

THE PONTIFICAL  
ACADEMY OF  
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

## Doctor Communis

FASC. 1-2

# L'incontro di Cristianesimo e di tradizione grecoromana come radice della cultura occidentale e della sua apertura universale

*The Encounter of Christianity and the Graeco-Roman Tradition*  
• *The Roots of Western Culture and Openness to the Universal*



Atti della VII Sessione Plenaria • 22-24 giugno 2007  
Proceedings of the VII Plenary Session • 22-24 June 2007



VATICAN CITY  
2008

# DOCTOR COMMUNIS

*Rivista della Pontificia Accademia di San Tommaso d'Aquino*  
*Review of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas*

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DOCTOR COMMUNIS

L'INCONTRO DI CRISTIANESIMO  
E DI TRADIZIONE GRECOROMANA COME  
RADICE DELLA CULTURA OCCIDENTALE  
E DELLA SUA APERTURA UNIVERSALE

THE ENCOUNTER OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE  
GRAECO-ROMAN TRADITION – THE ROOTS  
OF WESTERN CULTURE AND OPENNESS  
TO THE UNIVERSAL

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PONTIFICIA ACADEMIA SANCTI THOMAE AQUINATIS

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PONTIFICIA ACADEMIA SANCTI THOMAE AQUINATIS  
VATICAN CITY



Sua Santità Benedetto XVI



San Tommaso d'Aquino, opera di San Giovanni da Fiesole detto Beato Angelico, *Crocifissione e patriarchi, santi e beati* (particolare), sala del capitolo, museo di San Marco, Firenze, dipinto murale, 1441-1442.



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## PROGRAMMA/PROGRAMME

VENERDÌ 22 GIUGNO 2007/FRIDAY, 22 JUNE 2007

- 16:00 Padre EDWARD KACZYNSKI, Presidente dell'Accademia • Father EDWARD KACZYNSKI, President of the Academy: *Introduzione e saluto di benvenuto* • *Introduction and Word of Welcome*
- 16:15 Relatore/Speaker:  
Prof. Enrico BERTI: *Il contributo della filosofia greca* • *The Contribution of the Greek Philosophy*
- 17:00 Pausa/Break
- 17:30 Discussione/Discussion
- 18:30 Scelta dei tre Membri che prepareranno lo Statement • Choice of three Members to prepare a Statement
- 20:00 Cena presso la Casina Pio IV/Dinner at the Casina Pio IV

SABATO 23 GIUGNO 2007/SATURDAY, 23 JUNE 2007

- 9:00 Relatore/Speaker:  
Prof. Robert WIELOCKX: *Il principio di 'emergenza' in Boezio di Danimarca ed Enrico di Gand. Il patrimonio greco-romano presso la facoltà d'arte e la facoltà di teologia* • *The Principle of 'Emergence' in Boethius of Denmark and Henry of Ghent. The Greco-Roman Legacy at the Arts Faculty and the Faculty of Theology*
- 9:40 Discussione/Discussion
- 10:20 Pausa/Break
- 10:45 Relatore/Speaker:  
Prof. Russell HITTINGER: *Il rinascimento legale del XII e XIII secolo: alcune annotazioni tomistiche* • *The Legal Renaissance of the 12th and 13th Centuries: Some Thomistic Notes*

- 
- 11:25 Discussione/Discussion
- 13:00 Pranzo presso la Casina Pio IV/Lunch at the Casina Pio IV
- 15.30 Relatore/Speaker:  
Prof. Lawrence DEWAN: *S. Tommaso d'Aquino come esempio dell'importanza del legato ellenistico* • *St. Thomas Aquinas as Example of the Importance of the Hellenistic Legacy*
- 16:15 Pausa/Break
- 16:45 Discussione/Discussion
- 18:10 *Considerazioni sullo Statement preparato dai tre accademici ordinari* • *Consideration of the Statement prepared by three ordinary academicians*
- 20:00 Cena presso la Casina Pio IV/Dinner at the Casina Pio IV

DOMENICA 24 GIUGNO 2007/SUNDAY, 24 JUNE 2007

- 8:00 *Santa Messa, Monastero "Mater Ecclesiae"* • *Holy Mass, Monastery 'Mater Ecclesiae'* (Comunità delle Benedettine, Largo del Monastero, Città del Vaticano)
- 9:00 Relatore/Speaker:  
Prof. RALPH McINERNY: *Prams e preambula: il saggio e il semplice* • *Prams and preambula: The Wise and the Simple*
- 10:10 Discussion/Discussion
- 10:50 Pausa/Break
- 11:10 Relatore/Speaker:  
Prof. Luca TUNINETTI: *Il giudizio della fede e il giudizio della ragione in un'epoca di opinioni* • *The Judgment of the Faith and the Judgment of the Reason in an Age of Opinions*
- 11:50 Discussione e votazione dello Statement • Discussion and Vote on the Statement
- 13:00 Pranzo presso la Casina Pio IV/Lunch at the Casina Pio IV

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## TELEGRAMMA DEL SANTO PADRE

(21 giugno 2007)

OCCASIONE SESSIONE PLENARIA DI CODESTA ACCADEMIA SUL TEMA "L'INCONTRO DEL CRISTIANESIMO E DELLA TRADIZIONE GRECOROMANA COME RADICE DELLA CULTURA OCCIDENTALE E DELLA SUA APERTURA UNIVERSALE" SOMMO PONTEFICE RIVOLGE AT VOSTRA ECCELLENZA ET PARTECIPANTI SUO BENAUGURANTE SALUTO ET MENTRE AUSPICA CHE IMPORTANTE CONVEGNO SIA OCCASIONE PER AMPIA RIFLESSIONE CIRCA FONDAMENTI CULTURALI CONTINENTE EUROPEO FAVORENDO COSTRUTTIVO CONFRONTO CIRCA FONDAMENTALE APPORTO FEDE CRISTIANA CHE HA FORGIATO PENSIERO ARTE ET CULTURA OCCIDENTALI ET PROMOSSO INCESSANTEMENTE SOLIDARIETÀ PACE ET RISPETTO DIGNITÀ UMANA INVOCA COPIOSI DONI CELESTI PER BUON ESITO LAVORI ET INVIA AT TUTTI IMPLORATA BENEDIZIONE APOSTOLICA.

CARDINALE TARCISIO BERTONE  
SEGRETARIO DI STATO DI SUA SANTITÀ

## COMMEMORAZIONE DI EDDA DUCCI

*Edda Ducci viene ricordata durante il Consiglio Direttivo della PAST del 24 giugno 2007*

Edda Ducci, membro del Consiglio e testimone esemplare della Dottrina e della prassi di Cristo. Ricordando con affetto la cara collega ringraziamo il Signore per la sua vita ed il suo servizio prestato all'Accademia dall'anno 1999, fino alla morte il 18 maggio 2007.

È difficile dire in breve di una vita tanto intensa, ricca di studio, di ricerca, di docenza, di molteplice operosità. Laureatasi con il massimo dei voti in filosofia con Carlo Mazzantini nell'Ateneo genovese, assistente incaricata alla cattedra di Filosofia teoretica tenuta da Cornelio Fabro presso l'Istituto Universitario di Magistero Maria Ss. Assunta (1961-1966), assistente ordinario di Pedagogia nella Facoltà di Magistero dell'Università di Bari (dal 1965), libero docente in Pedagogia (1969), ha insegnato nella Facoltà barese questa disciplina come professore incaricato (dal 1969-70), passando poi, vinto il concorso ad ordinario, alla cattedra di Filosofia dell'educazione. Passa quindi per trasferimento alla cattedra di Pedagogia del Magistero Maria Ss. Assunta (1981), successivamente a quella della Facoltà di Magistero della Università di Roma La Sapienza (1988), per essere infine inquadrata su Filosofia dell'educazione nella Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università di Roma Tre (1997). Di questo *cursus academicus* sono testimonianza significativa le decine di pubblicazioni scientifiche in materia di filosofia dell'educazione, filosofia teorica, pedagogia e storia della pedagogia, alcune delle quali hanno costituito una pietra miliare nel processo di allargamento dei confini della conoscenza. Tra i suoi molteplici incarichi istituzionali, sono da ricordare la direzione della Scuola di specializzazione e scienze umane presso l'Istituto di Magistero Maria Ss. Assunta, la partecipazione come componente alla Commissione italiana Unisco, al Consiglio direttivo del CEDE (Centro Europeo dell'Educazione), del direttivo della Biblioteca di Documentazione Pedagogica di Firenze. Dunque il punto focale degli interessi scientifici e del magistero di Edda Ducci è stata la *paideia*: intesa non tanto come tecnica, o meglio come arte, dell'insegnare e quindi del trasferire in maniera saggia, equilibrata, organica, efficace, le conoscenze acquisite alle più giovani generazioni, per una formazione la



migliore possibile; quanto piuttosto come studio dalla persona umana, non solo astrattamente considerata bensì penetrata nella concreta individualità di ciascuno, con la quale il pedagogo entra in rapporto, instaura una relazione, apre un dialogo di vita, che trae fuori le potenzialità di ciascuna delle parti in gioco dando luogo ad una educazione che è coeducazione. Il paradigma di riferimento del suo pensiero non sono le mutevoli costruzioni teoriche del moderno pedagogismo, ma la grande filosofia classica riletta ed interpretata alla luce della grande filosofia e teologia cristiana – a cominciare dal diletto Tommaso, su cui aveva lavorato già per la tesi di laurea –, e che vede il rapporto paidetico non fermarsi al “dialogo metodo”, via per comunicare ad un altro segni, ma giungere più profondamente al “dialogo vita”, cioè “il dialogo-incontro tra due interiorità, due spiriti perché ci sia uno sviluppo sostenuto dalla reciprocità” (E. Ducci, *Dialogo vita*).

Nella sua speculazione non è data distinzione o separatezza tra *fides* e *ratio*: la ragione non è ostacolata ma illuminata e stimolata da una fede che, nel mistero sublime dell’Incarnazione, coglie la più forte epifania della verità dell’uomo.

Donna forte e coraggiosa, dal pensiero penetrante condito non di rado da una arguzia tutta toscana, Edda Ducci aveva ereditato dalla sua terra anche una certa durezza formale, un certo rigore scevro da convenevoli, un’asciuttezza di comportamento senza formalismi, che peraltro lasciavano trasparire un animo sensibile, un’attenta disponibilità verso il prossimo, un “ansietato desiderio” – per dirla con quella sua conterranea, Caterina da Siena, alla quale era tanto legata in ragione della propria vocazione e delle proprie scelte di vita – di volere il bene dell’altro.

Ma ci restano i suoi scritti, la sua testimonianza, l’impronta profonda lasciata nell’interiorità di tanti colleghi. E poi la certezza di poterci rincontrare in un giorno senza fine.

Propongo il Prof. Enrico Martínez come membro del Consiglio Direttivo della PAST, per avere sei membri, dopo la morte della Prof. Ducci.

Edward Kaczynski, O.P.

## INTRODUZIONE

Il tema sull'incontro di cristianesimo e di tradizione grecoromana come radice della cultura occidentale e della sua apertura universale è stato scelto a causa del discorso di Benedetto XVI a Ratisbona (12 settembre 2006) e ai suoi continui ritorni alla ragione umana aperta alla trascendenza e all'aiuto alla fede contro l'auto limitata ragione, cioè alla ragione ridotta ai metodi delle scienze positive.

Siamo convinti che con la scelta di questo tema, la Pontificia Accademia di San Tommaso si trovi al centro dei problemi e delle difficoltà delle attuali crisi sociali e culturali. Tanto di più che San Tommaso d'Aquino ha offerto un contributo di valore permanente, il quale può aiutarci a confrontare la situazione attuale e a cercare una nuova armonia tra fede e ragione rispondendo ai problemi contemporanei.

*Come l'attuale Papa Benedetto XVI vede San Tommaso?* Permettetemi, cari amici, di citare le parole di Benedetto XVI per la festa di San Tommaso il 28 gennaio di quest'anno: "Il calendario liturgico ricorda oggi San Tommaso d'Aquino, grande dottore della Chiesa – ha detto Benedetto XVI, il 28 gennaio scorso – con il suo carisma di filosofo e di teologo, egli offre un valido modello di armonia tra ragione e fede, dimensioni dello spirito umano, che si realizzano pienamente nell'incontro e nel dialogo tra loro. Secondo il pensiero di San Tommaso, la ragione umana, per così dire, 'respira': si muove, cioè, in un orizzonte ampio, aperto, dove può esprimere il meglio di sé. Quando invece l'uomo si riduce a pensare soltanto ad oggetti materiali e sperimentabili e si chiude ai grandi interrogativi sulla vita, su se stesso e su Dio, si impoverisce. Il rapporto tra fede e ragione costituisce una seria sfida per la cultura attualmente dominante nel mondo occidentale e, proprio per questo, l'amato Giovanni Paolo II ha voluto dedicarvi un'Enciclica, intitolata appunto *Fides et ratio* – Fede e ragione. Ho ripreso anch'io quest'argomento recentemente, nel discorso all'Università di Regensburg.

In realtà, lo sviluppo moderno delle scienze reca innumerevoli effetti positivi, come noi tutti vediamo; essi vanno sempre riconosciuti. Al tem-

po stesso, però, occorre ammettere che la tendenza a considerare vero soltanto ciò che è sperimentabile costituisce una *limitazione* della ragione umana e produce una terribile schizofrenia, ormai conclamata, per cui convivono razionalismo e materialismo, ipertecnologia e istintività sfrenata. È urgente, pertanto, riscoprire in modo nuovo la razionalità umana aperta alla luce del *Logos* divino e alla sua perfetta rivelazione che è Gesù Cristo, Figlio di Dio fatto uomo. Quando è autentica la fede cristiana non mortifica la libertà e la ragione umana; ed allora, perché fede e ragione non devono avere paura l'una dell'altra, se incontrandosi e dialogando possono esprimersi al meglio? La fede suppone la ragione e la perfeziona, e la ragione, illuminata dalla fede, trova la forza per elevarsi alla conoscenza di Dio e delle realtà spirituali. La ragione umana non perde nulla apprendosi ai contenuti di fede, anzi, questi richiedono la sua libera e consapevole adesione. Con lungimirante saggezza, San Tommaso d'Aquino riuscì ad instaurare un confronto fruttuoso con il pensiero arabo ed ebraico del suo tempo, sì da essere considerato un maestro sempre attuale di dialogo con altre culture e religioni. Egli seppe presentare quella mirabile sintesi cristiana tra *ragione e fede* che per la civiltà occidentale rappresenta un patrimonio prezioso, a cui attingere anche oggi per dialogare efficacemente con le grandi tradizioni culturali e religiose dell'est e del sud del mondo. Preghiamo affinché i cristiani, specialmente quanti operano in ambito accademico e culturale, sappiano esprimere la ragionevolezza della loro fede e testimoniarla in un dialogo ispirato dall'amore. Chiediamo questo dono al Signore per intercessione di San Tommaso d'Aquino e soprattutto di Maria, Sede della Sapienza".

La problematica della VII Sessione comincia da *Il contributo della filosofia greca* (prof. E. Berti); *Il principio di 'emergenza' in Boezio di Danimarca ed Enrico di Gand* (prof. R. Wielockx); *Il rinascimento legale del XII e XIII secolo: alcune annotazioni tomistiche* (prof. R. Hittinger); *San Tommaso d'Aquino come esempio dell'importanza del legato ellenistico* (prof. L. Dewan).

Solo la ragione *forte* che coglie la realtà esistente e non il contenuto della coscienza (ragione *debole*); orienta verso la *verità* e l'*essere*; verso la realtà *metafisica* come condizione dell'*antropologia: sapienziale* – come ricerca dell'ultimo e integrale senso della vita, può essere fondamento sia della filosofia sia della vita socio-politica degli uomini.

Edward Kaczynski, O.P.

## INTRODUCTION

The topic of the encounter of Christianity and the Greco-Roman tradition as the root of Western culture and its openness to the universal was chosen because of Benedict XVI's speech in Regensburg (12 September 2006) and its continuous references to human reason open to transcendence and to the help offered by faith against self-limited reason, that is, reason reduced to the methods of the positive sciences.

We are convinced that, by choosing this topic, the Pontifical Academy of St Thomas Aquinas places itself at the core of the problems and difficulties of the current social and cultural crises. All the more so since St Thomas has offered a contribution of permanent value, that can help us face up the current situation and seek a new harmony between faith and reason, in response to contemporary problems.

*How does the current Pope, Benedict XVI, consider St Thomas?* Allow me, dear friends, to quote Benedict XVI's words for St Thomas' feast day last 28 January: "Today the liturgical calendar – said Benedict XVI, on 28 January last – commemorates St Thomas Aquinas, the great Doctor of the Church. With his charisma as a philosopher and theologian, he offered an effective model of harmony between reason and faith, dimensions of the human spirit that are completely fulfilled in the encounter and dialogue with one another.

According to St Thomas' thought, human reason, as it were, "breathes": it moves within a vast open horizon in which it can express the best of itself. When, instead, man reduces himself to thinking only of material objects or those that can be proven, he closes himself to the great questions about life, himself and God and is impoverished.

The relationship between faith and reason is a serious challenge to the currently dominant culture in the Western world, and for this very reason our beloved John Paul II decided to dedicate an Encyclical to it, entitled, precisely, *Fides et Ratio* – Faith and Reason. Recently, I too returned to this topic in my Address to the University of Regensburg.

In fact, the modern development of the sciences brings innumerable positive effects, as we all see, that should always be recognized. At the same time,

however, it is necessary to admit that the tendency to consider true only what can be experienced constitutes a limitation of human reason and produces a terrible schizophrenia now acclaimed, which has led to the coexistence of rationalism and materialism, hyper-technology and unbridled instinct.

It is urgent, therefore, to rediscover anew human rationality open to the light of the divine Logos and his perfect revelation which is Jesus Christ, Son of God made man.

When Christian faith is authentic, it does not diminish freedom and human reason; so, why should faith and reason fear one another if the best way for them to express themselves is by meeting and entering into dialogue? Faith presupposes reason and perfects it, and reason, enlightened by faith, finds the strength to rise to knowledge of God and spiritual realities. Human reason loses nothing by opening itself to the content of faith, which, indeed, requires its free and conscious adherence.

St Thomas Aquinas, with farsighted wisdom, succeeded in establishing a fruitful confrontation with the Arab and Hebrew thought of his time, to the point that he was considered an ever up-to-date teacher of dialogue with other cultures and religions. He knew how to present that wonderful Christian synthesis of reason and faith which today too, for the Western civilization, is a precious patrimony to draw from for an effective dialogue with the great cultural and religious traditions of the East and South of the world.

Let us pray that Christians, especially those who work in an academic and cultural context, are able to express the reasonableness of their faith and witness to it in a dialogue inspired by love. Let us ask the Lord for this gift through the intercession of St Thomas Aquinas and above all, through Mary, Seat of Wisdom'.

This VII Plenary Session begins with the *Contribution of Greek Philosophy* (Prof. E. Berti); followed by *The Principle of 'Emergence' in Boethius of Denmark and Henry of Ghent. The Greco-Roman Legacy at the Arts Faculty and the Faculty of Theology* (Prof. R. Wielockx); *The Legal Renaissance of the 12th and 13th Centuries: Some Thomistic Notes* (Prof. R. Hittinger); and *St. Thomas Aquinas as Example of the Importance of the Hellenistic Legacy* (Prof. L. Dewan).

Only the *strong* reason that grasps existing reality and not the content of conscience (weak reason) oriented towards *truth* and *being*, towards *metaphysical* reality as a condition of *sapiential anthropology* – as the search for the final, integral sense of life – can be the foundation both of philosophy and of the socio-political life of human beings.

Edward Kaczynski, O.P.

## IL CONTRIBUTO DELLA FILOSOFIA GRECA

ENRICO BERTI

Il contributo che la filosofia greca ha dato all'incontro tra cristianesimo e tradizione greco-romana è stato recentemente ed efficacemente illustrato dal papa Benedetto XVI nella lezione da lui tenuta all'Università di Regensburg (Ratisbona) il 12 settembre 2006, alla quale pertanto è opportuno richiamarci. Questa lezione, come è noto, ha suscitato reazioni negative da parte di alcuni ambienti politici musulmani a causa della citazione, in essa riportata, di un dialogo tra l'imperatore bizantino Manuele II Paleologo (secolo XIV) e un dotto persiano, nel corso del quale l'imperatore "in modo sorprendentemente brusco" avrebbe detto: "mostrami pure ciò che Maometto ha portato di nuovo, e vi troverai soltanto delle cose cattive e disumane, come la sua direttiva di diffondere per mezzo della spada la fede che egli predicava".<sup>1</sup> Secondo i critici del papa, questi non avrebbe preso a sufficienza le distanze da tale giudizio, ritenuto offensivo nei confronti della religione musulmana. Per dissipare una simile impressione, il testo definitivo della lezione papale, pubblicato dal sito vaticano, ha introdotto dopo la frase sopra riportata, cioè "in modo sorprendentemente brusco", il seguente inciso: "brusco al punto da essere per noi inaccettabile".<sup>2</sup> Inoltre il papa, come è noto, si è recato in Turchia, dove non solo ha reso omaggio ad Ankara al monumento a Kemal

<sup>1</sup> Riporto il testo della lezione pubblicato da "Avvenire" il 13 settembre 2006. Il dialogo citato dal papa è sicuramente Manuel 2. Paléologue, *Entretiens avec un musulman; 7. Controverse*, introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par T. Khoury, Paris, Cerf, 1966. Dopo la notorietà procuratagli dal discorso di Ratisbona esso è stato tradotto in italiano col titolo: Manuele 2. Paleologo, *Dialoghi con un musulmano: 7. Discussione*, introduzione, testo critico e note di T. Khoury, traduzione di F. Artioli, Roma-Bologna, Studio Domenicano, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. G. Zizola, *Fedi e poteri nella società globale*, Assisi, Cittadella editrice, 2007, p. 163.

Ataturk, il padre della Turchia “laica”, ma a Istanbul ha visitato la Moschea Blu, “costruita dagli Ottomani per competere in grandezza e audacia con le cupole della vicina Santa Sofia”, raccogliendosi in preghiera silenziosa davanti al Mihrab, l’edicola rivolta verso la Mecca.<sup>3</sup>

Naturalmente i giornali, sia italiani che di altri paesi, hanno parlato solo di quella citazione e del rumore che essa ha suscitato, ma il discorso di Ratisbona, per dichiarazione esplicita del papa, aveva per tema il rapporto tra fede e ragione, anzi tra cristianesimo e ragione, e la citazione di Manuele II aveva lo scopo di riprendere un concetto positivo da lui espresso, quello per cui “non agire secondo ragione [nel greco dell’imperatore bizantino, riportato dal papa: *logos*] è contrario alla natura di Dio. Chi quindi vuole condurre qualcuno alla fede ha bisogno della capacità di parlare bene e di ragionare correttamente, non invece della violenza e della minaccia”. Come si vede, la tesi del papa è che la fede non può essere imposta con la violenza, ma al contrario deve essere proposta per mezzo della ragione, perché “non agire secondo ragione è contrario alla natura di Dio”.

A questo punto il papa cita il commento dell’editore dei dialoghi tra l’imperatore e il dotto persiano, il professore Theodor Khoury, secondo cui per la religione musulmana Dio è assolutamente trascendente, nel senso che la sua volontà non è legata a nessuna delle nostre categorie, nemmeno a quella della ragionevolezza, e riporta l’osservazione dell’islamista R. Arnaldez, citata dallo stesso Khoury, secondo cui il teologo musulmano Ibn Hazn (X secolo) avrebbe dichiarato che Dio non è legato nemmeno dalla sua stessa parola.<sup>4</sup> Come si può notare, l’osservazione di Arnaldez si riferisce ad un singolo teologo, Ibn Hazn appunto, valorizzato dalla scuola a cui lo stesso Arnaldez appartiene, quella di Louis Massignon, tendente a contrapporre le correnti più religiose dell’islam ai filosofi ellenizzanti, quali Avicenna e Ibn Arabi.<sup>5</sup> Essa viene estesa, a mio giudizio indebitamente, da Khoury all’intera religione musulmana, la quale invece fu professata anche da filosofi e teologi “razionali” come quelli citati ed altri ancora (Al-Farabi, Averroè, Al Bagdadi), anche se è vero che l’idea di una scienza divina e di una mediazione tra Dio e le creature ad opera di una o più intelligenze deriva a costoro dalla filosofia greca e non dal *Corano*, dove invece, come è

<sup>3</sup> *Ivi*, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> La citazione si riferisce al libro di R. Arnaldez, *Grammaire et théologie chez Ibn Hazn de Cordoue*, Paris 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Ciò è stato rilevato da C. Jambet, *I malintesi di Ratisbona: l’Islam e il sonno della ragione*, “Vita e pensiero”, 2007/1, pp. 9-19 (ripreso dalla rivista “Esprit”).

noto, è assente l'idea cristiana di una mediazione del Logos divino tra Dio stesso e la creazione.

È appunto su questo aspetto del cristianesimo che il papa, nel seguito del suo discorso, vuole richiamare l'attenzione, mediante l'interrogativo: "la convinzione che agire contro la ragione sia in contraddizione con la natura di Dio è soltanto un pensiero greco o vale sempre e per se stesso?", al quale risponde: "io penso che in questo punto si manifesti la profonda concordanza tra ciò che è greco nel senso migliore e ciò che è fede in Dio sul fondamento della Bibbia", e continua: "modificando il primo versetto del Libro della Genesi, Giovanni ha iniziato il prologo del suo Vangelo con le parole 'In principio era il logos'. È questa proprio la stessa parola che usa l'imperatore: Dio agisce con logos. Logos significa insieme ragione e parola – una ragione che è creatrice e capace di comunicarsi ma, appunto, come ragione. Giovanni con ciò ci ha donato la parola conclusiva sul concetto biblico di Dio [...]. In principio era il logos e il logos è Dio, ci dice l'evangelista. L'incontro tra il messaggio biblico e il pensiero greco non era un semplice caso. La visione di san Paolo, davanti al quale si erano chiuse le vie dell'Asia e che, in sogno, vide un Macedone e sentì la sua supplica: 'Passa in Macedonia e aiutaci!' (cfr. *At* 16, 6-10) – questa visione può essere interpretata come una 'condensazione' della necessità intrinseca di un avvicinamento tra la fede biblica e l'interrogarsi greco".

A testimonianza di tale avvicinamento tra fede biblica e pensiero greco il papa cita poi la famosa dichiarazione di Dio a Mosè nel roveto ardente, "Io sono" (*Esodo* 3, 14), da lui interpretata come contestazione delle divinità dai molteplici nomi del mito, analoga al tentativo di Socrate di vincere e superare il mito stesso; cita la derisione delle divinità che sono soltanto opera delle mani dell'uomo nel salmo 115, da lui interpretata come "una specie di illuminismo"; cita la tarda letteratura sapienziale di impronta ellenizzante ed infine la traduzione in greco dell'Antico Testamento ad opera dei Settanta. L'incontro tra fede biblica e filosofia greca, secondo il papa, "ha avuto un significato decisivo per la nascita del cristianesimo e la sua divulgazione", perché il suo significato profondo è quello "dell'incontro tra fede e ragione, tra autentico illuminismo e religione". Nel seguito del discorso egli deplora le tendenze volontaristiche sviluppatesi nel tardo Medioevo, da lui interpretate come analoghe all'immagine del Dio-arbitrio di Ibn Hazn, e le "tre onde" della dis-ellenizzazione sviluppatesi in età moderna, cioè la Riforma del XVI secolo, la teologia liberale del XIX e XX secolo e la "terza onda della dis-ellenizzazione che si diffonde attualmente", secondo la quale l'inculturazione del cristianesimo nell'ellenismo non



dovrebbe vincolare le altre culture. Ad esse il papa contrappone la convinzione che “le decisioni di fondo che riguardano il rapporto della fede con la ricerca della ragione umana [espresse appunto dall’incontro tra cristianesimo e filosofia greca], queste decisioni fanno parte della fede stessa e ne sono gli sviluppi conformi alla sua natura”.

Tralasciando gli altri aspetti del discorso di Ratisbona, a cui accenniamo in seguito, concentriamo la nostra attenzione sulla tesi di fondo, non senza avere prima riportato le parole con cui il papa stesso ne ribadisce l’importanza. “Il qui accennato vicendevole avvicinamento interiore – egli scrive – che si è avuto tra la fede biblica e l’interrogarsi sul piano filosofico del pensiero greco, è un dato di importanza decisiva non solo dal punto di vista della storia delle religioni, ma anche da quello della storia universale – un dato che ci obbliga anche oggi. Considerato questo incontro, non è sorprendente che il cristianesimo, nonostante la sua origine e qualche suo sviluppo importante nell’Oriente, abbia infine trovato la sua impronta storicamente decisiva in Europa. Possiamo esprimerlo anche inversamente: questo incontro, al quale si aggiunge successivamente ancora il patrimonio di Roma, ha creato l’Europa e rimane il fondamento di ciò che, con ragione, si può chiamare Europa”.

Forse l’unità tra fede e ragione, nonché il suo fondamento storico, cioè la convergenza tra fede cristiana e filosofia greca, non sono mai state espresse in precedenza con tanto vigore. Non c’è dubbio, infatti, che *logos* in greco significa “parola” e anche “ragione”, ma la tradizione esegetica finora aveva sottolineato preferibilmente il suo significato di “parola”, a cominciare dalla traduzione della *Vulgata*, “In principio erat verbum”, la quale, come sappiamo, per la Chiesa ha valore canonico. Finora si è sempre detto che il Verbo divino, cioè la seconda persona della Trinità, è colui “per mezzo di cui tutte le cose sono state create”, nel senso che sono state create per mezzo di una parola, e colui che si è fatto carne per salvare gli uomini è appunto il Verbo inteso come parola. All’idea di Dio come Parola è stata inoltre collegata la concezione della rivelazione come parola rivolta da Dio all’uomo. L’interpretazione di *logos* come “ragione”, e la conseguente affermazione che Dio è ragione, che Dio ha creato il mondo per mezzo della ragione, e che la ragione si è fatta carne, appare alquanto nuova ed audace, almeno a chi non è teologo come il sottoscritto, ma al tempo stesso rivela con quanta decisione il papa intende sottolineare la tesi che “il patrimonio greco, criticamente purificato, sia una parte integrante della fede cristiana”.

La tesi in questione, tuttavia, appare ben fondata, se si tengono presenti da un lato le precedenti prese di posizione del magistero della Chiesa cat-

tolica, in particolare l'enciclica *Fides et ratio* di Giovanni Paolo II, dotata di un'ufficialità molto maggiore di quella del discorso di Ratisbona, che in fin dei conti è stato una lezione tenuta a professori e studenti universitari, e dall'altro gli sviluppi della filosofia greca che hanno preceduto l'avvento del cristianesimo. L'enciclica, come è noto, afferma la complementarità di fede e ragione, paragonandole a "due ali con le quali lo spirito umano s'innalza verso la verità". Pur senza condividere l'osservazione fatta da un critico sicuramente malevolo, ma non privo di ingegno, secondo cui essa sembra voler porre un freno a una "deriva protestante" che starebbe insinuandosi nella chiesa cattolica,<sup>6</sup> credo anch'io che lo scopo principale di essa sia stato quello di rivalutare lo studio della filosofia, spesso trascurato, dopo il Concilio Vaticano II, nelle università pontificie e nelle scuole cattoliche in generale.<sup>7</sup> Essa infatti presenta la filosofia "come uno dei compiti più nobili dell'umanità" (n. 3) e non esita a richiamarsi alle posizioni fondamentali della filosofia classica, cioè pre-cristiana, quali l'origine della conoscenza dalla "meraviglia", il principio di non-contraddizione, il principio di causalità, il principio di finalità, dichiarando che esse, "proprio perché condivise in qualche misura da tutti, dovrebbero costituire un punto di riferimento delle diverse scuole filosofiche" (n. 4).

L'enciclica riconosce la legittimità del pluralismo filosofico, il che costituisce una notevole novità rispetto al tradizionale privilegiamento del tomismo, ma naturalmente circoscrive tale legittimità alle filosofie che non escludano la possibilità della fede, cioè che non siano incompatibili con essa. Ciò comporta il riconoscimento abbastanza esplicito della necessità della metafisica intesa come posizione razionale aperta al riconoscimento della trascendenza dell'assoluto (n. 22), quale si riscontra nelle maggiori espressioni della filosofia greca (Platone, Aristotele e alcuni degli Stoici). Ma la maggiore valorizzazione della filosofia greca ha inizio dal capitolo intitolato, non a caso, "intellego ut credam", che si apre con la rievocazione del discorso di san Paolo agli Ateniesi, riferito dall'evangelista Luca negli *Atti degli Apostoli* (17, 22 ss.). Questo discorso viene interpretato come sforzo "per individuare una base comune" su cui avviare l'annuncio del kerig-

<sup>6</sup> Mi riferisco ad un articolo di P. Flores d'Arcais pubblicato nella rivista "Micromega" qualche giorno dopo l'uscita dell'enciclica (14 settembre 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Mi permetto, a questo proposito, di rinviare al mio scritto *L'istanza metafisica nella "Fides et ratio"*, in A. Livi – G. Lorizio (edd.), *Il desiderio di conoscere la verità. Teologia e filosofia a cinque anni dalla "Fides et ratio"*, Roma, Lateran University Press, 2005, pp. 23-35.

ma, e tale base comune viene indicata nella filosofia (n. 24). Indi il testo prosegue dicendo: “per farsi comprendere dai pagani, i primi cristiani non potevano nei loro discorsi rinviare soltanto a Mosè e ai profeti; dovevano anche far leva sulla conoscenza naturale di Dio [...]. Poiché però tale conoscenza naturale, nella religione pagana, era scaduta in idolatria, l’Apostolo ritenne più saggio collegare il suo discorso al pensiero dei filosofi, i quali fin dagli inizi avevano opposto ai miti e ai culti misterici concetti più rispettosi della trascendenza divina” (n. 36).

Non si potrebbe dire in termini più chiari che il “Dio sconosciuto” annunciato da san Paolo agli Ateniesi è il “Dio dei filosofi”, cioè il concetto di Dio elaborato dai filosofi greci. L’enciclica infatti continua: “Uno degli sforzi maggiori che i filosofi del pensiero classico operarono fu quello di purificare la concezione che gli uomini avevano di Dio da forme mitologiche [...]. Fu compito dei padri della filosofia far emergere il legame tra la ragione e la religione [...], dare fondamento razionale alla loro credenza nella divinità [...]. Le superstizioni vennero riconosciute come tali e la religione fu, almeno in parte, purificata mediante l’analisi razionale” (ivi). Questa interpretazione dell’incontro tra cristianesimo e filosofia greca, del resto, era già stata proposta a chiare lettere sin dal 1968 dall’allora professore di teologia Joseph Ratzinger nella sua *Introduzione al cristianesimo*, immediatamente ristampata dopo la sua ascesa al soglio pontificio. Scriveva infatti Ratzinger: “il cristianesimo primitivo ha operato con coraggio la sua scelta e compiuto la sua purificazione, optando *per* il Dio dei filosofi, *contro* gli dèi delle religioni. Quando la gente incominciò a chiedere a quale dio corrispondesse il Dio cristiano – se a Zeus, o a Ermes, o a Dioniso, o a qualche altro ancora – la risposta fu la seguente. A nessuno di essi. Il cristianesimo non adora nessuno degli dèi che voi pregate, ma quell’Unico e solo che voi non pregate: quell’Altissimo di cui parlano anche i vostri filosofi”.<sup>8</sup>

A scanso di equivoci, cioè per prevenire l’obiezione secondo la quale san Paolo si espresse anche contro la filosofia, l’enciclica ricorda l’esistenza, nel mondo culturale pagano, di altre posizioni, quali ad esempio la gnosi, che si pretendeva conoscenza di tipo superiore, esoterico, riservato a pochi perfetti, e precisa: “È senza dubbio a questo genere di speculazioni esoteriche che san Paolo pensa, quando mette in guardia i Colossesi: ‘Badate che nessuno vi inganni con la sua filosofia e con vuoti raggiri ispirati alla tradizio-

<sup>8</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al cristianesimo*, con un nuovo saggio introduttivo, Brescia, Queriniana, 2003, pp. 128-129.

ne umana, secondo gli elementi del mondo e non secondo Cristo' (2, 8). Quanto mai attuali si presentano le parole dell'Apostolo, se le riferiamo alle diverse forme di esoterismo che dilagano oggi presso alcuni credenti, privi del dovuto senso critico" (n. 37). Dunque i passi in cui san Paolo sembra condannare la filosofia, secondo l'enciclica, vanno riferiti non alle grandi espressioni della filosofia greca, ma alla gnosi.

Del resto proprio il discorso agli Ateniesi, come ho avuto occasione di mostrare anche altre volte, contiene una serie di rinvii precisi al concetto di Dio professato dai filosofi greci.<sup>9</sup> Di solito si scorge un riferimento alla filosofia greca solo nella citazione esplicita che Paolo fa dei *Fenomeni* del poeta stoico Arato di Soli (III secolo a.C.), allievo del fondatore dello stoicismo, Zenone di Cizio: "come hanno detto anche alcuni dei vostri poeti: di lui, infatti, noi siamo anche stirpe (*genos*)".<sup>10</sup> Ma la stessa frase si trova anche nell'*Inno a Zeus* di Cleante di Asso, uno dei maggiori rappresentanti dello stoicismo antico, allievo pure lui di Zenone, il quale scrive: "O Zeus, il più nobile degli immortali, dai molti nomi (*poluônume*), sempre onnipotente, signore della natura, che governi ogni essere secondo la legge [...]. Di te infatti siamo stirpe (*genos*), avendo avuto in sorte un'immagine del suono [la parola], noi soli fra quanti mortali vivono e si muovono sulla terra".<sup>11</sup> Dunque san Paolo ha presente la concezione di Dio professata dagli Stoici e se ne serve per far accettare dai suoi ascoltatori, tra i quali il testo degli *Atti* dice che c'erano alcuni filosofi stoici, la sua idea di Dio.

Ma i riferimenti al "Dio dei filosofi" nel discorso agli Ateniesi abbondano. La prima caratterizzazione che l'apostolo propone del suo Dio è "il Dio che ha fatto il mondo (*ho poiêsas ton kosmon*) e tutto ciò che in esso si trova. Egli è signore del cielo e della terra". Ebbene, anche Platone nel *Timeo*, dialogo sicuramente noto al tempo di san Paolo perché utilizzato dall'ebreo Filone di Alessandria (I secolo a.C.) per commentare il *Genesi*, parla di un Dio "fattore e padre" (*poiêtês kai patêr*) di questo universo",<sup>12</sup> il famoso demiurgo, anche se sappiamo che questi non è un vero creatore perché pla-

<sup>9</sup> *Il discorso di Paolo agli Ateniesi e la filosofia classica*, in AA. VV., *Ebraismo, ellenismo, cristianesimo*, "Archivio di Filosofia", 53, 1985, vol. I, pp. 251-259; *Il "Dio dei filosofi" nel discorso di Paolo agli Ateniesi*, in A. Ales Bello (a cura), *Pensare Dio a Gerusalemme. Filosofia e monoteismo a confronto*, Roma, Pontificia Università Lateranense, 2000, pp. 47-57.

<sup>10</sup> *Atti* 17, 28, riferibile ad Arato, *Fenomeni* 5.

<sup>11</sup> Stoici antichi, *Tutti i frammenti secondo la raccolta di Hans von Arnim*, a cura di R. Radice, Milano, Bompiani, 1998, CA 537, pp. 236-238.

<sup>12</sup> Plat. *Tim.* 28 c.

sma il mondo a immagine delle Idee, mettendo ordine nel moto disordinato di elementi preesistenti che si agitano nel ricettacolo. E Aristotele nel dialogo *Sulla filosofia*, a noi non pervenuto ma diffuso nel I secolo a.C., come risulta dalle testimonianze di Cicerone e di Filone, parlava anche lui di un Dio “fattore e signore (*poiêtês kai êgemôn*) di questo universo”, probabilmente riferendo la dottrina del *Timeo*.<sup>13</sup>

Del Dio signore del cielo e della terra san Paolo afferma che “non abita in templi fabbricati dalle mani degli uomini (*en kheiropoiêtôis naois*), né riceve servizi dalle mani di un uomo, come se avesse bisogno di qualcuno, essendo lui che dà a tutti vita”. Aristotele, sempre nel dialogo *Sulla filosofia*, polemizzava contro quanti credevano che l’universo, da lui considerato un tempio divino, non differisse dalle opere costruite dalle mani degli uomini (*tôn kheirokmêtôn*),<sup>14</sup> nell’*Etica Eudemea* scriveva che “Dio non comanda impartendo ordini [...], perché non ha bisogno di nulla,<sup>15</sup> e nel *De caelo* scriveva che “di lassù dipendono anche per gli altri [...] l’essere e il vivere”.<sup>16</sup> Con ciò non intendo sostenere che san Paolo conoscesse queste ultime opere di Aristotele, edite da Andronico di Rodi proprio nel I secolo a.C. a Roma, ma non c’è dubbio che nella cultura di lingua greca del suo tempo circolava l’idea di un Dio descritto dai filosofi, unico o superiore a tutti gli altri dèi, in qualche modo fattore, o ordinatore, e signore del cielo e della terra, non di forma unana, non abitante in templi umani, non raffigurabile in idoli. Questa è l’idea di Dio a cui si richiama san Paolo.

Tale idea dovette essere veicolata anche da un trattato attribuito ad Aristotele, ma di origine posteriore agli Stoici, che ebbe molta fortuna nell’antichità, il *De mundo*, dove si dice che tutte le cose provengono da Dio e sono state costituite in funzione di Dio, che Dio è il generatore (*genetôr*) e il conservatore (*sôtêr*) di tutte le cose, che è denominato “l’altissimo”, che risiede nelle regioni più alte, che governa l’universo, che non è conoscibile se non dalla ragione, che è visibile attraverso le sue opere, che pur essendo uno ha molti nomi (*poluônumos*) e che egli è colui per il quale noi viviamo.<sup>17</sup> Si tratta, come si vede, di una sintesi di dottrine platoniche, aristoteliche e stoiche (queste ultime risultanti non solo dall’aggettivo *poluônumos*, che

<sup>13</sup> Philo, *De praem. et poen.* 7, 41-43 (= Aristot. *De philos.* fr. 13 c Ross).

<sup>14</sup> Philo, *De aet. mundi* 5, 20-24 (= Aristot. *De philos.* fr. 19 a Ross).

<sup>15</sup> Aristot. *Eth. Eud.* VIII 3, 1249 b 13-16.

<sup>16</sup> Aristot. *De caelo* I 9, 279 a 28-30.

<sup>17</sup> G. Reale-A. P. Bos, *Il trattato “Sul cosmo per Alessandro” attribuito ad Aristotele*, Milano, “Vita e pensiero”, 1995, pp. 213-235.

ricorre anche nell'*Inno a Zeus* di Cleante, ma anche dall'identificazione di tale Dio col fato, *eimarmenê*), che proponevano un'idea "filosofica" di Dio in alternativa agli dèi del mito. Anche l'affermazione che Dio si conosce a partire dalle sue opere risale al dialogo *Sulla filosofia* di Aristotele, a proposito del quale è testimoniata sia da Cicerone che da Filone,<sup>18</sup> e ritorna nella lettera di san Paolo ai Romani (1, 20), in un passo che la *Fides et ratio* interpreta come affermazione della "capacità metafisica dell'uomo" (n. 22).

Del resto la prova migliore del fatto che i primi cristiani – ma già gli Ebrei ellenizzanti – fecero propria l'idea di Dio elaborata dai filosofi greci è data dalla nota leggenda del "furto dei filosofi". Racconta infatti il cristiano Eusebio di Cesarea nella sua *Historia ecclesiastica* (IV secolo d.C.), che un ebreo di Alessandria di nome Aristobulo, uno dei Settanta a cui il re Tolomeo Filadelfo commissionò la traduzione in greco della Bibbia (II secolo a.C.), era versato nella filosofia di Aristotele (probabilmente conosceva il *De mundo* a lui attribuito);<sup>19</sup> e nella *Praeparatio evangelica* lo stesso Eusebio riferisce che secondo Aristobulo alcuni filosofi e poeti greci avevano preso da Mosè (ritenuto autore del *Genesi*) alcune dottrine che li resero famosi, precisando che si trattava di Platone e del poeta Arato, del quale ultimo Aristobulo cita precisamente lo stesso verso che poi sarà citato da san Paolo, cioè "noi siamo sua stirpe".<sup>20</sup> Qui la derivazione, che sarà affermata da san Paolo, dell'idea cristiana di Dio dalla filosofia greca è addirittura rovesciata, cioè Aristobulo afferma che l'idea filosofica di Dio è derivata dalla Bibbia, cosa del tutto impossibile, dato che i Greci conobbero la Bibbia soltanto dopo la traduzione dei Settanta. E il cristiano Giustino, anzi san Giustino perché martire della fede, considerato il primo filosofo cristiano, non esita a scrivere, nella sua *Prima apologia* (II secolo d.C.): "Platone ha desunto dai nostri maestri, intendo dire dalle parole dei profeti, la dottrina per cui Dio ha creato il cosmo, plasmando una materia informe".<sup>21</sup>

Naturalmente quando si dice che i primi cristiani hanno fatto propria l'idea di Dio elaborata dai filosofi greci, non si intende ridurre a questa idea la grandezza e la ricchezza della concezione cristiana di Dio. Il cosiddetto

<sup>18</sup> Cic. *De nat. deor.* 2, 37, 95-96 (= Aristot. *De philos.* fr. 13 a Ross); Philo, *Leg. Alleg.* 3, 32, 97-99 (= Aristot. *De philos.* fr. 13 b Ross).

<sup>19</sup> R. Radice, *La filosofia di Aristobulo e i suoi nessi con il "De mundo" di Aristotele*, Milano, "Vita e pensiero", 1994, pp. 174-175.

<sup>20</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 178-179, 186-187, 198-199.

<sup>21</sup> Giustino, *Apologie*, a cura di G. Girgenti, Milano, Rusconi, 1995, pp. 150-151.

“Dio dei filosofi” a cui si sono rifatti i primi cristiani non è il “Dio dei filosofi” di cui parlerà Pascal, riferendosi al Dio geometra ed orologiaio di Descartes, che lo stesso Pascal metterà in alternativa al “Dio di Abramo, di Isacco e di Giacobbe”, nonché di Gesù Cristo. Il Dio dei filosofi greci non è né veramente creatore, né fedele al patto col suo popolo, né soprattutto redentore dell'uomo; tuttavia è assoluto, trascendente, personale, quale deve essere anche il Dio di Abramo, Isacco, Giacobbe e Gesù per essere veramente un Dio. Il primo dunque non esclude il secondo, ma ne è presupposto, implicato, inglobato e infinitamente superato. Se, infatti, il Dio di Abramo e di Gesù non fosse anche assoluto, trascendente e personale, non potrebbe in alcun modo salvare il suo popolo e redimere l'uomo.

Nel suo discorso di Ratisbona il papa, a proposito della distinzione fatta da Pascal tra il “Dio dei filosofi” e il “Dio di Abramo, Isacco e Giacobbe”, rinvia alla prolusione da lui stesso tenuta all'Università di Bonn nel 1959, intitolata *Il Dio della fede e il Dio dei filosofi*. Ebbene, in questa prolusione, richiamandosi al rapporto stabilito da san Tommaso d'Aquino tra la natura e la grazia, Ratzinger aveva scritto: “La fede cristiana in Dio accoglie in sé la teologia filosofica e la perfeziona. Detto in termini più precisi: il Dio di Aristotele e il Dio di Gesù Cristo è unico e lo stesso. Aristotele ha riconosciuto il vero Dio che noi nella fede possiamo comprendere in modo più profondo e più puro”.<sup>22</sup> L'identificazione del Dio di Aristotele col Dio della fede può sembrare anche troppo audace, ma significa che il Dio della filosofia non è diverso da quello della fede, è solo conosciuto parzialmente, ma tuttavia con verità, e la fede non cancella questa verità, bensì la completa e la arricchisce del kerigma.

Di questo rapporto san Paolo ha la più chiara consapevolezza, quando, dopo avere annunciato agli Ateniesi il Dio creatore e signore del cielo e della terra, aggiunge che questo Dio “ha stabilito un giorno nel quale dovrà giudicare il mondo con giustizia, per mezzo di un uomo che ha designato, accreditandolo di fronte a tutti col resuscitarlo dai morti” (17, 31). È questo il kerygma, l'annuncio specificamente cristiano, che ingloba in sé ogni precedente discorso, senza tuttavia cancellarlo. Non condivido l'opinione di quanti dicono che il discorso agli Ateniesi fu un insuccesso. È vero che, secondo il testo degli *Atti*, “quando sentirono parlare di resurrezione, alcuni lo canzonarono, altri dicevano ‘su questo ti sentiremo un'altra volta’”, ma poi il testo

<sup>22</sup> La traduzione italiana di tale prolusione, pubblicata dalla Marcianum Press a cura di H. Sonnemans, è stata ripresa anche nel quotidiano “La Repubblica” il 15 marzo 2007.

aggiunge: “ma alcuni aderirono a lui e abbracciarono la fede; tra essi Dionigi, membro dell’Areopago, una donna di nome Damaris e altri con loro” (17, 32-34). Non si vede perché i primi debbano essere considerati più numerosi dei secondi, e comunque non ha senso fare questioni di numero di fronte ad un fenomeno così imponente come l’evangelizzazione dell’intero Oriente sino a Roma, e in particolare della Grecia, compiuta da san Paolo.

Con l’incontro tra filosofia greca e cristianesimo ha a che vedere anche la parte del discorso di Ratisbona che tratta della “dis-ellenizzazione”, perché con questo termine il papa indica proprio il tentativo di negare il valore di quell’incontro o di cancellarne le conseguenze. La prima ondata di dis-ellenizzazione è costituita, secondo il discorso, dalla Riforma del secolo XVI, dove il tentativo di recuperare la forma primordiale della fede si è risolto nella decisione di liberarla dalla metafisica, quella decisione che ha avuto il suo esito ultimo in Kant, la cui posizione viene interpretata dal papa da un lato come ancoraggio della fede alla sola ragione pratica, con la conseguente perdita della capacità di accedere al tutto della realtà, e dall’altro come riduzione della capacità della ragione al solo mondo della conoscenza scientifica. La seconda ondata di dis-ellenizzazione è la teologia liberale del XIX e XX secolo, rappresentata soprattutto da Adolf von Harnack, il cui rifiuto del “Dio dei filosofi” ha comportato significativamente la riduzione della figura di Gesù a semplice portatore di un messaggio morale umanitario, cioè la perdita della sua divinità. La terza ondata della dis-ellenizzazione è quella, secondo il papa, che si diffonde attualmente, nel tentativo di realizzare una nuova inculturazione del cristianesimo nei diversi ambienti in cui esso è oggi diffuso, rinnegando l’eredità greca.

Questo tentativo, secondo il papa, non solo è contrario al significato stesso della fede cristiana, perché “il Nuovo Testamento è stato scritto in lingua greca e porta in se stesso il contatto con lo spirito greco”, ma comporta una riduzione del valore della ragione, di cui lo spirito greco era appunto espressione, e quindi una svalutazione della filosofia e della teologia, mentre l’unica espressione valida della ragione rimangono le scienze naturali. Contro tale riduzione il papa rileva “la corrispondenza tra il nostro spirito e le strutture razionali operanti nella natura come un dato di fatto”, ed afferma che la domanda sul perché di questo stato di fatto “deve essere affidata dalle scienze naturali ad altri livelli e modi di pensare – alla filosofia ed alla teologia”. Quest’ultima affermazione ha suscitato le riserve di alcuni commentatori “laici”, secondo i quali essa imporrebbe alle scienze naturali il compito di giustificare la filosofia e la



teologia.<sup>23</sup> Forse il papa, anziché dire “affidata”, avrebbe potuto dire “lasciata”, perché la scienza non ha il compito positivo di giustificare la filosofia e la teologia, ma nemmeno quello negativo di escluderne la legittimità, altrimenti non è più scienza, ma è filosofia essa stessa, e cattiva filosofia.

Del resto il migliore riconoscimento che l'intenzione del papa è quella di difendere la ragione, è venuta dal maggiore filosofo “laico” del nostro tempo, Jürgen Habermas, che col cardinale Ratzinger ha già avuto occasione di dialogare in passato. In un articolo pubblicato nella “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” nel febbraio 2007 il filosofo tedesco anzitutto critica, anche duramente, il discorso di Ratisbona, a causa della “piega antimoderna” che, a suo dire, questo conterrebbe nel polemizzare contro le tre ondate della dis-ellenizzazione, le quali invece secondo Habermas avrebbero contribuito alla nascita della “ragione comune” moderna. Tuttavia egli riconosce che “entrambe le tradizioni culturali, rispettivamente risalenti ad Atene e a Gerusalemme, fanno sostanzialmente parte di una medesima genesi storica della ragione secolare, ossia di quella ragione attraverso cui i figli e le figlie della modernità possono accordarsi circa la loro identità e circa la loro posizione nel mondo”. E poi aggiunge: “cosa mi spinge a studiare questo rapporto della fede con la ragione? Il desiderio di mobilitare la ragione moderna contro il disfattismo che le cova dentro. Noi riscontriamo questo disfattismo della ragione sia nella declinazione postmoderna della ‘dialettica dell’illuminismo’ sia nello scientismo positivistico”.<sup>24</sup> Dunque Habermas invoca un’alleanza tra quello che egli chiama “il partito religioso” e la “ragione secolare” contro l’attuale “disfattismo della ragione”, affermando che il primo deve “riconoscere l’autorità della ragione ‘naturale’, come ha fatto appunto il papa, e la seconda non deve “impancarsi a giudice delle verità religiose”.

<sup>23</sup> Mi riferisco ad un articolo di G.E. Rusconi uscito nel quotidiano “La Stampa” del 13 settembre 2006.

<sup>24</sup> La traduzione parziale dell’articolo di J. Habermas è stata riportata, col titolo *Alleanza contro i disfattisti*, nel supplemento domenicale del “Sole-24ore” del 18 febbraio 2007.

THE PRINCIPLE OF 'EMERGENCE'  
IN BOETHIUS OF DENMARK AND HENRY OF GHENT  
THE GRECO-ROMAN LEGACY  
AT THE ARTS FACULTY AND THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

ROBERT WIELOCKX

In reading Augustine's *De genesi contra Manichaeos* (c. 389) and his *De genesi ad litteram libri xii* (401-415), the Masters of the University of Paris were equipped for understanding the Jewish-Christian faith as expressed in *Genesis* 1-2 in two alternative ways. It was possible to understand that the material and immaterial reality were created one after the other. But since it was equally possible to understand, with Augustine's later work, that God created in the beginning all things simultaneously, material and immaterial alike (cf. *Jesus Sirach* 18,1), an implication, irrespective of any of the two alternatives, seemed obvious. Even if the creation of the human being came later, God's sovereign creation of the spiritual being did not depend on any previously extant material reality, just as the human being itself must anyway be irreducible to the material elements it integrated.<sup>1</sup> The 'emergence' of the immaterial from the material implied two inseparable moments: 'assuming' and 'surpassing' of the lower by the higher. Understood in this way, Augustine's rereading the Jewish-Christian legacy at the close of Antiquity was preparing a future far beyond its revival in the medieval University. Three years after C.R. Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871), in which the term 'emergence' had its proper meaning, É. Boutroux ushered in the term of 'émergence' and gave it a very meaningful place in his *De la contingence des lois de la nature* (1874). Unlike A.L.

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *De genesi contra Manichaeos*, II, c. 2, n. 3 (PL 34,197); *ibid.*, I, c. 7, n. 11-12 (PL 34, 178-179); Id., *De genesi ad litteram*, I, c. 5, n. 29, pp. 21-22; *ibid.*, IV, c. 26, n. 43, pp. 125-126; *ibid.*, V, c. 8, n. 12-13, pp. 145-146, etc.

Lavoisier, according to whom nothing is gained, nothing is lost, all remains equal, indeed, and is able to find an adequate expression in a equation formula, É. Boutroux was convinced that no actual reality in nature is already what it will be when, by a new act of freedom, a higher organization of nature emerges which assumes the former one and surpasses it alike.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of presenting here a kaleidoscope of all important members of the University of Paris in the Middle Ages and the complex process of the full assimilation of the Greco-Roman sources by the medieval Universities – H. Rashdall, F.M. Powicke, A.B. Emden, A.G. Little, F. Pelster, H. Denifle, É. Chatelain, F. Vansteenberghe *et al.* have amply done this before – it seems useful to limit this contribution to a selection of two genuine representatives of the University of Paris, one of the Arts Faculty and another of the Faculty of Theology. It also seems appropriate to concentrate on a well-chosen theme and, concretely, on the principle of emergence, since this is the theme, if any, which allows to see how leading philosophers and theologians respectively deal with such crucial issues as the relationship between the natural and supernatural order, between scientific competence and Christian faith, etc. The choice of Boethius of Denmark and Henry of Ghent seems to recommend itself. Since the critical edition of Boethius's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* and the study of Henry's hitherto neglected earlier version of *Quodlibet IV*, qq. 7-8, are now in print, a presentation, however short, of these two works can bring some fresh information.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Boethius and Henry acknowledge the principle of emergence and its two constitutive elements: assuming and surpassing. Boethius of Denmark stresses the element of assumption, that is, the need for respecting the integrity of the order of nature assumed in the emergence of the supernatural order. With Henry of Ghent the stress falls on the element of surpassing, according to which the emerging new creation not merely preserves, but extends the old and carries it beyond the borders of its intrinsic limits.

<sup>2</sup> J. Ladrière, *Science et apologétique*, pp. 197-224, especially pp. 202-211; Id., *Science de la foi*, pp. 187-213, especially pp. 206-207, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> R. Wielockx (ed.), *Boethii Daci Quaestiones super librum De anima I-II*, 2008; A. Aiello – R. Wielockx, *La versione del Quodlibet IV*, qq. 7-8, 2008.

## BOETHIUS OF DENMARK

1. *Physics Assumed*

Boethius is famous for his systematic insistence on the limited character of the specialist's competence, admits the unifying role of metaphysics in the link of scientific disciplines and acknowledges the relative coefficient of uncertainty that, in the end, affects scientific knowledge. Logic, for instance, is no science of reality, but of common 'intentions' such as genus, species and the like. Limited as it is by its distinct principles, logic – or any other special science – is not allowed to overstep its competence. To be sure, the scientist is competent as regards the deductive certainty of his conclusions and the relationship between cause and effect within the borders of his system. He is not competent, however, as far as finding and proving of his principles are concerned. As to that, he depends on the truth and certainty of the first truly general principles.<sup>4</sup> Even though the metaphysician as such is competent to find and to prove the general principles involved in the principles of all particular sciences, he is as such not competent to judge the distinctive principles as such of any special science.<sup>5</sup> And, in the end, his specific competence, general as it may be, is not unqualified. A coefficient of uncertainty must be recognized. The First Cause, without which nothing at all could be or be an object of metaphysics, is the cause of everything else by its will.<sup>6</sup> The metaphysician as such cannot doubt God's will inasmuch as the created universe, especially its immaterial part, is preserved until now and, hence, witnesses the Creator's will to preserve its creation, at least for now. But since no metaphysician can investigate God's inscrutable will regarding the future of creation, it is strictly impossible to prove metaphysically that the universe, even its spiritual part, will always exist in the future.<sup>7</sup>

When, however, it comes to concrete applications and, for instance, to the question of the beginning of the universe with time, one should shrink

<sup>4</sup> J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, 1974, pp. 169-170; J. Wippel, *Boethius*, 1987, p. 11; D. Piché, *La condamnation*, 1999, p. 193; B. Bazán, *Boethius*, 2003, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, 1974, pp. 170-171, text and n. 12 with references to *P*, I, q. 15, ll. 36-37 and *MS*, q. 1, ll. 93-94; S. Ebbesen, *The Paris Arts Faculty*, 1998, pp. 284-285.

<sup>6</sup> J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, 1974, p. 179; Id., in *CPDMA* 6,1, 1976, p. xxxviii; S. Ebbesen, *The Paris Arts Faculty*, 1998, p. 285; Id., *Dansk middelalderfilosofi*, 2002, p. 148; B. Bazán, *Boethius*, 2003, p. 227.

<sup>7</sup> *P*, I, q. 33, ll. 85-98; *P*, III, q. 23, ll. 102-107, ll. 111-113; *AM*, ll. 612-623, ll. 633-651.

from concluding on behalf of this coefficient of uncertainty that, in Boethius's view, it is equally *scientific* to admit the necessary beginning of the universe with time and to admit the theoretic possibility of an eternal world (in the past).<sup>8</sup> Admitting, as all Christians should, the beginning of the universe with time, there is, according to Boethius, a right and a wrong way of conceiving the relationship of faith and science regarding this point.

On the one hand, a Christian believer may reject the *unconditional* necessity of an eternal universe.<sup>9</sup> This is consistent with faith, because, admitting the beginning of creation with time, one cannot anymore uphold its *unqualified* eternity. And, secondly, this does not destroy the *qualified* certainty of the physicist's scientific conclusion according to which, within the limits of his proper and limited principles, the universe must be acknowledged as eternal (in the past).<sup>10</sup> In this correct way of understanding the faith-science relation-

<sup>8</sup> Of the three series of arguments, a first series in favour of the unconditionally necessary beginning of the universe, a second series in favour of its possible eternity, and a third series in favour of its necessary eternity (*AM*, ll. 28-95, ll. 96-138, ll. 139-308), Boethius refutes the third (*AM*, ll. 597-802), does not refute the second and declares the first to be sophistic, even though he agrees with the conclusion, not on behalf of the arguments, but for the sake of the conclusion (*AM*, ll. 803-804). And, indeed, the main purpose as developed in the 'determinatio' is to show that neither physics nor mathematics nor metaphysics are able to demonstrate the beginning of the universe (*AM*, ll. 330-547).

<sup>9</sup> For the distinction adopted here and in the next paragraph between an unconditional and a conditional necessity, cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, c. 10 (13 b 1-35). Contingent facts can be conditionally necessary, like, for instance, in the case in which Socrates is seated, he is *of necessity* not running as long as he remains seated.

<sup>10</sup> As Godfrey of Fontaines already noticed (ms. Paris BnF lat. 15819, f. 301rc *mg. inf.*), Boethius's *De somniis* (S, ll. 159-191) is an authentic interpretation of his *De aeternitate mundi*. Not those causes the effect of which is simply unavoidable, but those other causes the effect of which can be impeded are the proper principle of the physicist as such. Hence his proper arguments do not lead to unqualified conclusions. They only lead to the knowledge of contingently necessary effects. Cf. G. Fioravanti, *La 'scientia sompnialis'*, 1966-1967, pp. 329-369; Id., *'Scientia'*, 1969-1970, pp. 525-632; J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, 1974, pp. 178-179; L. Bianchi, *L'errore*, 1984, pp. 62-69. The essentials of Boethius's contribution to the science-faith relationship are fatally misunderstood if his consistent utterances on the qualified necessity of properly physical conclusions are confused with his teaching any kind of unqualified certainty. This confusion is not unrelated to the confusion between a conditionally necessary beginning of the universe taught by faith and its unconditionally necessary beginning held by Stephen Tempier. This latter confusion is the counterpart of the confusion between a conditionally necessary eternity of the universe (in the past) held by Boethius and its unconditionally necessary eternity attributed to Boethius by Tempier's ill-conceived interpretation. These confusions are, in fact, a 'fallacia secundum quid et simpliciter': cf. A. de Libera, *Penser*, 1991, p. 371; S. Ebbesen, *Dansk middelalderfilosofi*, 2002, pp. 148-149.

ship, the competence of scientific knowledge, in its limited field of validity, is fully recognized. The defenders of the eternity of the universe, inasmuch as they rely on their proper and avowedly limited principles which are, in the historical circumstances, those of ancient and medieval physics, are acknowledged as competent people and, as far as the special point under discussion is concerned, their teaching is not rejected as ill-conceived or false. It is recognized that their teaching could become false only if they would fail to share the metaphysician's higher insight according to which the beginning of the universe with time is the secret of the First Cause's inscrutable will.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, a believer, even a person in 'dignitas' (according to Peter the Lombard, whom everybody in Paris read, 'dignitas' is the distinctive epithet of a bishop<sup>12</sup>), may go so far as to reject the idea that the beginning of the universe with time is only a *conditional* necessity.<sup>13</sup> This person holds not only that the universe did begin, in fact, to exist with time, but also that, under whatever supposition, it could not possibly *not* begin with time. This is, to begin with, not a necessary consequence of Christian belief. To be sure, according to Christian doctrine the universe began, as a matter of fact, to exist with time. Nevertheless, this does not entail that, according to the Christian Creed, an eternal universe (in the past) is intrinsically contradictory, viz. unconditionally impossible. And this does not entail that, abstracting from Christian belief, there would still be any properly scientific proof in favour of the beginning of the universe with time. Not only is this position unnecessary from the point of view of the Christian Creed, but it is scientifically unworkable, as well. It, indeed, destroys the principles and illative skill of the proper science of the ancient and medieval physicist.<sup>14</sup> And, as it implies a depreciation of the thesis of the theoretical possibility of an eternal world, it disqualifies those competent scientists (and outstanding theologians) who hold that position.<sup>15</sup> Those scientists should rightly oppose this destructive and illegitimate disowning of the borders of competence.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> AM, ll. 470-475.

<sup>12</sup> Petrus Lombardus (ed. I. Brady), *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, IV, d. 24, c. 14-15, t. 2, pp. 405-406; cf. J. Lécuyer, *Les étapes*, pp. 29-52, especially p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *supra*, n. 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> AM, ll. 421-456; cf. F.X. Putalaz – R. Imbach, *Profession*, pp. 95-98.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Thomas de Aquino, II *Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5; *Contra Gent.* II, c. 37-38; *De pot.*, q. 3, a. 14, a. 17; *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 46, a. 1, ad 1, a. 2; *Quodlibet* III, q. 14, a. 2; *Comp. Theol.*, c. 98-99; *De aeternitate mundi*.

<sup>16</sup> AM, ll. 421-456, especially l. 447: 'negare debet'.

## 2. *Physics Surpassed*

### 2.1. *The Intellective Soul: God's Immediate Creation*

Since no logical definition makes us know what 'rational' and what 'animal' are in terms of reality, we must turn to 'real' science for knowing what a 'human being' is. In the field of 'real' sciences dealing at least in some respect with the intellective soul, there is room for at least two competences. From the first decades of the Thirteenth Century the study of the human soul as form and the study of the human soul as substance were attributed by the masters of the Arts Faculty to physics and metaphysics respectively.<sup>17</sup> Boethius of Dacia stands in this tradition with some distinctive features characterizing his writings on this point.

Of course, the act of human intellection *as far as it proceeds in the living body* is an accidental activity like the acts of sense perception and of imagination which are logically antecedent to it and chronologically contemporaneous with it (A, I, q. 2, ll. 12-16; II, q. 14, ll. 1-4). It belongs, therefore, to real science to acknowledge, with Averroes, that intellection, as far as it happens in the human being composed out of form and matter, has no *object* unless sense perception and imagination furnish the 'phantasma' which, once universalized, becomes the distinctive object of intellective knowledge (A, I, q. 2, ll. 16-19). Firmly embedded as they are in the life of the human organism, the acts of human intellection belong, therefore, to the sphere of competence of the physicist (cf. A, I, q. 2, ll. 2-12). But, since it cannot be excluded that there is possibly another type of intellective knowledge, independent from activities in the body, the physicist as such cannot deny this possibility without overstepping his competence (A, I, q. 2, ll. 33-37).

The human act of intellection cannot be completely analyzed in terms of the mere dependence on sense perception and imagination, since the *universality* of the specific object of the act of abstraction proves irreducible to the always individual object of imagination and sense perception (A, I, q. 2, ll. 12-14).

There is room, then, for studying human intellection not only in so far as it is an *act (of the soul) proceeding in the living body* (A, II, q. 14, ll. 1-4), but also in terms of what the act of intellection *is* absolutely (*ibid.*, ll.

<sup>17</sup> B. Bazán, *The Human Soul*, pp. 106-113.

4-5). Once studied in terms of *being* absolutely, intellection, unlike imagining and sensing, proves to 'be', neither by virtue of the form of an organic body, nor by virtue of the latter's organic powers, nor 'in' organs (A, II, q. 14, ll. 4-5; cf. A, I, q. 2, ll. 12-14).

According to Boethius, it is possible and necessary to conclude from the intellect's separate act to its separate substance and conversely (A, I, q. 2, ll. 20-32). No wonder, then, that, like Aristotle, he knows 'the intellect' to be separate (A, II, q. 6, ll. 3-4, cf. *ibid.*, ll. 1-6; cf. A, II, q. 7, ll. 10-12). And he knows that a power of the soul cannot be separate without the separation of its *substance* (A, II, q. 8, l. 32). If, besides, Aristotle's words on 'the intellect' are to be understood as directly related to the *substance* of the soul, not to its intellectual power, it equally follows that the soul *as far as it is a substance* is from outside the sphere of matter: not possibly deduced from the potency of matter, this substance can only be 'separate' (A, II, q. 8, ll. 33-35, ll. 38-41). Hence, Aristotle must be correct, when he declares that 'the intellect' is not generated and not corruptible (A, II, q. 8, l. 40; cf. *ibid.*, ll. 30-38) and is, therefore, no substantial form generated by accident through the generation of the subject (*ibid.*, ll. 10-13; ll. 23-28). Instead of depending, for its being, on the existence of the subject (composite) (A, II, q. 7, l. 12), the intellectual soul as substance subsists in itself and makes the hylomorphic subject subsist (A, II, q. 3, ll. 7-8).

Since, then, the integral analysis of the act of human intellection leads of necessity to recognize that the human soul, along with its being substantial form, is a separate substance, this process of recognition must necessarily be also metaphysical in nature, because, according to Boethius, it is properly in its capacity as a *substance* that the intellectual soul is the proper object of metaphysics. And, indeed, the categories with the help of which the human soul is analyzed are 'act', 'form', 'substantial form', 'substance', 'subsistence', or in their opposition to, respectively, 'potency', 'matter', 'organic body', 'accident' and the like.

Boethius is only consistent when, after having recognized the intellectual soul as a substance which subsists in itself, he rebukes the idea that the potency of matter could account for the origin of this soul. He indeed attributes its origin positively to an *immediate* creation by God (A II, q. 8, ll. 40-41).



## 2.2. *Man's Substance in the Material-Immaterial Universe, or: the 'Golden Chain'*

As is very well known, Boethius holds that the respective principles of diverse scientific disciplines correspond to the respective causes which act upon proper or common areas of reality.<sup>18</sup> According to him, scientific knowledge, distinct in disciplines and united in metaphysics, mirrors the hierarchy of being, which implies distinct levels of necessity along with their characteristic unification in the First Cause. In this 'golden chain', duration ('fixio' in the wording of the *Liber de causis* which Boethius likes to quote) is the great thing.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, duration must be extant in diverse degrees and ultimately also in an undiminished instance, viz. in a properly infinite power ('virtus').<sup>20</sup> Hence, the respective objects of physics and metaphysics represent a different kind of duration.

The proper object of physics is confined to the realm of material species which last beyond the death of this or that individual. It is not the case, however, that those species as such, without any individual representative at all, would be enough for making scientific knowledge possible.<sup>21</sup> As a genuine Aristotelian, Boethius feels that the existence in actuality of at least one individual is a necessary condition for the scientific knowledge of a species.<sup>22</sup> It is the necessary link between this or that actually extant individual of a particular sublunary species and the causality of the heavenly bodies (and, through them, of the higher separate substances) which ensures the scientific character of physics.<sup>23</sup>

There seems to be, then, a substantial link between this well-known original philosophical position of Boethius regarding the foundation of

<sup>18</sup> G. Fioravanti, 'Scientia', 1969-1970, pp. 525-632; J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, 1974, p. 171-174, p. 179, n. 32; S. Ebbesen, *The Paris Arts Faculty*, 1998, pp. 282-283, pp. 284-285; B. Bazán, *Boethius*, 2003, p. 227.

<sup>19</sup> *P*, III, q. 23, ll. 79-114; *SB*, ll. 200-208; *AM*, ll. 619-632; *T*, II, q. 1, ll. 23-35. For the 'golden chain', cf. Homer, *Iliad*, VIII 18-25, especially 19; Plato, *Theaetetus* 153c; Aristotle, *De motu animalium*, c. 4 (699b36-700a8) cited by H. Schwabl, *Weltschöpfung*, col. 1481.

<sup>20</sup> J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, p. 181.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1974, pp. 171-174, p. 181; *Id.*, in CPDMA, 6,1, 1976, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii; S. Ebbesen, *The Paris Arts Faculty*, 1998, pp. 283-284; *Id.*, *Dansk middelalderfilosofi*, 2002, pp. 151-155; B. Bazán, *Boethius*, 2003, p. 227.

<sup>22</sup> S. Mansion, *Le jugement d'existence*.

<sup>23</sup> J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, 1974, pp. 172-174; *Id.*, in CPDMA, 6, 1, 1976, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii; S. Ebbesen, *The Paris Arts Faculty*, 1998, pp. 283-284; *Id.*, *Dansk middelalderfilosofi*, 2002, p. 114, pp. 151-155.

scientific necessity of physics, on the one hand, and his personal contribution to the at-his-time focal question of the beginning of the universe with time, on the other. If, indeed, the world is not eternal in the past – and according to Boethius as a metaphysician it is possibly not eternal<sup>24</sup> and again, according to Boethius as a Christian, it began to exist<sup>25</sup> – science of the physical universe is impossible on the supposition that only an eternal species can guarantee the necessity required by science. No wonder, then, that Boethius shows firmness in avoiding the path trodden by such colleagues as Siger.<sup>26</sup> If, however, the world is not eternal, but exists in fact and, as Boethius admits, is the effect of a sufficient, viz. in the end absolutely eternal, cause – or otherwise nothing at all would or even could exist in this world<sup>27</sup> – science of the physical universe is possible on the supposition that it is enough that there be a necessary link of some sort between a contingent and temporal effect and a necessary and eternal cause for making science possible. This clearly personal contribution of Boethius to the question of the necessary character of physics fits so well the scientific, viz. metaphysical, hypothesis of a non-eternal world (and the Christian belief in a creation that began with time) that one can hold it as probable that the contribution was worked out with the purpose of fully allowing for the contingency of the physical universe. If so, there are even less grounds, if ever there were any, for doubting Boethius's metaphysical reckoning with a temporal universe and his Christian orthodoxy.

Physics must in the end take into consideration the heavenly bodies, which, even though they are changeable as far as their location is concerned, are nonetheless kept in unchangeable duration as far as their individual identity is concerned.<sup>28</sup>

The crucial border which separates duration proper from its diminished realizations is the one which opposes the separate substances to all reality that is in one way or another engaged in matter. Metaphysics, unlike physics, deals with separate substances, which, by virtue of their

<sup>24</sup> *AM*, ll. 597-802.

<sup>25</sup> *AM*, ll. 585-593, ll. 823-825, ll. 826-836, ll. 857-860.

<sup>26</sup> F. Van Steenberghen, *Maître Siger*, 1977, pp. 267-268; S. Ebbesen, *The Paris Arts Faculty*, 1998, p. 283.

<sup>27</sup> *G*, I, q. 13, ll. 22-40; *ibid.*, q. 49, ll. 47-56; *SB*, ll. 188-189, ll. 191-192; *AM*, ll. 676-701; *T*, IV, q. 22. Cf. J. Pinborg, *Zur Philosophie*, p. 175, text and n. 24.

<sup>28</sup> *P*, II, q. 25, ll. 95-108; *G*, II, q. 9, ll. 42-56; *SB*, ll. 205-206; *AM*, cf. ll. 357-374.

immateriality, are devoid of all potentiality and composition.<sup>29</sup> They are of universal causality, acting upon everything below them.<sup>30</sup>

Only the First Cause is totally self-sufficient, because in addition to not being composed in its essence it does not even depend on an efficient or final cause. By contrast, the duration of the other separate substances by virtue of their nature hangs in the balance: only God's inscrutable will is capable of preserving this nature and its immaterial and, hence, simple substance.<sup>31</sup> Boethius links this teaching with his interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*, where, when speaking in the person of the first principle to the intelligences themselves, Plato says: 'My will is more important than your nature as regards maintaining your eternity'.<sup>32</sup>

One feels, then, that, within this Boethian thought, the intellective soul cannot seriously take part in the 'golden chain' of duration if it is not first of all at least in some respect a substance. Were it merely a substantial form, it would perish with the subject ('suppositum'). Hence Boethius's insistence: the intellective soul is in the first place a substance; it is a substantial form only as long as it informs matter for the constitution of the composite subject. Hence, it is able to survive the dissolution of the composite subject.<sup>33</sup> And, indeed, Boethius repeats that, in its capacity as a substantial form, the intellective soul perishes with the death of the body. It continues its eternal life, however, in its capacity as a substance.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *P*, III, q. 27, ll. 98-123; *G*, I, q. 50, ll. 27-36, ll. 64-88; *T*, III, q. 3, ll. 38-40; *T*, IV, q. 3, ll. 62-73; *T*, IV, c. 3, ll. 74-93; *T*, IV, q. 16, ll. 58-64.

<sup>30</sup> *P*, I, q. 15, ll. 20-34; *SB*, ll. 176-183; *MS*, q. 8, ll. 63-89.

<sup>31</sup> *P*, I, q. 33, ll. 85-98; *P*, III, q. 23, ll. 102-113; *AM*, ll. 612-623, ll. 633-651.

<sup>32</sup> *P*, I, q. 33, ll. 96-98; *P*, III, q. 23, ll. 111-113; *AM*, ll. 633-635, here quoted in the English translation of J.F. Wippel, *Boethius*, p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> *P*, II, q. 25, ll. 192-194: 'Licet anima sit substantia aeterna, non tamen est anima aeterna. Alfarabius: de proprietate animae est vivificare corpus'. *OHA* (pro manuscripto; cf. ed. M. Grabmann, pp. 80-81): 'Et iterum omni animali corrupto et omni homine corrupto non est aliqua anima in qua posset remanere essentia hominis; licet intellectus possit separari a corpore, ipse separatus non est anima, secundum Aristotelem secundo De anima anima enim est actus corporis physici organici potentia vitam habentis; et secundum Alfarabium supra De causis de proprietate animae est vivificare corpus'.

<sup>34</sup> *OHA* (pro manuscripto; cf. ed. J. Pinborg – S. Ebbesen, p. 14 (64), ll. 30-33): 'Non ideo fiat obiectio contra hoc quod dico hominem esse corruptibilem secundum suam formam substantialem, quia licet intellectus sit aeterna substantia, non tamen est aeterna forma; non enim semper informat materiam Socratis'.

### 2.3. *Substance and Form: Union without Confusion*

Since the intellectual soul is essentially both substance and substantial form, which sort of identification does such a substance have with a living man's form?<sup>35</sup> The question about substance and form calls to mind the classical difficulty regarding Plato's χωρισμός. If the 'separation' of the 'idea' only consists in adding a second concrete substance to the first already concrete substance, no way is left for any substantial identity between the two substances.<sup>36</sup> But if there is anything which, in Plato's genuine conception, the 'idea' is not, then it is a concrete, sensitively perceivable substance. By expressing itself in its copy, the idea does become neither another idea nor the opposite of an idea, but '*remains*' as much in itself as it '*proceeds*'.<sup>37</sup> Even in terms of Aristotelian hylomorphism, the 'form' is not only immanent in the composite, but is, of necessity, also not identical with matter.<sup>38</sup> The longstanding tradition, initiated by Plotinus's teacher Ammonius, of the ἀσύγχυτος ἔνωσις familiarized the Orient and the West with the conviction that the more a Reality is spiritual (and real), the more it keeps its undiminished strength and purity amidst its union with the Other. And from the very first moment the example to which this tradition recurred had been the 'inconfusa unio' of intellectual soul and body.<sup>39</sup> It seems, then, that Boethius himself does not believe that its being a substance hinders the intellect from being substantial form, but rather believes that it is by virtue of its being a substance that the human soul is able to be a substantial form.<sup>40</sup> How to interpret, however, the fact that, in Boethius's writings, there is no visible attempt either to resolve or even to put the question as to how the human soul, before death, can be both substance and form? It may be that Boethius was aware of not having a better philosophical response to the questions left open by Aristotle than these very questions themselves.<sup>41</sup> But his silence is open to different interpretations. His predecessors at the Arts Faculty of Paris saw appar-

<sup>35</sup> S. Ebbesen, *The Paris Arts Faculty*, p. 280.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, c. 6 (987b1-14), c. 9 (990a34-b11; 991b2-3); VII, c. 1 (1028a33-34), c. 3 (1029a27-28).

<sup>37</sup> Plato, *Phaedo* 100 b 5-7, 102 b; *Symposium* 210 e 1 – 212 a 7.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, II (193b3-5; 194b9-15).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. R. Wielockx, *Incarnation*, pp. 637-638.

<sup>40</sup> A, II, q. 1, ll. 28-33; A, II, q. 3, ll. 1-6.

<sup>41</sup> A. Mansion, *Conception aristotélicienne*, pp. 161-171.

ently no problem in a human soul that was as much a substance as a form.<sup>42</sup> One of his outstanding contemporaries, Thomas Aquinas, did, in the *Quaestio disputata de anima*, dispute this common position of his forerunners (which he had shared himself in his earlier writings), and yet, for reasons that might remain under discussion, he did not shrink from adopting shortly thereafter at least the characteristic formulas of the common opinion.<sup>43</sup>

#### 2.4. *Freedom in Spite of Dependence*

The theme of the influence of the heavenly bodies (and, by means of them, of the superior causes) on all the sublunary world and, hence, on the body, on its physical constitution and, in this way, on the working of the substantial form in the body is essentially linked with the theme of the universal causality of the separate substances. Through the causality of the heavenly bodies on the sublunary bodies, Boethius links the preservation of individuals, as far as that goes, with the theme of the 'golden chain'. In accordance with his general admission that causes can sometimes be prevented from producing their effects, Boethius explains that some physical constitution necessary for life cannot be preserved and that, accordingly, death is unavoidable.<sup>44</sup> A more specific prevention of the effect of heavenly bodies is due to the capacity of the rational soul to deliberate and make a free choice. These rational acts are not totally independent from the bodily conditions, since sense experience is a necessary condition for rational behaviour. The senses, however, and the heavenly bodies through them are no sufficient cause for deliberate acting. Even though they incline, they do not compel. If, on the one hand, they do not leave the human being equally disposed to either alternative, they are, on the other hand, less than necessitating.<sup>45</sup>

At this point, it seems that the core of Boethius's thought ends where it begins. Boethius begins by ensuring a middle-position to ethics between physics and metaphysics regarding the study of the human soul. And from the outset he admits that the physicist's analysis of the human act of intellection (its dependence on sense perception and imagination

<sup>42</sup> B. Bazán, *The Human Soul*, pp. 106-112.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. M.J. Sweeney, *Soul as Substance*, pp. 143-187.

<sup>44</sup> *G*, I, q. 21, ll. 99-107; *M*, q. 15, ll. 31-34; *SB*, I, 124; *MS*, q. 32, ll. 59-62.

<sup>45</sup> *P*, II, q. 25, ll. 171-176; *T*, I, c. 10, ll. 20-21.

and, indirectly, on the individual body and the cosmic causality) is necessary, but insufficient for the adequate understanding of this act 'sui generis' characterised by its 'universality'. Only metaphysical analysis in terms of being and, ultimately, substance can fully account for this characteristic. It comes as no surprise, then, when, in the end, the same Boethius insists on the two aspects of the human free choice. On the one hand, the heavenly bodies act on the physical constitution in humans and, indirectly, on the act of the free human choice, and so there is no use discussing human ethics without taking into consideration the human insertion into the cosmic link between contingent effects and their contingently necessary causes. On the other hand the cosmic forces do not adequately explain the act of a free human choice which is a characteristic function of human deliberation, of discursive reason and of syllogism, and so it is quite consistent to state clearly that, however necessary the effects of the heavenly bodies upon free human acting may be, they are not its sufficient cause.<sup>46</sup>

#### HENRY OF GHENT

Henry of Ghent can be considered a main representative of the Parisian Faculty of Theology and an interesting witness of the principle of emergence as applied to the relationship between the natural and supernatural order. Both elements of this principle of emergence, surpassing and assuming, are clearly present in his works. He is famous for developing into its full consequences the thesis of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas according to which the spiritual creature's blessedness (beatific vision) brings the creature to full realization beyond all creature, that is, in God *immediately*, not in any impressed intelligible 'species' intermediary between God and his creation.<sup>47</sup> And he is the author who, in formulations more pointed than those of his contemporaries, holds the thesis according to which it is properly *philosophy* which shows, by the analysis of the spiritual desire of humans, that the human mind *qua nature* cannot be content by mere nature, that is, without the search for

<sup>46</sup> *P*, II, q. 25, ll. 163-177.

<sup>47</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Quaestio de visione dei in patria*, ed. A. Fries (Alberti Magni Opera Omnia, 25,2), pp. 96-101 and parallels; Thomas de Aquino, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 12, a. 2 and parallels; cf. Th. Nys, *De werking*.

and the finding of what is properly supernatural.<sup>48</sup> It may be useful to have a closer look at these two aspects of Henry's thought in the light of some recently analyzed manuscript copies of his works.<sup>49</sup>

### 1. *Nature Surpassed*

It goes without saying that the theme of beatific vision is proper to Christian theology. Just as the typically Christian belief in incarnation, once it is theologically received, cannot avoid stating the *immediate* appropriation of human nature by the divine person, similarly the characteristically Christian belief according to which human blessedness consists, paradoxically enough, in the beatific vision of God's very essence, must sooner or later lead to dismiss the absurd inconsistency of admitting any objective intermediary between God and the blessed creature.

This Christian paradox (of a creature consummated immediately in God) rests on the antecedent, of which Henry is very keenly aware, that there is a gap between an immediate knowledge of God's quiddity and any knowledge obtained by means of discursive attributing general perfections to God's mysterious substance.<sup>50</sup> As an object of such an attribution, God's substance cannot be anything apart from any general attribute, since God

<sup>48</sup> J. Gómez Caffarena, *Ser participado*, 1958, especially p. 261; V. Sorge, *Gnoseologia*, 1988, pp. 182-183.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *supra*, n. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, a. 24, q. 2, ed. J. Badius, f. 138rI: 'Ad modum triplicis cognitionis sensitivae contingit imaginari de deo triplicem cognitionem intellectivam. Est enim quaedam cognitio sensitiva rei ex eius praesentia nuda *per essentiam suam*, sicut oculus videt colores in pariete. Est autem alia cognitio sensitiva rei in eius absentia. Et haec est duplex: vna qua res ipsa cognoscitur *per suam propriam speciem*, sicut homo imaginatur in tenebris colores quos vidit in lumine; alia qua res cognoscitur *per speciem alienam*, sicut ovis videns lupum, per speciem coloris eius et figurae aestimat inimicum et nocivum. § Ad modum primae cognitionis sensitivae deus cognoscit *<ur> immediate* per nudam essentiam, et hoc simplici intelligentia, *non ratione collativa per aliquod medium rationis*. Vnde et illa cognitio dicitur cognitio visionis, quia in ea videt deum oculus mentis ad modum quo videt oculus corporis formam coloris. Hoc modo scire vel intelligere de deo quid sit per essentiam non contingit alicui creaturae ex puris naturalibus, de quo in se debet esse bona quaestio; neque similiter cognitione tali cognoscibilis est in vita ista ex communi gratia, secundum quod dicit Augustinus, in lib. De fide catholica: "Tua essentia et species potest dici et forma, et est id quod est, reliquae autem non sunt id quod sunt. Haec verissime potest dicere 'Ego sum qui sum'. Haec tanta et talis est vt de eius visione nihil in hac vita sibi usurpare mens humana audeat quod solis electis tuis praemium in subsequenti remuneratione reseruas". Vnde super illud "Habitat lucem inaccessibilem quam nullus hominum vidit, sed

is absolutely simple.<sup>51</sup> As far as it is a subjective act, such an attribution to God's mysterious substance of general attributes like the 'good' – even the Good which has been understood, by a first abstraction, as remote from 'this good' or 'that good' and, by a second abstraction, as remote from the 'bonum universale et participatum' – cannot be more than the discursive assigning of a doubly negative attribute to a substance of which the proper quiddity is known neither immediately nor positively.<sup>52</sup>

Not by chance it were Christian theologians, namely Albertus Magnus (especially relying on Hugh of St. Victor) and Thomas Aquinas, who first opposed the idea of a 'species impressa' in beatific vision on the ground that such a 'species' would need compromise the immediacy thanks to which the creature's blessedness consists in nothing less than God's own blessedness.<sup>53</sup> Henry of Ghent, although in general not exactly a Thomist, stands with determination on Albert's and Thomas's side in stressing the crucial importance of dismissing the existence of a 'species impressa' in the case of the beatific vision.<sup>54</sup> Not only does he insist after Thomas on the fact that

nec videre potest" Glossa: "In hac vita, post autem videbitur", intelligo autem "In hac vita" secundum communem cursum et secundum communem gratiam. In raptu autem ex gratia priuilegiata bene potest videri etiam in vita ista, sicut viderunt eum Paulus et Moyses, vt determinat Augustinus in lib. De videndo deum ad Paulinam. § Ad modum autem secundae cognitionis sensitivae non est deus omnino natus cognosci, quia non habet speciem sui aliam a sua essentia qua cognoscibilis sit, quia nihil potest esse simplicius essentia eius, de quo alias debet esse sermo. § Ad modum autem tertii modi cognitionis sensitivae sic in praesenti cognoscitur quid sit ex puris naturalibus assistente diuina illustratione generali, et hoc est: ex creaturis, vt videbitur in sequentibus'.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 24, q. 6, f. 141vN: 'In deo autem, quia in ipso non est distinguere per diuersas intentiones esse et naturam ..., non contingit cognoscere si est per se, principium scilicet cognitionis eius accipiendo ex ipsa diuina natura primo indeterminate et in generali et deinde procedendo per appositionem alicuius et determinationem ad cognoscendum quod quid est in eo'.

<sup>52</sup> R. Wielockx, *Henry of Ghent*, p. 300. Unlike Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent is willing to recognize that humans can accede in this life to some *imperfect* knowledge of what God is ('quid est'), namely in removing from Him *all* real and intentional composition, the composition between 'esse essentiae' and essence, between 'esse essentiae' and 'existentiae' included. This does not prevent him, however, from noting 'Et sicut hoc modo non est vere et per se scire de re si est, ita nec quid est' (*Summa*, a. 24, q. 6, f. 141vN).

<sup>53</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Super De diuinis nominibus*, c. 13, ed. P. Simon (Alberti Magni Opera Omnia, 37, 1), p. 447, l. 66 - p. 448, l. 6, with the crucial reference to Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis*, pars 6, c. 1 (PL 176, 263D).

<sup>54</sup> A. Dondaine, *Secrétaires*, pp. 220-225, especially pp. 222-223, where the author acknowledges that he owes his information on authors contemporaneous with Thomas to his brother H.-F. Dondaine.



the disproportion between the finite and the Infinite renders the finite 'species' unfit for ensuring the immediate union with Infinite Blessedness. This theologically crucial insight became, in his mind, also a principle with wider application and led him, in a step quite uncommon at the Parisian University, to give up the admittance of a 'species impressa' all round.

Whatever Th. Nys may have thought about this, in *Quodlibet* IV, qq. 7-8, not only in q. 21, Henry definitively dismisses the existence of a 'species impressa' in all human knowledge.<sup>55</sup> By close analysis of a manuscript copy of these questions by Godfrey of Fontaines (Ms. Paris BnF lat. 16297, f. 256va-257rb) the picture becomes a bit more precise.<sup>56</sup> Before arriving, in the common version of these questions, to his final position, Henry drafted at least two earlier versions, of which Godfrey noted the second one (*Ordinatio* II), intermediary between the original thesis possibly upheld in the public determination of *Quodlibet* IV (*Ordinatio* I) and the common version transmitted by the other manuscript witnesses (*Ordinatio* III).<sup>57</sup> When compared with *Ordinatio* III, *Ordinatio* II is characterized by a number of significant author variants, which all show that a rereading of Augustine and also of Averroes, integrated into *Ordinatio* III, convinced Henry to take at last a stance quite different from the one he had taken in *Ordinatio* II on several sensitive issues.<sup>58</sup> Three examples: the relationship between 'species' and 'notitia' according to Augustine, the irreducibility of the relationship between 'intentio intellecta' and 'intellect' to a hylomorphic type of relationship according to Averroes, the adequate definition of 'verbum' in Augustine's writings according to which the 'word' is primarily the object known and secondarily the knowledge from and about this known object.<sup>59</sup> The internal references show this chronological sequence: *Ordinatio* I announces *Summa* XXXIII, q. 2 as a future work, *Ordinatio* II is quoted as extant in *Summa* XXXIII, q. 2 and *Ordinatio* III quotes *Summa* XXXIII, q. 2 as already in existence.<sup>60</sup> *Ordinatio* III is contemporaneous with *Quodlibet* IV, q. 21 and with the cancelling, in *Summa* XXXIV, qq. 4-5, of considerable portions of text in which Henry had been previously more or less affirmative on the existence of a

<sup>55</sup> Th. Nys, *De werking*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>56</sup> A. Aiello – R. Wielockx, *La versione*, pp. 440-441.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 421-439.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387-420.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 421-439.

'species intelligibilis impressa' (in ordinary cases).<sup>61</sup> This chronological sequence allows a more precise insight in Henry's doctrinal development at the time when he was writing *Quodlibet* IV, qq. 7-8, and *Summa* XXXIII-XXXIV. Not only does it allow understanding the chronological relationship between *Quodlibet* IV, qq. 7-8, q. 21, and *Summa* XXXIII-XXXIV. It also allows establishing an internal development in *Quodlibet* IV, qq. 7-8 itself over three successive stages. Interestingly enough, the direction taken by Henry's development does not lead from a general denial of 'species impressa' towards its denial in the case of beatific vision. Quite the opposite happened. At first (*Ordinatio* I), Henry is simply concerned with the human intellectual knowledge of one self in future life and, occasionally, with this self-knowledge in the present life.<sup>62</sup> Thereafter, in *Ordinatio* II, before the last redaction of q. 7, Henry treats of the human beatific knowledge of God in addition to his treating of the human self-knowledge.<sup>63</sup> Eventually, in *Ordinatio* III (q. 7) Henry comes to say explicitly, by means of some redactional additions, what he is systematically stating in q. 21 (and by isolated redactional interventions also in q. 8), namely that all 'species impressa' in the human intellect must be dismissed.<sup>64</sup> And even the latest stage of Henry's text (*Ordinatio* III) shows a different emphasis regarding a 'species impressa' in beatific vision and regarding 'species impressa' as such. The first is rejected as impossible with six arguments ad hoc. The second is simply discarded as unnecessary and, in some isolated formulas of a last redactional stage, as unreal.<sup>65</sup>

## 2. Nature Assumed

### 2.1. Instrumental Greco-Roman Vocabulary and Notions

It would be a fallacy of logics however to conclude from his stress on the immediacy of beatific knowledge over against the human knowledge of God 'per medium rationis' that Henry acted on this point merely as a perspicacious theologian. The sources which offer him their instrumen-

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 435-438.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 421-426.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 430-438.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 426-430.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 426-427, p. 435.

tal vocabulary and notions on this point are obviously those of the Greco-Roman philosophical culture. Hence, the meritorious interpretation of Th. Nys according to which Henry's theory of knowledge took a turn in *Quodlibet* IV, q. 21 and qq. 7-8, from an Aristotelian to an Augustinian description is in need of qualification, as is shown by a closer look on the excursus in *Quodlibet* IV, q. 8 (Bad. f. 97rM1-98rO5).<sup>66</sup> If outside this excursus the reference to Augustine is prevalent, inside the excursus, however, not only Aristotle, but also Boethius (Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus) and Averroes are the authorities most frequently quoted. It deserves noticing that, in this excursus, Henry does not abandon Aristotle on the plausible supposition that the Philosopher ignored the Augustinian distinction between an amorphous mental word and a formed one. Henry, on the contrary, appeals there explicitly to Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* in which the Philosopher treats of the long discursive itinerary which begins with sense perception, continues with the finding of the concept and, if all goes well, with the finding of the scientific definition and comes to a first important result in the act of the scientific syllogism, before coming to its ideal conclusion in the habitual possession of one or more scientific disciplines. These Aristotelian views can be paralleled with those of Augustine, an author who has never relented from stressing the distance, in the human being as opposed to God's sovereign knowledge, between the amorphous mental verb and the entirely formed verb. In *Quodlibet* IV, q. 8, Henry seems determined to hold together Augustine (who dominates before and after the excursus) with Aristotle-Boethius-Averroes (on whom the attention concentrates within the excursus without losing sight of Augustine). The presence of Boethius's name along with Augustine's might be significant. The two, indeed, are notorious for holding that Plato and Aristotle share in one important and true unity of thought.<sup>67</sup>

Augustine writes as follows:

Quod autem ad eruditionem doctrinamque attinet et mores, quibus consulitur animae, quia non defuerunt acutissimi et sollertissimi iuri, qui docerent disputationibus suis Aristotelem ac Platonem ita sibi concinere, ut imperitis minusque attentis dissentire uideantur,

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 440-441.

<sup>67</sup> Whatever Syrianus may have thought of this profound union oughtn't concern us here.

multis quidem saeculis multisque contentionibus, sed tamen eliquata est, ut opinor, una uerissimae philosophiae disciplina.<sup>68</sup>

In a moving passage, Boethius, in turn, explains:

Mihi autem si potentior divinitatis adnuerit favor, haec fixa sententia est, ut quamquam fuerint praeclara ingenia, quorum labor ac studium multa de his quae nunc quoque tractamus Latinae linguae contulerit, non tamen quendam quodammodo ordinem filumque et dispositione disciplinarum gradus ediderunt, ego omne Aristotelis opus, quodcumque in manus venerit, in Romanum stilum vertens eorum omnium commenta Latina oratione perscribam, ut si quid ex logicae artis subtilitate, ex moralis gravitate peritiae, ex naturalis acumine veritatis ab Aristotele conscriptum sit, id omne ordinatum transferam atque etiam quodam lumine commentationis inlustrem omnesque Platonis dialogos vertendo vel etiam commentando in Latinam redigam formam. His peractis non equidem contempserim Aristotelis Platonisque sententias in unam quodammodo revocare concordiam eosque non ut plerique dissentire in omnibus, sed in plerisque et his in philosophia maximis consentire demonstrem.<sup>69</sup>

The express mention of Augustine and Boethius by Henry in this q. 8 of *Quodlibet* IV casts some doubt on any attempt to make this passage a proof of Henry's alleged move from an Aristotelian to an Augustinian philosophy of human knowledge. The general rejection of the 'species intelligibilis impressa' is rather concurrent not only with Henry's developing the Augustinian doctrine as found in the so-called *Summa fratris Alexandri* and Bonaventure, but also with an assimilation in depth of Aristotle's and Boethius's teaching: the completely formed mental word is a fully worked-out definition and thus mirrors the hierarchy of the internal composition of the essence of the thing ('res'). It is the final result of a formation process that, in the vein of the 'ars definitiva' – Boethius is never far away –, evolves from the intellectual presence of the object known through a series of conscious acts of both the intellect (possible and, under circumstances, agent) and the will.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *Contra Academicos*, III, XIX, 42, p. 60, ll. 4-10.

<sup>69</sup> Boethius, *Commentarii in librum Aristotelis ΠΕΡΙ ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑΣ*, *Pars posterior secundam editionem et indices continens*, c. 3, p. 79, l. 9 – p. 80, l. 6.

<sup>70</sup> R. Wielockx, *Henry of Ghent*, pp. 301-302.

## 2.2. Aristotle *and* Plato, or: God acts through Creatures *and* immediately

And yet, the Greco-Roman legacy is not simply instrumental (vocabulary and notions) in Henry's working out an in its intent typically Christian theology according to which God is the immediate principle of the spiritual creation's blessedness. Two observations are in order here.

First, Henry's personal way of reassuming the deeper unity of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy consists, in line with Augustine, in pointing out that, by definition, God's creative activity can never be only indirect, that is, creative by means of already extant creatures, but must be, or at least must be also, immediate creative activity as well. Secondly, and against the background of this basic principle, it comes as no surprise that Henry, more pointedly than many of his contemporaries, has formulated a properly *philosophical* proof for admitting that the human mind insofar as it is a nature and creature cannot be content unless it finds itself beyond itself by the grace of divine immediacy.

It is when he is directly concerned with the deeper unity of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy that Henry, relying expressly on Augustine, comes to set forth one of his most basic principles: God is active not only in his capacity as a universal agent which acts through intermediary particular agents, but also in his capacity as a particular agent which *immediately* impresses what is perfect in the nature of the reality produced. This principle applies equally to the production of scientific and moral perfection: the outward thing is unable to impress by its species the 'perfect word of truth' upon the human mind without an *immediate* impression on behalf of the eternal Paradigm. In all things that come about by our initiative and by nature God is at work in a twofold way: not only does he produce what is imperfect by means of other particular agents, but he also *immediately* produces what is perfect in everything:

Dictum ergo utriusque et Aristotelis et Platonis coniungendum est in omnibus istis generationibus istarum formarum, et sic erit ex utrisque 'eliquata una verissimae philosophiae disciplina', ut dicit Augustinus in fine De Academicis, ut dicamus quod omnes formae scientiales et morales ab intra sunt quantum ad potentiam susceptibilis, et etiam ab extra non solum quantum ad impressionem agentis particularis secundum modum Aristotelis, sed etiam quantum ad impressionem agentis universalis secundum modum Platonis, ita quod sicut perfectum verbum veritatis imprimere non possit res extra in animam per suam speciem sine impressione ab

exemplari veritatis aeternae, ut dictum est supra, sic nec perfectum habitum cuiuscumque virtutis nec perfectam formam naturalem alicuius speciei possit agere ex materia illud quod ei imprimit agens particulare creatum quodcumque, nisi per se ipsum immediate imprimat agens universale et exemplar aeternum, ut ipsum sic agat, et tamquam agens universale imprimendo in omni quod sit mediantibus agentibus particularibus, quibus nihil effici potest nisi quod imperfectum est in natura rei, et etiam tamquam agens particulare immediate imprimendo in natura rei productae quod perfectum est et complementum eius, ut idea asini, quae Deus est, sit causa generationis asini, non solum ad quam natura particularis in agendo aspicit, ut Aristoteles imposuit Platoni, sed causa quae agendo imprimit. Et similiter est causa generationis notitiae veritatis et scientiae de asino, ut sic in omnibus quae fiunt a nobis et a natura Deus et mediantibus agentibus aliis operetur quod imperfectum est et immediate quod perfectum est, ut per hunc modum ‘sine Deo nulla natura subsistat, nulla doctrina instruat, nullus usus expediat’, ut dicit Augustinus, IV De civitate Dei. Et sic ‘res quas primo condidit administrare non cessat’, ut secundum hoc verificetur quod dixit Filius in Evangelio: ‘Pater meus usque modo operatur et Ego operor’.<sup>71</sup>

Against the background of this almost programmatic declaration, it is quite understandable that Henry admits, *on the level itself of natural human knowledge*, the existence of a special divine illumination, beyond the merely universal and indirect acting of God through the immanent resources of the human intellect.<sup>72</sup> And it is equally clear that Henry’s teaching on this point does not necessarily depend on his admittance of a ‘species impressa’ in the human mind. Anticipating an observation of many others, J. Gómez Caffarena (1958) noted long since that, along with a proof of divine illumination relying on the insufficiency of the human subject to grasp ‘sincere truth’,

<sup>71</sup> Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, a. 1, q. 4, ed. G. Wilson (Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia, 21), Leuven, 2005, ll. 288-316.

<sup>72</sup> Pace M. Pickavé’s doubt in his recent and remarkable book *Heinrich von Gent*, pp. 57-72.

<sup>73</sup> J. Gómez Caffarena, *Ser participado*, 1958, pp. 29-34; R. Macken, *La théorie*, 1972, pp. 98-104; St.P. Marrone, *Truth*, 1985, pp. 145-147; Id., *Henry of Ghent*, 1996, p. 207; Id., *The Light*, 2001, t. 2, pp. 354-355, pp. 381-382; K. Emery, Jr., *The Image*, 2001, pp. 98-102, pp. 123-124.

there is a second proof based on objective relationships.<sup>73</sup> The characteristic object of the act of intellectual understanding being the 'aliquitas' (the 'somethingness' or definite essence), every intellection must also somehow understand everything to which the 'aliquitas' refers by its very nature: its 'esse essentiae' (participated, that is, restricted being) *and* the in-itself subsistent divine Paradigm. No wonder then that, as St. Marrone proposed, it may be hard and even impossible to disentangle the Aristotelian side (the place given to 'quiddity' in the theory of scientific knowledge as presented in the *Posterior Analytics*) and the Augustinian side (divine illumination) of Henry's personal thinking, which may very well be a genuine synthesis.<sup>74</sup>

### 2.3. *Man Desires by Nature the Supernatural*

Henry of Ghent could very appropriately have figured in H. de Lubac's classic chapters VI-VIII of his *Le mystère du surnaturel* for two specific reasons.<sup>75</sup>

First, Henry's repetitive formulations are exceptionally pointed in articulating the 'Christian paradox' (cf. H. de Lubac): it is *by nature* that the human being desires to know what is to be known in a way *beyond nature*: 'Naturali enim desiderio bene desiderat homo scire etiam illa quae sunt supernaturaliter cognoscenda'.<sup>76</sup> And in his fourth article of the *Summa*, treating from end to end of the human desire for knowledge, q. 5 is entirely assigned to the question whether the human being desires knowing those things which surpass the knowledge of natural reason. The answer is unambiguous: the human being desires knowing those things which surpass the knowledge of natural reason. Hence, *by its nature* human desire cannot possibly come to rest until it reaches the *open* knowledge of separate substances, first of all of the *quiddity and essence* of Him who is the First Truth:

Absolute ergo dicendum quod homo appetit scire ea quae naturalis rationis notitiam excedunt, ita quod per naturam quiescere non potest humanus appetitus, quousque deveniat ad apertam notitiam separatorum, maxime quidditatis et essentiae eius qui est prima veritas.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> St. P. Marrone, *Truth*, 1985, pp. 145-147; Id., *Henry of Ghent*, 1996, pp. 207-208.

<sup>75</sup> H. de Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, pp. 135-208.

<sup>76</sup> Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, a. 1, q. 2, ed. G. Wilson (cf. n. 71), ll. 765-767.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 4, q. 5, ed. G. Wilson, ll. 117-120.

Henry shows this clear statement to its full advantage when he refers in the same context to the principle of Averroes which he cites in many places throughout his works: 'nulla res est otiosa in fundamento naturae et creaturae'.<sup>78</sup> It should be kept in mind that it is not merely 'nature' which inspires such a trust to Henry. It rather is 'nature *and creature*'. If already all creatures find their first origin in an *immediate* divine act of creation, this is the more so in the creation of the spiritual being, which, as the Creator's image, unlike other creatures is naturally apt to find its final consummation in the graceful gift of sharing in God's own blessedness *immediately*.

The text of *Summa*, a. 4, q. 5, is also interesting because Henry has obviously in view not any natural inclination in general, but specifically the natural desire *of humans*. This way of drafting makes the reader expect that Henry, as most of his contemporaries, is fully aware of the special status of the spiritual creature over against all creatures which have no sharing in the life of the mind. This brings us to a second point.

As one of many, Thomas Aquinas faces the objection: irrational creatures were given the natural means by which they effectually reach their natural completion: hence the spiritual creature could not be given the natural desire for beatific vision without being equipped with the natural means to effectually reach it. As one of many, Thomas replies to this type of difficulty by simply dismissing the similarity between the infra-spiritual and the spiritual creature: 'non est similis ratio'.<sup>79</sup> Henry meets a similar objection based on the analogy between infra-spiritual and spiritual life: the sight of the corporeal eye cannot be elevated by a higher light for seeing something it cannot see by its natural equipment: hence the spiritual eye cannot be elevated for seeing what it cannot see by its natural light.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 140-142; ll. 174-178; cf. *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, ed. R. Wielockx (Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia, 6), Leuven, 1983, p. 43, ll. 97-98.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I II, q. 91, a. 4, ad 3: 'Creaturae irrationales non ordinantur ad altiore finem quam sit finis qui est proportionatus naturali virtuti ipsarum. Et ideo non est similis ratio'. In his *Summa theologiae*, I II, q. 5, a. 5, Thomas first formulates this objection: 'Homo, cum sit nobilior irrationalibus creaturis, videtur esse sufficientior; sed irrationales creaturae per sua naturalia possunt consequi suos fines; ergo multo magis homo per sua naturalia potest beatitudinem consequi', and then he replies: 'Creatura rationalis, quae potest consequi perfectum beatitudinis bonum, indigens ad hoc divino auxilio, est perfectior quam creatura irrationalis, quae huiusmodi boni non est capax, sed quoddam bonum imperfectum consequitur virtute suae naturae'. For the many other representatives of the common opinion, cf., H. de Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, pp. 198-201.



Henry's reply to this objection is especially interesting. Not only does he flatly deny the similarity between the corporeal and the spiritual order in almost identical terms with Thomas Aquinas: 'non est simile'.<sup>80</sup> He also grounds his reply on a *philosophical* consideration which he takes pains to underpin with the authority of *Aristotle*. Flavour and smell are beyond the reach of sight and, unlike a colour, can by no means be seen. Hence there is no visible object beyond the one that can be seen by the material light. But, beyond the object which is intelligible to the natural light of the intellect there is another reality which is intelligible to the intellect by a supernatural light. This intelligible reality is far away from the natural intelligible objects of the intellect and far away from the intellect itself. Yet, it is distant from them, not as flavour and smell, being no colour and hence being by no means visible, are out of the reach of sight. It is distant from the intellect and its natural objects as something which is eminently visible is distant both from something which is modestly visible and from a weak sight. Hence a weak sight cannot reach this eminently visible thing unless it is illuminated and strengthened by a clearer light. And that is why the Philosopher says in Book II of the *Metaphysics* that our intellect is to the things that are the most evident by nature like the eye of the bat is to the light of the sun.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, a. 3, q. 5, ed. G. Wilson, l. 101.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 101-110.

## ABBREVIATIONS

*Works of Boethius de Dacia:*

*A: Quaestiones de anima*

*AM: De aeternitate mundi*

*G: Quaestiones De generatione et corruptione*

*M: Quaestiones super IVm Meteorologicorum*

*MS: Modi significandi*

*OHA: Sophisma 'Omnis homo de necessitate est animal'*

*P: Quaestiones super libros Physicorum*

*S: De Somniis*

*SB: De Summo Bono*

*T: Quaestiones super librum Topicorum*

*Abbreviations (except common ones) used in this Bibliography:*

CIMAGL = Cahiers de l'Institut du moyen âge grec et latin

CPDMA = Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi

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# THE LEGAL RENAISSANCE OF THE 12<sup>TH</sup> AND 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES: SOME THOMISTIC NOTES

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## I.

In *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, Rémi Brague characterizes European civilization 'as a nearly uninterrupted series of renaissances'.<sup>2</sup>

Now, what is remarkable...is that the effort of returning back aims at something other than the cultural recoveries and religious revivals that traverse every civilization. This effort [*renaissance*] does not tend toward the primitive period; it is not a return toward what is proper to the culture and which would have existed in all its purity at the time of the founding origins. On the contrary, it tends toward a source located *outside* of European culture – in this case, in Greco-Roman antiquity. A hugely important example of this fact is Law, such as it was systematized from the 'Papal Revolution' of the late Eleventh Century on. What the Bologna legists studied were not the legal rules that were actually enforced at their time, but ancient Roman Law.<sup>3</sup>

Before we turn to issues of law and jurisprudence, we should consider Brague's peculiar, but very useful, distinction between a renewal and renaissance.

A renewal (reform, revival) suggests returning to a source while remaining within the interior of a tradition that was brought forth from the source itself. A renewal seeks a source that is *ours*. To renew (reform, revive) is to repriminate a culture or institution according to what truly belongs to *us*.

<sup>1</sup> Earlier versions of this paper were given at Palermo (2005) and Pamplona (2006).

<sup>2</sup> Rémi Brague, *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, translated by Samuel Lester (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2002), 122.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 123.

If successful, a renewal will assimilate new external resources, but always for the purpose of reviving the original source. We can think, for example, of the continual reforms or renewals of the Rule of St. Benedict, from primitive Benedictine monasticism in the 6th century, to the choir monasticism of Cluny in the 10th and 11th centuries, to the Cistercian reforms of the 12th century.

In the case of a renaissance, however, one appropriates ‘an origin in relation to which one feels foreign’. A new source is appropriated, Brague explains, not because it is *ours*, but rather because it is true, good, beautiful, or even interesting. ‘[T]he appropriation of a source is fruitful only if it is disinterested’.<sup>4</sup> Thus, what is ancient or original is experienced not as something indigenous to one’s *ethos*, but as a real *novum* by virtue of ‘transplantation into a new soil’.<sup>5</sup> The old becomes new because of the mode of reception. It is this experience that marks the civilization of western Europe. He calls it an ‘eccentric identity’, in the sense of ‘having its sources outside of itself’.<sup>6</sup> ‘[N]o culture’, he says, ‘was ever so little centered on itself and so interested in the other ones as Europe’.<sup>7</sup>

The theme of this plenary session of the Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas – *The Encounter of Christianity and the Graeco-Roman* – provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the appropriation by Christians of a source located, as Brague says, outside of its indigenous culture. Indeed, the legal renaissance is one of the best, and earliest examples, of how something old becomes new by being transplanted to different soil.

First, I shall first make some general historical and cultural observations. The legal renaissance was never simply an appropriation of Roman legal texts. The rise of jurisprudential thinking coincided with the recovery of ancient scientific, philosophical and logical texts. It was deeply molded and directed by yet another ‘foreign’ element – Greek science and philosophy. Moreover, the legal renaissance developed in tandem with a dramatic renewal of interest in political life – in municipalities, corporations, universities, and new constitutional forms of religious life. Above all, the academic study of jurisprudence was spurred by the discovery and growth of the art of legislation. This art – *ius facere* – was perhaps the single most important factor for the transformation of customary and feudal law by a new

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 133.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 134.



professional class of lawyers in the service of kings and popes. It was the beginning of what we, today, would call states.

Second, I shall turn to the first article of the first question in Thomas's treatise on law (*S.Th.* I-II, 90.1). The title of this article is *utrum lex sit aliquid rationis*, whether law is something pertaining to reason. I do not intend to furnish a commentary. Rather, I will use it as a kind of microcosm in which we can see some of the main features (issues, problems) of the legal renaissance which Thomas inherited and to which he contributed.

## II.

Peter Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum*, written about 1132, furnishes a 'snapshot' of changes afoot in western Europe during the 12th century. Abelard writes:

My father had acquired some knowledge of letters before he was a knight, and later on his passion for learning was such that he intended all his sons to have instruction in letters before they were trained to arms. His purpose was fulfilled. I was his first-born, and being specially dear to him had the greatest care taken over my education. For my part, the more rapid and easy my progress in my studies, the more eagerly I applied myself, until I was so carried away by my love of learning that I renounced the glory of military life, made over my inheritance and rights of the eldest son to my brothers, and withdrew from the court of Mars in order to be education in the lap of Minerva.<sup>8</sup>

Fleeing the court of Mars for the bosom of Minerva, Abelard personally typifies the European renaissance.

At the time of Abelard's birth in 1079, we must imagine a western European culture bound not by systems of positive law, but rather by feudal oaths and the chivalric code. This was a Christian, warrior culture. The nobility trained its eldest sons in the art of war. With the arrival of clement weather in springtime, they betook themselves to combat. In 1095, when Abelard was 16 years old, Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade, urging these sons of Mars to take the cross and to become warriors of Christ rather than enemies of one another. Indeed, at the beginning of the 12th

<sup>8</sup> Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, in *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, translated by Betty Radice and revised by M.T. Clanchy, London, Penguin Books, 2003, letter-1, at page 3.

century, no realm of western Europe had an organized legal system. Criminal procedures made use of the so-called trial of ordeal – by combat, by fire, or by water. Abelard's Court of Mars, in fact, was not a 'court' in any sense that we would recognize. One procured the *ad hoc* judgment of a lord, and then sent one's family and vassals to execute the judgment. It was a decentralized system of private law and vindication. Abelard himself would become the victim of a private vendetta when his wife's kin had him castrated for a secret marriage.

Abelard tells us that his father loved him too much to send him into the warrior culture. Instead, he was sent to school. Within a generation, this preference for Minerva over Mars was being re-enacted throughout western Europe. Fathers who had financial resources sent their sons to cathedral schools, and a generation later to universities. As universities sprouted up like mushrooms, the faculties of law were the prototype of other faculties. At Bologna in the early 12th century, Guarnerius was the first Master to use the Justinian Code in its entirety as textbook. What did the masters and students find when they studied the newly recovered books of Roman law?<sup>9</sup> In the first paragraph of the *Digest* they read the boast of the jurist Ulpianus: 'of that art we are deservedly called the priests' (Dig. I, I, 1). Priests of what? *Cultus pacis, cultus iustitiae* – the cult of peace and the cult of justice. They also contemplated the first sentence of Justinian's *Institutes*: 'The Imperial Majesty should not only be graced with arms but also armed with laws'.<sup>10</sup> Thomas himself would use the expression *arma rationis*, the tools or weapons of reason, in order to emphasize the utility of laws made by men (*S.Th.* I-II, 95.1).

Until the 12th century, there was no free-standing discipline of law. Law was a branch of rhetoric, leading to a career in writing and notarizing official documents. Lawyers were little more than scribes. But when the scientific study of law emerged at Pavia and Bologna, it would have remarkable and almost immediate results. In 1139, Gratian produced the

<sup>9</sup> On these aspects of the legal renaissance, see: Stephan Kuttner, 'The Revival of Jurisprudence', and Robert L. Benson, 'Political *Renovatio*: Two Models from Roman Antiquity', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lanham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), at 299-323 and 339-386.

<sup>10</sup> *The Digest of Justinian*, translation by Alan Watson, Philadelphia, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. *Justinian's Institutes*, translated with an introduction by Peter Kirks and Grant McLeod (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

*Decretum*, the first systematic exposition of canon law, which became a template for the scholastic method in theology and philosophy. Civilian legal scholars did the same for the Roman law, accumulating and organizing as many as 100,000 different glosses on the *Digest* and other books of the law. In both systems, the *dicta* of authorities were transformed into a coherent whole; rescripts and responses to individual cases were organized into a system of precedents; legal procedures replaced trials by ordeal. In 1215, Pope Innocent III forbade clerics from taking part in such trials. Popes and Emperors had their own legal opinions collected into books and published into order to facilitate their study by legal professionals. In 1158, the Emperor Frederick I issued a decree giving imperial protection to anyone traveling in Italy for academic purposes.

Between the two culturally indigenous poles of order, one representing the freedom of the Christian under the sway of the Holy Spirit, and the other representing the force of arms by which the unruly elements are subdued by lay warriors, there came into existence an intermediate source of order – an order produced neither by fighting nor praying. Let us call it *the political*. Here indeed is a concrete example of what Brague means by a renaissance. Civilians and canonists alike were not merely engaged in a renewal of the resources latent in their own culture. They rather received something new, and, in Brague's sense of the term, something 'foreign'. Neither canonists nor civilians could honestly claim to stand in a direct, organic relation to the Graeco-Roman sources. Pope Gregory VII, whose name is given to the first phase of this transformation of ecclesiastical order, was driven from Rome. Dying in Salerno on 25 May 1085, his last words were adapted from Psalm 44, 'I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile'. We must remember that the Gregorian Reform began not as a renaissance but as a reform – specifically an emancipation of bishops, abbots, and priests from feudal vassalage to lay warriors. It aimed at the autonomy of the spiritual power in its exilic condition. But soon enough the papacy drew upon the 'new' philosophy, sciences, and jurisprudential arts of Graeco-Roman culture. Far from being in a condition of exile, the western Church began to fashion the temporal abode of a polity rather than a monastery.

Above all, Europeans discovered the art of legislation. The Nobel Prize winning economist, Friedrich Hayek wrote: '[T]he deliberate making of law, has justly been described as among all inventions of man the one fraught with the gravest consequences, more far-reaching than in its effects even

than fire and gun-powder'.<sup>11</sup> We can roughly mark the date when this new kind of gunpowder was invented. The year was 1231. Thomas Aquinas was only six years old. The Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II, who was also King of Sicily, wrote a constitution. It was called the *Liber Augustalis*, or more commonly the *Constitutions of Melfi*. The Emperor ordered his scholars to survey the feudal customs and common law of his kingdom. He then proceeded to transform it into royal law. If customs needed to be changed, he changed them; if laws were missing, he created them; he outlawed private vendettas; he provided for civil and criminal procedures. Here indeed was a new kind of sovereign who did something more than exercise judgment in cases and controversies. He wrote the law. What began as a legal transplant to be studied in the schools (the decrees, actions, and statutes of an ancient legal culture) had now become a practice having a life of its own.

### III.

In Plato's dialogue, Parmenides warned Socrates that we must always measure an idea when it is present, and once again when it is absent.<sup>12</sup> This advice serves us well when to turn to the first of Thomas's eighteen questions on law in the *Summa theologiae*. In question 90, he sets out in four articles to gather an essential definition of law. Law, he writes, is an ordinance of reason, for the common good, made by a competent authority, and promulgated (*S.Th.* I-II, 90.4). To us, of course, the definition is familiar, even conventional. All the more reason to consider what is absent in Thomas's definition. Coercive power (*vis coactiva*) is *not* included in the four essential traits of law.

In the first article, Thomas asks 'whether law pertains to reason'. He answers that law directs human acts by way of a moral rather than a physical necessity; that is to say, law moves rational agents to an end not by physical force but by obligation. *Lex* is derived from the verb *ligare* – to bind. However, this is not to be understood in the physical sense of a superior motion necessitating a motion in another body. This kind of necessity, as the ancient jurists said, 'knows no law'. For example, a ruler might try to post a law that no one shall get sick on a boat, or digest their food, but everyone understands that such events are not bound by law in

<sup>11</sup> F.A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, Liberty* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978) at 72.

<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Parmenides*, 135e-136a.

the proper sense of the term. To be sure, we read two questions later (92.1) that coercion is an act of law. But this pertains to law's instrument not to the essence of law itself. Without the law, coercion is violence. Indeed, in his reply to the third objection (90.1 ad 3), Thomas goes further. Against the ancient opinion of the jurists, *voluntas principis habet vigorem legis* (that the ruler's will has the force of law), Thomas insists that mere force of will, without a valid rule of reason, would make for lawlessness rather than law, *iniquitas quam lex*.

In just a few sentences, Thomas introduces two very important terms of contrast: first, between coercive and directive force; second, between the force of will and the rule of reason. Coercing and willing in the absence of a rule of reason are the opposite of law. Rather deftly, Thomas removes a great temptation from any legal system, which is to confuse the instrument of executive force with the *ratio legis*. Legislation is not executive force. Rather, the latter presupposes the former. Without a term of reason there is nothing to enforce. Moreover, promulgation (90.4) cannot be confused with executive force. To promulgate is not to force, but to make known. Namely, to make known a rule of reason for action. Of course, the law-giver must will that the rule be made known, and he must will that it be done efficaciously. Even so, promulgation is not force or will so much as a *communicatio* – the act of one mind inducing another to share in its rule. This sharing, in turn, is in view of a common good (90.2). Indeed, because the law-giver does not impose a private rule of reason, the *communicatio* is itself partially constitutive of the common good, provided, of course, that the rule has right reason.

In 90.1, we should also notice Thomas's use of authorities. The ancient juristic authorities are cited only in connection with the problem of force. Aristotle, however, is cited twice to vindicate the distinction between reason and force.<sup>13</sup> Quietly, but unmistakably, Thomas has established a dialectic

<sup>13</sup> The full use of Aristotle in this regard is in *De veritate*: 'Now, there is a twofold necessity which can be imposed by an outside agent. One is the necessity of coercion, through which someone with absolute necessity does that which the agent forces him to do... The other necessity is conditional, on the presupposition, that is, of an end to be attained. In this way, necessity is so imposed on one that, if he does not do a certain thing, he will not receive his reward. The first necessity, that of coercion, has no place in movements of the will, but only in physical things, because by its nature the will is free from coercion. The second necessity, however, can be imposed on the will, so that one must, for example, choose this means if he is to acquire this good, or avoid this evil. For, in such matters,

for integrating these two 'foreign' elements of Roman law and Greek philosophy. The efficiency of the sovereign's commands is not permitted to be free-standing or self-authenticating. To say that the commands work, or that they proceed from what the sovereign wills, or that such commands cohere in a system are not enough. For Thomas, the command must proceed from a rule of reason capable of creating obligation in view of a common good. Virtually the entire treatise on law is disclosed in this moment, where Thomas refused to allow law to be reduced either to coercion or to a kind of voluntarism, or (implicitly) to conventionalism (a coherent system). These three are the perennial temptations of human law, for they reduce law (1) to force, (2) to will, and (3) to system. In sum, law would be the will of a sovereign, backed by sanctions, and organized in such fashion that the state's force coheres in a predictable way.

Thomas's definition, emphasizing idea that law is essentially a precept, a binding directive communicated by one mind to others, for the sake of the common good, was implicit in the legal renaissance of the 12th and 13th centuries. Indeed, it summarizes the new humanism under the auspices of Minerva rather than Mars. Insofar as law is a rule of reason, it signifies a properly political reciprocity between ruler and ruled. Ruling and being ruled has a foundation, in both science and art, that is something more than the exercise of *subduing*. That ruling and being ruled are something more than subduing and being subdued was not easily received by medieval culture. The intuitions of both the warrior culture and the theological culture steeped in Augustine tended to emphasize the opposite.

Not only in Hebrew scripture, but in the New Testament itself, there seemed to be ample evidence that in the order of divine providence human

avoiding evil is considered equivalent to achieving some good, as is clear from the Philosopher. Moreover, as necessity of coercion is imposed on physical things by means of some action, so, too, it is by means of some action that conditional necessity is imposed on the will. But the action by which the will is moved is the command of the one ruling or governing. Consequently, the Philosopher says that by means of his command the king is the source of movement. Similarly, too, where the will is concerned, the relation between the command of a ruler and the imposition of the kind of obligation by which the will can be bound is like the relation between physical action and the binding of physical things through the necessity of coercion. However, the action of a physical agent never imposes necessity on another thing except by contact of its action with the object on which it is acting. So, no one is bound by the command of a king or lord unless the command reaches him who is commanded; and it reaches him through knowledge of it. Hence, no one is bound by a precept except through his knowledge of the precept'. *De veritate* 17.3.

law principally has a corrective and penal function. In Paul's *Letter to the Romans*, for example, we read that 'law works wrath' and 'where there is no law there is no transgression' (*Rom.* 4.15). Paul goes on to say of a ruling authority: 'he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil' (*Rom.* 13.4). In *1 Thessalonians*, Paul says 'God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to receive salvation' (*1 Thes.* 5.9). No less an authority than St. Augustine contended that temporal law exists only for one class of men: the 'unhappy class', namely those men who are not properly subordinated to the eternal law, and who therefore need an *imposed law* (*De Lib. Arb.*, XV.31).<sup>14</sup> Such law is just, as a punishment for sin. Indeed, imposed law is a constant reminder of our loss of dignity, while the absence of imposed law is the sign of the recovery of that dignity under the sway of charity. Here, in brief, is the old culture organized around the two poles of supernatural liberty and temporal coercion. It is the intermediate zone that remains undeveloped: namely, modes of order mediated by human reason and its arts, which are not reducible to the punishment of coercive force.

The penal function of law was deeply engrained in the European imagination. Consider, for example, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Triennial Oration* in praise of the Emperor Constantine. At the outset, Eusebius calls the Emperor's attention to divine providence, by which God creates, subjects, and preserves the order of nature. For his part, the Emperor imitates God insofar as he 'subdues and chastens the open adversaries of the truth in accordance with the usages of war' (*Tri. Or.*, II.1). Natural law is most evidently translated into human affairs by means of retribution – by judgment, and then by the exercise of executive power. Even Frederick II saw fit to begin his *Constitutions of Melfi* on this note: 'by the inspiration of divine providence, princes of nations were created through whom the license of crimes might be corrected. And these judges of life and death for mankind might decide, as executors in some way of Divine Providence, how each man should have fortune, estate, and status'. (*Lib. Aug.*, Prooemium).<sup>15</sup> Such was the ancient narrative. Human law comes into existence with criminal law, which, of

<sup>14</sup> I use the term imposed law in the neutral sense of positive law, drawn from the verb *ponere*. It can include either *lex humana* or *lex divina*. For Thomas and Augustine, it is always secondary to eternal law. But for Thomas, unlike Augustine, positive law is not always corrective and penal.

<sup>15</sup> *The Liber Augustalis*. Translated with an introduction and notes by James M. Powell (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1971).

course, is that part of law that conjoins command with physical force. We are reminded of the trial by fire and water. After rocks are heated in boiling water, the defendant is made to pull them out with his bare hand. The authorities then wait to see whether blisters heal in due course. In other words, the punishment is applied, and then God is invited to remove it (or to assist nature's own removal of it) in the case of innocence.<sup>16</sup> In the warrior culture, trial by combat had a similar motif.<sup>17</sup> It is not that justice is without, or dis severed from, the truth, but rather that the truth of justice is manifest chiefly in the coercion. The coercion or force by which unruly elements are subdued counts as the theophany of justice, concerning which the community is the witness.

Against this wrath-model of law, Thomas offered a counter-factual hypothesis. Suppose that the original state of innocence was never ruptured. Would there have been need for one man to command another? He concedes right away that there would have been no need for the corrective or penal function of authority. But there would have been need for directive authority. Thomas writes: 'First, because man is naturally a social being, and so in the state of innocence he would have led a social life. Now a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of one to look after the common good; for many, as such, seek many things, whereas one attends only to one. Wherefore the Philosopher says, in the beginning of the *Politics*, that wherever many things are directed to one, we shall always find one at the head directing them'. (*S.Th.* I, 96.4). In the *De Regno*, he makes the same point: 'Wherefore, if man were intended to live alone, as many animals do, he would require no other guide to his end. Each man would be a king unto himself, under God, the highest King, inasmuch as he would direct himself in his acts by the light of reason given him from on high. Yet it is natural for man, more than for any other animal, to be a social and political animal, to live in a group... If, then, it is natural for man to live in the society of many, it is necessary that there exist among men some means by which the group may be governed'. (*De Regno* I.2, 4, 8). Governing does not exclude the instrument of coercion, but coercion itself cannot count as governance.

Wherever a plurality of rational agents seek through their united action a common good, and whenever there is a plurality of valid means for achieving the end, there will be need for binding directives of a general rather kind,

<sup>16</sup> See Sadakat Kadri, *The Trial* (New York: Random House, 2005), 3-38.

<sup>17</sup> For an account of the last trial by combat in medieval France (1386), see Eric Jager, *The Last Duel* (New York: Broadway Books, 2004).



obligating the group to follow this means rather than another one. This level of governance is not to be confused with the removal of a deficiency, for there is no issue of anyone selecting morally wicked means to an end. The directive or coordinative function of law would have been necessary even without sin. And therefore the corrective or penal function of law is accidental – to be sure, it is a very important ‘accident’, and for all practical purposes, no ruling authority could hope to preserve the common good by ignoring it. Even so, it should not be confused with the essence of law.

So far forth, we see that Thomas emphasizes the directive nature of law (and command) particularly with regard to its coordinative function. In *S.Th.* I, 96.4, however, he mentions another consideration, namely the inherent sociality of any unity of order in which persons are ‘parts’ of a diversified ‘whole’.

...if one man surpassed another in knowledge and virtue, this would not have been fitting unless these gifts conduced to the benefit of others, according to 1 *Pt* 4:10, ‘As every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another’. Wherefore Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei* XIX, 14): ‘Just men command not by the love of domineering, but by the service of counsel’: and (*De Civ. Dei* XIX, 15): ‘The natural order of things requires this; and thus did God make man?’

Here, Thomas contends that on the counter-factual scenario of a community free of captivity to sin, there will be a diversity of talents. Such diversity will always be found in a unity of order, for in this kind of order the parts do not possess either the unity of substance nor a mere unity of aggregation.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the parts are rightly ordered to one another by acts of communication, by acts of sharing, or making common, talents which belong to each. It was Aristotle who said that man is naturally a political animal, for men ‘make common’ words, judgments, and deeds.<sup>19</sup> We are different than the other animals because we are not locked into our private perceptions; nor are we moved along like a herd or flock, by a kind of common instinct. The human world transcends its immediate environment by making our judgments the subject of common deliberation. To be sure, not everything can be put in common, for that would be totalitarian. And not everything that is made common can be done so in exactly the same way. Families, voluntary associations, the church, and the state make different things common in different ways.

<sup>18</sup> *S.Th.* I, 39.3.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics* 122611-12.

Any society is a *subject* in its own right. Importantly, it is only on this premise that legal personality is ascribed to a society not by a *fictio legis* (the external construction of the law). If we were dealing with an aggregate possessing the minimal perfection of inter-subjectivity amongst the parts we would not be speaking of a society. In a shopping mall, for example, hundreds of individuals interact without constituting a society, which is to say a subject in its own right. It would need only a minimum of external coordination. By legal fiat, we can create a legal person – for instance, the Retailers of Chicago – without pretending that this aggregate gathered together under a legal rubric is a real society. But this is *not* how Thomas situates the role of law. Law is neither crowd control nor coordination of individuals having accidental common good.

The key point is that when we affirm that law is essentially directive, we must be careful not to reduce law to a mere coordinative device facilitating the individual actions of an aggregate; rather, law is a coordinative device for a society. Societies are constituted by communications in which things are made common. The word *communicatio* simply means making something common, one rational agent participating in the life of another. Hence, in *Contra impugnantes*, Thomas quotes Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*: 'Everything that is not lessened by being imparted, is not, if it be possessed without being communicated, possessed as it ought to be possessed'.<sup>20</sup>

Thomas's question, which represents the new humanism of the legal *renaissance*, is not whether law is entitled to coerce and punish, or to coordinate a market-like interaction, but whether we can discern a more purely political office of law. The counter-factual scenario of a state of innocence as yet untrammelled by sin and injustice is meant to turn our attention to what law does every day: namely, to coordinate the actions of the good and the bad alike to a common good.

It was this idea that began to reverberate in European cities. Even as Thomas was at work on the *Summa theologiae*, the city of Bologna in 1256 brought those in servitude within the city, put them under ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and emancipated them. The act was memorialized in the *Liber Paradisus*, which, of course refers to the original condition of Adam.<sup>21</sup> Bolognese authorities understood that slavery did not derive from the nat-

<sup>20</sup> *Contra Impugnantes*, I.4 §14 A83 1265-70.

<sup>21</sup> I rely here on the account by John T. Noonan, Jr., *A Church That Can and Cannot Change* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), at 50-52.

ural law, but rather from sin; the yoke of servitude was recognized at customary law and the law of nations. But, for this very reason, servitude is not a moral or political necessity. Human prudence, in accord with natural law, can rule otherwise. In Bologna, the enactors of the *Liber Paradisus* reasoned that Christ liberated mankind from sin, and therefore human history is something more than a perpetual task of rearranging the chains of servitude merited by the sin of our first parents. They also reasoned that in the concrete situation of the city, such servitude is more corruptive of the common good than it is retributive of past injustices. In this event of 1256, we can see two ideas working in tandem. First, the quest for natural justice that transcends the punitive function. Second, the more audacious judgment that human law can develop the natural law in reference to both the permanent and contingent affairs of the city.

#### IV.

In his well-known definition of natural law, Thomas proposes:

Now among all others the rational creature is subject to divine providence in the most excellent way, insofar as it partakes of a share of providence by being provident both for itself and for others. It has a share of the eternal reason because it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end, and this participation of the eternal law [*participatio legis aeternae*] in the rational creature is called the natural law. Hence, the Psalmist after saying, ‘Offer up the sacrifice of justice’, as though someone asked what the works of justice are, adds: ‘Many say, Who showeth us good things?’<sup>22</sup> In answer to which question he says: ‘The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us’, thus implying that the light of natural reason whereby we discern what is good and what is evil and which pertains to the natural law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the divine light. It is evident that the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature’s participation of the eternal law. (*S.Th.* I-II, 91.2)

For Thomas, natural law is one of two exemplary models of law which are *not imposed*. The other is the new law (*lex nova*). Both the natural and the new law are called *lex indita* – indited or instilled law (90.4 ad 1; *S.Th.* I-II, 106.1). In different, but analogous ways, the creature is moved by nat-

<sup>22</sup> *Ps* 4.6.

ural law and by the new law to a common good from the inside-out. One of Thomas's favorite scriptural passages for natural law is *Wisdom* 8.1, where God is said to order creatures 'sweetly' (*suaviter*).<sup>23</sup> That is to say, they are moved *naturaliter*, naturally through their own nature. (90.4 ad 1).<sup>24</sup> This is the opposite of promulgation by imposition, particularly where imposition is combined with punishment. But it is not the opposite of law itself. Rather, what is true and right in acts of punishment stem from a law that is not essentially penal.

Moved naturally to know the rudimentary precepts of obligation, the human intellect participates in divine providence by exercising three kinds of prudence. First, on the basis of natural law, the individual is empowered to draw-out such additional concepts and to render such judgments as are fitting to make the natural law effective in his own conduct. From the first precept of law held by the habit of *synderesis*, the individual judgment terminates not in another law, but rather in the ordinary command of practical reason about things to be done.<sup>25</sup> Second, on a similar basis, individuals are empowered to devise additional commands suitable for social common goods other than the *civitas*. This is called domestic prudence. It consists of ordering-judgments for a community.<sup>26</sup> Third, there is the architectonic prudence, which is jurisprudence proper. Here, the political authority takes the rules and measures of the natural law and goes onto to make new laws.<sup>27</sup> The technical term for the making of a new law from the antecedent natural law (or new law) is *determinatio*.<sup>28</sup> The legislator is said to make more determinate the natural law in the human city.

<sup>23</sup> *De caritate*, 1, in *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 2. For other uses of *Wisdom* 8:1: (on creation) S. Thomae Aquinatis doctoris angelici Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium seu 'Summa contra Gentiles' (Turin: Casa Marietti, 1937), III.97; (on the virtue of charity) *Summa theologiae* II-II, 23.2; (on divine justice) *De potentia*, II.6. S. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 2, ed. P. Bazzi, M. Calcaterra, T.S. Centi, E. Odetto, and P.M. Pession (Turin: Casa Marietti, 1949).

<sup>24</sup> In the case of the *lex nova*, by the Holy Spirit moving the will through charity. *S.Th.* I-II, 106.1.

<sup>25</sup> *S.Th.* I-II, 94.2.

<sup>26</sup> 90.3. ad 3.

<sup>27</sup> *S.Th.* II-II, 50.

<sup>28</sup> *S.Th.* I-II, 95.2. Positive law is an admixture of two kinds of derivations from natural law. First, positive contains precepts which are inferred from the primary precepts. For example, at criminal law, the precept against murder is drawn from a primary precept against doing harm. These *conclusiones* have force of law both from being given by natural law and from being enacted by positive law. Second, positive law consists of *determinationes*

In each of the three modes, there is movement from law to a common good through the mediation of prudence.<sup>29</sup> The important point, however, is that natural law is not a closed system. It is meant to be completed by human judgments, the capstone of which is political or regnative prudence. Thus, Thomas concedes that the natural law can change, 'by addition', as he puts it (*S.Th.* I-II, 94.5). That is to say, by insight, judgment, and artful ingenuity, the human legislative mind can do two things: (1) in its moral office, to draw-out additional implications of the natural law, especially in light of their application to changing facts; and (2) in its properly political office, to discover new *rationes* of action and go on to impose new obligations, which are called positive laws.

Here, we find Thomas appropriating and giving philosophical shape to the legal and political *renaissance* of his era. Ruling authorities are given something to do besides wielding the sword in their exercise of executive power and rendering occasional judgments on the basis of customary law. And the *legis peritus*, the lawyer, will certainly have more to do than merely act as the notary of the king's official acts. In short, the sovereign, and his lawyers, are now engaged in legislation – and hence the invention of the legal 'gunpowder' that worried Friedrich Hayek. Legislation, *ius facere*, brings something new into the world of city, and what is more, this novelty is not only said to be in accord with natural law, but even required by it. The root of human rule (over oneself, the domestic order, and the polity) is participation in divine providence by which things are moved to their proper ends. In the case of human persons, this participated rule requires the giving and receiving of reasons – to move or to be moved to an end in the absence of knowing what is true and good is not law in the proper sense of the term (90.1 ad 1).

which specify matters left indeterminate by natural law. For example, the natural law does not specify precisely how or when a criminal is to be punished. While these determinations are related to the moral order of natural law, they have force by dint of human enactment.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas groups these under the triad of *to be*, *to live*, and *to know* – effects of God which are desirable and lovable to all. *S.Th.*, II-II, 34.1. The triadic structure of first precepts in I-II, 94.2 follow this pattern. The mind is moved first to desire and affirm the good of existence – not as self-preservation, but rather *secundum suam naturam*, according to its nature, which is to say, something common. Second, to desire and affirm the good of procreation, nurture and education of children. Third, to desire and affirm the good of political order. Human inclination always turns toward a common good, which is another way of saying that common goods are not an after-thought imposed by legislative fiat of the human lawgiver.

To repeat, law is not the unilateral projection of force. Nor is it, as Augustine surmised, an imposition upon unhappy men. It is (at least partially) constitutive of the happiness of the body politic, as Thomas contends in 90.2. As a species of regnative prudence, legislation derives from the first rules and measures of natural law (or in the case of canonical law, the evangelical law as well), and its purpose is to draw out additional rules and measures as are needed by the polity (again, for canonical law, the life of the Church). And it must do so on the basis of something more than *ad hoc* commands. As Aristotle taught: 'Where laws are not sovereign, there is no constitution. Law should be sovereign on every issue, and the magistrates and the citizen body should only decide about details. The conclusion which emerges is clear. Democracy may be a form of constitution; but this particular system, under which everything is managed merely by decrees, is not even a democracy, in any real sense of the word. Decrees can never be general rules [and any real constitution must be based on general rules]...'.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the purpose of law is not merely to equip the ruler with an assortment of commands, to be used at his own discretion as the occasion might require.

Law is perfected not only in a quantitative sense (by making more laws) but also by becoming a system that includes general, standing precepts. To be sure, the ruler will sometimes find this requirement to be inconvenient because it places a limit upon his *ad hoc* commands. But it is not inconvenient for those *subject to* law, for they need to know in advance what the law requires. The systematic character of law and the need for adequate gener-

<sup>30</sup> *Pol.* IV.iv 1292a. Elsewhere, Thomas notes that human laws must have adequate generality. *Ad hoc* commands and decisions are inadequate to the political common good. Legislation arises both for normative as well as for corrective purposes. 'As the Philosopher says (*Rhet.* i, 1), "it is better that all things be regulated by law, than left to be decided by judges": and this for three reasons. First, because it is easier to find a few wise men competent to frame right laws, than to find the many who would be necessary to judge aright of each single case. Secondly, because those who make laws consider long beforehand what laws to make; whereas judgment on each single case has to be pronounced as soon as it arises: and it is easier for man to see what is right, by taking many instances into consideration, than by considering one solitary fact. Thirdly, because lawgivers judge in the abstract and of future events; whereas those who sit in judgment of things present, towards which they are affected by love, hatred, or some kind of cupidity; wherefore their judgment is perverted. Since then the animated justice of the judge is not found in every man, and since it can be deflected, therefore it was necessary, whenever possible, for the law to determine how to judge, and for very few matters to be left to the decision of men'. I-II, 95.1 ad 2.

ality of statutes are deeply rooted in the criterion that law pertains to reason. Citizens who are subjected, willy-nilly, to sporadic commands from the ruler, will not be able to rationally order their lives according to law.

Take away, however, the foundation of legislation in reason's moral office, and let it become merely an external art of imposing order on innumerable details and contingencies; let it become an imposition of order upon an aggregate; moreover, let it become a series of sporadic commands having little or no generality (covering more than a single case). Then, indeed, legislation will begin to look like Hayek's 'gunpowder'. It will pass from the Greek understanding of practical reason to the notion of instrumental reason.

Thomas was aware of the problem, beginning in 90.1. He takes two things to be received – Greek reason and science and Roman law – and allows one to modify the other. Roman law without the Hellenic sense of reason and nature would become a cult of imperial force;<sup>31</sup> Greek reason and nature, without Roman law, would lack the artful and constructive character needed for polities. Thomas allows these two to qualify one another, and then inserts the result – as a module – into the indigenous culture. This culture was ready to affirm divine providence, creation, and an anthropology in which man is said to be made unto the image of God not merely by virtue of possessing a rational soul, but also because he is a master of his own actions by being, as Damascene said, provident for himself and others.<sup>32</sup>

On this three-part foundation, human law is able to introduce novelties which are not a rival to, or a usurpation of, divine dominion. All religions of the Book inherit a divine law. What is at stake is not whether human agents are entitled to produce incidental novelties by ordinary acts of interpreting, judging and executing judgments according to divine law. Shariah and rabbinical law allowed this much. The deeper issue is *ius facere*. The legal renaissance had already begun to make a move in that direction, which was necessary for any significant advance beyond the feudal order to a constitutional order. The indigenous culture had to be taught how to receive the ancient sources without subverting divine law. Thomas's doctrine of participation is the focal point. Made *ad imaginem Dei*, the human mind can cre-

<sup>31</sup> See Ulpianus in the *Dig.* II, 1, 3. The *merum imperium* (unmixed *potestas*) is nothing other than 'to have the power of the sword to punish the wicked'. By extension, all powers and offices of public jurisdiction flow from this starting point. The lawyer, therefore, is a priest of justice, but only because he is first a facilitator of the capital power.

<sup>32</sup> Prol. *S.Th.* I-II.

ate novelties (new obligations) on the basis of the higher law. He is capacitated to bring about perfections in others without subverting divine providence. Provided that the human law work in accord with the received rules and measures, the law enhances the participation of rational creatures.

## V.

Now, we should retrieve the thread of our earlier discussion about law as force. I said that the ancient penal model of law was one source of resistance to the idea that law is only accidentally coercive in nature. The second source of resistance came, interestingly, from the Roman civil tradition being recovered in the schools and courts of Europe. Both the papal and the imperial legal traditions were preoccupied with the legitimacy of their titles to rule. One of those titles was the imperial ideal itself. The Roman legal tradition, codified by Justinian, was deeply tinged with the premises of imperial absolutism. Justinian himself asserted: ‘God had sent among men the emperor as a “living statute”, to whom statutes themselves were subject’ (Nov. 105, 2, 4). There was also the famous dictum that the ruler’s will has the force of law (*quod voluntas principis habet vigorem legis*) (Dig. I, 4, 1; S.Th. I-II, 90.1 ad 3). Completing the toolkit of imperial power was the dictum, *princeps legibus solutus est* – the ruler is not bound by the laws (Dig. I, 3, 31; S.Th. I-II, 96.5).

This notion of a unilateral kingly power, exempt from its own laws, was a problem distinct from, but nevertheless intertwined with, the problem I discussed earlier in connection with Augustine’s idea that imposed law is meant for bad men. Law is retributive force deployed by a ruling authority. This explains why, for most of the middle ages, the mark of aristocracy was immunity from law. The idea of immunities as the privilege of aristocracy emerged from two traditions. First, from the notion that law is made for bad men, and thus that good men ought to enjoy immunities. Second, from the echoing effect of the ancient imperial ideal *princeps legibus solutus est* – the ruler is not bound by the laws.<sup>33</sup> Aristocrats therefore participate in the kingly power by having their own piece of his immunity. These immunities included everything from taxation to uses of lethal force.

<sup>33</sup> For the evolution of the imperial idea that the king is a kind of god, judged by no man, the best essay is still Ernst H. Kantorowicz, ‘Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and its Late Medieval Origins’, *The Harvard Law Review*, XLVIII (1955), 65-91.



At issue is not whether the ruler of a political community should rule by law, but whether the rule of law proceeds from executive power. And this in turn depends on how we understand the relationship between the intellect and the will. No one, of course, would deny that the ruler ought to govern intelligently. The question, rather, was whether the intellect is but an instrument of the will willing. Or, to put it in another way: Is law superior force conjoined with instrumental rationality?

Consider what was at stake for the legal renaissance of that era. What's the point of the new scientific study and organization of the law? What do we mean when we say that law should rule? On a voluntarist model, all of this work is ordered to the acquisition of the titles and instrumental resources put at the disposal of superior force. In other words, law is studied in terms of the technical armature facilitating the will of the sovereign. On an intellectualist model, such as what Thomas defends, study of the *rationes legis* (reasons of the law) is organically related to the intellect's governing what ought to be willed. The point is clearly made, once again, in 90.1. Command, Thomas contends, is chiefly an act of the intellect (*S.Th.* I-II, 17.1; and 90.1). For Thomas, there is no problem holding the position that law is a command, and that the political order embodies relationships of command and obedience. It would be not only radical but useless to deny this structure. Wherever we find human society, we find relations of command and obedience. Moreover, for Thomas, divine providence itself situates rational creatures in such an order. The difference between Thomas and the theories of positivism and/or voluntarism, therefore, is not whether law is command; rather, it depends upon what is meant by command. Is command a 'force' to which reason is appended instrumentally, or is command a 'reason' according to which 'force' serves in an executive office? Much stands or falls on this issue, which is introduced at the outset of Question 90.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Among other things which are implicated in this question is Thomas's treatment of the inclinations in *S.Th.* I-II, 94.2. Are the inclinations related to the precepts of natural law the pre-rational unfolding of human nature, or are the inclinations precisely inclinations in the spiritual powers of intellect and will? If the inclinations related to natural law are pre-rational, it would seem that the human are moved by law despotically, as an instilling or modifying of psycho-physiological instincts which might be law on the part of the Creator, but not on the part of the recipient. This model gives birth to the Enlightenment notion of the 'laws of nature'. On that view, a political or moral order must either deploy instrumental reason to render the pre-rational motions commodious; or to transcend the things to which we are moved naturally. We must create a zone of liberty apart from the

To the much vexed question of whether the ruler is immune from his own laws, Thomas faced a deeply entrenched tradition. Even as he wrote these questions on law, spiritual Franciscans, relying upon the eschatological prophecies of Joachim of Fiore, claimed to be solely under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This expression of antinomianism had remarkable affinity to the imperial notion that the Emperor is a 'living statute'. Both had an affinity to the Augustinian position that being ruled by the laws of men (clerical or lay) is an inferior condition that falls short of the autonomy and dignity of Christian liberty. If the positive law is entirely corrective in nature and scope, then good men are not under the law.

Thomas tackles the problem, as usual, by making a some distinctions. (*S.Th.* I-II, 96.5). In the first place, law contains two things. On the one hand, its essential property, namely, to be a rule and measure of human acts toward a common good. Second, its use of coercion for the disobedient. Therefore, any agent (not just the ruler) can be said to be either above or subject to law in two quite different ways. Those who are good are subject not to law's coercive power but only, or for the most part, to its essential, directive function. Indeed, the virtuous are more rather than less subject to law's directive purpose. The exemplar, once again, is the natural law itself. Perfection in virtue renders one more rather than less subject to the natural law. In short, being subject to law (just as such) is not an inferior dignity.

In the second place, someone may be exempt from a law because the ruler does not have jurisdiction over the matter. So, for example, the natural law requires both rectitude in the external act and rectitude in the internal act of the will (*S.Th.* I-II, 91.4). Human authorities, however, have no immediate jurisdiction over the *actus interior*. Moreover, the king has no jurisdiction over the sacramental order. But in none of these cases is one exempt from law – for commands lacking proper jurisdiction are not laws at all (*S.Th.* I-II, 96.4).

As for the political sovereign, Thomas writes:

it should be said the sovereign is said to be exempt from the law as to its coercive power; since, properly speaking, no man is coerced by

despotic pre-conditions given by divine providence. I propose that this is why modern natural theorists are always beset with the problem of transforming the waters of natural inclination into the wine of authentic moral obligation. Natural law can never be true law, but only the pre-condition founded in the welter of natural inclination. Carefully read, however, there is good evidence that Thomas was speaking of inclinations in the spiritual powers. See, for example, Stephen L. Brock, 'Natural Inclination and the Intelligibility of the Good in Thomistic Natural Law', *Vera Lex*, VT.1-2 (Winter 2005), at 57-78.

himself, and law has no coercive power save from the authority of the sovereign. Thus is the sovereign said to be exempt from the law, because none is competent to pass sentence on him if he acts against the law. Hence, on the text of the Ps. 50 [‘To Thee only have I sinned’], a gloss says that ‘there is no man who can judge the deeds of a king’. But as to the directive force of law, the sovereign is subject to the law by his own will; according to the *Decretals*: ‘whatever law a man makes for another, he should keep himself’. And a wise authority says: ‘Obey the law that thou makest thyself’. Moreover, the Lord reproaches those who ‘say and do not’, and who ‘bind heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but with a finger of their own they will not move them’, as had in Mt. 23. Hence, in the judgment of God the sovereign is not exempt from the law as to its directive force, yet he should fulfill it of his own free-will and not of constraint. Yet the sovereign is above the law, insofar as, when it is expedient, he can change the law and dispense it according to time and place.

To summarize. The ruler is exempt from the law as to its coercion. He cannot coerce himself. But this leaves entirely intact the primary predicate of law, the obligatory directive precept, regarding which the ruler is not exempted. In another way, a ruler can be exempt from the law insofar as he is supreme, which is to say, he is the final arbiter. This, however, does not entitle the ruler, in his adjudicative function, from being directed by the law applying to the facts of the case. In yet another way, he can be exempt from a law because of purely jurisdictional reasons. The positive law of the Kingdom of Sicily, for example, does not apply in Scotland. Finally, a ruler can be exempt from laws insofar as he has the office of amending or changing laws.

## VI.

Above all, Thomas was concerned that the dictum *princeps legibus solutus est* was incompatible with the broader context and indeed the *telos* of the rule of law. Namely, the natural ordination to political community. Whereas a parent is exempt from his commands to a child, political community entails a certain reciprocity that is destroyed by despotism. In his *Commentary on the Politics*, he writes:

Now the city is governed by a twofold rule, one political and the other regal. Regal rule obtains when the one who presides over the city has full power; political rule, when his power is limited by civil laws... For when a man has sole and absolute power over everything,

his rule is said to be regal. When, on the other hand, he rules in accord with the disciplined instructions [*sermones disciplinales*], that is, in accordance with laws laid down by the discipline of politics, his rule is political. It is as though he were part ruler, namely, as regards the things that come under his power; and part subject, as regards the things in which he is subject to the law. (In *I Pol.*, lect. 1 [#13]).

For Thomas, regal rule is a species of despotism. We should recall the difference between despotism and tyranny. The tyrant orders the common good to his own private good. The despot, however, orders things to a common good, but in such a way that the things ordered cannot resist or talk back. There are natural modes of despotic rule. The soul animates the corporeal body despotically, in the sense that the body has no choice but to be the body of this form. Insofar as the parent substitutes his own judgment for that of the child, the child has no choice. The child cannot make it otherwise.

Political society, on the other hand, preeminently requires the unity of parts which have their own proper operations and activities.<sup>35</sup> Each person senses, thinks, wills, and pursues the life of a farmer, a soldier, a monk or a merchant. The 'parts' of this kind of unity can 'talk back', as it were. Reciprocity is an essential characteristic of the political. Therefore, the dictum *princeps legibus solutus est* needed to qualified.

*First*, because it would put the ruler outside of the political community. He would stand to the political society as soul stands to the body, or as parent to child. This would spell the death of political friendship.

*Second*, because a unilateral projection of power is inconsistent with civic virtue. For Thomas, as for Aristotle, civic virtue is not mere passivity in receiving commands. 'Rulers imposing a law', he writes, 'are in civic matters as architects regarding things to be built', whereas civic prudence is concerned 'with individual operable things'. As legislative prudence 'gives the precept', so also 'civic prudence puts it in effect and conserves the norms stated in the law'.<sup>36</sup> Notice that the civic virtue governs the action by which those who receive a law conserve and effect it. Citizens therefore are

<sup>35</sup> 'It must be known that the whole which the political group or the family constitutes has only a unity of order [*habet solam ordinis unitatem*], for it is not something absolutely one [*aliquid simpliciter unum*]. A part of this whole, therefore, can have an operation that is not the operation of the whole, as a soldier in an army has activity that does not belong to the whole army. However, this whole does have an operation that is not proper to its parts but to the whole...'. In *Eth.* I.5.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas, In *Eth.*, lectio 9 (1197).

not only directed but also direct themselves. So, too, the ruler will always come under (and hence conserve) the law he makes. To stand outside of this circle is to stand outside the rule of law and political friendship. In short, to be obedient in matters political is not the same thing as being *subdued*. Obedience is complimented by the sister virtue of civic prudence, by which citizens actively participate in conserving the law. The human law is not imposed upon a common good. More radically it becomes part of the common good, conserved by rulers and the ruled.

*Third*, because in reshaping Augustine's doctrine of the Eternal Law, Thomas argues that God governs his creation politically. The intermediate zone between coercion and punishment on the one hand, and an eschatological liberty on the other hand, is shown to be an enduring aspect of the divine plan for the temporal life of men. Intelligent creatures are made to participate in providence, imitating the divine goodness not only in being good according to their kind, but also in bringing about goodness in others. 'God wished to produce His works in likeness to Himself, as far as possible, in order that they might be perfect, and that He might be known through them. Hence, that He might be portrayed in His works, not only according to what He is in Himself, but also according as He acts on others, He laid this natural law on all things, that last things should be reduced and perfected by middle things, and middle things by the first, as Dionysius says'. (*S.Th.*, Supplement, 34.1).

How does God act on others? If God governs only despotically, then (temporal) participation in divine rule would consist chiefly in the *iudex coactivus*. God makes creatures good through such instruments and secondary causes as are necessary for punishing the prideful and maintaining peace in this world. This task would have an aspect of the political insofar as it maintains a unity of order. But it is difficult to see how this notion of participated rule includes the other aspects of political order by which intelligent creatures are perfected. The *civitas* would become not an intermediate zone between punishment and liberty of the saints; rather, it would be the penal zone itself, now amplified and extended through the art of law.

The Christian culture of the Middle Ages, however, could not allow that God governs only in the mode of *vis coactiva*. For in the apostolic community mutually perfective acts are not chiefly coactive in nature. If participation by grace is directive rather than punitive, then the indigenous culture of Christendom would be radically split into two. One part constitutes a kind of *civitas*, in which law is equated with the sword; the other part constitutes something less (or more) than a *civitas*, in which perfections are

brought about by the directive authority of *regulae*, but not by *leges*. Rather than being a *renaissance*, in Brague's sense of the term, the reception of Roman law would only deepen, perhaps irreparably, the tensions inherent in the culture of Christendom.

Now, perhaps, we can better appreciate why Thomas insisted that, whatever the analogies between laws, the primacy of law's directive force is always the common element. This doctrine allows for the difference between the ends and objects proper to the different spheres (lay and clerical) without canceling what is common. First, it means that both spheres are entitled to become law-making, law-adjudicating, and law-executing polities without derogation from divine providence. Each has a common root in natural law. Second, it means that however we distinguish the two powers of Church and State, both are capacitated to deploy legal arts fitting to polity. Indeed, the emergence of concordats between ecclesial and temporal powers (beginning with the Treaty of Worms in 1122) depends upon precisely this development. Of course, the idea that the Church is authentically constituted in the form of polity was severely contested by Spiritual Franciscans, and a century later by Marsilius of Padua, and still later by Martin Luther. In various ways, all of them argued that when the Church becomes a polity equipped with the appropriate *arma rationis*, it violates divine providence (1) by usurping the temporal authority's monopoly on public law, and (2) by defecting from the New Testament's understanding of spiritual liberty. But Thomas set out to show that the rule of law embraces the orders of nature and grace, and that the analogies are brought into view once we understand that participated law is essentially directive rather than coactive. If this is true, then we can affirm that participation in divine providence is political, whether in Church or State. How a single people can be members of two overlapping polities, each with its own laws, and with neither immediately subordinated to the other (regarding the same action), was, of course, a difficult question then, and it remains a difficult question today.

## VII.

Thomas's teaching on legal justice is the capstone of the medieval legal renaissance.

For just as charity may be called a general virtue in so far as it directs the acts of all the virtues to the Divine good, so too is legal justice, in so far as it directs the acts of all the virtues to the common good. Accordingly, just as charity which regards the Divine

good as its proper object, is a special virtue in respect of its essence, so too legal justice is a special virtue in respect of its essence, in so far as it regards the common good as its proper object. (II-II, 58.6).

More than anything else, this doctrine of legal justice exhibits Thomas's contribution to the legal renaissance. It was essential to moving beyond the system of commutations and distributions characteristic of feudal order. It alerts us to the broader, indeed to the constitutional perfection of commutative and distributive justice. A proper estimation of political society enables us to situate this new legal prowess of legislation, or *ius facere*. Rather than being only a new technique of kingly (or papal) force, the art of human law must be exercised within the reciprocities of political order. We should not be surprised that in the 16th century, Thomas's disciples (Bellarmine, Vitoria, Suárez, Molina) contested the emergence of Absolutism, with its new arts of sovereignty based upon absolute, perpetual, and indivisible power.

Although ancient Roman law originally developed slowly, as a (mostly) uncodified system of private law, only attaining an imperial character relatively late, and codified even later, the Roman model inherited by the medieval schools and courts appeared (to them) as the legal architecture of state sovereignty. Left to its own resources, it favored a legal positivism by which the sovereign's law, in constituting justice, aspires to creating and maintaining social stability from the top-down. It was only a short step to the view that the natural law is nothing but the pre-legal conditions disposing men to peace and obedience. Thus, we recall the famous dictum of Hobbes: *Auctoritas, non veritas facit legem*, authority not truth makes the law.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXVI.8. An echo of this position is found in the later work of John Rawls, in *Political Liberalism* (1993). In order to maintain polity as a minimum of reciprocities, liberalism must never attempt to achieve philosophical, moral, or religious consensus. Citizens cannot be expected to give and receive fair terms of political cooperation on the basis of a convergence of philosophy, religion, or culture. They can, however, agree upon a very narrow set of principles governing justice enforceable by the state. The public 'module' is said to be 'reasonable' rather than 'true'. The true and the good (in any full sense of the term) are non-political. Here we find a quite different, albeit more subtle, avenue for under-cutting Thomas's opening moves in 90.1. Law is still the work of reason, but reason's task is to be 'reasonable' within a convention. In fact, Rawls makes clear that the convention is reasonable precisely because it is *ours*. 'Thus, justice as fairness starts *from within a certain political tradition* and takes as its fundamental idea that of society as a fair system of cooperation over time, from one generation to the next'. The legal constitution appeals to nothing outside of its own set of practices, conditioned and accepted over time. It makes no appeal to natural law, but only to the 'familiar' rights and liberties accepted in western polities. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, expanded edition 2005), §2.

The fusion of the Roman and Greek sources was a problem that became, over the centuries, a permanent legacy of law in the political culture(s) of the west. The notion of *vis legis* continues to be ambiguous. It points in one direction toward the state's capacity to use force to create and maintain order. Law is what distinguishes the state's power from all other random or private uses of force. It points in another direction toward justice and to the reciprocities between free and rational citizens. The first face of law is artful, for its end is chiefly productive. The second face of law is moral, for its end is chiefly rectitude of action. Of the cardinal virtues, justice alone requires both the productive art and the practical wisdom.

In the western polities today, virtually all jurists will hold that the state is constructed and maintained by law, which is that species of 'force' belonging preeminently to the state. So put, this continues to be the reigning doctrine in virtually all western legal cultures. But it is a doctrine held somewhat diffidently. The 20th century witnessed the rise of unfettered executive powers, not only in the dictatorships and the totalitarian regimes, but also in the democracies. This experience has made western polities understandably, but perhaps excessively, suspicious of law-making and law-enforcing powers. And thus we have seen more emphasis upon stronger judiciaries, which must uphold the reason of law against the arbitrary force of law.

In American law, for example, we can consider Alexander Hamilton's dictum that the judiciary 'may truly be said to have neither Force nor Will, but merely judgment'. It is the 'least dangerous' branch, he argued, because it is deprived of the power of either the sword or the purse.<sup>38</sup> Insofar as the judicial power is contrasted with the legislative according to the metaphor of judgment in contrast to will, it is easy, by a short and almost insensible step of the mind, to construe the matter as a contrast between reason and willfulness. This idea represents the Greek moment. Reason and judgment are superior to will and power. On that contrast, authority to render the natural law effective in the human city should be vested in the organ of reason rather than the will. Given a choice between the cognitive and the appetitive powers, the great western tradition of natural law theory would not hesitate to align natural law with the cognitive part. Thus, we should not be surprised that it came to pass that the judiciary was expected to enforce natural principles of justice against 'willful' legislatures and 'powerful' executives.

<sup>38</sup> Federalist #78. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, intro. Clinton Rossiter (New York: New American Library, 1961), 467, 465.



The problem, however, is that, on this view, *ius facere* (human law in its most obvious and potent sense) is consigned to willfulness rather than to what Thomas meant by *vis directiva*. To compensate, equity, in both its narrow and broad senses, must be vested in courts, which exercise reason. But, just what kind of 'reason' – its moral scope and depth – and just how reason is related to the artifice of state institutions and actions is left unsettled.

In our post-modern climate, the older democratic polities are timid with regard to both aspects of law. Timid, that is, about the productive artifice of state order, and timid about the efficacy of human reason in its moral office, particularly on controversial issues in the public domain. The emergence of the global economy and communications, and the strong (though philosophically diffuse) commitment to human rights after 1945, pull human law away from its traditional anchor in state sovereignty. Interest gravitates toward spontaneous modes of order, such as what obtain in markets and communications, and to natural justice, which courts must recognize and uphold not only against the state, but also against social institutions like families, churches, and corporations. Both of these tendencies – for spontaneous order and for natural justice – are impatient with positive law, and, indeed impatient with political order itself. Today, who would argue, as did Thomas, that legal justice is the analogate of charity?

For his part, Thomas insisted that legislative (regnative) prudence is summit of human participation in the Eternal Law. Judicial judgments are subordinate to the creative ordination of a multitude to the political common good via *determinatio*. He held this position because he saw the need to reconcile Roman legal artifice with the Greek understanding of practical wisdom, and the even deeper need to reconcile both of these with the Christian understanding of divine providence. Yet even more importantly, he accepted and amplified the ancient Graeco-Roman belief that man is naturally political, having an end that requires the exercise of reason both in its mode of art and prudence. Polities emerge neither by spontaneous order nor by pure artifice.

One final note. How the Roman and Greek elements, once transplanted on to the soil of Christian civilization, will work out their dialectic in a deeply secularized culture is another question. Today, revealed religions, with their own distinctive kinds of humanism, are more likely to be the 'foreign' element. Is secular civilization open to religion in any way analogous to the openness of medieval civilization to the Graeco-Roman sciences and arts? Or, will the twin elements of state law and reason congeal, forming a cocoon that is *ours*, but without the eccentricity, that, for Brague, constitutes the condition of the possibility for a *renaissance*?

# ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HELLENISTIC LEGACY

LAWRENCE DEWAN, O.P.

## *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

I have been asked to speak on ‘St. Thomas Aquinas as an Example of the Importance of the Hellenistic Legacy’. Since St. Thomas is the Common Doctor of the Church, what is fundamental to his thought is important for *sacra doctrina*, ‘the Holy Teachin’, the communication of the revealed truth. In speaking of ‘the Hellenistic Legacy’, I will have in mind in the present paper especially that part of *sacra doctrina* which St. Thomas calls ‘the preambles to the articles [of the Faith]’, though one might quite easily show the debt to the ancient Greeks also in the wealth of natural knowledge exploited by St. Thomas in approaching the truths of faith which by their nature transcend human reason.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas teaches that the preambular truths, objects of natural human knowledge, such as that a God exists, are presupposed to supernatural faith in the way that grace presupposes nature, and perfection presupposes something perfectible. This relationship attests to the importance of the

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations used include ‘*CM*’: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*; ‘*CP*’: *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics*; ‘*SCG*’: *Summa contra gentiles*; ‘*SS*’: *De substantiis separatis*; ‘*ST*’: *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>2</sup> For example, in *ST* 1.28, on the relations within God, Thomas’s explanations find help in Aristotle, *Physics* 3.3 (202b13): cf. *ST* 1.28.3.ad 1, and again in *Metaphysics* 5.15 (1020b26): cf. *ST* 1.28.4.in corp. Similarly, in *ST* 1.29, concerning the persons in God, we find in a. 1.ad 4 and in a. 2.in corp. Thomas exploiting Aristotle’s *Metaph.* 5 concerning ‘nature’ and ‘substance (*ousia*)’. These Trinitarian considerations transcend human reason: cf. *ST* 1.32.1.

natural truths.<sup>3</sup> While Thomas teaches that *sacra doctrina* does not *need* the philosophical knowledge of such truths, he explains that the human mind is aided in the approach to the supernatural by such knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

The preambular truths pertain to that domain also called 'Christian philosophy', the philosophical life of the believing Christian, philosophy as part of the life of integral Christian mind. It has been my privilege to study with Etienne Gilson, and one of his concerns was the relation of St. Thomas's thought to that of the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle. Gilson lived the life of a philosophical explorer, and his outlook sometimes changed considerably. We might begin with the following, from a letter to Jacques Maritain in 1931, on the importance of the Greek philosophical heritage:

...if there is a Christian philosophy, it is because there is a Greek philosophy. At least, I am convinced of that. Without Greek philosophy the Gospel would not have engendered philosophy among Christians any more than the Bible had engendered it among the Jews. Christian philosophy is indeed, using your expressions, philosophy itself in its Christian *state*. I will incorporate all that in my conclusions, once I have behind me the whole of my enquiry.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *ST* 1.2.2.*ad* 1. – For examples that exhibit that importance especially well, cf. *ST* 2-2.154.11.*ad* 2 and 1-2.110.2.*ad* 2. Consider also 1.60.5 (366b24-28): if it were not natural for the human being to love God, by love of friendship, more than one's own self, the natural love would be perverse, and charity would not perfect it but rather destroy it.

<sup>4</sup> *ST* 1.1.5.*ad* 2. – It is essential to note that if one does come to understand the demonstration of such a preamble, this does not imply that one loses the merit of belief, as long as one has, in charity, the 'to believe'. As St. Thomas teaches [*ST* 2-2.2.10.*ad* 2]:

...demonstrative arguments leading to those [truths] which the faith holds, but which nevertheless are preambles to the articles, though they diminish the note of faith, because they make apparent what is proposed, still do not diminish the note of charity, through which the will is ready to believe those things even if they were not apparent. And so the note of merit is not diminished. [... rationes demonstrativae inductae ad ea quae sunt fidei, praeambula tamen ad articulos, etsi diminuant rationem fidei, quia faciunt esse apparens id quod proponitur; non tamen diminuunt rationem caritatis, per quam voluntas est prompta ad ea credendum etiam si non apparent. Et ideo non diminuitur ratio meriti].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gilson, in Étienne Gilson/Jacques Maritain, *Correspondance 1923-1971*, éditée et commentée par Géry Prouvost, Paris, 1991: Vrin, p. 59: letter #14, April 21, 1931]:

...s'il y a une philosophie chrétienne, c'est parce qu'il y a une philosophie grecque. Du moins, j'en suis convaincu. Sans la philosophie grecque, l'Évangile n'aurait pas plus engendré de philosophie chez les Chrétiens que la Bible n'en avait engendré chez les Juifs. La philosophie chrétienne c'est bien, selon vos expressions, la '*philosophie*' dans son *état* chrétien. Je reprendrai tout cela dans mes conclusions, lorsque j'aurai derrière moi l'ensemble de mon enquête.

Gilson is here speaking to Maritain about preparation of his Gifford Lectures, *L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*.

While he was convinced of the important role of Greek philosophy in the history of Christian philosophy, including that of St. Thomas, he insisted that Christianity had made a contribution of its own to the history of philosophy. In particular, he came to think that St. Thomas had made a unique, indeed a *revolutionary*, contribution to the development of metaphysics in the conception he had of the act of being, *actus essendi*,<sup>6</sup> and so of God as *ipsum esse subsistens*. Eventually<sup>7</sup> Gilson became convinced that the Thomist school of commentators in the Dominican Order had been so much taken with Aristotle as present in Thomas's thought that they had obscured the special contribution made by Thomas himself. Thus, in Gilson's eyes, the doctrine of Aristotle, truly present in the work of Thomas, worked as a deterrent to the proper reading of Thomas. Indeed, Thomas himself was seen as part of the problem, in that, as Gilson saw it, Thomas made it a practice of presenting his own philosophical innovations as already present in earlier thinkers, and in particular in Aristotle.<sup>8</sup>

What I am proposing in the present paper depends very much on a conception of the history of philosophy as a process of growth from seeds, or as a discerning of the same truth at first dimly and later more clearly. Gilson himself wrote in one of the last of his publications that he was con-

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, Toronto, 1952: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies [Second ed., corrected and enlarged; first ed. was in 1948], p. 174:

...Thomas Aquinas could not posit existence (*esse*) as the act of a substance itself actualized by its form, without making a decision which, with respect to the metaphysics of Aristotle, was *nothing less than a revolution*. He had precisely to achieve the dissociation of the two notions of form and act. This is precisely what he has done and what probably remains, even today, the greatest contribution ever made by any single man to the science of being. [italics mine]

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Gilson, 'Compagnons de route', in *Étienne Gilson, Philosophe de la Chrétienté*, Paris, 1949: Cerf, pp. 275-295, at p. 294: here, in 1949, Gilson singles out Cajetan as one who had already had this insight into the importance of *esse*. By 1953, however, in 'Cajetan et l'existence', *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, 15e jaargang, 1953, pp. 267-286, Cajetan is seen as one of the problems.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. e.g. Gilson, *Le philosophe et la théologie*, Paris, 1960: Arthème Fayard, p. 230:

Le théologien Thomas d'Aquin est souvent la source de ces sources, c'est lui, et non pas le philosophe, qui fait servir paroles et notions philosophiques à l'intellection de la foi.

vinced that philosophy, unlike science, is *not* revolutionary.<sup>9</sup> My paper also depends on another of Gilson's views, that one must be a philosopher to understand rightly the history of philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Where Gilson saw Thomas as attributing to others his own innovations, I wish to argue that Thomas is to be trusted in his plumbing of the depths of the thought of earlier philosophers: that he is, as a great philosopher, a great historian of philosophy. And, to quote Gilson again: 'Great philosophers are very scarce...'<sup>11</sup>

### *Part I: The Five Ways*

In order to present Thomas as an example of the importance of the Hellenistic legacy, what better place to look than in his *ST*, and indeed, at its very outset? I do not mean the first question, though that could be used as an example, certainly. The discussion of the nature of *sacra doctrina* is laden with conceptions derived from Aristotle's analysis of the human sciences. However, it is the second question I have in mind, on the existence of a God. Even here, I do not wish to speak of the first two articles, though a. 1, which sets aside the approach proposed by Anselm (and

<sup>9</sup> Etienne Gilson, *D'Aristote à Darwin et retour*, Paris, 1971: Vrin, p. 10:

On lit dans le *Cahier de Notes* de Claude Bernard: 'La science est révolutionnaire'. Je suis profondément convaincu que la philosophie ne l'est pas.

<sup>10</sup> Gilson, 'Thomas Aquinas and Our Colleagues', *The Gilson Reader*, pp. 278-295. A lecture at the Aquinas Foundation, Princeton University, March 7, 1953, p. 287. Speaking of himself as a young man, he says:

Many years later, he began to realize that the history of philosophy requires identically the same intellectual maturity as philosophy itself, because unless you are something of a philosopher, you may well report what philosophers have said, you cannot understand it.

Cf. also Gilson, 'Doctrinal History and its Interpretation', *Speculum* 24 (1949), pp. 483-492. At p. 483, after noting some fairly ordinary problems of interpretation, he says:

These difficulties are important, but they are well-known ones. We are more likely to forget another one which is tied up with the very nature of the facts studied by doctrinal history, namely, that it is a history of non-historical facts...

This is what we mean by saying that the *history* of philosophy is a history of *philosophy*, a pseudo-tautology whose first consequence it is that no man can write a single line of history of philosophy without handling his subject as a philosopher. Such is the main reason why doctrinal history is full of philosophical controversies about historical facts, which we mistake for historical controversies.

<sup>11</sup> Gilson, *History of Philosophy and Philosophical Education*, Milwaukee, 1948: Marquette University Press, p. 21.

maintained by Bonaventure),<sup>12</sup> and a. 2, heavily dependent on the *Posterior Analytics* of Aristotle for the outline of method to be used in a. 3, both exhibit Thomas as a keen student of Aristotle.<sup>13</sup> I point rather to a. 3, on the Five Ways to prove the existence of a God. As Thomas says, in setting out in the *Summa contra gentiles*:

Now, among the inquiries which we must undertake concerning God in Himself, we must set down in the beginning that whereby His Existence is demonstrated, as the *necessary foundation* of the whole work. For if we do not demonstrate that God exists, all consideration of divine things is necessarily suppressed.<sup>14</sup>

And somewhat similarly we have in the *Summa theologiae*:

...it has been shown above that man through natural reason cannot come to a knowledge of God save through creatures. Now, creatures lead to a knowledge of God as effects to a cause. Therefore, that alone can be known about God by natural reason which necessarily pertains to him according as he is *the principle of all beings*; and we have made use of this *foundation* above for the consideration of God.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cf. my paper, 'St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and the Need to Prove the Existence of God', in *Philosophie et culture (Actes du XVIIe Congrès mondial de philosophie)*, Montréal, 1988: ed. Montmorency, vol. III, 841-844.

<sup>13</sup> ST 1.2.1, with its distinction between what is known by virtue of itself in itself and what is known by virtue of itself to the human mind, implies as background Aristotle's *Metaph.* 2.1 (993b8-11), comparing our intellects to the eyes of bats. I am aware that B. Dumoulin thinks this is an un-Aristotelian feature of this treatise; he seems ready to attribute to Aristotle a view of the human mind such as one finds in the *Phaedo* of Plato. Cf. Bertrand Dumoulin, *Analyse génétique de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, Montréal and Paris, 1986: Bellarmin and Les Belles Lettres, p. 76. Aristotle's constant practice is to start from that which is more knowable to us as contrasted with what is more knowable by nature: cf. *Metaph.* 7.3 (1029b3-12). Cf. also *De partibus animalium* 1.5 (644b32-34), often cited by Thomas [e.g. SCG 1.5.] (ed. Pera #32, and cf. Pera's note), on our valuing the little we can know of higher things over the fuller knowledge of lower things; also, in the same line, Aristotle, *De caelo* 2.12 (291b24-28); Thomas, *In De caelo* 2.17 (450).

<sup>14</sup> SCG 1.9 (Pera #58; Pegis, #5); translation A. C. Pegis, in St. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Book One: God*, Garden City, New York, 1955: Doubleday. [Inter ea vero quae de Deo secundum seipsum consideranda sunt, praemittendum est, quasi totius operis necessarium *fundamentum*, consideratio qua demonstratur deum esse. *Quo non habito, omnis consideratio de rebus divinis tollitur*].

<sup>15</sup> ST 1.32.1 (208b44-209a9):

Ostensum est enim supra quod homo per rationem naturalem in cognitionem dei pervenire non potest nisi ex creaturis. Creaturae autem ducunt in dei cognitionem, sicut effectus in causam. Hoc igitur solum ratione naturali de deo cognosci potest, quod competere ei necesse est secundum quod est *omnium entium principium, et hoc fundamento usi sumus supra in consideratione dei*.

Thomas, when commenting on Peter Lombard, and against an Augustinian background, provided quick sketches of the human approach to God.<sup>16</sup> In the *SCG* we have a lengthy study based mainly on materials taken from Aristotle's *Physics*, though a few other lines of thought are mentioned.<sup>17</sup> In the *ST* 1.2.3 we have something new, carefully designed for the occasion. Is there a plan in the presentation of the Five Ways? Many years ago I claimed to have discerned *the* plan of the article, and I have not changed my mind. I repeat it here because it is so profoundly based on Aristotle.

I think that the basic idea is to present a *seminal* article for the entire *ST*, which after all is a summary of Christian doctrine.<sup>18</sup> Thomas sometimes tells us how to sum up the Christian Faith. He uses the statement from the *Epistle to the Hebrews*: 'For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him'.<sup>19</sup> He sees a simi-

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Thomas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* [henceforth '*Sent.*'], 1.3. *divisio primae partis textus* (ed. P. Mandonnet, Paris, 1929; Lethielleux, pp. 88-89; cf. my paper, 'The Number and Order of St. Thomas's Five Ways', *Downside Review* 92 (1974), pp. 1-18, at pp. 3-8.

<sup>17</sup> *SCG* 1.13; cf. my 'The Number and Order...' pp. 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> It is seminal for the entire *ST*, whose subject is God (cf. *ST* 1.1.7). However, it is enough for our purposes to see it as the principle of the *Prima pars*.

<sup>19</sup> *Hebrews* 11.6 (RSV); cf. *ST* 2-2.1.7 (ed. Ottawa, 1407b54-1408a13), where Thomas says: ...ita se habent in doctrina fidei articuli fidei sicut principia per se nota in doctrina quae per rationem naturalem habetur. In quibus principiis ordo quidam invenitur, ut quaedam in aliis implicite contineantur, sicut omnia principia reducuntur ad hoc sicut ad primum: 'Impossibile est simul affirmare et negare', ut patet per Philosophum, in *Metaphys.* 4. Et similiter omnes articuli implicite continentur in aliquibus primis credibilibus, scilicet ut credatur Deus esse et providentiam habere circa hominum salutem, secundum illud *Ad Heb.* 11.6: 'Accedentem ad Deum oportet credere quia est, et quod inquiringibus se remunerator sit'. In esse enim divino includuntur omnia quae credimus in deo aeternaliter existere, in quibus nostra beatitudo consistit; in fide autem providentiae includuntur omnia quae temporaliter a Deo dispensantur ad hominum salutem, quae sunt via in beatitudinem. [...the articles of Faith have the role in the teaching of Faith comparable to the principles known by virtue of themselves in the teaching which is had through natural reason. Now, in those (latter) principles an order is found, such that some are contained implicitly in others: thus, all the principles are reduced to this as to a first: 'It is impossible simultaneously to affirm and to negate', as is clear from the Philosopher in *Metaph.* 4. And similarly all the articles are implicitly contained in some primary believable items, viz. that God is believed to be, and to exercise providence regarding the well-being of men; in accordance with *Hebrews* 11.6: 'Someone approaching God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of those seeking Him'].

Notice that this very move finds an Aristotelian background. – Cf. also *De veritate* 14.11.

lar primary duality, I would say, in the first two petitions of the Lord's Prayer: 'Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come!'<sup>20</sup> The *ST* 1 (all we need consider here) presents the divine nature, and then presents the divine causality, beginning with the production of things, but seeing that causality reach its conclusion in the steering of things to their goal: the divine governing of reality. Accordingly, I present the first four Ways, culminating in the Fourth, as a system relating to the hallowing of the divine name, and the Fifth as relating to God as remunerator, the steering to a goal. It is thus significant that the Fourth and Fifth Ways both end with the 'we' form: 'this *we* call a God', whereas the first three all end with the 'all' form: 'this *all* call a God'. Here I will limit my remarks to the first four, though the Fifth has an obvious Aristotelian background as well: Thomas, in his *CP*, notes that Aristotle's presentation of nature as a cause that acts for an end is important for the inquiry concerning providence.<sup>21</sup>

The Ways are explained in a. 2 as moving from an evidently existent effect to its proper cause. Thus, each Way is to be distinguished in terms of the particular effect it exhibits *as an effect*. The first three take as starting-points the modes of act presented in *Metaphysics* 9 by Aristotle. The First Way focuses on change. Aristotle spoke of this in last place among the three modes of act, *imperfect* act. The Second Way has its start in *efficient causal order*, and the efficient cause, as such, exhibits what Aristotle calls 'second' act,<sup>22</sup> efficiency being an operation or action towards something else.<sup>23</sup> The Third Way, beginning with generable and corruptible substance, is beginning with first act, substantial actuality.

Aristotle, as Thomas has said, is a man of few words, '*breviloquus*,'<sup>24</sup> and I am here reading him in *Metaph.* 9 as Thomas read him and presented him

<sup>20</sup> *ST* 2-2.83.9 (ed. Ottawa, 1848b47-1849a10).

<sup>21</sup> *CP* 2.12 (ed. Maggiolo, 250 [1]).

*And this is important for the inquiry concerning providence.* For those things which do not know the end do not tend towards the end, except inasmuch as directed by some knower; like the arrow by the archer. Hence, if nature operates for the sake of an end, it is necessary that it be ordered [towards it] by some intelligence; and this is the work of *providence*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1 (412a10-11 and 22-23).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ST* 2-2.183.3.ad 2:

'Efficientia'm ... importat actionem tendentem in aliud, ut dicitur in IX *Metaph.* [c. 1050a30-31].

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *In De caelo*, 2.17 (457 [8]).



in *CM* 9.5 (1828-29 and 1831). Where Aristotle had presented act generally, then distinguished between substance or form and 'movement' as modes of act, and lastly spoke of the infinite, Thomas has explained that it is 'movement' as the act of the motive power that is meant, and thus *operation* is meant; and that in the discussion of the infinite one includes '*movement* and time and other such items which do not have perfect being'. Thus, one sees that efficient causality is a case of second act, operation, ordered towards others. Change, on the other hand, is imperfect act.

Interpreters often wonder about the difference between Thomas's first two Ways.<sup>25</sup> However, if one sees that the difference must be in the effect as an effect, which constitutes the starting-point, then the First Way is plainly focused on change, imperfect act, and the vastly greater part of its presentation is a demonstration precisely that such actuality is intrinsically dependent on another, i.e. is an effect. Quite different is the Second Way, which presents efficient causal order. Obviously, it is inasmuch as an efficient cause is exhibited as *secondary*, i.e. *as a member of an order* of such causes, that it reveals a mode of actuality which, though truly 'second act', operation, has the status of a dependent, an effect. Similarly, the Third Way, so carefully chosen by Thomas for its place in the presentation, finds its start in that which exhibits the mode of being Thomas calls 'possible with respect to being and not being', a mode discerned in the events of generation and corruption. We are clearly dealing with substance as such, the first level of actuality. Generation and corruption enable us to measure the caliber of its being, its ontological density. The argument reveals it as intrinsically dependent.

All three of these modes of act, as so considered, reveal themselves as dependent on higher act, and thus as potential with respect to those higher acts. As Thomas notes in *CM* 9, when explaining Aristotle's contention that the priority of act over potency is seen 'more properly' in the contrast between the terrestrial and the celestial bodies, such hierarchical dependence is 'more clearly' a dependence of the potential on the actual.<sup>26</sup>

The Fourth Way continues the implicit reference to *Metaph.* 9 in this respect, viz. that it considers hierarchical order as to *goodness, truth, and*

<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g. my paper: 'St. Thomas and the Existence of God: Owens vs Gilson, and Beyond', in *God and Argument*, ed. William Sweet, Ottawa, 1999: University of Ottawa Press, pp. 115-141.

<sup>26</sup> *CM* 9.11 (1867), concerning Aristotle, *Metaph.* 9.8 (1050b6-8).

*nobility*. ‘Nobility’<sup>27</sup> is equivalent to ‘perfection’,<sup>28</sup> and we see that Aristotle presents act as more *perfect* than potency, *better* than potency, more intelligible and *truer* than potency. These might be called the ‘properties’ of being as act.<sup>29</sup>

In the Fourth Way, very quietly, all three aspects are reduced to being, through the line of truth. Accordingly we have the explicit reference to *Metaph.* 2. What I wish to bring out is the extent to which we are turning back to the simple grasp of the proportion of being in potency to being in act, and the priority which this comports. Thus, a single sentence beginning the Fourth Way – ‘we find in things something more and something less good, true, noble, and so on with other things of that order..’ – invites us to a succession of panoramas, which ultimately turn out, through slightly differing lenses, to be the vision of being as divided by act and potency. As Thomas says in his *De substantiis separatis*:

It is evident that while being [*ens*] is divided by potency and act, act is more perfect than potency and has *more* of the *ratio* of being [*magis habet de ratione essendi*]; for we do not say ‘is’ [*esse*], unqualifiedly, [of] that which is in potency, but rather [of] that which is in act.<sup>30</sup>

The Fourth Way’s ‘more and less of being’ is here directly applied to the act/potency distinction.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. SCG 1.70 (Pera #594 [3]; Pegis #3; translation mine):

...Everything which is, whether substantially or accidentally, *is actually*, and is a likeness of the *first* act, and by virtue of this [situation] it has *nobility*. Also, what *is potentially*, by its *order towards act*, is a *participant* in nobility: for it is in this way that it is said to ‘*be*’. It remains, then, that each thing, considered in itself, is *noble*; but it is called ‘lowly’ [Latin: *vile*] relative to a more noble [thing].

<sup>28</sup> Cf. SCG 1.28 and ST 1.4.1 (24b20-25), where one sees that the ‘*nobilitas*’ vocabulary for ‘perfection’ comes from the Latin of Averroes’ comment on *Metaph.* 5.16 (1021b31-32); cf. Thomas, *CM* 5.18 (1040).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. SS c. 3, Leonine lines 34-39:

Aristotle holds that the intelligible aspects expressed by the terms ‘true’ and ‘good’ are to be attributed to what he calls ‘*act*’: hence, the primary true and the primary good must be *pure act*, and whatever fall short of this must have an admixture of potency. [Ponit enim [Aristoteles] quod ratio veri et boni attribuitur actui: unde illud quod est primum verum et primum bonum, oportet esse actum purum; quaecumque vero ab hoc deficiunt, oportet aliquam permixtionem potentiae habere].

The Leonine editors appropriately relate this to Aristotle, *Metaph.* 9.9-10.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. SS c. 7, Leonine lines 47-52:

Manifestum est autem quod cum ens per potentiam et actum dividatur, quod actus est potentia perfectior, et magis habet de ratione essendi: non enim simpliciter esse dicimus quod est in potentia, sed solum quod est actu.

I.e. this Way also is a vision of hierarchy in terms of being in act and being in potency. I would say that all the hierarchization we see in the first three Ways finds its most metaphysical expression in the Fourth, where what is presented is not so much *causal* hierarchy as *the structure of derivation*: the more and the less: what one is seeing is the need to ascend to a most: this introduces the doctrine of creation into the vision.

### *Part II: Creation* <sup>31</sup>

Can Aristotle be seen as a source for Thomas regarding the doctrine of creation? This is not as distinct as it might seem from the issue already discussed. The Fourth Way, itself a consideration of the potency/act ontological proportion, presents itself quite literally as based on *Metaph.* 2.1.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the meaning of the word ‘god’ used as middle term in the Fourth Way is: ‘a maximal being that is the cause of being and goodness and of every perfection for all beings!’<sup>33</sup> This foundation is further elaborated through a series of discussions in the *ST* 1, i.e. qq. 3, 4, 7, and 11, arriving at a conception of God as the subsisting act of being,<sup>34</sup> universally perfect<sup>35</sup> and infinite in perfection,<sup>36</sup> such that there can only be one such being,<sup>37</sup> so that 1.44.1, the cornerstone for the presentation of creation, is, one might say, ‘the Fourth Way, now taken from the top down’, or, at least, the fruit of the single line of thought of this series of questions.

A striking feature in St. Thomas’s career is his sharply differing from Albert the Great, his professor, from the very moment he began to teach. Thomas, in the *Sent.*, speaks of ‘creation’ as naming even the sort of emana-

<sup>31</sup> Cf. my paper: ‘St. Thomas, the Fourth Way, and Creation’, *The Thomist* 59 (1995), pp. 371-378.

<sup>32</sup> It might be of interest that in the *SCG* 1.13 argument most akin to the Fourth Way, i.e. Pera #114 (Pegis #34) the appeal is to *Metaph.* 2.1 for the relation of truth to being, but to *Metaph.* 4.4 (1008b31-1009a5) for the argument that there does exist a highest truth. See my Appendix.

<sup>33</sup> We might recall that Thomas’s ‘conclusions’ in the Five Ways presentations are not really the conclusions; they are rather the meanings of the word ‘god’ used to constitute the middle term; cf. *ST* 1.2.2.ad 2, where the Aristotelian methodology is explained. The true conclusion, ‘therefore, a God exists’, is left unspoken in all the Ways.

<sup>34</sup> *ST* 1.3.2-4.

<sup>35</sup> *ST* 1.4.2.

<sup>36</sup> *ST* 1.7.1.

<sup>37</sup> *ST* 1.11.3.

tion which can very well have infinite duration looking towards the past.<sup>38</sup> On the issue of there being a doctrine of creation in Aristotle, Thomas, already in his *Sent.*, is very clear. According to Aristotle everything whatsoever other than the first principle flows from the first principle, as to the whole of its substance, matter as well as form. Aristotle was wrong, Thomas there says, about the universe having no temporal beginning, but not about the mode of production which encompasses the total substance of the product.<sup>39</sup>

That this was not Albert's view we see in his *Commentary on the Divine Names of Pseudo-Dionysius*, a work which we possess in the autograph of Thomas, the student.<sup>40</sup> The philosophers, i.e. Plato and Avicenna, have had

<sup>38</sup> At *Sent.* 2.1.1.2 (Mandonnet, pp. 17-18), Thomas says:

Hoc autem creare dicimus, scilicet producere rem in esse secundum totam suam substantiam.

And so taking 'creation', i.e. leaving aside the issue of temporal beginning, he says:

...sic creatio potest demonstrari, et sic philosophi creationem posuerunt.

<sup>39</sup> St. Thomas, *Sent.* 2.1, expositio textus (ed. P. Mandonnet, Paris, 1929: Lethielleux, p. 43):

Aristoteles non erravit in ponendo plura principia: quia posuit esse omnium tantum a primo principio dependere; et ita relinquitur unum esse primum principium. Erravit autem in positione aeternitatis mundi.

And:

Ad aliud dicendum, quod secundum ipsum [Aristotelem], primum principium agens et ultimus finis reducantur in idem numero, ut patet in 12 *Metaph.*: ubi ponit quod primum principium movens movet ut desideratum ab omnibus. Forma autem quae est pars rei non ponitur ab eo in idem numero incidere cum agente, sed in idem specie vel similitudine: ex quo sequitur quod sit unum principium primum extra rem, quod est agens et exemplar et finis; et duo quae sunt partes rei, scilicet forma et materia, quae ab illo primo principio producantur.

<sup>40</sup> This, of course, is Albert just prior to undertaking his Aristotelian paraphrases; he began them only in 1249-1250: cf. James Weisheipl, O.P., 'The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great', in Weisheipl, J. (ed.), *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, Toronto, 1980: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, pp. 13-51, at p. 30. Nevertheless, he does not seem to have changed his mind significantly on these issues: cf. Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae* 2.1.3 (ed. Borgnet, Paris, 1895: apud Vivès, t. 32, p. 21A-B):

Philosophi ductu rationis non adjunctae per aliquid intus vel extra non potuerunt cognoscere principium creationis vel etiam creationem, secundum quod proprie dicta est creatio production alicujus ex nihilo ... omnes ... dixerunt ... materiam factam non esse. [The philosophers led by reason non aided by anything inwardly or outwardly were not able to know the principle [i.e. the source] of creation or even creation itself, according as creation, properly speaking, is the production of something out of nothing. ...All...said...that matter was not made].

Albert's *Summa theologiae* is dated, as to its second part, 'not finished before 1274'; cf. D. Siedler and Paul Simon (Prolegomena), Albert, *Summa theologiae*, ed. Cologne, t. 34/1, p. XVII, lines 34-39. cf. also my paper: 'St. Albert, Creation, and the Philosophers', *Laval théologique et philosophique* 40 (1984), pp. 295-307.

a doctrine of creation of form, but not of matter. Aristotle has no doctrine of creation.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore and most important, if one expands the doctrine of creation to cover both form and matter, then the product *must* have a temporal beginning.<sup>42</sup>

In *ST* 1.45.1, Thomas explains the word 'creation' as signifying the emanation of the whole of being from the universal cause.<sup>43</sup> He does, however, note in that treatment that as we Christians use the word, it includes the

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium De divinis nominibus*, ed. Paul Simon, in *Opera omnia*, t. 37/1, Münster, 1973: Aschendorff, (ca 1248):

...since the issuing forth of things from the First [Principle] was merely as to form, like that of illumination from the first light, as acting from the necessity of his own form, one can find no way that matter could have proceeded from him: hence, it was necessary to posit eternal matter, which is against the Faith. And therefore we follow the opinion of Aristotle, which seems more Catholic. [Secundum hoc autem, cum exitus rerum a primo sit tantum formalis, sicut luminis a luce prima, quasi agentis ex necessitate suae formae, non inveniretur modus, quo procederet materia ab ipso; unde oporteret ponere materiam aeternam, quod est contra fidem. Et ideo sequimur opinionem Aristotelis, quae magis videtur catholica...] [p. 73, lines 35-42].

What Albert approves in Aristotle is the doctrine of forms being educed from the potency of matter. This makes possible a doctrine which would see the absolutely first cause as cause even of matter. However, he does not think that Aristotle held a doctrine of creation. Thus, to an objector who points out that in the *Metaphysics* the first cause moves as an object of desire, and argues that this presupposes the existence of something which desires, and so one must suppose at least matter as eternal, he answers that the coming forth of matter from God:

...cannot be investigated by natural theorizing; and so Aristotle said that matter is ingenerable and indestructible...[non potest investigari per rationes naturales; et ideo dixit Aristoteles materiam esse ingenitam et incorruptibilem...] [p. 74, lines 41-43].

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* [p. 118, lines 75-83]:

...God is indeed the perfect agent and can bring the entirety of the thing into being, but these are not mutually compatible, [1] that something be brought into being as regards the entirety of its substance, i.e. as regards [both] the matter and the form, and [2] that it be from eternity: because that sort of creation [*talīs creatio*] [i.e. #1] necessarily posits a beginning of duration, though the 'creation' of which Avicenna speaks, which is only of forms, can be understood as from eternity. [...deus quidem est agens perfectum et potest educere totam rem in esse, sed ista non compatiuntur se, quod aliquid sit eductum in esse secundum totam suam substantiam, scilicet secundum materiam et formam, et sit ab aeterno, quia talis creatio de necessitate ponit principium durationis, quamvis creatio, de qua loquitur Avicenna, quae est tantum formarum, possit intelligi ab aeterno].

<sup>43</sup> *ST* 1.45.1:

...emanationem totius entis a causa universali, quae est Deus; et hanc quidem emanationem designamus nomine 'creationis' [...the emanation of the whole of

note of 'novelty', i.e. a beginning of duration (though he remarks that Avicenna used the word for an eternal emanation).<sup>44</sup> In the same context he attributes to Aristotle a doctrine of the emanation of all being from the principle of being.<sup>45</sup> He does so again in *CP* in defending the doctrine of creation against Averroes' attack on it.<sup>46</sup> Still later in his career, in his *SS*, he uses the word 'creation' to signify the mode of production which involves no movement or change, and he attributes this mode of production to Aristotle.<sup>47</sup>

being from the universal cause, which is God; and this emanation we designate by the word 'creation'].

<sup>44</sup> For the inclusion of the note of novelty, cf. 1.45.3.*ad* 3. For the Christian meaning and the case of Avicenna, cf. 1.46.2.*ad* 2.

<sup>45</sup> *ST* 1.44.1. On the absurd misreading of *ST* 1.44.2 by Gilson, Maritain, Pegis and others, see Mark F. Johnson, 'Did St. Thomas Attribute a Doctrine of Creation to Aristotle?' in *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989), pp. 129-155; concerning *ST* 1.44.2, see pp. 143-146: Gilson's crucial mistake is in his *L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1944: Vrin, p. 70, footnote; in *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, tr. A.H.C. Downes, New York, 1940: Scribner, pp. 439-440, as to the reference of the pronoun: 'utrique' in *ST* 1.44.2 (he makes it refer to Plato and Aristotle, rather to the first two classifications of philosophers). Gilson also mentions that Maritain had so read the text.

It is remarkable that Maritain and Gilson read *ST* 1.44.2 the way they did, when it is so clearly presented in Thomas Pègues, O.P., *Commentaire français littéral de la Somme théologique de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, t. 3, Toulouse, 1908: Privat, pp. 14-15. Pègues even warns readers (p. 14) lest the mention of Plato and Aristotle in connection with the examples of causes at the second level of causality fool them into thinking that Thomas placed them merely at this level. He also correctly presents Plato and especially Aristotle as those whom Thomas would place at the third level. On the other hand, A.-D. Sertillanges, O.P., writing towards the end of his career, and presumably under the influence of Gilson, interprets *ST* 1.44.2 as excluding Plato and Aristotle from among those who considered being as being: see *L'Idée de création et ses retentissements en philosophie*, Paris, 1945: Aubier, p. 6, and *Le Christianisme et les philosophies*, Paris (no date): Aubier, t. I, pp. 261-262. So also, the footnotes in the Piana edition of the *ST* (Ottawa, 1941: Collège Dominicain), *ad loc.* (281a13), say the text 'seems' to exclude Plato and Aristotle from those who came to consider beings as beings; we are sent to Gilson's *Esprit* and Pegis's *St. Thomas and the Greeks*, Milwaukee, 1939: Marquette U.P., pp. 101-104.

<sup>46</sup> *CP* 8.2 (975 [5]):

Quorum primi consideraverunt causas solarum mutationum accidentalium, ponentes omne fieri esse alterari: sequentes vero pervenerunt ad cognitionem mutationum substantialium: postremi vero, ut Plato et Aristoteles, pervenerunt ad cognoscendum principium totius esse.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas in *SS* says:

...in the mode of production which is without motion – which is called 'creation' [*qui creatio nominatur*] – the relation to a cause is to God alone.

*SS* 10, lines 91-93. The term 'creation [*creare*]' is again explicitly and very deliberately introduced at line 125. This mode of production without motion was presented in *SS* 9,

As I have fully discussed elsewhere, both Etienne Gilson and Anton Pegis argued in some detail to deny that Thomas actually attributed to Aristotle a doctrine of creation. In order to do so, they misread one central text (ST 1.44.2) and depended on a printed faulty text of another.<sup>48</sup> Gilson also went so far as to attribute to Thomas one meaning of 'being' for use in speaking of Aristotle as knowing the cause of all 'being', and another meaning of 'being' when speaking for himself.<sup>49</sup>

Granted that Thomas did attribute to Aristotle (and to Plato as well) a doctrine of creation,<sup>50</sup> i.e. the entirety of being emanating from the first principle, was he right to do so, and is it appropriate to present this feature of his doctrine as an example of Greek influence? This, of course, is the question: who has best seen the meaning of Aristotle's metaphysics? What have the Greeks truly said, and what influence could they possibly have had?

If we consider Aristotle as presented in Gilson's book, *God and Philosophy*, published in 1941, the book concerning which he tells us that in writing it he first became aware of the importance to be attached to Thomas's

lines 102 ff., as the doctrine of Plato and Aristotle. – In *L'Esprit*, ed. cit. p. 69, n. 1, Gilson said that Thomas never attributed the notion of creation to Aristotle, and if Thomas has not once used this expression (i.e. 'creation') to characterize Aristotle's doctrine of the origin of the world, the reason is that the first principle of all being, in the way Plato and Aristotle conceived it, explained completely why the universe is what it is, but not why it is. This, we must reject.

<sup>48</sup> I am here referring to a note in Gilson's *Le thomisme*, 6th ed., Paris, 1965: Vrin, p. 155, n. 6; 5th ed., p. 190, n. 1; in the English translation (which is of the 5th ed.), *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (tr. L.K. Shook, C.S.B.), New York, 1956: Random House, p. 461, n. 6. Gilson uses a passage from the *De articulis fidei*, as he had it in the printed edition, saying that Aristotle 'held that the world was *not made* by God [*posuit mundum a Deo factum non esse*]' (the true reading is '*was made* by God [... *factum esse*]'). See *De articulis fidei et ecclesiae sacramentis* I, 112-119 (in Leonine ed., t. 42, Rome, 1979). May we say, then, that Gilson is merely a victim of an historical accident? Quite apart from the idea that he might have looked at manuscripts on so important a point as this was for him, there is also the order of presentation of errors in Thomas's list, which was visible to all even in the faulty editions. As close a reader of the text as Gilson should, in my judgment, have suspected the '*non*' was a mistake.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. my paper: 'Thomas Aquinas, Creation, and Two Historians', *Laval théologique et philosophique* 50 (1994), pp. 363-387.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Mark F. Johnson, 'Did St. Thomas Attribute a Doctrine of Creation to Aristotle?' in *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989), pp. 129-155; also his paper: 'Aquinas's Changing Evaluation of Plato on Creation', in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 66 (1992), pp. 81-88.

doctrine of the act of being,<sup>51</sup> we will not be surprised that Aristotle is not seen as a source of the doctrine of creation.<sup>52</sup> Gilson tells us:

The world of Aristotle is there, as something that has always been and always will be. It is an eternally necessary and a necessarily eternal world. *The problem for us is therefore not to know how it has come into being* but to understand what happens in it and consequently what it is. At the summit of the Aristotelian universe is not an Idea, but a self-subsisting and eternal Act of thinking. Let us call it Thought: a divine self-thinking Thought. Below it are the concentric heavenly spheres, each of which is eternally moved by a distinct Intelligence, which itself is a distinct god. From the eternal motion of these spheres the generation and corruption, that is, the birth and death, of all earthly things are eternally caused. Obviously, in such a doctrine, the theological interpretation of the world is one with its philosophical and scientific explanation. The only question is: can we still have a religion? The pure Act of the self-thinking Thought eternally thinks of itself, but never of us. *The supreme god of Aristotle has not made this world of ours; he does not even know it as distinct from himself, nor, consequently, can he take care of any one of the beings or things that are in it...*<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the aforementioned 'Compagnons de route', (291-292). He says (speaking of himself in the third person):

...haunted from the beginning by the mystery of existence, he [Gilson] could first have attached himself to St. Thomas Aquinas, as though by virtue of an obscure elective affinity, have read him, taught and presented him many times in the course of so many years, have spoken even in following him the words which he spoke, without having understood until relatively late [*tardivement*], in writing *God and Philosophy*, that the answer coincided here with the question itself. One does not explain *esse*, it is what explains all the rest, including duration and creative evolution itself.

<sup>52</sup> The book, *God and Philosophy*, New Haven, 1941: Yale University Press, was finished by Gilson in Toronto about February of 1940, and delivered as lectures at Indiana University in March, before his return to France in April (where he spent the war); cf. L.K. Shook, *Etienne Gilson*, Toronto, 1984: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, pp. 240-242.

<sup>53</sup> *God and Philosophy*, pp. 33-34. My italics and small caps. He goes on to make the rather bald statement, still as presenting the thought of Aristotle, that:

Truly wise men do not play at being gods; they rather aim to achieve the practical wisdom of moral and political life. God is in his heaven; it is up to men to take care of the world (34).

It is impossible to recognize in this Aristotle's wise man: cf. *EN* 10.7-8, especially 1179a20-33.



Now, many things are said in the above, but I will focus for the moment only on the contention that the eternity and necessity of being of the world eliminate the possibility of the world's having been 'made', its having 'come into being'.

For St. Thomas eternity and necessity of being do not rule out the world's being, as to the totality of its substance, an emanation from the first principle. Indeed, caused necessary being, as a doctrine of Aristotle, is *underlined* by Thomas against adversaries who would deny the causing of all beings by the first principle. We see this in *ST* 1.44.1.ad 2, where Thomas refers us to both *Physics* 8.1 and *Metaph.* 5.5. We read:

...some people were moved to hold that that which is necessary does not have a cause, as is recounted in *Physics* 8. But this shows its evident falsity in the demonstrative sciences, in which necessary principles are the causes of necessary conclusions. And so Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* 5 that there are some necessary things that have a cause of their necessity. Therefore, an efficient cause is needed not merely because the effect is able not to be, but because the effect would not be if the cause were not: for this conditional proposition is true whether the antecedent and the consequent are possible or impossible.<sup>54</sup>

We see it again in *CP* 8.3. Aristotle, at *Phys.* 8.1 (252a33-252b7), is saying that it is not always the case, when one arrives at what *always is* or always

One of the odd features of Gilson's first chapter, on 'God and Greek Philosophy', is that he makes a sharp distinction between person and thing, and sees the gods as religious principles who are persons, whereas the philosophical principles are things. Thus, at p.37, he tells us that:

What men cannot possibly bring themselves to do is to worship a thing.

I would have thought that, as soon as one comes to the *Nous* of Anaxagoras, where the first principle is intellectual, one has what should be called a 'personal being'. Its personal life may be a closed door to us, but that does not mean it is merely a thing.

<sup>54</sup> *ST* 1.44.1.ad 2:

Ad secundum dicendum quod ex hac ratione quidam moti fuerunt ad ponendum quod id quod est necessarium non habeat causam, ut dicitur in VIII *Physic*. Sed hoc manifeste falsum apparet in scientiis demonstrativis, in quibus principia necessaria sunt causae conclusionum necessariorum. Et ideo dicit Aristoteles, in V *Metaphys.* [1015b9], quod sunt quaedam necessaria quae habent causam suae necessitatis. Non ergo propter hoc solum requiritur causa agens, quia effectus potest non esse, sed quia effectus non esset, si causa non esset. Haec enim conditionalis est vera, sive antecedens et consequens sint possibilia, sive impossibilia.

happens, that one has reached the principle. Some things always are, and yet are caused to be. Thomas takes it upon himself to add:

What is said here must be most carefully noted [*valde notandum*]; because, as is had in *Metaph. 2*, the disposition of things in being [*esse*] and in truth is the same. Therefore, just as some things are always true and nevertheless have a cause of their truth, so also Aristotle understood [*Aristoteles intellexit*] that there were some perpetual beings [*aliqua semper entia*], viz. the heavenly bodies and the separate substances, which nevertheless had a cause of their being [*causam sui esse*]. From which it is clear that though Aristotle asserted the eternity of the world, nevertheless he did not believe that God is not the cause of being [*causa essendi*] of the world itself, but merely the cause of movement as some said.<sup>55</sup>

I would insist, generally, that any historian who has not appreciated this point concerning caused necessary being cannot have a sound judgment on the question of Aristotle and creation as St. Thomas approached it.<sup>56</sup>

I must add that Gilson tellingly spoke of the world's 'coming into being' and denied that Aristotle's God 'made' the world. Obviously the *imagery* of an 'entry' into being pertains very much to the temporal beginning of creation. Such language is far less appropriate for the causing of being of what always is.<sup>57</sup> As for 'make' and 'made', Thomas regularly warns us about the

<sup>55</sup> CP 8.3 (996 [6]):

Est autem valde notandum quod hic dicitur; quia ut in *Metaphys. 2* habetur, eadem est dispositio rerum in esse et in veritate. Sicut igitur aliqua sunt semper vera et tamen habent causam suae veritatis, ita Aristoteles intellexit quod essent aliqua semper entia, scilicet corpora caelestia et substantiae separatae, et tamen haberent causam sui esse. Ex quo patet quod quamvis Aristoteles poneret mundum aeternum, non tamen credidit quod Deus non sit causa essendi ipsi mundo, sed causa motus eius tantum, ut quidam dixerunt.

<sup>56</sup> It is a fact that Gilson came to appreciate more and more the doctrine of created necessary being and the doctrine of the possibility for God to create a universe with no beginning of duration: cf. my paper: 'St. Thomas and Creation: Does God Create "Reality"?' in *Science et Esprit* 51 (1999), pp. 5-25.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. SCG 2.18 (Pera #953, i.e. para. 3):

Videtur tamen creatio esse mutatio quaedam *secundum modum intelligendi tantum*: in quantum scilicet intellectus noster accipit unam et eandem rem ut non existentem prius, et postea existentem. [Creation nevertheless appears to be a change as regards merely our way of understanding: inasmuch as our intellect takes one same thing as previously not existing and subsequently existing].

This helps us realize that even where one asserts the temporal beginning of created reality, its beginning to be is not really a change.

inadequacy of this language for the discussion of the mode of production which, as creation, involves no change. In *CP* 8.2 he calls the use of 'make' regarding creation 'equivocal', since 'make' ordinarily suggests the mode of production which transforms matter.<sup>58</sup> Again, any historian who has not grasped the point that creation is not a change would not appreciate Thomas's attributing the doctrine of creation to Aristotle.

Gilson in the above citation also presents an interpretation of the knowledge to be attributed to God by Aristotle. Of course he was not alone among 20th-century historians in taking this line, and he was quite aware that the position he was presenting was that of Averroes in the twelfth century.<sup>59</sup>

St. Thomas, we must recall, had quite a different view. Indeed, in reviewing errors and coming to this very Averroist picture, he uses the words:

*In maiorem insaniam inde procedentes, aestimant Deum nihil nisi seipsum intellectu cognoscere...* [Advancing from there to still greater insanity, they judged that God knows intellectually nothing but himself...].<sup>60</sup>

We must call attention to *SS* cc. 14-15. Consider the following:

Therefore it is clear to someone diligently considering the foregoing words of the Philosopher, that it is not his intention to exclude from God in an unqualified way knowledge of other things, but rather that [God] does not understand things other than himself by *participating* in them so as to be rendered actually understanding by them, as comes about in any intellect whose substance is not its own act of understanding. But he understands all things other than him-

<sup>58</sup> *CP* 8.2 (974 [4] and again in 975 [5]). That creation, as a mode of production, is not a change, is seen in this discussion and also in Thomas's many presentations of creation, e.g. *ST* 1.45.2.*ad* 2 and a. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1955: Random House, p. 223, speaking of Averroes' doctrine of the separate Intelligences:

In knowing itself, each of these separate Intelligences therefore knows itself and its cause at one and the same time, except the first one of all which, having no cause, knows only itself. As its essence is absolutely perfect, the knowledge it has of itself forms a thought equally perfect, with nothing above it that it may know, with nothing below it that it should know. Not to know what is below him is not, in God, a shortcoming. Since he knows all reality by knowing himself, not to know, in a less perfect way, what he already knows in the most perfect way by knowing himself, cannot, in him, be any lack.

Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 644-645, n. 22.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas, *SS* c. 13 [ed. Spiazzi, #116].

self in understanding himself, inasmuch as his being is the universal and fontal principle of all being [*eius esse est universale et fontale principium omnis esse*], and his act of understanding is a universal root of understanding including in itself every intelligence [*et suum intelligere quaedam universalis radix intelligendi omnem intelligentiam comprehendens*].<sup>61</sup>

And Thomas continues by attributing to Aristotle the view that the other separate substances derive their *esse* and their *intelligere* from God.<sup>62</sup>

Thomas reads *Metaphysics*, Book *lambda* in the light of Book *alpha elation* and other texts. We will speak of this later.

Gilson's student Joseph Owens first published his well-known dissertation on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in 1951.<sup>63</sup> It is, in itself, notable that such a study of Aristotle issued from an institute of medieval studies. In his preface Gilson speaks of the immensity of the task of determining what was properly the philosophy of the ancient Greeks and what was the contribution of the Christian readers of that philosophy.<sup>64</sup> Fr. Owens presents an Aristotle who would not have known how to fit a doctrine of creation into his metaphysics. Owens indeed rules out any consideration of what he calls 'existential problems'. He sees this as a deficiency in Aristotle, a deficiency which one discerns only by looking at Aristotle from a later historical viewpoint, the viewpoint of St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>65</sup> Since Owens professes to be looking at Aristotle from this later viewpoint in making his judgment about Aristotle and creation, it is appropriate to ask whether Owens has correctly conceived Thomas's own doctrine of being and of creation. Failure to have done so will significantly affect the validity of his judgment of Aristot-

<sup>61</sup> SS c. 14 [lines 198-209]. – In this chapter we have a remarkable passage (lines 87-219) in which Thomas presents his understanding of Aristotle's *Metaph.* 12 on God as a being whose substance is the subsisting act of understanding.

<sup>62</sup> SS cc. 13-15 are a complete dossier on the truth that God knows all and cares for all providentially, and this according to the doctrine of Aristotle.

<sup>63</sup> This work, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, Toronto, 1951: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, With a Preface by Etienne Gilson, [henceforth 'DBAM'] was Fr. Owens's thesis, presented in 1948, for the degree of Doctor of Mediaeval Studies. Cf. E.M. Macierowski, 'Joseph Owens, C. Ss. R. (1908-2005)', in *Mediaeval Studies*, vol. 68 (2006), pp. vii-xxv, at p. viii and p. xii. Macierowski describes the work as 'under the guidance of Etienne Gilson and Anton Pegis' (vii). The third revised edition was published in 1978. My references are to the 1963 (4th printing) of DBAM.

<sup>64</sup> Gilson, in his preface to DBAM, pp. 7-8.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. DBAM, p. 466, with n. 41.

le in this matter. I have criticized Owens's position elsewhere, and here will only note that it involves a view of Thomas's doctrine of the act of being as a *per accidens* feature of created reality, a quite unacceptable contention.<sup>66</sup>

Crucial for the metaphysics of creation taught by Thomas is his dissociation of the doctrines of the mode of production and the duration of the product.<sup>67</sup> He steadfastly distinguished the question of the dependence of beings as beings on a productive cause from the question of the duration of the beings which are caused. The view that material reality might have unlimited duration in the past (no temporal beginning) he regarded as entirely compatible with the dependence of that reality through and through on a higher being, a cause of beings as beings. Philosophy has simply no answer to the question: past duration limited or unlimited? Indeed, it can *know* it can have no answer. On the other hand, philosophers can have something to say about the issue of total dependence. They have come to definite conclusions.<sup>68</sup>

The distinction Thomas makes between the two issues, dependence and duration, invites him to ask himself *how a mind that simply would not entertain the imagery of temporal beginning would envisage and present a doctrine of total dependence*. What would be the argumentative strategy to be employed by such a mind? At this point we might recall the approach to God as Creator used by Thomas in his Lenten preaching at Naples in 1273. He presents the image of the house, with a little warmth felt at the front door, greater warmth as one goes inside, even greater warmth as one advances to the next room – with the judgment that a *fire* radiating all this heat is present somewhere within. The listener is urged to consider observable reality as *graded as to nobility*. In that way, the createdness of reality

<sup>66</sup> Cf. my papers, 'Being *per se*, Being *per accidens*, and St. Thomas' Metaphysics', *Science et Esprit* 30 (1978), pp. 169-184, and 'St. Thomas, Aristotle, and Creation', in *Dionysius* (annual of the Classics Dept., Dalhousie U., Halifax, N.S.) 15 (1991), pp. 81-90.

<sup>67</sup> The following two paragraphs are adapted from my just mentioned 'St. Thomas, Aristotle, and Creation' paper.

<sup>68</sup> For the impossibility that philosophers reply to the question of duration, cf. *ST* 1.46.1. For the philosophical doctrine of total dependence, cf. *ST* 1.44.1 and 2. – Concerning the doctrine of *ST* 1.46.2, that the *non*-eternity of created reality is an article of faith, i.e. not demonstrable philosophically, notice that, like a. 1, it is based on the doctrine that the will of God is the cause of created reality: it does not merely say *that* non-eternity is not demonstrable, but also *why* it cannot be demonstrable. Thomas here clearly entertains the real possibility of a creature being without beginning, for otherwise it could not be a matter of divine will (which cannot bear on what is intrinsically impossible: *ST* 1.25.3).

will be seen. It is the Fourth Way approach.<sup>69</sup> We can understand why Aristotle's doctrine in *Metaph.* 2.1, twice referred to in the Fourth Way, together with the presentation in *Metaph.* 4.1 of metaphysics, seeking the highest causes, as seeking the causes of the nature of being, elicited so much attention from St. Thomas.<sup>70</sup>

What Thomas always makes the crucial point regarding philosophers and their knowledge of creation is whether they have attained to a consideration of beings viewed from the *universal* aspect expressed in the word 'being'.<sup>71</sup> Thus, while Thomas defends the formula found in the Ordinary Gloss on *Genesis* 1.1: 'To create is to make something out of nothing', taken from the Venerable Bede,<sup>72</sup> nevertheless his fundamental presentation of creation as a mode of production is 'the emanation of the whole of being from the universal cause which is God'. It is this emanation, he tells us,

<sup>69</sup> Thomas, *In Symbolum Apostolorum expositio*, in *Opuscula Theologica*, vol. 2, ed. R. Spiazzi, O.P., Rome/Turin, 1954: Marietti, pp. 193-217. Thomas had already presented the existence of God with an argument based on teleology in nature. Concerning the existence of God, see #869; concerning creation, we read, at #878:

Sicut dictum est, primum quod credere debemus, est quod sit unus solus deus; secundum est quod iste deus sit creator et factor caeli et terrae, visibilium et invisibilium. Et ut rationes subtiles dimittantur ad praesens; quodam rudi exemplo manifestatur propositum, quod scilicet omnia sunt a deo creata et facta. Constat enim quod si aliquis *intraret domum* aliquam, et *in ipsius domus introitu* sentiret calorem, postmodum vadens *interius sentiret* maiorem calorem, et *sic deinceps, crederet ignem esse interius*, etiam si ipsum ignem non videret qui causaret dictos calores: sic quoque contingit consideranti res huius mundi. Nam ipse invenit res omnes secundum diversos *gradus pulchritudinis et nobilitatis* esse dispositas; et quanto magis appropinquant deo, tanto pulchriora et meliora invenit. Unde corpora caelestia pulchriora et nobiliora sunt quam corpora inferiora, et invisibilia visibilibus. Et ideo credendum est quod omnia haec sunt ab uno deo, qui dat suum esse singulis rebus, et nobilitatem.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *CM* 4.1 (533); quoted below, at n. 95.

<sup>71</sup> One can see this in *ST* 1.44.2 and the many parallels. However, I might call attention to one sometimes neglected parallel, which appears to be the earliest presentation by Thomas of a history of philosophical thought in this matter, viz *Summa contra gentiles* (henceforth 'SCG') 2.37 (ed. Pera, 1130) What is remarkable in that particular presentation is that Thomas, though as usual he presents the pre-socratics as not attaining to a doctrine of creation, nevertheless leaves room even for some of them to have done so. He says, speaking of their common doctrine that 'nothing is made from nothing', that *if some of them arrived at a doctrine of creation*, they balked at calling it a 'making' [*factio*], since that word conveys an idea of change, and the sort of origination creation is cannot be a change [*mutatio*].

<sup>72</sup> Here I rely on the notes of the Ottawa edition, at *ST* 1.45.1.*sed contra*.

‘which we designate by the word “creation”’.<sup>73</sup> Also crucial to an understanding of this is the point that it is not a change, a *‘mutatio’*.<sup>74</sup> It is this which eliminates an intrinsic reference to a beginning of duration. The precise reality signified by a creature’s ‘being created’ is a *relation* to the universal cause of being. As we read in the SCG:

Creation is not a change [*mutatio*], but is rather the very *depending* [*ipsa dependentia*] of created being on the principle by which it is set up. And thus it is in the category of relation.<sup>75</sup>

This too is essential if one is to understand Thomas’s contention that the doctrine of creation is present in both Plato and Aristotle.<sup>76</sup>

Here also I would contrast St. Thomas with St. Bonaventure, commenting on the *Sentences of Peter Lombard* at somewhat the same time as Thomas.<sup>77</sup> Bonaventure asks whether creation is a change [*mutatio*], and replies that it is. His reply here is made in the light of his conception that creation, i.e. making out of nothing, requires a beginning of duration. Thus, he says:

There is a production in which the product is fully established now and not at all previously; and such is the production which is out of nothing... [Such production] lacks the character of movement [*motus*] but has nevertheless the character of mutation and production...<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> ST 1.45.1 (284a2-5):

...emanationem totius entis a causa universali, quae est deus, et hanc quidem emanationem designamus nomine ‘creationis’.

<sup>74</sup> ST 1.45.2.ad 2 and 1.45.3.

<sup>75</sup> SCG 2.18 [para. 2]:

Non enim est creatio mutatio, sed ipsa dependentia esse creati ad principium a quo statuitur. Et sic est de genere relationis.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. my paper: ‘What does Createdness Look Like?’ in Michael Treschow, Willemien Otten, and Walter Hannam (eds.), *Divine Creation in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought: Essays Presented to the Rev’d D. Robert D. Crouse*, Leiden and Boston, 2007: Brill, pp. 335-361.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas began commenting on the *Sentences* in 1252 (cf. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, p. 66), one year after Bonaventure: cf. John F. Quinn, C.S.B., ‘Chronology of St. Bonaventure (1217-1257)’, *Franciscan Studies* 32 (1972), pp. 168-186, who gives 1251-1253 as dates for his commenting on the *Sentences*.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. St. Bonaventure, *Sent.* 2.1.1.3.1, in St. Bonaventurae, *Opera theologica selecta*, cura Pp. Collegii s. Bonaventurae, editio minor, tomus II, Quaracchi-Firenze, 1938: ex typographia Collegii s. Bonaventurae, pp. 23-25:

Quaedam est productio, in qua productum omni modo se habet nunc et nullo modo prius; et talis est productio quae est ex nihilo... [Talis] caret ratione motus, habet tamen rationem mutationis et productionis. Ratione motus caret, quia cum non habeat materiam, nulla potest praeiudicare dispositio; habet tamen rationem mutationis, quia ibi est subita et nova formae inductio...

Speaking of this ‘*mutatio*’, he says he is not speaking of:

...natural mutation, which has as prerequisite matter and a being in potency, and which is generation: in that sense, creation is not a ‘mutation’, but is above this [sort of] mutation; hence, it can be called ‘supernatural mutation’. And if you ask whether it is a mutation [terminating] at form or at place [*ad situm*], I say that [it terminates] at the total substance of the thing, and in that way at the form; and thus it can be included under ‘change terminating at form’.<sup>79</sup>

Previously he asks whether the world has been made from eternity or from a time; and he begins his formal reply as follows:

It is to be said that to posit that the world is eternal or eternally produced, while holding that all things are produced from nothing, is entirely against truth and reason...and is so much against reason that I would have believed that none of the philosophers, however small his intellect, would have held this. For this implies, in itself, manifest contradiction.<sup>80</sup>

The position he is describing and so vehemently criticizing is, of course, that which St. Thomas carefully explains with approval in *his Commentary on the Sentences* as that of the philosophers.<sup>81</sup> I agree with the late Thomas

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid. ad rationes* 4-6; all three opposing arguments:

... procedunt de mutatione naturali, quae praeexistit materiam et ens in potentia, et quae est generatio; tali autem modo creatio non est mutatio, sed supra hanc mutationem: unde potest dici supernaturalis mutatio. Et si quaeras, utrum sit mutatio ad formam aut ad situm, dico quod est ad totam rei substantiam, et ita ad formam, ac per hoc sub mutatione ad formam potest comprehendi. [p. 25]

<sup>80</sup> Bonaventure, *Sent.* 2.1.1.1.2 (*ed. cit.* p. 15):

Respondeo: dicendum quod ponere mundum aeternum esse sive aeternaliter productum, ponendo res omnes ex nihilo productas, omnino est contra veritatem et rationem, ... et adeo contra rationem, ut nullum philosophorum quantumcumque parvi intellectus crediderim hoc posuisse. Hoc enim implicat in se manifestam contradictionem.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Sent.* 2.1.1.2 (Mandonnet, pp. 16-20). – There is now an English translation by Steven Baldner and William Carroll: *Aquinas on Creation: Writings on the ‘Sentences’ of Peter Lombard*, Book 2, Distinction 1, Question 1, Toronto, 1997: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. Here Thomas, in the *ad 2* [Mandonnet, p. 19], tells us that creation is ‘not a making, which is properly speaking a mutation, but is a sort of accepting of being’:

... creatio non est factio quae sit mutatio proprie loquendo, sed est quaedam acceptio esse. Unde non oportet quod habeat ordinem essentialem nisi ad dantem esse...

and in the main reply he distinguishes it from generation and the other mutations. In later presentations he is much more insistent on its not being a mutation.



Bukowski that Thomas's *De aeternitate mundi* is an early work, and that he is very likely replying to Bonaventure on this issue.<sup>82</sup> In it, St. Thomas sets out by making clear the precise issue separating him from his adversaries.<sup>83</sup> As he says:

Therefore, the entire question consists in this, viz. whether 'being created by God as regards the entire substance' and 'not having a durational beginning' exclude each other.<sup>84</sup>

The whole issue between Thomas and his adversaries in that work is whether his position is a contradiction in terms. And having demonstrated to his own satisfaction that it is not, he concludes:

It is amazing that the most noble of philosophers have not seen this repugnance... Therefore, those who with such subtlety have grasped it are alone members of the human race, and with them wisdom has dawned.<sup>85</sup>

All this I review as suggesting why many have found it absurd to credit the Greeks, and Aristotle in particular, with a doctrine of creation. To so credit them requires a certain metaphysical vision. To refer again to Gilson:

...doctrinal history is full of philosophical controversies about historical facts, which we mistake for historical controversies.<sup>86</sup>

### *Further Remarks by Way of Conclusion*

Having already spoken long enough, I will conclude with an outline of further aspects of Thomas's appreciation of Aristotle in these matters. I have noted the importance of the notion of universal causality for the meta-

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Thomas P. Bukowski, 'Rejecting Mandonnet's Dating of St. Thomas's *De aeternitate mundi*', *Gregorianum* 71, 4 (1990), pp. 763-775: at p. 773: 'One ought, then, to assign to the treatise a date during Thomas's first sojourn in Paris, in the 1250's: let us say 1259 or earlier'.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *De aeternitate mundi*, in *Opera omnia* t. 43, Rome, 1976: Editori di san Tommaso, pp. 85-89.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*:

In hoc ergo tota consistit quaestio, utrum esse creatum a Deo secundum totam substantiam et non habere durationis principium, repugnant ad inuicem, uel non. [Leonine lines 77-80]

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*:

Mirum est etiam quomodo nobilissimi philosophorum hanc repugnantiam non uiderunt... Ergo illi qui tam subtiliter eam percipiunt, soli sunt homines, et cum illis oritur sapientia [Leonine lines 240-254, in part].

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in full above, n. 9.

physics of creation. This is a doctrine which one can see already in Plato, but concerning which I will stress the Aristotelian origins for St. Thomas.<sup>87</sup>

'Universality' here relates to the causal field. The best approach to what is being said is perhaps through the doctrine of the object-operation-power triad. We see this introduced inchoately in Plato's *Republic* in order to explain the power of mind. He presents intellectual knowledge as a 'power', and explains power as relating to an operation and to a field: thus the power of hearing related to hearing (the operation) and the sonorous (the field). In this way he presents the power of intellect as corresponding to the field: 'that which is'.<sup>88</sup> This makes it the most powerful of powers.<sup>89</sup>

Aristotle develops this doctrine, employing it in his *De anima* for all the powers of the various levels of soul.<sup>90</sup> In the *Metaphysics*, bk. 9 presents potency or power, with the primary definition, that of 'potency' in the active sense, being 'a principle of movement in another or in the same thing *qua* other'.<sup>91</sup> He discerns a hierarchy of modes of power, the lower being the natural, ordered to a particular field or object (e.g. the reproductive power of the dog is limited to one outcome, viz. dogs); the higher being the power found in the rational soul, the power of reason, whose field is so universal as to include contraries: the medical art, a rational power, is able to produce well-being and to poison.<sup>92</sup>

This line of thinking can be seen well developed in St. Thomas's presentation of the powers of the soul, such that the more universal the object (or proper field) of the power, the higher the power: the vegetative powers are lowest (their operations are programmed to the nature of the particular living body); the sense powers are higher (the field of their operations

<sup>87</sup> Some of the relevant background can be seen in my study, 'Obiectum: Notes on the Invention of a Word', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 48 (1981), pp. 37-96. This paper is scheduled to be republished in autumn, 2007, in a collection of my papers by Fordham University Press.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic* 5 (477c-478a).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 477e.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *De anima* 1.1 (402b12-15) and 2.4 (415a15-22).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* 9.1 (1046a9-11).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 9.2 (1046a36-b24). The Aristotelian presentation of power as divided into nature and reason can be seen, for example, in St. Thomas's *ST* 1.19.4. Is God's will the cause of things? Thomas refers to Aristotle's *Physics* 2.5 (196b21) in order to present 'the very order of efficient causes' [*ex ipso ordine causarum agentium*]. And that order is 'intellect and nature'.

includes every sensible body); the intellect is highest (the field of its operation is most universal: universally every being).<sup>93</sup>

This doctrine, carefully developed at particular levels, is used cosmically. The general conception can be seen in the Five Ways. The ancient Greeks and their medieval followers tried to develop this hierarchy in a more particular way, assigning particular levels of causality as being more and more universal. Thus, the celestial bodies were seen as exercising a more universal mode of causality than was found in the natures of things on earth, and the separate substances were conceived as having still more universal roles.<sup>94</sup> All was seen under the most universal influence, that of the highest cause. As Aristotle says in *Metaph.* 4.1, the highest causes would be the causes of the nature of being (the most universal field).<sup>95</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.77.3.ad 3 and 1.78.1 (472b44-473a24).

<sup>94</sup> It should be underlined that this causal hierarchy is conceived by Thomas not merely as to *movement* of things but as to their *maintenance* in being. God must create without the use of instruments, but he can associate with his *conservational* causality created causes both immaterial and material. Cf. *ST* 1.104.2.

<sup>95</sup> Aristotle, *Metaph.* 4.1 (1003a21-32); St. Thomas, *CM* 4.1 (ed. Cathala, 529-533):

[533] Then, when [Aristotle] says 'But because...', here he shows that this science which we have in our hands has *that-which-is for its subject*, with this sort of argument. Every principle is the essential principle and cause of some *nature*. But we are seeking the *first* principles of things and the *highest* causes, as was said in the first book: therefore, *they* are the essential cause of some *nature*. But of no other [nature] than that of *being* [*entis*]. Which is clear from this fact, that *all the philosophers seeking the elements [of beings] inasmuch as they are beings* sought these sorts of principle, viz. the first and highest; therefore, in this science we are seeking the principles of that-which-is inasmuch as it is that-which-is; therefore, that-which-is is the subject of this science, because every science is seeking the proper causes of its subject. [Deinde cum dicit quoniam autem hic ostendit, quod ista scientia, quae prae manibus habetur, habet ens pro subiecto, tali ratione. Omne principium est per se principium et causa alicuius naturae: sed nos quaerimus prima rerum principia et altissimas causas, sicut in primo dictum est: ergo sunt per se causa alicuius naturae. Sed non nisi entis. Quod ex hoc patet, quia omnes philosophi [entium] elementa quaerentes secundum quod sunt entia, quaerebant huiusmodi principia, scilicet prima et altissima; ergo in hac scientia nos quaerimus principia entis in quantum est ens: ergo ens est subiectum huius scientiae, quia quaelibet scientia est quaerens causas proprias sui subiecti].

In the above I have inserted the words 'of beings' [*entium*] which appears to have been omitted by scribal error; since it is in Thomas's Aristotle text, and is needed for Thomas's argument. – Socrates also, as presented by Plato in *Phaedo* 96A-B and 97B, 97E, saw the early physicists as seeking the causes of being.

Put simply, reality is conceived on the model of the army. Lower levels of authority ('power') are more limited, higher levels more universal: the most important consideration is that the powers of the lower levels function only through the universal power of the first cause. No matter who else says 'go', if the general says 'stay', nobody moves. – The metaphysics of this vision is intact, but much of the physics (that of the celestial bodies) is gone.

I say all this to highlight the importance of St. Thomas's formula for creation, 'the emanation of all being from the *universal* cause'. The Greek, i.e. Platonic and Aristotelian, appreciation of *the universal* is crucial for Thomas's judgment that they have a doctrine of creation.<sup>96</sup> All of it depends very much on a reflection on the difference between the human intellect and everything else in nature,<sup>97</sup> the principle of the hierarchizing of power we noted in Aristotle's *Metaph.* 9.<sup>98</sup> In this line of thinking, St. Thomas proposes the aforementioned doctrine that the higher the power, the more uni-

<sup>96</sup> The doctrine of the universal cause is seen in the *Liber de causis*, ultimately traced to Proclus, and so to a Greek background. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Librum de causis expositio*, prop. 1 [ed. H.D. Saffrey, O.P., Fribourg/Louvain, 1954: Société philosophique/Nauwelaerts, pp. 4-10]. The so-called '*Book of Causes*' [*Liber de causis*] is an extremely influential Neoplatonic work originally written in Arabic, and itself based on Proclus's *Elements of Theology*. Thomas commented upon it in 1271 or 1272.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. e.g. Thomas, *In De caelo* 2.10 (ed. Spiazzi #384 [3]), where, in order to explain that qualities which in terrestrial things are contrary are not contrary in the celestial bodies, the situation is compared to the contrast between qualities as found in sensible matter particularly and as found in intellect universally.

<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, in keeping with the approach of Aristotle, St. Thomas insists that everything we understand in this present life we understand through comparison with natural, sensible things. Cf. *ST* 1.84.8 (523a2-5):

Omnia autem quae in praesenti statu intelligimus, cognoscuntur a nobis per comparisonem ad res sensibiles naturales.

Hence, e.g., he teaches us to view hierarchy of proper objects by considering the difference between the particular sense powers and the common sense power; cf. *ST* 1.57.2:

The order of things is such that the more superior something is, the more united is its power and extending to more: for example, right within the human being it is evident that the common sense [power], though it is a single power, knows all those things that are known by the five external senses and some other things which no exterior sense knows, e.g. the difference between the white and the sweet. [Hoc enim rerum ordo habet, quod *quanto aliquid est superius, tanto habeat virtutem magis unitam et ad plura se extendentem*, sicut in ipso homine patet quod *sensus communis*, qui est superior quam *sensus proprius*, licet sit unica potentia, omnia cognoscit quae quinque sensibus exterioribus cognoscuntur; et quaedam alia quae nullus sensus exterior cognoscit, scilicet differentiam albi et dulcis. Et simile etiam est in aliis considerare].

versal is the object of the power. Thus, the human intellect is seen as having 'universal being' as its object. Nevertheless, it is presented as a *passive* power having such an object; God the creator alone has unqualifiedly universal *active* power of intellect relative to universal being.<sup>99</sup> Still, it is the universal scope of the notion of being which we possess that indicates that we are in immediate relationship with God, the cause of being as being:

Only the rational created nature has an immediate relation to God. Because the rest of creatures do not attain to something universal, but only to something particular, participating in the divine goodness either in being only, as inanimate things do, or also in living and in knowing singulars, as plants and animals do, whereas the rational nature, *inasmuch as it knows the universal character of the good and of being*, has an immediate relation to the universal principle of being.<sup>100</sup>

Besides the notion of universal causality, we should also mention Thomas's doctrine of matter. It seems to me that the reason Albert and Thomas differ concerning creation and the philosophers is that whereas Thomas conceives of the potency of matter as the very substance of matter,<sup>101</sup> Albert conceives of matter as having a subject and an inchoate form,

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.79.2.

<sup>100</sup> *ST* 2-2.2.3:

Sola autem natura rationalis creata habet immediatum ordinem ad deum. Quia ceterae creaturae non attingunt ad aliquid *universale*, sed solum ad aliquid particulare, participant divinum bonitatem vel in essendo tantum, sicut inanimata, vel etiam in vivendo et cognoscendo singularia, sicut plantae et animalia, natura autem rationalis, *inquantum cognoscit universalem boni et entis rationem*, habet *immediatum ordinem ad universale essendi principium*.

Cf. also *ST* 1-2.66.5.ad 4: the object of unqualified wisdom is the highest cause, God; thus, it belongs to wisdom to consider the terms of the first indemonstrable principles, such as the '*rationem entis*', since *ens commune* is the proper effect of the highest cause.

<sup>101</sup> *CP* 1.15 (131 [3]):

It is not the case that the potency of matter is some property added over and above its essence: rather, matter, *as regards its own substance* [*secundum suam substantiam*], is potency to substantial being.

So also *De substantiis separatis*, c. 8, (Leonine ed., lines 12-21 [Opera omnia, t. 40, p. D 53]: Neque enim oportet quod ea quae sunt materiae tantum, sint absque diversitate... Dictum est enim, quod quia materia secundum id quod est, est in potentia ens, necesse est ut secundum potentiae diversitatem sint diversae materiae. *Nec aliud dicimus materiae substantiam quam ipsam potentiam quae est in genere substantiae*. Nam genus substantiae, sicut et alia genera, dividitur per potentiam et actum: et secundum hoc nihil prohibet aliquas substantias quae sunt in potentia tantum,

the inchoate form being the potency of matter towards form.<sup>102</sup> Albert can thus conceive of the first cause as giving being to matter inasmuch as it metaphorically ‘touches’ matter (this is the ‘eternal footprint in the eternal sand’ doctrine for Albert).<sup>103</sup> Thomas, on the other hand, sees matter as too thoroughly a *per se* part of the created material being to be anything but an emanation of the cause of being as being.<sup>104</sup> It is crucial that Thomas held that God could not miraculously create matter without form.<sup>105</sup> His so

esse diversas, secundum quod ad diversa genera actuum ordinantur... [italics added][... Nor it is necessary that items that are matter alone be without diversity... For it has already been said that, because matter taken as regards its ‘that which is’ [*secundum id quod est*] is a being in potency [*in potentia ens*], it is necessary that in function of diversity of potency there be diverse matters. Nor do we mean by ‘the substance of matter’ anything other than the very potency which is in the genus of substance. For the genus of substance, just as the other genera, is divided by act and potency; and in accordance with that nothing prevents some substances which are in potency only to be diverse, inasmuch as they are ordered towards diverse genera of acts].

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Albert, *Metaphysica*, bk. 11, tr. 1, c. 8 (ed. Cologne, p. 470, lines 52-53):

...omne quod generatur, educitur de potentia ad actum, et haec potentia de qua educitur, est intra materiam, et tamen nihil est de substantia materiae. [Everything that is generated is educed from potency into act, and *this potency* from which it is educed, is within the matter, and nevertheless *is nothing of the substance of matter*].

<sup>103</sup> Albert, *Metaphysica*, bk. 11, tr. 2, c. 20 (ed. Cologne, p. 508.16ss.):

...all of the Peripatetics agree on this, along with the Stoics and especially with the Platonists, that the primary matter does not come forth into being by virtue of some generating or moving cause, but rather that it is perpetual. However, the Peripatetics have said that the first source of movement [*movens primum*] is considered in two ways, viz. in itself, and thus it is light and active intellect, there being nothing existent above light and intellect; but it is also considered as causing, and on that side it metaphorically ‘touches’ matter, and is in some measure incorporated, just as the intellect of the artist is in itself light, and on the side of its moving the form and light of the art is incorporated in the instrumental bodies. Therefore, what is from the first cause, inasmuch as it is in itself immense light and emitting lights, is the intelligence of the first order after it. But what is made by it inasmuch as it is ‘touching matter’ is the first heaven, which it itself by its active form moves. For considered in the first way it is itself act and considered in the second way it is active power mixed with matter.

To the objection that the heavens are not generable, notice that Albert replies with the example of the eternal foot making the eternal print in the eternal sand (lines 62-74).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. e.g. *ST* 1.44.2.ad 3, as well as 1.15.3.ad 3 and 1.14.11.ad 3.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.66.1 (401a45-b9), which clearly applies to the matter of celestial bodies described in 1.66.2 (404a7-b11). Cf. also Thomas, *Quodl.* 3.1.1, and my *St. Thomas and Form as Something Divine in Things*, Milwaukee, 2007: Marquette University Press, at pp. 25-32.

understanding Aristotle's doctrine of primary matter has much to do with his ultimate understanding of the mode of causality necessarily to be found in the production of the substance of the heavens. It is the subsisting thing which is made, i.e. given being, and the matter which enters into the composition of the heavenly body cannot exist under any other form.<sup>106</sup>

It is clear that Thomas's reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* places great weight on *Metaph.* 2.1, though the conception of Aristotle as teaching creation does not depend on it alone. The question of the status of that treatise has been much discussed. I am taking it as genuinely 'Aristotelian'. No one, of course, sees it as anything but Greek, so it is certainly part of the Greek heritage. However, I think Thomas is right to use it as part of the overall interpretation of Aristotle.<sup>107</sup> Still, there remains the question: what does it actually say? It is remarkable how Thomas, when directly commenting on *Metaph.* 2.1 respects the *plurals* in Aristotle, speaking of the first causes as themselves not caused. Nevertheless, his ultimate understanding of the doctrine reduces all to one highest cause which produces the substance, not only on the celestial bodies, but of all other separate substances.<sup>108</sup> I think we must read him

<sup>106</sup> That it is the subsisting thing, i.e. in matter/form composites the composite, which is produced: cf. *ST* 1.45.4; that the matter of the celestial bodies cannot be of the same nature as the matter which is perfected by dissociable form: cf. 1.66.2; thus, only through creation can the celestial body be caused as to its substance; and this cannot be done by a created separate substance: 1.45.5.ad 1 and 1.110.2.

<sup>107</sup> Here I disagree with Bertrand Dumoulin, *Analyse génétique de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, Montréal and Paris, 1986: Bellarmin and Les Belles Lettres, at pp. 75-83. He thinks Thomas was in error in extending its doctrine to the whole of the *Metaphysics*. If Dumoulin were right, one would have to say that Thomas's source is Theophrastus or one of his pupils. I was happy to see that Leon Elders, *Revue Thomiste* 90 (1990), in the *Bulletin* on 'Aristote: sa pensée, ses textes, son influence', pp. 147-161, in his revue of Dumoulin at pp. 152-153, speaks of 'conclusions peu sûres' (p. 152). And we read:

Le livre A Elatton est déclaré non authentique (contrairement au consensus grandissant des aristotélisants modernes) (p. 152).

However, I was present last November at Nashville (American Maritain Association meeting) when Fr. Elders spoke of Alpha Elatton as Platonic rather than Aristotelian, I believe (but I have not seen a printed text).

<sup>108</sup> Ultimately Thomas will see Aristotle reduce the separate substances to the one supreme substance, pure act. Cf. *CM* 12.12 (2663) concerning Aristotle, *Metaph.* 12.10 (1076a1-4). Thus, in *CP* 8.3 (995 [5]-996 [6]) he speaks of Aristotle as understanding that both the celestial bodies and the separate substances have a cause of their being. In *De substantiis separatis*, 3, lines 7-21, one of the last works of Thomas, Plato and Aristotle are presented as in agreement about what Thomas calls the grade or level or measure of existence

in *CM* 2.2, with respect to the plurals, as taking Aristotle as expressing himself tentatively, so early in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>109</sup>

[...*in modo existendi*...] of the immaterial substances. This is first presented as regards Plato. Thomas says:

For Plato held that all lower immaterial substances are one and good by participation in the first which is by itself one and good; but everything which participates in something *receives* what it participates from that from which it participates in it, and in that regard that from which it participates is its *cause*; for example, the air has light as participated in from the sun, which is the cause of its illumination. Therefore, in this way, according to Plato, the highest god is the cause of all immaterial substances, that each of them is both one and good. [our italics]

And we go right on to Aristotle:

And Aristotle also held this, because, as he himself says, it is necessary that that which is maximally a being and maximally true [*maxime ens et maxime verum*] is the cause of being and truth [*causa essendi et veritatis*] for all others.

Notice the obvious background in Alpha Elatton.

<sup>109</sup> Thus, Thomas at *CM* 6.1 (1164) recalls the doctrine of book 2, continuing to use the plurals, and yet concludes from it that 'God' [*Deus*] is the cause of the substance of the celestial bodies. – Notice that the plurals are used without comment by Thomas himself in his own *prooemium* to the *CM*. – And again, in *In De caelo* 2.18. (ed. Spiazzi, 463 [6]), Thomas speaks of 'the first and supreme order of beings' as including God and the separate substances, but carefully distinguishes the latter from God by means of Aristotle's two words 'has' and 'participates'. We read:

And [Aristotle] says that in the order of things this which is supreme has and participates in the best without any movement: which applies to the separate substances, which are altogether immobile. But [Aristotle] says 'has' because of the supreme among the causes, which is God most high, who is the very essence of goodness; whereas he says 'participates' because of the lower separate substances, which have being and goodness from another: for 'to participate' is nothing else but to receive from another in a partial way. This, therefore is the first and supreme order of beings. He distinguishes the second order, saying that it is something attaining nearly to this best by few movements, such as the supreme sphere... [Et dicit quod in ordine rerum hoc quod supremum est, habet et participat optimo absque omni motu: quod quidem contingit substantiis separatis, quae sunt omnino immobiles. Dicit autem *habet*, propter supremam causarum, quae est *Deus Altissimus*, qui est ipsa essentia bonitatis: dicit autem *participat*, propter inferiores substantias separatas, quae esse et bonum habent ex alio: nam participare nihil aliud est quam ab alio partialiter accipere. Hic est igitur primus et supremus ordo entium. Secundum ordinem distinguit, dicens quod est aliquid quod de propinquo attingit illud optimum per paucos motus; sicut suprema sphaera...].



## PRAMS AND PRAEAMBULA: THE WISE AND THE SIMPLE

RALPH McINERNY

Ex ore infantium et lactantium perfecisti laudem  
(Psalm 8)

His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, in his acclaimed lecture at Regensburg, sketched in bold strokes our modern plight, attempting a critique of modern reason from within. (54) In comparing faith and reason, he does not attempt to belittle the latter in order to make room for the former. On the contrary, like Cardinal Newman more than a century earlier, Benedict urges a 'broadening of our concept of reason and its application'. (55) The reduction of reason to the techniques of empirical science arbitrarily and apriori rules out knowledge of God.

There are of course those who accept such a diminished notion of reason and its range, and there are professed believers among them. As do its foes, such friends of the faith see Christianity as antithetical to reason; not just above it, but against it, in contradictory opposition to it. Benedict is recalling us to our long tradition of seeing a complementarity of faith and reason, a *modus vivendi* or *convivendi*, which insists on the centrality of Logos. Benedict suggests that St. John was consciously commenting on, expanding on, the opening of Genesis: in the beginning was the Word.

Much has already been written about this lecture; much more will be written. In these modest remarks, I wish to pursue some thoughts to which the lecture tangentially gives rise. Benedict refers to his inaugural lecture at Bonn, given in 1960, a lecture which has recently become available.<sup>1</sup> The broadening of the modern concept of reason can only profit from those centuries during which believers brooded over the relationship between what philosophers – pagans – had to say about God and what God has told us of Himself in revelation, above all in Jesus himself.

<sup>1</sup> *Il Dio della fede e il Dio dei filosofi*. Venezia, Marcianum, 2007.

## 1. PRAEAMBULA FIDEI

Early in his career, while commenting on the *De trinitate* of Boethius, Thomas coined the phrase *praeambula fidei* to refer to those truths about God which, although they were included in revelation, had been attained by philosophers uninfluenced by that revelation. In the *Summa contra gentes*, Thomas speaks of two kinds of truth about God.

Est autem in his quae de Deo confitemur duplex veritatis modus. Quaedam namque vera sunt de Deo quae omnem facultatem humanae rationis excedunt, ut Deum esse trinum et unum. Quaedam vero sunt ad quam etiam ratio naturalis pertinere potest, sicut est Deum esse, Deum esse unum, et alii huiusmodi; quae etiam philosophi demonstrative de Deo probaverunt, ducti naturali lumine rationis.

(1 SCG 3)

In what we profess about God there are two kinds of truth. For some things are true of God which exceed wholly the capacity of human reason, .e.g. that God is both one and three. But there are some which natural reason can attain, e.g. that God exists, is one, etc. Indeed these were demonstratively proved even by philosophers led by the natural light of reason.

We notice *confitemur* in the passage: Thomas is speaking from the point of view of the believer and noting that among the things we confess, among the revealed truths to which we give our assent, there are some that are not of faith per se. If they were, they could not be known, demonstratively proved. But truths such as the existence of God and that there is only one God; not only have been revealed but also have been taught by philosophers. Accordingly, Thomas recognizes a subset of truths among revealed truths that he dubs *praeambula fidei*. They are to be distinguished from the *mysteria fidei* which throughout this life can only be held to be true on the authority of God revealing them. To speak of the truths about God that even philosophers can know as preambles of faith is of course to adopt a theological perspective – one is comparing them to the mysteries – but *what* one is talking about are truths about God accessible in the natural light of reason.

This teaching is firmly anchored in that essential text, *Romans* 1, 19-20, invoked whenever the relationship between faith and reason are discussed. The pagan Romans, sinners though they be, can from the things that are made, come to knowledge of the invisible things of God. When Vatican I cited this text in anathematizing those who would deny that God is knowable by natural human reason, the council was following a long long tradition.

When Thomas refers to what the philosophers have accomplished, we can be sure that Aristotle is at the forefront of his mind. From Aristotle he would have learned that the task of philosophy, the long march from initial wonder to wisdom defined in terms of such knowledge of the divine as we can attain, is the task of a lifetime. One does not begin wise; one hopes to attain wisdom, and the pedagogical presuppositions pretty well guarantee that one will be old before he is wise. Indeed, one of the arguments Thomas gives for the fittingness of the preambles being included in revelation is that the attainment of these truths by natural reason takes so long, and requires special talent and leisure; but knowledge of God is essential to living our lives. Hence, God in his mercy has revealed even knowable truths about himself.<sup>2</sup>

Philosophical theology – demonstrative proofs of certain truths about God – is the culminating and defining activity of the philosopher. These truths play a decisive role in the claim that faith is reasonable. The truths which are the per se objects of divine faith cannot be proved to be true, cannot be comprehended by us in this life. How can assent to such truths, to the *mysteria fidei*, that is, to the Incarnation, the Trinity of Persons in the one God, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection, and so on, how can such an assent be called reasonable? It would seem to be the very opposite of a rational act to accept as true what one cannot in this life know to be true. To this the believer can respond: among the things that have been revealed by God are truths about Him that even philosophers have demonstratively proved. Therefore, if some revealed truths, the *praeambula*, can be known to be true, it is reasonable to assume that the rest, the *mysteria*, are also intelligible in themselves, however mysterious to us.

What I am stressing here, however, is that naturally knowable truths about God, the *praeambula*, are difficult of attainment, the achievement of a few and only after much effort. I want to come back to that.

## 2. NATURAL LAW AND THE PRAEAMBULA

A clear parallel to these *praeambula* would seem to be the precepts of the Decalogue. These were revealed, of course, but some are nonetheless described as natural law precepts. But natural law precepts are precisely

<sup>2</sup> 1 SCG 4 ‘Quod veritas divinatorum ad quam naturalis ratio pertingit convenienter hominibus credenda proponitur’.

those that can be grasped by reason; indeed, the most common precepts are *per se notae quoad omnes*. Whenever Thomas discusses such precepts, he invokes Psalm 4. *Quis ostendit nobis bona? Who will show us what is good?* The answer: *Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, domine. The light of thy countenance is sealed upon us, O Lord.* Thomas explains.

Ratio naturalis indita nobis docet discernere bonum a malo... Vultus Dei est id per quod Deus cognoscitur, sicut homo cognoscitur per vultum suum: hoc est veritas Dei. Ab hac veritate Dei refulget similitudo lucis in animabus nostris. Et hoc est quasi lumen, et est signatum super nos, quia est superior in nobis, et est quasi quoddam signum super facies nostras, et hoc lumine cognoscere possumus bonum.  
(*In IV Ps. Vives, 18, P. 246a*)

The natural reason placed in us teaches us to discern good from evil. The face of God is that by which God is known, as a man is known by his face: this is the truth of God. From that truth of God a likeness of its light flows into our souls. And this is like a light that is sealed upon us because it is what is superior in us and like a sign on our faces, and by this light we can know the good.

The tables of the law given to Moses contain common precepts of natural law, not unadorned to be sure, but embedded in the precepts. It is for this reason that all and not only the Jews are obliged to observe these precepts.<sup>3</sup> The precepts oblige, not because they are precepts of the old law, but because they are precepts of natural law. What the old law adds to the common precepts of natural law is likened to the relationship of grace and nature.<sup>4</sup> But why would God reveal the most universal (*communissima*) precepts about which, as universal, men cannot err? Because custom, becoming used to sinning against them, obscures their particular application. Error about more particular precepts is easier and men can even come to think that what is evil is good and vice versa. Thus it was fitting, as a remedy for each of these defects – seeing the relevance of the most universal precepts to particulars, and acknowledging more circumstantial precepts – that this knowledge be underwritten by the authority of divine revelation.

<sup>3</sup> ‘...lex vetus manifestabat praecepta legis naturae, et superaddebat quaedam propria praecepta. Quantum igitur ad illa quae lex vetus continebat de lege naturae, omnes tenebantur ad observantiam veteris legis: non quia erant de veteri lege, sed quia erant de lege naturae’ (IaIIae, q. 98, a. 5).

<sup>4</sup> IaIIae, q. 99, a. 2, ad 1. ‘Sicut enim gratia praesupponit naturam, ita oportet quod lex divina praesupponat legem naturalem’.

What is naturally knowable is reenforced against the obscuring effects of sinful custom by being divinely revealed. It is at this point that Thomas explicitly draws a parallel with the *praeambula*.

Sicut etiam inter credenda nobis proponuntur non solum ea ad quae ratio attingere non potest, ut Deum esse trinum; sed etiam ea ad quae ratio recta pertingere potest, ut Deum esse unum; ad excludendum raionis humanae errorem qui accidebat in multis.

(*IaIIae, q. 99, a, 2, ad 2*)

Just as among the things proposed for our belief are not only some to which reason cannot attain, such as that God is triune, but also others to which right reason can attain, such as that God is one, in order to exclude the error of human reason into which many fall.

A moment's reflection will bring home to us the dis-symmetry in this comparison of the speculative and practical. In the speculative order, the knowable truths which are revealed are among the most difficult to know, truths about God reserved for the very term and culmination of the philosophical life. Here revelation enables the believer to hold firmly and straightaway what it took philosophers a lifetime to learn. The precepts of natural law which are included in the Decalogue are truths it would seem almost impossible for anyone to ignore.

In the justly renowned passage in which Thomas discusses the precepts of natural law, he develops the parallel between the speculative and practical orders.<sup>5</sup> In both, there are common principles, something first not only in the realm of conceptualization, but also in the realm of judgment. The first thing known by the mind is being and on this grasp is based the first judgment, a judgment requiring no proof, but self-standing, *per se nota*. The chief example of such a principle in the speculative order is the so-called principle of contradiction: *non est simul affirmare et negare*. The parallels in the practical order are, first, the grasp of good and, second, a judgment grounded in that grasp, *bonum est faciendum et prosequendum et malum vitandum*. To know what good is is to know the truth of that precept.

If in the practical order the very starting points, the self-evident principles, are revealed because of the obscuring effects of sin, the *praeambula fidei* in the speculative order consist of truths about God known only with difficulty and after long years of study.

<sup>5</sup> *IaIIae, q. 94, a. 2.*

### 3. ON BEHALF OF THE SIMPLE

Let us look at the text from Romans which from time immemorial has been invoked when the question of the relationship between faith and reason arose.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those men who in wickedness hold back the truth of God, seeing that what may be known about God is manifest to them. For God has manifested it to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen – his everlasting power also and divinity – being understood through the things that are made. And so they are without excuse, seeing that, although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless minds have been darkened.<sup>6</sup>

Paul is no doubt addressing some fairly literate audience but what he says to them does not seem to be spoken precisely under that aegis. No doubt the best case of knowing the invisible things of God from the things that are made is a demonstrative proof of the kind we expect from philosophers. But Paul's chiding hardly seems restricted to metaphysicians who failed to draw the practical consequences from their demonstrative proofs of God's existence. But surely what Paul is saying has a much wider, even a universal, application. In that case, however, his judgment of the inexcusable conduct of his hearers would seem to be based on a more common awareness of God's existence.

The suggestion that the existence of God is generally known by reasoning which falls far short of the apodictic discourse of the metaphysician would seem to run into obstacles. St. Anselm, we remember, urged on by his brother monks, sought to formulate a proof of God's existence that was in anybody's grasp. The proof is in effect a *reductio ad absurdum*, seeking to show that one who denies the existence of God must

<sup>6</sup> Romans, 1, 18-21. I quote the Douay-Rheims translation. The Vulgate is as follows: '18 Revelatur enim ira Dei de caelo super omnem impietatem et iniustitiam hominum, qui veritatem in iniustitia detinent. 19 quia, quod noscibile est Dei, manifestum est in illis; Deus enim illis manifestavit. 20 Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea, quae facta sunt, intellectus conspiciuntur, sempiterna eius et virtus et divinitas, ut sint inexcusabiles; 21 quia, cum cognovissent Deum, non sicut Deum glorificaverunt aut gratias egerunt, sed evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis, et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum'.

contradict himself in doing so. Such proofs are appropriate when we are dealing with truths that cannot receive because they do not need proofs in the proper sense. Proofs in the proper sense derive a truth from a conjunction of other truths more knowable than it. An extended exercise in the *reductio* is found fittingly enough in *Metaphysics* IV where the very first principle of all is under discussion, That a thing cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same respect is not susceptible of direct proof – there is no more obvious truth or truths from which it could be derived – but it can be denied. It is the denial that is the target of the *reductio*. Given all this, it is not surprising that St. Thomas regards the Anselmian text as maintaining that the existence of God is *per se notum*, self-evident. And this Thomas denies.<sup>7</sup>

If God's existence is not self-evident, then it must be proved, and the proofs that Thomas goes on to sketch are precisely the *quinque viae*, all of which would doubtless be called metaphysical. In short, we seem left with two poles: there are some who have the talent and leisure who can devote a long lifetime to philosophy and eventually formulate cogent proofs for the existence of God; on the other hand, there is the mass of mankind to whom God in his mercy has made his existence known through revelation. That is, a very few *know* that God exists; the vast majority must rely on faith for the truth of that claim.

Clearly a lot of people are left out of these classifications. Not only are few persons successful metaphysicians, not everyone has received the gift of faith. What then of all the others, the non-metaphysical pagans, so to speak? Are they devoid of all knowledge of God?

The very discussion in which Thomas denies that the existence of God is self-evident (and thus immediately known to all) provides some food for thought along these lines. Among the objections entertained by Thomas is

<sup>7</sup> Thomas gives the Anselmian proof short shrift. Anselm suggested that anyone knowing what 'God' means must admit that He exists on pain of contradiction. '...dicendum quod forte ille qui audit hoc nomen *Deus* non intelligit significari aliquid quo maius cogitari non possit, cum quidam credendum Deum esse corpus. Dato etiam quod quilibet intelligat hoc nomen *Deus* significari hoc quod dicitur, scilicet uulld quod maius cogitari non potest, non tamen propter hoc sequitur quod intelligat id quod significatur per nomen esse in rerum natura; sed in apprehensione intellectus tantum. Nec potest argui quod sit in re, nisi daretur quod sit in re aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest: quod non est datum a ponentibus Deum non esse' (Ia, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2).

one drawn from St. John Damascene to the effect that *omnibus cognitio existendi Deum naturaliter est inserta*.<sup>8</sup>

What does Thomas say to that

...dicendum quod cognoscere Deum esse in aliquo communi, sub quadam confusione, est nobis naturaliter insertum, in quantum scilicet Deus est hominis beatitudo: homo enim naturaliter desiderat beatitudinem et quod naturaliter desideratur ab homine, naturaliter cognoscitur ab eodem. Sed hoc non est simpliciter cognoscere Deum esse; sicut cognoscere venientem non est cognoscere Petrum, quamvis sit Petrus veniens: multi enim perfectum hominis bonum, quod est beatitudo, existimant divitias; quidam vero voluptates; quidem vero aliquid aliud.

(*Ibid.*, ad 1)

It should be said that it is natural to man to know God's existence in general, confusedly, insofar as God is man's happiness; a man naturally desires happiness and what he naturally desires is naturally known to him. But this is not to know that God exists just as such, anymore than to know someone is approaching is to recognize Peter even though it is Peter who is approaching. Many identify man's perfect good, happiness, with wealth, others with pleasures, others with something else.

The analogy suggested by this text is *ratio bonitatis: id in quo illa ratio vere invenitur: ratio deitatis: id in quo illa ratio vere invenitur*. In both cases, there is a familiar word to which a meaning is attached. In the case of happiness, the fulfillment or perfection of all one's desires. The completely satisfying good. But what pursuit could satisfy that meaning? We might say that in Book One of the *Nicomachean Ethics* we find the *ratio bonitatis* or *ratio ultimi finis* elaborated, and in the subsequent books there is the search for that in which true happiness can be found, culminating in the discussion of contemplation in Book Ten.

In his commentary on Psalm 8, Thomas draws attention to *admirabile* in the doopening verse: Domine Dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra! What is wonder?

Admiratio est quando aliquis videt effectum, et ignorat causam. Dupliciter est ergo aliquis causa admirabilis: vel quia ignota totaliter, vel quia producit

Wonder arises when one knows the effect and is ignorant of the cause. A cause is wonderful in two ways, either because it is totally unknown, or because

<sup>8</sup> Ia, q. 2, a. 1, obj. 1.



effectum manifestantem causam perfecte. Primum non est in Deo, quia producit effectum (Rom. 1, 20) *Invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt*, etc. Producit dico effectum, non tamen manifestantem perfecte causam: et ideo remanet admirabilis... (p. 265a).

it produces an effect manifesting it perfectly. The first is not true of God, because he produces effects: the invisible things of God through what is made, etc. I say he produces an effect which does however perfectly manifest the cause, so He remains wonderful.

It is clear from these remarks that Thomas regards knowledge of God as the result of discursive reasoning, a movement from effect to cause. In this it differs from immediate or intuitive (*intellectus*) knowledge. This is the difference between Thomas and Anselm; his agreement with St. John Damascene is somewhat guarded: while allowing a widespread, indeed natural, intimation of God, Thomas is careful to note that such recognition is compatible with a good deal of confusion as to the nature of God. His comparison, we remember, is the way anyone can desire happiness; such a desire is consequent on knowledge but the antecedent knowledge of happiness is compatible with a confusion as to what true happiness consists of. Nonetheless, he declares it manifest that there is in everyone, no matter how simple (*quantumcumque simplicibus*), a quasi natural knowledge of God. Indeed, he acknowledges a kind of advantage of the simple in this matter.

Duplex namque est genus hominum, qui consequuntur naturalem et rectum instinctum, sicut sunt simplices et sapientes. Quod sapientes cognoscant Deum, hoc non est magnum; sed quod simplices sic. Sunt autem quidam qui naturalem instinctum pervertunt; et isti cognitionem Dei repellunt. (P. 265b) There are two kinds of men who follow the right and natural instinct, the simple and the wise. That the wise should know God is not much of a surprise, but that the simple do, is. For there are some who pervert the natural instinct and drive away knowledge of God.

Thomas is reminded of Job 23, 'Qui dixerunt Deo, Recede a nobis: et scientiam viarum tuarum nolumus'. In commenting on this verse, Thomas speaks of an affected ignorance: *pertinet ad ignorantiam affectatam*. Moreover, he spells out what is meant by God's ways: *Viae autem Domini dicuntur praecepta et iudicia eius*. (P. 126a).

It is natural for men to come to knowledge of God from the world around them, from the things that are made. This is true of the simple as well as the wise, and of course one must first be simple before he becomes wise. Thomas is indignant with those who turn the simple away from this instinctive knowledge of God. He also notes that the simple can be a rebuke

to the pseudo-wise. 'Deus autem facit ut per illos, idest per simplices, qui sequuntur naturalem instinctum, confundantur qui pervertunt naturalem instinctum'. (265b) So it is that the wisdom of men is made foolishness and the foolishness of the simple wisdom. The instinct is to make an inference, not to have some innate idea. Thomas refers to Cicero's *De natura deorum* for an idea of Aristotle's which, he notes, is not to be found in the texts that have come down to us. Cicero is citing the long lost dialogue of Aristotle, *On Philosophy*.<sup>9</sup> Here is the way Thomas summarizes the passage. If a man should enter a well made palace he would not be so lacking in wit that, even though he did not know how it had been made, would not see that it had indeed been made by someone. So it is that we come into the world which we did not see being made but from its orderly disposition we can perceive it was made by someone. *Et hoc specialiter ostendit ordo corporum caelestium*. The starry skies above are the easiest way to recognition of God's existence, something Thomas takes to be clear from Scripture: *Levate in excelsum oculos vestros, et videte quis creavit haec (Is. XI, 26)* So too in the psalm he is commenting on: *Quoniam videbo coelos tuos, opera digitorum tuorum, lunam et stellas, quae tu fundasti (Ps 8, 3)*.

One should not derive too much from discussions such as these, but I suspect that our temptation is to draw too little from them. Perhaps we too

<sup>9</sup> Cicero, *De natura deorum* in Loeb Classical Library, Cicero XIX, tr. H. Rackham, Harvard: Cambridge, 1967, pp. 214-5. Thomas refers to it on p. 266a. Cicero leads in to the citation from Aristotle in this way: '...if the clash of atoms can create a world, why can it not produce a colonnade, a temple, a house, a city, which are less and indeed much less difficult things to make? The fact is that they indulge in such random babbling about the world that for my part I cannot think that they have ever looked up at this marvelously beautiful sky...' (215) Here is the passage from Aristotle as found in Cicero: 'If there were beings who had always lived beneath the earth, in comfortable, well-lit dwellings, decorated with statues and pictures and furnished with all the luxuries enjoyed by persons thought to be supremely happy, and who though they had never come forth above the ground had learnt by report and hearsay of the existence of certain deities or divine powers; and then if at some time the jaws of the earth were opened and they were able to escape from their hidden abode and to come forth into the regions which we inhabit; when they suddenly had sight of the earth and the seas and the sky, and came to know of the vast clouds and mighty winds, and beheld the sun, and realized not only its size and beauty but also its potency in causing the day by shedding light over all the sky, and, after night had darkened the earth, they then saw the whole sky spangled and adorned with stars, and the changing phases of the moon's light, now waxing and now waning, and the risings and settings of all these heavenly bodies and their courses fixed and changeless throughout eternity – when they saw these things, surely they would think that the gods exist and that these mighty marvels are their handiwork' (pp. 215-7).

have been infected by the skepticism of the age, by that false sophistication which can dull the theistic instinct of the simple. It is only to be expected that it is in commenting on the psalms that Thomas gives full rein to man's instinctive knowledge of God. *The heavens show forth the glory of God*. Have we in an age when the foot of man has trod upon the moon, when space probes send back to us precious knowledge of the system in which our planet turns, when the vast reaches beyond stretch our minds and imaginations – have we become so *blasé* that we do not see the hand of God in all this. The silence of those infinite spaces should not so much frighten us as rekindle our wonder.

It is natural for men to become aware of God. Atheism is a defect and a perversion, not the natural starting point.<sup>10</sup> However confused and in need of refinement that instinctive reasoning that leads us from the things that are made to the one who made them, it is the indispensable basis for later metaphysical achievements. It is unwise for the wise to grow too distant from the simple. Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus put it with characteristic pithiness: the only difference between the wise and the simple is that the simple do not understand and the wise understand that they do not understand. Of course he is speaking of the mysteries of faith. Of the preambles it may be said: what is common to the wise and the simple is that the simple have an instinctive intimation of God, and some of them go on to become wise.

<sup>10</sup> Nam atheismus integre consideratus non est quid originarium (*Gaudium et spes*, 19).

## IL GIUDIZIO DELLA FEDE E IL GIUDIZIO DELLA RAGIONE IN UNA EPOCA DI OPINIONI

LUCA F. TUNINETTI

Il 28 gennaio scorso Benedetto XVI prima della preghiera dell'Angelus in piazza San Pietro ha voluto ricordare san Tommaso d'Aquino nel giorno della sua festa, affermando che "egli offre un valido modello di armonia tra ragione e fede".<sup>1</sup> In quella circostanza il Papa ha sottolineato ancora una volta l'importanza che ha ai suoi occhi la questione del rapporto di fede e ragione, richiamandosi anche al suo discorso di Regensburg.<sup>2</sup> In questo e in altri interventi è chiaro che per Benedetto XVI tale questione "non è affatto di natura soltanto accademica", ma riguarda il "futuro di noi tutti".<sup>3</sup> Il Papa vede l'urgente necessità di superare una divisione che è contraria alla natura stessa della fede cristiana e che è evidentemente dannosa per la ragione. La fede cristiana è infatti adesione al *Logos* divino. D'altra parte la ragione moderna limitando le sue ambizioni all'ambito dello sperimentabile e del calcolabile diventa per un verso incapace di comprendere veramente i suoi stessi risultati e per un altro verso abbandona le questioni morali e religiose al dominio di un soggettivismo arbitrario. Ne consegue quella che Benedetto XVI nel discorso del 28 gennaio ha chiamato "una terribile schizofrenia, ormai conclamata, per cui convivono razionalismo e materialismo, ipertecnologia e istintività sfrenata". Mentre le culture dei popoli extra-europei, se le religioni che le animano non sono capaci di armonia con la ragione, diventano degli spazi chiusi e almeno potenzialmente tra

<sup>1</sup> Benedetto XVI, *Angelus*, 28 gennaio 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Id., *Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen*. Ansprache, Aula Magna der Universität Regensburg, 12 settembre 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Id., *Udienza alla Curia romana in occasione della presentazione degli auguri natalizi*, 22 dicembre 2006.

loro ostili, la cultura europea contemporanea, presentandosi come programmaticamente irreligiosa, costituisce una eccezione assoluta nel panorama delle culture dell'umanità, al punto da apparire a esse come una minaccia da respingere. In questa situazione la fede deve aiutare la ragione a scoprire la propria reale ampiezza e quindi a vedere come le appartenga la possibilità e la necessità di interrogarsi su Dio.

Questi interventi del Papa aprono grandi prospettive e richiedono una seria considerazione di come il rapporto di fede e ragione si sia configurato nella storia del pensiero cristiano e di come esso si configuri e si possa configurare nel presente e nel futuro. Nel mio intervento desidero accogliere l'invito che viene dagli organizzatori di questa sessione a riflettere sulla possibilità di un'armonia di fede e ragione nella situazione contemporanea. Evidentemente si tratta di un compito non facile. Per cercare di dare almeno un contributo utile in questo senso, mi pare opportuno prendere in considerazione una caratteristica della realtà contemporanea che cercherò di descrivere dicendo che viviamo in una epoca di opinioni. Più precisamente, la tesi che intendo sostenere è che ciò che chiamiamo "fede" e "ragione" quando parliamo del rapporto di fede e ragione sono due modi di fondare o giustificare i nostri giudizi e che le difficoltà nel rapporto di fede e ragione non possono essere superate se non è superata la difficoltà che sia la fede sia la ragione incontrano là dove il giudizio viene identificato con l'opinione. Per chiarire che cosa voglio dire mi riferirò al modo in cui la parola *opinione* è stata usata dal cardinale Newman. Innanzi tutto però vorrei cercare di precisare come si debba intendere l'armonia di fede e ragione che possiamo riconoscere in san Tommaso e che dobbiamo auspicare di ritrovare nel nostro tempo. Passerò poi a ricordare alcuni tratti del pensiero di Newman necessari per capire quello che egli dice a proposito dell'opinione. Cercherò infine di mostrare come questa concezione di opinione ci possa offrire una chiave di lettura della situazione contemporanea e come a partire da essa possiamo trovare qualche indicazione rispetto alla questione che ci interessa del rapporto di fede e ragione.

## I.

Che cosa intendiamo dire quando diciamo che nel pensiero di san Tommaso vi è armonia tra fede e ragione? Vogliamo dire non solo che san Tommaso ha realizzato tale armonia, ma che nel suo pensiero troviamo delle indicazioni che ci permettono di cogliere come essa si possa realizzare. Credo che un modo per comprendere questo aspetto, in effetti fondamentale,

del pensiero di san Tommaso sia quello di confrontare quello che dice a questo proposito il Dottore Angelico con il pensiero di un autore che quattro secoli dopo di lui ha scritto le pagine forse più influenti di tutta la storia della filosofia sul rapporto di ragione e fede. Mi riferisco a John Locke e a quello splendido manifesto della ragione moderna che è il quarto libro del *Saggio sull'intelletto umano*.<sup>4</sup>

L'intenzione esplicita di Locke è quella di evitare i conflitti tra ragione e fede.<sup>5</sup> Egli è convinto che la fede sia un modo assolutamente legittimo di assentire a una proposizione. Ciò che la caratterizza è il fatto di accettare le proposizioni alle quali si assente per il fatto che esse sono state comunicate da Dio stesso ovvero sono state rivelate.<sup>6</sup> Perché la fede sia veramente tale deve però essere chiaro che abbiamo a che fare realmente con una Rivelazione divina e che intendiamo correttamente il messaggio rivelato. Ma il giudizio in proposito spetta alla ragione. Chi pretende di credere alla Rivelazione senza essere in grado di esibire delle prove del fatto che sia tale e che sia intesa correttamente non fonda il suo assenso sulla fede, ma su quello che Locke chiama, con un termine che aveva a quei tempi un senso chiaramente peggiorativo, "entusiasmo" (*enthusiasm*).<sup>7</sup> La fede è quindi legittima ma solo a patto di sottomettersi previamente al giudizio della ragione: "Reason must be our last Judge and Guide in every Thing".<sup>8</sup> Questo ha una conseguenza rilevante per quanto riguarda i contenuti della fede: se è la ragione che stabilisce quali sono le proposizioni che possono essere riconosciute come rivelate da Dio, è chiaro che non potrà essere riconosciuta come tale nessuna proposizione che sia contraria a ciò che la ragione conosce. Più precisamente: dato che il giudizio con cui la ragione riconosce che una proposizione è rivelata non sarà mai un giudizio certo, ma sempre soltanto un giudizio probabile, la presunta rivelazione non potrà mai porsi in contrasto con i giudizi certi della ragione.<sup>9</sup>

Chi legge queste pagine avendo in mente i capitoli iniziali della *Summa contra gentiles* di san Tommaso non può non notare, al di là di certe somiglianze che sono indizi di un legame diretto o indiretto, una profon-

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, IV, specialmente ch. 18 e ch. 19, ed. Nidditch, pagg. 688-706.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, ch. 18, § 1, pagg. 688-689.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, ch. 16, § 14, pagg. 667-668.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, ch. 19, § 3, pag. 698.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 19, § 14, pag. 704.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, ch. 18, § 10, pagg. 695-696 e anche ch. 17, § 23, pag. 687.

da differenza. L'intenzione di san Tommaso è ovviamente ben diversa da quella di Locke: distinguendo nell'ambito delle verità su Dio quelle che sono accessibili alla ragione naturale e quelle che non lo sono, il teologo medievale non dice che occorre conoscere le une perché sia ragionevole credere alle altre. Del resto egli non vuole neppure tracciare un confine invalicabile tra i due tipi di verità ma sottolinea invece il fatto che è opportuno che anche le verità accessibili in linea di principio alla ragione umana siano state rivelate da Dio. È vero poi che per san Tommaso come per Locke non vi può essere contraddizione tra ciò che è conosciuto dalla ragione e ciò che è insegnato dalla rivelazione di Dio. Tuttavia per san Tommaso a differenza che per Locke la ragione umana non può diventare la misura della verità su Dio: la rivelazione di verità non accessibili alla ragione umana serve tra l'altro anche a correggere l'errore di coloro che "ritengono di poter misurare tutta la realtà con il proprio intelletto".<sup>10</sup> Sarebbe sbagliato però pensare che san Tommaso attribuisca semplicemente alla fede la funzione regolativa che Locke attribuisce invece alla ragione. Il filosofo inglese non ha semplicemente rovesciato il quadro dei rapporti di ragione e fede tracciato da san Tommaso, ma l'ha piuttosto semplificato. Per san Tommaso la ragione ha una consistenza propria per cui la fede può eventualmente avvertire la ragione che sta sbagliando ma deve essere la ragione stessa a scoprire come e perché sta sbagliando. Per Locke invece la fede non ha alcuna consistenza reale indipendentemente dalla ragione che ne dimostra la fondatezza. Quella che Locke chiama fede è in fondo soltanto una forma di convinzione fondata su un ragionamento probabile, come tale inevitabilmente subordinata a una convinzione più solidamente fondata. Si vede qui che la legittimità della fede accanto alla ragione può essere in effetti realmente riconosciuta soltanto se si riconosce in qualche modo la superiorità della fede rispetto alla ragione: la fede non appare subordinata alla ragione, come una forma della *doxa* rispetto all'autentica *episteme*, soltanto se è un modo di conoscenza diverso e in qualche modo superiore rispetto alla conoscenza che l'uomo acquisisce con le sue facoltà naturali.

Per approfondire il confronto tra la concezione di Locke del rapporto di ragione e fede e quella di san Tommaso si dovrebbe riflettere sul diverso senso che ha per loro l'espressione *ragione naturale*. È stato fatto notare che le parole *natura* e *naturale* assumono diversi significati a seconda del termi-

<sup>10</sup> Tommaso d'Aquino, *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, cap. 5, ed. Pera, n. 31.

ne a cui si contrappongono.<sup>11</sup> Nel testo tommasiano a cui ci siamo riferiti l'espressione *ratio naturalis* sembra per questo avere un duplice significato: per un verso la ragione di cui san Tommaso parla è naturale in quanto si distingue da una capacità che l'uomo può avere soltanto per un intervento gratuito di Dio, ma per un altro verso dire che c'è nell'uomo una conoscenza naturale significa affermare che c'è una misura ideale di ciò che l'uomo può e deve conoscere, al di là di ciò che di fatto il singolo uomo pretende di conoscere o riesce realmente a conoscere nelle circostanze contingenti in cui la sua ragione deve concretamente svilupparsi. Per questo certamente l'opera di Aristotele e degli altri filosofi non-cristiani offre a san Tommaso una indicazione di quali siano le possibilità della ragione umana, ma anche il pensiero aristotelico non è la misura della ragione naturale ma deve essere esso stesso misurato alla luce di quella. Possiamo raccogliere le due sfumature di significato che avvertiamo nell'espressione *ratio naturalis* dicendo che la distinzione di ragione e fede avviene per san Tommaso dal punto di vista di un uomo che essendo partecipe di una capacità soprannaturale riconosce che tale capacità non elimina le capacità che l'uomo ha in quanto creatura, ma al contrario le presuppone e permette loro di svilupparsi in tutta la portata che è loro propria.

Locke da parte sua ammette che non sarebbe corretto contrapporre fede e ragione.<sup>12</sup> Dal suo punto di vista, in effetti, la fede è soltanto una forma di assenso fondato su un ragionamento probabile al pari di altri, cioè è uno tra i risultati della ragione intesa come capacità di ragionamento. Cercando di chiarire in che senso si possa giustificare la distinzione abituale di fede e ragione, egli afferma che la ragione si intenderebbe qui come la capacità di cogliere la certezza o la probabilità di una proposizione a partire dai dati offerti all'uomo dalle sue facoltà naturali.<sup>13</sup> Non è chiaro però qui in che senso si possa parlare propriamente di facoltà naturali giacché Locke non riconosce il carattere soprannaturale della Rivelazione su cui si baserebbe invece la fede. La Rivelazione infatti è una comunicazione che dovrebbe venire

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. R. Spaemann, *Das Natürliche und das Vernünftige*, Pieper, München e Zürich 1987, pagg. 109-111.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. Locke, *Essay*, IV, ch. 17, § 24, ed. Nidditch, pagg. 687-688.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, cap. 18, § 2, pag. 689: 'Reason, therefore, here, as contradistinguished to Faith, I take to be the discovery of the Certainty or Probability of such Propositions or Truths, which the Mind arrives at by Deductions made from such *Ideas*, which it has got by the use of its natural Faculties, viz. by Sensation or Reflection'.



da Dio, ma non si distingue per il modo in cui è accolta da una qualunque comunicazione umana. La distinzione tra fede e ragione finisce per apparire allora come una distinzione di oggetti di conoscenza (nel senso dell'*objectum materiale*) piuttosto che come una distinzione di modi di conoscenza.

## II.

La concezione che Locke propone del rapporto di fede e ragione rappresenta un punto di riferimento fondamentale per Newman. Lungo tutto il corso della sua vita Newman si è confrontato con il problema di come una certezza assoluta quale quella richiesta dalla fede si possa fondare su ragioni che non sono di carattere dimostrativo. Nella *Grammatica dell'assenso* il grande teologo inglese si sente finalmente in grado di rispondere all'obiezione di Locke secondo cui sarebbe assurdo e immorale accogliere la fede in mancanza di una dimostrazione. Da tempo Newman aveva evidenziato le conseguenze paradossali a cui porta la posizione di Locke non solo in riferimento alla fede religiosa, ma in riferimento alla gran parte delle nostre convinzioni più profonde. Adesso però egli è in grado di mostrare l'errore che sta alla radice di quella posizione, ovvero la dottrina dei gradi dell'assenso, e può respingerlo perché ha riconosciuto la differenza fondamentale tra assenso e inferenza: mentre l'assenso è per sua natura incondizionato, quando vediamo che a partire da date premesse si arriva a una certa conclusione invece non diamo un assenso incondizionato ovvero non diamo propriamente un assenso.<sup>14</sup> Si potrebbe dire che quando consideriamo una proposizione come la conclusione di un argomento propriamente non ne riconosciamo la verità, ma riconosciamo il rapporto esistente tra la verità di quella proposizione e la verità di altre proposizioni.

Al fondo Newman rimprovera a Locke di aver proceduto in modo aprioristico, partendo da una idea di ciò che la ragione dovrebbe essere e non dall'osservazione di quello che è. Per questo Locke ha potuto sostenere che la certezza ci potrebbe essere soltanto in presenza di una dimostrazione, mentre in mancanza di questa vi potrebbero essere diversi gradi di assenso a seconda che le ragioni portate a sostegno di una proposizione siano più o meno forti. In realtà l'assenso non è il risultato automatico del processo inferenziale così che a ragioni più o meno forti dovrebbe corrispondere un assen-

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. J.H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. Ker, in particolare pagg. 105-123.

so di diversa intensità. L'assenso nella sua forma elementare e fondamentale consiste nel riconoscere una proposizione come vera o come non vera indipendentemente dalla consapevolezza delle ragioni che ci permettono di ritenerla tale. In questo senso la proposizione viene riconosciuta o non viene riconosciuta come vera o falsa, l'assenso o c'è o non c'è, senza che si possano dare gradi di assenso. Dire che vi sono gradi di assenso significa non riconoscere la natura propria dell'assenso e confonderlo con l'inferenza.

Newman ammette che vi è un caso in cui la diversa forza delle ragioni che abbiamo a sostegno di una proposizione trova un riscontro nell'assenso e questo è il caso di quel tipo particolare di assenso che egli chiama opinione.<sup>15</sup> Egli è consapevole che questa parola viene usata in diversi sensi e sceglie di usarla per indicare l'atto con cui una persona riconosce non la verità, ma la probabilità di una proposizione.<sup>16</sup> La probabilità può essere qui intesa come la misura delle ragioni che una persona ha per ritenere vera una proposizione: nell'opinione non ci si pronuncia quindi sulla verità della proposizione, ma sulla forza delle ragioni che si hanno per ritenerla vera. L'opinione così intesa è quello che Newman chiama un assenso nozionistico (*notional assent*): la proposizione cui viene dato l'assenso riguarda a sua volta un'altra proposizione considerata come tale. Nel caso dell'opinione, una proposizione non viene allora usata per parlare delle cose, ma diventa essa stessa oggetto di considerazione per valutarne la probabilità. L'opinione così come Newman la intende non è quindi un giudizio più debole, ma un tipo diverso di giudizio, un giudizio che non verte direttamente sulle cose.

(Non c'è bisogno di dire che questa nozione di opinione è molto lontana dalla nozione tommasiana di *opinio*, che è legata a una concezione assai esigente di *scientia* indipendentemente dalla quale non può essere compresa).

Prima di cercare di vedere che cosa queste riflessioni di Newman ci possano insegnare rispetto alla nostra situazione attuale, c'è un altro aspetto della sua concezione del rapporto di assenso e inferenza che deve essere sottolineato. Nel momento stesso in cui insiste sulla necessità di distinguere assenso e inferenza, Newman sostiene però anche che l'assenso deve pure dipendere in qualche modo da una inferenza che lo precede e lo accompagna. Non posso e non voglio soffermarmi adesso sul modo in cui Newman sviluppa e risolve quello che ai suoi occhi appare come un paradosso.<sup>17</sup> Mi interessa soltanto osservare che per lui un assenso pienamente

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, pag. 116.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, pagg. 44-45.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, pag. 105.

consapevole è un assenso deliberato alla verità di una proposizione che comporta una qualche considerazione delle ragioni che abbiamo per ritenerla vera.<sup>18</sup> Solo in questo modo l'assenso può essere qualcosa di diverso da "un mero pregiudizio" (*a mere prejudice*).<sup>19</sup>

### III.

Che cosa ci possono insegnare queste riflessioni di Newman sulla realtà di oggi? La concezione che sembra oggi prevalente della razionalità la identifica con la capacità non di affermare il vero, ma di riflettere sulle ragioni che si hanno per riconoscere una proposizione come vera. Si può capire allora perché ho parlato di una epoca di opinioni. Se la capacità del giudizio viene identificata con la capacità di dare ragione dei propri giudizi, l'unico giudizio di cui si può riconoscere la legittimità è l'opinione nel senso in cui si è detto. Il prevalere dell'opinione non dipende quindi innanzi tutto dal fatto che le ragioni che si hanno non sono sufficienti a giustificare la certezza, ma dipende dalla confusione che Newman segnalava di assenso e inferenza, cioè dipende dal fatto che non si riesce a distinguere l'attenzione a ciò di cui si parla dalla riflessione sulle proposizioni con cui se ne parla.

L'opinione così intesa, come registrazione delle ragioni che una persona ha per ritenere vera una proposizione, è per definizione qualcosa di relativo, in quanto le ragioni che una persona ha per ritenere vera una proposizione dipendono da quello che quella persona è e dalla situazione in cui si trova. Il relativismo epistemico trae le conseguenze dell'avvenuta identificazione del giudizio con la riflessione sulle ragioni che lo sostengono.

Newman osservava contro Locke che egli non può in pratica restare fedele ai criteri che lui stesso stabilisce: egli sostiene infatti che si dovrebbe essere certi soltanto là dove si ha una dimostrazione, ma ammette poi che un assenso possa essere ugualmente fermo anche se la proposizione in questione non è realmente dimostrata.<sup>20</sup> Il procedimento aprioristico porta nella persona a una divisione tra ciò che fa e ciò che afferma che si dovrebbe e si potrebbe fare. Se solo le opinioni sono legittime, bisognerebbe evitare ogni giudizio che pretenda di affermare come stanno le cose, ma se non lo si riesce a evitare non lo si può riconoscere come tale.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, pagg. 124-125.

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, pag. 127-128.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, pagg. 106-107.

Il rischio è allora che l'unica alternativa all'opinione sia il pregiudizio, nel senso che si è detto sopra: un giudizio inconsapevole di quello che è veramente e delle proprie ragioni. L'identificazione del giudizio con l'opinione cioè impedisce di vedere quali sono le condizioni per cui un giudizio fondato si distingue da un pregiudizio. Un giudizio che non voglia ridursi a essere una opinione finisce allora per l'essere o per l'apparire come un pregiudizio.

Questa situazione è rilevante sia per la fede sia per la ragione. Quando distinguiamo con san Tommaso la ragione dalla fede non intendiamo infatti due facoltà distinte, ma due modi diversi di usare l'intelletto nella sua seconda operazione, quella che ci siamo abituati a chiamare giudizio. Ciò che distingue la ragione dalla fede non è il fatto di giudicare, ma il fondamento del giudizio. C'è forse un legame anche testuale tra le riflessioni di Newman sull'assenso e la dottrina tommasiana della fede, ma in ogni caso è vero che per san Tommaso l'assenso è un momento costitutivo del giudizio, sia del giudizio che si fonda sulla dimostrazione sia del giudizio che si fonda sulla fede. Anche di fronte a ragioni indiscutibili il giudizio non c'è se la persona fa mancare il proprio assenso.

Se l'intelletto non giudica, quindi, né la fede né la ragione possono essere sé stesse. Ma più ancora: né la fede né la ragione possono essere se stesse se il giudizio è ridotto a opinione. Il giudizio della fede e il giudizio della ragione infatti non si fermano alla proposizione, ma usano la proposizione per giudicare della realtà.

Se quindi si chiede che cosa occorre perché si stabilisca l'armonia di fede e ragione che abbiamo riconosciuto in san Tommaso e che auspichiamo sia possibile anche oggi, risponderei che occorre innanzi tutto che vi siano persone capaci di usare la fede e la ragione per giudicare come stanno le cose, senza fermarsi alle opinioni.

Questa affermazione può suonare paradossale: il conflitto di fede e ragione non nasce proprio dall'apparente divergenza dei giudizi dell'una e dell'altra? In effetti è proprio così: la possibilità di armonia tra fede e ragione è legata alla possibilità del conflitto. Se sia la fede sia la ragione non vanno al di là dell'opinione, viene meno il disaccordo ma non è più possibile neppure l'accordo. La pretesa di conoscere la verità può dividere ma senza questa pretesa non ci può essere l'unico incontro reale che è l'incontro nella verità riconosciuta. La ragione ultima dell'armonia di fede e ragione in san Tommaso sta nel fatto che si tratta di due modalità di accesso alla verità: *duplex modus veritatis*.

Quello che ci mette d'accordo non è il fatto di avere dei giudizi e non sono neppure le ragioni che abbiamo a sostegno dei nostri giudizi, anche

se quello di cui possiamo discutere con gli altri sono proprio le ragioni che abbiamo per ritenere vero quello che riteniamo vero. Tuttavia sarebbe sbagliato a mio avviso considerare l'armonia di fede e ragione innanzi tutto come un risultato da raggiungere nel dialogo tra credenti e non-credenti.

In effetti, come abbiamo detto, la relazione di fede e ragione non è una relazione simmetrica: la fede deve riconoscere l'esistenza della ragione naturale, ma la ragione naturale in quanto tale non può comprendere adeguatamente una dimensione che la supera. Fede e ragione non possono stare sullo stesso piano: se si cerca di porle sullo stesso piano, negando che la fede si ponga su un piano diverso e superiore, si finisce per subordinare la fede alla ragione, come abbiamo visto in Locke. Con questo naturalmente non si deve ignorare il rapporto che c'è nel credente tra fede e ragione e non si deve negare neppure che gli insegnamenti della fede possono aiutare l'operare della ragione anche in coloro che non ne riconoscono l'origine soprannaturale ma li considerano come l'espressione di una tradizione degna di rispetto.

D'altra parte la dissimetria di ragione e fede è anche una dissimetria dei soggetti che le rappresentano: mentre c'è un'autorità che parla in nome della fede, non ci può essere una persona che parli con pari autorità in nome della ragione. Per meglio dire: in forza del rapporto che la fede ha con la ragione naturale, l'autorità della Chiesa parlando in nome della fede può parlare anche in nome della ragione. Un filosofo invece che si erge a portavoce della ragione assume un ruolo che non gli compete. Il compito del filosofo non è di rappresentare la ragione, ma di usare la sua capacità di ragionamento condividendo i propri giudizi con tutti coloro che come lui sono capaci di giudizio.

L'armonia di fede e ragione deve esserci innanzi tutto nella persona del credente e nella comunità dei credenti. La Chiesa ha oggi come ieri il compito di educare persone che siano capaci di giudicare la realtà usando tutte le risorse della ragione e della fede. In una situazione caratterizzata spesso dal prevalere di opinioni e pregiudizi, la parola e l'esempio di Benedetto XVI costituiscono un invito ad assumersi la responsabilità di giudicare come una parte non secondaria della vita di un cristiano.