of the relations of the persons of the Trinity themselves, although *in fact* they act toward one another through the world and in such a way that it really is true to say that the world changes God.

The first series runs as follows. Already above, we read of "free possibilities within the eternal life of love in God that *has always been realized.*" And continuing: "This eternally realized love in

[36] I put it this way since it is just as arguable that it is revelation that requires such transcendence, and not philosophy. See R. Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982). I note as well that for Sokolowski the Christian distinction is not understood by contrast to modern philosophy and paganism, but by contrast to ancient philosophy and paganism. For him, distinctive to Christianity is that God is out of the world completely, which is true neither for myth nor for philosophy. Balthasar seems rather to situate Christianity relatively to an already contaminated philosophy—that is, a philosophy contaminated by Christianity. But then, he thinks that it is pre-Christian philosophy that is contaminated by grace and the supernatural, and only Christian theology that can construct a philosophy not so contaminated; see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 280.

God, therefore, does not require the positing—in a Hegelian manner—of these free possibilities."[37] Quoting Adrienne von Speyr: "In the Christian context, sacrifice, suffering, the Cross and death are only the reflection of tremendous realities in the Father, in heaven, in eternal life."[38] Here, then, the economic realities are but reflections, manifestations. So also are they where we read that the "economic" sacrifice of Father and Son reflects eternal, Trinitarian sacrifices.[39] Again, Adrienne von Speyr: "In God, becoming is a confirmation of his own Being. And since God is immutable, the vitality of his 'becoming' can never be anything other than his Being."[40] And Balthasar, in his own voice again: "Primarily, what we have said about heaven is meant to show that neither creation nor Incarnation necessitates a change in God and his eternal life. In fact, the concept of eternal life 'cuts off all possibility of positing a change in God.'"[41] Christ "simply expresses in the *oikonomia* what he has always expressed anew in the eternal, triune life: his complete readiness to carry out every one of his Father's wishes."[42] Of Christ's forsakenness, we learn that it is "the revelation of the highest positivity of trinitarian love."[43]

The second series is as follows. "We must also bear in mind that infinite richness is rich in freedom and can enrich others (and

[37] *TD* 5:508 (IV:465): "freie Möglichkeiten innerhalb eines immer *verwirklichten* ewigen Liebeslebens Gottes ... welches somit nicht—hegelisch—der setzung jener freien Möglichkeiten innerhalb bedarf."

[38] *TD* 5:511 (IV:467): "Opfer, Leiden, Kreuz und Tod sind christlich betrachtet nur die Widerspiegelung von gewaltigen Wirklichkeiten im Vater, im Himmel, im ewigen Leben."

[39] *TD* 5:510 (IV:466-67).

[40] *TD* 5:512 (IV:468): "Das Werden in Gott ist Bestätigung seines Seins. Auch weil Gott unveränderlich ist, kann die Lebendigkeit seines 'Werdens' nie etwas anderes sein als sein Sein."

[41] *TD* 5:513 (IV:469), quoting von Speyr at the end: "Diese Aspekte von unten nach oben sollen aber hier vor allem beweisen, daß weder Schöpfung noch Menschwerdung eine Veränderung Gottes und seines ewigen Lebens notwendig machen. Durch den Begriff des ewigen Lebens 'wird die Möglichkeit abgeschnitten, eine Veränderung in Gott anzunehmen.'"

[42] Ibid.: "er drückt innerhalb der *oikonomia* nur aus, was er im ewigen dreieinigen Leben immer neu ausgedrückt hat: seine völlige Bereitschaft, jeden Willen des Vaters zu erfüllen."

[43] *TD* 5:517 (IV:473): "in der Kreuzesverlassenheit wird . . . die höchste Positivität der trinitarischen Liebe offenbar."

hence itself) in ways that are ever new."[44] It is "enriching itself"; it is growing. And this: "Eternal life, as the word itself says, is not a complete state of rest, but a constant vitality, implying that everything is always new."[45] Novelty, the changed, and so change, are asserted. Quoting von Speyr: the unchangeability of God is not something "static" but is "the movement of all movements."[46] And this most important sentence: "We must think of this in such a way that the work of the *oikonomia*, which is 'not nothing' either for the world or for God, actually does 'enrich' God in a particular aspect, without adding anything that is lacking to his eternal life."[47] Quoting von Speyr again: "the Trinity is more perfected in love after the Incarnation than before," which fact "has its meaning and foundation in God himself, who is . . . an eternal intensification in eternal rest."[48] So, the economy perfects God, who is ever intensifying anyway. And last: "We need not be shocked at the suggestion that there can be 'economic' events in God's eternal life. When the Father hands over all judgment to the Son, 'something happens in God.' When the risen Son returns to the Father, 'a new joy arises after the renunciation involved in the separation. This new joy . . . perfects the Trinity in the sense that the grace that is to be bestowed becomes ever richer, both in the world into which it pours forth and in God himself, who is willing to bestow it.'"[49]

[44] *TD* 5:509 (IV:465): "Man muß somit gelten lassen, daß das unendliche Reiche sich aus dem Reichtum seiner Freiheit immer neu bereichern (lassen!) kann"; earlier, *TD* 2:259 (II/1:234-35).

[45] *TD* 5:511 (IV:467): "Ewiges Leben ist, wie das Wort es schon sagt, kein Stillstand, sondern immerwährende Lebendigkeit, was ein Je-Neu-Sein einschließt."

[46] Ibid.: "die Bewegung aller Bewegungen."

[47] *TD* 5:514 (IV:470): "Das muß so zusammengedacht werden, daß das Werk der *oikonomia*, das wie für die Welt, so auch für Gott keinesfalls nichts ist, selbst Gott in einer bestimmten Hinsicht 'bereichert', ohne seinem ewigen Leben etwas ihm Fehlendes hinzuzufügen."

[48] *TD* 5:514 (IV:470): "daß die Trinität nach der Menschwerdung vollendeter ist als vorher, hat also seinem Sinn und Grund in Gott selbst, der keine starre, sondern eine immer neu in der Liebe zusammenschlagende Einheit ist, eine ewige Steigerung in der ewigen Ruhe."

[49] *TD* 5:515 (IV:471), with quotations from von Speyr: "Man braucht deshalb vor einer Aussage nicht zu erschrecken, die ein ökonomisches Ereignis in das ewige Leben Gottes einschreibt. Wenn der Vater das ganze Gericht dem Sohn übergibt, so 'geschieht etwas in

How can we read both series together, and always on the supposition that Balthasar means what he says?[50] Because of the Trinitarian involvement in it, the world enriches God, but not as adding anything lacking to God. The persons are in themselves and eternally always enriching one another, and would do so without the world. But in fact, the economy enfolds the world into this ever-increasing exchange of love and glory. "From all eternity the divine 'conversation' envisages the possibility of involving a non-divine world in the Trinity's love."[51] The concluding paragraph of the *Theodrama* should be quoted.

> What does God gain from the world? An additional gift, given to the Son by the Father, but equally a gift made by the Son to the Father, and by the Spirit to both. It is a gift because, through the distinct operations of each of the three Persons, the world acquires an inward share in the divine exchange of life; as a result the world is able to take the divine things it has received from God, together with the gift of being created, and return them to God as a divine gift.[52]

As a father gives his child the wherewithal to provide him a Fathers' Day gift, so does the Father bestow this on his child—not only his Son, but also us, as inserted into the Son's return of himself to the Father. As Thomas Dalzell explains, commenting on this same passage:

Gott.' Wenn der auferstehende Sohn zum Vater zurückkehrt, 'entsteht eine neue Freude nach dem Verzicht der Trennung und vollendet die Trinität im Sinne eines Je-reicher-Werdens der zu spendenden Gnade, sowohl in der Welt, in die sie ausströmt, wie in Gott selbst, der sie zu schenken bereit ist.'"

[50] For a good discussion of how to take Balthasar's language, as metaphor or analogy, see Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter,* 169-71, 186-91.

[51] *TD* 5:509 (IV:466): "Zunächst ist die Möglichkeit der Einbeziehung einer nichtgöttlichen Welt in die trinitarische Liebe von Ewigkeit her im göttlichen Gespräch."

[52] *TD* 5:521 (IV:476): "Was hat Gott von der Welt? Ein zusätzliches Geschenk, das der Vater dem Sohn, aber ebensosehr der Sohn dem Vater und der Geist beiden macht, ein Geschenk deshalb, weil die Welt durch das unterschiedliche Wirken jeder der drei Personen am göttlichen Lebensaustausch innerlichen Anteil gewinnt und sie Gott deshalb, was sie Göttliches von Gott erhielt, mitsamt dem Geschenk ihres Geschaffenseins auch als göttliches Geschenk erstatttet."

What he is saying is that in the finite's being drawn into the trinitarian life, God receives not only the [finite being's] createdness, itself a gift of God, but also an additional [*zusätzliches*] gift which is to be understood as its ever-greater giving back to God the gift of God's own love which it receives in taking part in the divine conversation. But since this additional gift is in fact a divine gift, any increase implied by its being given to God by created freedom is situated by him within the eternal increase in God, and specifically within the increase due to the Son's ever-greater self-gift to the Father.[53]

Therefore, the world does not just express an eternally complete God, for God is not eternally complete. Or perhaps we should say that part of being complete is always to grow. As the world expresses precisely that fact, it is a contingent, non-necessary, gratuitously chosen means of accomplishing this the free eternal exchange which would happen anyway.[54]

Does God really depend on the world? Yes. Does God depend on the world in such a way that he would be different did he not? No.

IV. CRITICISM

Balthasar might be said to have the best of all possible or at least all prior positions. With the "older dogmatics," God does not need the world, and the classical philosophical requirement of transcendence seems to be met. With Hegel, the world constitutes the Trinity—only contingently so, and only a Trinity that exists independently of the world process, it is true; still, the Trinity is affected by world process. With modern process thought, growth and novelty become metaphysically privileged and find a place in the Absolute. The categories of "event" and "self-giving" (*Ereignis*, *Er-gebnis*) provide an opening to

[53] Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter,* 210.

[54] Ibid., 208: "But if the worldly response is to be thought of as meaning something to God, Balthasar has to approach the hypothesis of God being 'enriched', so to speak, in such a way that there is no suggestion of that response adding something to the eternal life of love which was missing. In other words, he has to hold together the idea that finite freedom can make a meaningful contribution to the innerdivine conversation *and* the idea that there is already in God an ever perfect giving and receiving of love."

postmodern philosophy.[55] Most of all, we have a religiously satisfying way of taking those texts in Sacred Scripture that suggest dialogical, mutual relations between God and the world. The rest of this essay is concerned with only one of these prior positions, and whether the requirements of transcendence installed in the older dogmatics really are met.

A) Comparison with Aquinas on the Divine Understanding of Created Reality

One might think that what Balthasar is proposing is not unlike what St. Thomas offers by way of explaining how we can say that God truly knows and loves us, we who are really not God, without prejudice to his transcendence.

Saint Thomas's understanding of this is as follows. The primary object of the divine understanding, which is an infinite act of understanding, is the divine intelligibility, an infinite object. Finite intelligibility is a partial imitation of the divine intelligibility. In understanding himself, God necessarily understands all possible ways he can be and is imitated. Such understanding adds nothing to what he already understands—himself; nor would the absence of such understanding deprive God of anything he in fact has.[56]

It might appear, therefore, that just as for St. Thomas God's understanding of the contingent world is enfolded within his understanding of himself, so for Balthasar the Father's gift of creation to the Son is already enfolded in his always-surpassing-itself gift of himself to the Son which is the generation of the Son. Therefore, again, just as for St. Thomas if God did not understand the world (on the supposition of its nonexistence) there would be no diminution of what it is that God understands,

[55] See the discussion of Heidegger in *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 5: *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 429-50.

[56] For the infinity of the divine understanding, see *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 7, a. 3; q. 14, a. 4; for the infinity of the primary object of God's understanding, see *STh* I, q. 14, aa. 2 and 3; for the relevant infinities of will and object willed, see *STh* I, q. 19, a. 1, corp. and ad 3; q. 20, a. 1, ad 3. A nice statement of this argument is in B. Lonergan, *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1961), nos. 55-56.

so if the world did not exist there would be no diminution of the ever-increasing richness of the personal exchanges within the Trinity. Thus, the world is a non-necessary way that the persons in fact actually increase one another—with an increase that would happen even if the world did not exist. Perhaps it is helpful to write out the parallels as follows.

(1) As the divine mind understands finite intelligibles in understanding the Infinite Intelligible,
(2) as the divine will wills the finite good in willing the Infinite Good,
(3) so the Father generates (or creates?) the world in generating the Son,
(4) and so Father and Son give the world to each other in giving themselves to each other.

The formal similarity of Balthasar to St. Thomas consists in integrating a divine act relative to a finite reality into a divine act relative to a divine reality. Again, there is a formal similarity in the concern to express the fact that nothing external to God operates on God—at least, for Balthasar, independently of God.

But the differences emerge, also. The point of (1) and (2) is to show how it can be true that God understands and wills something not himself and yet is not dependent on what is not himself and is not different from what he would be did he not understand and will something not himself. The point of (3) and (4), however, is to show how the world can really contribute to the divine glory and goodness in such a way that, did it not, there would be no diminution of the divine glory and goodness.

The problem with (3) and (4) is that while it is possible to understand that the divine will and the divine understanding can have a finite as well as an infinite object, it is more difficult to understand how the first procession can have a finite as well as an infinite product. And the gift, insofar as it names a product of inter-Trinitarian commerce, is the Holy Spirit, Proceeding Love. We could put it like this: the world relative to the Father is not in an opposed relation of origin, such that without the world there is no Father (as, without the Son, there is no Father). Neither can Father and Son be who they are without breathing the Spirit; but they can be without the world.

Balthasar indeed knows that the world is not necessary for God. But in (1) and (2) we see how the world can be distinct from God and yet known and loved by God. Knowing and loving can have objects distinct from the knower and lover. In (3) and (4), on the contrary, we do not see how the world can be distinct from God and yet generated, or given by God, within the first or second processions. The processions serve to distinguish persons within a single nature, but not distinct natures. If the world was "in" the first procession, it would be the Son, or, if it is "in" in the second, it would be the Holy Spirit. Or else Son and Spirit are created.

What does account for the distinction of the world from God? Not that it be generated within the generation of the Son, distinct from the Father, or given within the mutual gift of Spirit, but that it be understood and willed to be so distinct. This knowing and willing are common to the three persons. This does not prevent St. Thomas from finding an exemplar of the procession of creatures from God in the procession of the Word from the Father and of Love from both, as the texts adduced by Balthasar report.[57] Thus St. Thomas's teaching does not suggest the note of efficiency that Balthasar's solution trades on.

B) An Ever-Growing God

Even so, we have not yet broached the most obvious problem with Balthasar's position: whether the world contributes to God's increase or not, still, there is increase. But from what? With what? At the end of the day, Parmenides will have his say: if the increment comes from what is, it already is and does not come to be; and if it comes from nothing, it does not come to be, for nothing comes from nothing. Therefore, there can be no additions to God; whatever he is, he is. This is so, at least, unless one wishes to deny the priority of act to potency.

Again, growth is a kind of becoming or change. Becoming is the actualization of the potential insofar as it is potential.

[57] See *TD* 5:61-62 (IV:53-54), for the texts in question.

Becoming requires passive potency in the becoming subject; it requires an agent or principle of actualization really distinct from the principle of potency. It requires time, which is nothing but a measure of becoming. Therefore, if there is growth in God, the divinity is potential, non-simple, and not eternal.

There are, it would seem, two ways Balthasar's position might be saved. It will be rejoined, in the first place, that the addition in question is predicated of the persons and not the nature. But this does not avoid the problem. Where the persons are distinct from one another but not from the nature, growing persons would seem to imply a growing divinity. One would have to restrict the "growth" in question and conceive it as in some way belonging to the persons alone. The growth would have to be a growth in, for example, the very relationality of Father and Son, such that the "addition" means the Father is more Father, and the Son more Son, and this as not touching what they possess in common, which cannot change. But growth predicated of the relation would seem to be a relation of a relation, and relations of relations are relations of reason only. Therefore, the growth in question would be not real but only a manner of speaking, nothing except a pointed and arresting way of indicating the richness of the Trinitarian relations.

Nor does it help, in the second place, to urge, as Balthasar does, that this is becoming in another sense, not an earthly sense, and that the time in question is a kind of supratime.[58] Of such things as wisdom, or goodness, or understanding we say that what they are in God is not like what they are in creatures. But we do not say this of change or becoming, because change is constituted by potency and imperfection. Perfection is act. Becoming requires potency. It requires being imperfect.[59]

[58] E.g., *TD* 5:67 (IV:59) (no ordinary becoming); 5:92 (IV:81) (time); Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter,* 178, 207 (a becoming not like ours); idem, 168 n. 3 (a time above our time).

[59] See here the exchange of papers on passivity in God, beginning with David L. Schindler, "Norris Clarke on Person, Being, and St. Thomas," *Communio* 20(1993): 580-92; Steven Long, "Divine and Creaturely 'Receptivity': The Search for a Middle Term," *Communio* 21 (1994): 151-61; and David L. Schindler, "The Person: Philosophy, Theology, and Receptivity," *Communio* 21 (1994): 172-90.

This is not a matter of a Thomistic and Aristotelian account of change versus some other possibility of thought. There is no other analysis of change besides that of Aristotle. There are denials of change, from Parmenides to (in his own way) Hume. There are assertions that some kinds of change are really other kinds of change, as with the reduction of qualitative to quantitative change in materialism. There are assertions of novelty with no ground or cause, with Nietzsche and Bergson. There are reversals of the priority of act to potency, with Hegel. But there is no *analysis* of change, a location of the principles of change, except that of Aristotle.

It is hard to see how the invocation of a change in God unlike that which we find in our earthly experience, therefore, can be anything more than words. Change requires passive potency; it requires composition in the subject of change. To speak of change that is not like this, that does not involve a passage from potency to act, is not to speak of anything at all.

What does Balthasar want? The liveliness of an "event" as opposed to substance? But substance is nothing except what is in itself and not in another. If the Balthasarian event exists in itself, it is a substance in the required sense.[60] If one wants to think of such an "in itself" as a pure event, as a pure liveliness, then what is wanted, it would seem, is a sort of pure act—a line of thought already well developed in the history of Western theology and metaphysics.

V. Conclusion

Much earlier, in *The Theology of Karl Barth,* Balthasar called strenuously for a theology that is not antecedently measured and confined by philosophy.[61] Does the foregoing criticism fail to meet that standard, and so fail to appreciate a theology whose

[60] On the other hand, if we are supposed to hear Heidegger in the talk of a Trinitarian "event," and if this means that we are in the order of manifestation and appearance, and not of constitution, then the problem disappears. Evidently, I do not think this is the way to understand Balthasar.

[61] See Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth,* 264-265, for criticism of St. Thomas in this vein. See also ibid., 267ff., for the delimitation of a *theological* concept of nature.

inspiration is wholly from revelation? To the contrary and to repeat, invoking the Aristotelian analysis of change is not an invocation of something peculiarly, narrowly Aristotelian. It is to invoke the only analysis of change that human thought has produced. The *Physics,* at this point, is strong. It is strong with the strength of reason, and so of nature, itself. To say that revelation, as read by Balthasar, trumps Aristotle here is not to preserve revelation and therefore the autonomy of theology; it is to say that grace does not complete but rather destroys nature, that faith kills and does not perfect reason.

It is in that same earlier work on Barth that Balthasar takes such pains to defend an analogous naming of God and the world. If the analogy of names were the point of departure for an answer to the question of the *Theodrama* as to whether the world adds anything to God, the answer would most certainly be no. Nor would this denial imply that the world is therefore illusory. To the contrary, and in two ways. First, and obviously, participated being, for all that it cannot add anything to the being (God's being) of which it is a participation, is not therefore unreal.[62] Second, if infinite Love loves a finite good, that is to make that finite good "matter" both infinitely, and, since infinite Love is immutable, unchangeably. This is to find a sense of what it means to "matter," furthermore, that is instructed by the manifestation of the God than which nothing greater can be thought.

It is this answer alone that seems congruent with the classical theology Balthasar intends still to preserve in the *Theodrama*. The *Theodrama* itself, so promising in the prospect of a properly theological and indeed Trinitarian reconciliation of modern concerns with the "older dogmatics," appears to be yet another demonstration of the impossibility of such a project, if indeed, as it seems, the Trinitarian overcoming of the impasse there proposed rather destroys than preserves the classical part of the material it seeks to integrate.

[62] Balthasar's fear about the world seeming illusory next to the God who need not create seems to suppose some one field of being in which the divine nature would compete with worldly natures. Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason,* is especially valuable in warding off intellectual vertigo of this kind.

The Thomist 64 (2000): 521-63

ESSENTIALISM OR PERSONALISM IN THE TREATISE ON GOD IN SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS?[1]

GILLES EMERY, O.P.

University of Fribourg
Fribourg, Switzerland

The relationship between the unity of God and the distinction of persons belongs among the foremost points of controversy in the interpretation of the Trinitarian theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. The discussion has for some time crystallized around the "essentialism" or "personalism" that is attributed to Aquinas's treatise. Such a problematic (in which the very terms of the alternatives already determine the kind of solution that one can adopt) lies at the intersection of many approaches and different methods of analysis, because it involves not only the recovering of the thought of Thomas Aquinas from a historical perspective, but also the profoundly speculative fundamental notions of his Trinitarian theology (person, relation, essence, notional act, etc.), the relationship between theology and philosophy, and finally the very aim of Trinitarian theology. After a brief overview of the debate, we will present the general framework of a reading that investigates the Trinitarian doctrine of St. Thomas on the relationship between person and essence in God.

I. A LONG AND WIDE-RANGING DEBATE

When, at the end of the nineteenth century, Théodore de Régnon examined the Trinitarian synthesis of Thomas Aquinas,

[1] This article first appeared as Gilles Emery, O.P., "Essentialisme ou personnalisme dans le traité de Dieu chez saint Thomas d'Aquin?" *Revue Thomiste* 98 (1998): 5-38. The translation is by Matthew Levering.

his analysis led him to formulate the problem of an "essential" approach as opposed to a more personal representation of the mystery of God. It provided the basis of the distinction that, since de Régnon, has become customary to introduce: the distinction between the "Greek" conception which begins with the consideration of the persons, and the "Latin" or "Scholastic" conception which takes its point of departure in the unity of the essence or the divine substance.[2] The problem identified by this pioneer in the history of Trinitarian doctrine concerns not only the methodological priority of the divine essence in Thomas, but also the connection between essence and person in his use of the psychological analogy derived from Augustine: "All the Augustinian theory, if superb when it begins from a 'personal' God, risks dissolving when it analyzes the acts of a 'nature' identical to many persons."[3]

Such is, since then, the problem constantly posed in the reading of the treatise on the Trinity in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae:* does his theological elaboration, very attentive to the prerogatives of the essence or nature of God, adequately take account of the tripersonal reality of God? Placed at the heart of the interpretation of the history of doctrine sketched by de Régnon, this question is intensified by the contrasts in which it is inscribed: Thomas manifests a concern for conceptual organization rather than a contemplative approach to the mystery of God, a recourse to a "static" metaphysics rather than to a "dynamic" thought, etc.[4] In the extension of this schema of interpretation, the theology of Thomas Aquinas becomes the focal point of difficulties attributed to a large current of Latin medieval thought which, following Augustine, accorded primacy to the divine essence rather than to the persons and was developed on the basis

[2] Cf. Th. de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité* (Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892-98), 1:335-40, 428-35.

[3] Ibid., 2:214.

[4] Ibid., 2:128-29, 447-51.

of a metaphysics rather than by reference to the history of salvation.[5]

Karl Rahner has summarized this difficulty in regard to the division of the treatise on God into a treatise *De Deo uno* and a treatise *De Deo trino:* "If one begins with the basic notions of the Augustinian and western approach, a non-Trinitarian treatise *De Deo Uno* comes apparently automatically before *De Deo Trino.*"[6] Rahner specifies that

> this separation first occured in St. Thomas, for reasons which have not yet been clearly explained. St. Thomas does not begin with God the Father as the unengendered origin in the Godhead, the origin of all reality in the world, but with the nature common to all three persons. And the procedure became well-nigh universal.[7]

The consequence is a "splendid isolation" of the treatise on the Trinity that fails to weigh its repercussions for the doctrine of salvation: "It looks as though everything important about God which touches ourselves has already been said in the treatise *De Deo Uno.*"[8]

Faced with this affirmation, contemporary Trinitarian theology received the task of displaying the personal reality of God as the point of departure of the treatise *De Deo,* thereby clarifying all the other treatises of theology and demonstrating their organic unity. It is precisely on the basis of this critical reading of the Latin and Thomist tradition that one understands the famous fundamental Rahnerian axiom: "the Trinity of the economy of salvation is the immanent Trinity and vice versa."

Rahner's critique has been pursued in many studies, notably on the Christological impact of the deficiency present in Thomas (the

[5] M. Schmaus, "Die Spannung von Metaphysik und Heilsgeschichte in der Trinitätslehre Augustins," in *Studia patristica* 6, "Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, 81" (Berlin: F. L. Cross, 1962): 503-18.

[6] K. Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" in *Theological Investigations,* vol. 4, trans. K. Smyth (New York: Crossroad, 1982): 83-84.

[7] Ibid., 84; cf. K. Rahner, *The Trinity,* trans. J. Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 16-17.

[8] Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" 84; *The Trinity,* 17.

hypostatic union approached by the angle where the person is identical to the divine essence, "as if God were not Trinity").[9] Even in recent works, it is not rare to encounter the accusation of a philosophical pre-comprehension of God (*de Deo uno*) that arranges the Trinitarian mystery in preestablished human categories that are incapable of taking account of the full tripersonal Godhead.[10] At the heart of this debate (essence-persons, immanent Trinity-economic Trinity), the firm maintaining of the unity of operation of the Trinity *ad extra* by Thomas inspires the suspicion that he weakens the personal traits in the creative and redemptive action of God in favor of a certain "monism." Thomas Aquinas, by reason of such essentialist or "unitary" representation of God, bears therefore a large part of the responsibility in this "loss of function" of Trinitarian faith that the authors have long discerned: the Trinity remained in Thomas "locked in the immanence of its own life."[11]

Following the lead of Walter Kasper, Trinitarian doctrine today is expected to furnish an adequate Christian response to the situation of modern atheism.[12] This demand begins from the historical affirmation of the failure of a monopersonal "theism" in modern Western thought and of its progressive transformation,

[9] Cf. G. Lafont, *Peut-on connaître Dieu en Jésus-Christ?* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 151-57.

[10] M. Corbin, *La Trinité ou l'excès de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1997). On the contemporary emphasis on the "living God of Revelation" in contrast to a "principally philosophical" treatise *De Deo uno* (Thomas Aquinas), see notably W. Breuning, "La Trinité," in *Bilan de la théologie du XXe siècle,* vol. 2, ed. R. Vander Gucht and H. Vorgrimler (Tournai-Paris, 1970), 252-67; L. Scheffczyk, "Die Trinitätslehre des Thomas von Aquin im Spiegel gegenwärtiger Kritik," *Studi tomistici* 59 (1995): 163-90, esp. 164-66.

[11] G. Greshake, *Der Dreieine Gott: Eine trinitarische Theologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997), 117; the author summarizes here a current of interpretation of Thomas, and holds for his part that in Thomas, despite his going beyond a pure and simple essentialism, the "unitarian" perspective remains dominant (119). For the position of the problem, see notably H. Mühlen, "Person und Appropriation. Zum Verständnis des Axioms: *In Deo omnia sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio,*" *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 16 (1965): 37-57.

[12] Cf. W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 294-95.

through deism, into atheism.[13] In this perspective, Trinitarian doctrine should emphasize the freedom of God, manifested in love, by strictly linking the consideration of the "essence" to the divine freedom which accords liberty to humankind in love and for love. One thus expects that Trinitarian doctrine will clarify our understanding of human life, ecclesial and social, by removing all presentations of God that, in conceiving him as an essence posed in opposition to man, make him a "rival" for man.[14] The question of the relationship between essence and person in God, however, goes far beyond a simple arrangement of concepts, for it inquires into the very purpose of Trinitarian theology. In order to integrate correctly the contribution of Thomas Aquinas, we must test the correspondence between these demands and the role that Thomas assigns to the theological elaboration of a treatise on the Trinity.

In this task, which stretches over more than a century of interpretations, the first requirement was to go back, beyond the manuals of the school, to Aquinas's texts, in order to try to identify the place of the person in his doctrine on God. Among the major works, we should place first the studies of A. Malet which, from a historical and systematic perspective, devoted themselves to showing the deeply rooted influence of Greek patristics in the thought of Thomas as well as the accent he placed on the persons in God.[15] Malet's research, intended to show the "synthesis" of person and nature in God, nonetheless remained dominated by the antinomic dialectic imposed by the controversy:

[13] Ibid.: "From the theological standpoint we must speak more accurately of the heresy of theism." For the nuances of the historical evolution of this vocabulary (in which the Trinitarian question has been presented since Socinus), see H. Bouillard, *Vérité du christianisme,* "Sur le sens du mot 'théisme'" (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1989), 219-32.

[14] Such a demand constitutes the major purpose of the work of G. Greshake, cited above; cf. also W. Müller, *Die Theologie des Dritten: Entwurf einer sozialen Trinitätslehre* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1996).

[15] A. Malet, "La synthèse de la personne et de la nature dans la théologie trinitaire de saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 54 (1954): 483-522; 55 (1955): 43-84; idem, *Personne et amour dans la théologie trinitaire de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1956). See also the reviews of this work by J.-H. Nicolas, *Revue Thomiste* 57 (1957): 365-73; H. Dondaine, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 43 (1959): 172-74.

one strives to establish "the primacy of person over nature"[16] in Thomas in order to show his "personalism," which should be opposed to an "essentialism." Despite the reservations that one could formulate on other points, Malet's work had the merit of showing the inadequacy of accounting for Thomas's thought through the schema of opposition between Greeks and Latins.[17]

Around the same time, a vigorous overview of the Thomist doctrine of relation and of notional acts (personal acts considered as the manner of the subsistence of the person) led P. Vanier to note the eminently dynamic and personal Trinitarian conception in Thomas. The orientation of the study was, here again, the necessity of a return to the texts of Thomas and of a historical approach in order to recover, against certain misadventures of school-Thomism, the thought of the master.[18] In his enthusiasm for the mature thought of Thomas, P. Vanier postulated the existence of a second redaction of the commentary on the *Sentences,* in order to explain the presence of the mature doctrine of Thomas in this work (notably the rejection of a "derivation" of the persons from the essence, following a perspective that Vanier qualified as "Ps.-Dionysian"). This hypothesis has not received scholarly confirmation,[19] but it has drawn attention to the complexity of the teaching of Thomas, even in his first work of theological synthesis.

Alongside various works devoted to certain more limited aspects of the problem,[20] the question has been reviewed recently by H. Schmidbaur, who endeavors to show the strict "personalism" of Thomas in opposition to other theological currents of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with regard principally to

[16] Malet, *Personne et amour,* 71-88.

[17] Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ,* 297-98.

[18] Cf. P. Vanier, *Théologie trinitaire chez saint Thomas d'Aquin: Évolution du concept d'action notionnelle* (Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1953).

[19] See notably, on the properly theological level, A. F. von Gunten, "Gibt es eine zweite Redaktion des Sentenzenkommentars des hl. Thomas von Aquin?," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 3 (1956): 137-68.

[20] Cf. notably E. Bailleux, *Le don de Dieu: Essai de théologie personnaliste* (Diss., Lille, 1958); idem, "Le personnalisme de saint Thomas en théologie trinitaire," *Revue Thomiste* 61 (1961): 25-42.

the doctrine of processions and relation.[21] It is again the "primacy of person" that constitutes the object of the study. The manifestation of the place of person in Trinitarian theology is here, however, taken into a framework of understanding dominated by a nearly irreducible opposition between essence and relation (to such a point that, for example, the conception of a free creation by a "mono-personal" God becomes in itself contradictory). The enterprise of "rehabilitating" the thought of Thomas in the face of contemporary critics poses then the question of the balance of Thomas's thought. It seems indeed that, on the basis of an authentic evaluation of "person," the debate should lead us to reconsider the integration of the elements of the problem in Thomas.

II. The Creative and Redemptive Activity of the Divine Persons

The Trinitarian dimension of the divine creative and redemptive activity is not the first element in the order of the speculative exposition, but it can be useful to consider first the influence of Trinitarian faith. What is at stake is our "experience" of the Trinity[22] and the interpretation that one should give to the rule of the unity of activity of the divine persons, a rule that is sometimes suspected of obscuring the divine tripersonality.

This rule of the unity of operation of the persons *ad extra* (a principle shared by East and West) does not constitute the sole aspect of Thomas's doctrine on this point. If he holds firmly the unity of divine action, in virtue of the unity of the principle of operation (the divine nature) required by the consubstantiality of the Trinity, he maintains equally clearly another principle: "the procession of the divine persons is the cause and the reason of the

[21] Cf. H. Chr. Schmidbaur, *Personarum Trinitas: Die trinitarische Gotteslehre des heiligen Thomas von Aquin* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1995); see my review in *Revue Thomiste* 96 (1996): 690-93.

[22] This vocabulary can appeal to Thomas himself: cf. A. Patfoort, "*Cognitio ista est quasi experimentalis* (I *Sent*, d.14, q.2, a.2, ad 3)," *Angelicum* 63 (1986): 3-13; idem, "Missions divines et expérience des Personnes divines selon saint Thomas," *Angelicum* 63 (1986): 545-59.

procession of creatures." This thesis is found in all of Thomas's works.[23] The connection of the double rule (unity of operation *ad extra* and causality of the Trinitarian processions) comes not from a modern interpretation, but is explicitly posed by Thomas.[24] Thus, the causality of the Trinitarian going-forth (*processus*) in the order of efficiency and of exemplarity unites the divine activity *ad extra* to the eternal generation of the Son and to the procession of the Holy Spirit: it furnishes from this fact the "motive" of the divine economy. The elaboration of the doctrine of the Word and of Love at the core of the Trinity finds itself verified by its capacity to take account of the activity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the world and on behalf of mankind: the Father accomplishes all things by his Word and by his Love.[25] We touch here the necessity of a *redoublement* of Trinitarian language in Thomas: it is imperative to consider the double perspective of the common nature and the Trinitarian relations if one is to take account fully of Trinitarian faith. We will return to this point further on.

In order to manifest the activity of the divine persons on our behalf, Thomas exploits principally three themes of his Trinitarian doctrine. The first resides in the *very existence of Trinitarian processions:* the "first" going-forth constituted by the Trinitarian processions is the cause and the reason of the "second" going-forth that is the production of creatures (in the order of creation as in that of grace). What is affirmed of the processions (understood as the "path" that leads to the person) is equally affirmed of the *distinction* of the persons by their relations. The relation of divine persons is the source or the prin-

[23] Cf. F. Marinelli, *Personalismo trinitario nella storia della salvezza* (Paris: Vrin, 1969); G. Emery, *La Trinité créatrice* (Paris: Vrin, 1995). Outside the commentary on the *Sentences* (which contains more than ten passages developing this thesis), cf. notably *De Potentia,* q. 10, a. 2, arg. 19, sed contra 2, and ad 19; *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 45, a. 6; a.7, ad 3.

[24] Cf. I *Sent.,* d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 6: "Non tantum essentia habet ordinem ad creaturam sed etiam processio personalis, quae est ratio processionis creaturarum"; I *Sent.,* d. 32, q. 1, a. 3.

[25] Cf. *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 13; 20-22; and Gilles Emery, O.P., "Le traité de saint Thomas sur la Trinité dans la *Somme contre les Gentils,*" *Revue Thomiste* 96 (1996): 5-40. The fruits of the elaboration of the *Summa contra Gentiles* are reprised in *STh* I, q. 34, a. 3; I, q. 37, a. 2; I, q. 43.

ciple of the whole production, by God, of creatures; the very plurality of creatures, under this aspect, finds its rationale in the distinction of the divine persons by their relations.[26]

The second theme is furnished by the *personal properties* of the Word and of Love. Word and Love provide the rationale, in an eminently Trinitarian perspective, of the effects that come forth from the generosity and from the wisdom of God. The action *ad extra* is clarified here by the personal "term" of the fruitful immanent actions.

The third theme is constituted by the notion of *order* in the Trinity. Thomas exploits it in all his works, by means of the concepts of *principle* (the *ordo* signifies the relation of origin) and *auctoritas* (the Father is without origin) and by an analysis of the language with which we formulate the Trinitarian act (notably the preposition "by": the Father acts by the Son and the Spirit). Thus, regarding the Father, Thomas can affirm that the relation of origin in the Trinity (the Father is the principle of the Son) is the source of this relation of origin that God maintains with creatures.[27] There should be nothing surprising in reading in St. Thomas that as the preposition "by" (*per*) designates the divine causality from the side of the realities produced by God:

> the proposition "the Father works all things by his Son" does not signify something appropriated to the Word, but indeed a reality that is proper to him [*non est appropriatum Verbo, sed proprium eius*], since the Son has from another to be the cause of creatures, that is to say from his Father, from whom he has being.[28]

We note finally that, in the order of the supernatural acts of faith and charity, Thomas does not fail to maintain a *proper* relation to the person as regards exemplarity and according to the term of the act (Son and Holy Spirit): this is the reason for which

[26] Cf. I *Sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.

[27] I *Sent.*, d. 29, q. 1, a. 2, qla. 2; cf. *STh* I, q. 33, a. 3.

[28] *In Ioann.*, I, 3, Turin, Marietti, 1952, no. 76. The expression "from the side of creatures" signifies here that the Son is not the formal cause of the act of the Father—that would make of the Son a principle with respect to the Father—but a principle with respect to creatures, following the order in the Trinity.

a divine effect can properly be retraced, under this aspect, to a personal property in God.[29]

These brief reminders allow us to observe that Thomas proposes a theology attentive, in its very principles, to the personal dimension of creation and of the economy of salvation. Such is moreover the motive that one should assign to the revelation of the Trinity:

> The knowledge of the divine persons was necessary to us on two grounds. The first was to enable us to think rightly on the subject of the creation of things. . . . The second motive, and the principal one, was to give us a true notion of the salvation of mankind, a salvation which is accomplished by the incarnation of the Son and by the gift of the Holy Spirit.[30]

The knowledge of salvation procured by the mission of the divine persons, along with the right understanding of the free creation by a God acting according to love, constitute the fundamental purpose of Trinitarian doctrine for Thomas. Already at this first level it is apparent that Thomas's organization of the treatise on God, beginning with the consideration of what concerns the essence in order to approach next what touches the distinction of persons, would not result in "stripping the Trinity to a large extent of any function in the economy of salvation."[31] The properly Trinitarian dimension is certainly developed without prejudicing the dogmatic rule of the unity of operation of the Trinity (can it be otherwise?), and without restricting the autonomy and the proper competence of philosophical knowing, which is legitimate and pertinent but incapable of discerning the presence of the Trinity. We do not find here, however, any "primacy" of the essence or of the unity of God, but indeed two aspects or two approaches that shed light on and become integrated in the consideration of the divine person. We find here a first expression of the *redoublement* of language and of approach to the mystery of God that we will explicate further on:

[29] Cf. I *Sent.*, d. 30, q. 1, a. 2 (relationship of the creature to a personal reality in God: the act of theologal charity comes to an end in the similitude of the personal procession of the Holy Spirit).

[30] *STh* I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3.

[31] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 312.

the divine creative and redemptive activity is first considered in the treatise on God with regard to the divine attributes of knowledge, will, and power, then in the Trinitarian treatise with regard to the names of Word, Love, and Gift. Likewise, the treatise on creation begins by taking account of the creative activity as well as of the attributes common to the three persons, which permits Thomas then to pose clearly the Trinitarian principle of creation.[32] Even more: the key concepts of the speculative synthesis on the Trinity in its immanent being (procession, relation, property, order) are those which permit Thomas to manifest the personal traits of God's action on our behalf. One perceives here the usefulness of a doctrine of the "immanent Trinity," as it is generally called today,[33] for the comprehension of the economy in which the Trinitarian mystery manifests itself for us.

III. The Essence and the Persons in the Structure of the Treatise on God

As we have remarked above, one of the major critiques that contemporary theology addresses to Thomist thought concerns the distinction between a treatise *De Deo uno* and a treatise *De Deo trino*. Teaching the treatise on God is most often characterized today by the rejection of this distinction and by the choice of a resolutely "theological" approach, founded upon the history of salvation (against the "philosophical" conception of a treatise *De Deo uno*). This is not the place to show the legitimacy and the usefulness of a philosophical approach that establishes the *praeambula fidei*, which theological reflection can then take up in

[32] *STh* I, q. 45, aa. 6-7: the procession of the eternal persons is the cause and the reason of creatures. We note that creation is reprised in detail for the angels, the corporeal creatures, and mankind; here again, the Trinitarian dimension is presented, whether in the theological exegesis of the work of the six days (*STh* I, q. 74, a. 3), or in the study of the creation of man in the image of God (*STh* I, q. 93).

[33] So long as the "immanent Trinity" is not defined as being necessarily indifferent to its manifestation *ad extra* or excluding this same manifestation in human history. This strange opposition has sometimes led authors to hold that, since the Trinity is manifested in the world, "there no longer is an immanent Trinity" (for example Greshake, *Der dreieine Gott*, 373, 381).

deepening them, but it is necessary at least to consider the fundamental structure of the treatise.

In the *Summa Theologiae,* Thomas announces a treatise on God divided into three sections (*consideratio autem de Deo tripartita erit*): (1) what concerns the divine essence, (2) what concerns the distinction of persons, and (3) what concerns the procession of creatures *ab ipso*.[34] It is essential to note that the treatise on God, the *consideratio de Deo,* does not consist of two, but rather of *three,* sections. The divine act *ad extra,* inaugurated with creation, is integrated around God, in accordance with the theocentric approach specific to the theologian; creatures are examined inasmuch as they have God as their principle (efficient, exemplar, and final cause).[35] The study of God as principle is not determined by the aspect of unity or of Trinity, but rather is determined by the unique and entire reality of God (the three persons of one and the same essence) which is posed here in a theological synthesis resulting from the first two sections of the treatise. Regarding the first two sections, there is no question of a "one God" or of a "tri-God," but of God considered *under the aspect* of the essence and *under the aspect* of the distinction (that which concerns the essence, and that which concerns the distinction of persons: *ea quae pertinent ad essentiam divinam, ea quae pertinent ad distinctionem personarum*). The nuance is important, because the structure set forth by Thomas poses simply the opportunity for a double consideration or a double approach to the God confessed by Christian faith.

Why this double consideration in the first two sections of the treatise on God? After we have considered the texts of Thomas and researched the characteristics that are proper to them, it is worth remarking that this completely traditional distinction appears at the origins of properly speculative Trinitarian theology. In the history of doctrines, indeed, this methodological option appeared as the result of a principle stemming from the triadology of the Cappadocians which Thomas receives notably through Augustine and John Damascene: the necessary distinction

[34] *STh* I, q. 2, prol. Cf. the recapitulation of the prologue in *STh* I, q. 27.
[35] *ScG* II, c. 4.

and connection of what is *common* and of what is *proper* in the Trinity (*commune-proprium*), following the specifications elaborated by Basil of Caesarea in order to challenge the errors of Eunomius of Cyzicus. St. Basil, attempting to take away from the name "Unbegotten" (*hagennetos*) the exceptional status that Eunomius had accorded it in order to ground his radical Arianism, observes:

> The divinity is common [*koinon*] but the paternity and the filiation are properties [*idiomata*]; and from the combination of these two elements, that is to say from the common and from the proper [*tou te koinou kai idiou*], occurs in us the comprehension of the truth. Thus, when we mean to speak of the unbegotten light, we think of the Father; of the begotten light, we think of the Son. As regards light and light there is no contrariety between them, but as regards begotten and unbegotten one considers them under the aspect of their antithesis.[36]

The binomial *common-proper*, as is known, is equally exploited by St. Basil in order to establish the formula "one substance, three hypostases" which becomes from then on the expression of Trinitarian orthodoxy.[37] The Arian controversy thus led orthodox theology, in order to grasp correctly what the faith itself proposes ("the comprehension of the truth"), to pose the necessary distinction between what is common and what is proper in the Trinity, that is to say the substance (*ousia*) and the property, of which Basil already notes the purely relative content (relation of opposition). It is this binomial that becomes, in Thomas (in another context than Basil and following a different orientation but on the same basis): essence (substance)/distinction of persons (relative properties).

[36] Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius* 2.28, *Sources chrétiennes*, 305, pp. 120-21. For exegesis of this fundamental passage, see B. Sesboüe, *L'apologie d'Eunome de Cyzique et le Contre Eunome (L. I-III) de Basile de Césarée*, Présentation, analyse théologique et traduction française (Rome, 1980), 77-84.

[37] Cf. notably Basil, *Letter* 214, 4 (Y. Courtonne, *Saint Basile, Lettres*, vol. 2, [Paris, 1961], 205). It is known that the formula is already posed in Marius Victorinus, *Against the Arians* 2.4 and 3.4 (*Sources chrétiennes* 68, pp. 408, 450) but its establishment as the expression of orthodoxy is the work of the Cappadocians.

One can thus observe, already in Basil of Caesarea, the necessity of a connection ("combination") of the proper and of the common, that is to say of a pair of notions that permit us to know the divine persons. Basil illustrates it with the example of light, which is dear to him. This is one of the first formulations of what G. Lafont has called, in St. Thomas, the "law of *redoublement*"[38] which we have evoked above in regard to the creation: in order to speak the Trinitarian mystery, it is necessary always to employ two words, two formulas, in a reflection in two modes that joins here the substantial (essential) aspect and the distinction of persons (relative properties). This is precisely what Thomas does in the structure of his treatise on God. One need not have recourse to the quite embarrassing concept of "total essence," as C. Sträter has done,[39] in order to explicate the first section of the treatise on God. Since the relations are really identical to the essence, the essence is not constituted by the relations: this "totality" (of our concepts), if one wishes to speak thus, would only be adequately expressed by the complex *redoublement* of our discourse joining the aspect of the divine substance and that of the relative property, this relative property being identical to the divine substance in the reality of God.

The pair essence/distinction of persons can suggest the distinction between truths accessible to the natural reason (what concerns the essence) and truths held by faith only (what concerns the distinction of persons). Here the structure of the *Summa contra Gentiles* comes to mind. However, because of the specifically theological purpose of the *Summa Theologiae,* and because of the broader value of such a distinction, this explanation is insufficient. It does not suffice to project purely and simply on the *Summa Theologiae* the "apologetic" perspective of the *Summa contra Gentiles.* It would be more fitting to seek an explanatory principle that belongs to the aim of Trinitarian theology itself rather than to other considerations.

[38] Lafont, *Peut-on connaître Dieu en Jésus Christ?*, 130.

[39] C. Sträter, "Le point de départ du traité thomiste de la Trinité," *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 12 (1962): 71-87.

It seems to me that one ought first to emphasize, on the basis of the distinction *common-proper*, the priority that the knowledge of the *common* has with us. Thomas constantly recalls, "What is essential is prior according to our understanding [*secundum intellectum*] to what is notional, just as what is common to what is proper."[40] Such an explanation is based in the first place on the path of our access to the mystery of God (one knows the divine essence through its effects: this is a prerequisite assumed by faith in the Trinity), but it is not limited to this order of progression in understanding. The conceptual priority belongs to the *common* taken in itself, not in a relationship to creatures (in which latter case, because of the relationship associated with the *common*, the *property* of the person ought to receive the conceptual priority). The order of concepts at work takes on a properly Trinitarian motif: the comprehension of the personal reality in God presupposes the knowledge of the essence *because it integrates it* (the *proper* does not have reality without the *common*). One cannot conceive of the person without the substance or without the nature belonging to the very *ratio* of the divine person, this latter being defined as "distinct subsisting in the divine nature [*distinctum subsistens in natura divina*]"[41] or, with Boethius, as "individual substance of rational nature." The exploitation of the category of relation carries a double aspect. By its proper *ratio* it is pure relation (*esse ad*), but a relation equally inheres in a subject (*esse in*) that grounds its being: this "to be" of the relation, accidental in creatures, is in God the substantial *esse* of the divinity.[42] In treating of the divine essence, Thomas thus treats of what is fundamentally required in order to account for the person and for the *esse* of the relation in God, and therefore in order to elaborate what is the pinnacle of his doctrine of the divine

[40] I *Sent.*, d. 29, q. 1, a. 2, qla. 2, arg. 1 and sol.; cf. I *Sent.*, d. 7, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 4 and ad 4; also *STh* I, q. 33, a. 3, ad 1: "Communia absolute dicta, secundum ordinem intellectus nostri, sunt priora quam propria: quia includuntur in intellectu propriorum, sed non e converso."

[41] *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 4; Thomas here makes precise the signification of the *divine* person and not only of the person in general, in order to emphasize the aspect of relation. Cf. I *Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4. This technical definition is reprised in a very similar manner in *STh* I, q. 29, a. 4 and q. 30, a. 4.

[42] *STh* I, q. 28, a. 2; *STh* I, q. 39, a. 1.

persons: the subsisting relation. It is not, moreover, strange that, in Thomas, the structure of a treatise is clarified by the very content of the treatise that it contains in germ. This explanation respects the fundamental principles of the Trinitarian doctrine of St. Thomas and shows itself equally capable of integrating the order of our knowledge of the mystery. It likewise will permit us further on to specify the relation between essence and person.

IV. Relation, Procession, and Person

A rapid overview of the plan of questions 27-43 of the *Prima pars* enables one to see that the aim of Thomas is entirely oriented towards person in God:

1. Origin or processions (q. 27)
2. The relations of origin (q. 28)
3. The persons (qq. 29-43)
   a. The persons, considered in an absolute manner (qq. 29-38)
      i. The persons according to what is common to them (qq. 29-32)
      ii. The persons according to what is proper to each (qq. 33-38)
   b. The persons, considered according to their relations (qq. 39-43)
      i. The persons in relation to the essence (q. 39)
      ii. The persons in relation to the properties (q. 40)
      iii. The persons in relation to the notional acts (q. 41)
      iv. The persons according to their mutual relations (qq. 42-43)

Of the seventeen questions, fifteen are placed under the title "the persons," and are entirely devoted to the persons under their diverse considerations. The question of the divine missions (q. 43), which opens the great movement of the Trinitarian economy of grace and which attaches the *Secunda* and the *Tertia pars* to the Trinitarian treatise, is itself approached from the angle of the mutual relations of the persons. On the simple level of structure,

could one say more clearly that the missions of the persons procure participation in the Trinitarian communion?[43]

The two sole exceptions are constituted by the questions on procession and relation (qq. 27 and 28); these two questions do not have, however, any other goal than to lead to an understanding of "person," as Thomas explains in the prologue to question 29: "Having seen what ought first to be recognized [*quae praecognoscenda videbantur*] on the subject of processions and of relations, it is necessary to come to the persons." It is thus to the divine persons, to each one of them and to their relationship of mutual communion, that Thomas wishes to lead us.[44] This plan manifests a resolute option in favor of a doctrine governed by the notion of person. Now this project is only effectively completed because it integrates the consideration of the essence in that of the person, requiring the prior explication of "what concerns the essence" in order to clarify the mystery of the three divine persons. In other words, by making use of the "law of *redoublement*," a synthesis occurs within the notion of person which Thomas goes on to clarify by means of the notion of subsisting relation or of distinct subsisting in the divine nature.

The sequence of questions—processions-relations-persons—is thus easily explained. Procession or origin is perceived as the path that leads to the person: it signifies the relation, either in the "active" mode of a notional act (generation, spiration), or in the "passive" or rather "receptive" mode that we perceive as the foundation of the relation.[45] The concept of procession thus prepares for that of relation. For its part, the relation that distinguishes the three in God furnishes the key to the theological

[43] This structure accounts for the effect of the mission that Thomas, like Irenaeus of Lyons or Basil of Caesarea, formulates thus: the Holy Spirit makes known the Son, and the Son manifests the Father (*In Ioan.*, 16, 14, no. 2107).

[44] Cf. F. Bourassa, "Note sur le traité de la Trinité dans la Somme théologique," *Science et Esprit* 27 (1975): 187-207; H. Jorissen, "Zur Struktur des Traktates 'De Deo' in der *Summa theologiae* des Thomas von Aquin," in *Im Gespräch mit dem dreieinigen Gott: Elemente einer trinitarischen Theologie*, Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Wilhelm Breuning, ed. M. Böhnke und H. Heinz (Düsseldorf, 1985): 231-57.

[45] The privilege of constituting the person, properly speaking, does not belong to the notional act or to the procession, but to the personal property that is the relation possessed by the person: cf. *STh* I, q. 40, a. 4.

understanding of the mystery: relation of opposition according to origin. It only remains then for Thomas to display the bundle of Trinitarian relations in the communion of distinct persons. The methodical order followed by Thomas thus implements a rigorous use of concepts where each presupposes the preceding one.

The linking of these concepts, in this precise order, does not represent, however, Aquinas's only approach to the matter. In the *Summa contra Gentiles,* for example, he poses first the reality of three persons and the truth of procession, and only turns to relation in order to clear up the objections that human reason can oppose to Trinitarian faith, or in order to establish the procession *a Patre Filioque* at the end of his exposé.[46] In this latter case, he observes the order of exposition person-distinction-opposition-relation. Similarly, in the *De Potentia,* he follows the sequence person-distinction-relation.[47] In these two works, indeed, Thomas starts from the first given of the Catholic faith: "three persons of one sole essence." In the *Summa Theologiae,* the inverse sequence appears as the exact expression of the *ordo disciplinae* required by the general prologue. This observation could seem elementary, but it is fundamental for grasping the aim of Trinitarian doctrine in Thomas.

On the one hand, the point of departure of the treatise on God (i.e., what concerns the essence) and that of the section on the distinction of persons (i.e., procession and relation) in the *Summa Theologiae* are explained by pedagogical arrangement: the point of departure is posed for conceptual reasons of organization and only finds its full meaning in the later integration that it prepares. The methodical organization proposed by Thomas ought to be appreciated according to its termination point: the persons in God.

On the other hand, the organization of the material ought to be grasped in the light of a deliberately modest and limited theological aim, which Thomas explains elsewhere in these terms:

[46] *ScG* IV, cc. 10-14 and 24.

[47] *De Pot.*, q. 8, a. 1 (on the reality of relations in God, at the beginning of three questions on Trinitarian theology).

The plurality of persons in God belongs to those realities that are held by faith and that natural human reason can neither investigate nor grasp in an adequate manner; but one hopes to grasp it in Heaven, since God will be seen by his essence, when faith will have given way to vision. However, the holy Fathers have been obliged to treat it in a manner developed because of objections raised by those who have contradicted the faith in this matter and in others that pertain also to the faith; they have done it, however, in a modest manner and with respect, without pretending to comprehend. And such a search is not useless, since by it the spirit is elevated to the understanding of an aspect of the truth that suffices for excluding the errors.[48]

This observation is not at all rhetorical. It is the project that Thomas enacts strictly in all of his works: Trinitarian theology is sustained by a contemplative end in which the immediate motive is the defense of the faith. The *Summa contra Gentiles* explains it in detail: it is precisely in order to show that the faith is not surpassed or vanquished by human reason that the doctrine of the Word and that of Love, of relation, etc., intervene.[49] The treatise of the *Summa Theologiae* equally takes its point of departure here, from the very first article: it is necessary to pose in God, following the Catholic faith, a truly immanent procession, which Arianism and Sabellianism, the two major dangers in this matter, have failed to do (*STh* I, q. 27, a. 1). Thomas appears to know well that the doctrine of relation and the clarification of processions go back historically to the defense of orthodoxy in the face of Sabellianism and of Arianism under their diverse forms. The *Against Eunomius* of Basil of Caesarea shows us nothing different. Thus, what one asks from the theological reflection upon the processions and the relations is to make manifest that it is not unreasonable to believe in three persons really subsisting in the unique essence of the divinity: the Trinitarian mystery which constitutes the heart of the Christian faith resists the objections that one can address to it. The fruit of contemplation that one obtains, in making manifest the intelligibility of the faith in the connection of its mysteries, suffices for the believer who wishes "to defend" his faith, in the

[48] *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 5. The question here is that of the number of persons in God.
[49] *ScG* IV, c. 10, no. 3460; *ScG* IV, c. 19, no. 3557.

hope of the beatific vision. Trinitarian theology is pursued for no other motive when Thomas, in the *Summa Theologiae*, guides us progressively from processions to relations and from relations to persons.

V. The Processions and the "Psychological Way"

The point of departure that Thomas takes in his analysis of processions is open, however, to the suspicion of "dissolution" that de Régnon raised, and that has not ceased since then to constitute a point of controversy in the interpretation of Thomas. In exploiting the Augustinian "psychological" way of the self's knowledge and love of itself, does Thomas manage to pose in God some properly personal (notional) acts? Does the comprehension of the two processions in God go beyond that of essential acts?[50]

We note first that Thomas's intention is evidently to avoid posing the distinction of persons on the basis of an absolute or essential reality. This is the error for which Abelard, who had employed the triad "power-wisdom-goodness" in order to make manifest the distinction of persons, was reproached, and which caused the adjustment of the doctrine of appropriations. Thomas explains this by linking Abelard's error to Arianism and to Sabellianism.

> This distinction [of persons in God] cannot be according to an absolute reality, since everything which is attributed absolutely in God signifies the divine essence; it would result that the divine persons would be distinguished by essence, which is the heresy of Arius.[51]

And if one considered a procession according to the essential attributes, it would result in a procession incapable of taking account of a real relation, since an essential act in God only involves a procession and relation of reason:[52] this leads to

[50] See, for example, Müller, *Die Theologie des Dritten*, 40; Corbin, *La Trinité ou l'excès de Dieu*, 54-55.

[51] *De Pot.*, q. 8, a. 1.

[52] I *Sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 1; *STh* I, q. 27, a. 4, ad 1.

Sabellianism. Thus, if one considered only nature and will (or knowledge and love) in seeking to understand the modes of the procession of the Son and of the Spirit, one could not go beyond a simple conceptual distinction of persons: these attributes, since their proper *ratio* should be posed in every truth, only are distinguished by reason, being in God a single reality in virtue of the divine simplicity.

The problem recurs in the question of the *Filioque,* where Thomas exploits this argument many times to establish the necessity of an order of processions (and therefore the procession of the Holy Spirit *a Filio*) in order to avoid Sabellianism.[53] The Trinitarian processions cannot be explained by a relationship of the divine essence towards creatures: this is again, Thomas explains, the erroneous path followed by Sabellius.[54] One can surely see that, if Thomas had been left with an "essential" perception of divine processions, it would have gone against the most elementary principles of his Trinitarian doctrine.

It is only by missing the difference between "to know" or "to understand" and "to speak," or between "to love" and "to spirate love," that one could find in Thomas an "essential" comprehension of divine processions. At stake is nothing less than our capacity to be able to render account of Trinitarian faith, that is to say, of a *real* distinction of three divine persons. Thomas explains this, in the *Summa Theologiae,* in opposition to St. Anselm (whose excessive accentuation on the essence in the knowledge of personal processions he takes care to correct in other contexts as well):[55]

> Anselm improperly took *to speak* [*dicere*] for *to understand* [*intelligere*]. It is a matter of two different things. Because *to understand* means only the relationship of the knower to the thing known; no origin is evoked here, but only a certain information in our intellect, since our intellect has need of being put in act by the form of the object known. Now in God this means a total identity, since the intellect and the thing known are absolutely the same thing,

[53] *ScG* IV, c. 24, no. 3616; *De Pot.,* q. 10, aa. 2 and 5.

[54] *STh* I, q. 27, a. 1; *STh* I, q. 28, a. 1, sed contra and sol.; *De Pot.,* q. 8, a. 1.

[55] Cf. notably I *Sent.,* d. 11, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 1 and ad 1; cf. Albert the Great, I *Sent.,* d. 27, a. 2, ad quaest. 2; Malet, *Personne et amour,* 55-59.

as was seen [*STh* I, q. 14]. But *to understand* means principally a relationship to the word conceived; *to speak* is nothing other than to utter a word; but by the intermediary of the word there is a relationship to the thing known, which is manifested by the word uttered to the one who understands.[56]

Thus, "to speak a word" is a process (*processus*) constitutive of the achievement of the act of intellection, without these two acts being identified or reduced to each other.[57] This is not the place to present Thomas's noetic and the accomplishment of the act of intellectual knowledge by the speaking of the word,[58] but it is necessary at least to retain three points for Trinitarian theology. First, Thomas distinguishes between the act of intellection common to the three persons in virtue of their unique essence (essential act), and the notional act of speaking which belongs properly and exclusively to the person of the Father: "So therefore, the only person who speaks in God (*dicens in divinis*) is the one who utters the Word, although each person understands and is understood, and consequently is spoken in the Word."[59] There is no confusion between the level of the essential act (common to the three) and that of the notional act (proper to a divine person). Second, this Word is entirely related to the person of the Father. Thomas discerns an origin (as the human word is spoken by the intellect, the divine Word exists *a Patre*) that signifies the name itself of Word, a properly relative term. "The Word, spoken properly in God, signifies something that proceeds from another." Third, this name of Word can only belong properly to the person of the Son. At the end of a

[56] *STh* I, q. 34, a. 1, ad 3.

[57] In us, the speaking of a mental word is necessary to the achievement of the act of intellectual knowledge (there is no intellection without the speaking of a word): Thomas explains this as early as *ScG* I, c. 53 in order to pose a word in God. But the existence of the divine Word as a distinct person (a real relation with its source) is never established as a rational necessity. Thomas emphasizes in this regard the difference of the mode of intelligence in God and in us (*STh* I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 2); the rule of analogy is the same in the things that only faith allows us to grasp.

[58] One could refer with profit to H. Paissac, *Théologie du Verbe: Saint Augustin et saint Thomas* (Paris: Cerf, 1951); cf. also Y. Floucat, "L'intellection et son verbe selon saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 97 (1997): 443-84; 640-93.

[59] *STh* I, q. 34, a. 1, ad 3.

remarkable evolution,[60] Thomas can affirm without ambiguity in the *Summa Theologiae,* as an exact consequence of the preceding explanations of the *ratio* of word and of speaking, "The name of Word in God, if it is taken properly, is a personal name and *in no way an essential name.* . . . It is not taken essentially, but *only personally.*"[61]

The same distinction, although Thomas has not developed it with a comparable fullness, can be observed in the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit as Love. If one takes *Love* as a proper name of the Holy Spirit, Thomas explains, it is not a matter of love or of the act of love common to the three persons (essential love, of which St. John says, "God is love" [1 John 4:8-16]), but of a loving imprint that is to the notional act of love (active spiration, notion of the Father and of the Son) what the Word is to the speaking of the Father, and that is related to the essential act of love in the same way that the Word is related to the essential act of intellection. Measuring the extreme poverty of our vocabulary with regard to love, Thomas observes:

> In as far as love or dilection only means a relationship of the one who loves to the thing loved, *love* and *to love* in God are said essentially, like understanding and to understand. But in as far as we use these words in order to express the mutual relationship of the one who proceeds by the mode of love to its principle, of such kind that by *Love* one understands *Love proceeding* and that by *to love* one understands *to spirate Love proceeding,* then *Love* is a name of the person, and *to love* (*diligere vel amare*) is a personal verb, like *to speak* or *to beget.*[62]

Just as Thomas has identified the properly relative and therefore personal standing of the speaking of the Word, he likewise deepens his thought on love until he has established the "relative" reality of personal Love sent out by a fecund act of the

[60] For an illuminating sketch of this evolution, cf. A. F. von Gunten, "*In principio erat Verbum:* Une évolution de saint Thomas en théologie trinitaire," in *Ordo sapientiae et amoris,* Hommage au Professor J.-P. Torrell, O.P., ed. C.-J. Pinto de Oliveira (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1993), 119-41.

[61] *STh* I, q. 34, a. 1 (emphasis added).

[62] *STh* I, q. 37, a. 1; cf. Emery, "Le traité de saint Thomas sur la Trinité dans la *Somme contre les Gentils,*" 27-28; H.-D. Simonin, "Autour de la solution thomiste du problème de l'amour," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 6 (1931): 174-274.

Father and the Son, a mysterious impression, affection, or attraction of love which is in no way confused with an essential property of the divinity. Thus, when he introduces his Trinitarian treatise by posing a mode of procession according to intellectual act and another according to voluntary or loving act (*STh* I, q. 27), he has in view not the essential act but indeed the personal term of a notional act.

The "psychological" analogy is developed here in two phases. In a first phase, Thomas situates the immanent spiritual activity, the activity that befits God and that allows one to render account of the procession from a personal term which is God in the midst of God, and which, as such, can only be grasped in the domain of intellectual and voluntary action. One observes that as early as the *Summa contra Gentiles* Thomas introduced the distinction of persons by the consideration of "God" present to himself as the known in the knower and as the loved in the lover.[63] Does this approach to processions, which emphasizes immanence through the self-presence of God known and loved, mean that the psychological analogy presents the Trinitarian processions as an emanation from the divine substance ("God")? In order to respond to this question, one must take into account the stages of the exploitation of the analogy, which is not applied in a static manner but follows a progression intended to gather together the diverse elements of the reality.

We remark first that, in this context, Thomas emphasizes always the *distinction* that this self-presence suggests: distinction between "God knowing" and "God known," distinction between "God loving" and "God loved." In the intellectual analogy, for instance, the accent is not placed solely on the identity, but indeed on the reflexive self-understanding in view of manifesting the distinction according to origin.[64] Thomas can bring out here

[63] For this formulation, on which is based the development of the intellectual analogy for the procession of the Son and the voluntary (or loving) analogy for the procession of the Spirit, cf. *ScG* IV, c. 11, no. 3469; *ScG* IV, c. 19, nos. 3560-63; *Compendium Theologiae* I, 37, 45; *STh* I, q. 27, a. 3.

[64] *ScG* IV, c. 11, no. 3469: "Etiam intellectus noster, seipsum intelligens, est in seipso, non solum ut idem sibi per essentiam, sed etiam ut a se apprehensum intelligendo." It is by means of this reflexive self-understanding that Thomas establishes the prerogatives of the intellect

many elements already elaborated in the treatise on the divine essence (intellectual and voluntary activity by which God knows and loves himself), and the correlatives in presence are designated by the word "God" qualified by the acts of intellection and of love. But, at this juncture, when Thomas poses the presence of a word and of a love in God in a productive operation, it is indeed the personal reality that is in view. One must insist that it is not simply a matter of "God knowing" or of "God known," but of the self-presence, by a fecund emanation, of "God known present in God knowing" which allows for gathering together the aspect of the distinction, that of the relation of origin, and that of the unity. On the other hand, the formulation of this self-presence is not the end (*terme*) of the analogy, but its point of departure. Thomas does not yet employ the names of Father, Son, Holy Spirit, because it is precisely this that the analogy is called upon to manifest, since it is by the speaking of the Word and the spiration of personal Love (the outcome of the psychological analogy) that, in God, this self-presence in the distinction is verified, so that the expression "God known in God who knows" only finds its full sense in the affirmation "the Father speaks the Word," where it manifests its intelligibility. This means that, in the formulation of this analogy, "God" does not designate the divine "to be" in its indistinct unity, but *God referred to God* in a distinction that is grasped according to the intellectual and loving operation. In virtue of his doctrine of relation, Thomas does not think of God as the subject of a notional act without posing immediately and simultaneously two persons from the fact of the relations that constitute them.

In a second phase, he establishes the personal property of the Word and of Love, personal "terms" of a notional act, which are never confused with the "essential" activity, although they are unthinkable without this essential activity common to the three persons (each person understands and loves). This elaboration, which is clarified well in the doctrine of *relation* that it introduces with the notion of distinction according to origin, is based on the

at the summit of the degrees of existence: "Nam intellectus in seipsum reflectitur, et seipsum intelligere potest" (no. 3465)

knowledge of a true immanent fecundity of "to speak" and of "to spirate Love" in God. It is entirely oriented towards the manifestation of a real distinction of persons, of such a kind that "if the procession of the Word and of Love does not suffice for suggesting the personal distinction, there could not be any personal distinction in God,"[65] since, in short, the second term of an alternative in this domain could only consist in a common (essential) act incapable of manifesting the truth of Trinitarian faith.

There is, therefore, no "derivation" of persons from an essential act in Thomas. This observation clarifies anew the structure of the treatise on God: the distinction of the two sections of the treatise (what concerns the essence, then what concerns the distinction of persons) does not express a separation between a treatise on a "monopersonal" God and a treatise on God the Trinity, nor a conception of the essence which opens up into a plurality. In reality, it prevents the derivation of the persons from the essence: it is to relation, and not to essence in its proper formality, that the manifestation of the plurality in God belongs.[66] The pivot of this structure is, once again, the doctrine of relation, since only this relation of opposition according to origin allows for the introduction of the aspect of plurality in God. This theological option is crystallized in many famous theses of Thomas's triadology that it will suffice to describe briefly.

Refusing to make the persons derive from the essence, Thomas firmly excludes the expression "the essence begets" or "the essence is begotten." The question is historically connected to the critique that Joachim of Fiore had addressed to Peter Lombard, accusing the latter of posing a "quaternity" in God from the fact that he had excluded a notional act attributed to the essence.[67]

[65] *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 9, ad 7.

[66] This is a fundamental insight of the work of Schmidbaur, *Personarum Trinitas*.

[67] Thomas explains the interpretation that Joachim of Fiore gave of the Master of the Sentences thus: "He believed that Master Peter posed the essence as something distinct from the three persons, in a manner in which the essence could have been called a fourth reality. He believed in effect that from the fact that one says that the essence does not beget, is not begotten and does not proceed, it is distinguished from the Father who begets, from the Son who is begotten and from the Holy Spirit who proceeds" (*Expositio super secundam*

Thomas is concerned with this problem as early as his *Commentary on the Sentences* and he examines the question most closely in his commentary on the decretal *Damnamus* of Lateran IV. To attribute a notional act to the essence ("the essence begets," "the essence is begotten") amounts for Thomas to dividing the essence among the three persons, and therefore to opening the path to Arianism, since generation and spiration, as such, distinguish a supposit-principle from a supposit-term. It is very clearly the faith of Nicaea, professing the consubstantiality of the three persons, that is in play in Thomas on this point.[68]

His position engages first an analysis of language. Since the mode of signification of the term "essence" is that of an abstract form, this term does not have of itself the faculty of holding the place of a person; otherwise, one would signify a distinction in the essence as one signifies a distinction of supposits.[69] In creatures (to which, precisely, our mode of signification is linked in virtue of the constitution of our knowledge), actions are the work of supposits: "the essence does not act, but it is the principle of the act in the supposit." In God, the essence is really identical to each of the three supposits or persons, but, since it is necessary to take account of the mode of our knowledge and of our language, the essence is grasped in the notional act on a different mode from the person, since the person is distinct whereas the essence is common.[70] The essence is what the notional act communicates. It is also by it (principle *quo* with the property) that the Father begets and that the Father and Son spirate the Holy Spirit, but it cannot itself be the subject of a productive (notional) act in God.

Decretalem, in *Opera omnia* 40 [Rome: Editio Leonina, 1969]: p. E 41)

[68] In his brief *Exposition of the Second Decretal,* Thomas twice has recourse to the *homoousion* of the Council of Nicaea in order to establish his response to the question.

[69] *STh* I, q. 39, a. 5; *Expositio super sec. Dec.,* p. E 41.

[70] I *Sent.,* d. 5, q. 1, a. 1: "In divinis autem essentia realiter non differt a supposito sed solum ratione, sive quantum ad modum significandi: quia suppositum est distinctum et essentia est communis. . . . Sed actus qui dicitur de supposito secundum modum secundum quem differt ab essentia, non potest de essentia praedicari; et hujusmodi est actus generandi, qui praedicatur de supposito Patris, secundum quod distinctum a supposito Filii."

It is in strictly extending these explanations that Thomas proposes the famous formula: "It is because he is Father that the Father begets [*Quia Pater est, generat*]," and not the inverse proposition (the Father is Father because he begets). What Thomas rejects, here again, is that the supposit to whom belongs the notional act could be thought in a prerelational or essential manner (as subsisting essence), independently of his constitution as a person, that is to say, independently of his personal relation. Positively: since the subject of attribution of a notional act is a *person as such* (acts are the work of supposits), it is not so much the begetting which makes the Father be Father, but indeed rather the inverse. The Father is thought as subject of a personal act *because he is a person*. It is also for this reason that, in the case of the personal property of the Father, inasmuch as this property constitutes the person of the Father, it ought to be thought as a precondition (it is "preunderstood") to the notional act of begetting. The relation of the first person precedes the act in the order of concepts, "as the person who acts is preunderstood to his action"[71]—otherwise, one could not see in the relation the principle of the constitution of the person and the person itself. In the case of active spiration, however, there is indeed a conceptual priority of the procession or origin, that is to say of the notional act, above the property or notion of active spiration common to the Father and to the Son. The reason for this is, however, identical since here, in the order of notions, we are already in possession of a personal concept of Father and of Son, constituted by the relations of paternity and of filiation (and not by active spiration, which is not a personal property constituting a person), and the act therefore is indeed thought as the work of supposits.[72]

Here we must pose the question: in order to emphasize the personalism of Trinitarian faith, should not Thomas begin his

[71] *STh* I, q. 40, a. 4; I *Sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2.

[72] The procession or passive origin (the "begotten 'to be'" of the Son and the "to proceed" of the Holy Spirit) presents a different case since it is conceived as the path leading to the person who proceeds: it is attributed to the person who proceeds and not to the person-source to whom belongs the active origin (cf. *STh* I, q. 40, a. 4).

treatise on God by the consideration of the person of the Father, rather than by a section on the divine essence? This position, promoted notably by M. Schmaus and K. Rahner on the basis of their consideration of Scripture,[73] is largely accepted today in the essays and manuals of Trinitarian theology: "The doctrine of the Trinity must start with the Father and understand him as origin, source and inner ground of unity of the Trinity."[74] The Father would appear then, from the first, as "the personal divine Being."[75] In this perspective, which appeals also to Greek thought and notably the Cappadocian Fathers, the aspect of unity in the Trinity is manifested in the extension of the primacy that belongs to the Father: the unity is then the consequence of the fact that the Father communicates all his essence to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The advantages of such a structure of triadology, like the biblical and traditional foundations that it can bring out, are not negligible. We would wish, however, to show the speculative reason[76] that leads Thomas to chose another path from which the benefit is no less.

In explaining the constitution of the divine person by relation, Thomas rules out conceiving a divine person outside of his personal relation. Without this relation, which requires the simultaneous understanding of the other person to which a person is referred, following the Aristotelian (and patristic) rule of the necessary simultaneity and co-understanding of correlatives, a person cannot be thought as person. This is precisely the reason for which Thomas poses the conceptual priority of the relation of paternity, inasmuch as that constitutes the person of the Father, above the notional act of generation. This thesis is expressed by Thomas's repeated affirmation: "If one abstracts the

[73] Rahner, *The Trinity*, 16. This is one of the major conclusions that Rahner drew from his foundational study on the meaning of the word "God" in the New Testament: see K. Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament," *Theological Investigations*, vol.1, trans. C. Ernst (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 79-148, esp. 145-47.

[74] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 299.

[75] Ibid.

[76] In order to be complete, it would be necessary to develop the historical themes that situate more fully the thought of Thomas in the Latin heritage that he deepens.

relations in the persons, the hypostases disappear."[77] He distinguishes here two kinds of abstraction, but the conclusion is identical: if one removes the relation conceived as *proprium* from the divine person, there only remains in our mind the essence common to the Three. If one abstracts the relation grasped by our intelligence as a form, then, if it is a matter of the personal relation that constitutes the person,[78] the hypostasis disappears from our mind. In this second case, taking the whole measure of the function of the constitution of the person which belongs to the relation, and which is not limited to the simple manifestation of a distinction already given independently of the relation (as if the personal relation happened to a person already otherwise constituted), Thomas can even add:

> If one removes the relation from our mind, there does not remain any substrate to this relation, since the relation itself is the reality that subsists. If one abstracts the relation, to speak properly, *nothing subsists,* neither what is absolute, nor what is related, nor the hypostasis, nor the essence, since the relation itself is the reality that subsists.[79]

[77] I *Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 2; *De Pot.*, q. 8, a. 4; *Comp. Theol.* I, 61; *STh* I, q. 40, a. 3.

[78] The precision is imposed, because the persons possess many relations of which only one constitutes each person. Thus, for Thomas, if one abstracts the notions of *Unbegotten* (innascibility) or of *Spirator* (principle of the Holy Spirit), which belong to the Father, the hypostasis of the Father stays in our mind, because innascibility and active spiration do not constitute the person of the Father. The three personal relations alone are involved here: paternity, filiation, and passive spiration (procession of the Holy Spirit); cf. *STh* I, q. 40, a. 3.

[79] I *Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 2: "Remota relatione per intellectum, non relinquitur aliquid quasi substratum illi relationi, sed ipsamet relatio est res subsistens. Unde, abstracta relatione proprie loquendo nihil manet, neque absolutum, neque relatum, neque hypostasis, neque essentia." Thomas reprises here the teaching of Albert the Great: "ipsa relatio fert secum suum suppositum, quod distinguit. Et propter hoc separata personalitate per intellectum in divinis nihil manet. Separata enim paternitate a Patre per intellectum nihil manet in re Patris. . . . et ita nihil manet" (Albert the Great, *Super Dionysium de divinis nominibus*, c. 2, no. 25; ed. Colon., vol.37/1, p. 60). The point of view adopted in this affirmation is that of the reality of God such as the faith teaches it, and Thomas considers the relation as form (there are no accidents in God, and what is signified there as a form is subsisting). This does not take away either the legitimacy of a distinction between what is common and proper in God, or the possibility of dialogue with believers of other religions or with philosophers who know of God only what concerns his unity or his essence.

One notes in this latter text that Thomas does not oppose the personal relation to the essence as two great irreducibles, as if the essence were posed outside of persons or beside the relation: the subsisting relation "integrates" the essential being of the divinity that it possesses properly considered as divine relation and in virtue of which it subsists. In its character of personal property, of relation constituting the person or of subsisting relation, the relation cannot be separated from the essence without all the reality of God vanishing from our mind: *nihil manet.*

It is because he holds, in a rigorous manner and in its uttermost consequences, a resolutely relational understanding of the person that Thomas's thought can hardly begin a treatise on God with the person of the Father, presenting there the attributes of the divine substance (power, wisdom, goodness) in order to come next to the Son and then to the Holy Spirit receiving the substance of God and everything that belongs to it, and in order to manifest finally the divine unity, resulting from the Father's primacy or status as font. In proceeding thus one puts, in the place of the Thomist treatise concerning the divine essence, a treatise on the Father. This approach certainly has the advantage of emphasizing from the beginning that the essential attributes are considered in a person (the Father), but one would in that case treat of the Father in an extensive manner *before having grasped Him in his relation to the Son.* The consideration would be indeed that of a person, but independently of the relation that constitutes it, in the manner of a personal essence.[80]

In all rigor, if the structure of a treatise corresponds well to the master ideas of that treatise, such a methodological option requires a theology that can think of the person without the relation. This is precisely what Thomas Aquinas rejects. If one

[80] Rahner ("Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" 84) notes with clarity, but not without some debatable generalization: "It would be more biblical and Greek to start from the one absolutely unoriginated God, who is still the Father, even when it is not yet known that he is the Begetter and Spirator, because he is known as the unoriginated hypostasis, who may not be thought of *positively* as 'absolute', even when he is not yet known expressly as relative"; cf. on the other hand, *The Trinity,* 16: for Saint Thomas "the first topic under study is not God the Father as the unoriginate origin of divinity and reality, but as the essence common to all three persons."

must pose the question in terms of "essentialism" and of "personalism," one should wonder which of the structures risks more the danger of an "essentialism": that of Thomas, which poses first the divine essence in order to assume it into the doctrine of the person as subsisting relation,[81] or that which can think of the Father in a "nonrelational" or rather "prerelational" manner with the sole essence or divine substance with which he is identified? Without entering into the speculative ramifications of these fundamental approaches,[82] or into the historical sources that one can bring out (which lead moreover to nuancing the very sharp prejudices in favor of an exclusive "personalism" of the Cappadocian triadology in contrast to Latin theology),[83] one ought at least to conclude that the question of "personalism," in Thomas's perspective, is measured not in terms of an opposition between person and essence but by the place that one accords to relation in the account of the person.

It is true that Thomas pays great attention to the theme of the Father as "principle without principle," "principle of all the divinity," "source" or "font of the divinity," "primordial author," possessing the "plenitude of the font" or "the universal *auctoritas*."[84] With his Greek sources, he speaks of the Father as "font of

[81] Not beginning his treatise on God with the person of the Father, Thomas equally cannot begin with a treatise on "God" that would be distinguished from the Trinity. There remains then only one solution: to expose first what, in God the Trinity, concerns the unity of essence, and to follow this with a treatise on the persons that introduces an analysis of relation.

[82] One can think here of the doctrine of the *Filioque* which, in Thomas, is fundamentally connected to the thesis of the constitution and the distinction of the person by the single relation of opposition according to origin: cf. Gilles Emery, O.P., "La procession du Saint-Esprit *a Filio* chez saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 96 (1996): 531-74; Schmidbaur, *Personarum Trinitas*, 353-61.

[83] A. de Halleux, "Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Pères Cappadociens?" in *Patrologie et oecuménisme: Recueil d'études* (Louvain: 1990), 215-68. Halleux concludes that the principle of unity and the Trinitarian principle have equal importance in the doctrine of God of the Cappadocians who "are at the same time, and totally, personalists and essentialists" (265-66). This study, like many others of the same author, furnishes important foundations for the rediscovery of a complementarity between the so-called "Greek" and "Latin" approaches to the mystery of the Trinity.

[84] Such expressions, easily accessed by means of the *Index Thomisticus*, are very numerous, and occur most often in the *Commentary on the Sentences*.

deity [*fontana deitas*],"[85] and he knows that the Christian East considers the procession *a Patre* as the reference to the "First origin [*prima origo*]."[86] One could multiply the examples. But these expressions are always strictly understood by means of the doctrine of the relation of opposition according to origin, with the notion of principle and of order (expressing the relation to the principle), of such kind that the person of the Father never is posed without the relation of paternity which constitutes it, and cannot therefore be identified with the essence or with the divinity in a stage that would precede the deployment of the doctrine of relations.

There is thus no possibility, in Aquinas, of considering the essence in the manner of a fecund subject or of a "font of being" from which the persons would be drawn, and therefore no derivation of the persons from the essence. The essence that is in question in the first section of the treatise on God is not a source of the plurality of persons. It is, from one end to the other of the treatise, "the unique essence of three persons," numerically one, subsisting in each of the persons, never outside of the persons with which it does not number.

VI. Relation and Essence: A Unitarian Perspective?

The analysis of the relationship between essence and person poses ultimately the difficult question of subsistence in God.[87] The terms of the debate are the following: is subsistence the work of the essence or of the persons as such? If the persons hold their subsistence from the essence, does not the essence return to the forefront? Would we not be faced with a "primacy" of the divine

[85] I *Sent.*, d. 11, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 1; d. 28, q. 1, a. 1; *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, 2, 4, (Turin: Marietti, 1950), no. 181.

[86] Cf. I *Sent.*, d. 12, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3; *In Ioan.*, 15, 26, no. 2065.

[87] It suffices for our purpose to consider subsistence (*subsistentia*) as the mode of the substance existent by itself, without entering into the developments of the Thomist tradition on the distinction between existence and subsistence or on the terminal mode of the essence. "In so far as the substance exists by itself and not in another, one calls it 'subsistence [*subsistentia*]': because to subsist [*subsistere*] is said of what exists in itself and not in another thing" (*STh* I, q. 29, a. 2).

essence over the relation, since in this vision of things the essence grounds the subsistence, so that one affirms first the subsistence of the essence in order *then* to attribute it to the relations (to the persons) which receive it from the essence? Do we not find, then, in Thomas, despite the advances in his theory of relation, a fundamentally "unitarian" perspective that makes the divine essence the guiding concept in the doctrine on God the Trinity?[88]

The principles of Thomas's response have already been suggested above. In considering relations in creatures, where they are accidents, one discovers a double aspect: (1) the being (*esse*) of the relation, which it possesses, since it is an accident, by inherence in a subject; and (2) the essence or reason (*ratio*) of the relation, which is proper to the relation, and which consists in the reference to another (*ad aliquid*). The first aspect is grasped in the consideration of that in which the relation exists, while the second aspect is grasped by the reference to an exterior reality.

In contrast to the approach nearly universally adopted in the wake of nominalism, this analogy does not consider the relation as a category understood as being *between* individuals, but *in* individuals, "in the things." The transference of this category into God leads to identifying the first aspect, the being of the relation, with the divine *esse:* that which is inherence of the accident in creatures becomes, in God, "the being of the divine essence" of such kind that the relation exists or subsists as really identical to the essence. Between essence and relation, on this point, there is no difference. As regards the second aspect, the proper *ratio* of relation, it consists alone in the relationship to another thing,

[88] Greshake, *Der dreieine Gott,* 117-18. For a more complete overview of the question, in an approach that extends the reflection of St. Thomas in a critical manner, cf. K. Obenauer, "Zur *subsistentia absoluta* in der Trinitätstheologie," *Theologie und Philosophie* 72 (1997): 188-215. Obenauer proposes to grasp the divine essence (*das Wesen Gottes*) in a relational manner as the indivisible reality of relations, consisting in the going forth (*processus*) of relations, and residing as "absolute" in the measure in which the relative being, completed in the personal relations, is in itself one. This proposition merits attention, but it poses notably the question of the knowledge of the divine essence by natural reason, as well as the question of the function of relation in God (realization of the relational character of the essence?). Thomas avoids all absorption of one notion by another, since the essence does not constitute the relation, and no more does the relation constitute the essence.

which does not modify the subject but which is pure "ecstatic" reference to this other reality (privilege of the relation): this is what permits an account of a strict Trinitarian monotheism, since the constitution and the real distinction of the persons by the relation in no way affect the unity of the divine being.[89] It is on this basis that Thomas can show that the name of "person," in God, signifies "the relation insofar as subsisting [*relatio ut subsistens*]," which comes back "to signifying the relation by manner of substance, that is to say of the hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature."[90]

The place of the essence in the subsistence of relations is found expressly formulated in the disputed questions *De Potentia:*

> The relations in God, although they constitute the hypostases and thus make them subsist, do it however insofar as they are the divine essence; indeed, the relation insofar as it is relation does not have anything of what subsists or makes subsist: that belongs solely to the substance.
>
> The relation distinguishes the hypostases insofar as it is relation, but it constitutes the hypostasis insofar as it is the divine essence: it does the one and the other thing insofar as it is divine essence and relation.[91]

Following these texts, to which it is not difficult to attach the doctrine of the *Ipsum esse subsistens,* would the essence not play the decisive role in the subsistence of the divine person?

One way to understand this is to emphasize that, for Thomas, "only the relation subsists," that subsistent relation being the only subject of attribution of acts in God (the acts are the work of supposits), the sole "subject-bearer of the essence" which has no reality outside of the persons.[92] But, if one wishes to withdraw from the substance or from the divine essence as such the dignity of subsistence, one still must explain the numerous texts of Thomas's corpus that speak of a subsistence of the essence or of

[89] Cf. *STh* I, q. 28, a. 2.

[90] *STh* I, q. 29, a. 4; *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 4.

[91] *De Pot.*, q. 8, a. 3, ad 7 and 9; cf. also ad 8.

[92] This thesis constitutes a leitmotiv of Schmidbaur, *Personarum Trinitas,* notably 435-37, 445, 513-26.

the divine *esse*, or of an activity attributed to the essence.[93] Thus, Thomas explains in the *De Potentia:*

> In God, the personal properties only work to distinguish mutually the supposits from the divine nature, and they are not the principle of the subsistence of the divine essence, *because the essence is subsistent by itself;* it is, on the contrary, from the essence that the personal properties have subsistence.[94]

As regards essential acts (to create, to govern, to understand, to will, etc.), one speaks more properly when one attributes them to a concrete essential name (e.g., "God"), but the distinction is placed here on the level of the mode of signification and not of the reality signified. As regards the reality itself, in virtue of the identity between the *quod* and the *quo* in God, these essential acts refer indeed to the divine essence, and Thomas does not deny that the latter could be signified—although in an improper manner—by the mode of a supposit.[95]

When he treats of individuation, Thomas likewise retains a double approach. On the one hand, the divine essence or nature exists singularly by itself and it is "individuated" by itself.[96] This is the reason for which a plurality of gods is presented as an impossibility: the divine essence plays here the role of a principle of individuation. In the distinction of three persons, on the other hand, the principle of individuation ("*quasi* principle of individuation") of persons can only be the personal property, and not the divine essence or nature.[97] In both cases, the principle of individuation is characterized by the fact of not existing in another (incommunicability): the divine essence is not possessed

[93] E.g., creation, in I *Sent.*, d. 5, q. 1, a. 1. Thomas shows there that, in contrast to the notional act, the creative act is attributed to a supposit that is not grasped on a different mode from the essence.

[94] *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 5, ad 13: "In divinis autem proprietates personales hoc solum habent quod supposita divinae naturae ab invicem distinguuntur, non autem sunt principium subsistendi divinae essentiae: ipsa enim divina essentia est secundum se subsistens; sed e converso proprietates personales habent quod subsistant ab essentia."

[95] Cf. *De Pot.*, q. 8, a. 2, ad 7.

[96] *ScG* I, c. 21, no. 199: "Divina essentia est per se singulariter existens et in seipsa individuata"; *ScG* I, c. 42, no. 346.

[97] *ScG* IV, c. 14, no. 3503; cf. *ScG* IV, c. 10, no. 3452.

by another God, the personal property does not exist in another person. In conclusion:

> For this reason, we say that there is only one God, since there is only one subsisting essence [*una essentia subsistens*]; and we say that there are many persons, in virtue of the distinction of subsisting relations [*propter distinctionem subsistentium relationum*].[98]

It seems that, in order to understand these texts in their full meaning, one ought to take into account two principles of reading. The first is in the rule of *redoublement* discussed above, which is based on the distinction between "common" and "proper" in God the Trinity. The complexity of our knowledge of the mystery, faced with the impossibility of extracting the persons from the essence as if they were an emanation or an effusion of it, obliges us to approach subsistence by a double knowledge. The solution does not therefore consist in excluding the conception of subsistence from the essence, which conception the Thomist doctrine of pure Act cannot in fact renounce; rather it is necessary to see *where the synthesis of the two approaches takes place*. Now it is very clearly in the teaching on the person—"what is most perfect [*perfectissimum*] in all nature"[99]—as subsisting relation that this integration is effected.

It is necessary to note here a particular application that, under the aspect of our access to the knowledge of God, accounts for the fact that some non-Christians can conceive of God as a person who exists or subsists. Thomas gives here, as an example, the Jewish faith, but one can extend his explanation to other non-Christian religions as well as to philosophical reflection that borders on the idea of a personal God: "If, by our thought, one abstracts the personal properties, there still remains in our consideration the divine nature as a subsisting reality and as a person."[100] The reason advanced by Thomas is the real identity of

[98] *ScG* IV, c. 14, no. 3502. It is in order to account for this double approach that the Thomist tradition has developed the concept of "communicable subsistence" distinct from the "incommunicable subsistence" proper to the divine person.

[99] *STh* I, q. 29, a. 3.

[100] *STh* III, q. 3, a. 3, ad 1; cf. ad 2.

quo est and of *quod est* in God: all that one attributes to God under an abstract mode (*quo*, for example the nature or the essence signified as a form), considered in itself, and even if one abstracts from the rest, ought necessarily to be thought as a subsisting reality because of the perfect simplicity of God. This thesis, which is not unique to Thomas (one finds it already in Albert and Bonaventure),[101] establishes clearly that the idea of a certain personality of God is accessible outside of Christian faith: in making precise our concepts, it constitutes an important foundation of interreligious dialogue. This does not involve, however, a consideration of the reality of God as the Christian faith teaches it, since in this case personality pertains exclusively to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, without the addition of a fourth term. Indeed, if one knows God "as he is [*sicuti est*]," Thomas specifies, it is impossible to proceed to the abstraction of one thing in order to maintain another thing, because all that is in God is one (divine simplicity). The abstraction of divine relations consequently cuts out the whole reality of God, because the essence is not a substrate other than the relation:[102] "nothing remains," as has been seen above.

Thus, the particular case of the abstraction of Trinitarian relations so as to pose an "absolute" subsistence of the divine essence, in order to conceive of God as a person, hardly causes difficulties, since this abstraction is explicitly cut off from Trinitarian faith and does not envisage the full reality of God. By isolating a concept, however, it reveals itself to be capable of conceiving the rational character of a non-Christian monotheism, safeguarding at the same time the prerogatives of faith which alone permits one to know the three persons in God. Thomas employs the same procedure of abstraction in order to deny that, from the plenitude of God (goodness, love, beatitude), one could have deduced the plurality of persons:[103] human reason can

[101] Cf. Albert the Great, *Commentarii in I Sent.*, d. 2, a. 12, ad 1; Bonaventure, *In librum Sent.*, III, d. 5, a. 1, q. 4.

[102] *STh* III, q. 3, a. 3 and ad 3.

[103] I *Sent.*, I, d. 3, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3. The theological argumentation in this domain (the psychological analogy for example) resides rather in certain "adaptations," and never in necessary reasons.

certainly arrive at the full goodness and beatitude of a unique God conceived as subsistent, but it could not find a motif that establishes the divine tripersonality.

This point leads us to the second principle of reading. The opposition between essence and person, as the opposition between essence and subsisting relation, leads to an impasse, since it is not a matter of two great irreducibles, neither on the level of reality (there is only a distinction of reason between essence and person or relation), nor even on the level of concepts. The notion of person, as we have said, assumes or integrates the reality of essence and the notion of subsisting relation is unthinkable without the concept of essence. "The divine essence, although it is subsisting, cannot be separated from the relation that it is necessary to understand in God."[104] At stake is once again the numerical identity of the essence in each of the persons, following the *homoousion* of Nicaea. In the subsisting relation, Thomas joins the two aspects, that of the *esse* and that of the *ratio*. When one speaks of subsisting relation, it is of the relation reuniting the two aspects that one treats. When Thomas isolates "the relation as relation," that is to say the relation according to its proper *ratio* which consists in the pure *ad aliquid,* he only describes a component, intended to manifest the distinction of persons which leaves intact the pure unity of the divine substance that this *ad aliquid* does not modify. And when he treats of the existence of relation in God, he specifies: "The *esse* of the relation does not depend on the substance [*nec esse relationis est esse dependens neque a substantia*], nor on another exterior reality, since the being of the relation is the being of the essence."[105] Correlatively, there would be a profound misunderstanding in thinking that,

[104] *ScG* IV, c. 14, no. 3502: "Essentia enim divina, etsi subsistens sit, non tamen potest separari a relatione quam oportet in Deo intelligi ex hoc quod Verbum conceptum divinae mentis est ab ipso Deo dicente. Nam et Verbum est divina essentia, ut ostensum est; et Deus dicens, a quo est Verbum, est etiam divina essentia; non alia et alia, sed eadem numero." The same thing holds for the spiration of Love.

[105] *ScG* IV, c. 14, no. 3508. It is in creatures that there is a dependence between the "to be" of the relation and the "to be" of the substance bearing the accident. G. Ventimiglia, "Le relazioni divine secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino: Riproposizione di un problema e prospettive di indagine," *Studi tomistici* 44 (1991): 166-82.

when one speaks of "essence" in God, on the level of reality, one has spoken of something other than the relation.

The question, at bottom, is this: what is a relation? If, following the path of a conceptualist nominalism, the relation is grasped as a category of understanding, a comparison or putting in relationship of two absolute realities, of such kind that this relation amounts to a concept or to the act by which the knowing subject refers this thing to that thing,[106] or if it is solely defined as a relationship existing between two realities but not in them, so that its being is posed necessarily against the being of realities referred to or outside of these realities, Trinitarian theology could only very laboriously try to reunite the being of the essence and that of the relation in a convincing way. The thought of Thomas thus becomes incomprehensible. But if the *esse* and the *ratio* of the relation are considered in the synthesis proposed by Thomas, one can see clearly that the constitution and distinction of divine persons comes back to the relation "inasmuch as it is divine essence and relation"[107] at the same time, although this implies no dependence of the relation with respect to the divine essence.

We should recall here the exegesis of Cajetan who—against the critique of Peter Auriol and with the purpose of avoiding the consequences of Scotist theology (which tends to pose the constitution of the divine person by an absolute property)[108]—reads in the *Summa Theologiae* the affirmation of a constitution of the divine person by the relation as such. Cajetan interprets the texts by means of the following distinction: when one affirms that relation constitutes the divine person because it is identical to the essence (*quia est eadem essentiae*), one indicates that relation holds this privilege from the essence as from its root (*radicaliter*);

[106] Cf. notably R. Schönberger, *Relation als Vergleich: Die Relationstheorie des Johannes Buridan im Kontext seines Denkens und der Scholastik* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) (a study of the doctrine of relation from Thomas Aquinas to Buridan).

[107] *De Pot.*, q. 8, a. 3, ad 9; cf. also ad 7-8.

[108] Duns Scotus, *Lectura in I Sent.*, d. 26, q. un. (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 17, pp. 328-37). Scotus, appealing to Bonaventure, holds as more probable the opinion according to which the person is not constituted by the relation but by an absolute reality, so that the divine persons are first thought of as absolutes and only secondly as the relations by which they are referred.

when one affirms that relation constitutes the divine person inasmuch as it is the divine essence (*ut est essentia*), one attributes formally (*formaliter*) the constitution of the divine person to the relation. Cajetan accounts for the theses of the *De Potentia* by means of the first affirmation, although he explains the thought of the *Summa Theologiae,* where the presentation of relation is better unified, by means of the second. Whatever the difference between the *De Potentia* and the *Summa* and the accuracy of Cajetan's interpretation, he notes quite rightly that Thomas has in view *divine* relation, and that it comes back to being able to speak of *divine relation* and *subsisting relation.* A relation in creatures, indeed, does not possess of itself that which constitutes a person: it is to the divine relation, from the fact that there are no accidents in God, that this belongs. In this way, if one thinks of the subsisting relation as a reality formally divine (in the "genre" of *divina*), it belongs to this relation insofar as it is a relation that constitutes the person: the relation in this case constitutes the person in virtue of its very formality (*infra latitudinem relativam*), without thereby excluding the radical role of the essence. In other words, "the relation constitutes the person in this way alone: by posing itself, because it is the person itself [*ponendo seipsam, quia est ipsa persona*]."[109]

These precisions certainly pretend to nothing more than an identification of the order in the diverse aspects of our understanding of the mystery. Nevertheless they show that Thomas does not present the divine relation, taken in a complete manner (*ratio* and *esse*), as a greatness in competition with the essence, and that the *esse* that one should attribute to the essence does not diminish the privilege of the relation: it is indeed in its formality and its integral reality of divine relation that it constitutes the persons and distinguishes them.

[109] Cajetan, *In I*, q. 40, a. 4 (Ed. Léonine, vol. 4, p. 419). Cf. Vanier, *Théologie trinitaire chez saint Thomas d'Aquin,* 77-80; idem, "La relation trinitaire dans la Somme théologique de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 1 (1948): 143-59, esp. 156-59.

Conclusion

The relationship between essence and personal relation in God, according to Thomas Aquinas, is entirely bound up with the very structure of his treatise on God. This treatise is based on the path of our access to God and on a conceptual organization that makes the doctrine of persons, inasmuch as they are subsisting relations, the place of synthesis of all the preliminary elements. To place essence and relation in concurrence, as two great opposites or exterior one to the other, would amount to misunderstanding Thomas's synthesis of relation. Our understanding of the texts consequently is not aided by posing the exclusive primacy of one notion or the other, as if the one should prevail to the detriment of the other. If the problem of essentialism and personalism should consist in a systematic opposition of these two notions, one must recognize that, in St. Thomas at least, this would be a false question where the terms are badly posed. The reading of the texts of Thomas that articulates the perspective of *common* and of *proper* invites us rather to understand, through the *redoublement* of our discourse, the integration of the diverse elements in their summit, that is to say in the doctrine of subsisting relation which furnishes the key of the organization of the treatise of God. The constitution and the subsistence of persons come down to relation and its integral being, without negating the preliminary study of the essence and without refusing to the essence the fundamental role that our understanding of the mystery assigns it. The important accent placed by Thomas on the Trinitarian principle of creation and on the personal dimension in the accomplishment of salvation, by means of notions keyed to his doctrine of divine persons, shows the fecundity of this teaching and its capacity to render account of the divine activity *ad extra*.

There is not, in Thomas, any attempt (or any possibility) of conceiving the person in God the Trinity as a divine Being personalized in a nonrelational or prerelational manner. The idea of a unique personality of God, which grounds the rational legitimacy of a monotheism outside of Christian faith (and which

safeguards the gratuity of the revelation of the Trinity!), is not added to the divine tripersonality and offers only an incomplete knowledge that does not consider God as he is. The personal distinction in God is never posed as an emanation from the essence: neither in the doctrine of processions, nor in the knowledge of the person of the Father, nor in the study of the distinct persons. This speculative motif, which grounds the distinction between the treatise on the essence and that on the plurality of the persons, retains the prerogatives of faith, since a personal plurality in God cannot be extracted from a knowledge of the essence or of the essential acts. From this point of view, replacing a treatise on what concerns the essence by a treatise on the Father would constitute perhaps less an advance than a regression towards a prerelational conception of the divine person. This is why, in the light of the thought of St. Thomas, the question of Trinitarian personalism invites an inquiry into one's conception of relation and the role that one recognizes for it in manifesting the intelligibility of the faith.

The Thomist 64 (2000): 565-80

FOR INSERTING A NEW QUESTION (26A) IN THE *PRIMA PARS*

FREDERICK E. CROWE

Lonergan Research Institute
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Just over fifty years ago Bernard Lonergan finished his series of articles on "The Concept of *Verbum* in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas."[1] Though his general thesis has made an impact on Thomist studies and been recognized in the wider academic world,[2] there are still many particular points to study and many implications of the main thesis to explore. The present article explores the meaning and implications of an intriguing statement Lonergan makes in the concluding pages of his study: "Thus, the Augustinian psychological analogy makes trinitarian theology a prolongation of natural theology, a deeper insight into what God is."[3]

I interpret this deeper insight as the discovery of a new divine attribute, and I will argue that discussion of this new divine attribute belongs between questions 26 and 27 of the *Prima pars,* where it functions as a new and unifying transition from the questions on God as one to the questions on God as three, so that

[1] *Theological Studies* 1946-49, published in book form as *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967; 2d ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); henceforth *Verbum,* with page references to the 1997 edition.

[2] For example, Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 83: "The best book in English about Aquinas's philosophy of mind is Bernard Lonergan's *Verbum.*"

[3] *Verbum,* 215. Lonergan really meant this point to be taken seriously, for a little later on the same page he repeats it: "the psychological analogy truly gives a deeper insight into what God is."

questions 2 to 43, instead of being two treatises (God as one, God as three) can be seen as one treatise on God, with no jump to a new consideration at question 27.

To mark this proposal, I would insert a new question between the present question 26 and the present question 27, tentatively calling it question 26A. I will first show the opening Thomas leaves for an insertion here, then set forth the relevant human perfection uncovered by Lonergan, transfer it in the usual way of analogy to a divine attribute, and conclude with brief reflections on repercussions this proposal may have on our doctrine of God.

I. The Order of the *Prima Pars*

The grand sweep of Thomas's master plan for his *Summa Theologiae* has been a fertile field for Thomist exegesis.[4] The rationale of this division is of the highest interest to Thomists but it has no immediate reference to our present question. Within the *Prima pars* itself there is an introductory question on *sacra doctrina,* after which Thomas unfolds his plan, laid out according to the intention of this *sacra doctrina,* namely, "to discuss [our] knowledge of God, and not only as he is in himself, but also as he is the cause of [created] things and their final end."[5] The treatise on God "as he is in himself" covers questions 2 to 43, and that on God as principle of creation the rest of the *Prima pars*. Once more the rationale of this division has no immediate reference to our topic.

Within the treatise on God "as he is in himself" we come to a division and order that is highly relevant to our topic. Thomas

[4] It is not part of my commitment to study the literature on this, but I may mention by way of example the justifiably famous analysis proposed by M.-D. Chenu; he saw the whole *Summa* under the heading of an "émanation et . . . retour . . . la *Ia pars* et la *IIa Pars* sont entre elles comme *exitus* et . . . *reditus* . . . deux branches de la courbe qui, partant de Dieu, ramène tout à lui," with the third part figuring as the means God chose for that return. M.-D. Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 2d ed. (Montreal: Institut d'Études Mediévales; Paris: J. Vrin, 1954) 266; see also ibid., 260-64 and 266-73, which are devoted to "La construction de la Somme."

[5] *STh* I, q. 2, pro.: "Dei cognitionem tradere, et non solum secundum quod in se est, sed etiam secundum quod est principium rerum et finis earum."

divides this section to consider first "those things that pertain to the divine essence" (questions 2-26), and then "those things that pertain to the distinction of persons" (questions 27-43).[6]

The twenty-five questions from 2 to 26 consider such matters as God's existence, perfection, goodness, infinity, eternity, unity, knowledge, will, and power. With question 27 Thomas begins to treat "of those things which pertain to the trinity of persons in divinity," and because the persons are distinguished according to origin he will treat first the question of origin or procession, then that of relations, and thirdly that of persons,[7] before going on to the many questions that arise in regard to individual persons, the comparison of persons, and so on.[8] Thomas's first Trinitarian question is therefore, "whether there is procession in God."[9]

I believe Thomas has left an opening here for a new question, for he makes the transition from the divine essence to the Trinity without assigning grounds for that transition, and indeed without assigning grounds for this order of the treatises. Of course, he has reasons for his procedure. That God is one and God is three is part of his faith, so he must consider both. Further, in considering two things, there must be an order of one after the other; and Thomas chooses to take essence first and distinction of persons second. Nothing could be simpler; the Thomist order is perfectly normal. But it is an ordering of our beliefs, not an ordering according to theological reasons. We believe God to be one and we believe God to be three, and we have reasons for each of these beliefs; but that does not give us a theological reason for the order of the *Prima pars*. Why, for example, do we not begin with

[6] Ibid.: "ea quae ad essentiam divinam pertinent" and "ea quae pertinent ad distinctionem personarum." Note that Thomas regards the whole *Prima pars* as a treatise on God, setting it in contradistinction to the treatise "de motu rationalis creaturae in Deum" (on the movement of a rational creature to God), covered in *Secunda pars*. Also note that the treatise on God is "tripartita," including as its third part a treatise on "ea quae pertinent ad processum creaturarum ab ipso" (those things which pertain to the procession of creatures from him [questions 44-119])—again a division that touches our question only because the procession of creatures *from* God could be seen by analogy as continuous with the processions of Son and Spirit *internal* to God.

[7] *STh* I, q. 27, pro.: "de his quae pertinent ad trinitatem personarum in divinis."

[8] *STh* I, q. 29, pro.

[9] *STh* I, q. 27, a. 1, pro.: "Utrum processio sit in divinis."

the triune God and proceed in the second place to the unitary God? One might well argue that the triune God has a stronger claim than the unitary to be basic in our concepts.

In any case, since Thomas is writing according to a reasoned series, "according to the order of teaching,"[10] there seems to be need and room here to give a theological justification of the order, whatever it be, that we happen to choose. Can we justify the Thomist order, starting with the divine essence and turning from a treatise on God as one to a treatise on God as three? It will be part of my contention that by assigning a new attribute to the divine essence we can do just that, thereby justifying his transition from questions *De Deo uno* to questions *De Deo trino* and seeing that transition less as a transition and more as a link to make one integral treatise out of two.

There is, however, a real oddity in the role of question 26 in the Thomist "plan" which must be mentioned here. Thomas twice rounds off the questions that pertain to the unity of the divine essence, as if ready in each case to proceed to the distinction of persons, but in the first of these transitions he turns, not to the distinction of persons, but to a question on divine beatitude. Thus in his prologue to question 26 he says, "Finally, after considering those things that pertain to the unity of the divine essence we have to consider . . ." Surely, we think, he means to turn now to the distinction of persons. Not so. His topic is beatitude: after considering what pertains to the unity of God "we have to consider the divine beatitude."[11] (As if beatitude did not pertain to the divine essence!) Then, in the prologue to question 27, he again rounds off the questions pertaining to the divine unity, and this time proceeds to Trinitarian questions: "Having considered the things that pertain to the unity of the divine essence, it remains . . ." and now the Trinity: it remains "to consider the things that pertain to the trinity of persons in God."[12]

[10] Prologue to *Summa* and to the *Prima pars:* "secundum ordinem disciplinae."

[11] *STh* I, q. 26, pro.: "Ultimo autem, post considerationem eorum quae ad divinae essentiae unitatem pertinent, considerandum est de divina beatitudine."

[12] *STh* I, q. 27, pro.: "Consideratis autem his quae ad divinae essentiae unitatem pertinent, restat considerare de his quae pertinent ad trinitatem personarum in divinis."

The perplexity is compounded by the further oddity that the question on beatitude is not announced in any of the carefully drawn plans of the *Prima pars*, nor is any rationale for its inclusion given in question 26 itself.[13] It seems to be an afterthought of Thomas, but even so we would expect his "Finally" sentence to read, "Finally, among those things that pertain to the unity of the divine essence we have to consider beatitude." This oddity has no special significance for our topic, but it does prompt the question whether Thomas felt the need of some transitional idea from God as one to God as three.[14]

II. A New Perfection of Human Spirit: Rational Consciousness

The contention of this article is that Lonergan's *Verbum* study uncovers a new human perfection, that this suggests a new attribute under which to consider the divine essence, that this new attribute affects quite radically the Thomist transition from question 26 to question 27, and that notable clarifications of general Trinitarian questions result as byproducts. I proceed now to the first of these claims.

What I am calling here a new human perfection needs its own name. Lonergan, after the example of Aquinas, is more concerned with meaning than with words,[15] so the term he uses here is

[13] The oddity continues in that Cajetan, in his commentary published with the Leonine edition of Thomas, does not advert to the problem.

[14] This is the kind of question without data that encourages guessing, a quite harmless pastime as long as we know that we are guessing. Here is one guess. The *Prima secundae*, dealing with our "reditus" to God, begins with our last end, which is beatitude. Did Thomas, on writing this part, realize "But I said nothing about beatitude in God," and so go back to insert question 26 in the *Prima pars* without tidying up the details of the prologues outlining his plan?

[15] Some data on this may be found in *Verbum*, 115: "so far was Aquinas from the stereotyped terminology that sometimes is attributed to him that he could write 'a wise person is not fussy about words' (Aquinas, II *Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1 sol.: 'sapientis enim est non curare de nominibus')"; see also *Verbum* 127, 130. The whole of chapter 3, "Procession and Related Notions," is worth reading for perspective on terminology. See also Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), 142: "as if to insist upon meaning and to

"rationality," and the new divine attribute would be the rationality of God. The connotations of this term make it less than happy as a concept for the divine, and in fact Lonergan does not seem to have used it for God. It is ambiguous even for human psychology, for what Lonergan proposes is not some generic rationality but a quite specific one, and though he later names it more specifically "reflective rationality"[16] the term "reflective" is also in need of explanation and further specification. Let us not cavil, however, about the term, but look to the meaning as it emerges in Lonergan's explanation, first in abbreviated form, then at greater length.

The brief explanation runs as follows:

> To introduce a term that will summarize all this, we may say that the inner word is rational, not indeed with the derived rationality of discourse, of reasoning from premises to conclusions, but with the basic and essential rationality of rational consciousness, with the rationality that can be discerned in any judgment, with the rationality that now we have to observe in all concepts.[17]

This makes the point positively and negatively, but it *is* somewhat cryptic, an abbreviation, introducing "a term that will summarize," so we must turn to the full explanation as given in *Verbum*.

The proximate context and occasion for the *Verbum* study was the need, as Lonergan saw it, to overcome the conceptualism that afflicted much of Thomistic exegesis: the disposition, namely, to take concepts for granted as a basic given, to compare the concepts in judgments, and to compare the judgments in syllogisms, and only secondly to search for understanding. For Lonergan this represents a blackout of the whole rich universe of insights which are the fertile source of concepts, and an oversight of the intelligible procession of concepts (and judgments and

contemn terminological primness"; also p. 69.

[16] *Verbum*, 207. We avoid giving the word "reflective" the sense of a second act supervening on direct understanding and knowledge; it means rather that reflection in a special sense is internal to every procession of a word in us; it means the same as the "because of" character of our inner words.

[17] Ibid., 46-47.

syllogisms) from an act of understanding. Instead of that rich universe bequeathed to us by Aristotle and Aquinas, and the intelligible procession of concepts which was added by Aquinas, we have what Lonergan rather caustically describes as a "metaphysical sausage machine, at one end slicing species off phantasm, and at the other popping out concepts"—a poor substitute for what he sees as "an operation of rational consciousness."[18]

To this negating element there has to be added the positive side. We have to pin down this "basic and essential rationality of rational consciousness," this "operation of rational consciousness." Lonergan does this by contrast with natural process, the process, say, of heating: "The intelligibility of natural process is passive and potential . . . but it is not the very stuff of intellect." Or, if we turn to the laws by which we understand natural process, we find that they have "the intelligibility of some specific natural law . . . but never the intelligibility of the very idea of intelligible law." Even then, "the intelligibility of natural process is imposed from without; natures act intelligibly," but not intelligently.

On all three of these points Lonergan contrasts the intelligibility of the procession of an inner word.

> [T]he intelligibility of the procession of an inner word is not passive nor potential; it is active and actual . . . it is intelligible, not as the possible object of understanding is intelligible, but as understanding itself and the activity of understanding is intelligible. Again, its intelligibility defies formulation in any specific law. . . . [It] is the pure case of intelligible law. . . . Thirdly, it is native and natural for the procession of inner word to be intelligible, actively intelligible, and the genus of all intelligible process. . . . intelligence in act does not follow laws imposed from without, but rather it is the ground of the intelligibility in act of law, it is constitutive and, as it were, creative of law; and the laws of intelligible procession of an inner word are not any particular laws but the general constituents of any law. . . . an inner word not merely has a sufficient ground in the act of understanding it expresses; it also has a knowing as sufficient ground, and that ground is operative precisely as a knowing, knowing itself to be sufficient.[19]

[18] Ibid., 48.

[19] Ibid., 47.

With this Lonergan comes to the short form of his key statement, already quoted: "To introduce a term that will summarize all this, we may say that the inner word is rational, not indeed with the derived rationality of discourse, of reasoning from premises to conclusions, but with the basic and essential rationality of rational consciousness."

This amounts to saying that we have discovered a new perfection of human spirit and human consciousness: a new perfection, we might add, that borrows the use of an old name. But there is a hint of where we might find a new name, for later Lonergan adds a contrast between "caused by" and "because of," a way of putting it that might be converted into a better name than rationality.

> [I]nner words do not proceed with mere natural spontaneity as any effect does from any cause; they proceed with reflective rationality . . . not merely from a sufficient cause but from sufficient grounds known to be sufficient and because they are known to be sufficient. . . . The inner word of defining is not only *caused by* but also *because of* the act of understanding.[20]

Thus this "basic and essential rationality of rational consciousness," this "operation of rational consciousness," has to do with internal process. It is a process within intelligence. It is an intelligible process; more, it is an intelligent process. It is a process from knowledge to knowledge, from knowledge as insight, as perfection, as insight into a particular phantasm, to knowledge as the expression of the insight, knowledge as conceived, objectified, made universal. It has a "because of" character; it is intrinsically in itself, and not just as seen in an object, a "because of"; we could call it a "because-of-ness," were not that phrase such a mouthful in English.

My own preferred term for this perfection is *ipsum quia* (because-of-ness itself), coined on the pattern of *ipsum intelligere* (understanding itself, the very essence of understanding) and *ipsum amare* (loving itself, the very essence of loving), where *quia*

[20] Ibid., 207; see 220: ". . . thought because of understanding, and love because of both, where 'because' means not the logical relation between propositions but the real *processio intelligibilis* of an intellectual substance."

has the same essential dynamism as *intelligere* and *amare,* and adds the new dynamism of "from . . . to"; it is the "because of" linking "from X" and "to Y." If the form *ipsum quia* suggests a divine attribute in parity with *ipsum intelligere* and *ipsum amare,* that is all to the good, because I propose it as a divine essential dynamism, as pertaining to the essence of the one God, and as a better name for the new attribute than the rather infelicitous "rationality," even if we convert the latter to "rationality itself."

I have so far avoided the Latin term *emanatio intelligibilis* (intelligible emanation), though it figures so prominently in Lonergan's thought. This very Thomist phrase is the carrier for his exposition of rationality, but it is a problem to many.[21] Though the term occurs not frequently in Thomas, it is definitely Thomist, and the core purpose of Lonergan's *Verbum* articles was to recover the idea Thomas had of it,[22] which is simply another way of stating what we have already said, that his purpose was to overcome a conceptualism that had no room for an *emanatio intelligibilis*. *Emanatio intelligibilis* is, in fact, the complete antithesis of the "metaphysical sausage machine" mentioned above.

In any case the phrase is definitely a key to Thomas's Trinitarian thought. In the very first article of his Trinitarian questions in the *Prima pars,* he lists and sets aside various modes of procession to arrive at *emanatio intelligibilis* as the only procession that elucidates our faith in the divine Word:

> Procession [in God] is not then to be understood the way it occurs in the corporeal world, either through local motion or through the action of some

[21] Karl Rahner is said to have been puzzled by Lonergan's use of it, and to have asked someone supposedly in the know, "What does he mean by *emanatio intelligibilis?*" It is useful to adduce this item of news, coming to us by the academic grape-vine but apparently authentic, for it suggests that *emanatio intelligibilis* is not part of the stock-in-trade of current Thomism and that it may have a meaning not yet widely recovered in our "traditional" interpretation of Thomas.

[22] *Verbum,* 222: "my purpose has been to understand what Aquinas meant by the intelligible procession of an inner word." The focused treatment is *Verbum,* 46-59; pp. 206-8 list the equivalent phrases, of which the preferred one seems to be *processio intelligibilis;* but it looks as if Thomas himself did not use the term *emanatio intelligibilis* frequently, and this may account for our neglect of it.

cause to produce an external effect, as heat [proceeds] from the heater to the heated, but is to be understood as intelligible emanation, as of an intelligible word from the speaker.[23]

Further, in the justly famous treatment in book 4 of the *Summa contra Gentiles* Thomas goes through in far greater detail a similar series of emanations that are to be set aside in order to conclude, "It remains therefore that divine generation is to be understood as intellectual emanation."[24] The occurrence of the phrase in these two key loci of Thomist Trinitarian doctrine cannot but be significant for the meaning Thomas attached to the phrase. As for the meaning it has for Lonergan, it is simply a Latin form of "basic and essential rationality of rational consciousness," or of the "operation of rational consciousness."

We need another step before we proceed to speak of "reflective rationality" or *ipsum quia* as an attribute of God. This rationality has an aspect we may call generic in the sense that it applies both to the procession of concept and judgment in us (these are one in the procession of God's one Word) and to the procession of love. We may call it transcendental in the sense not only that it is not limited to any one of these three occurrences, but also in the sense that it is an attribute of consciousness and the condition of possibility of any of the occurrences.[25]

This, I believe, is of some importance for our transfer of the human attribute to God. I would illustrate it by a parallel in Lonergan's position on what may be called the transcendental

[23] *STh* I, q. 27, a. 1: "Non ergo accipienda est processio secundum quod est in corporalibus vel per modum localem, vel per actionem alicuius causae in exteriorem effectum, ut calor a calefaciente in calefactum, sed secundum emanationem intelligibilem, utpote verbi intelligibilis a dicente."

[24] *ScG* IV, c. 1 (paragraph 8 in the Leonine manual edition): "Relinquitur igitur quod generatio divina secundum intellectualem emanationem sit intelligenda."

[25] For Lonergan's use of "transcendental," see *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1974; repr. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 207, "in the Scholastic sense (it is not confined to any particular genus or category . . .) and in the Kantian sense (it is the condition of possibility . . . of any categorial method)"; *A Third Collection* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 145 n. 8: "three meanings . . . the most general . . . concepts . . . of the Scholastics; the Kantian conditions of the possibility of knowing an object *a priori*; Husserl's intentionality analysis in which . . . act and object, are correlative"; and *Third Collection,* 82-83.

character of "is." "Is," Lonergan says,[26] may be thought of in two ways. First, it may be viewed as contrasted with "was" and with "will be." But there is a second way to think of it, a way in which "is" is not contrasted with "was" or "will be," a way rather which finds a common and fundamental reference to being in all three. There is an aspect of "is" that underlies its use in the three temporal meanings and prescinds altogether from temporal connotations. If we get hold of that aspect which is common to all three, which underlies all three, which pervades all three, which does not include a reference to time, we will have a radical sense of "is" and, I have argued elsewhere, a radical new meaning for eternal life and eternal being.[27] In a similar way, there is a "because-of" character that pertains to the dynamism of the human mind in a way that is prior to all particular instances of rational consciousness and so provides an analogy for the divine dynamism where we conceive "ipsum quia" as an essential divine attribute and as in our thinking prior to and grounding the two Trinitarian processions.

III. A New Attribute of the Divine Essence: *Ipsum Quia*

Our human word is not only caused by an insight; it is also consciously "because of" the insight. While the ontological "caused by" is irrelevant to Trinitarian theology,[28] the cognitional "because of," as a property and perfection of the human, provides the possibility of analogous understanding of *ipsum quia* as a divine attribute. There is in God not only the procession of an inner Word and the procession of inner Love, and so three divine

[26] Bernard Lonergan, *De scientia atque voluntate Dei: Supplementum schematicum*, unpublished notes for students of the course *De praedestinatione*, College of Christ the King (now Regis College), Toronto, March 1950, caput 3.

[27] Frederick E. Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Risen Life," *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997): 18-19; for the original presentation of this idea, see idem, "Rethinking Eternal Life: Philosophical Notions from Lonergan," *Science et Esprit* 45 (1993): 25-39.

[28] With the mature Thomas we avoid saying the Word is "caused by" the Father's "dicere," or that proceeding Love, the welling forth of Love, is "caused by" the Utterance and the Word; though Thomas did speak of the proceeding person as being produced (*STh* I, q. 37, a. 2, ad 3), this is not characteristic of his language; see *Verbum*, 204, 206.

Persons, but also, in the divine essence, a radical dynamism that has the character of "because of," that can be named *ipsum quia*, that in our human thinking is the ground of the pro-cessions of Word and Love, that is a divine fermentation such that those processions can be.

It is this rationality, conceived as a human perfection and therefore as pertaining in the *via eminentiae* to the being and essence of God, that we have now to study in its divine form. An indirect and preparatory step is to open our minds to the concept and possibility of an internal infinite and eternal dynamism in God. Here I draw on a Thomist professor[29] who, to overcome the appearance of the "static" in the divine "is," an appearance of the static that we too readily attach to "is" used as a copula, proposed that when we say "God is," we think of God as "is-ing." It is a striking expression, and though it is not directly relevant to the concept of "rationality" in God it can play a supportive role in our conception of rationality as a divine dynamic and eternal perfection.

I would first conceive this new attribute in its purest form, in its most generic aspect, by simply saying that God is such as to have in the divine essence an attribute that underlies our human concept of the divine processions. That ought to be readily conceded, for it is little more than an analytic proposition: there are processions internal to God, therefore the being of God is such as to have internal processions. We first conceive this divine attribute, then, simply as a "suchness"—God is "such" as to have two internal processions. At this abstract stage we already have an attribute of the divine essence conceived in relationship to the divine processions, and so the possibility of an ordered transition from question 26 to question 27 of the *Prima pars*, and a quite natural transition from a treatise *De Deo uno* to a treatise *De Deo trino*.

It is desirable, however, to conceive this "suchness" in a more concrete way, for as yet we have little positive content for our new question 26A, and could propose the question in Thomist

[29] From Toronto's Mediaeval Institute, I believe, but I am dependent on my unreliable memories of fifty years ago.

form only as "Whether God is such as to be able to have internal processions."[30] For that more positive understanding I call again on book 4 of the *Summa contra Gentiles,* which we can use as a springboard to our conception. Thomas sets up a series of higher and higher emanations in which principle and term come closer and closer to identity, while the emanation remains and, we may even say, grows in perfection. A baseball proceeds (emanates) from the bat of the batter, and is totally extrinsic to the bat. A plant proceeds from a seed, and is also extrinsic to the seed; still, the process began within the principle of the emanation, inasmuch as the seed was formed there. In an animal, the image proceeds from the sensation, and is extrinsic to it, since at this level of life sensitive potency does not reflect on itself. Still, both principle and term are now internal to the animal: they are now more nearly one. But then we come to the life of intellect, which is able to reflect on itself, so that the principle and term approach identity, less perfectly in human intelligence since the process starts outside in the object sensed, more perfectly in the angel, in whom the process is totally internal, with absolute perfection in God in whom principle and term are perfectly one in being.[31]

Here we have a series of the same type as that which Newman constructed for the approach of a polygon to a circle. Increase the number of sides in the polygon as much as you please; with each step you come closer to the circle, but you never reach the circle, you simply find a way to point to it.[32] In the same way Thomas, in this illuminating series of emanations, approaches ever more closely to the identity in being of Father and Son, while their distinction, signified and grounded by the emanation, is preserved untouched; the distinction of being is disappearing while the reality of the procession and the distinction of persons remain. The series points to its goal—reality of procession without difference in being—but cannot reach it except by analogy and the way of eminence.

[30] "Utrum Deus sit talis ut possit habere processiones internas."

[31] *ScG* IV, c. 11.

[32] John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), 320-21.

We need a similar series to point to our goal of conceiving rationality, *ipsum quia,* without principle or term, a series that shows the *ipsum quia* to remain while the distinction of a term that is "cognitional cause" and a term that is "because of" vanishes. Could we simply take over and adapt the Thomist series? To a certain extent that might be possible. For Thomas the task was to show the identity of being of principle and term of the emanation, while maintaining the reality of the emanation. Ours would be to show the identity of a divine rationality, the oneness of the "because-of-ness" character of rational process, while maintaining the reality of the *emanatio intelligibilis* and so the distinction of an antecedent and what is "because of" that antecedent. Just as the Thomist sequence brings principle and term of an ontological process closer and closer together in one identical being (the context for Thomas is the divine generation of a Son, hence has a clear ontological cast), so a focus on the rational side of the Thomist process would bring the rational "cause" and the rational "consequence" closer and closer to the identity of one rationality as an essential attribute, while maintaining the reality of the "because of," and so the distinction of the divine persons. Unfortunately, however, we would not be able to duplicate all the Thomist steps, for the material and sensitive emanations have no place in the world of "because of." We await another Thomas to construct the series we need.

At the start of section II above, I proposed as a second step in our essay that this new attribute, *ipsum quia,* affects quite radically the Thomist transition from question 26 to question 27. We are ready now for that step, but it can be handled quite briefly. Our new question, 26A, dealing with that new attribute, would at once assume a natural locus between question 26 and question 27 in the *Prima pars.* It would follow on question 26 as a new dynamic attribute follows on the more static attributes (though "static" suggests a kind of inertia and is not a happy term for things divine). But clearly, and without unhappy connotations, the new attribute would take its place prior to question 27 and point to it. It really would provide that springboard to question 27 that is not explicit in the *Prima pars.* Thus questions

2 to 43 of the *Prima pars* would form one "integral" treatise on one "integral" God, God would be conceived by us the way He is, namely, as three in natural unity, and there would be nothing awkward in the transition from question 26 to question 27.[33]

IV. Byproducts of the New Attribute

A first and obvious byproduct of inserting this new attribute into the *Prima pars* is the negative side of what I said more positively in speaking of a natural transition from question 26 to question 27: namely, to the charge that a treatise *De Deo uno* followed by a treatise *De Deo trino* divides our God doctrine into two parts, I would claim that Lonergan's new and deeper insight gets the two parts back together again, so that we avoid the appearance of a somewhat arbitrary jump, or of bringing in a *processio ex machina* in order to begin the Trinitarian study. The question of the processions has no *ex machina* appearance now, but rather arises quite naturally from the new concept we have of God. Thus the unitary God is linked naturally with the Trinitarian God and the Trinitarian God is continuous in human thought with the unitary God, and we have the Trinity emerging from within the nature of God instead of being considered in a separate set of questions.

Not that we conceive the processions as processions from the *ipsum quia;* that would be the *processio operationis* that Lonergan repudiates in favor of a *processio operati.*[34] But as a human mind has to think of the divine *ipsum intelligere* in two ways, as in the Father as *Dicens* and as in the Son as *Verbum,* so we have to think of the divine *ipsum quia* in two ways, as in the Father as in "that because of which," and as in the Son as in the "becaused," or the *emanans.*

[33] We realize, of course, that Thomas did not number his questions; nevertheless the traditional numbering is sacrosanct and if a new question is to be introduced it has to be numbered 26A. An unwieldy alternative would be to modify question 27 somewhat to bring it back to include a question on the divine essence.

[34] *Verbum,* 205-6; see the index of the book for several references to *processio operationis-processio operati* (procession of an operation-procession of a product of the operation).

Another byproduct is that we avoid to some extent the impression inevitably formed by speaking of "first, second, and third" Persons. In the imagination of the believer a "first" Person is somehow before and above and superior to the second and third persons; the "first" Person has *a se* something the other two "receive" and would otherwise lack. In the new perspective all three are immediately related in our thinking to the "because-of" attribute, for it is an attribute of the divine essence. Of course, in the traditional conception, once the Trinity is conceived *in facto esse* (as already constituted), then all attributes are from the Father and communicated to Son and Spirit; thus, for example, the divine simplicity is communicated to Son and Spirit by the Father. So also, then, is *ipsum quia* communicated to Son and Spirit by the Father. But there is a difference: the communication of the divine simplicity from Father to Son is a notional act following on the Trinity as conceived *in facto esse,* but the relation of *ipsum quia* to a possible procession is antecedent to the Trinity as conceived *in facto esse.* While our concept of the Trinity is still *in fieri* (as on the way to being constituted), the potential for an *emanatio intelligibilis* and so for the distinction of the three is already intrinsic to the conception.[35] When the psychological analogy is set forth, the Father will still be seen as "first," and the Son and Spirit as "second" and "third," but prior to the order of the psychological analogy there is the new attribute that potentially regards all three without assigning the order of first, second, and third.[36]

[35] The importance of the two orders of our concepts of the Trinity, one *in fieri* and one *in facto esse*, is set forth by Lonergan, *Verbum,* 213-16.

[36] This is not the place to discuss the history of theological thought on the Trinity, but I may at least indicate the relevance of this essay to the controversy between those who consider Augustinian-Thomist thinking a decline from Cappadocian thought and those who consider it a development.

The Thomist 64 (2000): 581-92

ST. THOMAS AND THE ANALOGY OF *POTENTIA GENERANDI*

JOHN F. BOYLE

University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota

In the intellectual achievement that is St. Thomas Aquinas's Trinitarian theology, the question of whether the *potentia generandi*—the power of generating—is essential or personal occupies a rather modest corner. The question is not, however, without interest, for it is one on which Thomas changes his mind. Such questions, even the modest ones, offer their own particular insights into Thomas's thought.

The question itself is an interesting one. In the life of the Trinity, the Father generates the Son. The act of generation is a personal act of the Father; as such, it is proper to the Father but not to the Son or the Holy Spirit. The act is a notional act, that is, an act that makes known something proper to a particular divine person. But acts do not come from nowhere: some agent must do the act, and that agent acts on the basis of powers that he has. The agent in this case is the Father. But what about the power of generating (*potentia generandi*)[1] by which he acts? Is it essential or personal? The answer is not obvious. Agents in the created order act on the basis of powers they have according to their nature or essence; acts are of persons, but the power is essential, that is, according to the person's nature. Thus one might be inclined to say that the *potentia generandi* is essential, a matter of the divine nature. Yet in the case of the Trinity, in

[1] Thomas usually speaks of *potentia generandi* but sometimes of *potentia generativa;* he seems to use these terms interchangeably.

which the three persons share one nature entirely, if the power were essential, then would not the Son and the Holy Spirit share that power and be able to generate too? Thus one might be inclined to say that the *potentia generandi* is proper to the Father, that is to say, it is personal and not essential.[2]

This question is not new with St. Thomas. It is found in this particular guise in the twelfth century. Peter Lombard attends to it in his *Liber sententiarum* where he holds that the *potentia generandi* is essential.[3] Once in this standard textbook of theology, the question was assured a life; it is found in almost all—if not all—of the Trinitarian literature of the thirteenth century, and indeed in the Scholastic literature well beyond.[4] Thomas inherits the question. Although it is not at the heart of his Trinitarian theology, he keeps coming back to it and reformulating his answer to it. The question nagged him, not because doctrinal fidelity hung in the balance, but because it demanded particular refinement and precision in analogical analysis.

The general contours of St. Thomas's development on this question are clear. The question admits, as Thomas always notes, of three possible answers: the *potentia generandi* is purely personal, purely essential, or both personal and essential. When he first addresses the question in his Parisian *Scriptum* on Lombard's *Liber sententiarum,* he maintains what we might call a strong middle position, that is to say, that the *potentia generandi* is equally essential and personal. He considers the question again a number of times during his sojourn in Rome

[2] The difficulty is captured well by John of St. Thomas, *In primam partem Summae theologiae,* disp. 36, a. 3, from his *Cursus theologicus* (Paris: Desclée, 1946), vol. 4, fasc. 2, pp. 330-31. This was in the early printed editions disp. 16 of *Cursus theologici in Primam Partem D. Thomae Tomus Secundus, a quaestione decima quinta usque ad vigesimam septimam.*

[3] Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, I, d. 7, c. 2, ed. Patres Collegii S. Bonaventurae (3d ed.; Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 93-94.

[4] Bañez gives a concise and systematic summary of the various Scholastic answers to the question in his commentary on *Summa theologiae* I, q. 47, a. 5 in *Scholastica commentaria in universam primam partem* (Venice: Apud Petrum Mariam Bertranum, 1611), vol. 1, col. 957.

antecedent to his return to Paris for his second regency. The principal texts are three. In the disputed questions *De Potentia,* Thomas again holds the middle position, but the central features of the analogy are increasingly clarified. In the *Roman Commentary,* his second commentary on the first book of Lombard's *Liber sententiarum,* Thomas thinks the position that the *potentia generandi* is purely essential to be the truer. Having said that, he then qualifies his position. Finally, in the *Summa Theologiae,* Thomas explicitly rejects the middle position, takes the essential position, and again qualifies it. He is never a strict essentialist on this question; he always qualifies his position. Interestingly, he articulates his final position as a modified essentialist position and not a modified middle position. Although his final position might be categorized more easily as a soft middle position, Thomas nonetheless places himself firmly in the essentialist camp, but with qualifications. Why this should be will become clear with a focused consideration of the positions in the four texts.

In his Parisian *Scriptum* on Lombard's *Liber sententiarum* at the beginning of his career, Thomas poses the question as whether the *potentia generandi* is *ad aliquid,* that is, relational as opposed to essential.[5] In a Trinitarian context, to say something is relational is necessarily to say that it is personal, since the persons are subsisting relations. In his response to the question, Thomas denies that the *potentia generandi* is *ad aliquid.* He refutes this position throughout his career, and his answer is always along the same lines: the position makes no sense given the meaning of the terms in the natural order.

Consider Thomas's argument here in the *Scriptum.* The position that the *potentia generandi* is *ad aliquid* arises from a confusion of categories. In analyzing operations or actions, one speaks of their principles. Commonly noted are two: the *principium quod* and the *principium quo,* that is, the principle which acts (the agent) and the principle by which the agent acts. *Potentia* is a *principium quo,* the power by which the agent acts.

[5] "Utrum potentia generativa sit ad aliquid" (I *Sent.,* d. 7, q. 1, a. 2; ed. P. Mandonnet [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929], vol. 1, pp. 178-80).

The argument for the purely *ad aliquid* is this: *principium* considered precisely as *principium* is relational or *ad aliquid;* since *potentia* is a *principium,* it is also *ad aliquid.* Unfortunately, a category mistake is lurking in the argument. While it is true that *principium* considered as *principium* is *ad aliquid* (i.e., in the category of relation), it is not true that the particular thing that is the *principium* is itself *ad aliquid. Potentia* is properly in the category of quality, not relation, and thus the argument fails. In fact, there are no instances in the created order in which a *potentia* in its most proper sense is *ad aliquid.*

Throughout his career, Thomas denies that the *potentia generandi* is to be understood as purely personal or relational. Notably, he is much more lax in addressing the position that the *potentia generandi* is purely essential. Why the consistent concern to deny the purely personal character of the *potentia generandi*? The answer is in the analogical character of the analysis. If the *potentia generandi* is purely personal, then there is no analogy since there are simply no such *potentiae* in the created order. It is not that one could not engage in such speculation, nor is it that such divine *potentiae* are impossible; rather, it is that such *potentiae* do not assist one in coming to a deeper understanding of the Trinity in an analogical way. What had started as clearly and properly analogical—the consideration of the divine essence and divine acts—is now shifting. The language of the natural order is now being so restricted by Trinitarian demands as to be rendered meaningless, or perhaps we might better say, purely equivocal. In short, if one holds *potentia generandi* to be purely personal, one has inverted the ordinary order of analogical analysis.

So how is one to understand the *potentia generandi?* Thomas first affirms (from what has already been argued in I *Sent.*, d. 4) that the *principium* of any divine operation whatever is the divine essence. He is on firm analogical ground here as it is also true that the essence of any given creature is also a *principium quo* of its actions. Nonetheless, God is of a different order from created things. God's properties are his essence. The *principium quo* of the Father's act of generation is indeed the divine essence but the

essence according to which it is paternity itself. The *potentia generandi* is thus not purely essential. The Father's paternity—that subsisting relation that constitutes the person of the Father—is the divine essence. Because in God person is essence, Thomas locates relation in the very understanding of the *potentia generandi* as essential. By introducing paternity into the consideration of *potentia* as *principium quo,* Thomas sees the personal as constitutive of the *potentia generandi* precisely as a *potentia.* He firmly grounds the analogy in what is properly to be understood of a created *potentia,* but also locates the difference, the point at which the comparison fails, in the introduction of paternity into the divine *potentia generandi.* He concludes that it is thus a kind of—*quasi*—medium between essential and personal.

In his first consideration of this question, we can see Thomas's attentiveness to its analogical character. He rejects the purely personal understanding of the *potentia generandi* for the reason that it is not in accord with a natural understanding of *potentia.* In the created order *potentia* is essential. At the same time, Thomas thinks the purely essential understanding of the *potentia generandi* is inadequate from the vantage point of the divine reality in which the persons are the essence itself. Thomas concludes that the *potentia generandi* is both essential and personal, thus maintaining the analogy with created reality and the truth of the divine mystery.

In the disputed questions *De Potentia,* Thomas returns to this question but formulated a bit differently. He asks whether the *potentia generativa* in God is said essentially or notionally.[6] That the question is posed in terms of how the term is said of God makes the analogical character of the issue clear. Of the three possible answers to the question, Thomas first considers that the *potentia generandi* is wholly notional. As he had in the Parisian *Scriptum,* he rejects this position, but at greater length. The argument's details need not detain us. It is, at least initially, a fuller elaboration of the argument found in the *Scriptum.* The

[6] "Utrum potentia generativa in divinis dicatur essentialiter vel notionaliter" (*De Pot.,* q. 2, a. 2, in *Quaestiones disputatae,* ed. P. Bazzi et al. [8th ed.; Turin: Marietti, 1949], vol. 2, pp. 27-29).

proponents of the purely notional understanding of the *potentia generandi* have made a categorical mistake; *potentia* is in the category of quality not relation. Thomas's point is the same: if the *potentia generandi* is purely notional, there is no natural analog.

Thomas not only argues against this position by countering the arguments of its proponents, he also poses an argument of his own directly against it. With it, we see a shift in his analysis. He turns his attention from the analogical uses of *principium* and *potentia* to the analogical use of *generare,* to generate or beget. Here he articulates what he understands generation to be, and from this he will not waver throughout the remaining considerations. In natural generation in the created order, the begotten is made like the begetter. A man begets a man; the begotten is made like the begetter in their shared human nature. As it is by virtue of his human nature that a man begets another man, and as it is in that nature that the son is made like the father, the *principium* of generation is the nature. The defining feature of generation is likeness in nature, the assimilation of the begotten to the begetter in the begetter's nature. In turning to the divine, one can thus say that the begotten Son is conformed to the Father in the divine nature and thus the divine nature is the *principium generandi.*

Following this line of argument from generation as assimilation in nature, some hold the *potentia generandi* to be purely essential. Thomas rejects the purely essential position and again adopts a middle position. The argument, however, has shifted from the Parisian *Scriptum.* In the *Scriptum,* Thomas qualified the wholly essential position on the basis of Trinitarian doctrine. Here he does so on the basis of the natural analog of generation. In acts that arise by virtue of a common nature, the mode of the acts themselves is often affected by properties of the agent. So, Thomas observes, actions arising from common animal nature are of a particular kind when found in man since they are affected by what is proper to man; for example, the imaginative power is more perfect in man than brutes because of man's rationality. Likewise in the case of individuals, one man will understand something more clearly than another; although the act of

understanding arises from shared human nature, the greater clarity of understanding in one man arises from some personal particularity of his own affecting the act. The point is that such a particularity is a *principium quo* of the act. Thomas then applies this to the question at hand. If the common divine nature is a *principium* of some operation which belongs to the Father alone—precisely the circumstance under consideration, that is, the *potentia generandi* is essential and also the *principium* of the Father's unique act of begetting—then it must be a *principium* according to which it pertains to the Father by some personal property. From this line of analogical reasoning, Thomas concludes that in the very understanding (*ratio*) of this *potentia* paternity is in some way (*quodammodo*) to be included, even with regard to that which is the *principium* of generation. Thus *potentia generandi* signifies at the same time both essence and notion.

This is a splendid bit of analogical reasoning. Thomas maintains the essential character of *potentia* as *principium quo*. But in considering acts that arise from a common nature (i.e., that have a common nature as *principium quo*), he finds that these acts are, as it were, further specified by properties of the agent, which properties are themselves *principia quibus* of the act. The great value of this consideration is that Thomas has articulated a natural analog for the middle position with regard to the *potentia generandi*. In the *Scriptum* the demands of Trinitarian doctrine seemed to force him to the middle position. Here, he has a full analog from the natural order that provides an illuminating account of the *potentia generandi* in the divine as both essential and notional.

Within the year, Thomas abandons this line of analogical argument and indeed the middle position itself.

When Thomas comments a second time on the first book of Lombard's *Liber sententiarum,* he asks whether the *potentia generandi* is notional or essential.[7] The response is short and the

[7] "Utrum potentia generandi in diuinis sit notionale uel essentiale." The text of the second commentary is found in Oxford, Lincoln College Ms. Lat. 95. The attribution of the text to St. Thomas was established by Leonard E. Boyle, in "'Alia lectura fratris Thome,'" *Mediaeval*

shift is clear. He says there are three opinions on this question: the *potentia generandi* is purely notional, it is between them having something of each, and it is purely essential. He says almost nothing about the first two. Of the last he says that he holds it to be the truer. His reason is the argument from assimilation according to nature in generation. The *potentia generandi* is that by which the begetter begets, and is that in which the begotten is assimilated to the begetter. Since the begotten is assimilated into the begetter's nature, the nature is that by which the begetter begets; and since nature is essential in God, the *potentia* is essential in God. The extended analogical argument of the *De Potentia* is gone. Without further explanation, we find only this gentle qualification: because *generandi* is added, the *potentia* is said to be in God with an order to the notional.[8] A similar move is found in the *Summa Theologiae,* written the next year. Let us consider it together with the *Roman Commentary.*

In the *Summa,* Thomas poses the question whether *potentia generandi* signifies relation and not essence.[9] From the very posing of the question, Thomas has the purely relational understanding of the *potentia generandi* in his sights, and it is to it that he turns first in the response. His argument is again the argument from assimilation. When any agent produces, it makes what it produces like itself with regard to the form by which it acts. So in human generation, the son who is begotten is like the

Studies 45 (1983): 418-29. The critical edition is being prepared for publication by Leonard E. Boyle and John F. Boyle.

[8] "Responsio. Dicendum quod circa hoc sunt tres opiniones. Quidam enim dicunt quod potentia generandi sit pure personale siue notionale in diuinis, et ad hoc moti sunt propter rationes inductas in obiciendo. Alii dixerunt quod potentia generandi sit medium inter personale et essentiale, habens tamen aliquid de utraque. Alii fuerunt sicut Magister qui dicit quod est pure essentiale; et hanc reputo ueriorem. Illud enim quo generans generat est potentia generandi, et illud ergo quo generans generat est potentia generatiua, et hoc est in quo generatum assimilatur generanti. Assimilatur autem in natura sua, et ideo natura est quo generans generat. Cum ergo natura sit essentiale in Deo, dico quod potentia est pure essentiale in Deo. Set quia additur hoc quod dicitur generandi, dicitur esse in Deo cum ordine ad notionale" (f. 22v.).

[9] *STh* I, q. 41, a. 5: "Utrum potentia generandi significet relationem et non essentiam" (ed. Institutum Studiorum Medievalium Ottaviensis [Ottawa: Commissio Piana, 1953], vol. 1, pp. 261-62).

father who begets and is like him in that human nature by virtue of which the father begets in the first place. Thus, that in which the begotten is assimilated to the begetter is the *potentia generandi* in the begetter.

Thomas now applies this to the Trinity. "The Son of God is assimilated in the divine nature to the Father begetting. Hence, the divine nature in the Father is the *potentia generandi* in Him." Thomas concludes that the *potentia generandi* principally signifies the divine essence. He explicitly denies that it signifies essence in so far as it is the same as relation such that it might signify both equally. If the Father begat according to those properties proper to Him as a person He would beget the Father, whereas he begets the Son who is like Him not in person but in nature. Thus paternity is to be understood as constituting the person of the Father, the *principium quod* of the begetting, but not the *principium quo* or *potentia* of the begetting which refers to the divine nature. Thomas concludes clearly enough: "That by which the Father generates is the divine nature in which the Son is assimilated to Him."

As he had in the *Roman Commentary*, Thomas then qualifies this position. "And thus the *potentia generandi* signifies the divine nature *in recto,* but relation *in obliquo.*" The explanation is found in the reply to the third objection: *potentia* signifies *in recto* and generation *in obliquo*. "Hence with regard to essence which is signified, the *potentia generandi* is common to the three persons; with regard to the notions which are connoted, it is proper to the person of the Father." What was articulated in the *Roman Commentary* as signifying essentially but with an order to the notional is here articulated as signifying essentially *in recto* but connoting notionally *in obliquo*.

Given the shift in Thomas's thinking in the *Roman Commentary* and the *Summa Theologiae,* three questions arise: What has happened to the *De Potentia* analogy used to argue for the middle position? Why does Thomas consider his new position that of purely essential and not simply a more modest form of the middle position? What is the point of the qualification of the purely essential position?

First, what happened to the *De Potentia* analogy? Thomas makes no direct reference to it in either the *Roman Commentary* or the *Summa*. As it was the argument for the middle position, he has presumably not simply omitted it, but has now rejected it. He has further distilled his understanding of the place of nature in generation. Or better, he has come to see that, most properly, generation is a question of nature: the assimilation of the begotten to the begetter in that nature in virtue of which the generation takes place. Considered most formally, generation is assimilation in nature and the *potentia generandi* is that nature. As for the various particular properties that had functioned as *principia quibus* in the *De Potentia* argument, Thomas simply denies that in generation they are *principia quibus,* now situating them in the agent as constitutive of the agent. What seems to be at work here is a formal refinement of the terms. The particular properties are now more properly placed in the *principium quod,* that is to say the agent, and not in the *principium quo* or *potentia,* which is most properly understood to be purely and formally the nature according to which generation takes place.[10] In the *De Potentia,* Thomas's consideration of the natural analog moved him to reject the purely essential position and maintain the middle position by which *potentia generandi* signified both essentially and notionally. The natural analog has now been refined and with that the argument from analogy for the middle position has been lost. Indeed, Thomas is left with a particularly strong form of the argument from assimilation for the purely essential signification of *potentia generandi.*

Thomas now claims this position as his own. In both the *Roman Commentary* and the *Summa* he qualifies his position so as to introduce something of the notional. In so doing, he would seem to be returning to the middle position but in a soft form. Why insist that the purely essential is the truer and that this is now his position? The answer lies in his statement that *potentia generandi* signifies essence *in recto* and generation *in obliquo*. This is a way of saying that it signifies primarily the divine essence and

[10] Cf. Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae* I, c. 63 (*Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita,* vol. 42, p. 101).

secondarily the person of the Father. In this a strong middle position of equal signification is clearly abandoned. But the *in recto/in obliquo* distinction carries a more precise meaning. To say that the *potentia generandi* signifies the divine essence *in recto* is to say that it can be predicated of the essence; to say that it signifies the person of the Father *in obliquo* is to say that it cannot be predicated of the Father.[11] Hence one finds the still weaker language in the reply to the third objection that the divine essence is signified, but the person of the Father connoted. Such a distinction makes for a particularly vigorous analogy. In the created order, the *potentia generandi* is essential, that is to say it signifies the nature; more truly it is simply predicated of that nature. By now insisting on the purely essential character of the *potentia generandi* in the divine, Thomas maintains the analogy in the divine analog in which the *potentia generandi* is essential, signifies *in recto* the divine nature, and therefore can be predicated of that nature. The analogy in its fullness is thus most rightly preserved in maintaining that the signification is most properly understood as purely essential.

So why the gentle qualification of the purely essential position in both the *Roman Commentary* and the *Summa?* For the simple reason that God is different. The analogy is not perfect and thus in the case of the Trinity the *potentia generandi* does, in a secondary way, signify notionally. In the divine, the *potentia generandi* does make the Father known, but by connotation. In this, *potentia generandi* in the divine is different from the *potentia generandi* in creation—importantly, but, from the vantage point of the *potentia* considered most formally, only secondarily.

The line of development in Thomas's thought on how to understand *potentia generandi* is an exquisite example of the boldness of his analogical thinking. The natural analog is uncompromised and increasingly clarified. With increasing precision in articulating the natural analog comes increasing simplicity in articulating the divine analog. *Potentia generandi*

[11] The use of *in recto* and *in obliquo* is particularly prominent in a similar discussion among the theologians about the signification of the term "person." Cf., especially for the use we have made of it here, *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 4 (ed. Bazzi, p. 232).

speaks to the divine essence, illuminating the place of divine nature in divine generation without compromising the unity of essence and person. This is all, as noted in the beginning of this essay, a modest corner of St. Thomas's Trinitarian thought; it is, nonetheless, an interesting one in which to watch Thomas work through an analogy with clarity and precision.

The Thomist 64 (2000): 593-618

WISDOM AND THE VIABILITY OF THOMISTIC TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

MATTHEW LEVERING

Ave Maria College
Ypsilanti, Michigan

I. INTRODUCTION

Although we see today evidence of increasing appreciation for Aquinas's Trinitarian theology, Karl Rahner's critique of the Thomistic approach—a critique voiced in similar ways by Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar—remains the standard way in which the Thomistic approach is understood by contemporary theologians.[1] One way to contribute to a new reading of Aquinas's treatise on God (one and three) is to begin with Rahner's critique.

In an oft-cited passage, Rahner remarks:

As a result [of beginning with God's essence] the treatise becomes quite philosophical and abstract and refers hardly at all to salvation history. It speaks

[1] Rahner's seminal work was "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendeter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte," in *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, vol. 2 of *Mysterium Salutis, Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1967). It has appeared in English as *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (2d ed.; New York: Crossroad, 1998). The new edition contains an introduction by Catherine Mowry LaCugna, who lauds Rahner's work as the foundation of contemporary Trinitarian theology. For Barth's and Balthasar's positions, cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologik*, vol.2: *Wahrheit Gottes* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1985), esp. 128f. Thanks in large part to the work of French Dominicans, preeminently Gilles Emery, the time seems ripe for a new appreciation of Aquinas's approach. In addition to numerous articles, Emery has contributed a monograph, *La Trinité créatrice* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), that responds masterfully to Rahner's claim that Aquinas's Trinitarian theology isolated the doctrine of the Trinity from the other doctrines of Christian faith.

of the necessary metaphysical properties of God, and not very explicitly of God as experienced in salvation history in his free relations to his creatures. For should one make use of salvation history, it would soon become apparent that one speaks always of him whom Scripture and Jesus himself calls the Father, *Jesus'* Father, who sends the Son and who gives himself to us in the Spirit, in his Spirit. On the other hand, if one starts from the basic Augustinian-Western conception, an a-trinitarian treatise "on the one God" comes as a matter of course before the treatise on the Trinity. In this event, however, the theology of the Trinity must produce the impression that it can make only purely formal statements about the three divine persons, with the help of concepts about the two processions and about the relations. Even these statements, however, refer only to a Trinity which is absolutely locked within itself—one which is not, in its reality, open to anything distinct from it; one, further, from which we are excluded, of which we happen to know something only through a strange paradox.[2]

This paragraph suggests four major concerns. First, "philosophical and abstract" or "metaphysical" knowledge about God is contrasted with "God as experienced in salvation history," and the Thomistic approach is faulted for paying insufficient attention to the latter. Second, Rahner argues that attention to salvation history rules out beginning with a metaphysical inquiry (i.e., an account of God under the rubric of what pertains to his unity or essence), because such a starting-point fails to appreciate that the God of salvation history is never abstractly "one," but already Father, already personal.[3] Third, if a treatise on what

[2] Rahner, *The Trinity*, 17-18.

[3] Citing the work of Théodore de Régnon, Rahner connects this "biblical" view with the position of the Greek Fathers, in contrast to the Latin Fathers. On this point, see Michel René Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 51-79; and "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237-50. Barnes persuasively challenges the accuracy of the theory, formulated in the nineteenth century by de Régnon, that the Greek Fathers began with the divine persons and the Latin Fathers with the essence. Barnes's research concerns the earlier Fathers. It is also worth noting (because of his influence upon Aquinas) that John Damascene, in his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, first defines God's unity, perfection, goodness, wisdom, and power, and then proceeds to treat the distinction of persons in God. Wayne Hankey has suggested that Aquinas, like earlier medieval theologians, finds this order in Pseudo-Dionysius's *The Divine Names*; see Wayne Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (New York: Routledge, 1998), 168-69. See also Hankey's *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 23.

pertains to God as one (Rahner calls this treatise an "a-trinitarian treatise," although since the Trinity *is* one I would contest this label) precedes the treatise on what pertains to God as three, then the theology of the Trinity will be confined to making "purely formal statements about the three divine persons," because the earlier metaphysical treatise—rather than the dynamism of salvation history—will guide the theological investigation.[4] Fourth, the Trinity, understood in this way, is "locked within itself," an object of abstruse contemplation rather than a definite historical presence and actor.[5]

No one article could address all these concerns, despite their interrelatedness. This article will focus on the criticism that Aquinas's highly philosophical and abstract treatise on God (one and three) appears insufficiently scriptural. Specifically, I will argue that Aquinas's treatise is engaged with, and governed by,

[4] It is on these grounds that Rahner lodges his well-known complaint: "Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.' We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged" (10-11). What Rahner is (rightly) indicating here is the need for the treatise on God (one and three) to be read as a unified whole.

[5] Rahner elaborates this point in two directions. First, he calls attention to the Thomistic doctrine of mixed relation, in which God is "logically" related to us and we are "really" related to God. He asks, "How can the contemplation of any reality, even of the loftiest reality, beatify us if intrinsically it is absolutely *unrelated* to us in any way?" (15). Numerous theologians have made clear that Rahner misapplies what Aquinas means by "relation" in this context; see, e.g., Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M.Cap., *Does God Change?* (Still River, Mass.: St. Bede's Publications, 1985), 86-96; and *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 130-37. Second, Rahner argues that the contemplation of the Trinity does not truly engage us in a knowing of the particular persons, who remain interchangeable. He asks, "is our awareness of this mystery merely the knowledge of something purely extrinsic, which, as such, remains isolated from all existential knowledge about ourselves as in our present theology the treatise on the Trinity is isolated from other dogmatic treatises telling us something about ourselves conducive to our real salvation?" (15). An analysis of Aquinas's understanding of wisdom will show that the contemplation of the Trinity is, in his view, a transformative exercise. Far from "the knowledge of something purely extrinsic," contemplation of the Trinity belongs to the appropriation of our destiny of sharing in the life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet given Aquinas's theocentric account of wisdom, contemplation of the Trinity must be distinct (not isolated) from Christology and the doctrine of grace, *pace* Rahner's axiom. For contemplative purposes, conflation of the economic (our experience of the Trinity) and the immanent (the Trinity as such) must be avoided.

salvation history in a way that Rahner did not recognize.[6] To grasp how Aquinas's theology of the triune God is attuned to "God as experienced in salvation history in his free relations with creatures," we must revise our expectations about what kind of theology should flow from attention to salvation history. For Aquinas, a theology of God guided by salvation history must be contemplative in character, in order to reflect (while refining and deepening) the contemplative stance that characterizes the definitive prophetic and apostolic appropriation of God's self-revelation. In a world conditioned by idolatry, the words and deeds that reveal God *must* be appropriated sapientially, if their regulative function is to be adequately grasped.

To state the matter another way, this article will seek to demonstrate that the crucial means for retrieving Aquinas's Trinitarian theology—especially as regards its relationship to salvation history—will be reclaiming his vision of theology as contemplative wisdom.[7] As Otto Pesch has remarked (in the context of a lecture on justification and grace according to Aquinas), "the whole spirituality of Thomas Aquinas' theology" can be described as "Wisdom is salvation."[8] With this insight in mind, the article will proceed in three steps. I will first explore

[6] In *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34-64, A. N. Williams shows that the dynamism of the economy of salvation (ultimately ordered to deification) suffuses Aquinas's treatment of God as one and three. Williams demonstrates that for Aquinas contemplation of God-in-Himself (the "immanent" Trinity) does not result in a God "locked within itself," since contemplation belongs intrinsically to the graced movement by which we are conformed to the triune God, that is, deified. See also Williams's comment on Aquinas's denial that God has a "real relation" to creatures (67).

[7] Rowan Williams has undertaken a somewhat similar project with regard to Augustine's *De Trinitate*. See his "*Sapientia* and the Trinity: Reflections on the *De Trinitate*," in *Collectanea Augustiniana*, vol. 1, ed. B. Bruning (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 317-32. I am also indebted to the brief but excellent treatment of Aquinas's use of metaphysics in William J. Hill, O.P., *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 62-69.

[8] Otto Pesch, *Christian Existence according to Thomas Aquinas,* Etienne Gilson Lecture Series (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989), 2. Pesch explains, "For Christian existence is nothing else than to live out the unity of faith, hope and love, and that means to understand God's truth for the world and for human beings and to be related, 'attracted' by the Giver of that truth in love" (3).

Aquinas's complex account of wisdom, which he presents in four ways: wisdom as a (natural) intellectual virtue, wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit, wisdom as *sacra doctrina*, and Wisdom as the Son of God.[9] I will argue that Aquinas's theology of wisdom indicates the way in which his theology of the triune God integrates philosophical (metaphysical) terms and categories while remaining governed by scriptural revelation.

Second, I will examine theological wisdom in light of recent accounts of Aquinas's theology as pedagogy or protreptic, as well as Pierre Hadot's work on ancient philosophy as spiritual exercise. The purpose here will be to show why theocentric metaphysics is intrinsic to Aquinas's theological wisdom. I will suggest that Aquinas's theology of God (one and three) should be read as an exercise of contemplative ascent, in which Aquinas employs metaphysical tools as a means of intellectual ascesis in aid of the believer's participation in God's own knowledge.

Third, I will conclude by proposing that Aquinas's view of St. John the Evangelist as *the* contemplative of Wisdom incarnate is particularly instructive with regard to the relationship of Scripture and metaphysical tools in Aquinas's theology of the triune God. By showing that revelation cannot be separated from the inspired authors' contemplative practices, Aquinas's interpretation of St. John calls into question both the dichotomy between abstract or theoretical investigation of the triune God and the dynamisms of salvation history, and the corresponding conflation of "economic" and "immanent" Trinity.[10]

[9] For a thorough discussion of this topic, see Kieran Conley, O.S.B., *A Theology of Wisdom: A Study in St. Thomas* (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1963). See also the interesting study of L. Boadt, "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Biblical Wisdom Tradition," *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 575-611.

[10] Aristotle recognized that "it is because of wondering that men began to philosophize and do so now. . . . Now a man who is perplexed and wonders considers himself ignorant (whence a lover of myth, too, is in a sense a philosopher, for a myth is composed of wonders), so if indeed they philosophized in order to avoid ignorance, it is evident that they pursued science in order to understand and not in order to use it for something else" (*Metaphysics* A, 982b10-20, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle [Grinnell, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 1979]); cf. Denise Schaeffer, "Wisdom and Wonder in *Metaphysics* A:1-2," *The Review of Metaphysics* 52 (1999): 641-56; and Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture,* trans. G. Malsbary (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1998). As Hans Urs von Balthasar notes, "the greatest

II. WISDOM AND *SACRA DOCTRINA*

Commentators on Aquinas's treatise on God generally detach it from the previous question, which is (not incorrectly) viewed as a "methodological prolegomenon"[11] to the entire *Summa*. The problem with this approach is that it risks overlooking a key resource for recognizing the treatise on God as an exercise of theological wisdom.

In *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6, Aquinas asks whether *sacra doctrina* is the same as wisdom. In order to understand what he means by wisdom, it is necessary to read this article in light of his account, in the *Prima secundae,* of the intellectual virtues. Aquinas has a specific *intellectual* virtue in mind when he speaks of wisdom. Adopting the position taken by Aristotle in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics,* Aquinas states that wisdom is knowledge of what is most knowable in itself, but least knowable to our intellects, which know only through sense perception.[12] Spiritual realities are most knowable in themselves. Due to our intellects' dependence upon sensibles, spiritual realities are least knowable to us. As Aquinas shows in *STh* I, qq. 2-3, the ultimate spiritual reality is the first cause, which is pure act (and therefore transcends every genus). The intellectual virtue of *wisdom,* therefore, is the virtue of ordering all things in accord with knowledge of God as first cause, as well as with knowledge of the first causes in every particular genus. By knowing the first causes,

Christian thinkers (including Origen, Augustine, Anselm and Thomas Aquinas) consistently understand the *intellectus fidei* as including this interior completion of the philosophical act in theology" (H. U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics,* vol. 1, *Seeing the Form,* trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982], 146) Balthasar further remarks that "because of that final securing of reality which the believer who encounters God in Christ experiences, the theological vision makes it possible for the first time for the philosophical act of encounter with Being to occur in all its depth. . . . The correctness of such an integrated vision can also be seen from the philosophianic or contemplative attitude of faith which has its beginnings in the Bible, where it emerges in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and, in the New Testament, is realised especially in Paul and John: *God's Word is itself shot through with human contemplation, which contains within itself the truly philosophical act*" (ibid., emphasis added).

[11] Williams, *The Ground of Union,* 39.

[12] *STh* I-II, q. 57, a. 2.

the wise person "rightly judges all things and sets them in order, because there can be no perfect and universal judgment that is not based on the first causes."[13] On the basis of this knowledge of the principles of all things, the wise person is able to judge all the conclusions of the particular sciences or fields of knowledge. Insofar as wisdom demonstrates conclusions from principles, it is a science; however, since it judges all particular sciences by knowing their principles, it is more than a mere science.[14]

A second aspect relevant to the account in *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6 of *sacra doctrina* as wisdom is Aquinas's presentation of "wisdom" as one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gifts enable the person who possesses faith formed by charity to respond to the special prompting of the Holy Spirit. As Servais Pinckaers has noted,

> In the collaboration between grace and us, the virtues represent the active side of our participation; but their action needs to be completed by the gifts which dispose us to welcome the motions of the Spirit and constitute the passive or receptive side of the spiritual life; they render us docile to grace.[15]

The virtues, both natural and supernatural, engage our natural human resources, because they operate according to a human mode (the active side). The gifts operate according to a divine mode (the receptive side). They perfect the virtues by enabling our acts to transcend natural human resources. The gifts of the Holy Spirit conform the believer to Christ by *connaturalizing* the believer to God's ways.[16]

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., ad 1.

[15] Servais-Théodore Pinckaers, O.P., *La vie selon l'Esprit: Essai de théologie spirituelle selon saint Paul et saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 206. See also Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics,* trans. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. (3d ed.; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 151-57; and Romanus Cessario, O.P., *Christian Faith and the Theological Life* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 164-65.

[16] On connatural knowing according to Aquinas, see also A. Moreno, O.P., "The Nature of St. Thomas' Knowledge 'Per Connaturalitem,'" *Angelicum* 47 (1970): 44-62; cf. Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics,* 93.

The intellectual virtue of wisdom is limited to what human intelligence can acquire by its natural endowments. Such wisdom judges all things in light of first causes, as they can be known by natural human intelligence. In contrast, wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit judges all things instinctively on the basis of first Truth known by the assent of faith.[17] Aquinas remarks that "wisdom as a gift is more excellent than wisdom as an intellectual virtue, since it attains to God more intimately by a kind of union of the soul with Him."[18] Faith gives knowledge of God beyond mere natural human knowledge, because faith is a supernatural participation in God's own knowledge. Referring to this infinitely deeper knowledge, Aquinas cites 1 Corinthians 2:10, "the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."[19] The gift of wisdom is an ordering of all things on the basis of this deeper knowledge.

Aquinas also notes that the intellectual virtue of wisdom is the perfect use of natural reason, by which one orders or judges all things rightly, in accord with reason's natural participation in God's eternal law. The gift of wisdom, on the other hand, means *connaturality* with God's eternal law, so that reason no longer needs to make its inquiry. The gift of wisdom is thus associated by Aquinas with the virtue of charity, which perfects and elevates the will. Charity, Aquinas points out, causes "sympathy or connaturality for Divine things."[20] While caused by charity, therefore, the gift of wisdom is a perfection of the intellect, because the gift enables the believer to order all things rightly in relation to God known in faith.[21] In short, the gift of wisdom explains why Christians do not all need to be philosophers. Christians, who know first Truth in faith, are connaturalized to that knowledge by charity through the gift of wisdom. The ordering accomplished by wisdom as a gift (as opposed to wisdom as an intellectual virtue) is not only contemplative, but

[17] *STh* II-II, q. 45, a.1, ad 2.
[18] *STh* II-II, q.45, a.3, ad 1.
[19] *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 1.
[20] *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 2.
[21] Ibid.

also practical, because the gift of the Holy Spirit, in contrast to the intellectual virtue, directs all aspects of the person.[22]

In discussing *sacra doctrina* as wisdom, Aquinas makes reference to both the intellectual virtue and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He first distinguishes *sacra doctrina* as wisdom from the intellectual virtue of wisdom. It might seem that *sacra doctrina,* which is knowledge (*scientia*) of the things that have been divinely revealed (God and all things insofar as they are referred to God as their beginning and end),[23] merely complements and extends the ordering achieved by the intellectual virtue of wisdom. On this view, *sacra doctrina* would simply add knowledge inaccessible to natural reason, such as the teaching of the Trinity or of supernatural beatitude as humankind's ultimate end. As Brian Shanley has pointed out, however, revelation completely transforms our knowledge of all things: "The term *revelabilia* here bears the burden of describing the new horizon opened up by revelation; it denotes the capacity for reality to be grasped in the light of divine revelation."[24] *Sacra doctrina* is not simply teaching about revealed realities. Rather, it is an entirely new teaching, which takes up all that can be known naturally and orders (re-orders) it in light of the revelation of the *triune* God as our beginning and *supernatural* end. Shanley notes that what is produced is "an entirely new view of the whole based on the presentational dimension that results from faith's encounter with God revealing."[25] The new view of the whole is presented, according to Aquinas, in *sacra scriptura,* which belongs to the structure of "faith's encounter with God revealing."[26] At times,

[22] *STh* II-II, q. 45, a. 3.

[23] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 3. For an introduction to the development of Thomas's thought on *sacra doctrina,* as well as to the vast Thomistic literature on this topic from the generation after Thomas to the present, see especially Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., "Le savoir théologique chez saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 96 (1996): 355-96; and "Le savoir théologique chez les premiers thomistes," *Revue Thomiste* 97 (1997): 9-30.

[24] Brian J. Shanley, O.P., "*Sacra Doctrina* and the Theology of Disclosure," *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 177.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Jean-Pierre Torrell approvingly cites Max Seckler, *Das Heil in der Geschichte* (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1964), to the same effect. See Torrell, "Le savoir théologique chez saint Thomas d'Aquin," 361.

therefore, Aquinas uses "*sacra scriptura*" interchangeably with "*sacra doctrina,*" even though the latter results from the study and teaching of the former.[27]

In this new view of the whole, the intellectual virtue of wisdom, as a human achievement, is not negated. The believer who possesses the intellectual virtue of wisdom (not every believer, since charity infuses all the moral virtues, but does not infuse intellectual virtues) continues to attain knowledge of God as first cause, and to order all things in relation to God as first cause. The difference is that now this (*true*) metaphysical knowledge is surpassed. Whereas natural reason can only attain to knowledge of God by means of creatures, now the believer possesses a real participation in God's own knowledge.[28] As Aquinas states,

> sacred doctrine essentially treats of God viewed as the highest cause—not only so far as He can be known through creatures just as philosophers knew Him—*That which is known of God is manifest in them* (Rom. 1:19)—but also so far as He is known to Himself alone and revealed to others.[29]

By means of this participation in God's own knowledge, the believer reorders all things, now in relation to the triune God and the ultimate end of supernatural beatitude. This reordering is the task of *sacra doctrina,* understood as wisdom. *Sacra doctrina* remains wisdom according to a human mode: it is based upon revealed principles known in faith, but it requires for its task of ordering the normal methods of the mind. As Aquinas points out,

[27] Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8. James A. Weisheipl, O.P., outlined the relationship between *sacra doctrina* and *sacra scriptura* in "The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1," *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 49-80. In response to Weisheipl, Thomas C. O'Brien emphasized (following the work of G. F. van Ackeren) the nature of *sacra doctrina* as a human teaching consequent upon revelation. See O'Brien, "'Sacra Doctrina' Revisited: The Context of Medieval Education," *The Thomist* 41 (1977): 475-509. I would argue that O'Brien's view is more compatible with Weisheipl's than O'Brien himself seems to have thought.

[28] For a detailed discussion of this point, see Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in Our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology," *Angelicum* 76 (1999): 25-45.

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

sacra doctrina "is acquired by study, though its principles are obtained by revelation."[30]

Sacra doctrina as wisdom, in short, is not the same as the wisdom that is the gift of the Holy Spirit, nor is this latter wisdom a substitute for *sacra doctrina*. Certainly the two are intrinsically related, since *sacra doctrina* is based upon the supernatural virtue of faith, and all the virtues and gifts are infused simultaneously in the believer. Yet because study is necessary for *sacra doctrina,* the wisdom attained by natural reason (the intellectual virtue of wisdom) remains necessary even for the theologian who possesses the gift of the Holy Spirit. The truths known by metaphysical reasoning are not *displaced* by an infusion of revealed knowledge. Even so, the architectonic principle is now not God known by natural reason, but God's own knowledge, to use Mark Johnson's phrase, "in our frail minds."

Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into the structure of Aquinas's theory of knowledge, two points are worth mentioning before we proceed. First, Aquinas conceives of creaturely intellect as a created, finite participation in the divine intellect or the divine Wisdom.[31] In the human person as created, there already exists an analogy between human knowing and divine Wisdom. This analogy constitutes a capacity for the new embodiment of (supernatural) wisdom that characterizes the graced human being. Second, this "new creation" of the human being, in which by grace the human being participates infinitely more deeply in divine Wisdom, is not a human achievement but the fruit of the Incarnation. In the first chapter of the *Summa contra Gentiles,* Aquinas explains that "divine Wisdom testifies that He has assumed flesh and come into the world in order to make the truth known: 'For this I was born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth' (John

[30] Ibid., ad 3. The objection had argued that wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and so *sacra doctrina* (which requires study) could not be wisdom.

[31] See, e.g., *STh* I, q. 54, a. 1 (with regard to angelic intellect); I, q. 79, a. 4 (with regard to the human intellect).

18:37)."[32] *Sacra doctrina* involves human knowing (created participation in divine Wisdom) that has been supernaturally elevated to participate far more profoundly in divine Wisdom (by the grace of the Holy Spirit), without ceasing to be human knowing (acquired by study). Given this pattern of redemption accomplished by the missions of Wisdom incarnate and the Holy Spirit, it should come as no surprise that the structure of Aquinas's Trinitarian theology is best understood within the context of Aquinas's analogous use of "wisdom."

III. Theologizing as a Wisdom-Exercise[33]

In light of this examination of Aquinas's view of *sacra doctrina* as wisdom, one might evaluate Rahner's view that Aquinas's treatise on God (one and three) speaks "of the necessary metaphysical properties of God, and not very explicitly of God as experienced in salvation history in his free relations to his creatures" and makes "only formal statements about the three divine persons, with the help of concepts about the two processions and about the relations."[34] As noted above, Rahner seems to be suggesting that Aquinas's use of metaphysics compromises his ability to speak about God as experienced in salvation history. For Aquinas, however, the presence of metaphysical language (the practice of the intellectual virtue of wisdom) is not a sign that something has gone wrong, since salvation history describes humankind's—at first specifically Israel's—increasingly profound engagement with divine Wisdom.

[32] *ScG* I, c. 1 (trans. Anton C. Pegis [2d ed.; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975], 60). For a superb discussion of Aquinas's Wisdom-Christology, see Joseph Wawrykow, "Wisdom in the Christology of Thomas Aquinas," in *Christ Among the Medieval Dominicans*, ed. Kent Emery, Jr., and Joseph P. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 175-96.

[33] Jean-Pierre Torrell, in *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maître spirituel* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), discusses Aquinas's treatise on God with an emphasis (evidently in response to Heideggerian critiques of "onto-theology") on how Aquinas brings out God's transcendence. The central theme of Torrell's book, which is an introduction to Aquinas's theology, is Aquinas's contemplative and mystical orientation. This theme should be seen as inspiring my approach to Aquinas's treatise on God.

[34] Rahner, *The Trinity*, 18.

Yet, Rahner's own constructive Trinitarian theology, which is itself highly abstract, suggests that his concern may be not primarily with metaphysical language *per se,* but with *Aquinas*'s metaphysical language.[35] As Thomas O'Meara has put it, Rahner sought to produce "a modern systematic theology, modern in the sense of proceeding from a subject analyzed transcendentally, existentially, and historically."[36] Where Aquinas speaks of Trinitarian missions, for example, Rahner speaks of divine self-communication. O'Meara finds that Rahner's criticisms seek primarily to update Aquinas. For O'Meara, Aquinas's "thinking is largely theocentric, and from the eighteenth century on, human subjectivity, freedom, and science are the points of departure for human reflection and exploration."[37] Is the answer simply to transpose Aquinas's treatise from the Aristotelian metaphysical categories to the anthropocentric metaphysical categories of modern philosophy? Before adopting such an answer, one should revisit the concept of wisdom from a different perspective. As Aquinas states in the prologue to the *Summa Theologiae,* his theological ordering is intended to serve "the instruction of beginners." The question, then, is what is involved in such "instruction" (*eruditionem*). How is it that a proper *ordo disciplinae* turns beginners into masters of theological wisdom?[38]

In investigating this question, I will argue that the experience of God in salvation history—from Moses at the burning bush to the prophets to St. John at the foot of the cross—involves above all the contemplative discernment that reality is radically theocentric. Even apparently anthropocentric analogies take their bearings from contemplating the real in terms not of human

[35] Cf. ibid., 80-120. One might compare Rahner's approach with the far more narrative-dramatic approach of contemporaries such as Hans Urs von Balthasar.

[36] Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas, Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 190-91.

[37] Ibid., 246; cf. 248.

[38] I am arguing that the theocentric (contemplative) order of Aquinas's treatise on the triune God must characterize any contemporary Thomist Trinitarian theology. However, I am not suggesting that Thomist Trinitarian theology must confine itself to re-presenting, and commenting upon, each of Aquinas's questions in the order he presents them. This would reduce Thomist Trinitarian theology to a historical enterprise, rather than the contemporary systematic enterprise it should be.

subjectivity or historicity but of divine causality.[39] Theocentric metaphysics thus belongs to the pedagogical intention of Aquinas's theological wisdom: Aquinas's treatise on the triune God is intended to *form* the reader into a particular kind of knower, by guiding him through intellectual exercises that enable him to experience, through contemplation, the God of salvation history.

The best discussions of this pedagogical intention—which runs throughout Aquinas's corpus—concern the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Mark Jordan and Thomas Hibbs (the latter acknowledging a debt to the former) have argued that theological wisdom is for Aquinas essentially pedagogy or protreptic. I will not enter into the debates over the structure of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, in which context the approach of Jordan and Hibbs is contested.[40] Rather, my purpose is simply to appropriate their work insofar as it provides evidence that, for Aquinas, theologizing is an exercise that seeks to transform as well as to inform. Although the *Summa Theologiae* adopts a very different structure from the *Summa contra Gentiles*,[41] in both works Aquinas deploys metaphysical (theocentric) analysis to raise or convert the mind to the self-revealing God who is triune spiritual substance and uncaused cause of all things.

Mark Jordan comes to the *Summa contra Gentiles* with a central question in mind: "How is the reader meant to be engaged by this avowedly persuasive work?"[42] His question might also be

[39] Regarding the role that meditation upon divine causality (the five ways to prove the existence of God) plays in Aquinas's theology of the triune God, cf. Hankey, *God in Himself*, 55-56, 68-74, 139-42.

[40] For an introduction (lacking a discussion of Hibbs's work) to the debate, see Rudi A. te Velde, "Natural Reason in the *Summa contra Gentiles*," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1994): 42-70. The standard work on the *Summa contra Gentiles* is R.-A. Gauthier, *Somme contre les gentils: Introduction*, Collection Philosophie Européenne dirigée par Henri Hude (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1993). See also Michel Corbin, *Le chemin de la théologie chez Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), and Albert Patfoort, O.P., *Thomas d'Aquin: Les clés d'une théologie* (Paris: FAC, 1983).

[41] On this point, see Gilles Emery, O.P., "Le traité de saint Thomas sur la Trinité dans la *Somme contre les Gentils*," *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995): 5-40.

[42] Mark D. Jordan, "The Protreptic Structure of the '*Summa Contra Gentiles*'," *The Thomist* 50 (1986): 174.

phrased in terms of formation: how is the reader meant to be formed? What transformation in the reader does Aquinas desire his *Summa contra Gentiles* to accomplish? Jordan's answer is that Aquinas intends to draw the reader through the insights and errors of the "Gentiles"—the ancient Greek philosophers—to the fullness of Christian faith.[43] The pedagogical purpose is to show believers how Christian wisdom includes truths (about God) that can be philosophically demonstrated, as well as truths that cannot be so demonstrated. As Jordan explains,

> in order to teach believers about what can and cannot be demonstrated, Thomas must undertake a persuasive clarification of the truth of faith. As it teaches believers how to persuade, the *Contra Gentiles* must also persuade believers to become habituated in the whole of Christian wisdom.[44]

Christian wisdom, insofar as it moves beyond faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit, cannot be attained without acquiring the practices of philosophical wisdom (the intellectual virtue of wisdom).

As Thomas Hibbs states, therefore, "The text [of the *Summa contra Gentiles*] presupposes some measure of intellectual virtue in its readers and provides ample opportunity for further exercise of those virtues."[45] Aquinas must persuade his readers to allow their conceptions of God to be transformed in light of the kind of

[43] Ibid., 184.

[44] Ibid., 190-91. Rudi A. te Velde takes issue with Jordan's claim: "It seems to me misleading to read in the use of *convincere* an intention of rhetorical persuasion. The twofold mode of truth is primarily a logical division, a division of the truth claims of faith into one part that can be demonstratively made known as true in the light of natural reason and another, the truth of which cannot be made known in the light of reason." (Te Velde, "Natural Reason in the *Summa contra Gentiles*," 55) Te Velde's point is that the arguments from natural reason contained in the first three books of the *Summa contra Gentiles* cannot be "persuasive" for believers, "since reason does not contribute to the inner truth and certainty of faith—the truth of which is founded in God's knowledge of himself (*prima veritas*)—but only to the way the truth of faith can be appropriated within the domain of human experience and understanding." (55) The question, however, is whether he has grasped what Jordan means by "habituation" into Christian wisdom.

[45] Thomas S. Hibbs, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas: An Interpretation of the Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 3. For more insight into Hibbs's approach to the *Summa contra Gentiles*, see idem, "Kretzmann's Theism vs. Aquinas's Theism: *Interpreting the Summa Contra Gentiles*," *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 603-22.

intellectual probing that can dispel intellectual idolatry. Moreover, Aquinas's arguments require his readers to become learners in his school of intellectual virtue, through which he seeks (in Hibbs's words) "to inculcate intellectual virtue and uproot the sources of intellectual vice."[46] Readers who wish to know God solely through revelation must be persuaded to recognize that the Christian God, while not the god of the philosophers, cannot be known apart from philosophical practices and inquiries, whose complexity must increase when the believer moves from simple faith to the pursuit of the wisdom of *sacra doctrina*, faith seeking understanding.[47] In this vein, Hibbs remarks, "Appreciation of Aquinas's teaching entails apprehending its arguments from the vantage point afforded by the possession of the virtues."[48] Neither Aquinas nor Hibbs, however, is sanguine about whether the reader already possesses the required virtues. Rather, Aquinas's teaching is intended as pedagogy. By integrating dialectical inquiry with key passages from the revealed "narrative" of *sacra scriptura*, Aquinas prompts the reader (Christian or non-Christian) to enter into the fullness of wisdom. The reader is invited to join in the dialectical inquiry, and to see how that inquiry, as properly philosophical, both enriches and is enriched (fulfilled and transformed) by the Christian "narrative."

Hibbs explains that "the dialectical structure of the *Contra Gentiles* seeks to provoke the reader to inquiry, to an appropriation of the virtue of wisdom."[49] Aquinas's theological argumentation is not merely intended to inform the reader; its purpose is also to shape the kind of reader who will be able to understand the argumentation. Understanding will not necessarily mean *agreeing*. It will mean grasping the interplay of wisdoms (the intellectual virtue, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and *sacra doctrina* or *sacra scriptura*) and judging the text in light of the

[46] Hibbs, *Dialectic and Narrative*, 23.

[47] As evidence for the necessity of philosophical practices, recall the Egyptian monks of Anthony's time who were shocked to hear that God does not have an arm or a hand, contrary to the letter of Scripture.

[48] Hibbs, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas*, 4.

[49] Ibid., 5.

text's conception of wisdom as formative teaching. Aquinas never claimed to have the last word; as Alasdair MacIntyre has indicated, "each article, each question takes the argument as far as it needs to be taken in the light of what Aquinas knew of the discussions of each particular argument so far but leaves it open to be taken further."[50] But as a faithful teacher of *sacra doctrina,* Aquinas was also aware that students—even highly advanced students—need to be guided in the acquisition and deepening of the virtues. Intellectual virtue is no exception to this rule. Behind Aquinas's theological works is the desire to teach revealed wisdom in a way that forms in the reader (or hearer) the ability to engage truth at the highest intellectual level, that is, the ability to participate more and more deeply in the dynamic presence (through faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit) of *God's own knowledge* in our frail minds.

Since, as we have seen, wisdom for Aquinas is primarily knowledge of God, the teaching required of the wise person will primarily be teaching about the triune God. We have shown that this teaching, in Aquinas's view, must not only inform but also *form,* by eliciting in the reader the practices that will enable the reader to raise his mind to apprehend more profoundly the God experienced in faith. It remains to place Aquinas's concept of wisdom (and thus of theology) in the context of recent theoretical analysis of ancient philosophy.

Jordan argues that Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles* belongs to the ancient philosophical genre of protreptic.[51] Protreptic differed from philosophy *per se* in that it functioned as a kind of introduction or invitation to the practice of philosophy. Jordan explains, "A protreptic was originally a persuasion to the study and practice of some art or skill; for philosophic writers, it became an exhortation to the practice of the philosophic art, which required virtues of inquiry and contemplation."[52] Jordan suggests that Aquinas found an exemplar of ancient protreptic in

[50] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 164.

[51] Jordan, "The Protreptic Structure of the *Summa Contra Gentiles,*" 191f.

[52] Ibid., 192.

the first two chapters of Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* which play an important role in Aquinas's own conception of wisdom. According to Jordan, Aquinas transformed his model into a call "to progress in the practice of Christian wisdom."[53] Since this practice is, for the *viator,* always ongoing, Aquinas's protreptic is not simply a prelude to his theological work, but lies at the heart of the work itself.

Jordan also notes a similarity with Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed:* just as the *Guide* ends with the implications of Torah for human life, so likewise each of the four books of the *Summa contra Gentiles* ends with discussions of the human good (ultimately, sharing in God's beatitude).[54] As is well known, the same *exitus-reditus* pattern is found in the *Summa Theologiae*. On the basis of this pattern, Jordan states,

> The structure of the *Contra Gentiles*, as of the *Guide*, is not so much a descending deduction as an ascending exhortation. . . . The highest purpose of the work is not apodictic but epideictic, not demonstrative but hortatory. In short, it is a protreptic to the contemplation of God; it is an ascent to God through the world and law which culminates the "practice," that is, the possession of the wisdom of a vision.[55]

The value of theological wisdom thus lies in its practice of contemplative ascent, which deepens the participation in God's knowledge that the believer already has in faith, and which is perfected in the beatific vision. By practicing theological wisdom, the believer is enabled to anticipate, and to live in accord with, the ultimate end of *deification* (as A. N. Williams has rightly emphasized) that marks the transition from grace to glory.

Jordan's comparison of Aquinas's work with ancient protreptic is valuable for its emphasis on theological wisdom as something that is not only taught but *practiced.* Aquinas's teaching about God (one and three) has to be seen as an exemplar of and invitation to the practice of contemplation. However, since protreptic is basically encouragement or exhortation, the risk

[53] Ibid., 194.
[54] Ibid., 199.
[55] Ibid.

inherent in the comparison is that Aquinas's account of theological wisdom will be confused with rhetorical theology as defined recently by David Cunningham: "theology gains its greatest insights when it leaves matters of truth to God and strives, rather, toward verisimilitude—toward what appears to be true."[56] Truth, Cunningham argues, is found only in the beatific vision. Aquinas, in contrast, is fully convinced that theological wisdom attains truth here and now, not only in the articles of faith but also in its own deductions. Cunningham's claim about the nature of theology is uncomfortably close to Jordan's remark that Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles* is simply "a protreptic to the contemplation of God," as if (as with the distinction between protreptic and philosophy proper) such contemplation did not really occur until the beatific vision. Although this is not apparently Jordan's meaning, nonetheless the difficulty remains. Unlike protreptic, theological wisdom is not simply hortatory, even as regards participation in the ultimate end. Rather, just as grace is a foretaste of glory, so also theological wisdom is, while not beatitude, a real *foretaste* of beatific contemplation of God's truth.

For this reason, it is also useful to compare Aquinas's account of theological wisdom with Pierre Hadot's discussion of philosophy as spiritual exercise. Hadot has demonstrated that

> the Socratic dialogue turns out to be a kind of communal spiritual exercise. In it, the interlocutors are invited to participate in such inner spiritual exercises as examination of conscience and attention to oneself; in other words, they are urged to comply with the famous dictum, "Know thyself."[57]

The spiritual exercise is not, Hadot makes clear, reducible to a moral exercise. Rather, for Plato at least,

> every dialectical exercise, precisely because it is an exercise of pure thought, subject to the demands of the Logos, turns the soul away from the sensible

[56] David S. Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion: In Aid of a Rhetoric of Christian Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 4.

[57] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 90.

world, and allows it to convert itself towards the Good. It is the spirit's itinerary towards the divine.[58]

In this view, not merely protreptic but also philosophy proper belongs to the exhortation by which the person turns towards higher things. Philosophy itself is the practice of turning away from the temporal towards the eternal; as a practice, philosophy involves meditating on higher things in order to *encourage* oneself to persevere. By practicing philosophy, one becomes adept at living philosophically.

Is Aquinas's treatise an example of such a spiritual exercise? On the one hand, the answer is no. Because of the supernatural virtue of faith, Aquinas's treatise on God is not intended as a (Stoic) aid in perseverance. His treatise also involves scriptural narrative in a way that classical philosophy obviously does not. Yet on the other hand, with these caveats, Aquinas's treatise *can* be seen as a spiritual exercise. The treatise, written for a community of learners, is intended as a contemplative guide into the reality of God, as self-relating and as cause of all things, and thus into "God as experienced in salvation history" as the wise and loving God who freely creates and redeems. In this way, it preserves the contemplative and pedagogical intention of the classical philosophical dialogues, despite differing greatly in form. Similarly, the treatise makes clear that the theologian must grasp his own rational processions of knowing and loving, since these spiritual acts of the human person undergird analogous discourse about the God who is spiritual, rather than material, act.[59] In light of the tradition of spiritual exercise recognized by Hadot, therefore, one can identify Aquinas's treatise as a form of spiritual exercise, dynamically ordered to contemplation of divine truth, and attentive to the dictum "Know thyself." However, the differences may still be stronger than the similarities. As Hibbs shows, scriptural "narrative" is an integral part of Aquinas's

[58] Ibid., 93.

[59] This point is emphasized by Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

theological wisdom. By way of elaborating this point, I will turn to Aquinas's reading of St. John.

IV. Isaiah and St. John the Evangelist as Contemplatives

Aquinas considers the narrative of St. John the Evangelist to be the model of the contemplative ascent to knowledge of God. Jean-Pierre Torrell has praised the *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John* as "certainly among the most finished and most profound of the commentaries that Thomas left."[60] Aquinas composed this commentary between 1270 and 1272, at the height of his theological powers. In the prologue, Aquinas indicates that he will read the Gospel of John in light of Isaiah 6:1, "I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the whole house was full of his majesty, and the things that were under him filled the Temple."[61] He explains that this passage from Isaiah's mystical vision illuminates the manner of St. John's contemplation of the Lord Jesus. By beginning with Isaiah's mystical vision, Aquinas makes clear (following Augustine) that the Gospel of John is above all the fruit of an inspired contemplative. For Aquinas, the author's contemplation of Jesus is the central mark of the gospel. He thus feels justified in employing Isaiah 6:1 as an exegetical tool. Using one contemplative to explore the work of another, he writes of St. John's contemplation: "It is described as high, full, and perfect. It is high: *I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne*; it is

[60] Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas,* vol. 1: *The Person and His Work,* trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 339. The text of the commentary is a *reportatio* done by Reginald of Piperno.

[61] For a discussion of Aquinas's method of exegeting John's Prologue, see C. Clifton Black, "St. John's Commentary on the Johannine Prologue: Some Reflections on Its Character and Implications," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 681-98. Although he is wary of some aspects of Aquinas's procedure, Black remarks that Aquinas's "unmitigated concern to read the Bible holistically—to interpret the Fourth Gospel within its larger scriptural context—resonates with, and might inform, the current resurgence of interest in canonical criticism." (696) See also R. Guindon, "La théologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin dans le rayonnement du 'Prologue' de saint John," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 29 (1959): 5-23 and 121-42.

full: *and the whole house was full of his majesty*; and it was perfect: *and the things that were under him filled the Temple.*"[62]

As Aquinas goes on to sketch in more detail the meaning of "high, full, and perfect," we find that this threefold account of John's contemplation reflects the structure of Aquinas's Trinitarian theology. Before exploring this point, however, we should note how he depicts the process of revelation. The sole source of divine revelation is Jesus, but revelation is not an extrinsic event, as if Jesus simply enunciated doctrinal truths which were then codified, without any process of subjective appropriation on the part of the disciples. Rather, revelation depends upon the (inspired) interior preparation and prayerful contemplation of the disciples who receive and reciprocate Jesus' love. St. John, Aquinas explains, was able to grasp and to present the mystery of Jesus' divinity in a more profound way than were the other evangelists because "among the other disciples of the Lord, John was more loved by Christ."[63] The spiritual exercise that informs *sacra doctrina* is directed by Christ as spiritual master, who is the source of theological wisdom. Put another way, *sacra doctrina* depends upon friendship with Christ. As Aquinas remarks,

> And because secrets are revealed to friends, "I have called you friends because everything I have heard from my father I have made known to you" (below 15:15), Jesus confided his secrets in a special way to that disciple who was specially loved.[64]

If the *Summa Theologiae*'s treatise on God (one and three) is a spiritual exercise intended to form as well as to inform the reader, then this spiritual exercise is necessarily rooted in contemplation

[62] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John*, p. 1, prol., no. 1 (trans. James A. Weisheipl and Fabian R. Larcher [Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1980], 23). For clarification of the text of Isaiah used by Aquinas, see Weisheipl's appendix 1, pp. 447-49.

[63] *In Joan.*, p. 1, prol., no. 11 (Weisheipl, trans., 27). Aquinas cites John 21:20.

[64] Ibid. For an excellent discussion of what friendship involves for Aquinas, see Guy Mansini, O.S.B., "*Similitudo*, *Communicatio*, and the Friendship of Charity in Aquinas," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médievale*, Supplementa 1: *Thomistica*, ed. E. Manning (Leuven: Peeters, 1995): 1-26.

of the master/friend, Jesus Christ—a contemplation of the Word through the Holy Spirit.

This point becomes clear in Aquinas's elaboration of the terms "high, full, and perfect." The term "high" describes John's contemplation of Christ's possession, as Word, of the divine essence. Aquinas explains,

> Now a fourfold height is indicated in this contemplation of John. A height of authority; hence he says, I saw the Lord. A height of eternity; when he says, seated. One of dignity, or nobility of nature; so he says, on a high throne. And a height of incomprehensible truth; when he says, lofty. It is in these four ways that the early philosophers arrived at the knowledge of God.[65]

This last sentence indicates the crucial point that Aquinas wishes to make. In the remainder of his account of "high" contemplation, Aquinas argues that John's contemplation of Jesus' divinity is paralleled by the metaphysical arguments of Plato and Aristotle.[66] John's contemplation, Aquinas suggests, attains and (in the gospel) presupposes the conclusions about God's essence reached metaphysically by the great philosophers, even though John himself is not a "philosopher" in the sense that Plato and Aristotle were. The four ways—authority (the argument from design), eternity (the argument from causality), dignity (the argument from participation), and incomprehensibility (the argument from finite truths to infinite Truth)—show that Aquinas regards his own inquiries into the divine essence (God as one) as part of the spiritual exercise of contemplation, which alone enables a "high" understanding of God.

John's contemplation is also "full." Aquinas states that "contemplation is full when someone is able to consider all the effects of a cause in the cause itself, that is, when he knows not only the essence of the cause, but also its power, according as it can extend out to many things."[67] When one recalls that Aquinas's treatise on God under the rubric of oneness includes questions regarding such points as the existence of God in things,

[65] *In Joan.*, p. 1, prol., no. 2.
[66] Ibid., nos. 3-6 (Weisheipl, trans., 23-25).
[67] Ibid., no. 7 (Weisheipl, trans., 257).

the providence of God, and so forth, one recognizes that Aquinas is teaching that contemplation of God must first be "high" and "full" because it must first address the aspects that pertain to God's unity, in order to be able then to rise to contemplation of God's threeness without falling into a polytheistic account of God's presence. This aspect of "fullness" justifies the scope of *sacra doctrina,* which treats *all things* in relation to God.

The third term with which Aquinas describes John's contemplation of Jesus is "perfect." For Aquinas, contemplation is "perfect" when it attains its object. For contemplation to be perfect, therefore, the person must know and love (by faith and charity) the Trinity as Creator and Redeemer. As he states in *STh* I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3,

> There are two reasons why the knowledge of the divine persons was necessary for us. It was necessary for the right idea of creation [because it reveals God's freedom in creating]. . . . In another way, and chiefly, [it was necessary] that we may think rightly concerning the salvation of the human race, accomplished by the Incarnate Son, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* treats what pertains to God as three, he is imitating John's contemplation insofar as it is "perfect." To know God as one is insufficient (even though the true God *is* one: God's oneness cannot, for Aquinas, be *subsumed conceptually* into threeness along the lines proposed by philosophers and theologians who argue that being itself is intrinsically relational) because it is only by knowing and loving *God as three*—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that human beings are fully taken up into the dynamism that is grace and glory, the freely given perfection of the *imago dei.*

In short, contemplation of the Lord Jesus will manifest itself in a treatise on God that is "high, full, and perfect." Contemplation of the authority, eternity, dignity, and incomprehensibility of the Son of God is not opposed to the metaphysical efforts of the philosophers. When contemplated with the intellectual virtue of wisdom, the divine Word will reveal truth accessible to reason alone, unenlightened by faith. Yet the

contemplation of the Son of God attains its perfection only in the contemplation (possible only in faith) of the Trinity. The process is not from a false "one God" to a true "triune" God. On the contrary, each manner of contemplation reveals necessary truth. If one's contemplation is not "high" and "full," in accord with the intellectual virtue of wisdom, it will certainly not attain to the "perfect" contemplation that can only be had in faith. The movement of the *De Deo* trains the person to know and love God in the "perfect" way. Aquinas's *De Deo* is thus a spiritual exercise under the guidance of the one master, Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, who teaches us about himself (and thereby *befriends* us) through inspired contemplatives such as Isaiah and John.

V. Concluding Remarks

The above reflections have avoided the question of how the incarnate Son's Cross and Resurrection should instruct theological claims about the Trinitarian relations. This question, present in Rahner but most powerfully brought to the fore by Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, has recently become a pressing one for theologians who wish to evaluate the contemporary relevance of Aquinas's approach. I hope, however, that I have prepared the ground for further reflection along these lines. This article has been limited to exploring the structural intention of Aquinas's approach to the doctrine of the triune God, in light of the widespread criticism that Aquinas's approach obscures "God as experienced in salvation history." I have suggested that Aquinas's Trinitarian theology should be understood as an exercise in sapiential contemplation, which requires that *sacra doctrina* integrate the intellectual virtue of wisdom. In such a framework, metaphysical tools are seen to be integral to salvation history: contemplative wisdom belongs to the dynamism by which God freely relates in salvation history to human beings.

As William Hill has pointed out, Aquinas operates out of a

concern for theology as real assent of the intelligence to God. . . . The abstractness of procedure must not be misconstrued: it is not a question of knowledge *of* the abstract, but of abstract (and so penetrating) knowledge of the actual and so the concretely real.[68]

Thus the theoretical approach that Aquinas adopts in his treatise on God (one and three) need not distance the reader from the biblical narrative of salvation history. On the contrary, the philosophical terms in which Aquinas, as a contemplative, probes the scriptural evidence to God's simultaneous oneness and threeness recapitulates, in the theological realm, the posture of the holy men and women in the Bible (e.g., Isaiah and John) vis-à-vis the triune God's self-revelation. Through the contemplative practices of Aquinas's treatise, the reader becomes a deeper *participant* in salvation history. He learns how to join more profoundly in Israel's invocation of the "*one* God" and in the apostolic invocation of the God who is revealed by Christ Jesus to be one *and* three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By means of the metaphysical ascesis, the reader is drawn closer to the revealed God whose simultaneous oneness and threeness invites inexhaustible contemplation. This movement occurs when, by participating more and more deeply in God's knowledge of himself as one and three, we are drawn—impelled by love—into the transcendent mystery of God's own inexpressible *communio*.[69]

[68] Hill, *The Three-Personed God*, 65; cf. his important programmatic essay, "Seeking Foundations for Faith: Symbolism of Person or Metaphysics of Being?" in William J. Hill, O.P., *Search for the Absent God: Tradition and Modernity in Religious Understanding*, ed. Mary Catherine Hilkert, O.P. (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 17-32.

[69] I would like to thank Gregory LaNave and an anonymous reviewer from *The Thomist* for extremely helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

The Thomist 64 (2000): 619-29

THE PROBLEM OF TRINITARIAN PROCESSIONS IN THOMAS'S *ROMAN COMMENTARY*[1]

WILLIAM B. STEVENSON

St. John's College
Annapolis, Maryland

It seems providential, at a time in which we have seen a revival of scholarly interest in the Trinity, that a work of Thomas devoted largely to an explication of the doctrine of the Trinity should have been discovered.[2] The *Roman Commentary* gives us a glimpse into the mind of Thomas as it was immediately prior to fashioning what must be considered his definitive treatment of the doctrine.[3] That treatment, found in *Summa Theologiae* I, qq.

[1] A version of this paper was presented at the Thirty-Fourth International Congress of Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 1999.

[2] We now know that Thomas commented on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard twice. In addition to the *Scriptum* on all four books of the *Sentences,* which he wrote while a bachelor at Paris (1252-56), he commented on the first book a second time as a master (1265-66). Such an undertaking was unusual for a master, but as the occasion for this second commentary was Thomas's establishment of a Dominican *studium* in Rome, it may have been intended for the instruction of those just starting their theological studies—that is, those "beginners" referred to in the Prologue of the *Summa Theologiae.* This second commentary is now commonly referred to as the *Roman Commentary* in order to distinguish it from the Parisian *Scriptum* of a decade earlier. The *Roman Commentary* is found in Oxford, Lincoln College Ms. Lat. 95. Leonard E. Boyle positively established Thomas's authorship of the text in "'Alia lectura fratris Thome,'" *Mediaeval Studies* 45 (1983): 418-29. The critical edition of the text is being prepared by Leonard E. Boyle and John F. Boyle. The texts used in this article are working texts prepared by John F. Boyle and are at this point strictly provisional. For incipits and explicits, see Mark F. Johnson, "'Alia lectura fratris Thome': A List of the New Texts of St. Thomas Aquinas found in Lincoln College, Oxford, MS. Lat. 95," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 57 (1990): 34-61.

[3] For a further examination of the practical and theoretical exigencies of Thomas's Trinitarian thought in the *Roman Commentary,* see John F. Boyle "The Ordering of Trinitarian Teaching in Thomas Aquinas' Second Commentary on Lombard's Sentences,"

27-43, masterfully transforms Augustine's Trinitarian thought, which restricted the image of the Trinity to the *ratio superior* of the human person, by setting it within the framework of an Aristotelian ontology. Thomas's re-casting of Augustine's psychological analogy into an Aristotelian framework is a remarkable achievement because it allowed him to sublate an analogy based on a psychology of the soul into a general metaphysical analysis of cognitional acts.[4] Hence, when one reads qq. 27-29 of the *Prima pars* one finds a thinker for whom the relation between intra-divine processions, relations, and persons has ceased to be a problem.

The Trinitarian theology of the *Summa* is, of course, not merely the result of identifying Aristotelian equivalents to Augustine's *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas.*[5] Indeed, that triad is conspicuously absent. The *Summa*'s treatment of the Trinity is the product of a much more radical re-appropriation of Augustine. We must remember that no fewer than 22 "trinities" are found in Augustine's work, 13 of which are discussed in the *De Trinitate.* In the *Summa,* we have the intra-divine processions, conceived according to a single analogy of intelligible emanation, which ground the relations, which in turn ground and, insofar as they subsist, are the divine persons. We now know that the mastery demonstrated by this sort of seamless treatment of the doctrine came only at the end of a life spent wrestling with Augustine's legacy. In the *Roman Commentary* we see Thomas's final sustained attempt at developing a Trinitarian theology on the analogy of memory, intellect, and will. It is an attempt he

Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale Supplementa (1995): 125-36.

[4] Perhaps the most detailed study of this transformation of Augustinian Trinitarian thought is Bernard Lonergan's *Verbum* articles, originally published in *Theological Studies* 7 (1946): 349-92; 8 (1947): 35-79, 404-44; 10 (1949): 3-40, 359-93. Lonergan later augmented these and assembled them in book form. The critical edition of the book is published as volume 2 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* under the title of *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas,* ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). This essay is indebted to Lonergan's study of the development of the general notion of *verbum* in the thought of Aquinas.

[5] This seems to be the task to which Thomas sets himself in the *De Veritate.* Cf. Lonergan,*Verbum,* 221.

ultimately abandoned in order to begin work on the *Summa*. By attending to the structure of the *Roman Commentary* as well as to the use Thomas makes of the Augustinian triad of *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas,* we may arrive at a clearer understanding of Thomas's mature Trinitarian thought as well as a firmer grasp of the implications of the *ordo doctrinae,* which governs that thought.

I. The Distinction between Memory and Intellect

Unlike the *Summa,* in which the discussion of Trinity is immediately preceded by the treatise *De Deo uno,* the *Roman Commentary* considers the *imago Dei* (d. 3) as a prologue to its extended treatment of the Trinity (d. 4ff.). The "magnificent disorder" of the *Commentary,* however, becomes apparent when one considers that earlier, in d. 2, q. 2, which is concerned with the *summum bonum,* Thomas gives what seems like a premature disquisition on the processions of word and love within a simple being as a way of leaving open the possibility of a plurality of persons in the supreme good. One might expect that his discussion of the *imago Dei* would develop the notion that the emanation of word and love within human rational consciousness is the locus of that image. It does not. Thomas is compelled by Lombard's text to comment on the Augustinian triad of *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas*—a task that presents some special difficulties to the Aristotelian. This is most apparent in Thomas's treatment of memory.

To begin with, in his discussion of *mens* in d. 3, q. 3, a. 1,[6] Thomas points out that Aristotle and Augustine have very different notions of *memoria*. According to Aristotle, memory pertains to the sensitive, rather than the intellective, part of the soul.[7] Memory extends to the concrete and particular; intellect abstracts from the here and now or the there and then. For Aristotle, the very existence of science depends on this fact of

[6] "Quid sit mens" (124ra-b).

[7] "Secundum Philosophus, memoria est in parte sensitiua anime" (*Roman Comm.,* d.3, q. 3, a. 1, obj. 3 [124ra-b]).

cognition. The "here and now," which Thomas designates by such terms as *materia individualis, materia designata,* and *materia signata,* is "irrelevant to all scientific explanation; it is an irrelevant a priori; time and place as such explain nothing."[8] Thus, for Archimedes, the baths of Syracuse and King Hiero's votive crown were in the decisive sense irrelevant to his insight into the principles of displacement and specific gravity; that insight was only extrinsically conditioned by those now legendary factors. Now because we are not angels human understanding is always insight into what Aristotle calls "phantasm."[9] But the intellective part of the soul does not remain within the limits of the sensible and imaginable. Rather, it grasps the intelligible in the image; it abstracts from that which in its particularity cannot be an explanatory factor. In the third book of his commentary on the *De Anima,* Thomas sums the matter up simply, saying that "the intellective part of the soul understands species abstracted from phantasms."[10]

Memory, on the other hand, pertains to the past precisely as past, and so is a sort of extension of sense which only knows the here and now. As such, it cannot be intellective, although it provides the phantasms into which the intellect will abstract intelligible species. Thomas knows that, as it stands, Aristotle's concept of memory deals the deathblow to Augustine's triad inasmuch as what purports to be an analogy intrinsically unconditioned by space and time would after all be stuck in the sensible or imaginable—a glorified clover-leaf analogy. This account of memory, of course, is not what Augustine meant by *memoria* at all, but Thomas's defense of Augustine is puzzling. Augustine, Thomas observes, understood memory to pertain not only to the past, but also to the present and future: "And therefore [memory] is not in the sensitive part of the soul, since

[8] Lonergan, *Verbum,* 53.

[9] Common experience affirms this: "Quilibet in se ipso experiri potest, quod quando aliquis conatur aliquid intelligere, format sibi aliqua phantasmata per modu exemplorum, in quibus quasi inspiciat quod intelligere studet." Summa Theologiae, I, q. 84, a. 7.

[10] "pars animae intellectiva intelligit species a phantasmatibus abstractas" (*De Anima* III, lect. 12 [§777]).

sense does not extend itself, except to the present only; rather, it is in the intellective part, which extends itself to the past and future."[11]

This explanation is problematic for several reasons. To begin with, broadening the scope of memory to include the present and future only sidesteps the problem posed by the Aristotelian notion of memory. It is clear that the senses cannot extend to the past or, for that matter, the future. But Aristotle's point is that there is a real distinction between an understanding which has its genesis at a particular place and time but for which those factors are essentially irrelevant, and a recollection of the past as past. Properly speaking, the intellective soul does not remember; "to know the past as past, like knowing the present is the work of sense."[12] Furthermore, by declaring that memory pertains to the present Thomas is conceding that indeed it is not possible fully to extricate *memoria* from the sensitive part of the soul, for he states explicitly that the senses extend themselves to the here and now. Although memory of the present is distinguished from sense knowledge here, Thomas does not provide the grounds for that distinction. Finally, extending the province of memory to the future fails to overcome the challenge presented by Aristotelian psychology. There is a prima facie plausibility to the claim that anticipation or knowledge of the future must be purely intellective. While we have sense knowledge of the present and recollections of past particulars, we certainly cannot claim to have such knowledge of the future. Since knowledge of future contingents lies outside man's natural powers, must not any knowledge of the future necessarily be "abstract"? Yet, as one of Thomas's own examples from the sciences illustrates, even such "memory" of the future cannot claim to be purely intellective. Thomas himself observes in the *De Veritate* that the astronomer

[11] "Ad tertium dicendum quod memoria aliter sumitur ab Aristotele et aliter ab Augustino. Aristoteles enim accipit ibi memoriam prout est preteritorum tantum, et secundum hoc pertinet ad sensitivam partem que cognoscit hic et nunc. Ab Augustino autem sumitur largius prout scilicet est preteritorum, presentium, et futurorum. Et ideo non est in sensitiva cum sensus non extendat se nisi ad presentia tantum, set est in intellectiua que ad preterita et futura se extendit" (*Roman Comm.*, d. 3, q. 3, a. 1, ad 3 [124ra-b]).

[12] Lonergan, *Verbum*, 53. Cf. *De Verit.*, q. 10, a. 2.

is able to predict all the eclipses of coming centuries, but he does not, as a scientist, know them in their particularity.[13] Lonergan puts it this way: "his science as such will not give him knowledge of any particular eclipse as particular 'sicut rusticus cognoscit'; for insofar as the astronomer knows future eclipses as particular, it is only by relating his calculations to a sensibly given here and now."[14]

Thus, the problem with this defense of Augustinian *memoria* is that it seems to fail to take into account the decisive fact that past, present, and future as such have no intrinsic bearing on the intelligent grasp of intelligibles. While it is indeed true that the intellective memory of Augustine extends to past, present, and future, the explanation in the *Roman Commentary* fails to explain why it is intellective. Such an explanation is critical if Thomas is to succeed at making Augustine's triad work within the context of Aristotelian science. Intelligence in act always prescinds from the particularities of space and time. When this is not adverted to, the distinction that Thomas draws between image and vestige[15] is obliterated and so also is any claim to having a suitable analogy for the intra-divine processions.

If this judgment seems harsh, Thomas's own thought seems to warrant it. In fact in the very next article (d. 3, q. 3, a. 2)[16] he explains that, for Augustine, memory is a habitual knowledge that makes human cogitation and its terminal acts of understanding possible.[17] He essentially repeats the account of *memoria* found in the *De Veritate*. In the tenth question of that work he explains

[13] "sicut si quis astrologus cognosceret omnes motus caeli et distantias caelestium corporum, cognosceret unamquamque eclipsim quae futura est usque ad centum annos; non tamen cognosceret eam in quantum est singulare quoddam, ut sciret eam nunc esse vel non esse, sicut rusticus cognoscit dum eam videt" (*De Verit.*, q. 2, a. 5).

[14] Lonergan, *Verbum*, 53.

[15] All creatures bear the imprint (*vestigium*) of their triune Creator. The "image" of the invisible God, however, could be found only in that which is not intrinsically conditioned by space and time, for example, the human operations of knowing and loving. Cf. *Roman Comm.*, d. 3, q. 2, a. 1: "Utrum in omnibus creaturis sit uestigium Trinitatis" (14vm-15rf).

[16] "Utrum in mente secundum ista tria, scilicet memoriam, intelligentiam et voluntatem, sit ymago Trinitatis" (124rb-va).

[17] "Ipse enim per memoriam nichil aliud intelligit hic quam habitualem notitiam ad cognoscendum aliquid" (*Roman Comm.*, d. 3, q. 3, a. 2, ad 3).

how memory is a habitual knowledge in which the mind is present to itself.[18] This is how memory's knowledge of the present differs from that of sense, for consciousness is not sense knowledge. Thomas is thus able to free Augustine's triad from the Aristotelian charge that it is rooted in sense knowledge, and therefore not a truly spiritual analogy. Nevertheless, it seems that for Thomas *memoria* always has an ambiguous status, since even if it has this intellective aspect, it does not thereby lose its sensitive and imaginative aspect.

II. LOMBARD'S MISTAKE

In the *Roman Commentary,* we see also that Thomas needs to extricate the triad of *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas* from Lombard's misinterpretation of Augustine. It seems that Lombard understood these three to be powers or potencies (*vires, potentiae*) of the soul.[19] To be sure, the terms themselves signify faculties rather than acts, but there is a theological rationale for considering them as acts. In the fourteenth book of the *De Trinitate,* Augustine declares that "if the rational soul is made to the image of God in the sense that it can make use of reason and intellect to understand and consider God, then the image of God was in the soul from the beginning of its existence," that is, prior to any of its acts. The human person possesses the image of God by his nature, not by his acts. It seems that this is the reason that Thomas himself considered the triad as powers in his first commentary on the *Sentences.* The Thomas of the *Roman Commentary,* however, explains that if *memoria, intelligentia,*

[18] Cf. *De Verit.,* q. 10, a. 2. See also Juvenal Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas' Teaching* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), 115-22.

[19] "Ad tertium dicendum quod si recte considerentur uerba Magistri et uerba Augustini non uidentur sonare idem; et uidetur quod Magister non intellexerit intentionem Augustini. Magister enim uult quod illa tria, scilicet memoria, intelligentia et uoluntas, sint tres uires et tres potentie. Set hoc Augustinus non uult" (*Roman Comm.,* d. 3, q. 3, a. 2 ad 3). Indeed, Lombard does say that "Mens enim, id est, spiritus rationalis, essentia spiritualis est et incorporea. Illa vero tria, naturales proprietates seu vires sunt ipsius mentis, et a se invicem differunt" (Peter Lombard, I *Sententiae,* d. 3).

and *voluntas* are a triad of potencies, as Lombard insists, then there is no way to ground an essential unity in God, nor is there a basis on which to posit the intra-divine processions, for a potency cannot give rise to a potency.

It might be easy to fault Lombard here, but only from the lofty point of view of Thomas's mature Trinitarian thought. As Juvenal Merriell reminds us, Lombard's treatment may very well be "the first step in the direction of an ontological interpretation of the Augustinian analogy."[20] Still, any useful metaphysical analysis must be guided by Augustine's own account of the psychological facts. Lombard, says Thomas, failed in this regard. Indeed, Augustine is quite clear that the triad of *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas* has no explanatory power unless one remembers, understands, and loves his own remembering, understanding, and loving.[21] This point is critical, for as Merriell observes, Augustine "points out that in themselves the terms *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas* are insufficient to reveal the Trinity unless we understand the triad in terms of the processions of word and love."[22] If these three are not understood in relation to the twofold procession of word and love, then the persons are only distinguishable by absolute or essential attributes; thus, the Father is the memory of the Godhead, the Son the understanding, and the Spirit the love. The unintended result is a sort of crypto-tritheism.

The *Roman Commentary*'s adaptation of Augustinian Trinitarian thought shows that Thomas had to differentiate Augustine's understanding of *memoria* from Aristotle's, and do so

[20] Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity,* 52.

[21] Augustine, *De Trinitate,* XV, 20.39: "De creatura etiam quam fecit deus quantum valuimus admonuimus eos qui rationem de rebus talibus poscunt ut invisibilia eius per ea quae facta sunt sicut possent intellecta conspicerent, et maxime per rationalem vel intellectualem creaturam quae facta est ad imaginem dei, per quod velut speculum quantum possent, si possent, cernerent trinitatem deum in nostra memoria, intelligentia, voluntate. Quae tria in sua mente naturaliter divinitu instituta quisquis vivaciter perspicit et quam magnum sit in ea unde potest etiam sempiterna immutabilisque natura recoli, conspice, concupisci (reminiscitur, per memoriam, intuetur per intelligentiam, amplectitur per dilectionem), profecto reperit illius summae trinitatis imaginem."

[22] Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity,* 32.

from the perspective of Aristotle's science. He also he needed to develop an alternative to the ontological interpretation of Augustine's triad inherited from Peter Lombard. His treatment is typically nuanced, but the result is ambiguous: memory must be conceived as a certain type of memory; the faculties of memory, understanding, and will must be understood in terms of their acts—qualifications abound. He faced the additional challenge of developing a treatise on the Trinity on the foundation laid in his discussion of the *imago Dei*. This task, I believe, was an important element in Thomas's emerging awareness of an *ordo doctrinae*.

III. THE *ORDO DOCTRINAE*

When one examines the distinctions that flank his treatment of the *imago Dei* in distinction 3, one finds that Thomas drops altogether any discussion of memory, understanding, and will. This triad is nowhere to be found either in his discussion of plurality in the *summum bonum* (d. 2) or the doctrine of the Trinity (d. 4ff.). What might we make of this? It seems that when Thomas's primary concern is theological, rather than anthropological, he grounds all plurality in God in processions of intelligible emanation. Of course, a divine procession must be internal, but it cannot be one whereby an act arises from a potency, since there is no potency in God. Nor can it be an internal procession in which an act arises from act, since God is absolutely simple, existing as one infinite act. Ultimately, any distinction in God must be made according to processions *per modum operati*.[23] Lonergan defines this sort of procession as an "internal procession in which the principiating act and the principiated act are really distinct, not on the basis of absolute existence, but on the basis of relative existence."[24] In order to posit a plurality in God without compromising His essential unity, Thomas needs to speak in terms of act and only of act, not

[23] Cf. *De Verit.*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 7.

[24] "Processio ad intra in qua actus principians et actus principiatus distinguuntur realiter, non tamen secundum esse absolutum, sed secundum esse relativum" (Bernard Lonergan, *De Deo Trino* II, *Pars systematica* [Rome: Gregorian University, 1964], 76).

of potency or even of habit—hence the *Summa*'s replacement of *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas,* with *principium verbi, verbum,* and *amor* (*STh* I, qq. 27-29).

The structure of the *Roman Commentary* suggests that Thomas intended to develop a theological anthropology that served as the foundation for a fully developed Trinitarian theory. But the utter lack of continuity between the two indicates the problematic nature of that project and creates a tension that Thomas will ultimately resolve in the *Summa,* where the *imago Dei* is separated from the intra-divine processions by some sixty-six questions. That fact in itself proves exactly nothing, but it increases the suspicion evoked by the *Roman Commentary:* that the distinct tasks of Trinitarian theology and theological anthropology have distinct criteria. Indeed, just as the *Summa* maintains that the divine processions can only be understood according to the analogy of intelligible emanation and accordingly restricts the triad to *principium verbi, verbum,* and *amor,* so also does it explain that the image of God in the human soul cannot be restricted to acts, for it exists in the dim-witted as surely as it exists in the bright. The image pertains to the intellectual nature of man, prior to the specific acts of intelligence.[25] Granted, that image is more perfectly manifested in the habits and acts of understanding and loving, but it belongs to man essentially. The *Roman Commentary,* on the other hand, conflates the anthropological consideration of the intellect as *imago Dei* and the theological or Trinitarian consideration of intellectual operations as analogous to the intra-divine processions.

The *Roman Commentary* represents an attempt to translate Augustine's Trinitarian thought into Aristotelian ontology. Thomas explains that in addition to the sensitive aspect of memory there must be an intellective memory by which the mind is habitually present to itself and out of which reasoning proceeds. It is only when he invokes Aristotle's psychology, however, that he is able fully to establish the abstract character of

[25] *Sth* I, q. 93, a. 4.

intellective memory. Difficulties remain, for while Thomas's Trinitarian thought required him to demonstrate the inadequacies of treating memory, intellect, and will as potencies or powers of the soul, such a consideration seems necessary to affirm the image of God within human nature, and not just human acts of intelligence and loving. This seems to be confirmed by Thomas's auspicious omission of *memoria, intelligentia,* and *voluntas* in the properly Trinitarian portions of the *Roman Commentary.* The exigencies of a theological anthropology differ from those of a Trinitarian theology. For while theological anthropology requires an explicit analysis of faculties, a Trinitarian theology must advert exclusively to the immanent operations of understanding and loving. It would be left to the *Summa Theologiae,* not only to make this distinction, but also to discern and articulate an intelligible order, an *ordo doctrinae* which moves from the *priora quoad se* to the *priora quoad nos* so that the beginner might more easily understand these and all the verities of the faith within a single formal viewpoint.

BOOK REVIEWS

Le Christ en ses mystères: La vie et l'oeuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin. Tome 1. By JEAN-PIERRE TORRELL, O.P. Paris: Desclée, 1999. Pp. liii + 351. 180F (paper). ISBN 2-7189-0950-1.

Jean-Pierre Torrell's *Le Christ en ses mystères: La vie et l'oeuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* is a timely book. It is a close reading of questions 27 to 45 of the *Tertia pars* of St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. A second volume covering questions 46 to 59 is promised.

Torrell explicitly states that his task is not simply one of an historical recovery of Thomas's thought. He takes Thomas's work to be of service to theology today, and much of this fine book is an effort to suggest how. In doing so, Torrell appreciates some of the difficulties and challenges of contemporary theology, especially contemporary Roman Catholic theology, which seems to suffer from manifold fragmentation. Most pervasive and pernicious is the divide between the study of Scripture and systematic theology. Certainly this past century has seen a renewed interest in what is often called "biblical theology." With it has come a desire to bring Scripture more fully and richly to bear on theological reflection, and, at the same time, to pursue those ways in which the rich theological tradition of the Church can inform a substantive—and faithful—reading of Scripture. If such has been the task, it has proven to be a difficult one indeed. This egregious instance of fragmentation is hardly the only one. The many sub-disciplines of theology seem to work in increasing isolation; sub-disciplines have spawned their own sub-disciplines. The dangers and privileges of specialization are ubiquitous. If such is, on the negative side, an unfortunate circumstance of our time, St. Thomas may well have something to contribute to our work. This Torrell argues, explicitly and implicitly, throughout his book.

Torrell begins at question 27, for it is at this question that Thomas begins his consideration of the narrative of Christ's life. This first volume follows Thomas through the Transfiguration; the promised second volume will cover the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. Torrell has focused on these questions not simply because they show Thomas engaging the scriptural text, but because in them Thomas engages directly the narratives of the Gospels. Throughout these pages, Torrell brings out how fully immersed in the Gospels Thomas is, and, perhaps surprising to many, how attentive he is to the

Synoptics. Over and over again, Torrell uses Thomas's commentary on Matthew, as well as the *Catena aurea* on the other Synoptics, to complement the reading of the *Summa* or, better, to show how the thinking in the *Summa* is nourished by the reading of the synoptic Gospels.

Thomas's reading of the Gospels is not, however, a bare reading. Torrell brings out with striking clarity the depth of Thomas's study of the Fathers, both Latin and Greek. His reading of the Fathers is a docile one, in the literal sense of seeking to learn from them. Torrell shows the delicate ways in which Thomas brings together the reading of Scripture and the Fathers to come to a deeper understanding of the faith. (One is inclined to say that if Torrell presents Thomas as a model of the intelligent theological reading of the Fathers for his time, Torrell is himself a model for the intelligent theological reading of St. Thomas in our time.)

Perhaps most striking is Torrell's sense of the whole. He never considers questions or sets of questions as free-standing treatises. No event in the life of Christ stands in isolation. A profound sense of unity pervades this part of the *Summa* as it does the *Summa* as a whole. We might note two strains of capital importance. The first is methodological. From the opening of the book, Torrell brings out the consistent use of arguments from fittingness. Even the superficial reader of the *Tertia pars* cannot help but be struck how often Thomas argues *ex convenientia,* rather than by strict deduction. Torrell brings out the methodological force of this kind of argument precisely as a way of theological engagement of historical particularity. A second point of unity is intimately tied to the arguments from fittingness: namely, the economic, specifically soteriological, character of the *Tertia pars.* It is precisely the goal of bringing man to eternal life that shapes and guides Thomas's thought. As arguments from fittingness are most properly made with regard to final cause, this soteriological focus ought not be surprising. Still, Torrell brings it out with a consistency and a force that not only shows its importance to Thomas's Christology, but also shows how it serves as a unifying principle.

Throughout, Torrell is interested in engaging contemporary thought. To this end, he seeks not only to understand Thomas, but also to suggest ways in which he might be reconsidered. He is dismissive of the Aristotelean biology that informs Thomas's thinking on the conception of both Mary and Christ. At the same time, he carefully disentangles the theological strains in Thomas's thought from this biology to show that, fundamentally, it is the theological principles that shape Thomas's thinking. Indeed, he brings out how Thomas's fidelity to the Fathers greatly strains the Aristotelean biology in just these questions.

Torrell also expresses concern on several occasions about what he terms Thomas's "biblical literalism" in considering specific gospel narratives. Torrell is sensitive to the advances of modern thought, in this case in the study of sacred Scripture. At the same time, he notes any number of instances in which Thomas's thought is convergent, either explicitly or implicitly, with elements in contemporary Scripture scholarship.

Further, Torrell notes places in which Thomas's thought is quite apropos of modern concerns. He brings out, for example, the pneumatological character of Thomas's Christology. He also shows how this pneumatological dimension is itself deeply rooted in a fully Trinitarian consideration of the person and mission of Christ (particularly, though by no means exclusively, manifest in the baptism). Perhaps the most striking and well-developed reconsideration of Thomas in the light of modern theology is Torrell's suggestion for rethinking Thomas's position on the contentious point of Christ's possession of the beatific vision.

For the contemporary theologian, even the theologian not particularly captivated by or enthusiastic about St. Thomas, this volume is timely as it offers in a most accessible and relevant way the work of a truly great and not merely historically seminal theologian. It provides a striking opportunity to deepen one's own theological thinking on the person and mission of Christ.

Le Christ en ses mystères is also timely for the student of St. Thomas's thought. It can serve, certainly, as an introduction to these important questions of the *Summa*.. As Torrell notes in his introduction, almost half a century ago M.-D. Chenu called for greater attention on the part of Thomists to those parts of the *Summa* that were, in effect, extended considerations of Scripture. The value of this book, however, goes well beyond its service as a response to Chenu's call. Torrell's mastery of St. Thomas is arresting. He does not simply present the text; rather, he brings out the conceptual unity and integrity of the text.

Torrell's reading is twofold. On the one hand, he considers many specific articles in detail. He often provides substantial quotations, well chosen and never overwhelming, and then guides the reader to see the import of Thomas's line of thought. He is, as well, attentive to the responses to initial arguments which serve to give precision to Thomas's position or suggest the dialectical character of his thought. In his attention to detail, Torrell is a helpful guide to Thomas's language. We have noted already his attention to "fittingness." Examples could be multiplied. Torrell speaks to the rich implications of Thomas's use of *conversatio* as the word for Christ's way of life; or again, he notes that the term *manifestatio,* found so frequently, is the Latin equivalent of the Greek "epiphany." On the other hand, he is always careful to consider the larger division of the text in such as way as to see how Thomas situates a specific topic. One might note, for example, that Thomas locates the baptism not at the beginning of the public ministry (as is common in modern thought) but as the conclusion of the part on the entrance of the incarnate Word into the world. Torrell masterfully considers why Thomas might do this, developing the parallel between the baptism at the end of the questions on the entrance into the world and the transfiguration at the end of the questions on the public ministry.

Although Torrell states clearly that his task is not strictly one of historical reconstruction, he offers plenty of historical insights. His own historical work,

so amply manifest in his *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, bears much fruit here. We might note especially his treatment of Thomas's question on Christ's way of life. This question, which covers such topics as whether Christ should have led a solitary life or should have lived a life of poverty, echoed throughout many of the mendicant controversies of Thomas's day. By introducing texts from Thomas's own defenses of the mendicants, Torrell brings out the ways in which the debates of Thomas's own day and, more importantly, his own Dominican vocation give life to these particular articles. If such considerations illumine the articles, they do not exhaust them, and Torrell avoids clumsy historical reduction.

The use of the works in defense of the mendicants is but one instance of Torrell's consistent use of material from elsewhere in Thomas. Often times, this is from elsewhere in the *Summa*. Although one would expect references back to the first 26 questions of the *Tertia pars*, Torrell draws widely from throughout the *Summa*, and throughout the corpus. Most noteworthy, however, is his use of Thomas's commentary on Matthew, showing over and over again how a careful reading of this commentary complements the *Summa*. Indeed, one can see how the *Summa* really is a preparation for the theological reading of Scripture.

For those interested in Thomas as a theologian this book is indeed timely. In it, the all-too-common and enduring textbook stereotypes fall: for example, Thomas's thought is not scriptural, it is rigidly Aristotelean, its arguments are mechanically deductive. Torrell brings to life the supple, organic quality of Thomas's theology.

Of course one could quibble with a book of this scope. When one has read St. Thomas as long and as deeply as has Torrell, one takes positions on any number of issues contentious among Thomists. Many readers will no doubt find themselves disagreeing with Torrell along any number of fault lines. Yet even to disagree, perhaps especially to disagree, is to think again and in a fresh way about essential elements in the thought of St. Thomas.

This is a welcome book. Those who know little of Thomas on the life of Christ will find an incomparable introduction to it, and those who have spent years in study will find much that is illuminating. One can only hope that the concluding volume will appear soon, followed promptly by an English translation.

JOHN F. BOYLE

University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota

Trinity and Truth. By BRUCE MARSHALL. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 287. ISBN 0521453526.

This remarkable book sets forth a bold thesis and develops it with great subtlety. In its negative aspect—looking chiefly, one supposes, towards theologians—the thesis is that typically modern accounts of the Christian faith fail to meet the best standards of analytical philosophy, even while accommodating modern thought in ways that diminish the substance of the faith. In its positive aspect—addressed not only to theologians but clearly also to philosophers—the author's thesis is that a Tarski-Davidson account of truth, meaning, and justified belief is the strongest available in contemporary philosophy, and that its theological inadequacy can and should be made good by full-blooded doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity.

For a description of what Christians most importantly hold true, Marshall begins by attending to the crucial ritual act of the assembled Christian community, which is the Lord's Day liturgy of word and sacrament whereby the narrative of God's history with the world is rehearsed and prolonged. By readings from the canonical Scriptures, preaching, prayers, and gestures, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are identified as the triune God who, in a differentiated unity of action, creates, redeems, and consummates the world. Marshall focuses particularly on the Resurrection of Jesus; and "Jesus is risen" will, at a later stage in his argument, become the prize example of a statement whose meaning and truth are to be determined.

The next step, however, is to show what has been wrong with the grounding of the truth claims for Christianity offered in their several ways by Schleiermacher, Bultmann, K. Rahner, S. M. Ogden, D. Tracy, and W. Pannenberg (though the last mentioned is let down gently in virtue of his "eschatological reserve"). Their fault lies—alone or in combination—in their supposition of an internally accessible "experience" or an externally evident set of irrefragable data that are not themselves belief-dependent at least for their meaning. These variously "foundationalist" justifications of Christian belief will not stand up to the analytic work of such philosophers as Quine, Putnam, Dummett, and Davidson.

From analytic philosophy, and particularly from the work of Davidson in the wake of Tarski, emerge proposals for the assessment of truth claims and the justification of beliefs that, so far as they go, provide what Marshall believes are a more suitable beginning for the clarification of the nature and content of the Christian faith. In the line of Tarski and Davidson, the truth conditions of a sentence take the following shape: "'Grass is green' is true if and only if grass is green"—and this within a cohesive framework of meaning, other beliefs, and the way the world is arranged. This is considered by Marshall to be the most adequate philosophical account of truth on the current scene. The added "framework" (my word, not Marshall's) is perhaps what saves this account from being a "truism" (a possibility which seems to concern Marshall very

little); but its very basic character is precisely what testifies to the elementary, intuitive nature of our grasp of (th
e notion of) truth. However, Marshall will hold that a Tarski-Davidson account needs theological modification, not only when talking about God, but also when talking about creatures, since the actions of the divine persons and their mutual relations are constitutive of the very concept of truth. His next step is to examine more analytically what the canonical Scriptures and Christian doctrine and practice claim about God and truth.

If Jesus is "the truth" (John 14:6), he enjoys comprehensive epistemic primacy; and if his life, death, and resurrection are "for the life of the world" (John 6:51), then "what happens on the way from Bethlehem to Golgotha and the Emmaus road has universal scope." The Pauline way of putting this is to say that all things were made through Christ and for Christ and hold together in him, who "made peace by the blood of his cross" (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-20). The ontological basis resides in Christ's being "the icon of the unseen God" (Col 1:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:4-6; Heb 1:3), the eternally begotten Son of the Father who as such shares in the Father's being, will, and purpose (John 1:1-3, 18). Include in the reckoning the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2; 2:7; Luke 1:35; 4:11; 10:21; Rom 8:11; Acts 2:17, 33; 1 Cor 12:3), who is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 14–16), and the developed Trinitarian picture appears as follows:

> The Father loves the Son Jesus, in eternity and in time, precisely by giving him the gift of the Spirit—the one gift equal to and so worthy of both the giver and the receiver—to repose in and on him; the Son loves the Father precisely by gratefully receiving and rejoicing in this gift, and (in time) sharing the gift with the world. Father and Son are thus eternally united or joined with one another in and through the Holy Spirit as a person distinct from both, though the love which unites them, as it springs only from fullness and not from lack, does not have the distinctive note of desire. That creatures succeed in attaining the God who perfectly expresses himself in Jesus Christ results from the gift of this Spirit; that they, made from nothing and so lacking all, cannot help desiring union with this God, whether or not he ever wills to pour out his Spirit so that they may attain him, results from their creation in the image of this same Spirit. Anything which is, however remotely, *like* the Spirit to whom it eternally belongs to unite the Father and the Son in love, will naturally seek its own share in that love. (115)

With the claim of "an unrestricted epistemic primacy" for Christ and the Trinity, how is the charge of "fideism" to be avoided? Other—or "alien"—truth claims are excluded insofar as they are inconsistent with the narrative centered on Jesus. Yet the better they positively fit with that narrative, the greater their chance of being right (cf. 2 Cor 10:5). For its part, Christianity has shown, says Marshall, considerable assimilative capacity for truths discovered and formulated elsewhere, although modern Christian

thinkers have often been too lax in their application of the consistency test. Marshall himself is ready to admit evolutionary theory on geological and biological grounds because "the beliefs negated by [its] novel claims are not really central" to the Christian community, although he realizes that "there are evident limits to pursuing this strategy," for "eventually the community will run out of beliefs to decentralize," and even a "decision to live with epistemic tension can be made only sparingly" (150f., 164f.). On the other hand, "that Jesus is not dead, though he once was, is utterly central to the Christian community's belief system," and a demonstration that the tale of the Resurrection was an apostolic hoax (illustrated by Marshall in an amusing counterfactual anecdote) would require such a shift in "our epistemic priorities" (preparedness for which is, in principle, a condition for rationality) that the faith would simply have to be avowed false (166-69).

The point at which philosophical accounts of truth may be "radically disciplined and changed," though hopefully "not annihilated," by theological accounts (the language is that of D. M. MacKinnon), is located by Marshall in the provision of personal "bearers" (a key term), primarily divine and derivatively human. "Jesus is risen" is true if and only if Jesus is risen, etc.—but with now an extra element in the concept of truth: *only if Jesus presents himself to us as risen.* This is because the identity of Jesus in the whole story is bound up with the divine Trinity's self-communication to us, and that indeed with redemptive and transformative purpose. The Christian faith, its truthfulness, stands or falls with the self-presentation of the risen Lord and its/his effect. In fully Trinitarian terms: "If a share in the Father's creative and definitive knowledge is the end of the epistemic road, and the narratives which identify Jesus crucified and risen—not all alone, but as they are used to order the whole field of belief—are the road itself, then we traverse this road from beginning to end by partaking of the communally embodied love the Spirit imparts" (216). Not incidentally, "the eucharistic disunity of the church" ranks among "the strongest objections to Christian belief" as a case in which the Christian community's central beliefs lead one "to expect a particular state of affairs which manifestly fails to obtain" (165f.).

Truths about God, says Marshall, cannot be "automatic," for they call for personal acceptance on our part. This itself depends on revelation (a word not much used by Marshall) and on the work of the Spirit. Room is always left, therefore, for "the skeptic"; and although such a person is not described by Marshall as an "unbeliever," the classical questions debated in Christian theology concerning election, free will, and faith remain open and are untreated in this connection.

In the light of truths about God and his relation to the world (especially as its creator), truths also about the world will be marked by "traces of the Trinity." Only those truths pertaining to sin and all evil will lack the divine imprint since they fall outside God's active will.

Throughout the book Marshall is able to support his arguments from major figures in the Western tradition of Christian thinking, notably Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Luther, Barth, and Balthasar; and there are hints of its congruity with the East, especially with Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Palamas.

In the face of postmodern tendencies to fragmentation and even nihilism, Marshall sides with those philosophers who stick to a unitary concept of truth. Indeed he proposes to them what should be a congenial account of the Christian faith which the Holy Spirit may perhaps integrate into his work of persuasion. To theologians and all thinking believers Marshall displays the intellectual superiority of a robust version of the historic faith over reductionist restatements of it. In highly technical style, he furnishes a surround for the kind of advocacy that has been conducted in evangelistic, apologetic, and pastoral mode by Lesslie Newbigin and other significant theological writers of the late twentieth century.

GEOFFREY WAINWRIGHT

Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

New Approaches to God. By JULES M. BRADY, S.J. North Andover, Mass.: Genesis Publishing, 1996. Pp. 136. $19.95 (paper). ISBN: 1-886670-09-9.

In *New Approaches to God,* Fr. Jules Brady attempts to synthesize arguments from Anselm, Aquinas, and Kant in order to propose his own argument for God's existence. This compact text is written in a clear and succinct style. Brady often uses familiar analogies or examples to help the reader grasp his ideas. Furthermore, he prefaces each chapter with a question or a set of questions and then endeavors to answer them for the sake of clarifying its important themes. This seems like sound pedagogy. Unfortunately, the editing and proofreading at times leaves something to be desired. For example, the endnote chapters are mislabeled (e.g., the notes for chapter 4 are labeled "chapter seven," those for chapter 5 are labeled "chapter eight").

Brady's compact text contains three distinct sections or parts. The first section, chapters 1 through 3, consists of primary source selections from Anselm, Aquinas, and Kant. The translations of Anselm and Aquinas are Brady's. The passages again are clear and concise. The Kant selection is taken from Norman Kemp Smith.

The second part of Brady's text, chapters 4 through 7, contains commentary on the classic debates between Anselm, Aquinas, and Kant regarding the Ontological and Cosmological Arguments. Chapter 4 is a defense of Anselm's (first) theistic argument, found in chapter 2 of the *Proslogion*. Brady argues that Anselm's argument can be read on three different levels. The first regards the crucial premise (i.e., God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived) as grounded in faith, and so fails to be a demonstration for God's existence (50-51). The second level simply leaves the crucial premise unjustified. This version also fails as a demonstration, according to Brady, and he cites Aquinas's objection that it illicitly moves from the concept of something to its (actual) existence. What the second level lacks, according to Brady, is "a foundation in the real (i.e., extra-mental) order for the concept" (52-53). Brady believes that Anselm accomplishes this in his response to Gaunilo: "Anselm proposes a method of arriving at the concept of that than which nothing greater can be conceived by starting with something that is objective, extra-mental and in the real order outside the mind, the degrees of good" (51). Since the highest degree of goodness corresponds to that than which nothing greater can be conceived, the third level of Anselm's argument is immune to Aquinas's criticism. Thus while the first two readings of the Ontological Argument are not demonstrations for God's existence, Brady argues that the third is.

That Anselm makes such a response to Gaunilo is not always noted in the literature. In this regard Brady's defense seems rather novel. However, I anticipate two objections, both of which deal with justifying the claim regarding degrees of goodness. On the one hand, if goodness (or degrees thereof) is a mind-independent object due to empirical considerations (e.g., witnessing that certain things in nature are better than others for various reasons), then the argument ceases to be an a priori proof. On the other hand, if goodness (or degrees thereof) is a mind-independent entity due to conceptual considerations, then the argument remains a priori, but it then seems that Brady has simply justified one controversial a priori claim with another. After all, is it not the case that "goodness" or "degrees of the good" is a concept? But if so, then it is not clear how this move escapes Aquinas's objection. If goodness or degrees of the good is not merely a concept, as Brady suggests, this needs to be further developed and justified. Lacking further elucidation, Anselmians taking Brady's tack may have a dilemma on their hands. Either Anselm's proof ceases to be a priori, which undercuts its very motivation, or it rests upon a new crucial premise just as controversial, if not more so, than its more familiar predecessor.

Brady ends his treatment of the Ontological Argument with a discussion of Kant's criticism of it. He presents Kant's relevant views concisely and clearly. However, Brady's Anselmian response is somewhat puzzling. He concludes that if Kant is correct, then Anselm's "hypothetical proposition [i.e., being able to conceive of something greater than the greatest conceivable being] would not be the absurdity that it is" (55). Brady seems to reaffirm Anselm's position

without explaining why Kant's view is incorrect and thus comes dangerously close to begging the question against Kant. This difficulty is alleviated initially with Brady's addition that for Anselm "'God is'—is an *analytic proposition in a special sense*" (55). However, Brady does not explain what that entails, nor how it addresses Kant's criticism.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the debate between Aquinas and Kant on the Cosmological Argument. Brady begins his exposition by defining key Thomistic key terms, such as essence and *esse*. He goes on to explain succinctly why *esse* must be distinct from essence in any finite thing. This, of course, invites the question of how we should understand the *esse* of any finite thing. Answering this question, Brady explains, "depends on a correct understanding of the principle of causality: a cause is both simultaneous with the effect and prior in nature to the effect" (61). Since, according to this Thomistic principle, the existence of (say) the President of the United States cannot be adequately explained by either his parents or in reference to the man himself, the only adequate explanation for the President or any finite thing, Brady concludes, is the First Cause, God. This conclusion is strengthened, he claims, by the realization that without a First Cause there would be no finite beings (62). This last claim presupposes Thomas's view that an infinite regression of causes is unintelligible—a premise often regarded as the most controversial in Aquinas's first two Ways. Brady offers a very brief account of it in the prologue, but does not offer a defense.

In discussing Kant's objection(s) to the Cosmological Argument, Brady focuses upon Kant's noumena/phemonena distinction as it applies to causality. He tells us that, according to Kant, causal relations are understood as arising from the imposition of categories upon our experience. According to this schema, and as Brady points out, a sensible cause is necessarily connected with a sensible effect (64). However, Aquinas's first two Ways argue from a sensible effect back to a nonsensible cause, God. Kant's ontology will allow no such inference: "Kant rejects vaulting from a sensible effect, my existence, to a not sensible cause, an absolutely necessary being" (65). Brady's resolution to this debate begins by noting that Kant's philosophy is grounded in phenomenology while Aquinas's is a philosophy of being. From this, Brady concludes that "Kant and Aquinas simply offer us different philosophies; consequently one does not negate the other" (66).

Pointing out, as Brady does, that Kant and Aquinas reach different conclusions regarding the Cosmological Argument because of their differing ontological presuppositions is insightful. This important point is sometimes overlooked. However, to infer that different ontologies do not "negate" one another simply because they are different is highly dubious. Invariably, such differences lead to logical incompatible entailments. For example, Christian ontology grounded in enduring substances and a Buddhist ontology grounded in momentary states will lead to differing entailments regarding the afterlife. The debate between Kant and Aquinas regarding the validity of the

Cosmological Argument seems to be a similar example. If so, then it is difficult to see how both ontologies can coexist, and therefore how they do not "negate" one another. It seems that Brady needs to accomplish one of two tasks. Either explain how these two ontologies are only prima facie incompatible or offer some sort of account why one (presumably Thomas's) is more plausible than the other.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to the First Way. Brady countenances the hypothesis that Aquinas wrote the Five Ways for a very select audience, namely, Augustinian theologians. Because he was suspicious of their view that we have direct or immediate knowledge of God, he utilized Aristotelian principles to show how our knowledge of God is best characterized (or at least can also be characterized) as indirect, mediated by objects of sense. But, of course, Aristotle's is not specifically a philosophy of being. Because Thomas relies almost exclusively upon Aristotelian principles, according to Brady, it may therefore appear that the Five Ways are incomplete or otherwise not totally persuasive (70-71). Brady countenances Sillem's remark that if the Five Ways are understood in the context of Aquinas's full ontology, then they become more persuasive. The suggestion is that it is because instructors do not often put the Five Ways into their proper metaphysical context that the Angelic Doctor's theistic arguments are often (too) hastily cast aside.

The seventh chapter is Brady's exposition on the Fourth Way. This is the jewel of section 2. He deftly uses accessible analogies to reinforce two crucial ideas. First, by referring to how a yardstick compares to a one-foot ruler, Brady explains that differences in existential acts (i.e., how our act of existence differs from that of, say, nonrational animals) cannot be quantitative, but must rather be qualitative. Second, by referring to two student renditions of the Mona Lisa, he explains how, although different, a man's act of existing and a brute's act of existing are nonetheless similar. Furthermore, by eliminating what he plausibly takes to be mutually exclusive alternatives, he concludes that the only defensible explanation of the qualitative differences *and* similarities among man's (superior) *esse* and a brute's (inferior) *esse* is the infinite act of existing, which is God (77-78).

This chapter has a thoroughness that the prior ones, at times, lack. The Fourth Way is notoriously difficult, and Brady offers some genuine insights. As Fr. Copleston famously remarked: "if the line of thought represented by the fourth way is to mean anything to the common reader, it has to be presented in a rather different form from that in which it is expressed by Aquinas who was able to assume in his readers ideas and points of view which can no longer be presupposed" (*Aquinas* [Penguin Books, 1961]). This, it seems to me, is exactly what Fr. Brady has done. Thomists and non-Thomists alike can grasp the force of Brady's rendition.

Chapter 8 signals the third part of Brady's text. This chapter and the next contain his most novel insights. The introduction, written by Joseph Bobik, contains a succinct and helpful account of Brady's chapter 8 argument. Bobik

comments that, "the argument in chapter eight, from knowing-that-I-know, is challengingly subtle, appropriately ascetic, clearly and persuasively presented, and very likely capable of convincing the careful realist reader" (14). I agree; I also agree, however, with Bobik's following comment that, "one would like to see Fr. Brady anticipate disproofs of this proof" (14). For instance, Brady assumes that "being is intelligible," or, to put the same idea in different verbiage, that the Principle of Sufficient Reason is true and necessarily so. Many philosophers deny this claim and it would have been helpful if Brady had offered a discussion in its defense.

Similar remarks apply to the complementary chapter 9 argument from what Brady calls the "dynamism of the mind." He points out that we, as finite knowers, can and do have many successive realizations regarding the world around us. If we affirm that a tree exists and then affirm that there is a blue jay on the lawn and next affirm the existence of an acquaintance, this demonstrates being aware of movement in our mental activities. This movement leads Brady to infer that the change associated with such movement points to a source, which he names "mental natural appetite" (106). And he infers from this that because our mental natural appetite is continually moving from affirmation to affirmation, this is evidence that our minds (naturally) strive to be completely satisfied in intellectual affirmation. The idea seems to be that our moving between affirmations is evidence that we are searching for that affirmation which will result in a cessation of all affirmation. From this, Brady concludes that the only plausible end goal for this teleology of the mind is affirming the existence of Pure *Esse* (111-12). This is another intriguing argument and well deserving of further investigation in its own right. However, Brady does not consider objections to his assumption that our minds possess the teleology that he ascribes to them. Our minds do indeed move from intellectual affirmation to affirmation (more or less) as he describes, but how does it follow from this that our minds naturally strive to be intellectually satiated? Reliance upon teleology in nature has become circumspect in philosophy. Thus prudence seemingly dictates that Brady explain why this modern trend is at least unwarranted, if not plainly unfortunate.

Since Brady assumes, without much by way of justification, a great deal of Thomistic metaphysics, this book seems best suited for theologians and philosophers who are steeped in Thomism, and who have little or no difficulty in making the kinds of assumptions Brady makes. Non-Thomists may require more discussion and defense of these assumptions—most notably, the unintelligibility of an infinite causal regress, the truth of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, and that there is teleology of the human mind. However, such scholars could benefit from Brady's discussions of the First and particularly the Fourth Ways. Beginning Thomists may desire a more penetrating and thorough discussion of the classic debates between Anselm, Aquinas, and Kant. However, they could benefit from the discussion in chapter

9 of the religious value of studying natural theology. In any event, advanced Thomists, especially neo-Thomists influenced by Maritain, clearly will gain the most from Brady's text. Those who seek to explore their Thomism in contemporary circles and find new approaches to God would do well to find Fr. Brady's appropriately named text.

DEAN A. KOWALSKI

Loras College
Dubuque, Iowa

Introduction to Scholastic Realism. By JOHN PETERSON. New York: Peter Lang, 1999. Pp. 190. $46.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-8204-4370-4.

Writing in a recent issue of *New Blackfrairs,* Catherine Pickstock posed the following question, and I think not rhetorically: "How should one respond to the death of realism, the death of the idea that thoughts in our minds can represent to us the way things actually are in the world? For such a death seems to be widely proclaimed by contemporary philosophers" (July/August 2000, p. 308). In his *Introduction to Scholastic Realism,* John Peterson attempts to provide a response to Pickstock's quandary by articulating a realist philosophy based, for the most part, on the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Using the techniques and meta-philosophical moves common to twentieth-century analytic philosophy, Peterson makes a strong case for understanding realism through the lenses of Scholastic philosophy. That Aquinas, following Aristotle, was unabashedly a realist in metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and moral theory is not to be denied. But what is one to make of the philosophical suitability of Aquinas's version of realism at the beginning of the new millennium? Peterson provides a strong argument in favor of a Scholastic form of realism—in this book equated for the most part with Thomism—within the confines of recent analytic philosophy. While Peterson does not address the issues Pickstock raises through postmodernism, nonetheless the arguments in this book apply equally well to most forms of postmodernism.

The architectonic of this book appears to be an ontological dialectic that forces the reader to come to terms with the adequacy of what Peterson refers to as Scholastic realism. Working within the structures of mid-twentieth century analytic philosophy—in fact, the philosophical shadows of G. E. Moore and Gustav Bergmann appear to hover continuously over the philosophical dialectic —Peterson engages the reader in a dialogue that confronts the philosophical weaknesses in most of the major ontological theories common to

mainstream Western philosophy. The result of the dialectic suggests, Peterson argues, that a form of Scholastic realism found in the writings of Aquinas can be justified adequately as the most perspicuous response to these major philosophical worries.

Peterson articulates a version of moderate realism with a substantial form determining the set of essential properties that in turn constitute the essence in the particular thing. In many ways, this dialectic forces the metaphysician into accepting a theory of natural kinds akin philosophically to the writings of Kripke and the early Putnam. This theory of natural kinds, founded ontologically on a set of essential properties—the *forma substantialis* of medieval Thomism—serves in turn as the foundation for a theory of truth, a theory about the nature of facts, an analysis entailing the existence of God, a theory distinguishing knowledge from belief, a theory of predication, the ontological underpinnings of a theory of natural law morality, an account of a theory of the person, and finally a theory of intentional logic at odds with the formalism prevalent in many contemporary logic texts.

That Peterson here attempts a monumental philosophical undertaking is not to be denied. What is gratifying, however, is that for the most part the ontological dialectic in this book is persuasive and articulated in a perspicuous manner. This is not to suggest that there may not be some philosophical quibbles to which Peterson may need to respond. In some ways, this is not an easy book to read. The reader needs to bring to the philosophical table both a sense of Scholasticism and a sense of the general tenor of analytic philosophy. Nonetheless, one can read this book and emerge with a better handle on how Scholastic realism might deal with many of the problems found in twentieth-century analytic philosophy.

Throughout the text, Peterson offers succinct narratives of several major ontological theories common to Western philosophy. The introduction contains an articulate account of differing theories that consider the status and function of universals. Chapter 1 begins the dialectic with an account of the nature of truth. Peterson argues that the concept of truth is indeed analogical. Truth entails a conformity or "measure," which is the "*adequatio*" common in the texts of Aquinas. Ontological truth has the divine mind as the ultimate "measure" and formal truth has the human mind as its "measure." Peterson argues that a propositional theory of truth entails scepticism; for him, sentential truth is predicated of statements and not of propositions, beliefs, or judgments. The relation of "conformity" needed in sentential truth is, in the end, a relation of formal identity; readers familiar with Aristotle and Aquinas will recall the use of formal cause.

Peterson considers various objections to a correspondence theory of truth, to which his account of sentential truth is reducible. He considers Frege, Blanchard, the so-called "copy theory" of truth, and what philosophers like Roderick Chisholm have called "the problem of the criterion." He next treats

and rejects what he calls five "rival theories" to his account of sentential truth as one of formal identity: the coherence theory espoused by Blanchard and A. C. Ewing earlier in the twentieth century; the pragmatic theory common to Peirce, James, and Dewey; Tarski's semantic theory; the reductionist theory put forward by Frank Ramsey and A. J. Ayer; and finally the performative theory articulated at mid-century by Peter Strawson. Peterson argues that none of the above "rival" theories will stand up to the strengths of his proposal for sentential truth based on moderate realism.

For sentential truth to hold, one needs an adequate account of facts. Readers familiar with logical atomism will recall these worries, especially in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Peterson argues ultimately that a fact is a state of affairs that subsists in—and is known by—the mind of God. Facts are ultimately the measure of truth, and the exemplars in the Divine Mind are the ultimate source for essences found in the natural things of the world. A fact, using the language of Aquinas, is a composite of "essence and existence." Peterson's dialectic suggests that one has two choices: either one adopts a Hegelian view of the Absolute, or one adopts a form of the Judaeo-Christian God. The Hegelian account is problematic, so Peterson argues, and one is left with the God of Aquinas. This is the God of the *Summa Theologiae* with Divine Exemplars serving as the Divine Ideas. In effect, this chapter on the status of facts is a dialectic establishing the necessity for the existence of the God of Aquinas.

Following the account of the ontology needed for Scholastic realism, Peterson considers the vexing epistemological issue of how one is to account for and distinguish knowledge from true belief. Of course, Plato's *Theatetus* articulated these issues with care and they remain with us, thanks especially to the work of Roderick Chisholm. Using categories from Frege, Peterson suggests that belief is when sense and referent are not identical, while knowledge is when sense and referent are identical. Knowledge is, once again, a relation of formal identity. This leads Peterson into considering a theory of predication, where he argues that knowledge, truth, and predication all imply a theory of formal identity. His point is that the moderate realism articulated by Aristotle and perfected in the writings of Aquinas provides the best response to the question, "What is X?" Peterson argues explicitly that "moderate realism is the only view of universals under which it is possible to predicate a species of an individual" (106). The shadow of G. E. Moore on the role of common sense hovers strongly over this discussion of predication. Peterson appeals to *De Ente et Essentia* and Aquinas's account of first and second intentions in order to distinguish knowledge of an essence from knowledge of a universal.

Peterson uses the material obtained in the discussions of ontology, epistemology, and predication for his development of Aquinas's natural law moral and legal theory. His argument is that formal identity plays a role in moral theory too. This is an extensive chapter, comprising more that twenty-

five percent of the book. In effect, this chapter establishes that the metaphysical backdrop for natural law moral theory is the version of Scholastic realism articulated in the earlier chapters. This is a thorough analysis of the role human nature as a philosophical anthropology plays in determining the virtues necessary for a theory of natural law. Peterson develops Aquinas's account of the intellectual and the moral virtues, with particular emphasis on the nature and function of prudence in Aristotelian naturalism. This is a finely honed account from which the reader can profit substantially.

The final two chapters concern the role of a philosophy of the person and the nature of intentional logic, both topics common to recent analytic philosophy. In the end, Peterson argues that his account of the moderate realism of Aquinas makes for an intelligible philosophy of the person. The first of these two chapters discusses the role of matter and form in determining what makes for the substantial individual in Aquinas's ontology as opposed to a "collection of qualities" ontology common to much empiricism. Furthermore, Peterson suggests that the ontological holism of Aquinas's hylomorphism renders suspect any form either of reductive materialism or Cartesian dualism. As Aquinas once wrote: "Anima mea non est ego!" The last chapter considers the intentional logic originally discussed at mid-century by the late Henry B. Veatch. Peterson develops a realist form of logical theory that transcends the formalism common to much contemporary logic theory, especially of the syllogism. This is a contemporary defense of the Aristotelian form of realist demonstration from which *scientia* is developed.

This book is, in my judgment, the kind of analysis that John Haldane has recently termed "Analytical Thomism." Yet Peterson's text appears removed from the serious recent discussions on Aquinas's philosophy by analytic philosophers—Peter Geach, Elizabeth Anscombe, Anthony Kenny, Norman Kretzmann, Eleonore Stump, and Brian Davies, to mention but a few. At times, the book seems strangely dated. This observation does not dismiss the quality of the argument nor what Peterson attempts to undertake, but it does suggest that analytic philosophy and the philosophy of Aquinas are not isolated philosophical entities practiced by persons few and far between.

I would like to mention a few philosophical questions that can be culled from considering the dialectic in this book. First, in chapter 4, Peterson appears to be willing to adopt the category of "negative facts" into this account of Scholastic realism. Certainly at one time Russell postulated this category of weird ontological entities. One might wonder about Russell's other weird category—possible facts. It is unclear to me that Aquinas would accept these categories into his ontological scheme.

Second, in discussing knowledge and belief, I suspect that some discussion of intentionality theory in Aquinas would be important and useful. This is one area where I think Peterson is too much influenced by what I take to be G. E. Moore's account of the mental act of awareness. Moore writes often about the

"diaphanous arrow of consciousness." I would argue that Moore's account of the act of awareness is more akin to Platonic "acquaintance" than it is to the intentionality theory of Aquinas, who, following Aristotle, adopts what I would call a "structured mental act."

Third, as to the discussion of *De Ente et Essentia,* I submit that Aquinas owes much of his account on the differing acts of awareness for the essence and for the universal to Avicenna's claim that "Nature is neither one nor many." This is foundational for the position Aquinas articulates on the status of our knowledge of universals.

Fourth, while I completely agree with Peterson's claims about the necessity for a metaphysical foundation for natural law theory, nonetheless there are many contemporary natural law philosophers who adopt what has been called the "new natural law theory" developed and espoused by Germain Grisez, John Finnis, Joseph Boyle, and Robert George. This theory argues against the philosophical anthropology Peterson adopts as propaedeutic to understanding natural law moral theory. Henry Veatch, it should be noted, would have agreed with Peterson in this debate.

Fifth, in his account of the syllogism Peterson denies the role and importance of analytic truth claims. This follows, he argues, from the need to have demonstrations indeed prove something about the external world and not be rendered unable to transcend the limits of logical formalism. I suggest that adopting a concept of real, causal connections in the version of synthetic necessary truths might solve this conundrum for Peterson. The late Everett J. Nelson argued strenuously for the category of substance and the category of causality, both of which are synthetic necessary connections in the external world. This concept of synthetic necessary truths, I have argued elsewhere, is similar structurally to essential formal identity in Aquinas. Hence, one need not wiggle out of the need for some analytic truth claims in order to save Aristotelian realist demonstration.

In closing, I wish to second the acknowledgment that Professor Peterson offers to the significant contributions made to Scholastic realism during the last half of the twentieth century by the late Professor Henry Babcock Veatch. Veatch was indeed a philosopher for philosophers, a man dedicated to ontological, epistemological, and moral realism. His many writings have greatly assisted all of us interested in the grand plan of interpreting the philosophy of Aquinas within the general framework of contemporary analytic philosophy.

ANTHONY J. LISSKA

Denison University
Granville, Ohio

The Dearest Freshness Deep down Things: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Being. By PIERRE-MARIE EMONET. New York: Crossroad, 1999. Pp. 160. ISBN 0-8245-1794-6.

The Greatest Marvel of Nature: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person. By PIERRE-MARIE EMONET. New York: Crossroad, 2000. Pp. 128. ISBN 0-8245-1799-7.

God Seen in the Mirror of the World: An Introduction to the Philosophy of God. By PIERRE-MARIE EMONET. New York: Crossroad, 2000. Pp. 152. ISBN 0-8245-1873-X.

These three short books, by a Dominican priest who is Professor of Philosophy at the Seminaire International d'Ars in France, are a marvel of initiation to philosophical thinking for those who have no formal philosophical training, and a delight for those have. He stimulates the reader to basic philosophical insights principally by appealing to the imagination, using especially poetry and painting as his media, and basing himself on the challenging, but I think quite sound, thesis of Bergson: "There is no philosophy so sound and so subtle that it cannot be, and ought not to be, expressed in everyday language." The author himself suggests that there is a kinship between the painter and the philosopher: both need to transcend mere appearances (29).

The first book, *The Dearest Freshness Deep down Things*, deals with the basic themes of metaphysics: being, essence/existence, form/matter, activity, unity, truth, goodness, beauty, efficient and final causality, act and potency, Pure Act, the ultimate Cause, etc. Each chapter begins with a stimulating quotation from a poet or some other thinker, and often ends with a brief summary of some appropriate technical philosophical term. What is so astonishing and captivating is the author's skill at stimulating a fresh new perspective on these age-old problems and terms, so that the basic intellectual insight behind them suddenly shines forth. The quotations both at the head of each chapter as well as throughout it are themselves worth the price of the book. Let me cite a few examples to catch the flavor of the work: "God has not made the world; he has made it make itself; he has provoked it." "God has seeded the world to his likeness" (Claudel). "Cezanne seeks to paint matter in the process of giving itself form" (Merleau-Ponty). "In the flower there is a within, that opens its eyes, and unveils, ever more profoundly, a form that ravishes by its proportions and its hues" (Balthasar). "All things hasten toward being more, in the light of the morning" (Olivier). "I bring to everything its deliverance. Through me nothing is any longer alone. In my heart I associate it with something else" (Claudel).

The author wisely follows the example of Aristotle in drawing all his examples of what is meant by being as active presence from living beings, such as plants and animals, as they strive actively to bring to actuality the ideal form (final cause) that is at work within them. It would have been helpful, however, to extend his examples to the inorganic but still highly active world of atoms

and molecules to complete the analogy. And the brief argument for ascending to God as Pure Act or Prime Mover suffers too much from its Aristotelian limitations to be persuasive.

In sum, if anyone were to ask me for a good, non-technical book as an introduction to metaphysics, this is without hesitation the one I would recommend. The author is obviously a fine philosopher himself, who has learned to live his own philosophy and extend it from mind to imagination and heart as well.

Correction: On page 14 the text of Aristotle is incorrectly referenced and two key explanatory phrases are omitted, thus rendering the text meaningless. The quotation should read: *Physics*, 2.8.199a13: "Now intelligent action is for the sake of an end; 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."

Much the same can be said of the second volume, *The Greatest Marvel of Nature*, on the philosophy of the human person. It is as good as the first, if not even possibly better. Most of the quotations heading each chapter are like wake-up calls to the mind and the imagination. A few examples again: "The body is the work of the soul. It is its expression, and its promulgation in the domain of matter" (Claudel). "The human soul breathes above time" (Maritain). "By space, the universe embraces me all around, and overwhelms like a point. By thought, I comprehend the universe" (Pascal). "Water apprehends water; mind inhales essence" (Claudel).

The chapter headings themselves are especially eloquent. Some samples: "10. The Intellect, Essential Gentleness"; "13. "Like a Hand, Intellect Gathers Being at the Heart of Things"; "21. Freedom at the Heart of the Will"; "21. Life of the Soul as Spirit." The whole book is strongly recommended.

The third volume, *God Seen in the Mirror of the Universe*, the briefest in the series, is not, I regret, to be recommended as much. Parts 2 and 3, on the nature and attributes of God, and the relation of the world to God, are as fine, rich, and insightful as the other volumes, though not quite up to their level. But the trouble occurs in part 1, on the ascent to the existence of God by reason. It seems that in the philosophy of being and of the human person the solutions to the basic problems are based on one or a few commanding insights. Not so in the philosophy of God. There the ascent of reason to God seems to require a whole series of insights linked carefully together. Either one does this very carefully and precisely or the argument fails to achieve its objective. This is not supposed to be a technical study; still, the brief sketches of arguments given here remain so closely tied to limited Aristotelian perspectives that they do not bring us with clear evidence to the desired goal of a single infinitely perfect Source of all Being.

The author claims to be using the famous Five Ways of St. Thomas, but in fact some of his interpretations are somewhat eccentric and miss the real point

and power of some of the proofs, precisely because they are tied too closely to an Aristotelian interpretation. For example, the Second Way, from the causal dependency of one being on another for its very being, is watered down, quite contrary to Aquinas's intention, to just the causality of any agent over its own action. Thomas clearly indicates he is talking about a deeper dependency of the whole being of one being on another being as its efficient cause, when he says, "If a being were the cause of its own self, then it would have to preexist itself in order to cause itself, which is impossible" (*STh* I, q. 2, a. 3). This would not make sense if he were merely talking about an already existing being causing its own action.

The author's Third Way, from contingency, can be a good one in itself, as found elsewhere in St. Thomas, but as put here it is not really the path of St. Thomas himself. The latter depends on the famously controverted premise that at some point of past history there would have been a time when all contingent beings would have passed out of existence together, leaving nothing, and from nothing, nothing can ever henceforth appear. The Fourth Way of Aquinas is also a difficult one in its present curiously inverted order of causality and supreme excellence, and the author straddles the difficulty.

In sum, if one is to use these Five Ways of St. Thomas in their exact present form, many precisions and adaptations need to be made before a clear, cogent conclusion can be reached. There are in fact broader, simpler, and more cogent ways of arguing to God in the general spirit of the Five Ways, but without the unsolved textual difficulties we find here. It is clear that the author knows well and highly esteems Aristotle, and justly so, but the one place one cannot stick too closely to him is on the question of God as unique, infinitely perfect Source of all being—which the author tends to do, showing little appreciation of the other Neoplatonic dimension of Thomas's thought as evidenced by his rich and profound doctrine of participation. However, as I have said above, the rest of the book (about two-thirds of it), on the nature and attributes of God and his relation to the world, get back on the track again with the author's customary fresh insights, mediated by stimulating creative images drawn from both art and life.

In sum, these three slim volumes, aside from the first part of the last one, are a remarkable and highly recommended achievement, unique of its kind as far as I am aware, by a talented philosopher with the rare gift of making clear the meaning and relevance of philosophy to life to the ordinary intelligent reader. They are also a delight, for the most part, for the professional philosopher himself.

W. Norris Clarke, S.J.

Fordham University
New York, New York

The Mystery of the Trinity in the Theological Thought of Pope John Paul II. By ANTOINE E. NACHEF, B.S.O. New York: Peter Lang, 1999. Pp. 289. $32.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-8204-4524-X.

The plentiful and intellectually rich writings of Pope John Paul II have occasioned a growing number of studies such as this book, which attempt to analyze various dimensions of his philosophical and theological world-view. Father Nachef, Professor of Theology at the International Marian Research Institute in Dayton, seeks to give a systematic presentation of the Pope's thought on the Trinity. Although John Paul has not written extensively on the Trinity as such, Nachef attempts "a careful tour of his writings from a Trinitarian perspective" (1). At the same time, Nachef situates the pontiff's Trinitarian thought squarely within the larger ensemble of dogmatic themes—creation, anthropology, evil, redemption, Christology. Only after several chapters take up these moments of salvation history do the final two chapters of the book turn toward explicit considerations of Trinitarian theology.

Although Nachef states that John Paul's Trinitarian thought should be "located within the framework of other contemporary Trinitarian theology" (ibid.), he makes relatively little attempt to do so. Rather than placing the Pope's thought in dialogue with other contributors to the late twentieth-century revival of Trinitarian theology (Rahner, Balthasar, Hill, Kasper, etc.), Nachef presents John Paul's thought with specific attention to the question of its philosophical background. Is John Paul "more of a Lublin Thomist or a Schelerian phenomenologist" (18)? Is the Pope's thought "fundamentally phenomenological while borrowing some elements from Thomism, or is it metaphysical and greatly expanding Thomas with insights from phenomenology" (19)? It is, of course, a matter of relative priority; there is no question that John Paul draws from both Thomism and phenomenology. Furthermore, these two influences are but part of a larger complex of ideas and experiences that come together in his unique thought. Still, the slant of one's interpretations of the Pope's writings may be quite different depending upon which source one judges as more determinative. In general, those who read the Pope more from the viewpoint of phenomenology are more inclined to highlight the rather more original and "progressive" elements of his theology, while those who stress the Thomist background seem readier to emphasize the continuity of his theology with the traditional positions of the Neoscholastic manualists.

This is the question that drives the book, as Nachef not only offers his own reading of the principal texts but also canvasses the secondary literature for other commentators who have explored the sources of John Paul's thinking. Thus there are those (e.g., R. Harvanek) who assert that the Pope should be interpreted more "from the point of view of Munich phenomenology and Scheler rather than from the perspective of Thomism and Aristotelianism" (37).

On the other side are those (e.g, G. McCool, R. Buttiglione, J. Conley) who, while acknowledging the importance of the phenomenology of consciousness as an element of John Paul's thinking, insist upon the prior importance of a metaphysics of being in the Pope's thought. Nachef unambiguously aligns himself with this later camp in arguing for the relative priority of an objective ontology to the philosophy of the conscious subject in the thought of John Paul (a priority first observed, of course, in the pre-papal writings of Karol Wojtyla, most notably in *The Acting Person*). The personalist philosophy of John Paul, so fundamental to his theological vision, is the result of the integration of a philosophy of conscious subjectivity into a prior framework of the ontology of human nature. Nachef approvingly cites Buttiglione, who remarks: "In sum, St. Thomas provides an objective personalism, a set of objective features which are necessary to work out an authentic philosophy of the person" (50). Nachef helpfully points out that one cannot simply refer to the Thomism of Wojtyla/John Paul, but must rather note earlier and later forms of Thomism: "Whereas earlier he used the metaphysics of universal nature whose source was the universal structure of man as such formulated in the universal concept, his later Thomism was a philosophy of conscious subjectivity and the concrete person" (39).

The personalist focus upon the concrete, singular, and unrepeatable character of each subject in no way reduces the objectiveness of that subject's universal nature and, in particular, the moral norms that flow from that nature. The freedom of the human person should emerge from the truth about human nature. Ethics remains firmly grounded in metaphysics. For Nachef, "The Pope's insistence that specific acts are *intrinsically* and *universally* wrong shows his divergence from many personalist and phenomenological ethicians 'who easily speak of conflicts of value and who refuse to condemn a particular act as wrong, apart from the act's context of motive and circumstances'" (46-47). The proper relating of Thomist and phenomenological influences in the thought of John Paul allows a reader to grasp the nuanced balances in his writing between person and nature, person and community, and body and consciousness. These elements come together in acts of self-donation, in which, by giving themselves away to others (through their bodies), men and women discover and fulfill their own reality as persons. In his writings John Paul repeatedly echoes *Gaudium et spes* 24, which states that humans can discover their true selves "only through a sincere gift of self" to others. Nachef demonstrates that this personalist emphasis of John Paul most definitely does not degenerate into subjectivism or relativism of any kind.

These considerations of philosophical anthropology, though first in the order of presentation, are themselves grounded in the revealed theology of the divine persons. It is the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit as self-donative and self-receptive persons from all eternity that provide the proper framework for the understanding of human persons as constituted by acts of mutual giving and receiving. While the Pope's anthropology may have received more attention

than his Trinitarian theology, nonetheless, the prominence of Trinitarian thought is readily discernible. First, there is the "Trinitarian triptych" of three early encyclicals—*Redemptor hominis* (RH), *Dives in misericordia* (DM), and *Dominum et vivificantem* (DV). Nachef rightly points out the thematic unity of these three documents, which focus, respectively, on Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. It is only with the issuance of *DV* in 1986 that *RH* (1979) and *DM* (1980) are set in their full context.

The second major explicit reflection upon the Trinity in John Paul's corpus of writings comes in those texts, such as *Tertio Millennio Adveniente,* that deal with the preparations for the celebration of the Jubilee Year. As is well known, the three-year preparatory period was devoted, sequentially, to the Holy Spirit, to Jesus Christ, and to God the Father (interestingly, an order differing from that of the Trinitarian encyclicals).

Nachef devotes his final two chapters to specifically Trinitarian topics—"Immanent and Economic Trinity in the Theological Thought of John Paul II" and "The Procession of the Holy Spirit in the Thought of Pope John Paul II: Theological Considerations." The presentation is thorough and straightforward and indicates that John Paul reaffirms the traditional elements of Trinitarian theology (e.g., the absolute identity of the immanent and economic Trinity). Attention is given to the *communio* of the divine persons, based on the mutual acts of self-donation and self-reception, as the bases for ecclesial and spousal *communio* among human persons, all the while respecting the analogical dissimilarity between divine and human persons. Nachef observes that John Paul's interest in the individual human person over the universality of nature places him in the tradition of the Cappadocians. At the same time his pneumatology bears the marks especially of Saint Augustine; the mutual offering of Father and Son to each other is the basis for understanding the Holy Spirit as the Person-Uncreated Gift. John Paul emphasizes as well that the Holy Spirit is not only a Person-Gift in the context of the immanent Trinity, but also in the economy of salvation; the Spirit is the source of every gift of God in the order of creation and the subject of God's self-communication in the order of redemption.

Nachef's book is an informative presentation of Trinitarian themes in the writings of John Paul II. Readers will find a thoroughly documented account in a descriptive mode, with little by way of any critical observations or comparisons. Two of the issues that could have received further attention stand out in my mind. First, John Paul relies exegetically on the "Upper Room" scenes of the New Testament as a basis for his Trinitarian reflections (the farewell discourse at the Last Supper, the appearance of the Risen Christ to the disciples on Easter evening, and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost). It might be said that John Paul develops a "theology of the Upper Room"; indeed, he states in *DV* 66 that "the event of Pentecost does not belong only to the past; the Church is always in the Upper Room that she bears in her heart." Second, the Pope speaks of a "double rhythm" of the mission of the Son and

the mission of the Holy Spirit (*DV* 63). Here John Paul is offering a suggestive line of thought for reflection upon the relationship between the two distinct but inseparable missions in the divine economy.

MORRIS W. PELZEL

Saint Meinrad School of Theology
Saint Meinrad, Indiana

GENERAL INDEX TO *THE THOMIST*
VOLUME 64 (2000)

ARTICLES

REVIEWS