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Credo ut intelligam or Credo quia absurdum? Reason and Beyond Reason in Religious Faith

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Improper, but Not Illegitimate: Mindreading through the Ages
(Introduction)

"Credo ut intelligam or Credo quia absurdum? – Reason and Beyond Reason in Religious Faith": this title might suggest that the present volume is just another contribution that discusses the relationship between religious faith and knowledge in a traditional manner. This is not precisely the case. In a somewhat unusual way, we have turned our focus to those borderline areas of medieval philosophical and religious thought that are marked by improper, but not illegitimate uses of philosophical language, devised to convey ideas that are impossible to grasp in terms of ordinary, proper language usage. Thus, we are exploring areas of philosophical and theological language which are designed, adopting a metaphor by Descartes he used to characterize our difficulties in talking about God, to (mentally) touch the bark of a huge oak tree that we cannot embrace.

The metaphor of touch, although applied in a different context, plays a central role in György Heidl's paper. Heidl discusses the Biblical and philosophical concepts of faith that might have influenced early Christian spirituality and draws a strong connection between "faith" and the metaphor of "touch," which – in turn – leads to fundamental questions about Christian and Platonic mysticism.

Gyula Klima's paper, "Words and what is beyond words," directly addresses the extraordinary hermeneutical scenario generated by the improper, but not illegitimate uses of language required to talk about what is beyond the grasp of the ordinary meanings of our ordinary words. To provide a sufficiently general theoretical framework for the discussion of this hermeneutical scenario, he distinguishes three typical interpretational practices, and argues for what he regards as the "the golden mean" between two bad extremes.

Joshua Hochschild describes medieval logic using the metaphor of "game" (with reference to Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*) and the traditional metaphor of "tool". In spite of being a leisurely activity, something done for its own sake, a game can also serve a purpose outside of itself. Similarly, a tool is not merely instrumental, insofar as it can have its own intrinsic goods and can shape and be shaped by that which it serves. After reviewing some distinctive ways in which theology shaped developments of medieval logic, Joshua Hochschild's

paper summarizes key examples from the work of Thomas Aquinas where medieval logic shaped the articulation and is therefore crucial to a proper understanding of theological claims and arguments.

The purpose of Gábor Borbély's paper is to explore some of the basic assumptions that, he believes, Aquinas's ambitious work, the *Summa contra Gentiles* greatly depends on. These assumptions appear to form the bedrock of Aquinas's deep personal convictions, and as such they may have been the driving force behind his attempt to manifest the truth and eliminate all human error in this work. By casting light upon these assumptions, Borbély aims to clarify some aspects of his „odd project" that has stubbornly resisted attempts at contextualization.

Nicolas Faucher's paper explores the concept of voluntary belief in Peter John Olivi's work. Voluntary belief is being produced to fulfill the individuals' moral duties and to promote common human activities. Its concept, however, seems to be at odds with doxastic normativity that we tend to attribute to our ordinary beliefs. Furthermore, its use seems to lead to an infinite regress. Nicolas Faucher's paper deals with these issues in the context of the Olivian doctrine of faith.

Magali Roques's paper focuses on one class of social realities in William of Ockham's academic writings, the class of "voluntary signs," which includes not only linguistic signs, but also monetary price, property right, and the sacraments. Roques argues that for Ockham these signs have a social function because a mental act is part of their definition, namely, the decision to endow a material object with a social function for the first time or to follow an established social practice. She further argues that the model of the covenant that grounds social reality (economic and other kinds of social exchanges, including linguistic exchanges) is to be conceived analogously to the model of the covenant between God and human beings (concerning what is required for salvation, and therefore especially the sacraments).

György Geréby delves into a common theme shared by Peter Damian and Hans Jonas, namely, the issue of the changeability of the past. Contrary to the common view, Hans Jonas in the twentieth century and Petrus Damiani in the eleventh, independently from each other, argued for the possibility of a retroactively changeable past. In the case of Jonas, the changeability is implicit, based on two considerations: the first is the result of his analysis of the conditions of truth in historical statements, while the second is the consequence of his reflections on the theological implications of the shoah. In Damiani's case, the changeability is explicit, an original idea against the views of Aristotle, Jerome and Augustine, based on his understanding of divine omnipotence, supported by ingenious logical analysis. While Jonas and Damiani reached their conclusions independently, both were based on theological considerations, albeit on widely different ones.

Dániel Schmal analyses some literary and argumentative techniques employed by late scholastic writers to integrate new elements into traditional wisdom. The authors chosen for this study, Nicolás Martínez and Leonard Lessius, illustrate how late scholastic writers treat the Patristic and medieval heritage when they use authoritative texts for innovative purposes. Although ecclesiastical authority continues to serve as the basis for theological argumentation in their texts, the case studies highlight how making distinctions among meanings allegedly present in the tradition, along with other "techniques of alignment," are employed to integrate new ideas and fulfil the need for conformity at the same time.

Gábor Borbély – Gyula Klima

György Heidl

Faith, Reason and Touch

The following is a brief overview of the Biblical meanings of "faith," including a discussion of the philosophical concepts of faith that may have influenced early Christian spirituality. Then, I further characterize the distinctive Christian understanding of "faith" from several points of view. Finally, I draw a strong connection between "faith" and the metaphor of "touch," which will lead to fundamental questions about Christian and Platonic mysticism.[1]

I. FAITH AND THE BIBLE

The Greek noun *pistis*, together with the verb *pisteuein* in its various forms, appears in the Bible in the sense of faithfulness, faith, trust, vow, oath, approval, and truth. *Pistis* is one of the most important concepts in the New Testament, because it conveys the central message of revelation: Abraham trusted in God, believed in the promises and remained loyal to the one who made the promises, and this trust, faithfulness and faith, in other word *pistis*, is completed as faith in Christ and faithfulness and trust in Christ (see, Rm 4:3ff; Gal 3:6ff). This means that in the New Testament the concept of *pistis* undergoes a kind of natural transformation: initially it expresses the trust and faithfulness that serve as the basis of the covenant first made with Abraham, then with Moses, and subsequently confirmed repeatedly, until at last designating faith in the resurrection of Christ.

It is clear from the Old Testament that God is loyal *(pistos)* to the one he elected and to all the covenants he made (see e.g. Deut. 7:9). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are faithful servants of God (e.g., *2* Macc. 1:2), and their faithfulness

[1] This paper is largely based on the first chapter of my book, *Érintés: Szó és kép a korai keresztény misztikában* (*Touch: Word and Image in the early Christian Mysticism*). Kairosz, Budapest, 2011. I am greatly indebted to Gyöngyi Pisák and David Baer for the English translation, and to the Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office for supporting my research (NKFI K-128321).

are an example to follow for everyone. But human beings are often unfaithful and lose sight of the covenant (e.g., Deut. 32:20; Jer. 7:28, Ps. 76 (77):8). Prophets often describe unfaithfulness through the example of infidelity and adultery. God's faithfulness toward human beings is constant and everlasting, while the faithfulness of the sons of man toward God is unsteady and inconstant. They tend to forget about the covenant and yield to their momentary desires and interests. Thus, they turn away from the one true God to false gods and idols, and become unfaithful and lustful. This is what the song of Moses refers to: "they are a perverse generation, children in whom there is no faithfulness. They made me jealous with what is no god, provoked me with their idols." (Deut. 32:20 – 12; NRSV)

In early and emerging Christianity, *pistis* refers to the threefold "Credo" of the Baptismal Creed (i.e., in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) and develops to designate a faith that can be increasingly and consistently expressed in tenets. What starts out as the "we believe" of creeds is followed by clear and dogmatic formulations resulting from centuries of heated debates, which delineate the object and contour of the professed creed. At the same time, the New Testament concept of *pistis* retains the sense of faithfulness, trust, steadfastness, vow, etc., given that develops naturally out of the Old Testament, and these meanings continue to guide and inform Christian usage.

According to the Bible, faith and trust are due not only to God, but also to those persons recognized by the community as authentic teachers, because they are God's true witnesses and prophets. Abraham was the first to receive the promises, Moses handed down the law, and a long line of prophets cautioned the children of Israel to be faithful to God. Jesus says that those who entrust themselves to the conveyors of the divine message will undoubtedly come to believe in him; "[Moses] wrote about me. Bur if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?" (Jn 5:46–47; NRSV)

When the Latin-speaking West translated *pistis* as *fides,* it added to the concept of faithfulness and trust in God a concept taken from the Roman catalogue of virtues with multiple meanings: reliability, loyalty, trust, and credibility. Yet while "faithfulness" in the Biblical tradition is God-centered, the Roman *fides* is a human-centered concept. Faithfulness is a virtue beneficial not only to the faithful person, but also to the entire community.[2] Faithfulness is steadfastness and constancy in contracts, and as such, a safeguard of justice.[3] Just as faithfulness constitutes the basis of justice, without justice there is no faithfulness, because we trust in the fact that we are being faithful to a person whom we believe to be just and who will not mislead us. In addition, faithfulness also requires a certain down-to-earth, practical understanding *(prudentia),* since "we have confi-

[2] Cicero, *De oratore* 2.343.
[3] Cicero, *De officiis* 1.7.23.

dence in those who we think have more understanding than ourselves, who, we believe, have better insight into the future."[4] In fact, this faithfulness and trust keeps the commonwealth together.[5]

From the start, philosophers were appalled by the Christian effort to have their teaching recognized as a philosophy, what is more, as the only true and genuine philosophy, given that the cornerstone of their philosophy was the concept of faith, and they expected their followers to have faith.[6] Irrationalism was a recurring charge made by philosophers against Christians. According to Celsus (mid-2nd century CE) Christians say to each other: "'Do not examine, but believe!' and 'Your faith will save you!';"[7] they require immediate faith (*CCels.* 6.7), and a completely absurd faith at that: "Believe that the person of whom I am telling you is God's Son, although he was most dishonourably arrested and punished to his utter disgrace, and though quite recently he wandered about most shamefully in the sight of all men. […] This is all the more reason for believing."[8] The common denominator for Christians is therefore; "Believe, if you want to be saved, or else away with you."[9] Porphyry, the neo-Platonic philosopher (circa 233/34–305), willingly criticized Christians in his anti-Christian writings for being unable to corroborate their teachings in a reasonable manner, exhorting their followers to simply believe, teaching them as if they were mindless beasts, and calling them believers for having such mindless belief.[10]

II. PLATO AND FAITH

The *lack of faith* of Celsus, Porphyry and their companions is understandable, since they were all devoted to ancient gods and to Plato's philosophy, and faith did not play an important role either in the practice of pagan cults or in Plato's philosophy.

In Plato's epistemology *pistis*, which, from the point of view of the Biblical tradition, is translated as faith only for lack of a better word, corresponds to a lower, unreliable form of knowledge. Understanding, according to Plato, is a systematic process closely related to explanation, because one understands what one can explain and, vice versa, one can only explain what one understands. The unity of intellectual and linguistic formulation is especially apparent in di-

[4] *ibid.* 2.9.33. English translation by Walter Miller.

[5] *ibid.* 2.24.84.

[6] On *Christian philosophy* and its close connection with philosophical schools of late antiquity, see Hadot 1995. 126–144.

[7] Origen, CCels 1.9; *see* Chadwick 1980. 12.

[8] *Ibid.* 6.10; *see* Chadwick 1980. 324.

[9] *Ibid.* 6.11; *see* Chadwick 1980. 324.

[10] Harnack frg. 73 = Eusebius *Demonstratio euangelica* 1.1.12, l. and: Macarius Magnes *Apocriticus* 3.17; 3.22; 4.9; 4.10.

alectics. Dialogic speech *(logos)* is an activity where the speakers discover and understand together an aspect of the nature of things. It is the intellect *(logos)* that understands, and the sense, meaning and essence of the given thing is what is being understood *(logos)*. In other words, you can express in language anything that you can understand.[11]

One more thing, however, is needed for understanding. This is what Plato calls the good, or the Form of the good, which is both the guarantee and the final object of understanding.[12] Plato mentions an important simile which says the Good makes understanding possible in the same way as the Sun makes it possible to see in the world of the senses. Just as additionally to vision and an object, the Sun is needed to see, so also, additionally to the one who apprehends an intelligible object, the Good is needed in order to understand. As concerns sensible and intellectual knowledge, there are four manners of knowing and four types of objects, which correspond to four capabilities in the soul. Knowledge of physical things transmitted by the senses is no more than conjecture *(eikasia)*. Faith *(pistis)* is also related to physical things. Among things that can be captured by the mind, thinking *(dianoia)* operates with assumptions and images, and finally pure understanding *(noesis)* is grasping truth and reality. Conjecture and faith belong to the realm of belief *(doxa)*, while understanding is the capacity of the mind *(nous)*.[13]

Plato's Socrates approaches this idea from a different perspective in the famous allegory of the cave in *The Republic*.[14] People are chained in a cave, unable to turn their heads, hearing only voices and seeing only the shadows of objects projected on the wall of the cave. Behind the chained persons, in the back of the cave, the light of a fire shines from above with a path stretching in front of it and a low screen-like wall. Mysterious persons carry different objects along the path, occasionally speaking to each other. This image represents our current condition. We are the chained prisoners who only see the physical images that are transmitted by our senses, giving them knowledge amounting to mere conjecture. The objects lit by the fire, or the visible sun, represent the things in a world that can be grasped by the senses, the objects of faith. However, a person can step out of the cave and into the sunshine, travel from the sensual to the intellectual by reasoning, even though reasoning still relies on assumptions, similes and physical images, although the object is a reality grasped by the mind. The person stepping out of the cave into the sunshine still needs to get used to the light, because he is incapable of looking at the Sun immediately. Eventually, he can glimpse the Sun, that is, through clear understanding he can grasp clear

[11] Plato, *The Sophist* 264a.
[12] See Plato, *The Republic* 505a.
[13] *Ibid*. 508c–511e.
[14] *Ibid*. 514a–517a.

intelligible reality, the Form of the Good, without physical images, assumptions and conjectures.

Therefore, according to the extremely influential Platonic approach, faith is a form of conjecture aimed at things that can be perceived by the body and the senses. If man's most important goal is to capture eternal truth, he has to break away from faith and strive toward clear intellectual knowledge.

III. PROBABILITY AND FAITH

At one point in the history of the Plato's Academy, epistemological skepticism played a key role, providing useful arguments for Christian theologians engaged in polemical debate a few centuries later about the nature of faith.[15] Arcesilaus (316, or 315, to 241, or 240, BCE) and Carneades (214, or 213, – 129, or 128, BCE) developed the basic tenets of philosophical skepticism, primarily against the Stoics. Today we would say that, according to the Stoics, there is a type of information which communicates its reality to the recipient without distortion, and this type of information can be clearly recognized. The founder of this school of thought, Zeno of Citium (turn of the 4th – 3rd century BCE), referred to this type of *information* as *kataleptic* impressions, which in his opinion communicated self-evident knowledge about the real object and which corresponds to it in a way that would not be possible for a non-real object. Such impressions provide a solid foundation for thought and action, because one can build a system of thought that corresponds to reality with the help of concepts, and this ensures that our actions and decisions are reasonable.

According to later sources Arcesilaus held,[16] in contrast to the epistemological optimism of the Stoics, that it is impossible to differentiate between false and real sense impressions. One tends to accept false impressions just as much as true ones, as numerous examples indicate in the case of people who are sick, crazy, drunk, etc., There is no criterion that would help us differentiate with certainty between what is true and what is false. Therefore, it is best to suspend every kind of affirmation and refrain from claiming that something is true or false. It is even impossible to decide between completely contradictory philosophical tenets, because one can, and must, argue for a thing as well as for its opposite. However, a person has to make a number of decisions every day, and if there can be no certain criterion of truth for his decisions and actions, then,

[15] Kendeffy (1999) published an excellent monograph on the subject. In respect of practical probability and diaphony (difference of opinion), I rely on the statements in his book and the patristic works it refers to.

[16] Arcesilaus did not leave any written texts behind.

unless he resigns himself to complete inaction, he must follow what is probable in order to act wisely and correctly.

Consequently, Arcesilaus and his followers associated wisdom, cognition, knowledge, action and ethics with the realm of probability. They provided many examples of how in many life situations decision and action are based on probability, because we never foresee with certainty the results on our choices and the consequences of our actions. The farmer sows seeds because they will probably grow and bring fruit; we get married because we hope for happiness; we have children because we assume we will have healthy and smart offspring; we embark on a trip because we trust that the trip will be successful, and so on. In the footsteps of Arcesilaus, both Cicero (*Lucullus* 34.109) and Seneca (*De beneficiis* 4.33.2–3) provide further examples similar to those mentioned above as proof of the important role of probability in human life. And Christian writers trained in philosophy mention the same examples when defending "faith" before their philosophical opponents.

The skeptics' practical probability corresponds to the Christians' everyday *pistis* which in the eyes of the Christians fundamentally determines human life, that is, faith or trust. "But why do you disbelieve? Do you not know that faith leads the way in all actions?" – asks Theophilus, the bishop of Antioch, from his cultured pagan friend in the eighties of the second century. Then he continues:

> What farmer can harvest unless he first entrusts the seed to the earth? Who can cross the sea unless he first entrusts himself to the ship and the pilot? What sick man can be cured unless he first entrusts himself to the physician? What art or science can anyone learn unless he first delivers and entrusts himself to the teacher? If, then, the farmer trusts the earth and the sailor the ship and the sick man the physician, do you not want to entrust yourself to God, when you have received so many pledges from him?[17]

Responding to the objection of Celsus, according to which Christians are satisfied by mere faith without examination, Origen (185–253), the excellent thinker of Alexandria, invokes the universality of faith.

> Why is it not more reasonable, seeing that all human acts depend on faith, to believe in God rather than in them? Who goes on a voyage, or marries, or begets children, or casts seeds into the ground, unless he believes that things will turn out for the better, although it is possible that the opposite may happen – as it sometimes does? But nevertheless the faith that things will turn out for the better and as they wish makes all men take risks, even where the result is not certain and where things might turn

[17] *Autol.* 1.8; *see* Grant 1970. 11–13.

> out differently. Now if it is hope and the faith that the future will be better which maintain life in every action where the result is uncertain, is it not more reasonable for a man to trust in God than in the outcome of a sea voyage or of seed sown in the earth or of marriage to a wife or any other human activity? For he puts his faith in the God who created all these things, and in him who with exceptional greatness of mind and divine magnanimity ventured to commend this doctrine to people in all parts of the world, and who incurred great risks and a death supposed to be disgraceful, which he endured for the sake of mankind; and he taught those who were persuaded to obey his teaching at the beginning boldly to travel everywhere in the world for the salvation of men through all dangers and continual expectation of death.[18]

Defenders of the Christian faith such as Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150 – ca. 215), Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 263–339), or Arnobius (284–305), Lactantius (ca. 250 – ca. 325) and Augustine (354–430) among the Latins, all appropriated, in varying degrees, two important arguments of the skeptics.[19] They not only invoked the fact that faith is the basis of the everyday decisions of man who does not know the future, but they also argued that the process of learning and cognition are fundamentally faith-based, an argument which originates in the philosophy of the Skeptics. Commitment to a given school of philosophy cannot be the result of mere intellectual contemplation, because the novice thinker does not possess the knowledge required for making decisions based on a purely intellectual understanding. His decisions are influenced by a number of irrational factors: his upbringing, social status, personality, etc. When he makes a commitment to a given school of thought, he in fact makes a decision based on trust and faith, in which the reputation and authority of his teacher plays a key role. This is what Theophilus refers to in the quotation above: "What art or science can anyone learn unless he first delivers and entrusts himself to the teacher?" He then alerts us to the fact that the arguments for accepting the authority of God the Creator are much more reasonable than those for following any sort of human authority. Decades before Theophilus, Justin Martyr, the first Christian philosopher (died ca. 165) shared his personal experience when he told how searched for truth from various philosophers whom he considered worthy of following because of their reputation, and how eventually he discovered the divine authority of the prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Scriptures themselves.[20] Origen also employs the example of choosing a school of thought and the argument from authority in his response to philosophers who rejected faith, and draws the following conclusion: "If, as my argument has shown, belief is inevitable in following a particular in-

[18] *CCels.* 1.11; *see* Chadwick 1980. 14.
[19] See the texts in Kendeffy (1999) under the discussion of individual authors.
[20] *Dial.* 2.3–6. and 7.1. ff.

dividual among those who have founded sects among the Greeks or the barbarians, why should we not far more believe in the supreme God…?"[21]

When the Church Fathers make use arguments from the Skeptics in support of accepting a faith that determines everyday action and an authority that serves as the basis of learning, they are only pointing to the initial steps everyone must take before acquiring more certain knowledge and true understanding. This faith is not the same as specific Christian faith, and this concept of authority does not fully overlap with what the young Augustine refers to when, not long after his conversion, he declares: "I, therefore, am resolved in nothing whatever to depart from the authority of Christ for I do not find a stronger."[22]

IV. THE HISTORICITY OF FAITH

At the center of Christian faith is the figure of the resurrected Christ, and two very important features differentiate it from all other faith; it is historical and connected to a collection of books. Faith is historical in several respects. The life, death and resurrection of Christ are historical events that fit into a series of preceding events and brings them to completion, and finally, the faith in these events is passed on by a community to each member of subsequent generations. The history of this faith is at the same time the history of the Holy Scripture and the church. The books report on the teachings of Christ and the most important events in his life, and they contain recurring references to the laws of Moses and the prophecies of the prophets. According to the New Testament, the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus, and this is exactly what justifies the special place and authority of the holy books of the Jews when compared to any other book. Faith in the laws and the special inspiration of the prophets does not legitimate Christ, but rather it is the other way around; faith in Christ legitimates Moses and the prophets. Victorinus of Poetovio (died ca. 304) puts it concisely: "it makes the faith unquestionable that what happened later and was fulfilled was foretold."[23] Origen says that everything which we have seen to come to pass, everything which we know from history, had already been written down in the holy books of the Jews. Therefore, although the divine origin of the laws of Moses and the books of the prophets used to be unverifiable, they have been proven after Christ, because we see them coming true.[24]

Perhaps the most mature analysis of the historicity of faith among the apologists was provided by Tertullian (ca. 155–230). He is generally thought to have

[21] *CCels.* 1.10; see Chadwick 1980. 14.
[22] *Acad.* 3.20.43; see O'Meara 1950. 150.
[23] *Apoc.* 4.5.
[24] *Princ.* 4.1.6.

written the statement "I believe because it is absurd" *(credo quia absurdum)*, although we cannot find it in this form either in his writings or in the extant works of any other church father. His arguments for the Christian faith are logical, consistent and historical.

Although the statement "*credo quia absurdum*" is a misunderstanding, Tertullian did use a rhetorical proof based on impossibility. "The Son of God was crucified: I am not ashamed – because it is shameful. The Son of God died: it is immediately credible – because it is silly. He was buried, and rose again: it is certain – because it is impossible *(certum est quia impossibile)*."[25]

Here Tertullian, who received an excellent philosophical training, in fact uses an argument that was also mentioned by Aristotle. Aristotle explains under enthymemes, rhetorical proofs, that the more unlikely an event is, the less likely it is that anyone will believe that it has actually taken place, unless you have a peculiar proof for it.

> Another is derived from things that are thought to have taken place but yet are implausible, [using the argument] that they would not seem true unless they were facts or close to being facts. And [one can argue] that they are all the more true [for that reason]; for people accept facts or probabilities as true; if, then, something were implausible and not probable, it would be true; for it is not because of probability and plausibility that it seems true [but because it is a fact].[26]

Tertullian says that the resurrection of Christ was this kind of a completely improbable event. However, the fact that the apostles report on this improbable event as if it had in fact occurred, makes it believable.[27]

The final objective of intellectual inquiry is to reach faith, and this is what Christ commands: *Seek and you shall find*.[28] One must preserve the faith that one found in order to obtain salvation. Therefore, the correct order is the following: understanding, faith, salvation. However, inquiry is often motivated by curiosity and vanity (*Praescr.* 14), and the purity of faith is often threatened by heresies. Just as inquiry has its own rules, faith has its own rules as well, the so called *regula fidei*, the rule of faith or confession (*Praescr.* 13). The rule of faith must be preserved in its own unity, faith in its own purity. The protection of the confession is at the same time the protection of the faith. Tertullian lists historical arguments for the rules of faith (*Praescr.* 16–44). First one must clarify "With whom lies that very faith to which the Scriptures belong. From what and through whom, and when, and to whom, has been handed down that rule by

[25] *De carne Christi* 5.4; *see* Evans 1956. 19.
[26] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.23. 1400a; see Aristotle 2007. 181.
[27] Lindberg 1983. 516–517.
[28] Mt 7,7; cf. *Praescr.* 8-10; English translation: "The Prescription Against Heretics", translated by Peter Holmes. *See* Tertullian 2018.

which men become Christians?" (*ibid.* 19.1).[29] Jesus Christ is a historical person who lived, taught, worked and assembled disciples in a specific period, at a specific place. He charged the apostles with the task of proclaiming the faith to all people, to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (*Praescr.* 20). Accordingly, the disciples proclaimed the faith everywhere, witnessed to Jesus Christ, and based on this faith, built churches.

> [They] founded churches in every city, from which all the other churches, one after another, derived the tradition of the faith, and the seeds of doctrine, and are every day deriving them, that they may become churches. Indeed, it is on this account only that they will be able to deem themselves apostolic, as being the offspring of apostolic churches […]. Therefore the churches, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive church, (founded) by the apostles, from which they all (spring). In this way all are primitive, and all are apostolic, whilst they are all proved to be one, in (unbroken) unity.[30]

We know Christ's teachings from the apostolic proclamation that the apostolic churches, which constitute a unified church, preserve and pass on as a rule of faith.

> If, then, these things are so, it is in the same degree manifest that all doctrine which agrees with the apostolic churches – those moulds and original sources of the faith must be reckoned for truth, as undoubtedly containing that which the (said) churches received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, Christ from God.[31]

After the historical argument, all that remains to prove is which church, from among the churches that claim to have apostolic legacy, kept the pure apostolic teaching. With this the dispute shifts from an external apologetic perspective to the analysis of Holy Scripture and the examination of questions related to liturgical traditions and lifestyle, which are an internal matter for Christian communities.[32]

The teaching of Tertullian, Origen, and the other Church Fathers about the historical and communal nature of faith actually follows the logic of the apostle Paul, who says in his letter to the Romans:

> if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is

[29] *Praescr.* 19.1.
[30] *Praescr.* 20.3.
[31] *Ibid.* 21.3.
[32] *Ibid.* 36–44.

> justified, and on confesses with the mouth and so is saved […] For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? […] So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. (Rom. 10:9–10, 13–15, 17. NRSV)

Faith in the resurrected Christ brings salvation through the following steps: 1. the resurrection of Christ; 2. the sending away of the apostles; 3.the proclamation of the apostles; 4. personal faith in Christ based on the teaching of the apostles; 5 calling to Christ for help and confessing Him – which is a reference to the apostolic confession.

V. PERSONAL FAITH

But what did Abraham do? He arrived neither too early nor too late. He mounted the ass, he rode slowly down the road. During all this time he had faith, he had faith that God would not demand Isaac of him, and yet he was willing to sacrifice him if it was demanded. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for human calculation was out of the question, and it certainly was absurd that God, who required it of him, should in the next moment rescind the requirement. He climbed the mountain, and even in the moment when the knife gleamed he had faith – that God would not require Isaac. No doubt he was surprised at the outcome, but through a double-movement he had attained his first condition, and therefore he received Isaac more joyfully than the first time. Let us go further. We let Isaac actually be sacrificed. Abraham had faith. He did not have faith that he would be blessed in a future life but that he would be blessed here in the world. God could give him a new Isaac, could restore to life the one sacrificed. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for all human calculation ceased long ago (Kierkegaard 1983. 35–36).

After the imperative "Let us go further," Kierkegaard almost faithfully summarizes the rich Christian exegetic tradition of the "Akedah" ("Binding"). He says that Abraham believed, *by virtue of the absurd*, that Isaac will be resurrected. His faith supersedes the general ethical imperative of "you must not kill." He is not a murderer because he believes. Yet an important thought is nevertheless completely missing from *Fear and Trembling*: the fact that faith has an object and a history. In the final analysis, Kierkegaard denies both. He understands faith to be an utterly subjective "leap" to what is intellectually incomprehensible, which is completely different from the place from which one approaches God. Abraham, who is getting ready to sacrifice his son upon God's command, made this leap, but if we truly contemplate the impossibility of his position and deci-

sion, we understand Kierkegaard's resignation: "I cannot make the movement of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd; it is for me an impossibility, but I do not praise myself for that."[33] So how should we interpret the observation, according to which Abraham believed that "he would be blessed here in the world. God could give him a new Isaac, could restore to life the one sacrificed." Did he really believe it by force of the absurd as the Danish philosopher claims?

Kierkegaard, however, keeps some of his cards close to his chest. He does not let on that the source of his comment is the letter to the Hebrews;

> By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promise was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead – and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back (Heb. 11:17–19; NRSV).

The author of the letter also follows a tradition of interpretation, the traces of which can be found in the letter to the Romans: "[Abraham believed in the God] who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations,' according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.'" (Rom 4:17–18; NRSV).

We could claim based on the two letters that Abraham believed by force of the absurd, if we considered the belief in resurrection absurd. In any case, this would resonate with the "I believe because it's absurd" concept mistakenly attributed to Tertullian, which was extremely important for Kierkegaard (see Bühler 2008. 137–138). However, "impossibility" for Tertullian, as we have seen, was a historical concept with a rational basis. By contrast Kierkegaard had a non-historical, non-rational concept of the absurd. Abraham's faith was not absurd in the Kierkegaardian sense according either to Tertullian or to other Church Fathers. At the same time, the Church Fathers did not wish to add rational explanations to this story like those offered by historical-critical exegesis of the Bible or comparative mythological research, the effect of which is to banish the Akedah to the realm of the bizarre and classify it as an astral myth, an allegory, or a document from the history of religions which records the prohibition of human sacrifice. Maybe at the deepest level the story originates in the fear experienced by nomadic people of the night sky once the sun set. Maybe this psychological experience led followers of Yahweh to engage in religious polemics against gods that demanded human sacrifice, and the story might have complex historical connections to certain Greek or Sumerian mythologies as

[33] *Ibid*. 34.

well (see e.g. Goldziher 2011. 57–60 and 250; Graves – Patai 1969. 173–178). We could unravel this complex story and trace its components to probable causes. However, if one is to embark on such a project, as Socrates says, "he'll need a great deal of leisure. I myself have no leisure at all for such business, and the reason for that, my friend, is this: I'm not yet able, in accordance with the Delphic inscription, to know myself, and it seems ridiculous to me to investigate things that don't concern me while still lacking that knowledge."[34]

Rational explanations take the weight off the shoulders of the reader of John's Gospel which were placed there by the words of Jesus: "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did" (Jn 8:39; NRSV). How could Abraham be the knight of faith (Kierkegaard), the father of nations (Apostle Paul, cf. Rom 4:16, Gal 3:7), if the Biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac is mere literary fiction? The Church Fathers and Kierkegaard believed that the Akedah actually occurred, which has grave consequences for the life and personal faith of the individual. But while Kierkegaard excludes all rationality and historicity from the concept of faith, the Church Fathers do not consider Abraham's faith either absurd or rational. Faith cannot be understood in terms of rationality or irrationality.

Origen adds a surprising comment, but still one based on Scripture, to the idea expressed in the letter to the Hebrews: "Abraham knew himself to prefigure the image of future truth; he knew the Christ was to be born from his seed, who also was to be offered as a truer victim for the whole world and was to be raised from the dead."[35] How is it possible? Did Abraham know that everything he does in any given moment prefigures a future chain of events? Did he know that his actions mirror God's redemption? Yes, that's exactly what Origen means. He is convinced that Abraham saw something in his mind and that's why he responded as follows to Isaac's question: "God himself will provide the lamb."[36] St. John Chrysostom quotes an important verse of the Gospel of John in order to shed light on the above: "Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad" (Jn 8:56; NRSV). The "day" of Jesus which filled Abraham with jubilation was the day when Jesus died and was resurrected, the fulfilment of salvation history, of which Abraham's story is a part and which it prefigures.[37] The astonishment of the Jews who argue with Jesus is apparent in the narrative of the Gospel of John: "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" They did not understand what he said, because, according to Jesus, it was the other way round; Abraham saw Jesus. "'Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.' So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and

[34] Plato *Phaedrus* 229e 230a; see Cobb 1993. 89.
[35] Origen, *HomGen*. 8.1; see Heine 1981. 137–8.
[36] *Ibid*. 8.6.
[37] See John Chrysostom, *HomGen*. 47.3.

went out of the temple." (Jn 8:57–59; NRSV) They considered this statement blasphemous. Yet based on John's theology, the Jesus' words point to the fact that almost two thousand years before the incarnation Abraham could see him, because he is the everlasting Word. (cf. Jn 1:1). If Abraham saw him, he did not lie to Isaac when he said "God himself will provide the lamb," because he saw the future as a prophet. Abraham embarked on the road to sacrifice his son with faith in the resurrection. He believed that after he kills his child, God will bring him back to life, that he will receive his son again in this earthly life, because he knew that this sacrifice prefigured the universal sacrifice of Christ. The "movement" of faith is truly "terrifying" when Abraham gives up everything to win back everything (cf. Kierkegaard 1983. 36–37). He answered God's personal call when he started on the road to the peak of Moriah. He believed because he received a revelation from God's Word. But if there is no resurrection, Abraham's faith is madness.

Plato considered faith a form of conjecture, an inferior form of sensory knowledge. Christian faith originates in sensory knowledge insofar as it originates from hearing and is handed down in a given community from Christ to each individual. Faith is therefore the *assurance of things hoped for*, *the conviction of things not seen* (Heb 11:1). This faith has a preeminent object: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. All other doctrines originate from this. Because the object of faith is a person who is resurrected, who lives, faith in the resurrection of Christ is a personal relationship with the One who was resurrected. What does this mean?

VI. FAITH AS TOUCH

Christine Mohrmann, a philologist-theologian, and perhaps the most significant linguist to research Latin Christian literature, demonstrated in a masterful study how Latin-speaking Christians transformed the traditional usage of the verb *credo* to express their own specific understanding of faith.[38] Classical authors often used the verb *credere* with the accusative or dative case (i.e., to believe someone or to believe in/on someone) to express faith in God. Seneca, for example, says the following: "the first way to worship the gods is to believe in the gods." Somewhere else he says the following: "there is no people so far beyond the reach of laws and customs that it does not believe at least in gods of some sort."[39] The usage of *credere* with the preposition *in* (followed by the accusative or dative case) was influenced by biblical Greek, and it started to denote the act of specifically Christian faith in God. The difference between *credere in* + *accusative* and

[38] Mohrmann 1951. I briefly summarize below the ideas of this excellent study and quote its most important examples.

[39] Seneca, *Ep.* 95.50. and *Ep.* 117.6; *see* Gummere 1925. 89. and 341.

credere in + *ablative* is difficult to express, but perhaps we could say that the first denotes believing God while the other means faith in God. The two, however, basically overlap.

Augustine and, following him, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas made a careful distinction between the three meanings of *credere Deo*, *credere Deum* and *credere in Deum*: "to trust in God," "to believe God" and "to believe in God." *Credere Deo* expresses trust in and faithfulness to God, but it does not indicate as strong a commitment as *credere in deum*:

> This is believing in God, and it is a great deal more than believing what God says. We may often believe what some human being says, yet know that such a person is not to be believed in. To believe in God is to cling by faith to God who effects the good works in such a way that we collaborate well with him.[40]

However, we must believe in the person that God sent, in other words, Christ. What does it mean to say we must believe in Christ rather than trust Christ?

> "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." "That you believe in him," not, that you believe him. For if you believe in him, you believe him; but he who believes does not as an immediate consequence believe in him. For even the demons believe him, but they did not believe in him. Again we can also say about his Apostles, "We believe Paul," but not, "We believe in Paul", "We believe Peter", but not, "We believe in Peter." For, "to him who believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as justice." What, then, is it to believe in him? By believing to love, by believing to cherish, by believing to go to him, and to be embodied in his members. Therefore, it is faith itself that God demands of us.[41]

Believing in Christ means loving Christ in contrast to the belief of demons, who also believed him but did not believe *in him*, that is, they had nothing to do with the son of God. The one who believes Christ but does not believe in him does not share community with Him, and is not tied to Him through hope or love. Love unites a person to Christ through which one becomes part of His body.[42] The manner in which we are united with Christ through faith is illustrated by the story of the healing of the bleeding woman, and the patristic explanations of it.[43]

Jairus, an official of a synagogue implored Jesus to heal his only daughter, twelve years old, who was dying. As Jesus and his disciples made their way

[40] Augustine, *En. Ps.* 77.8; *see* Boulding 2002. 98.
[41] Augustine, *Tract. Jn.* 29.6; *see* Rettig 1993. 18.
[42] Augustine *Sermon* 144.2.2.
[43] Mohrmann (1951. 283–284) quotes examples for St. Augustine: *Sermons* 244.3. and 95.5. See also *Sermon* 375/C.

to his house, traveling through a big crowd, a woman who had been suffering from bleeding for twelve years and had spent all her money on doctors, secretly touched the hem of Jesus's cloak and was healed right away. Jesus asked who touched him. The disciples did not understand the question, because anyone in the crowd could have touched him. However, Jesus had a specific touch in mind, one which had caused the power to go out of him, as he put it. The woman knelt at his feet and trembling, admitted what she had done. She had reason to be afraid because the law considered her unclean and strictly prohibited touching her and everything else that she touched (cf. Lv 15: 25–27). Jesus, however, reassured her, and stated that her faith had made her well. After this he reached the house and brought back to life the little girl who had died.[44]

Origen provides us with one of the earliest summarized comprehensive interpretations of the story told by the synoptic gospels.[45] Jesus first started out to visit the daughter of the synagogue official, who is the symbol of the synagogue. The synagogue was sick, and then died because of the sins of Israel. But before Jesus reached the official's house and brought the girl back to life, he healed the bleeding woman who represents the church of converted pagans. If the church of the pagans is fully healed, then synagogue will also be healed. (cf. Rom 11:25 ff). The woman's sickness started twelve years before, just as the girl was born. This means that pagans had lived without faith since the synagogue was built. The woman spent all her money on doctors but was not healed, because the doctors of pagans, the philosophers, are unable to heal anyone. Jesus is the sole healer of body and soul. We touch the hem of his cloak with fervently burning faith. Therefore, our touch is faith itself, just as Jesus tells the woman that her faith has healed her: *Daughter, your faith has made you well* (Lk 8:48). Through faith the divine power flows into a person, because Jesus feels his strength leaving him. *Someone touched me; for I noticed that power has gone out of me* (Lk 8:46).

This sentence has great importance for the Church Fathers. Origen even draws a physical parallel to demonstrate the strong bond between the power of Jesus and the faith of human beings. Faith attracts divine power just as a magnet attracts iron and oil attracts fire. "And perhaps, as in the case of material things there exists in some things a natural attraction towards some other thing, as in a magnet for iron, and in what is called naphtha for fire, so there is an attraction in such faith towards the divine power."[46] This is the divine touch *(theia haphé),* through which the human soul touches the divine nature of Christ.

[44] See. Mt 9:18–26; Lk 8:40–56; Mk 5:25–34.

[45] Origen, *Frg. Lc.* 125. For a similar analysis see Ambrose: *Exp. Lc.* 6.57–59.

[46] Origen, *ComMt.* 10.19. English translation: https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf09/anf09.xvi.ii.iii.xix.html Additional references in Origen: *ComCant.* 3.13.48; *ComMt.* 11,7; *HomLev.* 3.3 és 4.8; *HomIud.* 5.5.

> The outer human being has the faculty of taste, and the inner human being has the spiritual faculty of which it is said: *Taste and see that the Lord is good* (Ps. 34[33].8; cf. 1 Peter 2.3). The outer human being has the sensible faculty of touch, and the inner human being also has touch, that touch with which the woman with a hemorrhage touched the hem of Jesus' garment (cf. Mark 5.25-34 *parr).* She touched it, as He testified who said: *Who touched me?* (Mark 5.30). Yet just before, Peter said to Him: *The multitudes are pressing upon you and you ask, 'Who touched me?'* (Luke 9.45 *par).* Peter thinks that those touching are touching in a bodily, not a spiritual manner. Thus, those pressing in on Jesus were not touching Him, for they were not touching Him in faith. Only the woman, having a certain divine touch, touched Jesus and by this was healed. And because she touched Him with a divine touch, this caused power to go forth from Jesus in response to her holy touch. Hence He says: *Someone touched me: for* I *perceive that power has gone forth from me* (Luke 8.46). It is about this healing touch that John says: *Which we have touched with our hands concerning the word of life* (1 John 1.1).[47]

Origen calls attention to an important distinction. The inner man touches the Word with all his existence, which means that faith is an act of the innermost essence of man. It is not about emotions and intellectual comprehension. Through the movement of faith the entire human personality is unified with Christ so that it partakes of the divine *dynamis* of Christ.

The above quotes are imbedded in a fairly long anthropological reflection.[48] Origen refutes the thesis that the internal man is identical with blood. Man, in fact, is identical with the internal man that was created by God in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:26) as opposed to the outer man that was taken from dust (Gen 2:7). But at the same time, there is a fundamental analogy between the capabilities of the created likeness of God and the senses of the body. The vision, hearing, touch, sense of taste and all capabilities of the inner man are directed to God in all their original purity. They sense God in a spiritual way and they gain their strength from Him. Sins may soil, but cannot destroy them. The inner man can regain his original purity and can be continually regenerated in the image of his Creator (cf. Col 3:9–10). Finally, after the death of the body, he can be with Christ. St. Augustine identifies this inner man with the heart, which, unlike in the romantic poetry of later ages, represents the seed of personality, an emotional and intellectual center, the organ of faith: "to touch with heart is to believe."[49]

[47] *Dial.* 19; *see* Daly. 1992. 72.
[48] *Dial.* 14–24.
[49] Augustine, *Sermo Guelferbitanus* 14.2.

VII. TOUCHING WHAT IS REAL

The idea of a spiritual touching of God played an important role not only in Christianity, but in the Platonic tradition as well. In Plato's *Symposium* Socrates remembers a conversation with Diotima who taught him about true love. Toward the end of Diotima's speech, when this woman from Mantinea talks like a priestess who initiates her pupil into final knowledge, she admonishes them to touch what is real rather than contemplate copies of the real (210a–212a). She says that the spirit must gradually be elevated to the ultimate object of its love. First it focuses on a single beautiful body, then it notices beauty in every beautiful body. Afterwards the spirit moves on because it realizes that the bodies owe their beauty to the spirit, and this extrasensory beauty is reflected also in beautiful actions and laws. The beauty of sciences is of even higher order, but that is surpassed by unified beauty, the sight of "the sea of beauty" and "the science of beauty" *(episteme mia kalou)*. It is a kind of beauty that can be defined better with negative rather than affirmative statements. After Diotima explains what cannot be said about it, she defines it as what is homogeneous in and by itself *(monoeides)* and eternal *(aei on)*. All other representations of beauty share its beauty, but in such a way that beauty does not diminish while it is shared it and it does not grow if those that share it decay (211b). In other words, true beauty is perfectly uniform, and it is not corporal but purely intellectual. Diotima adds to this that only those who see this pure beauty live a life that is worthy of man.

> "Do you think," she continued, "it would be a worthless life for a human being to look at that, to study it in the required way, and to be together with it? Aren't you aware," she said, "that only there with it, when a person sees the beautiful in the only way it can be seen, will he ever be able to give birth, not to imitations of virtue, since he would not be reaching out toward an imitation, but to true virtue, because he would be taking hold of what is true [or *he would touch that what is true* –Gy. H.]. By giving birth to true virtue and nourishing it, he would be able to become a friend of the gods, and if any human being could become immortal, he would."[50]

Those who are led by the inferior manifestations of beauty to the source of beauty touch what is real. They are impregnated by this touch; they bear and nourish real virtues, and eventually become immortal. I do not think that Plato, or Diotima, speak of some type of transcendent beauty which can be touched by the duly prepared person in a mystical, religious trance. Translators are prone to reformulate and spiritualize the passage – perhaps under the influence of its later interpretations – so as to interpret metaphors related to sight and seeing, etc. as contemplation and perception. However, the verb *theasasthai* was used by

[50] Plato, *Symposium* 211e–212a; *see* Cobb 1993. 49.

Plato a couple of lines before in the sense of *seeing* the beauty in actions and in laws (210 c). This seeing is not at all mystical contemplation; instead, it is careful observation.[51] It is advisable to interpret the metaphors related to seeing in the speech of Diotima in relation to the basic theme of the dialogue and the circumstances situations of the persons talking with each other, rather than in relation to the sun analogy in the *Republic*, or the comments of the *Seventh Letter* about sudden, inexpressible and ultimate understanding (341c–d).[52] According the multiplied story within a story, the banquet guests had assembled to celebrate the theatrical success of their host, Agathon, who the night before had won the tragedy contest. The "star" of the theater, of the spectacle, of the *theatron* who triumphed before thirty thousand people (175e, 194a), wishes to be celebrated and be recognized ostentatiously, but in the company of Socrates his superficiality and stupidity are exposed.[53]

Diotima frequently uses verbs of seeing in her speech, because she in fact teaches us how to see correctly. One condition of correct seeing is a carefully selected object. For example, instead of looking at beautiful bodies one must recognize the source of their beauty. Another closely related requirement is purity of the intention for the person who wants to see. He should desire the presence of virtue and pure intellectual beauty *(synousia)* instead of coveting sensual pleasure, riches, luxury, or the company of pretty boys to look at. The quote above follows closely from the one below:

> "Here is the life, Socrates, my friend," said the Mantinean visitor, "that a human being should live – studying the beautiful itself. Should you ever see it, it will not seem to you to be on the level of gold, clothing, and beautiful boys and youths, who so astound you now when you look at them that you and many others are eager to gaze upon your darlings and be together with them all the time. You would cease eating and drinking, if that were possible, and instead just look at them and be with them."[54]

It seems that the Platonic-Socratic Diotima does not talk about a mystical contemplation which removes us from everyday existence, or touching a transcendent reality, but about an ethical and ascetic life that is worthy of a philosopher, which is based on the acceptance that the beauty of the world of the multitudes is only a reflection of a reality which is beauty itself.

[51] See Cobb, 1993. 80–81.
[52] Such as Louth 1983. 10–14.
[53] Plato, *Symposium* 194c–d and 201b. A nice analysis is provided by Emlyn-Jones 2004.
[54] *Ibid.* 211d; *see* Cobb 1993. 48–49.

VIII. TOUCHING THE ONE

Nevertheless, the later followers of Plato did not understand Diotima's teaching in such a prosaic manner. This is what Porphyry says about his master, Plotinus, "who often raised himself in thought, according to the ways Plato teaches in the *Banquet*, to the First and Transcendent God." And this God, who appeared several times to Plotinus, is characterized specifically with the affirmative-negative method used in the Symposium "who has neither shape, nor any intelligible form, but is throned above intellect and all the intelligible."[55] How can rise up to this God existing above everything if he cannot be grasped as a form, and therefore he cannot be contemplated as beauty? Plotinus responds that this God can only be touched. "One is not absent from any and absent from all, so that in its presence it is not present except to those who are able and prepared to receive it, so as to be in accord with it, and as if grasp it and touch it in their likeness."[56]

How to make sense of the One being and yet not being present? It is simple: "it is always present to anyone who is able to touch it, but is not present to the one who is unable."[57] The One is at the center of the human being, therefore those who touch Him touch their own centers, and will become more than themselves. But those who do not touch Him, leave themselves behind. "For a god is what is linked to that centre, but that which stands far from it is a multiple human being or a beast."[58] Plotinus understands the comment of Diotima, according to which a person bears and nourishes real virtues and becomes immortal through touch, to mean that only the soul that touches the One leads a real life:

> and its true life is there; for our present life, the life without God, is a trace of life imitating that life. But life in that realm is the active actuality of Intellect; and the active actuality generates gods in quit contact with that Good, and generates beauty, and generates righteousness, and generates virtue.[59]

And because the One is beyond existence, those who touch Him rise above existence.[60] Therefore, in Plotinus' understanding, the eternal, monadic form being in the *Symposium (monoeides)* changes into the One without form, beyond existence. The One is above everything that can be comprehended. The intellect may, therefore, long for it with loving desire, but will never be able to reach

[55] *Vita Plotini* 23; *see* Armstrong 1969. 69.
[56] *Enn.* 6.9.4; *see* Armstrong 1988. 317.
[57] *Enn.* 6.9.7; *see* Armstrong 1988. 327.
[58] Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.9.8; *see* Armstrong 1988. 331.
[59] *Enn.* 6.9.9; *see* Armstrong 1988. 335.
[60] *See Enn.* 6.9.11.

it (see Perczel 1997. 223–264). The encounter with the One is a quiet touch, in which the intellect surpasses its own capacity, that is, understanding.

From Plotinus' point of view, Plato is in fact a mystic. As St. Augustine puts it, Plato has come to life in Plotinus, to which we may add, yes, the mystical Plato.[61] Perhaps more than two centuries after the birth of Christianity, this was bound to happen. Or is it the other way round, and without a mystical Plato no Christian mysticism would exist? Whatever the case may be, there are numerous similarities between the two traditions, Christianity and Platonism, but the differences between the two traditions are also significant. I did not intend to address questions of philological, historical, or the history of religion here. I have only highlighted shared concepts in the spiritual teaching of two contemporaries, the Christian philosopher Origen who studied in Alexandria and the Platonic Plotinus. The analysis of the concept of "faith" through the metaphor of "touch" led me to the central issues of Christian and Neo-Platonic mysticism. Undeniably, the two approaches share many similarities. According to the Church Fathers, faith surpasses intellectual activity because in faith we do not understand Christ, we touch him internally: we unite with Him in love and we receive divine power as a result of this inner touching. According to Plotinus, the desiring and loving intellect may touch, but cannot grasp, the One who is above all reason. If this happens, the human being becomes a divine, and the intellect bears beauty, justice, and virtue.

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[61] Augustine, *Acad*. 3.18.41.

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Gyula Klima

Words and What Is Beyond Words*

I. INTRODUCTION: WORDS, WORDS, WORDS …

– What do you read, my lord?
– Words, words, words.
– What is the matter, my lord?
– Between who?
– I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

The famous little exchange between Hamlet and Polonius quoted here intriguingly points to several important issues relevant to our subject matter. First, the things we call words are in themselves just insignificant sounds we make, no matter how articulate, unless they successfully convey our thoughts. Second, although the noises we make are words only if they convey our thoughts, our words are not *about* the thoughts they convey; they are about what those thoughts are about. For example, when say 'A man is running' my words convey my thought that a man is running, but they are not about this thought, but about the man this thought is about. Third, although we usually take the relationship between words and thoughts as a given, *which* words convey precisely *what* thoughts *on which occasions* of their use, is not a trifling matter. Indeed, it is not a trifling matter especially if we take into account not only how the same words of the same language can convey different thoughts on different occasions, but also the added complications caused by using different languages for conveying and articulating human thoughts in general. Finally, if words are about what our thoughts are about, then what is truly beyond words is only what is truly beyond human thought; but how can we even think about what is beyond our thoughts? How can we intelligently speak about what is beyond our words; about what we actually do have a word for, *the ineffable?*

* This is a slightly revised version of a talk on the pre-assigned subject I delivered in 2019, "Words and What is Beyond Words", at *Tikkun Olam* ("Fixing the World"*): Current Challenges of Universities of Faith in a Secular World, A Catholic-Jewish Colloquium*, Bar-Ilan University, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, Israel, November 19, 2019. A video clip of the talk and the ensuing discussion is available here: < https://youtu.be/S_saMtNJshQ >.

In this little introduction to our discussion, I will try to address our topic in a somewhat more systematic fashion than the previous questions may suggest. The framework for this discussion should be what we usually refer to as Aristotle's "semantic triangle", describing the relationships between words, thoughts and things, the things in question being the objects of our thoughts conveyed by our words. It is also clear, however, that our individual words can have the function of conveying our thoughts only insofar as they are the building blocks of a human language. So, we need to expand our investigations from the single words of a language and their relations to our thoughts and their objects, to the relationships between human languages, human thoughts, and the possible objects of human thoughts in general.

Now words can constitute a language only if they can enter into combinations to form complex phrases to express complex thoughts resulting from the combination of the concepts expressed by single words. But not just any old combination of simple words can result in a meaningful complex phrase that properly expresses a complex human thought; after all, a mere list of words does not constitute a phrase: hence there is the need for a grammar or syntax for any human language, which describes the rules of proper construction.

On the side of their *syntax,* one important feature of all human languages, whether natural or artificial, is their *generativity:* their syntactical rules generate a potential infinity of well-formed phrases out of a finite vocabulary. But of course, in order for us to be able to make sense of all these potentially infinite phrases, we should be able to construct their meaning based on the known meanings of their components. Thus, on the side of their *semantics,* all human languages, whether natural or artificial, have another important feature, namely, *compositionality,* which is the semantic rule that the meaning of a complex phrase is a function of the meanings of its components. But in natural human languages, actually *used* as the medium of human thought and communication, the situation is not so simple. For these *natural* languages, in contrast to the artificial languages of logic, math and computing, twist and bend the clear-cut rules of syntax and semantics in their *pragmatics*, endowing them with a further feature, which I might call their "*malleability*". It is this *pragmatic malleability* that allows us to use our words in all sorts of secondary roles in relation to their primary meanings, as when we use them self-referentially (in contrast to their ordinary reference), or metaphorically or analogically (in contrast to their ordinary meanings), or when we use set phrases non-compositionally (such as "man's best friend" or "rosy-fingered dawn"), say, for rhetorical, comical, satirical, poetic or other stylistic effect.

So, given all this variety of words and languages and their uses in their relations to our thoughts and what we are thinking about, I suggest that in the subsequent reflections let us try to systematize our emerging questions in relation to the framework provided by the above-described triad of features of human

languages in trying to grasp what we *can* reach with our words and thoughts, so that eventually we can at least *point toward* what lies beyond their reach.

I propose, therefore, the following topics for discussion:

(1) What are the best practices of linguistic interpretation? I will distinguish "literalism" and "Humpty-Dumptyism" as possible bad extremes, and "intentionalism" as "the golden mean," trying to get to the *intended meaning* of some linguistic expression under interpretation.

(2) In keeping with that targeted mean: How do we get from words to the thoughts we intend to express by them? Is there a common medium of human thought, a shared natural system of human mental representation, a common Mental Language, only differently expressed in different human languages? I will again distinguish three possible attitudes concerning the issue: conceptual "imperialism" vs. "tribalism" as two bad extremes, and "naturalism" as the desirable "golden mean," relying on the idea that all humans have the same natural capacity to acquire the concepts of each other, even if not actually sharing all their concepts all the time. It is this idea that can help us see a way to build bridges between apparently isolated conceptual schemes, whether they appear to be isolated synchronically (say, those of an Amazonian Indian and a British banker) or diachronically (say, those of a contemporary atheist, e.g., Peter Singer, and a medieval saint, e.g., St. Anselm of Canterbury; most notably, Singer has written: "The notion that human life is sacred just because it is human life is medieval" – as if that should end all discussion!).

(3) How do we get to the limits of thought? How can we know that there is something we cannot know? How can we stretch our concepts to somehow "reach beyond themselves?"

(4) Finally, how can we talk intelligently about what we manage somehow to reach conceptually, yet cannot comprehend, and hence cannot properly express in words? What are the improper, yet still legitimate uses of our words when we talk about *the ineffable*?

II. HUMAN LANGUAGES AND THEIR HERMENEUTICS

One thing that obviously distinguishes human languages is their different vocabularies (see 'man', 'homo', 'anthropos'). Yet, as anyone who knows several languages is aware, that is not the only, or even the most important difference. Different languages have very different ways of constructing well-formed phrases to convey complex thoughts: some use copulas, others do not, some use inflections, others use prepositions, some use grammatical genders, others do not, some use several tenses, others just three times, etc., etc. And on top of these obvious syntactical differences, there are also the further semantic and

pragmatic differences; the primitive vocabularies of different languages cannot be brought into a one-to-one correspondence: what one word expresses in one language, even in its fixed, primary meaning, can only be expressed by several words in another, and vice versa (see e.g. 'serendipity' in Hungarian; you would have to explain it in terms of its nominal definition: 'the faculty or phenomenon of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for'). And even the same words with the same meanings would have to be translated by different words in different contexts, not to mention the above-mentioned cases illustrating the phenomenon of *pragmatic malleability* of all these phrases in their actual use.

And there is nothing surprising in this. After all, since human languages are the product of human institution and convention, and they evolve as primarily prompted by the pragmatic needs of efficient communication, and not as driven by logical or philosophical theorizing, there is an enormous amount of flexibility in how written or spoken languages are related to human thoughts they are supposed to express and articulate in their own ways.

But this obvious truth about languages and their uses clearly poses what might be called "the hermeneutical challenge": how do we gather from all this variety of expressions what is commonly meant by them, the common thought identifiable as such even across different languages? If we put the question in this way, we can at once eliminate two bad extremes in our hermeneutical practice: "literalism" and "Humpty-Dumptyism."

The *literalist* would say that the only legitimate way of interpreting any phrase is in terms of its commonly set primary meaning, and any speaker or listener who tries to interpret it in any other way is simply making a gross error, revealing their linguistic incompetence. Now, obviously, poets and orators who *instituted* new uses for old words or even introduced new words into a language would duly protest this attitude.[1]

But this phenomenon of linguistic creativity, based on the fact that language is a human institution, should not be taken to give license to the "anything-goes" attitude of "Humpty-Dumptyism," which is obviously named after the caricaturistically extreme materialization of it in Lewis Carrol's character. ("'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less'.")

Clearly, what we are usually shooting for as our "golden mean" between these two bad extremes is what may be referred to as "intentionalism," trying to get the *intended* meaning of a phrase, based on the ordinary, primary meanings of its components, as possibly modified by context, or broader, possibly extra-linguistic, situational, or even general, cultural factors. (A good example of

[1] Shakespeare alone is credited with having introduced hundreds of new words into the English language, most of them by transforming old ones into new ones with new meanings. < https://www.litcharts.com/blog/shakespeare/words-shakespeare-invented/ >

this is 'sorry' in Australian [expression of feeling guilty] and 'Sorry' [expression of sympathy in grieving] in aboriginal English.) In short, "intentionalism," as *I mean it in this context*, is the name of the hermeneutic attitude and practice of our best efforts to get from our words to the thoughts they are meant to convey. But this description of the hermeneutic task immediately gives rise to an even bigger problem: just *how* do we get from words to thoughts? How do we identify the precise mental contents supposedly conveyed by our words? Is there a common conceptual idiom behind all spoken and written languages merely differently expressed and articulated by each? Do all human beings of all cultures have the same concepts merely differently identified in different languages? And if not, how is cross-linguistic and cross-cultural understanding ever possible, if at all?

III. HUMAN LANGUAGES AND 'MENTALESE'

Well, to deal with this question we should first of all clarify what it would even mean for all human beings to have the same Mentalese working (or just lurking?) in their minds behind their different spoken and written languages. Indeed, we should clarify this issue especially in view of the popular modern misconception concerning Mentalese, namely, that it is something "ideal," without any of the logical shortcomings of ordinary spoken languages (such as equivocations, ambiguities, vagueness, etc.), and which therefore is also uniform, being the same for all humans, who only express it differently in their different conventional, spoken and written languages. However, if the sameness of Mentalese for all humans should mean that every human mind has the same set of concepts at all times, then a number of implausible consequences would follow.

First, individually, the same human person would have to have the same set of concepts from birth to death, whereas it seems clear that an adult has concepts a child does not.

Second, interpersonally, if all persons had the same concepts at all times, then one person could not acquire a concept from another, which should put us, *qua* teachers out of business at once.

Third, historically, in possession of the same concepts at all times, all humans should have all the same a priori sciences at all times; there could be no history of mathematics or logic, which we know there is.

Finally, cross-culturally, for under the simplistic uniformity assumption, translation, and generally cross-cultural understanding would merely be a business of relabelling our otherwise shared concepts lurking behind their culturally different conventional expressions, which is again clearly not the case.

So, what is the point of insisting that mental language is the same for all, while there is more than enough evidence for grave conceptual diversities among different individuals or even the same individuals in different time periods under

different circumstances in different linguistic communities, having different experiential and cultural backgrounds? Well, conceptual diversity is obviously a great hindrance to understanding: if we don't have the same concepts, we cannot have the same thoughts, which means we are doomed to talking past each other all the time (an all too common experience in today's social discourse).

So, there is an obvious problem here, which can be, and has been, approached in at least three typically different ways, based on three radically different attitudes.

The "imperialistic" attitude would be based on the assumption that there really are no genuine conceptual diversities, or at least there should not be any, among equally rational human beings. Accordingly, one with this attitude presumes to know (a) what the primitive vocabulary of the uniform human mental language is (what kinds of simple concepts a human mind can possibly form), and (b) what the "syntax" of mental language is (what the possible rules of construction that allow the formation of [semantically] complex concepts out of simple ones are). This presumption is quite unjustified and is often coupled with an arrogant attitude that earns it the "imperialistic" title. For arrogant representatives of this view often use their presumption as a criterion of meaningfulness or intelligibility: they take whatever that is not expressible in terms of their theory to be simply meaningless or unintelligible (see e.g. the arrogant use of Fregean logic to "eliminate metaphysics" through the "logical analysis of language" by early logical positivists, or "the received view" on quantification theory quite famously described by George Boolos as such, or Anthony Kenny's use of the same in criticizing Aquinas, etc.; Boolos 1984. 430–431; Klima 2004. 567–580).

By contrast, the "tribalistic" attitude takes Mentalese to be just as variable as conventional languages are; indeed, in its extreme forms it would claim that, as a consequence, cross-cultural understanding (involving rational argument) is quite impossible, whether synchronically or diachronically, for the equally rational speakers of radically different languages in fact live in "different worlds" articulated, indeed, *constituted* by their radically different ontologies inherent in their different conceptual schemes or paradigms.[2] Originally driven by the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the idea is still palpable in all sorts of social, cultural and moral relativisms.

Finally, the "naturalistic" attitude is what I take to be the Aristotelian golden mean between these two bad extremes. It does not presume to know *a priori* what simple concepts a human mind is capable of forming under what circumstances, so it does not pretend to know what simple concepts any and every human mind must contain. To be sure, there probably *are* some minimum requirements for the elementary functioning of human rationality. But in principle even

[2] See e.g. < http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/supplement2.html > or the tons of ink spilled over the issue of "the incommensurability of paradigms."

those do not have to be the same for all; just think of the equivalent variants of propositional logic: one containing two primitive truth functions, negation and conjunction (call it "Notandian"), and yet another containing only the Sheffer-("not-both" or NAND)-function (call it "Nandian"). Still, one with this attitude does not claim that human beings are locked into their narrow-minded tribal "universes" rendering cross-cultural rational argument among them impossible (given sufficient distance and isolation in space and/or time). After all, all humans, on account of being human, have essentially the same natural capacities for concept formation, so a child born among the Notandians is just as capable of forming in his mind the Sheffer-function as another child born among the Nandians. Indeed, on top of this, with sufficient patience, benevolence and care, the Notandians and the Nandians may be able to realize that their primitives are not only humanly conceivable and learnable as primitives, but they are also inter-definable, so despite appearances to the contrary, they do not even disagree, but merely articulate provably equivalent thoughts in terms of different primitive conceptual vocabularies.

Of course, things are not always as neat and tidy as in the case of our two hypothetical tribes (provided all they do is checking the validity of their natural deductions in their respective systems). But then again, there are at least certain fragments of our different languages, encoding different "mentalities," especially the well-regulated, "disciplined" parts of scientific and mathematical and logical theories, which quite plausibly lend themselves to the sort of "easy reconstruction" that our tribes could afford. (Think for instance of the very different, yet provably equivalent, expressions of the axiom of choice in axiomatic set theory.) In other cases, the acquisition of different mentalities is a much trickier, but still not humanly impossible business. After all, all humans *qua* humans have *the same natural capacities for concept-formation*, even if they actually don't all have the same concepts, but with patience, good-will and care they *can work out their common concepts*, leading to common understanding.

However, one even trickier feature of all human minds is their finitude, and yet their ability to reach beyond their limits. Or, to put it less figuratively, we all have the ability to think about and hence to talk about what we nevertheless have to realize is unthinkable and inexpressible by us, namely, the divine.

IV. GETTING TO THE LIMITS OF ALL HUMAN THOUGHT

Clearly the very formulation of the problem is already paradoxical: after all, in this very formulation we are actually thinking and talking about what we in the same breath claim to be unthinkable and inexpressible. How come? How did we get here? Perhaps, we can get some help from some of those who got us in this predicament in the first place, by working out this concept of a transcendental

divinity. Here is, for example, Augustine of Hippo. In his *On Christian Doctrine*, Book I. Chap. 7, he describes what "all men understand by the term 'God'" as follows:

> For when the one supreme God of gods is thought of, even by those who believe that there are other gods, and who call them by that name, and worship them as gods, their thought takes the form of an endeavour to reach the conception of a nature, than which nothing more excellent or more exalted exists. And since men are moved by different kinds of pleasures, partly by those which pertain to the bodily senses, partly by those which pertain to the intellect and soul, those of them who are in bondage to sense think that either the heavens, or what appears to be most brilliant in the heavens, or the universe itself, is God of gods: or if they try to get beyond the universe, they picture to themselves something of dazzling brightness, and think of it vaguely as infinite, or of the most beautiful form conceivable; or they represent it in the form of the human body, if they think that superior to all others. Or if they think that there is no one God supreme above the rest, but that there are many or even innumerable gods of equal rank, still these too they conceive as possessed of shape and form, according to what each man thinks the pattern of excellence. Those, on the other hand, who endeavour by an effort of the intelligence to reach a conception of God, place Him above all visible and bodily natures, and even above all intelligent and spiritual natures that are subject to change. All, however, strive emulously to exalt the excellence of God: nor could anyone be found to believe that any being to whom there exists a superior is God. And so, all concur in believing that God is that which excels in dignity all other objects.[3]

Augustine's point is most aptly summarized by the famous Anselmian formula: God is that than which nothing greater can be thought. Based on this formula, the famous "ontological argument" can be teased out more explicitly from his *Proslogion* in the following way:

[3] "Deum omnes intellegunt, quo nihil melius. Nam cum ille unus cogitatur deorum Deus, ab his etiam qui alios et suspicantur et vocant et colunt deos sive in caelo sive in terra, ita cogitatur ut aliquid quo nihil sit melius atque sublimius illa cogitatio conetur attingere. Sane quoniam diversis moventur bonis, partim eis quae ad corporis sensum, partim eis quae ad animi intellegentiam pertinent, illi qui dediti sunt corporis sensibus, aut ipsum caelum aut quod in caelo fulgentissimum vident, aut ipsum mundum Deum deorum esse arbitrantur. Aut, si extra mundum ire contendunt, aliquid lucidum imaginantur idque vel infinitum vel ea forma quae optima videtur, inani suspicione constituunt, aut humani corporis figuram cogitant, si eam ceteris anteponunt. Quod si unum Deum deorum esse non putant et potius multos aut innumerabiles aequalis ordinis deos, etiam eos tamen prout cuique aliquid corporis videtur excellere, ita figuratos animo tenent. Illi autem qui per intellegentiam pergunt videre quod Deus est, omnibus eum naturis visibilibus et corporalibus, intellegibilibus vero et spiritalibus, omnibus mutabilibus praeferunt. Omnes tamen certatim pro excellentia Dei dimicant, nec quisquam inveniri potest qui hoc Deum credat esse quo est aliquid melius. Itaque omnes hoc Deum esse consentiunt quod ceteris rebus omnibus anteponunt." Translated by the Rev. Professor J. F. Shaw; see Augustine 1887. 524.

(1) God is d: *that than which nothing greater can be thought* [nominal definition of 'God']
(2) d is in the understanding (i.e., d can be thought) [self-evident]
(3) d is not in reality [the Fool's assumption]
(4) If something is in the understanding and not in reality, then something greater than it can be thought (namely, something that is in reality)
[self-evident, based on the meaning of "greater"]
(5) Something greater than d can be thought, i.e., something greater than that than which nothing greater can be thought can be thought
[1, 2, 3, 4, by UI, CON, MP, SI]

What this argument soundly proves is that whoever is thinking of something as that than which nothing greater can be thought cannot deny its existence on pain of self-contradiction. But then, an atheist would never think of anything as such, for when he refers to God, he simply *parasitically* rides his reference on the believer's concept without ever sharing it: he thinks of something of which he knows *the believer thinks as* that than which nothing greater can be thought, but he, thinking that it is just a figment of the believer's mind, thinks it is nothing (i.e., not any single thing). (For more on this issue, see Klima 2000. 69–88; Klima 2003. 131–134; Klima 2008. 53–77.) This is why he needs to be persuaded in the first place to think of something *non-parasitically, as that than which nothing greater can be thought*; hence the need for *a posteriori* arguments starting from phenomena that are better known to us all regardless of our philosophical or religious predilections (such as the existence of motion, causation, generation and corruption, degrees of perfection, goal-directedness, or our own existence). But assuming we are the fools trying to get a spiritual guidance for our lives, once we have gone through this arduous process and persuaded ourselves that there is nothing crazy about genuinely thinking of something as that than which nothing greater can be thought, and so we can see that in the end that Anselm was right, and it only took us a while to genuinely acquire his concept and use it as our own, he gives us a further twist to the plot. He shows us that what we have struggled to genuinely think of as something that satisfies his formula, we cannot really and genuinely think of. As he says:

> Therefore, Lord, not only are You that than which a greater cannot be thought, but You are also something greater than can be thought. For since it is possible to think that there is such a one, then, if You are not this same being something greater than You could be thought – which cannot be. (Anselm of Canterbury 1998. 96.)

So, having gone through all the trouble to somehow, so to speak, "grab the foot of God," He slips out of our mental grasp into "a transcendental fog." Well, what now?

V. GOING BEYOND WORDS, I.E., BEYOND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN THOUGHT AND LANGUAGE

Actually, in the very description of the scenario we are facing, when I talked about "God's foot slipping out from our mental grasp into a transcendental fog," I already started doing the only thing we can do in this scenario: start speaking in metaphors, analogies, using all sorts of improper, yet not illegitimate forms of speech. In this remark, *both* characteristics of the forms of speech mentioned are meant to be equally weighty: *improper*, but not *illegitimate*. Let me try to explain.

First, no ordinary words in their proper meaning can properly capture with their content the divine essence. Our ordinary words are subordinated to concepts we abstract from creatures, all of whose essences are only a participation in the intensive infinity of divine essence. Therefore, even with the words coined directly to refer to the divinity, such as 'God,' 'Creator,' we are only mentally pointing toward Him, without ever grasping his essence. How can that be? Again, we can only use a metaphor, this time coming from Descartes: we can touch the bark of a huge oak tree, even if we cannot embrace it.

In the second place, however, just because we can use our words *only* in some improper senses to describe the divine, it doesn't mean that just anything goes when talking about the divine. If we can use a term in some improper sense, then it has to have some proper sense, for we call the improper sense "improper" only as opposed to what we take to be "proper". But just because the term has to have some proper sense, it does not follow that the term has *only one* proper sense. It would be ridiculous, for example, to try to rule out the several verbal senses of the word 'bat' as improper (as in talking about batting an eye or the batting average of a baseball player), on the grounds that the proper sense of the word is that in which we use it to talk about certain flying mammals. So, of course, the same term may have several, equally legitimate and proper uses and senses in the same language, provided that the term in question is equivocal, or when at least it is not purely univocal. And, equally obviously, what establishes any of these uses and senses as proper and acceptable is the existence of the well-established common usage of that term in that sense, an existing linguistic tradition that in better dictionaries is also supported by citations of authoritative texts clearly illustrating, or even explicitly establishing, the sense in question.

Thus, although it is clearly within my power to use any word in any odd, idiosyncratic way I wish, I can only do so at the risk of disqualifying myself as a competent speaker of the language, at least with regard to some proper usage of the term in question. Of course, this is not to say that I cannot legitimately use a term in some improper way, say, for the sake of humour, irony, poetic expression, etc. But these "secondary language games" presuppose my competence in the "primary language game" of understanding and being able

to use the term in its proper sense or senses in the first place. Thus, to "participate in the game" of speaking the language, I first must be able to align my usage with an existing linguistic tradition, which then of course I can also influence in my own ways, if I manage to establish some authority concerning some uses of some terms.

The philosophically relevant lesson of these (rather trivial) points seems to be the following. In the first place, although (nay, *because*) linguistic usage is conventional, it cannot be entirely arbitrary. One can only qualify as a competent user of a language by aligning one's usage with an established linguistic tradition, based on some commonly accepted authoritative usage. In the second place, joining a linguistic community as a competent speaker consists precisely in conforming to the authoritative usage of that community. However, even within the same language as well as across different languages, there are various linguistic communities with various standards for usage based on various types of authorities, and, even within what may be identified as one and the same community concerning the usage of certain parts of their language or languages, modifications (indeed, schisms) may develop over time. Therefore, rational conversation even within the same language and within the same linguistic community is inevitably exposed to the contingencies of this dynamic of emerging and falling linguistic authorities and correspondingly changing meaning and usage, not to mention the complications on the interface of different languages, religions and cultures. To be sure, in view of the foregoing, this is nothing to despair about. One only has to be constantly aware of, and reflect on, this dynamic, in order to keep rational discourse across the board possible.

So, what should be our guiding light, in this rational discourse? In one word: *rationality*, which is *love* or *goodwill* on its active side, on the part of the will, and *understanding* on its receptive, theoretical side, on the part of the intellect.

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Joshua P. Hochschild

Thomas Aquinas, *Magister Ludi*: The Relation of Medieval Logic and Theology

Ludus delectabilis est, et contemplatio sapientiae maximam delectationem habet.
– Thomas Aquinas: *Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus, proemium*

I. INTRODUCTION

Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game (Das Glasperlenspiel)* is Aristotelian science fiction. Published in 1943, Hesse's last, brooding, existential novel describes neither advanced technology nor new discoveries in natural science; instead, it imagines an advanced culture of philosophical study and learning, an aristocratic intellectual bulwark against utilitarian science and shallow mass media, which synthesized and developed the best habits of academy, monastery, conservatory and university – a kind of alternative-history neo-scholasticism.

At the heart of this culture is a game – "the Glass Bead Game" – which makes it possible to carry out theoretical exploration and conversation, ritually but creatively, through the manipulation of highly symbolic glass beads. A move in the game is meaningful not only because of the beads' individual meanings, but additionally because of the relation between the beads to each other in the game, and even more the relation between the play of the present game and that of past games. Moves, governed by elaborate and highly traditional rules, are thus not only assertions or questions but allusions to or variations on past moves, and part of a larger overall conversation about or exploration into the profoundest ideas and highest objects of contemplation.

As such, the "game" is a means of the most refined and intense spiritual discipline:

> It represented an elite, symbolic form of seeking for perfection, a sublime alchemy, an approach to that Mind which beyond all images and multiplicities is one within itself – in other words, to God… The symbols and formulas of the Glass Bead Game combined structurally, musically, and philosophically within the framework of a uni-

> versal language, were nourished by all the sciences and arts, and strove in play to achieve perfection, pure being, the fullness of reality. Thus "realizing" was a favorite expression among the players. They considered their Games a path from Becoming to Being, from potentiality to reality.[1]

In Hesse's alternative history, the origin of the game was traced through medieval intellectual culture (the backstory mentions Abelard and Nicholas of Cusa, and the book begins with a Latin epigraph about "non entia" from the fictional Albertus Secundus), and the culture of the game retained a respectful relationship with, though it was distinct from, the Catholic Church. But the rules and symbols of the game were so comprehensive that they could be used to articulate or develop any sort of artistic or theoretical or spiritual expression, and so of course

> the terminology of Christian theology, or at any rate that part of it which seemed to have become part of the general cultural heritage, was naturally absorbed into the symbolic language of the Game. Thus one of the principles of the Creed, a passage from the Bible, a phrase from one of the Church Fathers, or from the Latin text of the Mass could be expressed and taken into the Game just as easily and aptly as an axiom of geometry or a melody of Mozart. (Hesse 1969. 41.)

In Hesse's novel, to experience a certain kind of conversation and contemplation, one must engage in the Game itself; the development of certain kinds of conversations and access to certain kinds of contemplation was itself the development of the Game, and the development of the Game was the development of those most noble human endeavors. "We would scarcely be exaggerating if we ventured to say that for the small circle of genuine Glass Bead Game players the Game was virtually equivalent to worship, although it deliberately eschewed developing any theology of its own" (Hesse 1969. 41).

I want to suggest that in describing a "game" with a crucial relationship to theology, Hesse offers a metaphor for medieval logic. This paper will proceed by exploring the appropriateness of the metaphor, and then by considering what we can learn from it about the study of logic and theology in medieval thinkers, especially in Thomas Aquinas. For those whose primary interest is medieval logic, this will be an invitation to consider that apparently separate questions from metaphysics and theology contribute to the very intelligibility of medieval logic. For those who are interested in theology – especially the theology of Saint Thomas, doctor of the Church – it is an invitation to take seriously the essential role of logic in Thomistic theology (and so, necessarily by extension, in the

[1] Hesse 1969. 40. This translation is subtitled (in parentheses) "Magister Ludi," which was the title given to an earlier English translation by Mervyn Saval, published in 1949.

historic development and expression of the faith of the Church). In short, I will argue simply that one cannot understand medieval logic without understanding medieval theology, and that one cannot understand medieval theology without understanding medieval logic. We will see, in fact, that each helped develop the other, as important facets of a larger project.

In a later section of this paper I provide specific examples of how theological inquiry that is not accompanied by an adequate understanding of medieval logic can lead one to misinterpret or misunderstand central Christian theological claims. Using specific examples from Aquinas, I will show how neglect of, or inadequate understandings in, the realm of logic can obscure significant features of an orthodox theological position, confuse basic claims of traditional theology, make orthodox theological claims appear heretical, or even render as inscrutable metaphysical claims that are presented as basic and necessary rational truths. These are examples of misunderstanding *theological* claims, rooted in a failure to enter into the relevant *conceptual framework* in which those claims were formulated; they reveal the importance of understanding the relationship of historical expressions of Christian faith to medieval logic – and thus the opportunity for those versed in medieval logic to help clarify and explain the work of historical – and so also contemporary – theologians.

But before getting to that, I will explore in the earlier parts of this paper the other side of this relation, that is, how knowledge of theology helps us to make sense of medieval logic. Interest in specific theological doctrines, and general Christian theological commitment, provided impetus for the development of much of medieval logic. Consequently scholars attempting to understand medieval logic benefit from familiarity with and appreciation of its theological context. I approach this part of my thesis by a sort of *via negativa*, by showing first that attempts to understand medieval logic on its own, without attention to any theological impetus, render the very practice and purpose of medieval logic rather puzzling.

II. SPADE'S QUESTION: WHAT WERE MEDIEVAL LOGICIANS DOING?

The past half century or so has seen a strong revival of attention to medieval philosophy, with especially robust attention to medieval logic. But paradoxically, the high degree of attention paid to medieval logic has not always been accompanied by a keen understanding of, or even interest in, what medieval logic is for. Thus, for instance, *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Kretzmann 1982; "CHOLMP") was rather lopsidedly preoccupied with logic – such that in his review of the volume Alfred Freddoso observed

> the disproportionately large amount of space allotted to the discussion of medieval logic and grammar – more than half the text of CHOLMP, once we discount the four historical essays meant to set the intellectual stage for medieval scholasticism and its modern scion, neoscholasticism. Less than half of CHOLMP is devoted to late medieval metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. Astonishingly, late medieval philosophical theology receives (by design) virtually no attention at all. (Freddoso 1984. 151.)

Freddoso's point is not only that attention to medieval logic has come at the expense of attention to other areas, but that it has, in a way, come at its own expense. As he continues:

> CHOLMP's inordinate stress on logic obscures the fact that the most profound thinkers of the late medieval era (e.g., Bonaventure, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham) viewed logic primarily as a tool, albeit an indispensable one, for dealing with the "big" questions in metaphysics and theology. To illustrate, Aquinas's perceptive discussion of the logic of reduplicative propositions occurs within his treatment of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Again, by the time that Ockham wrote his groundbreaking *Summa Logicae,* he had already employed almost all his distinctive logical insights in one or another metaphysical or theological context. (Freddoso 1984. 152.)

The observation that medieval thinkers often addressed logical questions in theological contexts might seem obvious, but it could also seem insignificant and purely accidental to the study of logic. Of course we find medieval thinkers attending to logic in theological contexts, because they happened to be interested in theological questions; but if one assumes that logical resources are in principle independent from the theological discussion, we are free to attend to the logic ideas without any consideration of – or even curiosity about – their theological context.

The lack of curiosity about what medieval logic is for is highlighted by the rare case of a scholar who explicitly raised the question. Almost twenty years after the publication of the *Cambridge History*, Paul V. Spade wrote a striking paper expressing genuine perplexity that so much of medieval logic doesn't have an obvious purpose, and that so few medieval logicians are explicit about what their work is about. The title of his paper was: "Why Don't Mediaeval Logicians Ever Tell Us What They're Doing?" The subtitle is even more dramatic: "What is this, A Conspiracy?" (Spade 2000).

To illustrate his point, Spade gave four examples from medieval logic. *Exhibit A* was the theory of *obligationes* – a highly structured, rule-bound form of argument, in which counter-factuals and thought experiments play a large role. As Spade explained, on the one hand obligations-theory can't be just about testing logical skill (since some of the rules were rather arbitrary and the participant's

knowledge of actual facts often mattered), and yet on the other hand it does not seem to have been about gaining any knowledge unconnected to the rules of the game themselves. Texts about the *obligationes* are silent on their purpose.

Exhibit B was the theory of exposition – a method of articulating an individual proposition into a logically equivalent conjunction of propositions which make explicit what is only implicit in the original proposition. This sounds like "logical analysis," but as Spade argued, it wasn't always the case that the conjunction of more explicit propositions is more perspicuous, logically or ontologically – the "exposition" is often more puzzling and difficult to comprehend than the original proposition it "expounds" – and medieval thinkers who practiced this are not forthcoming about why an exposition is useful.

Exhibit C was the theory of "proofs of propositions" – a set of strategies for showing how one proposition can be "proved" by other propositions. But the kind of "proof" described is neither one of establishing truth nor of removing doubt, nor is it purely about logically valid form. There were specific rules about what could be accepted as "immediate" propositions incapable of "proof" – but those engaged in this theory don't seem to follow their own rules, and again are silent on what the theory is for.

Exhibit D was the theory of supposition, which Spade argues was not just an account of how terms indicate things (a theory of reference) but a theory of how to interpret a term and the things it refers to (descent to singulars) depending on the kind of sentence it appears in (and so sometimes involving also a kind of exposition of one proposition into an "equivalent" set of more explicit propositions). That has reminded some of modern quantification theory, but Spade convincingly shows that the comparison is misplaced: supposition theory's so-called "equivalences" sometimes weren't. And once again, "no one knows what that was all about."

Spade's formulation of the problem was refreshing in its honesty. Still today, proposals about the purpose of medieval logic are not common, and even the fact that its purpose is a question can go unrecognized. Terrence Parson's *Articulating Medieval Logic*, for instance, is as thorough and insightful a study of medieval logic as one could hope for, and yet not only does it not answer, it doesn't even ask, the question of what medieval logic was for (Parsons 2014).

Some scholars have done work that sheds light on the purpose of medieval logical theories. One particularly fruitful approach has been that taken by Catarina Dutilh Novaes, whose work on the development and nature of logic can be understood, at least in part, as a response to Spade's question. Dutilh Novaes emphasizes the social and dialogical dimension of logic. In the case of supposition theory (Spade's Exibit D) for instance, she argues that it is essential to understand it in terms of the context of certain interpretive practices, namely textual commentary and disputations. This allows her to reinterpret supposition theory, not as a theory of reference, but as a theory of "interpretation, of seman-

tic analysis…, of hermeneutics" (Dutilh Novaes 2008. 30) or more specifically a theory of "algorithmic hermeneutics" (Dutilh Novaes 2008. 7ff).

In another case, Dutihl Novaes interprets *obligationes* theories (Spade's Exhibit A) as providing a model of what it means to act and talk rationally, i.e., to take part in (mainly, but not exclusively) discursive social practice. She describes this as a "game" (Dutilh Novaes 2005), and more specifically as "a regimentation of 'the game of giving and asking for reasons'" (Dutilh Novaes 2009).[2] The notion of a "game of giving and asking for reasons" comes to her from Brandom 1994, who traces it Wilfred Sellars.[3] The provenance could suggest a functionalist, empiricist, and pragmatist approach to philosophy, far from the scholastic mode.[4] But for Dutilh Novaes is connects what is usually perceived as the more abstract nature of logic with the socially-embodied practice of human rational inquiry. The game "should," she says, "account for what makes us social, linguistic and rational animals"; in addition to being about rules of inference, the game of giving and asking for reasons "is fundamentally a normative game in that the *propriety* of the moves to be undertaken by the participants is at the central stage" (Dutilh Novaes 2009).

This is a promising and very helpful approach, not only for understanding medieval logic but for understanding its relation to modern logic and for reimagining how they might be seen as parts of a larger, common project. As Dutilh Novaes argues in a more recent essay,

> traces of logic's dialogical origins persist in recent developments, which means that taking the dialogical or dialectical perspective into account is essential to come to a thorough understanding of the nature of logic even in its more recent, mathematical instantiations – also because mathematics itself is very much a dialogical affair. The history of logic also leads us to question the overly individualistic conception of knowledge and of our cognitive lives that we inherited from Descartes and others, and perhaps to move towards a greater appreciation for the essentially social nature of human cognition. (Dutihl Novaes 2017.)

If we are to take the social dimension of human life as relevant to logic, then it gives new weight to Freddoso's comments about scholars' neglect of the actual interests of medieval thinkers. In principle, a general attention to the social con-

[2] This argument was further developed in Dutilh Novaes 2011.

[3] Sellars 1997 (Sellar's book was originally published in 1956). See also Brandon's "Study Guide" appended to the 1997 edition.

[4] In fact, the metaphor of dialectic as a "game" goes back at least as far as Plato, who has the title character of *Parmenides* describe the structured inquiry into One as a "serious game" (*pragmatiōdē paidian paizein*, 137b3). For an interpretation of Eleatic "antilogic" (or *elenchus*, or the "art of contradicting") as game, see Castelnérac 2013. On Proclus's attention to the game metaphor in *Parmenides*, and its development in Renaissance commentary, see Bartocci 2019.

text of medieval logic will not be complete without reference to a specific kind of community invested in that logic: in short, a Christian community (even, one might say, the Church itself, not considered as a political entity but as an embodied expression of spiritual interests, ideas, beliefs, relationships, and practices).

It is not controversial to point out that medieval logical reflections took place within a particular intellectual culture in which an obvious motivation and inspiration was desire for better understanding and effective communication of the Christian faith, and it doesn't take much of a stretch to suggest that this climate would have some effect on medieval logic's nature and purpose. And once pointed out, we realize that the importance of theology, and specifically Christian theology, for understanding medieval logic has not really been hidden from us.[5]

III. MOODY'S ANSWER: LOGIC'S THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

In what almost seems like an observation formulated to anticipate Spade's query, Ernest Moody in 1975 characterized the purpose of medieval logic by contrast to the purposes of ancient and modern logic:

> The fundamental historical condition that affected the development of logic in the Middle Ages, and that determined its distinctive form and character, was the function assigned to it, and the part played by it, in the clerically dominated Christian program of education. Whereas the logic of Aristotle was developed for the primary end of exhibiting the formal structure of demonstrations in the sciences of nature, and modern logic has been developed as an abstract formulation and axiomatic derivation of the principles of mathematics, medieval logic functioned as an art of language *(sermocinalis scientia)* closely associated with grammar, to be used as a means of construing authoritative texts of Sacred Scripture and of the Church Fathers and of establishing interpretations of such texts that would be logically coherent and free from contradiction. (Moody 1975. 373–374.)

So to be clear, Moody identifies three stages of logic. The oldest, Aristotelian logic, was a tool for exhibiting the structure of reasoning about nature. The most recent, modern logic, is a more abstract and mathematical exercise, meant to be more formal and axiomatic. In between, medieval logic was "an art of language" developed for avoiding error and contradiction in interpreting holy texts.[6]

[5] Even so, Gabbay 2008 gives little explicit attention to theology apart from a section on "logic and theology" in Marenbon's chapter on the Latin tradition until 1100. There is attention to theology in the chapter on Abelard, and only a small amount in the section on Aquinas discussing the "mental word" and analogy.

[6] In Gabbay 2008, Gyula Klima's contribution on nominalism notes that logic's status as a universal art accounts for its connection to other philosophical questions: "The primary

Moody's account of the purpose of medieval logic makes sense as soon as one hears it, or it should. On the face of it, a cultural or religious tradition committed to the unity of truth and to the harmony of faith and reason, and confident not only in the existence, wisdom and knowability of God but also in God's essential reasonableness (an apparent implication of characterizing God as *Logos*), and thereby invested in a particular way in textual exposition (reading and interpreting inspired scriptures) and in evangelization (announcing, teaching and defending the saving truth) – a community invested in all this would and should find itself embracing, and in turn shaping, the development of an "art of language."[7] Logic, whatever its origins and former contexts, was recognized by medieval Christian thinkers as just this art – the "art of arts" or even "science of sciences" – and was embraced accordingly.

Although much scholarly focus on medieval logic is in its later developments, the fruitful relationship of logic and theology was recognized especially clearly among early medieval thinkers, so that scholars (such as John Marenbon) have described early medieval philosophy as being born from the interaction of theology and logic.[8] The theological orientation of medieval interest in logic even imbues it with a spiritual purpose, so that Anselm (as Eileen Sweeney has argued) regarded the purpose of logic as supporting the project of union with God.[9] And we can regard it as a significant new development in later medieval philosophy that logic might come to be treated as a discipline that has more autonomy and independence from theology (as Zupko 2003 argues is so crucial to Buridan's legacy).

In short, Moody's answer suggests that the question of the purpose of medieval logic cannot be adequately answered without reference to the fundamen-

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theoretical reason why medieval logic comprised subjects that we would recognize as falling under such varied subjects as metaphysics, cognitive psychology, linguistics, the philosophy of science, and epistemology is the medieval conception of logic as a universal theoretical tool *(organon)* of reason in its pursuit of truth and avoidance of error" (Klima 2008). For the same reason, it was also crucially tied to and motivated by *theological* conviction.

[7] Sweeney 2006. 1: "…the sciences of words – logic, grammar, and rhetoric – are developed and their power harnessed in order to name God, interpret scripture, argue in support of Christian doctrine, and ultimately reach God in prayer and meditation."

[8] Marenbon 1981. 4: "Early medieval philosophy grew out of the fusion of two disciplines which were not themselves philosophy: logic and theology. The tools of logic were summoned to clarify and order Christian dogma; and, far more important, concepts and arguments logical in origin were charged with theological meaning." Cf. 139: "The imposition of theological interests on logical texts led [medieval thinkers] to ask questions about the fundamental constitution of reality, and to give answers which were consistent with Christian dogma but not in any simple way derived from it."

[9] Sweeney 2012 describes logic and theology as having a "mutual and necessary connection," neither one subordinated to the other (76; cf. 107). "Anselm always *both* takes the tools of grammar and dialectic into his theological works *and* works hard to show the ways in which those tools and that language is transformed by his subject matter, whether it is God or creatures as from God" (345). Anselm's "rational and spiritual projects are elements of an integral whole" (369).

tally theological orientation of those who used it. It would be too simplistic to say that medieval logicians were *doing theology* (although often the texts that we refer to for our knowledge of medieval logic are in fact theological texts, and even explicitly logical texts were often intended as training for further theological study). On the other hand, it is not quite sufficient to say only that, insofar as theological concerns were intellectual concerns, they were simply explored according to whatever set of logical methods and terminology were available, as if these were developed independently of, and can be understood apart from, theological context.[10]

IV. THE GAME AND THE TOOL: LEARNING FROM THE METAPHORS FOR LOGIC

We are used to thinking of a "game" as a paradigmatic case of a leisure activity, in the Aristotelian sense – something done for its own sake. And yet, as the usage of Hesse and Dutihl Novaes helps to remind us, a game can also be useful, and serve a purpose outside of itself.[11] To describe logic as a "game" is thus not to describe it as useless or ordered only to its own ends (much less to describe it as frivolous or unserious, or as an arbitrary and fully-self-contained series of rules). To describe a logical practice as a game is to acknowledge its integrity as a system of rules which guide choices, a system which takes practice to master, and in which accomplished practitioners can take enjoyment in the work of mastering. As a game, it may have its own intrinsic goods – but that does not mean that it does not serve other, higher goods, nor that the development of the

[10] Novikoff 2013 adds helpful historical detail and cultural nuance to what I'm calling "Moody's answer" to the question of logic's purpose. It aims to "trace the origins and influence of scholastic disputation as a normative cultural practice in medieval Europe," especially the late 11th to late 13th centuries. Novikoff finds the roots of medieval dialectic in the dialogue and ancient literary forms, and identifies five stages of growth from dialectic as a pedagogical ideal to the defining feature of medieval intellectual life: (1) Anselm used dialectic to persuade about faith and explain the rationality of faith; (2) the transition from monasteries to new schools involved the development of new tools for studying scripture and structuring debate; (3) with new Aristotelian texts (the *logica nova*) came new models of dialectic argumentation (e.g. in John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*); (4) disputation was integrated into university teaching, and with its pedagogical institutionalization came also new literary forms modeled on classroom debates; (5) disputation ventured outside the universities into the public sphere.

[11] Aquinas answers an Aristotelian objection that playful action is not directed to a further end, in *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 168, a. 2, ad 3: "the very operations of the game, with respect to its species, are not ordered to some other end, but the delight taken in such acts is ordered to the refreshment and peace of soul." Cf. Aquinas's proemium to his commentary on Boethius' *De hebdomadibus*, which embraces game / play *(ludus / ludo, ludere)* as a model for contemplation.

game should not be shaped by and improved by its ordering toward those higher goods.[12]

With such reflection on the metaphor of a game in mind, we may fruitfully revisit another common metaphor for logic, mentioned by Freddoso, and more common in the tradition: the metaphor of a tool. In a kind of mirror image of the simplistic interpretation of the "game," we are used to thinking of a tool not only as an instrument but as *merely* an instrument, and thus with no intrinsic value nor even any essential connection to the good that it serves – it is always ready to be replaced by a newer, better tool. Thus in common usage the image of a "tool" becomes the icon of instrumental or utilitarian reasoning. Yet in many crafts, the tool is an essentially designed implement, a part of the craft and an extension of the craftsman bringing him closer to his craft. Indeed, in some crafts, the craftsmen themselves design and develop their tools, and at the very least it is their prerogative to conduct and direct those who do. The craftsman judges his tools in light of his craft; he expects superior tools and rejects inferior ones, he makes recommendations about how tools could be improved, and he can evaluate whether innovations in the tool would strengthen or weaken his craft. In the well-known example from the beginning of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the bridle-maker serves the equestrian, and so the equestrian governs the bridle-maker. This does not mean that the equestrian knows how to make bridles (although he could), but it does mean at the very least that he will admire, care for, and have authority to adapt bridles to his purposes; and he will feel most at home with the finest bridles that best serve the equestrian art.

In short, to the craftsman a tool is not incidental to the craft; it shapes the craft, and the craft shapes the tool. If we say, then, that for medieval thinkers logic was a tool for theology, we should expect that theologians would come to feel a proprietary interest in the tool, would appreciate its role in their theological project, and in particular that the more logic was a genuine tool of theology, the more theology and logic would shape each other.

V. THE CRAFT SHAPES THE TOOL: THE INFLUENCE OF THEOLOGY ON MEDIEVAL LOGIC

So looking at the history of medieval logic and theology, we should expect to find and do find areas where theological questions could not obviously or uncontroversially be answered or even formulated using already available logical principles, methods, or moves, and so theology prompted clarification or even

[12] For just these reasons the importance of games is widely recognized in developmental psychology.

innovation in logical theory – in the way that, say, a distinctively challenging horse, or an advanced equestrian movement, may prompt the development of a specially adapted bridle.

So far, this suggests a practical implication for scholars, namely that a familiarity with theological context – with beliefs, practices, and institutions of medieval Christendom – would be of benefit to historians of medieval logic. A thorough and responsible exploration of this thesis would need to distinguish different theoretical parts of logic (concerning terms, propositions, and arguments, according to the traditional divisions going back to Aristotle) as well as different stages within medieval logic *(logica vetus*, *logica nova*, *logica modernorum)* and different approaches (e.g. realism vs. nominalism, and debates about the subject of logic and its status as a science or relation to other sciences) along with particular theories (*obligations*, supposition, etc.); not to mention different parts or modes of theology (natural vs. revealed; Scriptural exegesis, moral pedagogy, doctrinal defense). It will suffice here simply to note – in addition to some of the cases mentioned above or referenced in footnotes – some of the more widely recognized cases, mostly in later medieval philosophy, of "theories of medieval logic which can be regarded as important logical innovations and which were originally introduced in order to solve theological problems or… were essentially developed in relation to theology" (Knuutila 2006). In addition to the work just cited, other scholarship (including Brown 1993, Ebbesen 1997, de Libera 1997, Pini 2003, Knuutila 2007, and Amerini 2013) examines in detail various areas where theological topics motivated logical theory:

– Divine foreknowledge and omniscience, the possibility of prophecy, and human and divine freedom shaped modal logic, the interpretation of temporally definite propositions, and the development of the theory of the *significata* of propositions from *dicta* through *enutiabilia* to *complexe significabilia*.
– The doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Hypostatic Union prompted reflection about reduplicative propositions, identity, and predication, distinctions between intensional and extensional sameness, as well as to supposition theory, obligationes theory, and insolubilia.
– The doctrine of the Eucharist and the act of consecration inspired attention to demonstrative pronouns as well as the notions of substance, accident, and inherence.

The focus of these examples is primarily specific theological doctrines and how they motivate specific logical concepts and theories, but we can also expect that the general religious circumstances influenced the practice of medieval logic, as for instance the circumstances of Aquinas in the Church and in his order affect-

ed how he adopted and deployed the *questiones* method in different theological texts for different audiences and pedagogical purposes.[13]

In any event, our examples serve to show how, in particular cases, theological concerns motivated developments of medieval logic, and so they illustrate in general how appreciation and understanding of medieval logic can be advanced by theological awareness.

VI. THE TOOL SHAPES THE CRAFT: THE INFLUENCE OF LOGIC ON THEOLOGY IN AQUINAS

Now I want to turn to Aquinas to show how the mutual influence of logic and theology worked in the other direction, to give some examples of how logical assumptions formed the development of theology. For in addition to theology prompting developments in logic, we should also expect to find, in looking at the history of medieval logic and theology, areas where logical principles, methods, or moves helped to shape and advance formulations and responses of theological questions – in the way that, say, a uniquely designed bridle might make an equestrian aware of new opportunities in handling and training a horse. This means that, practically speaking, scholars of medieval logic can be helpful to theologians.[14]

Here I summarize several examples, many from my own areas of research, where appreciating Thomistic theological insights depends on an adequate familiarity with St. Thomas's approach to logic.

The Trinity and how "God" signifies. Aquinas asks whether God is the same as his essence or nature (*ST* Ia. q. 3, a. 3). His answer depends partly on the difference between the ways that concrete and abstract terms signify, and so partly on terminology that is as much a matter of logic as metaphysics: "man" signifies the human *nature* insofar as it is individualized in a *suppositum* (that is, still abstracted from, but *without excluding,* its individualized matter); "humanity" signifies that nature with the exclusion of the individualizing matter, so *humanity* and a *man* are not identical. But God and divinity are identical, since there is no difference in God between nature and supposit. Of course, this analysis must be further developed in light of the doctrine of the Trinity, since "God" can signify the divine nature common to three divine Persons, but can also name any of the distinct divine Persons (*ST* Ia. q. 39, a. 4). Cajetan, commenting on

[13] Careful attention to Thomas's pedagogical and rhetorical situation is given by Jordan 1986 and Jordan 2006.

[14] This is something that I think is somewhat less acknowledged by scholars, perhaps because scholars of logic are too humble to presume they can help theology, or because theologians are less likely to be trained to notice, or even want to acknowledge, the significance of medieval logic, or for some other reason.

this, thus distinguishes even more explicitly than Aquinas ways of signifying a nature – and yet scholars unfamiliar with the logical terminology of Cajetan have mistakenly found him making heretical metaphysical claims, as if there could be a divine substance existing apart from the three divine Persons. Only a careful attention to Thomistic realist semantics can prevent such mistaken interpretation (Hochschild 1999).

The substance of the Eucharist. In characterizing the transformation of the Eucharist, Thomas Aquinas attends to the truth conditions of the words of consecration, "This is my body." The notion of "substance" that Aquinas uses, which informs his characterization of "transubstantiation," is a metaphysical concept, but his analysis depends on features of accidental vs. substantial predication, which could easily be missed by theologians working within a modern logical framework. So, for instance, an analysis of the identity of the consecrated host ("this") with the body of Christ, not informed by a notion of Aquinas's realist commitment to the inherence theory of predication, could completely ignore the fact that Aquinas is not only insisting on the *real* presence but also on the *substantial* presence of Christ in the Eucharist – with significant implications for how one interprets Catholic teaching and practice, as well as opportunities for ecumenical dialogue (Hochschild 2014a).

Essences material and immaterial. Key metaphysical claims that play into Aquinas's natural theology include that composite individuals only have essences as members of a species, and so *qua* individuals don't have essences and cannot be defined; that immaterial substances are identical with their essences; that God's essence is identical with His being. All of this depends on Aquinas's notion of form as principle of actuality, which doesn't fit easily into the Fregean semantic distinction between "objects" and "concepts." So if one insists on applying a Fregean analysis of predication, claims that for Aquinas are necessary metaphysical discoveries just don't make sense; they appear not simply false but sophistical and incoherent. Only if one ventures outside of a Fregean analysis can one consider the alternative, "realist" understanding of the relationship between semantics and metaphysics in which Aquinas's claims can be understood and evaluated on their own terms (Hochschild 2006).

Signifying the simple God. Aquinas teaches that God is simple, perfect, the cause of all other beings, and beyond our proper comprehension. Within Aquinas's own framework of semantic realism, these are distinct claims, yet all related to each other and to the challenges of knowing and naming God. It is common to invoke "analogy" as the key to divine naming, and yet the metaphysical uniqueness of God leads Aquinas to attribute several peculiarities of language as it applies to God, not all of which come under "analogy." Attempts to make sense of Aquinas on divine naming that don't attend to the different semantic distinctions Aquinas applies to the problem thus not only confuse the issue of analogy and fail to appreciate his teaching on divine naming, but obscure Aquinas's teaching about

divine simplicity and its intrinsic connection to other metaphysical claims about the divine nature (Hochschild 2019).

Words human and divine. Aquinas follows a long tradition of treating thought as in some way language-like – a concept is a *verbum mentis*, a "word of the mind (or heart or soul)" – an insight usefully extended to theology, both natural (since God is a divine mind) and revealed (since the second Person of the Trinity is the *Logos*). And yet given the later medieval development by Ockham of a nominalist "theory of mental language," together with contemporary views of mental language which are rooted in assumptions of mental representationalism, it is tempting to discount Aquinas's treatment of the *verbum mentis* as only a theological metaphor; but in that case one would miss the extent to which Aquinas does treat thought as having linguistic properties and structure (thoughts are natural "signs" and complex thoughts have semantic compositionality), miss an opportunity to clarify differences between realist and nominalist conceptions of mental language, and underestimate the extent to which Aquinas thinks we can learn about God from human thought (Hochschild 2015).

Participation and qualified signification. Aquinas's most sophisticated argument for the existence of God depends on the real distinction between being and essence, and he was even willing to use what we might regard as the more "Platonic" language of "participation" to describe a metaphysical reality more commonly expressed in Aristotelian terms, that created essences are not identical with their being but have a share in or "participate in" being, while the Creator is identical with its being. Disputes about whether creaturely participation implies the analogy of being and the necessity of a creator identical with its being – as denied by Henry of Ghent but affirmed by Thomas Sutton – turn out to rest on different conceptions of what it means for the significate of a word to be qualified in some way; the properly Thomistic idea of analogy assumes that not every qualification or determination of a term is *specifying* (which narrows and clarifies the signification of an otherwise indeterminate and broadly applicable term) but that some are diminishing or delimiting (which broadens the signification of an otherwise narrowly applicable, pure or unqualified sense of a term) (Klima 2002).

Of the six examples I've given, all in some way rest on semantic assumptions about how words signify, which may explain some of the traditional Thomistic insistence on the importance of the conceptual framework of "realism" (not a metaphysical thesis but a semantic theory). Undoubtedly Peter Geach overstepped when he argued that the rejection of realism for nominalism necessarily led to heresy (Geach 1972),[15] but he was correct to worry that theological truths cannot be understood and evaluated without knowledge of the conceptual

[15] The paper originally appeared in *Sophia* 3 (1964): 3–14. Klima 2015 argues that Geach's too-strong criticism of nominalism is one of his "most inspiring errors."

framework in which they developed, and that changes in semantic theory could have unintended consequences for theology. Further, Geach was right that if logic is a tool for discovering and articulating truth, then Christian theology, as a gift of revealed truth, provides a unique opportunity for applying and testing logical theories. Geach expressed this in three theses:

> I. If an argument has true premises and a heretical conclusion, then a logical rule that would make it out formally valid is simply a bad bit of logic.
> II. A statement of a logical rule will not be correct if it is vitiated by a theological counter-example; nor, in order to avoid this, will the rule expressly advert to theological propositions.
> III. Whenever a logical form is shown to be invalid by a theological counter-example, we could if we were clever enough construct a non-theological counter-example. (Geach 1972. 299–300.)

What all three rules embody is the total confidence that truth is revealed both by the art of logic and by Christian faith, which means not only that logic is a tool for expounding and defending faith, but that Christian faith is a gift for testing and refining logic.[16]

VII. CONCLUSION: RECONSTITUTING THE GAME

My attention here to the relation between logic and theology has been in one sense very broad; I have spoken mostly quite generally about my themes and referred to a range of examples. At the same time, my attention has also been very limited; a more comprehensive treatment would address the intellectual and cultural context in greater depth and detail, attending to methods of instruction, genres of texts, modes of expressing and enforcing ecclesiastical authority, the shape and growth of medieval educational institutions, and in general all the cultural conditions of knowledge-making and knowledge-transmission in the Middle Ages.[17] A more comprehensive treatment would also have to explore the ways in which logic, precisely as a fundamental tool for pursuing truth, was for medieval thinkers intrinsically bound up with what would now be considered separate areas of philosophy: philosophy of mind, epistemology, philosophy of science, and of course metaphysics.

[16] On this theme see also Klima 2009 and Hochschild 2014b.
[17] For some of this, see Novikoff 2013, Jordan 1986, and Jordan 2006.

Especially important are questions about the relationship of metaphysics to logic and about the subject matter of logic.[18] Later distinctions between parts or kinds of philosophy sometimes make it difficult to understand how, for instance, Aristotle's *Categories* could be read as both a treatise on metaphysics and as a treatise on logic; for modern interpreters this suggests a tension or confusion, while for medieval thinkers it was perfectly natural, on the assumption that the rules of thought cohere with the structure of reality, and that reflection on basic logical distinctions is preparation for spiritual ascent to first principles.[19] Yet if this ascent is the purpose of life, and all human arts, including logic or dialectic, are to be put to the service of that purpose, it is easy to see how early medieval thinkers would see no need – indeed, would not even consider it a possibility – to isolate the business of logic from the aspiration of union with God. This means that late medieval attempts to develop different kinds of logic, or to reconceive of the project for which logic is a tool, have far reaching consequences not only for philosophy and theology but even for the relationship between faith and reason and the very practice of discourse within the Christian community – even for the very continuity of the Christian community itself.

Indeed, the real weight of my argument here is its practical implications, for scholarship and for Christian witness. It is not enough to catalogue, as a matter of historical fact, that logic, as a tool of theology, shaped and was shaped by theology in the middle ages. Even the best archeologists, digging up on old tool, will try to learn how it was used, and, if it turns out to have a use in an art that is lost, may try to revive the lost art. Or, to switch back to the metaphor of the game, even to document that and how a game was played, we need actually to learn the game, and resume playing it.

In Hesse's novel, the main character masters the Glass Bead Game and becomes its chief authority, the Magister Ludi or "Master of the Game."[20] But then (for reasons about which the reader is, I think, meant to feel ambivalent) he turns away from it. The game-master's desire to exercise greater freedom, and his sense of responsibility to the problems of the wider world beyond the game, prompt him to abandon the game and venture beyond the safety and promise of

[18] Minerd 2019, which also notes that Parson's *Articulating Medieval Logic* is also silent on the question of the object (what I here called "subject matter") of logic. See also Klima 2014.

[19] See Wear 2014, especially the editors' introduction and the lead essay (Gerson 2014). The interpretation and application of Aristotle's *Categories* was influential in medieval theology and even back to the Church fathers; see Bruun 2005, especially the contributions by Kenny on the Latin Fathers, Frede on the Greek Fathers, de Libera on Boethius, and Marenbon on Eriugena and Anselm. Anselm's *De Grammatico* had a partially theological motivation traced to the semantic realism of Boethius's theological treatises; see Boschung 2006.

[20] In Roman education the teacher of the earliest stage of education, until about age 11, was the *ludi magister*, who came before the teachers for later stages, the *grammaticus* and finally the *rhetor*.

its culture. Soon after, unprepared for a new set of challenges, he dies a premature and accidental death, drowning in a cold lake.

It would be too simplistic to find in that end a metaphor for philosophy in the modern era – as if the philosophical pursuit of truth, once, cultivated within a particular intellectual-spiritual culture of medieval institutions, simply decided to venture outside of the schools and despite good intentions for wider relevance found itself unprepared to sustain a coherent agenda. It is true that theoretical or spiritual activity, cultivated in a particular context of rationality, can quickly become unreason when separated from that context – but the choice of Hesse's protagonist is too binary: to play the game or not. Imagine instead that he had persuaded a group of people to modify the rules a bit, and created a derivative or parallel game; imagine that some did not notice that this was what was happening, or were not even aware of the extent to which they were modifying the rules of the game. Imagine that as new games developed, it was not always clear whether or to what extent two players were in fact playing the same game – until, of course, the games have proliferated and diverged so much that it becomes harder and harder for them to have anything to do with each other, or even to keep the original game going. And if this happened, would it be adequate if one game, according to its new and different rules, found a way to talk about a lost game, without actually entering into the practice of the original game, which might require one to leave, or at least radically modify, the context of the new game? [21]

If we care about the game that Aquinas was playing, it will not be enough to learn about it and talk about it within some very different game.[22] The study of the relationship between logic and theology in Aquinas, and in medieval thought more generally, is not merely archeological or documentary; it is a practical, participatory project of re-entering into its activity. Medieval logic was a particular kind of intellectual activity which grew and was fostered "from the heart of the Church"; only by relearning that game and teaching it to others can we ensure that the goods of that game continue to be enjoyed, are rediscovered if lost, and can be shared with new players – for their good, and for the greater glory of God.

[21] An example of games about games talking past each other and failing to achieve mutual understanding or rational progress is George Berkeley's argument with Peter Browne about theological knowledge. Berkeley and Browne appeal to and argue about concepts and distinctions from Cajetan on analogy, yet neither appreciate the function these served in their original context, and the two are not even able to clearly formulate their areas of agreement and disagreement. See Hochschild 2004.

[22] This may require nothing less than "reconceiving the university and the lecture as a genre," in the words of the title of the last chapter of MacIntyre 1990.

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Gábor Borbély

The Triumph of Renouncement

Religious Signals, the Secrets of the Heart, Error, Deception and Happiness in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles*[*]

I. INTRODUCTION

Although it has been appropriately characterized as the most accessible and the least scholastic work of Aquinas,[1] many scholars have considered the *Summa contra Gentiles* enigmatic for a strikingly simple reason: we do not fully understand why Aquinas wrote it.[2] This is not because he concealed his intention. Quite the

[*] I am very grateful to Gyula Klima and István Bodnár who read and commented on this paper. I would also like to thank Yossef Schwartz and the members of his seminar at the Tel Aviv University for their helpful and sophisticated remarks that inspired me to pursue the ideas that I presented to them in May 2017 further. An earlier, significantly different version of this paper was published in Hungarian in 2018.

[1] Gauthier 1993. 5.

[2] The title *Summa contra Gentiles* is most probably not authentic. It goes back to an early *exemplar* of the work that was presumably prepared between 1268 and 1272 and was put in use by a Parisian university stationer William of Sens (Laurent 1931–1937. 595; Rouse–Rouse 1988. 60–62; 64–66; Gauthier 1993, 27–28; 112). Furthermore, this title as a succinct summary of the author's intention is inaccurate. It suggests that Aquinas wrote the work against pagans, since he used the word "gentilis" in this sense throughout his works (Laurent 1931; Salman 1937; Gauthier 1993. 111–112). This manner of usage also precludes the interpretation suggested by Edward Synan that "gentiles" refers here – in agreement with the rabbinic and patristic tradition – to all those "peoples" who do not follow the true faith (Synan 1978. 20). Nonetheless, even though "gentiles" does not mean "goyim" in Aquinas's language, the non-authentic title could have been taken in this sense by his contemporaries and the subsequent tradition (see, e.g., I. T. Eschmann's remark: "this title brings to light the true nature of the work." Eschmann 1956. 385). There is, however, an alternative title of the work that has been attested by the "incipit" of the manuscript tradition ("Incipit liber de veritate catholice fidei contra errores infidelium editus a fratre thoma de aquino ordinis fratrum predicatorum"; see *Praefatio,* Leonina 13, xii). The *Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium* title – that might well be authentic (see Van Steenbereghen 1966. 321; Gauthier 1993. 109 and 147; Patfoort 1983. 104; Kretzmann 1997. 51; Tugwell 1998. 252; Davies 1996. 9) – seems to express Aquinas's intention more faithfully. First of all, Aquinas is quite clear that his work is primarily against errors that have to be "eliminated". Compared to the errors themselves, the authors or representatives of errors seem to be of secondary significance for him. Secondly, this title is open ended. The wider scope allows for a relevant extension of the range of possible secondary targets. Most importantly, the term "infidel" refers – among others – to heretics whose errors take up an important place in the work, even though Aquinas

contrary. At the beginning of his work, Aquinas makes it clear that he set himself the twofold task of the wise man by seeking „to make manifest" the truth that the Catholic faith professes, „eliminating" thereby the errors that are contrary to it.[3]

Until recently, the tacit consensus among scholars had been that Aquinas's brief declaration did not cover all his intentions.[4] Who are the authors of the

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mentions contemporary heretics rarely and usually refers to them with vague terms (Gauthier 1993. 134–140). On the downside, this long title is impractical and little known. Therefore, given the prevalence and the usability of *Summa contra Gentiles* and the conventional nature of linguistic signals, I will refer to the work with this title. I am going to apply the customary abbreviation (SCG) followed by the numbers of the book and the chapter respectively (e.g., SCG 1.6). The *Summa contra Gentiles* title became widespread early on. *Contra Gentiles*, with or without *Summa* is used in the earliest documents of the correctorium-controversy at the beginning of the 1280's (see, e.g., Glorieux 1927. passim), in the catalogues of Aquinas's works from the 13th–14th centuries (see Alarcón 2000–2019. https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/ilcatope.html), in the oldest biographies of Aquinas by William of Tocco, Bernard Gui, and Peter Calo (Le Brun Gouanvic 1996. 130; Ferrua 1968. 144; 159; 190) and in the documents of Aquinas's canonization process (Ferrua 1968. 297; 300; 330). We have an extant autograph of a part of the work, from the 13th chapter of the first book to the 120th chapter of the third (MS Vat. lat. 9850. fol. 2ra-89vb). The autograph text had been seriously mutilated while being preserved in various Dominican convents over the centuries, presumably mainly during the Middle Ages. Due to negligence, or rather, as Gauthier puts it, "a misconceived piety" some friars probably handled the manuscript similarly to the corpse of a saint and used its parts as a relic (Gauthier 1993. 8).

[3] SCG 1.2: "propositum nostrae intentionis est veritatem quam fides Catholica profitetur, pro nostro modulo manifestare, errores eliminando contrarios" (Leonina 13. 6; Marietti 2. 3. n. 9; ET 1. 62. n. 2). Sometimes, as in the present case, I deviate from the English text of the translation. I will indicate the most important differences. According to Aquinas, falsity is contrary to the truth. See ST 1a.17.4. Furthermore, the truth that the Catholic faith professes is one, whereas the errors contrary to it can be infinitely multiplied. See ST 2a2ae.10.5: "Si […] distinguantur infidelitatis species secundum errorem in diversis quae ad fidem pertinent, sic non sunt determinatae infidelitatis species, possunt enim errores in infinitum multiplicari […]." On the "twofold task" or "twofold profession" of the wise man with reference to Aristotle and Saint Paul, and on the double function of theology see Gauthier 1993. esp. 147–163. The twofold task of the wise man and the twofold function of theology do not seem to be specific to the *Summa contra gentiles*. Aquinas attributes the same objective to the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard in his commentary to the prologue of the work. In Aquinas's interpretation, Petrus Lombardus refers to two benefits when he indicates the "final cause" of the work: the "destruction of errors" *(destructio erroris)* and "the manifestation of truth" *(manifestatio veritatis)*. See the "Divisio textus Prologi cum ejus expositione" part in Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences*: Thomas Aquinas 1929. 23.

[4] See, e.g., Chenu's claim that SCG is "an apologetic theology," "a defense of the entire body of Christian thought, confronted with the scientific Greco–Arabic conception of the universe" (Chenu 1964. 292) or Murphy's arguments on why – in his view – "the missionary and the anti-Averroist intentions" traditionally ascribed to the work cannot be excluded (Murphy 1969. 405). For the long history of the various attempts to ascribe ulterior intentions to Aquinas regarding SCG, see Torrell's brief summary (Torrell 1996. 104–107) and Marc Jordan's paper (Jordan 2006. above all pages 89–101). For a suggestion that – by writing the SCG – Aquinas might have responded to the "expressed desire" of the Master of the Dominican Order, Humbert of Roman, who considered one of the tasks of the Master "to ensure that there is always available in the Order a supply of treatises against the errors of unbelievers, heretics and schismatics", see Tugwell 1998. 252–253. Brian Davies, however, argues that the

errors Aquinas is seeking to eliminate by elaborating his position? False claims are undoubtedly made by someone and represent theoretical positions of individuals or groups. If the work was written against a group or groups of adversaries – as suggested by the work's titles – on what socio-cultural ground can we identify them? Did someone commission this work? And how can we identify the target audience whose members were supposed to be able to read this highly sophisticated philosophical-theological text?[5] Also – in case it was intended to serve a further goal – who were supposed to use it? And then again: what were they supposed to use it for? In summary: what was the indirect aim he sought to achieve by writing this enormous, 325.000-word, four-part work over the course of six to seven years?[6]

Unfortunately, neither the external evidence nor the *Summa contra Gentiles* itself seems to be of much assistance if we would like to establish an ulterior intention of Aquinas – provided that he had one at all.

The well-known account of Peter Marsili that linked the composition of the work to the missionary activity of the Dominican Order in Hispania has been highly controversial.[7] Similarly, connecting Aquinas's book with the controver-

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first nine chapters of the SCG provide a satisfactory answer of why Aquinas wrote the work: "his intention in writing the SCG is to provide an extended essay in natural theology (which will occupy him through books 1–3) and then to offer defenses of the articles of faith (which will occupy him in book 4)" (Davies 2016. 15).

[5] Even at a fundamental level (Christian audience or non-Christian audience), this problem is not easy to solve. For the first alternative see, e.g., Van Steenberghen 1966. 322–323; Te Velde 1998. 181–182; Te Velde 2002. 123. and Jordan 2006. 104. For the second alternative see, e.g., Kenny 1993. 13. and Kretzmann 1997. 48.

[6] Aquinas presumably started writing the *Summa contra Gentiles* not long before his journey to Italy in 1259, perhaps as early as in 1258. He finished the work before September 1265 in Orvieto. For the date of the work, see Torrell 1996. 101–104; Gauthier 1993. 10–18; 22; 122; 173. and 179. Pierre Marc took a radically different approach when he attempted to prove in the introduction to the Marietti edition of the SCG that Aquinas had written "at least most" of the work during his second Parisian regency from 1269 on, and finished it in Naples in 1273 (Marc 1967. 374). Marc's observations and arguments to establish this chronology immediately provoked strong criticism. The consensus of the majority of researchers seems to be in agreement with Clemens Vansteenkiste's early summary: although the vast volume of Marc's introduction (including C. Pera's and P. Caramello's contributions) "contains an infinity of historical, critical, methodological and doctrinal information," the chronology Marc determines "remains highly questionable" with regards to both the SCG and Aquinas's other works (Vansteenkiste 1968. 354–355). In a similar manner: Van Steenberghen 1974a. 108. For a different assessment, however, see Murphy 1969.

[7] According to the account of Peter Marsili (Petrus Marsilius) O. P., Aquinas was asked to write the *Summa contra Gentiles* in support of the Dominicans' external mission on the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa by the former (1238–1240) master general of the Dominican Order, Raymond Penyafort. This account is part of Peter Marsili's own addition to his translation of the *Llibre dels fets* by King James I of Aragon. Peter completed the text before the feast of Holy Trinity in 1314. The relevant passage runs as follows: „Conversionem etiam infidelium ardenter desiderans, rogavit eximium doctorem sacrae paginae, magistrum in theologia fratrem Thomam de Aquino ejusdem Ordinis, qui inter omnes hujus mundi clericos, post fratrem Albertum philosophum, maximus habebatur, ut opus aliquod faceret contra Infidelium

sies at the University of Paris proved to be hardly tenable.[8] Moreover, it is a

errores; per quod et tenebrarum tolleretur caligo et veri solis doctrina credere nolentibus panderetur. Fecit magister ille quod tanti patris humilis deprecatio requirebat, et Summam, quae contra gentiles intitulatur, condidit, quae pro illa materia non habuisse parem creditur." (See Balme–Paban 1898.12; for a somewhat different reading based on the text of Ms. Biblioteca de Catalunya 1018, fo. 184r see Gauthier 1993. 168. footnote 39; see further Vose 2009. 53.) In addition to the many arguments that make it highly unlikely that we could consider this story more than a piece of hagiographic imagination presumably fueled by political motives in connection with attempts to promote Raymond Penyafort's canonization, we should even consider the possibility that the additions are dated later than the early fourteenth century (Vose 2009. 11–12). Furthermore, I think, there is an aspect of the text that – to my knowledge – has never been under consideration. It has generally been assumed that the term "infidelis" in the citation above refers only to the members of non-Christian populations, probably because in the following lines the author refers to the language schools in Tunis and Murcia established by Raymond Penyafort: "Studia linguarum pro fratribus sui Ordinis Tunicii et Murcige statuit […]." Now, if we look at the rhetorical structure of the text, "infidelis" might as well refer to the heretics mentioned by Peter Marsili in the previous paragraph which runs as follows: „Sentiens etiam fugitivos haereticos de Tholosanis, Bitterensibus et Carcassonensibus partibus ad partes Cathaloniae velut ad secreti sinus latibulum evolare, ac, more cancri, sermonem eorum serpere in plurium terrae partium ulcerosam corruptionem, tractavit, ut Rex, qui ejus adhaerebat consiliis et salutaribus favebat monitis, pro terris habitis et habendis a Romana curia peteret et obtineret inquisitiones hereticae pravitatis." With "conversionem etiam infidelium ardenter desiderans" ("ardently desiring also the conversion of the infidels") immediately following the "sentiens" paragraph, the author seems to suggests that Raymond Penyafort is not only characterized by the relentless effort to seek out and persecute heretics (depicted here with the help of a stock element of folk-iconography: the snake) who are fleeing from Languedoc, hiding and seeking refuge in Catalonia, and whose "speech" spreads in many parts of the kingdom as "ulcerative rot". It is also a distinctive characteristic of Raymond Penyafort that he feels a burning desire to advance the conversion of the infidels, certainly including those heretics among them who are traditionally the most important subjects of the activities of the Dominican Order. Raymond Penyafort appears in the text both as a bad cop and a good cop: not only does he take care of the persecution of the heretics, but he also feels responsible for the conversion of the infidels. Remarkably, the relentlessly accurate philologist R.-A. Gauthier, when summarizing briefly the above mentioned sections of the text, (1) consistently refers to "infideles" as "pagans", and (2) complements his summary of the "sentiens etiam" paragraph with what is not in the text at all regarding the inquisition. Raymond Penyafort persuaded the king, James of Aragon, says Gauthier, to ask the pope to establish the inquisition in his kingdom "with the task of leading back the heretics to the faith" (see Gauthier 1993. 170). Even if we accept that the purpose of the inquisition process was to "lead the heretics back to faith", Peter Marsili does not mention this task here. He mentions it only in the next section ("Conversionem etiam …") in which he links Raymond's insurmountable longing for the conversion of the infidels with his request for Aquinas to write the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Be all that as it may, it is really hard to say what we have learned from the tale of (the possibly pseudo) Peter Marsili. For the Dominican concept of mission, Raymond Penyafort's relevant activities and the inconsistencies of the story see above all Cohen 1982. 103–169; Chazan 1989. 29–85; Daniel 1992. 9–12; Tugwell 1998. 252–254; Tolan 2002. 233–255; Vose 2009. 53–59; Douais 1899. 305–325; Smith 2010. esp. 188–209; Tolan 2017. 97–101; Gorce 1933. 242; Chenu 1964. 289–292; Van Steenberghen 1966. 319–323; Burns 1971. 1401–1403. and 1409–1410; Van Riet 1976. 159–160; Weisheipl 1983. 130–131; Gauthier 1993. 165–174; Torrell 1996. 104–107; Jordan 2006. 90–94; Davies 2016. 9–10. See further footnote 29 below.

[8] M. M. Gorce identified "Gentiles" as "the averroists who infested Italy and France" in the 1260s (Gorce 1933. 249). He held, further, that the term "gentiles" had a "perfectly

striking feature of the work that the most important sources of the errors to be eliminated are not even the contemporaries of Aquinas: a significant portion of the authors who seem to be responsible for the typical errors mentioned in the book and the ones that can be identified at all, had long been dead by the time of the SCG's birth.[9]

As for the work itself, it seems to resist even attempts to determine its literary genre. Is it a polemical text at all? Is it an apologetic work?[10] Does it serve persuasive, pedagogical or apostolic-missionary aims?[11] If the latter, does it express Aquinas's apostolic vocation only in a broad sense as a work of universal wisdom not bound by his historical context?[12] Or is it a work of personal reflexion as Aquinas's most personal work?[13]

In this paper I do not wish to come up with a fresh conjecture regarding Aquinas's ulterior intention.

Yet, I would not like to leave it at that either.

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determined" meaning in the Parisian university milieux and suggested that Aquinas's work should be interpreted in the wider context of the Parisian controversies as an overwhelming attack against all those "Averroist" philosophers in the West who were the defenders of the doctrines condemned in 1270 and 1277 by the bishop of Paris, Stephanus Tempier (Gorce 1933. 242). This interpretation is based on an overly simplified view of what happened at the University of Paris in the 1260s and 70s, which is untenable for several reasons. First, the term "averroista" was invented by Aquinas himself years after he had finished the *Summa contra Gentiles* and the term referred only to those who were committed to specific claims regarding the nature of human intellect. (See DUI 1: "Sed quia ex quibusdam uerbis consequentibus Auerroyste accipere uolunt intentionem Aristotilis fuisse, quod intellectus non sit anima que est actus corporis, aut pars talis anime: ideo etiam diligentius eius uerba sequentia consideranda sunt." Leonina 43. 294b–295a.) In the second place, there wasn't any "heterodox" or "averroistic" "movement" at the University of Paris at that time (Gauthier 1984. 20–25). Thirdly, even Aquinas himself was affected by the condemnation of 1277. Finally, at least one of the condemned articles is certainly taken from the *Summa contra Gentiles* (Hissette 1977. 83). Indeed, there might have been more, since Étienne Bourret famously revoked his predecessor's condemnation in 1325 insofar as "it might touch the doctrine" of Aquinas (for the text of the document, see Laurent 1931–1937. 666–669). For further critical remarks on Gorce's claims, see Salman 1937. 488–509 and Van Steenberghen 1966. 318–319.

[9] A list of authors explicitly or implicitly cited by Aquinas is found in Gauthier 1993. 183–204.

[10] In the *Bibliographie thomiste* of Mandonnet and Destrez, SCG is found among the apologetic works (Mandonnet–Destrez 1921.19; Gauthier 1993. 147). See further Chenu in footnote 4 above; Weisheipl 1983. 133; Hibbs 1995. 179–185; Kretzmann 1997. 46–47 and Davies 2016. 9.

[11] For the SCG as a work of deliberative rhetoric, see Allard 1974. In a similar manner, but also highlighting the differences, Mark Jordan regards SCG as a protreptic exhortation to Christian wisdom (Jordan 1986. 93–101; Jordan 2006. 89–115). For an interpretation that focuses on what the author calls "dialectical segments" and "narrative continuity" of the work, see Hibbs 1995. However, see also Norman Kretzmann's review of Hibbs: Kretzmann 1997b. 300–301.

[12] Gauthier 1993. 145–156 and 180–181; Porro 2016. 123.

[13] Gorce 1933. 263. Gauthier 1993. 150, 176, 180.

Instead, I aim to explore some of his basic assumptions that, I believe, his ambitious work greatly depends on. These assumptions seem to represent Aquinas's deep personal convictions that may have been apt to become the driving force behind Aquinas's endeavour. By revealing them, I expect that some aspects of his "odd project" that so stubbornly resists attempts at contextualization can be clarified.[14]

II. AQUINAS'S ASSUMPTIONS

Aquinas's first assumption concerns the reliability of religious signalling. In SCG 1.6 Aquinas deals with the issue of justifiability of religious commitment: on what grounds, if any, do we give our assent to propositions incomprehensible to us, such as the articles of faith?[15] In Aquinas's view, the truth of the articles of faith cannot be demonstrated, yet can be confirmed by miracles. In SCG 1.6 he focuses on what he calls there "the greatest of miracles": early, untutored followers of the Catholic faith recognized the highest wisdom and – despite the dispositions of human nature and their natural inclinations – manifested commitment to an implausible, spiritual world. This was followed by the conversion of the world to Christianity in an exceedingly hostile environment; and this fact is, again, as Aquinas stresses, the „most wonderful of all."[16]

[14] Stump 2003. 26: "there is something odd about that project of his."

[15] For some reason, Aquinas does not use the expression "articles of faith" in SCG. Instead, in the introduction of the work (the first nine chapters of the first book; see footnote 18), he is talking about two aspects or modes of the same truth with regard to God and claims that one of these modes represents those "truths about God" that "exceed all the ability of the human reason." (SCG 1.3; Leonina 13. 7b; Marietti 2. 4. n. 14; ET 1. 63. n. 2; similar phrasing can be found elsewhere in the introduction of the SCG.) Truths about God that exceed all the ability of the human reason, however, clearly refers to what he calls elsewhere "articles of faith." A neat example for an article of faith is that "God is one and three" (see, e.g., In Sent I.3.1.4: "Deum esse trinum et unum est articulus fidei"; SCG 1.3: "Quaedam namque vera sunt de Deo quae omnem facultatem humanae rationis excedunt, ut Deum esse trinum et unum." see Leonina 13, 7b; Marietti 2, 4, n. 14). For the sake of simplicity, I am always going to use "articles of faith" in this paper.

[16] SCG 1.6: "Quibus inspectis, praedictae probationis efficacia, non armorum violentia, non voluptatum promissione, et, quod est mirabilissimum, inter persecutorum tyrannidem, innumerabilis turba non solum simplicium, sed sapientissimorum hominum, ad fidem Christianam convolavit, in qua omnem humanum intellectum excedentia praedicantur, voluptates carnis cohibentur et omnia quae in mundo sunt contemni docentur; quibus animos mortalium assentire et maximum miraculorum est, et manifestum divinae inspirationis opus, ut, contemptis visibilibus, sola invisibilia cupiantur." (Leonina 13. 17a; Marietti 2. 9. n. 37.) "When these arguments were examined, through the efficacy of the abovementioned proof, and not the violent assault of arms or the promise of pleasures, and (what is most wonderful of all) in the midst of the tyranny of the persecutors, an innumerable throng of people, both simple and most learned, flocked to the Christian faith. In this faith there are truths preached that surpass every human intellect; the pleasures of the flesh are curbed; it is taught that the things of the world should be spurned. Now, for the minds of mortal men to assent to these things is the

One of the striking features of SCG is that in this key chapter of the work Aquinas uses the very same insight for justifying the assent to articles of faith that – centuries later – led to the formulation of the handicap principle in evolutionary biology. This insight is what I consider to be Aquinas's first assumption: handicapped signals provide reliable information about the quality they display, for only high-quality signallers can afford to send them, i.e., those who really possess the quality manifested and do not just fake it.[17]

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greatest of miracles, just as it is a manifest work of divine inspiration that, spurning visible things, men should seek only what is invisible." (ET 1. 72. n. 1.)

[17] Under no circumstances would I claim that the content elements of Aquinas's argument were original, much less would I suggest that he had been a forerunner of something he could not have the faintest idea about. In SCG 1.6 Aquinas seems to recycle arguments found in Patristic literature concerning the universal spread of Christianity. In particular, his argumentation in SCG 1.6 seems to rest on Augustine's work. (See, e.g., Augustine's *De civitate Dei* XXII. 5: "Iam ergo tria sunt incredibilia, quae tamen facta sunt. Incredibile est Christum resurrexisse in carne et in caelum ascendisse cum carne; incredibile est mundum rem tam incredibilem credidisse; incredibile est homines ignobiles, infimos, paucissimos, inperitos rem tam incredibilem tam efficaciter mundo et in illo etiam doctis persuadere potuisse." "[…] si autem, ut verum est, paucis, obscuris, minimis, indoctis eam se vidisse dicentibus et scribentibus credidit mundus, cur pauci obstinatissimi, qui remanserunt, ipsi mundo iam credenti adhuc usque non credunt? qui propterea numero exiguo ignobilium, infimorum, inperitorum hominum credidit, quia in tam contemptibilibus testibus multo mirabilius divinitas se ipsa persuasit. Eloquia namque persuadentium, quae dicebant, mira fuerint facta, non verba. Qui enim Christum in carne resurrexisse et cum illa in caelum ascendisse non viderant, id se vidisse narrantibus non loquentibus tantum, sed etiam mirifica facientibus signa credebant." […] "Si vero per apostolos Christi, ut eis crederetur resurrectionem atque ascensionem praedicantibus Christi, etiam ista miracula facta esse non credunt, hoc nobis unum grande miraculum sufficit, quod eam terrarum orbis sine ullis miraculis credidit." XXII. 6: "Ligabantur includebantur, caedebantur torquebantur, urebantur laniabantur, trucidabantur – et multiplicabantur. Non erat eis pro salute pugnare nisi salutem pro Salvatore contemnere." XXII. 7: "Legebantur enim praeconia praecedentia prophetarum, concurrebant ostenta virtutum, et persuadebatur veritas nova consuetudini, non contraria rationi, donec orbis terrae, qui persequebatur furore, sequeretur fide." XXII. 8: "Cur, inquiunt, nunc illa miracula, quae praedicatis facta esse, non fiunt? Possem quidem dicere necessaria fuisse, priusquain crederet mundus, ad hoc ut crederet mundus. Quisquis adhuc prodigia ut credat inquirit, magnum est ipse prodigium, qui mundo credente non credit. Verum hoc ideo dicunt, ut nec tunc illa miracula facta fuisse credantur. Unde ergo tanta fide Christus usquequaque cantatur in caelum cum carne sublatus? Unde temporibus eruditis et omne quod fieri non potest respuentibus sine ullis miraculis nimium mirabiliter incredibilia credidit mundus? An forte credibilia fuisse et ideo credita esse dicturi sunt? Cur ergo ipsi non credunt? Brevis est igitur nostra complexio: Aut incredibilis rei, quae non videbatur, alia incredibilia, quae tamen fiebant et videbantur, fecerunt fidem; aut certe res ita credibilis, ut nullis quibus persuaderetur miraculis indigeret, istorum nimiam redarguit infidelitatem." […] "Nam etiam nunc fiunt miracula in eius nomine […]." (Augustinus 1993. 559–566). See further Augustine's *De vera religione* III. 3: "[…] omnia contemnendo quae pravi homines cupiunt, et omnia perpetiendo quae horrescunt, et omnia faciendo quae mirantur, genus humanum ad tam salubrem fidem summo amore atque auctoritate converteret": "[…] he should be able to despise all that wicked men desire, to suffer all that they dread, to do all that they marvel at, and so with the greatest love and authority to convert the human race to so sound a faith" (Augustinus 2007. 86; Augustine 1959. 5); III. 5: "Si haec per totum orbem iam populis leguntur et cum veneratione libentissime audiuntur; si post tantum sanguinem, tantos ignes, tot cruces martyrum tanto fertilius et uberius usque ad

I think it is not merely a historical curiosity that Aquinas bases his work – and to a considerable extent the whole edifice of his theology – on an insight that played an important role in the different context of evolutionary biology centuries later. Aquinas addresses problems in SCG that show up on different levels of biological organization and cultural complexity in signalling systems, especially when doubts arise about the reliability of the signals, i.e., when the possibility of error and deception appears. I think, therefore, that not only the handicap principle itself, but also the subsequent debates on the handicap principle in evolutionary biology are relevant if we try to understand Aquinas's handling of the possibility of error and deception in the SCG.

The main issue to be addressed by Aquinas can be reformulated in a context-independent way. Under what conditions can honest communication be warranted if signallers with conflicting interests use conventional signals that – apart from the cost of production – can be arbitrarily cheap, therefore are prone to error and can be easily faked? As we shall see, even in this case – and this is an important result from contemporary debates on the handicap principle – the reliability of signalling can be maintained if the senders of erroneous or deceptive signals can expect a penalty imposed by the recipients for false signalling.

A further difficulty appears if we assume – as Aquinas does, and this is his second assumption I am investigating – that mental states and processes exist, yet they are principally hidden from fellow human beings and only the willing and thinking subject and God have full access to them. Evidently, it also follows that errors as misrepresentations of reality resulting from defective mental operations are principally hidden and – aside from the thinking subject – can only be known by God. Given their hiddenness, how can error and deceptive intent be identified and eliminated? What can human beings do to promote cautious and accurate communication that is in the best interest of cooperative signallers to reduce the chance of costly, occasionally even fatal mistakes?

This is both an epistemological and an ethico-theological problem for Aquinas, since he holds – and this is his third assumption I am going to investigate – that errors are responsible for most of the miseries in human life. In Aquinas's

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barbaras nationes ecclesiae pullularunt;": "These things are read to the peoples throughout all the earth and are listened to most gladly and with veneration. After all the Christian blood shed, after all the burnings and crucifixions of the martyrs, fertilized by these things churches have sprung up as far afield as among barbarian nations." (Augustinus 2007. 90; Augustine 1959. 7.) At the same time, Aquinas goes beyond the patristic content when he emphasizes that – in contrast to the characteristics of the signals given by different sects – wastefulness is an essential part of the signals of the apostles and it necessarily indicates a true underlying quality. Furthermore, as we shall see, his insight plays a substantial role in his justification of religious commitment and, as a consequence, in the architecture of the *Summa contra Gentiles*. For the similarities between SCG 1.6 and Raymond Martini's *Capistrum Iudaeorum* see footnote 38 below.

view, only religion can unite people in a common form of life that, in turn, can lead them to ultimate happiness.

Uniting people in a common form of life by eliminating the errors that are principally hidden, but can give rise to sinful acts of choice and unhappiness: this is the SCG's agenda in which Aquinas's deep personal convictions about the opacity and deceitful nature of human social life and his vocation as a Dominican friar meets.

III. AQUINAS'S FIRST ASSUMPTION: HANDICAPPED SIGNALS PROVIDE RELIABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE QUALITY THEY DISPLAY

1. Double truth and assent

The first nine chapters of the first book of the *Summa contra Gentiles* are usually regarded as a general introduction to the entire work.[18] At the beginning, Aquinas discusses the office of the wise man and declares that the intention of the author is to manifest the truth the Catholic faith professes, eliminating thereby the errors that are opposed to it.[19] The remaining chapters are mainly concerned with what Aquinas here calls "the double truth with regard to divine things," i.e. with the two ways – natural reason and faith – that are available for human beings to access the different aspects of one and the same truth concerning God.[20] Concluding the introduction, Aquinas shortly discusses the order and the manner he follows when proceeding with his work.[21]

[18] See, e.g., Torrell 1996. 107. Torrell says that the first nine chapters of the work seem like a "discourse on method", with the ninth chapter as a summary; see further Corbin 1974. 491–642; Patfoort 1983. 119–124; Jordan 2006. 93–101; Davies 2016. 10. Leonina 16. also refers to SCG 1.1–9 as an introduction to the work: "Introductio et divisio totius operis in quatuor libros" (Leonina 16. 286a and 302).

[19] SCG 1.2: "And so, in the name of the divine Mercy, I have the confidence to embark upon the work of a wise man, even though this may surpass my powers, and I have set myself the task of making known, as far as my limited powers will allow, the truth that the Catholic faith professes, and of setting aside the errors that are opposed to it. To use the words of Hilary I am aware that I owe this to God as the chief duty of my life, that my every word and sense may speak of Him." (ET 1. 62. n. 2.)

[20] SCG 1.3: "There is a twofold mode of truth in what we profess about God. Some truths about God exceed all the ability of the human reason. Such is the truth that God is triune. But there are some truths which the natural reason also is able to reach. Such are that God exists, that He is one, and the like. In fact, such truths about God have been proved demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of the natural reason." (ET 1. 63. n. 2.) See further SCG 1.4, SCG 1.9 and footnote 23 below.

[21] In the SCG, following a methodological principle often deployed in his works, Aquinas proceeds from what is more manifest to what is less manifest to us. Thus, in the first three books he brings forward "both demonstrative and probable arguments" to make manifest that aspect of "the double truth with regard to divine things," which is accessible to human reason. This is commonly referred to as "natural theology" in the literature. In the first book,

In clarifying the concept of wisdom and exploring the methodological and procedural issues relevant to the SCG, Aquinas uses the argumentative prose that is characteristic to the entire introduction and most of the work. In the sixth chapter, however, the discursive reasoning is intermitted, giving way to narrative argumentation and an unexpected and astounding display of contrast between some features of the Christian and Muslim religions. Compared to the rest of the introduction, the SCG 1.6 has not received much attention and, in my view, has not been interpreted in the appropriate way. This is even more surprising if we take into account that Aquinas discusses a problem here that may be regarded as the single most important question for the philosophy of religion from a Catholic point of view: is there any good reason to consider the assent to the articles of the Catholic faith well-grounded or it is to be regarded as a consequence of a foolish, aleatoric decision-making?[22]

In Aquinas's view, the phrase "double truth with regard to the divine things" refers to two different ways in which human beings in the present state can have cognition of God.[23] We can acquire scientific knowledge through demonstrative

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Aquinas deals solely with the attributes of God, in the second with the procession of creatures from God, and in the third with the ordering of creatures to God as to their end. In the fourth book, Aquinas proceeds to make manifest the second aspect of truth regarding divine things. As the propositions that represent this aspect of truth (the articles of faith) cannot be known by demonstration, Aquinas uses "probable arguments" and "authorities" to obtain some cognition of what "surpasses reason", as it were "by a kind of intellectual glimpse" *(intellectuali quodam quasi intuitu)* (see SCG 1.9 and SCG 4.1; Leonina 13. 22a-b; Leonina 15. 4a; Marietti 2. 12. n. 54–57; Marietti 3. 243. n. 3342; ET 1. 78. n. 3–4.; ET 4. 36. n. 4). In SCG 1.9, the Latin verb "convincere" occurs several times in relation to certain "adversaries" *(adversarii)* that are not further specified. Gauthier argues that "convincere" here does not have any modern connotation yet ("to persuade someone of something"). Aquinas uses it in the ancient sense ("refuting someone's error"), in connection with what he considers the double service of the wise man to be *(officium sapientis):* making manifest the truth and refute the errors (Gauthier 1993. 150–156; see further Gauthier's introduction to the critical edition of Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*: Leonina 45,1. 289*– 293*). The misunderstanding of the term, according to Gauthier, may have significantly contributed to the attribution of apologetic intent to Aquinas when writing the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Beyond a significant number of case-studies, detailed and in-depth analyses of Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles* are provided by Norman Kretzmann and Brian Davies (Kretzmann 1997; Kretzmann 1999; Davies 2016). My present paper offers a short walk on the other side of Aquinas's work, thus making a contribution to the investigations on the outskirts of his metaphysics and theology that – to my knowledge – do not exist in great numbers yet. Still, I also attempt to achieve what many traditional inquiries do: contribute to the reconstruction of his metaphysics and theology, by revealing Aquinas's assumptions. After all, it is mindreading through the ages.

[22] This can be reformulated in a generalized form as the fundamental problem of the philosophy of religion. There is an important *caveat* though. In Aquinas's view, propositions such as "God exists," "God is one" and the like do not properly belong to the religion as their truth can be demonstrated. Being scientific claims about God, they have special status: they constitute a body of propositions that are famously called *praeambula fidei* by Aquinas.

[23] SCG 1.9: "Dico autem duplicem veritatem divinorum, non ex parte ipsius Dei, qui est una et simplex veritas; sed ex parte cognitionis nostrae, quae ad divina cognoscenda diversimode se habet." "I am speaking of a twofold truth of divine things, not on the part of God

arguments about certain attributes of God such as "God exists, He is one and the like"[24] and we can have cognition – not knowledge in the proper sense – of other attributes of God through faith when we assent to indemonstrable claims such as God is triune.[25] According to Aquinas, giving assent to a proposition amounts to considering it to be true, i.e. accepting it and holding it without doubt and without any fear that the contradictory proposition is true.[26] In the case of demonstrative sciences, we acquire knowledge by natural reason and the object of science is a sufficient cause of the assent itself. We assent to the principles of

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Himself, Who is truth one and simple, but from the point of view of our knowledge, which is variously related to the knowledge of divine things" (ET 1. 77. n. 1). Aquinas's "duplex veritas divinorum" ("the double truth with regard to divine things") has nothing to do with the so-called "theory" of "double truth," one of the most notorious chimaeras of the historical imagination (for the historiography of the "theory of double truth" that never existed, see: Van Steenberghen 1974b).

[24] See further SCG 3.39: "[…] demonstration shows that God is immutable, eternal, incorporeal, altogether simple, one, and other such things which we have shown about God in Book One" (ET 3/1. 127. n. 1). Yet, in Aquinas's view, these and further demonstrable propositions about God are also "presented to men by way of faith." Should this latter not be the case, inconveniences would follow. Firstly, only a few people could have knowledge of God (for many people, it is not or it cannot be a part of their daily routine to analyse propositions and arguments about God), secondly, even for these few people it would require "a great deal of time" to reach this knowledge, and, thirdly, theoretical discord would prevail even among those who are said to be wise, because sometimes falsity is mingled with the truth and probable or sophistical arguments "has the credit of being a demonstration." (SCG 1.4; ET 1. 66–68. n. 1–6.) For Aquinas's concept of science and demonstration, see MacDonald 1993. For a detailed analysis of the first book of SCG, see Kretzmann 1997 and Davies 2016. 17–136.

[25] See footnotes 15 and 20 above.

[26] Although Aquinas talks about "perfect," "certain" or "firm" assent that characterizes scientific knowledge and the non-discursive understanding of principles, he does not seem to regard "assent" as a spectrum concept that can be marked by different attitude intensities. In Aquinas's view, we do not have assent at all when we have an opinion about something, because an opinion implies acceptance only with fear that the other member of a pair of contradictory propositions is true. Similarly, when we are in doubt about something, we do not have assent either, as we "fluctuate" between the members of a pair of propositions. See, e.g., his remarks in his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* and BDT below. Both works were written during Aquinas's first regency in Paris (1256–1259), shortly before or perhaps – in part – at the same time as Aquinas embarked on writing the SCG. DV 14.1: "[…] non enim dicimur alicui assentire nisi quando inhaeremus ei quasi vero; similiter etiam dubitans non habet assensum, cum non inhaereat uni parti magis quam alteri; similiter etiam nec opinans, cum non firmetur eius acceptio circa alteram partem." […] Et haec est dispositio opinantis, qui accipit unam partem contradictionis 'cum formidine alterius'." […] "ista est dubitantis dispositio qui fluctuat inter duas partes contradictionis" (Leonina 22, 437b and 436b). BDT 3.1: "Cum scientia siquidem et intellectu commune habet certum et fixum assensum; in quo ab opinione differt, quae accipit alterum contrariorum cum formidine alterius, et a dubitatione, que fluctuat inter duo contraria." See, however, BDT 3.1, ad 4, where he is talking about assent in connection with opinion: "Ad quartum dicendum, quod quandocumque acceptis aliquo modo assentitur, oportet esse aliquid quod inclinet ad assensum, sicut lumen naturaliter inditum in hoc quod assentitur primis principiis per se notis, et ipsorum principiorum veritas in hoc quod assentitur conclusionibus scitis et aliquae verisimilitudines in hoc quod assentimus his quae opinamur […]" (Leonina 50, 107a. and 109a). For the concept of assent in Aquinas see Stump 1991. 183–193 and Stump 2003. 361–366.

sciences as soon as we apprehend their truth by understanding the terms that make them up, and we assent to the conclusions when we have reduced them to their principles in a valid, demonstrative syllogism.[27] Since we have immediate knowledge of the self-evident principles and we are forced to assent to the conclusions by these principles, intellectual assent in demonstrative sciences is a result of cognitive processes alone and does not leave any room for our choices.[28] Consequently, a proposition that has been demonstrated about God cannot be denied reasonably by anyone, as it yields knowledge in the strict sense. This is what Aquinas indicates when he says in SCG 1.2 that "all men are forced to give their assent" to natural reason, i.e., everyone is forced to give their assent to the first, self-evident principles and to the conclusions of valid syllogisms.[29]

[27] For the paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic forms of scientia in Aquinas see MacDonald 1993. 174–179.

[28] DV 22.6: "[…] in scientiis demonstrativis conclusiones hoc modo se habent ad principia quod remota conclusione removetur principium: et sic propter hanc determinationem conclusionum respectu principiorum, ex ipsis principiis intellectus cogitur ad consentiendum conclusionibus. (Leonina 22, 629a). BDT 3.1, ad 4: "Set illud quod inclinat ad assentiendum principiis intellectis aut conclusionibus scitis, est sufficiens inductivum, et ideo etiam cogit ad assensum et est sufficiens ad iudicandum de illis quibus assentitur" (Leonina 50, 109a). The possibility of error is the consequence of composition, division and reasoning: see section V.4 below. SCG 1.61: "Intellectus in primis principiis non errat, sed in conclusionibus interdum, ad quas ex principiis primis ratiocinando procedit", "[…] the intellect does not err in the case of first principles; it errs at times in the case of conclusions at which it arrives by reasoning from first principles" (Leonina 13. 174b; Marietti 2. 72. n. 509; ET 1. 205. n. 4).

[29] SCG 1.2: "Unde necesse est ad naturalem rationem recurrere, cui omnes assentire coguntur" (Leonina 13. 6b; Marietti 2. 4. n. 11; ET 1. 62. n. 3). For the same reason, it is not surprising that Aquinas accepts or rejects philosophical and theological claims in the first three books of SCG solely on the basis of whether they are based on true premises and valid reasoning or not. Consequently, Aquinas's assessment of a claim or an argument in the first three books has nothing to do with the religious affiliation of its author. This is the case even if religious affiliation regularly appears as a marker in Aquinas's often vague references to the authors of errors, usually only at the end of the individual chapters (he famously refers to the difficulty to proceed "against the errors of particular persons"; see footnote 180 below). A striking example of this substantial decoupling of theoretical position and religious affiliation is given by the first two chapters of the work after the introductory part (SCG 1.10–11), where Aquinas argues against the "opinion" of "some people" who say that the existence of God – being self-evident – cannot be demonstrated (Leonina 13. 23–25; Marietti 2. 13–14. nn. 59–71; ET 1. 79–83). Now, we know that one of these people is certainly identical with Anselm of Canterbury who had been canonized almost a century before Aquinas was attempting to refute his error in SCG 1.10–11. (For Aquinas's rejection of Anselm's argument see Klima 2000; above all pages 79–83). As for Aquinas's natural theology and the supposed missionary intent of SCG, see Stump 2003. 27: "But nobody, and certainly not Aquinas, could have supposed that Muslims or Jews needed to be argued into perfect-being monotheism of the sort developed in those first three books, which contain nothing that he would have taken to be contrary to Judaism or Islam. If Aquinas had intended *Summa contra Gentiles* as a manual for missionaries to educated Muslims, Jews or Christian heretics, he would have wasted the enormous effort represented in the 366 copiously argued chapters of Books I–III […]." See further Kretzmann 1997. 50: "The appropriate audience for the teaching attempted in all the arguments of all those chapters in the first three books would be made up of intelligent,

With regard to the second aspect of truth, however, God's greatest perfection can only be represented by "a most imperfect operation of the intellect", for the intellect is not able to grasp the content of faith in its entirety. The object of faith itself, being incomprehensible, is not sufficient to move the intellect to assent.[30]

2 The cause of assent: will

What is then the cause of the assent in this case? What moves us when we give our assent to incomprehensible propositions that are supposed to represent God's true nature? In the absence of cognitive constraints or, what is more, in the presence of counterintuitive features that even seem to support many people's inclination towards dissent, our assent can be caused by the will alone.[31]

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educated atheists, and I dont believe Aquinas ever met an avowed atheist." See also footnote 7 above.

[30] See SCG 3.40: "In cognitione autem fidei invenitur operatio intellectus imperfectissima quantum ad id quod est ex parte intellectus, quamvis maxima perfectio inveniatur ex parte obiecti: non enim intellectus capit illud cui assentit credendo." "But, in the knowledge of faith, there is found a most imperfect operation of the intellect, having regard to what is on the side of the intellect, though the greatest perfection is discovered on the side of the object. For the intellect does not grasp the object to which it gives assent in the act of believing." (Leonina 14. 99a; Marietti 3. 46. n. 2175; ET 3/1. 131. n. 2.)

[31] Since "that which is above the human reason we believe only because God has revealed it" (SCG 1.9; ET 1. 77. n. 2), the articles of faith cannot possibly be proved by demonstrative arguments. In Aquinas's view, arguments intended as demonstrations for any of these articles are "frivolous". They provide unbelievers an opportunity to ridicule the believers, for unbelievers think that believers give their assent to the articles of faith for such absurd reasons (see, e.g., ST 1a.32.1: "For when people want to support faith by unconvincing arguments, they become a laughing stock for the unbelievers, who think that we rely on such arguments and believe because of them." For the translation see Davies 1992. 190. It is Aquinas's permanent concern to find and deactivate pseudo-demonstrations in defence of the Catholic faith. See, e.g., his admonitions regarding the attempts to prove demonstratively that the world is not eternal. SCG 2.38: "Hae autem rationes quia non usquequaque de necessitate concludunt, licet probabilitatem habeant, sufficit tangere solum, ne videatur fides Catholica in vanis rationibus constituta, et non potius in solidissima Dei doctrina." "Now, these arguments, though not devoid of probability, lack absolute and necessary conclusiveness. Hence, it is sufficient to deal with them quite briefly, lest the Catholic faith might appear to be founded on ineffectual reasonings, and not, as it is, on the most solid teaching of God." (Leonina 13. 355a; Marietti 2. 154. n. 1142; ET 2. 113. n. 8.) See further QQ III.14.2 co.: "Respondeo. Dicendum, quod ea quae simplici voluntati divinae subsunt, demonstrative probari non possunt, quia, ut dicitur I ad Cor. II, 11, quae sunt Dei, nemo novit nisi spiritus Dei. Creatio autem mundi non dependet ex alia causa nisi ex sola Dei voluntate; unde ea quae ad principium mundi pertinent, demonstrative probari non possunt, sed sola fide tenentur prophetice per spiritum sanctum revelata, sicut apostolus post praemissa verba subiungit: nobis autem revelavit Deus per spiritum sanctum. Est autem valde cavendum ne quis ad ea quae fidei sunt, aliquas demonstrationes adducere praesumat, propter duo. Primo quidem, quia in hoc derogat excellentiae fidei, cuius veritas omnem rationem humanam excedit, secundum illud Eccli. III, v. 25: plurima […] super sensum hominis ostensa sunt tibi; quae autem de-

Aquinas uses a highly metaphorical language of dominion in his various works when he describes the process of committing ourselves to the incomprehensible and indemonstrable articles of the Catholic faith. This language lays emphasis on the fact that our commitment is a result of a purely voluntary act and not a termination of natural cognitive processes.[32] Talking about the assent to the articles of faith, the human will is depicted by Aquinas as an independent, extrinsic power[33] that "takes a leading role"[34] as it "exercises imperium over" the intellect which is being "taken captive" by the faith of by means of the will.[35]

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monstrative probari possunt, rationi humanae subduntur. Secundo, quia cum plerumque tales rationes frivolae sint, dant occasionem irrisionis infidelibus, dum putant quod propter rationes huiusmodi, his quae sunt fidei assentiamus." "Answer. Things that are up to God's sheer will are impossible to prove demonstratively, since no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God, as 1 Corinthians 2 says. Yet the creation of the world depends on no other cause than God's will alone. Hence, things about the beginning of the world are impossible to prove demonstratively. Instead, such things are held by faith alone, as they have been revealed prophetically by the Holy Spirit. […] Moreover, we should be extremely wary of anyone presuming to offer demonstrations of matters of faith, for two reasons. First, because doing so detracts from the excellence of the faith, whose truth surpasses all human reasoning. As Ecclesiasticus 3 says: Many things beyond human understanding have been shown to you. Whereas things that can be proven demonstratively do not surpass human reasoning. Second, because many of the arguments offered for them are silly, which gives nonbelievers cause to laugh at us, thinking that we believe the matters of faith for such reasons." (Translated by Turner Nevitt and Brian Davies. Thomas Aquinas 2020. 309–310.) For the role of the will in faith see Stump 1991. 183–193 and Stump 2003. 361–367. For the articles of faith that might support people's inclination to dissent see Stump 1991. 188, footnote 18.

[32] In Aquinas's view, will and nature are two active principles. See SCG 3.56: "[…] voluntas non tendit in sua volita omnino naturaliter; propter quod voluntas et natura duo principia activa ponuntur." "[…] the will does not incline to its object in a purely natural way; this is why the will and nature are said to be two active principles." ET 3/1. 190. See further DP 2.6, ad arg. 1: "Sicut intellectus noster ad credendum inclinatur a voluntate, ad intelligendum prima principia ducitur ex natura."

[33] See, e.g., In Sent III.23.2.2 qc. 1 co.: "credens […] habet assensum simul et cogitationem; quia intellectus ad principia per se nota non perducitur: unde, quantum est in se, adhuc habet motum ad diversa, sed ab extrinseco determinatur ad unum, scilicet ex voluntate."

[34] SCG 3.40: "In cognitione autem fidei principalitatem habet voluntas: intellectus enim assentit per fidem his quae sibi proponuntur, quia vult, non autem ex ipsa veritatis evidentia necessario tractus." "But in the knowledge of faith the will takes a leading role; indeed, the intellect assents through faith to things presented to it, because of an act of will and not because it is necessarily moved by the very evidence of the truth." (I modified the translation.) (Leonina 14. 99a; Marietti 3. 46. n. 2176; ET 3/1. 131. n. 3.)

[35] See, e.g., In Sent III.23.2.2 qc. 1 co.: "Unde et fides captivare dicitur intellectum, inquantum non secundum proprium motum ad aliquid determinatur, sed secundum imperium voluntatis et sic in credente ratio per se intellectum non terminat, sed mediante voluntate." The intellect as being held captive to obey Christ is a well-known metaphor that comes from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. See 2 Cor 10:5: "[…] in captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium Christi […]" "[…] we take every thought captive to obey Christ." According to Aquinas's interpretation, in the case of the assent to the incomrehensible and indemonstrable propositions of the Catholic faith, it is the will, an external power that terminates the intellect's actions, not the intellect itself. See further DV 14.1: "intellectus […] terminatur tantum ex extrinseco. Et inde est quod intellectus credentis dicitur esse cap-

However, while these metaphors emphasize the dramatic nature of the choice of faith and the moral weight of the act of the will, they do not accurately represent the principles Aquinas relies on when analyzing the interplay between the different powers of the human soul. Aquinas argues that even though the human will take a leading role when it comes to religious commitment, it is not a self-determining force in an absolute sense. The human will has a natural inclination towards something only because "it has the rational character of a good" which is the will's proper object.[36] If a voluntary act does not prove to be right, it is not because the will is evil in itself (in Aquinas's view no will can naturally be evil), but because the will's object – albeit apprehended as something good – is not in accord with reason.[37]

We can now rephrase the problem: can we ever be certain that assenting to a proposition which is supposed to represent the incomprehensible aspect of God's nature is in accord with reason, if it is obvious that our assent to the articles of Catholic faith cannot be determined by cognitive constraints as in the case of science?

3. SCG 1. 6

This unraised, nevertheless fundamental question lurks behind the argumentation of SCG 1. 6.[38] If our assent is not in accord with reason, then – as the text

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tivatus quia tenetur terminis alienis et non propriis. II Cor. X, 5 'in captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum' etc.;" (Leonina *22*. 437b–438a).

[36] SCG 3.16: "[…] voluntas, quae est appetitus finis praecogniti, non tendit in aliquid nisi sub ratione boni, quod est eius obiectum," "the will, which is the appetite for a foreknown end, inclines toward something only if it has the rational character of a good, which is its object" (Leonina 14. 38b; Marietti 2. 18. n. 1988; ET 3/1. 70. n. 4). For faith and goodness in Aquinas see Stump 1991. 179–207 and Stump 2003. 363–370.

[37] SCG 3.107: "In unoquoque habente intellectum, naturali ordine intellectus movet appetitum: proprium enim obiectum voluntatis est bonum intellectum. Bonum autem voluntatis est in eo quod sequitur intellectum: sicut in nobis bonum est quod est secundum rationem, quod autem est praeter hoc, malum est. Naturali igitur ordine substantia intellectualis vult bonum." "[…] in each thing that possesses understanding the intellect moves the appetite according to the natural order, for the proper object of the will is the good that is understood. But the good of the will consists in the fact that it follows the understanding; in our case, for instance, the good is what is in accord with reason, but what is apart from reason is evil. So, in the natural order, an intellectual substance wills the good." (Leonina 14. 336b; Marietti, 2. 162. n. 2827; ET 3/1. 102. n. 8.)

[38] On the obvious similarities of SCG 1.6 and a part of the Catalan Dominican Raymond Martini's *Capistrum Iudaeorum* (1267) see Marc 1967. 65–72. For the publication of the parallel passages see pages 65–69. Marc's arguments for the dependence of SCG 1.6 from the *Capistrum Iudaeorum* found a favourable reception in Murphy 1969. 408–409 and 412, Burns 1971. 1409, Tolan 2002. 242 and Tolan 2012. 524. Marc is undoubtedly right when saying that "inter duos supradictos passus tam multae sententiae et etiam verba utriusque communia adsunt ut certum sit unum auctorem alterius opus prae oculis habuisse dum proprium librum componeret. Quaestio igitur est, quis alterius opus usurpaverit, ex intrinsecis indiciis utriusque

implies – Catholic believers commit themselves to the truth of the articles of faith lightly *(leviter)* as if they were "following artificial fables", i.e. following what is "apart from reason" *(praeter rationem)*.[39] Aquinas uses the adverbial form

textus determinanda." (Marc 1967. 69.) However, we can be basically certain now that SCG had been written before 1267 (see footnote 6 above). For that reason alone, it seems unlikely that Aquinas borrowed from Raymond Martini's work (provided that Raymond's work was really completed in 1267 as he himself says; see Marc 1967. 55). In addition to his apparently misguided chronology, Marc's arguments for the dependence of Aquinas from Raymond Martini do not seem convincing. Firstly, although Marc is right that "ista communia elementa uterque scriptor ad proprium propositum assumpsit", this obviously does not imply that it is Aquinas who borrows from Raymond (Marc 1967. 69). Secondly, neither the different order of periods of time in the texts, nor the less clear and abbreviated references of Aquinas prove his dependence on Raymond' work (Marc 1967. 69–71). As a matter of fact, both observations are consistent with the assumption that Raymond was paraphrasing Aquinas's text. Thirdly, what Marc sees as a lapsus from Aquinas's part is a simple misunderstanding of Aquinas's "et" from Marc's part in the following passage: "quibus inspectis, praedictae probationis efficacia, non armorum violentia, non voluptatum promissione, et, quod est mirabilissimum, inter persecutorum tyrannidem, innumerabilis turba non solum simplicium, sed sapientissimorum hominum, ad fidem Christianam convolavit." "Et" in this passage is clearly reinforces and enhances what is being said and its meaning is: "and, what is more" (Marc 1967. 71–72). But, in addition to the chronology, the most obvious indicator of Raymond Martini paraphrasing Aquinas is what Raymond says at the beginning of the parallel passages found in the *Capistrum*: "ars autem raciocinandi obtime ex suis effectibus causas concludere docet." Now, the same sentence with some seemingly minor differences can be found in SCG 1.12: "huius autem sententiae falsitas nobis ostenditur, tum ex demonstrationis arte, quae ex effectibus causas concludere docet." Why would Aquinas, an erudite and sophisticated philosopher and logician (he refers twice to the *Posterior Analytics* in SCG 1.12 alone) borrow such a sentence from Raymond Martini? Why would he use this sentence in SCG if it so clearly needs an improvement by a substitution of "ars ratiocinandi" with "ars demonstrationis" and by an omission of "optime"? Why would Aquinas apply this particular principle borrowed from Raymond in a chapter where he argues against those who say that God's existence cannot be demonstrated, but is held by faith alone? It does not make sense at all. However, the occurrence of this sentence in the *Capistrum* makes perfect sense if we suppose that it is Raymond Martini – paraphrasing Aquinas – who tries to support his argument with what he thinks is a useful principle borrowed from Aquinas's work. And the same is certainly true for the rest of his paraphrase. On Raymond Martini's life and activities see Berthier 1936. 267–311; Cohen 1982. 129–169; Chazan 1989. 115–136; Tolan 2002. 234–242; Vose 2009. 105–106. 112–115. and 223–225; Burman 2012. 381–390; Bobichon 2013. 405–414; Tischler 2015. 25–28. Aquinas and Raymond Martini might have been together at St. Jacques in Paris sometime between 1245–1248 (Vose 2009. 113; Bobichon 2013. 407). For an edition of the passages from the *Capistrum* which concern the Prophet Muhammad see Di Cesare 2012. 301–305. On the possible dependence of the *Capistrum* from the *Summa contra Gentiles*, see Jordan 2006. 92, footnote 13; Huerga 1974. 542–545.

[39] SCG 1.6: "Huiusmodi autem veritati, *cui ratio humana experimentum non praebet*, fidem adhibentes non leviter credunt, quasi *indoctas fabulas secuti*, ut 2 Petr. 1–16, dicitur." "Those who place their faith in this truth, however, for which the human reason offers no experimental evidence, do not believe foolishly *(leviter)*, as though following artificial fables (2 Peter 1:16)." (Leonina 13. 17a. Marietti 2. 8. n. 35. ET 1. 71. n. 1.) For Aquinas's references see Gregorius Magnus: *Homiliae in evangelia* lib. 2, homilia 26: "Sed sciendum nobis est quod divina operatio, si ratione comprehenditur, non est admirabilis; nec fides habet meritum, cui humana ratio praebet experimentum" (Gregorius Magnus 1999. 218) and 2 Pt 1:16 "[…] non enim doctas fabulas secuti notam fecimus vobis Domini nostri Iesu Christi virtutem et praesentiam […]." According to Aquinas, "imagination" *(phantasia)* can metaphorically refer to

of the term "levity" *(levitas)* in his various works with reference to commitments based on insufficient reasoning and in connection with error and deception.[40]

Now, as we have seen, arguments intended as demonstrations for the articles of faith are "frivolous" and give "nonbelievers cause to laugh at us, thinking that we believe the matters of faith for such reasons."[41] Besides, demonstrative arguments for the propositions that represent the hidden aspect of God's true nature – if such arguments could be constructed at all – would deprive faith of its meritorious character.[42]

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the erroneous choice of the intellect: see DP 6.6 ad 3: "Utitur autem metaphorice" (i.e., Dionysius) "nomine phantasiae pro intellectu errante in eligendo." In contrast to human reason which "is always correct either in that it is disposed toward first principles about which it does not err, or in that error results from defective reasoning rather than the properties of reason," it is an essential property of imagination that it apprehends the images or likenesses of absent (including non-existent) things. As a consequence, its operation leads to error. See DM 7.5 ad 6: "Ad sextum dicendum, quod ratio semper dicitur recta vel secundum quod se habet ad prima principia, circa quae non errat, vel quia error non evenit ex proprietate rationis, sed magis ex eius defectu. Ex proprietate vero phantasiae consequitur error, in quantum apprehendit similitudines rerum absentium." (For the English translation see Thomas Aquinas 2003. 291). For "praeter rationem" see SCG 3.107 in footnote 37.

[40] The term "levitas" appears in the title and in the chapter itself. Although only a part of the autograph is extant (see footnote 2 above), the manuscript tradition seems to be reliable with regard to the titles: see Leonina 15. XXVI–XXXVIII, where a list of the titles of the chapters is to be found. The title of SCG 1.6 has only two marginal, less intelligible versions. Following Augustine, Aquinas says that a "light-minded consideration" *(existimatio levis)* is always present when it comes to error and deception: "quidam dixerunt quod in nomine deceptionis duo possunt intelligi, scilicet qualiscumque existimatio levis, qua aliquis adhaeret falso tanquam vero, sine assensu credulitatis; et iterum firma credulitas" (ST 1a.94.4 co). For the description of error included in this passage see Augustinus: *Enchiridion* V, 17: "pro uero quippe approbat falsum, quod est erroris proprium" (Augustinus 1969. 57). See further footnote 42 below.

[41] See footnote 31 above.

[42] In ST 2a2ae.2.9 ("Whether it is meritorious to believe") Aquinas raises an objection that revolves around the same dilemma: "Praeterea, ille qui assentit alicui rei credendo aut habet causam sufficienter inducentem ipsum ad credendum, aut non. Si habet sufficiens inductivum ad credendum, non videtur hoc ei esse meritorium, quia non est ei iam liberum credere et non credere. Si autem non habet sufficiens inductivum ad credendum, levitatis est credere, secundum illud Eccli. XIX, qui cito credit levis est corde, et sic non videtur esse meritorium. Ergo credere nullo modo est meritorium." "Furthermore, he who assents to something in believing either has a cause sufficiently inducing him to believe or [he does] not. If he does have something sufficient inducing him to believe, this does not seem to be meritorious for him, because he is no longer free to believe or not to believe. If he does not have something sufficient inducing him to believe, believing is frivolous *(levitatis est credere)*, according to Sirach 19, 'He who believes quickly is not serious in heart *(levis est in corde)*.' And so it does not seem to be meritorious. Therefore to believe is in no way meritorious." (translated by Mark D. Jordan, see Thomas Aquinas 1990. 88–89). In his answer Aquinas denies the consequence: we do not believe lightly as we have something sufficient that induces us to believe, i.e., the authority of divine teaching confirmed by miracles and "an inward impulse towards God, who invites" us (translated by Mark D. Jordan, see Thomas Aquinas 1990. 90).

What else could we rely on in an attempt to justify the assent to the articles of faith? And how could we avoid destroying thereby the moral weight we attribute to faith?

Drawing on the classical division of the two parts of logic, judicative and inventive, Aquinas distinguishes between "one process of reasoning that brings on necessity, in which no failure of truth is possible, and through the process of this sort of reasoning the certainty of knowledge scientia is produced" (judicative part, analytics) and "another process of reasoning which in most cases results in truth, without, however, carrying necessity" (inventive part, dialectics).[43] Although this latter process of reasoning "does not produce knowledge" and "absolute certitude", it produces "belief or opinion on account of the probability of the propositions from which it proceeds" and a "certain degree" of certitude "is reached accordingly as the process more or less approaches perfect certitude."[44]

Now, as Aquinas clarifies in the last, methodological and procedural chapter of his introduction to the SCG, we are able to "make manifest" the second aspect of truth with regard to divine things that we cannot demonstrate by deploying "probable reasonings" based on "the authority of Scripture" which is "divinely confirmed by miracles." And, even though such arguments cannot force our "adversaries" to accept our claims and arguments, they can only be used – as Aquinas puts it – "for the training and consolation of the faithful."[45] Still, these arguments might be apt to approach perfect certitude to such an extent that believers cannot regard their faith as unjustified. Apparently, Aquinas does

[43] See Cicero, *Topica* 2. 6: "[…] omnis ratio diligens disserendi duas habeat partis, unam inveniendi alteram iudicandi […]" (Cicero 1891. 426) or "[…] omnis ratio diligens disserendi duas habeat artes, unam inveniendi alteram iudicandi […]" (Cicero 2003. 118). See further Boëthius's *In Isagogen Porphyrii* 1. 2 (Boëthius 1906. 139: "omnis ratio diligens disserendi duas habeat partes, unam inveniendi, alteram iudicandi") and Boëthius *De topicis differentiis* I. (PL 64. 1173C; Boëthius 1978. 29 tr. by Eleonore Stump): "The whole science of discourse *(ratio disserendi)*, which the ancient Peripatetics called 'logiké,' is divided into two parts: one of discovering, the other of judging."

[44] See In LP 1.1 *(Proemium)* (Leonina I. 2 5b–6b). For the English translation of Aquinas's preface to his commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* see: Copeland–Sluiter 2012. 790–791. See further MacDonald 1993. 180.

[45] SCG 1.9: "Singularis vero modus convincendi adversarium contra huiusmodi veritatem est ex auctoritate Scripturae divinitus confirmata miraculis: quae enim supra rationem humanam sunt, non credimus nisi Deo revelante. Sunt tamen ad huiusmodi veritatem manifestandam rationes aliquae verisimiles inducendae, ad fidelium quidem exercitium et solatium, non autem ad adversarios convincendos: quia ipsa rationum insufficientia eos magis in suo errore confirmaret, dum aestimarent nos propter tam debiles rationes veritati fidei consentire." "The sole way to overcome an adversary of divine truth is from the authority of Scripture – an authority divinely confirmed by miracles. For that which is above the human reason we believe only because God has revealed it. Nevertheless, there are certain likely arguments that should be brought forth in order to make divine truth known. This should be done for the training and consolation of the faithful, and not with any idea of refuting those who are adversaries. For the very inadequacy of the arguments would rather strengthen them in their error, since they would imagine that our acceptance of the truth of faith was based on such weak arguments." (Leonina 13. 22a; Marietti 2. 12. n. 53–54; ET 1. 77–78. n. 2.)

not consider any kind of fideistic salvo here: Catholic religion is either based on some kind of guarantee or confirmation concerning the truth of the contents that exceed natural cognition, or it is based on deception, as Aquinas thinks is the case in other religions. If the articles of faith are "confirmed in a way that is so clearly divine", says he after laying down the argument in SCG 1.6, then it is "not permissible to believe as false that which we hold by faith."[46]

Given these points, Aquinas's rhetoric significantly changes in SCG 1.6.

Firstly, the discursive prose that characterizes the methodological introduction gives way in SCG 1.6 to an argumentation that is based on a historical narrative.

Secondly, compared to the epistemological, methodological and procedural issues of the introduction, a different type of problem is raised by Aquinas in SCG 1.6: under what conditions can we trust the testimonies of those who verbally transmitted the second aspect of truth? What makes the testimony given by the first disciples and the apostles reliable who claimed to have been directly inspired by God to teach the mysteries of Christian faith?

Thirdly, as a consequence, from the last lines of SCG 1.5 that introduces the narrative argumentation of SCG 1.6, Aquinas shifts the focus on God's representation as an intelligent and voluntary agent – however mighty – who communicates with human beings by giving signs to them.[47]

[46] SCG 1.7: "Ea enim quae naturaliter rationi sunt insita, verissima esse constat: in tantum ut nec esse falsa sit possibile cogitare. Nec id quod fide tenetur, cum tam evidenter divinitus confirmatum sit, fas est credere esse falsum." "For that with which the human reason is naturally endowed is clearly most true; so much so, that it is impossible for us to think of such truths as false. Nor is it permissible to believe as false that which we hold by faith, since this is confirmed in a way that is so clearly divine." (Leonina 13. 19a; Marietti 2. 11. n. 43; ET 1. 74. n. 1.)

[47] For God as an intelligent and voluntary agent see above all SCG 1.44–71, SCG 1.72–88. (For the expression "voluntate agens et intelligens" see SCG 2.35; Leonina 13. 349b; Marietti 2. 151. n. 1118; ET 2. 106. n. 8.) Being an "agent through His very self" *(agens per se)*, God acts through his essence *(per suam essentiam agit)* and – as a consequence – acts "through His will and intellect" with regards to created things and not by a necessity of His nature (SCG 2.8 and SCG 3.75). This is obviously true also if we consider God's communication with human beings. In SCG 1.6 Aquinas claims that the divine wisdom "reveals its own presence, as well as the truth of its teaching and inspiration, by fitting arguments; and in order to confirm those truths that exceed natural knowledge, it gives visible manifestation to works that surpass the ability of all nature." These works that "surpass the ability of all nature" are miracles. Now, miracles are generally regarded in the Middle Ages as signs and it is certainly true of God what Aquinas says about intelligent beings: "we do not use signs except in regard to other intelligent beings" (SCG 3.105; for miracles as signs in the Middle Ages see Ward 1987 passim and Ward 2011; for the term "signum" in medieval culture see: Maierú 1981). By performing miracles, God signals his intention to confirm the truth of his teaching, i.e., the "truths that exceed natural knowledge." Accordingly, Aquinas characterizes the method of theological inquiry in his Sentence-commentary as "a way of talking about those signs that are being brought about to confirm faith" (*modus istius scientiae sit narrativus signorum, quae ad confirmationem fidei faciunt;* In Sent I. Prologus 1.5 corpus) with reference to Mark 16:20 (see below). The methodology of theology as described in this work is clearly consistent

4. Miracles

In Aquinas's view, the only way to justify our assent to the second aspect of divine truth is to make sure that the author of the articles of faith – even if these articles are transmitted as the oral teaching of men – is God whose existence, simplicity and certain other attributes such as his veracity and reliability can be known to us by natural reason.[48]

The identification of God, however, as the author of the articles of faith is possible only if God unmistakably signals His authorship. Now, God can unmistakably signal his authorship if and only if it is impossible that natural processes alone or other agents alone produce the signs that are meant to signify God's intentions.[49] The signs that only God can produce or, if further agents are involved, that cannot be produced without the contribution of God, are miracles.

Although, as we saw before, miracles cannot prove that the articles of faith are true propositions, they still can confirm that the oral teaching of the disciples and apostles is of divine origin.[50] According to Aquinas's narrative, given the

with what Aquinas says in SCG and elsewhere about the differences between the investigations concerning the two aspects of divine truth. The object of inquiry, however, cannot be, without further ado, considered the same: there seems to be a conflict between God as a perfect being and God as a person represented by the biblical narratives (for this point and for the defence of Aquinas's claims on divine simplicity and immutability, see Davies 2016. 62–71). Now, Aquinas says that the term "persona" – under the definition given by Boëthius: "persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia" – applies to God, because "person" in this sense refers to what is "the most perfect" thing in the whole nature *(perfectissimum in tota natura)* and we have to attribute to God everything that is perfect (see ST 1a.29.3 co.; Boëthius 2000. 214). For the purposes of the present study it is not relevant to examine in what sense exactly and under what conditions the term "person" can or cannot be attributed to the one and three God (for this see Davies 2016. who, for some reason, claims that "'God is a person" is a relatively recent mantra"; Davies 2016. 65 and 300–351). It is sufficient that Aquinas holds – clearly in line with the Biblical narrative – that God cooperates and communicates with human beings. See, e.g., SCG 1.6: "The manner of this confirmation is touched on by St. Paul: 'Which,' that is, 'human salvation, having begun to be declared by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that hear Him: God also bearing them witness of signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost (Heb. 2: 3–4)" and SCG 3.154: "And it is said at the end of Mark (16:20): 'But they going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed.'" (ET 1. 72. n. 2 and ET 3/2. 242. n. 8.)

[48] See SCG 1.60–62. In Aquinas's view, in God "there is pure truth, with which no falsity or deception can be mingled" and – as a consequence – "no falsity can be proposed to man by God" (SCG 1.61; ET 1. 205. n. 1; SCG 3.118. ET 3/2. 129. n. 3).

[49] SCG 1.6: "[…] operatio visibilis quae non potest esse nisi divina, ostendit doctorem veritatis invisibiliter inspiratum […]"; "[…] a visible action that can be only divine reveals an invisibly inspired teacher of truth […]" (Leonina 13, 17b; Marietti 2, 10. n. 41; ET 1. 73. n. 4).

[50] As it is used in this context, the term "confirmatio" is of Scriptural origin. Aquinas often refers to Mark 16:20: "illi autem profecti praedicaverunt ubique Domino cooperante et sermonem confirmante sequentibus signis", and Heb 2: 3–4: "quomodo nos effugiemus si tantam neglexerimus salutem quae cum initium accepisset enarrari per Dominum ab eis qui audierunt in nos confirmata est contestante Deo signis et portentis et variis virtutibus et Spir-

order of providence, the second aspect of divine truth was evident only to those who were being directly instructed by God. They were then verbally passing on their knowledge.[51] They could not prove, however, the truth of their claims, because faith refers to something which is beyond human understanding and, as we saw, cannot "be confirmed by any rational principles in the way of demonstration."[52] So God confirmed their oral teachings with miracles, making clear thereby that their teaching comes from God.

Miracles, in this respect, can be regarded as signs that certify the authorship of the message sent by the author with the assistance of further agents.

In a sermon from 1273, that clearly runs parallel with the SCG 1.6, Aquinas compares the reception of the articles of faith to receiving a letter from a king who had sent it "with his own seal", thus signalling that it proceeds from his will. Similarly, what has been handed down to us about the faith by the apostles and the saints is "marked with the seal of God," i.e., the miracles, "those deeds which no creature would be able to do, but only God."[53]

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itus Sancti distributionibus secundum suam voluntatem" (for the English translation see also footnote 47 above). Confirmation of the "truths that exceed natural knowledge" by miracles is seen as an *ipso facto* key for justifying the assent to these truths by Aquinas. See Aquinas's answer to the objection mentioned in footnote 42: "Ad tertium dicendum quod ille qui credit habet sufficiens inductivum ad credendum, inducitur enim auctoritate divinae doctrinae miraculis confirmatae, et, quod plus est, interiori instinctu Dei invitantis. Unde non leviter credit. Tamen non habet sufficiens inductivum ad sciendum." "To the third it should be said that he who believes does have something sufficient inducing him to believe. He is induced by the authority of divine teaching confirmed by miracles, and, what is more, by an inward impulse towards God, who invites him. So he does not believe lightly. But he does not have something sufficient inducing to knowledge." (ST 2a2ae.2.9 ad 3; translated by Mark D. Jordan, see Thomas Aquinas 1990. 90.)

[51] SCG 3.154: "Since man can only know the things that he does not see himself by taking them from another who does see them, and since faith is among the things we do not see, the knowledge of the objects of faith must be handed on by one who sees them himself. Now, this one is God, Who perfectly comprehends Himself, and naturally sees His essence. Indeed, we get faith from God. So, the things that we hold by faith must come to us from God. But, since the things that come from God are enacted in a definite order, […], a certain order had to be observed in the manifestation of the objects of faith. That is to say, some persons had to receive them directly from God, then others from them, and so on in an orderly way down to the lowest persons." (ET 3/2. 239–240. n. 1.)

[52] SCG 3.154: "But because oral teaching that is offered requires confirmation so that it may be accepted, unless it be evident in itself, and because things that are of faith are not evident to human reason, it was necessary for some means to be provided whereby the words of the preachers of the faith might be confirmed. Now, they could not be confirmed by any rational principles in the way of demonstration, since the objects of faith surpass reason. So, it was necessary for the oral teaching of the preachers to be confirmed by certain signs, whereby it might be plainly shown that this oral teaching came from God; so, the preachers did such things as healing the sick, and the performance of other difficult deeds, which only God could do." (ET 3/2. 242. n. 8.)

[53] In Symb I. See Ayo 2005. 23. Aquinas's sermon-conferences on the Apostles Creed are known as *Expositio super Symbolum Apostolorum* or as *Collationes Credo in Deum*. The Latin text Nicholas Ayo uses for his translation is a Leonine Commission version (Leonina 44. 2, not published yet). The sermon-conferences were probably given by Aquinas in a parish church

Aquinas's narrative in SCG 1.6 gives a short overview of a series of miracles that confirms the second aspect of divine truth, with an emphasis on what he calls "the greatest of miracles."[54] There is an ascending order in the narrative. First, Aquinas refers to the miracles that he calls later in the SCG "the bodily miracles" ("wonderful cures of illnesses, there is the raising of the dead, and the wonderful immutation in the heavenly bodies") and continues with "the much greater" spiritual ones referring to the disciples and apostles' miraculous spiritual transformation: "what is more wonderful, there is the inspiration given to human minds, so that simple and untutored persons, filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit, come to possess instantaneously the highest wisdom and the readiest eloquence." [55]

In addition, Aquinas calls "the greatest of miracles" and "a manifest work of divine inspiration" the assent itself to the truths of Catholic faith.[56] A necessary

of Naples, in the Lent of 1273. The extant text is a *reportatio*, written down and translated from the vernacular into Latin by Reginald of Piperno. See Ayo 2005. 1–6; Eschmann 1956. 425–426; Torrell 1996. 358.

[54] See footnote 56 below.

[55] SCG 1.6: "et, quod est mirabilius, humanarum mentium inspiratione, ut idiotae et simplices, dono spiritus sancti repleti, summam sapientiam et facundiam in instanti consequerentur" (Leonina 13, 17a; Marietti 2, 9. n. 36; ET 1. 72. n. 1). The spiritual miracles of Christ are referred to SCG 4.55 again where Aquinas answers objections against the suitability *(convenientia)* of God's incarnation, with reference to Hebrew 2:3-4 again: "And not merely bodily miracles were worked through Christ, but spiritual ones as well, and these are much greater namely, by Christ and at the invocation of His name the Holy Spirit is received, and so hearts are inflamed by the affection of divine charity; and minds suddenly are instructed in the knowledge of things divine; and the tongues of the unlettered are rendered skilled for setting divine truth forth to men. But works of this sort are express indications of the divinity of Christ; they are things so pare man was able to do. Hence, the Apostle says that the salvation of men 'which, having begun to be declared by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Spirit' (Heb. 2: 3-4)." (ET 4. 237. n. 11.)

[56] SCG 1.6: "Quibus inspectis, praedictae probationis efficacia, non armorum violentia, non voluptatum promissione, et, quod est mirabilissimum, inter persecutorum tyrannidem, innumerabilis turba non solum simplicium, sed sapientissimorum hominum, ad fidem Christianam convolavit, in qua omnem humanum intellectum excedentia praedicantur, voluptates carnis cohibentur et omnia quae in mundo sunt contemni docentur; quibus animos mortalium assentire et maximum miraculorum est, et manifestum divinae inspirationis opus, ut, contemptis visibilibus, sola invisibilia cupiantur." "When these arguments were examined, through the efficacy of the abovementioned proof, and not the violent assault of arms or the promise of pleasure, and (what is most wonderful of all) in the midst of the tyranny of the persecutors, an innumerable throng of people, both simple and most learned, flocked to the Christian faith. In this faith there are truths preached that surpass every human intellect; the pleasures of the flesh are curbed; it is taught that the things of the world should be spurned. Now, for the minds of mortal men to assent to these things is the greatest of miracles, just as it is a manifest work of divine inspiration that, spurning visible things, men should seek only what is invisible." (Leonina 13, 17a; Marietti 2, 9. n. 37; ET 1. 72. n. 1.) This state of affairs (i.e., that the minds of mortal men assent, first, to the truths that surpass every human intellect, second, to the suppression of the pleasures of the flesh and, third, to spurning of the whole world) is regarded by Aquinas as a spiritual miracle itself and – as "the greatest of

concomitant of this assent was, in Aquinas's view, the loosening or even breaking of the bonds that bound the apostles and disciples to their physical and social environment.[57]

Aquinas's characterization of the behaviour of the apostles and disciples (rejection of the sensual pleasures, spurning of the world and seeking only what is invisible by assenting to the second aspect of divine truth) satisfies an important requirement proposed by Aquinas himself in his analysis of the concept of miracle later in SCG. For only those things can "properly be called miraculous", writes Aquinas, "which are done by divine power apart from the order generally followed in things." Furthermore, Aquinas's account seems to entail that for anything to be "the greatest of the miracles" the miracle in question must be the most "removed from the capacity of nature."[58]

The very same narrative, however, raises a serious problem with regard to the success of Christianity. How can a religion be successful in human history if its followers spurn the world, turn away from it and seek only what is invisible?[59]

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miracles" – he seems to place it on the same level as incarnation. Aquinas calls incarnation the greatest of the miracles in the fourth book of SCG. See SCG 4.27 on the mystery of incarnation: "[…] nunc incarnationis mysterio restat dicendum. Quod quidem inter divina opera maxime rationem excedit: nihil enim mirabilius excogitari potest divinitus factum quam quod verus Deus, Dei filius, fieret homo verus. Et quia inter omnia mirabilissimum est, consequitur quod ad huius maxime mirabilis fidem omnia alia miracula ordinentur: cum id quod est in unoquoque genere maximum, causa aliorum esse videatur." "[…] it now remains to speak of the mystery of the Incarnation itself. Indeed, among divine works, this most especially exceeds the reason: for nothing can be thought of which is more marvelous than this divine accomplishment: that the true God, the Son of God, should become true man. And because among them all it is most marvelous, it follows that toward faith in this particular marvel all other miracles are ordered, since 'that which is greatest in any genus seems to be the cause of the others'." (Leonina 15. 108a; Marietti 3. 301. n. 3635; ET 4. 147. n. 1.)

[57] See footnote 56 above: "In this faith there are truths preached that surpass every human intellect; the pleasures of the flesh are curbed; it is taught that the things of the world should be spurned."

[58] In SCG 3.101 Aquinas gives the following definiton of miracle: "those things must properly be called miraculous which are done by divine power apart from the order generally followed in things." He adds that "there are various degrees and orders of […] miracles." "The highest rank among miracles," continues Aquinas, "is held by those events in which something is done by God which nature never could do" and even among these miracles "an order may be observed," in so far as "the greater the things that God does are, and the more they are removed from the capacity of nature, the greater the miracle is" (ET 3/2. 82. n. 1–2). According to Aquinas "miracles are divinely accomplished, when something is done in a thing, which is not within the potency of that thing" (SCG 3,102; ET 3/2. 84. n. 4). For miracles in SCG 3.98–102 and SCG 4, see Davies 2016. 259–262; 267–269; 361–362. For an even more detailed discussion of miracles by Aquinas himself see his *Quaestiones disputatae de potential*, Quaestio 6 (De miraculis) (for an English translation see Thomas Aquinas 2012. 161–193). See further ST 3a.43–44, and Davies 2014. 318–319.

[59] Aquinas clearly thinks that Christianity is the only religion with these characteristics, as it is clear from the introductory remark to what he says about Muhammad and his followers in SCG 1.6: "On the other hand, those who founded sects committed to erroneous doctrines proceeded in a way that is opposite to this" (ET 1. 73. n. 4). See further SCG 1.5 which contrasts Christianity with Judaism: "That is why it was necessary for the human mind to be

This characterization of the faith of the apostles and disciples places a double burden on Aquinas, since the very same features that make their assent and consequent behaviour the "greatest of the miracles" constitutes a serious handicap when it comes to their efficiency to fulfill their mission. Their total renouncement, from a naturalistic point of view, implies a serious waste of capacities that could otherwise contribute to the strengthening of their worldly community and to the successful spread of Christianity.

How can this double burden be resolved? On what condition is it possible for the apostles and disciples to thrive if their wasteful behaviour – again, from a naturalistic point of view – makes them more exposed to the attempts of suppression in a context where conflict of interest prevails?

The only way this would be possible was if this waste made sense, i.e. if the waste was a part of a signal that indicates a true underlying quality. This is Aquinas's insight on which his narrative argumentation rests in SCG 1.6: the waste which is a substantial part of the signals given by the early followers of Christ provides reliable information about the religious quality they display, for only those can afford wasting their natural reserves and capabilities who really possess the quality indicated by the signals. The gist of the argument can be reformulated as a counterfactual claim: had not total renouncement been a reliable signal of the religious quality of Christianity, Christianity would not be able to thrive in a hostile environment, in spite of the persecutions and in spite of early Christians' turning away from natural desires.[60]

I would like to briefly highlight two further aspects of the narrative of SCG 1.6.

Firstly, the greatest miracle is not subject to disagreement.[61] Aquinas considers "the wonderful conversion of the world to Christianity" an effect that is "the

called to something higher than the human reason here and now can reach, so that it would thus learn to desire something and with zeal tend towards something that surpasses the whole state of the present life. This belongs especially to the Christian religion, which in a unique way promises spiritual and eternal goods. And so there are many things proposed to men in it that transcend human sense. The Old Law, on the other hand, whose promises were of a temporal character, contained very few proposals that transcended the inquiry of the human reason." (ET 1. 69. n. 2.)

[60] The "most miraculous" conversion of the world to Christianity took place not only without the support of worldly forces ("violent assault of arms" and the "promise of pleasure" are mentioned by Aquinas) but despite of it, "in the midst of the tyranny of persecutors." See footnote 17 and the text in footnote 56 above. At the same time, Aquinas clearly notices that the reliability of the signals of the apostles and disciples was increased by the fact that signalling their total renouncement made them less efficient, i.e., "less well-adapted" to their environment. To this latter point see the next section of this paper and Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. 91.

[61] Aquinas argues that miracles – even if they are directly perceived – cannot be a sufficient cause of the assent to the articles of faith, since they do not necessarily lead to assent. See ST 2a2ae.6.1 co: "As regards the second, namely man's assent to the things that are of faith, the cause can be considered in two ways. In one way, as an outward inducement, such as a miracle seen or a human persuasion inducing one to faith. Neither of which is a sufficient cause.

most certain indicator" of the reliability of the "signs" given by God "in the past." This effect is undeniable and so obvious that, he says, "it is not necessary" that the underlying past "signs" given by God "should be further repeated."[62]

The structure of Aquinas's narrative argumentation is reminiscent of his *a posteriori* arguments for the existence of God, for he seems to build in SCG 1.6 an inference from an effect accessible to everyone (the conversion of the world to Christianity) to its cause (the divine authorship of the articles of faith). Nevertheless, it cannot be called a proper *a posteriori* argument since, as we saw earlier, Aquinas does not intend to, could not and would not *prove* – in the proper sense, by means of a demonstrative argument – that the articles of faith are true. Aquinas would only like to show us with the help of "a process of reasoning which in most cases results in truth" that the author of the articles of faith is the same God whose certain attributes can be known to us by natural reason.[63] Furthermore, Aquinas argues that our assent to these propositions cannot be considered light or foolish *(levis)*, as the conversion of the world to Christianity in spite of the hostile environment and the conterintuitive features of the Christian religion is a miracle itself.[64]

Secondly, Aquinas's unexpected detour into the realm of Christian-Muslim apologetic in the last paragraphs of SCG 1.6 cannot be regarded as a theological reasoning against the main tenets of Muslim religion.[65] Instead, it is an attempt to compare features that represent true religious quality (the signals of the apos-

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Among those seeing one and the same miracle, and those hearing the same preaching, some believe and some do not believe." (Translated by Mark D. Jordan, see Thomas Aquinas 1990. 138.) See further ST 2a2ae.2.9 in footnotes 42 and 50 above.

[62] SCG 1.6: "Haec autem tam mirabilis mundi conversio ad fidem Christianam indicium certissimum est praeteritorum signorum: ut ea ulterius iterari necesse non sit, cum in suo effectu appareant evidenter." Nonetheless God, Aquinas notes, "even in our own time" […] "does not cease to work miracles through His saints for the confirmation of the faith" (Leonina 13. 17a-b; Marietti 2. 9. n. 40; ET 1. 72–73. n. 3).

[63] For the probabilistic reasoning see section III.3 above.

[64] Aquinas's narrative is extraordinarily strong, because it grounds the effect of those miracles in our common experience that, in Aquinas's view; confirm the authorship of the articles of faith. This is why he could transform later (in his 1273 Lent sermo mentioned earlier in footnote 53) his narrative into an argument whose compelling power seems to be close to that of a demonstrative argument. "That seal is indeed those deeds which no creature would be able to do, but only God. They are the miracles whereby Christ confirmed the sayings of the apostles and the saints. If you say that no one sees a miracle happen, I would reply thus. It is a fact that the entire world cultivated idols, as the very history of the pagans' shows. But how were all of them converted to Christ, both the wise and the rich, both the powerful and the multitude, by the preaching of simple men who were poor and few in number, preaching poverty and flight from delights? Either this fact is miraculous or not. If it is miraculous, I have made my point. If it is not miraculous, I say that there cannot be a greater miracle than the world should be converted without miracles. No need to search any further. So therefore no one ought to doubt about faith, but ought to believe those things of faith more surely than those which one sees, because human sight can be deceived, but the knowledge of God is never mistaken." (Ayo 2005. 23–25.)

[65] For this point see footnote 29 above.

tles and disciples) with those that indicate error and deception (the misleading signals of the founder of a false religion).[66] This explains why Aquinas enumerates the Prophet Muhammad's promises, precepts and deeds as opposed to the first Christians' faith and behaviour instead of talking about the doctrines of *Saraceni* or *Mahumetistae*. Aquinas uses Muhammad's person only as an example – however suitable he thinks it is – that illustrates the seductive way of the many founders of "false sects" *(sectae errorum)*.[67]

The contraposition of the seduction and the promises of carnal pleasures on the one hand, and the pursuit of the invisible, on the other, unveils a deeper and broader divide that leads us back to the main objective of the work, i.e., to eliminate all errors by manifesting the truth of faith. For to get seduced by a founder of a false sect is only possible if those who are seduced follow an order in the false belief that it will be lead them to happiness. Only those, says Aquinas, who are deceived, i.e who are in error voluntarily enter into a worse state.[68]

Now, the followers of false sects cannot avoid being in error as long as they are being deceived in regard to the proper good of men, i.e., the end to which

[66] Following the order Aquinas presents his point: Muhammad seduces his followers with the promises of carnal pleasure, whereas the first Christians curb carnal pleasures, spurn visible things and seek only what is invisible; Mohammad's "proofs of the truths of his doctrine can be grasped by the natural ability of anyone with a very modest wisdom" and in his teaching even truths are mingled with fables and falsity, whereas the first Christians possess the highest wisdom and preach truths "that surpass every human intellect"; Muhammad does not bring forth any supernatural signs, whereas the first Christian's teachings are confirmed by miracles, including the greatest of the miracles; the only signs Muhammad gives are the signs of violence which is characteristic to robbers and tyrants and Muhammad forces others to become his followers "by the violence of his arms", whereas the first Christians find followers through the efficacy of the miracles that accompany their operations and not by means of the "violent assault of arms or the promise of pleasure", what is more, "in the midst of the tyranny of the persecutors"; Muhammad's actions are not offered any witness by the preceding prophets, he perverts "almost all the testimonies of the Old and New Testaments" and bans their reading, whereas the first Christians' actions come as a result of the disposition of God and is being foretold by the ancient prophets whose books are held in veneration among Christians. See ET 1. 73–74. n. 4.

[67] SCG 1.6: "Hi vero qui sectas errorum introduxerunt processerunt via contraria: ut patet in Mahumeto qui carnalium voluptatum promissis, ad quorum desiderium carnalis concupiscentia instigat, populus illexit." "On the other hand, those who founded sects committed to erroneous doctrines preceded in a way that is opposite to this. The point is clear in the case of Mohammed. He seduced *(illexit)* the people by promises of carnal pleasure to which the concupiscence of the flesh goads us." (Leonina 13, 17b. Marietti 2, 9. n. 41. ET 1. 73. n. 4.) In his characterization of Muhammad's activity Aquinas mainly draws upon the "Apology" of Pseudo Al-Kindi, known to him probably through Vincent of Bauvais's *Speculum historiae* (see Van Riet 1976. 150–160; Gauthier 1993. 119–127; for Pseudo Al-Kindi on Muhammad see "The Letter of the Saracen and the Response of the Christian" in Di Cesare 2012. 122–139; see further Tischler 2015. 3–62, esp. 32–33; Bottini 2009. 585–594; Tolan 2002. 242–245; for Vincent of Bauvais see Frunzeanu 2012. 405–415).

[68] See SCG 2.83: "Nullus enim vult in statum peiorem venire nisi deceptus." "For no one voluntarily enters into a state worse than the previous one, unless he be deceived." (Leonina 13. 521b.; Marietti 2, 242. n. 1665. ET 2. 277. n. 17.)

human beings are directed.[69] Aquinas thinks that the true character of this end was manifested in the teachings of the apostles and disciples whose wasteful signals along with the miraculous spread of Christianity provide a guarantee that these teachings are from God. The ultimate source of error and sin in the case of a member of a false sect is the light assent to those views that pervert the right order of the goods of men making those goods primary and a higher end that should be subordinated.[70] When they turn away from what is truly good they act slavishly.[71]

[69] In Aquinas's view, the proper good and the end of man as a being of intellectual nature consists exclusively in the contemplation of God. This is the ultimate felicity of man, this is an end that is above human nature and it belongs to the whole species. See SCG 3.37: "[…] ultima felicitas hominis non consistit nisi in contemplatione Dei." "Our ultimate felicity consists only in the contemplation of God" and SCG 3.150 (speaking of Grace): "Unumquodque ordinatur in finem sibi convenientem secundum rationem suae formae: diversarum enim specierum diversi sunt fines. Sed finis in quem homo dirigitur per auxilium divinae gratiae, est supra naturam humanam." "Besides, everything is ordered to an end suitable to it by the rational character of its form, for there are different ends for different species. But the end to which man is directed by the help of divine grace is above human nature." (See Leonina 14. 93b. and 442b; Marietti 3. 43. n. 2160. and 225. n. 3229; ET 3/1. 125. n. 9. and ET 3/2. 232. n. 5). On what ultimate human felicity is and what it is not according to Aquinas (SCG 3.26–63) see Davies 2016. 227–243.

[70] For the right order of the goods and the choice of a volitional agent to order his own perfection to a higher end see, e.g., SCG 3.108 (a part of an objection to the view that sin can occur in demons; it, nonetheless, represents Aquinas's position): "[…] sin does occur in our act of appetition, because, since our nature is composed of the spiritual and the corporeal, there are several goods for us. Our good in regard to understanding is indeed different from what it is according to sensation, or even according to the body. Now, there is a certain order of these various things that are man's goods, based on the fact that what is less primary is subordinated to what is more primary. Hence, a sin occurs in our will when, failing to observe this order, we desire what is only relatively good for us, in opposition to what is absolutely good" and Aquinas's answer in SCG 3.109: "[…] this kind of volitional agent is God, Whose being is the highest goodness, which is the ultimate end. Hence, in God there can be no sin of the will. But in any other kind of volitional agent, whose proper good must be included under the order of another good, it is possible for sin of the will to occur, if it be considered in its own nature. Indeed, although natural inclination of the will is present in every volitional agent to will and to love its own perfection so that it cannot will the contrary of this, yet it is not so naturally implanted in the agent to so order its perfection to another end, that it cannot fail in regard to it, for the higher end is not proper to its nature, but to a higher nature. It is left, then, to the agent's choice, to order his own proper perfection to a higher end." (ET 3/2. 106. n. 6. and ET 3/2. 109. n. 6–7.)

[71] See, e.g., SCG 4.22: "The will, of course, is ordered to that which is truly good. But if, by reason of passion or of bad habit or disposition, a man be turned away from that which is truly good, he acts slavishly, in that he is diverted by some extraneous thing, if consideration be given the will's natural order itself. But if one considers the act of the will as inclined to an apparent good, one acts freely when he follows passion or a corrupt habit he acts slavishly, of course, if while his will remains such he – for fear of a law to the contrary – refrains from that which he wills. Therefore, since the Holy Spirit inclines the will by love toward the true good, to which the will is naturally ordered, He removes both that servitude in which the slave of passion infected by sin acts against the *order* of the will, and that servitude in which, against the movement of his will, a man acts according to the law; its slave, so to say, not its friend.

It is of the utmost importance, however, to emphasize that – in Aquinas's view – anyone can be in error, not only the misled followers of the false sects. Aquinas thinks that the "frailty of reason" ("debilitas rationis") is the greatest "spiritual penalty" for the whole of humankind, alongside with death, which is the greatest bodily penalty.[72] As error and sin are inextricably connected according to Aquinas, an error with regard to the proper good of men unavoidably leads to sin if the will's choice is determined by it.[73]

How can we avoid this? What can a "well-disposed intellect" do to help those whose intellect is improperly disposed?[74]

IV. THE HANDICAP PRINCIPLE

In SCG 1.6, Aquinas's solution had drawn on an insight that – centuries later – led to the formulation of the handicap principle in evolutionary biology: "waste can make sense."[75] Handicapped signals provide reliable information about the quality they display, for only high-quality signallers can afford them, i.e. those

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This is why the Apostle says 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (2 Cor. 3:17); and 'If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law' (Gal. 5:18)." (ET 4. 127. n. 6.)

[72] SCG 4.52: "Patitur autem communiter humanum genus diversas poenas, et corporales et spirituales. Inter corporales potissima est mors, ad quam omnes aliae ordinantur: scilicet fames, sitis, et alia huiusmodi. Inter spirituales autem est potissima debilitas rationis, ex qua contingit quod homo difficulter pervenit ad veri cognitionem, et de facili labitur in errorem; et appetitus bestiales omnino superare non potest, sed multoties obnubilatur ab eis." "Now, the human race commonly suffers various penalties, both bodily and spiritual. Greatest among the bodily ones is death, and to this all the others are ordered: namely, hunger, thirst, and others of this sort. Greatest of course, among the spiritual penalties is the frailty of reason: from this it happens that man with difficulty arrives at knowledge of the truth; that with ease he falls into error, and that he cannot entirely overcome his beastly appetites, but is over and over again beclouded by them." (Leonina 15. 163a; Marietti 3. 343. n. 3875; ET 4. 217–218. n. 1.)

[73] See, e.g., SCG 3.108: "unless there is an error in the apprehension of the good, there cannot be a sin in the will" (ET 3/2. 104. n. 2).

[74] For the "well-disposed intellect" *(intellectus bene dispositus)* that "takes pleasure in truth" but "not in lies" see, e.g., SCG 3.106: "Intellectus bene dispositi est reducere homines in ea quae sunt hominum propria bona, quae sunt bona rationis. Abducere igitur ab istis, pertrahendo ad aliqua minima bona, est intellectus indecenter dispositi." "[…] it pertains to a well-disposed intellect to bring men back to things that are proper goods for men, namely, the goods of reason. Consequently, to lead them away from these goods, by diverting them to the least important goods, is the mark of an improperly disposed intellect." Similarly: "cum igitur boni sit bonum adducere, cuiuslibet intellectus bene dispositi esse videtur alios perducere ad veritatem." "since to attract to the good is proper to a good being, it seems to be the function of every well-disposed intellect to bring others to the truth." Furthermore: "Intellectus bene dispositus veritate allicitur, in qua delectatur, non autem mendaciis." "Besides, a well-disposed intellect is attracted by truth, takes pleasure in it and not in lies." (Leonina 14. 334a-b; Marietti 3. 160. n. 2814, n. 2817 and n. 2818; ET 3/2. 98–99. n.4 n. 7 and n. 8.)

[75] "The Handicap Principle is a very simple idea: waste can make sense, because by wasting one proves conclusively that one has enough assets to waste and more" (Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. 229).

who really possess the quality manifested and do not just fake it. Aquinas uses this insight to propose an argument for the well-foundedness of the assent to the articles of Catholic faith.

What happens if handicapped signals are not available anymore to indicate the true religious quality of the signallers? What if their intentions and thoughts are principally hidden and they mostly communicate with conventional signals that are not difficult to fake? Is there anything that can ensure the reliability of the signals under such conditions? Aquinas addresses problems with regard to reliable signalling in SCG that show up on different levels of biological organization and cultural complexity. I think therefore that the debates on the handicap principle in evolutionary biology can shed some fresh light on the work that has remained a mystery for scholars for so long.

1. The Handicap principle in evolutionary biology

The handicap principle was first formulated in the 1970s in evolutionary biology.[76] It is based on the intuition that, roughly, the reliability and the cost of a signal is positively correlated in animal communication. If the delivery of a signal is sufficiently expensive, this signal is *ipso facto* reliable, since faking it would require resources that are no longer mobilized by fraudsters.

The principle was formulated as a proposal for solving the puzzle of honest signalling. How is honest signalling possible if individuals who are successful at giving deceptive signals to increase their fitness seem to have an advantage in differential reproduction over honest communicators in competitive interactions?[77] If dishonest signallers are effective enough, receivers take the deceptive signals at face value and respond accordingly, contributing thus to the increase

[76] Zahavi 1975; Zahavi 1987; Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. For the precursors of the idea see Getty 2006. 83: "The handicapping analogy is often traced back to Veblin's concept of conspicuous consumption: the idea that rich people who 'waste' a lot of money on luxury goods (the signals) should have more money left in the bank (the unobservable quality) than do poor people who spend little on utilitarian goods. However, there is a more striking and immediate precursor in Vonnegut's 1961 short story *Harrison Bergeron*, about a fantasy dystopia where human performance is equalized by the Handicapper General. Vonnegut appreciated the signalling possibilities of a handicapping system: 'it was easy to see that she was the strongest and most graceful of all the dancers, for her handicap bags were as big as those worn by two-hundred- pound men'." On the honest signalling in economy and the "poor" and sometimes not that poor methodology "employed by many human scientists when using what is typically referred to as 'costly signalling theory'," see Grose 2011. esp. 689–693.

[77] We need not define deception with reference to mental (intentional) states. See, e.g., the following definition of functional deception: "1. A receiver registers something Y from a signaller; 2. The receiver responds in a way that *a*. benefits the signaller and *b*. is appropriate if Y means X; and 3. It is not true here that X is the case." (Searcy–Nowicki 2005. 5.) For "functional deception" see further Hauser 1996. 569–572. who coined the term. Similarly, "honesty" should not refer to the mental state of a signaller, either: "Honesty is when the

of fitness of the manipulator, while they do not benefit from the interaction. This process should result in a multiplication of deceptively communicating individuals within a given population, which, in turn, would lead to the loss of reliable communication. Nonetheless, reliable signals are produced regularly in animal interactions; what is more, their existence is what makes deception possible. What is it that ensures the survival of reliable signals?

The handicap principle claims that faking reliable signals would cost more to the cheaters than they are willing to bear.[78] It is important to stress that what cheaters are not willing to pay is not the efficacy cost of the signal (i.e. the cost of its production), but the "waste" or "strategic cost" on top of it.[79] According to the representatives of the principle, the strategic cost of honest signalling is paid only by the individuals who actually possesses the hidden (unobservable) quality they advertise, that is, they are actually fit enough to bear the strategic cost of the wasteful signal without their fitness being thereby threatened.

One frequently quoted example is the stotting of Thomson gazelles in response to coursing predators.[80] Their apparently pointless and potentially self-destructive behaviour has long intrigued scholars and the puzzle has just been increased by observations suggesting that wild dogs are less likely to select and chase gazelles with higher stotting rate. In addition, gazelles that escape the attack of the predator are more likely to be stotting during the chase than the ones who eventually fall prey to the predators.[81] So it seems that – surprisingly and somewhat counterintuitively – it is likely that those individuals that sacrifice the most of their resources will most likely survive.

How can we explain this? According to one hypothesis, stotting is an honest signal sent to inform the predators about the ability of the gazelles to outrun them.[82] The effectiveness of this signal is based on its reliability and its reliability, in turn, on its costliness. For gazelles that are not strong enough, too young or too old, they cannot afford sending as many wasteful signals as the physically more able individuals, as the waste of time and the depletion of available energy reserves would seriously jeopardize them when attacked by predators. Since

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sender provides all relevant information to the receiver. Doing so allows the receiver to infer the signaller's state from the signal chosen without ambiguity." (Hurd–Enquist 2005. 1168.)

[78] "Willingness," again, refers here to the presence of physical ability that makes it possible for the individual to give a reliable signal. For another class of signals (index signal), the signal is constrained by the physical or physiological structure of the individual. Consequently, there is no cost for signalling. A small tiger cannot scratch the trunk as high as a larger one. For the distinction between index signals and handicaps see Maynard Smith – Harper 2003. esp. 1–67.

[79] See Számadó 2012. 280. For the distinction between "efficacy cost" and "strategic cost" see Maynard Smith – Harper 1995. 306–307.

[80] Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. XIII–XV and 6–7; Fitzgibbon–Fanshave 1988; see further Walther 1969. 192–196; Caro 1986a; Caro 1986b.

[81] Fitzgibbon–Fanshave 1988. 71–73.

[82] Caro 1986a. 654–655; Caro 1986b. 672–674; Fitzgibbon–Fanshave 1988.

stotting actually wastes the individual's resources, this signal cannot be faked: it is an *ipso facto* confirmation that the individual possesses the hidden unobservable quality indicated.

2. Honest signalling without handicaps

After its early formulation in theoretical biology, the handicap principle – in spite of its simplicity and apparent plausibility – was rejected by many as a "laughable nonsense." Over time, however, it became "the central explanation underlying all forms of animal communication."[83] This wider acceptance was largely due to the works of Alan Grafen and John Maynard Smith.[84] The conclusion of Grafen's evolutionary game theory model and its confirmation by John Maynard Smith was considered as a proof that in contexts characterized by conflict of interest, the reliability of the signal is ensured by the strategic cost paid: "persuasive signalling necessarily involves waste as only cost can enforce honesty".[85]

Corroborated by the success of game theory models, Amotz Zahavi, who introduced the handicap principle in the 1970's, started to regard it as the basis for a general theory of reliable signalling. Zahavi thought that all reliable signals should be costly regardless of the context (i.e. the status of recipient: potential partner, rival, enemy, etc.) and reliable signals are selected by a selection algorithm.[86] The handicap principle or the theory of "costly signalling," which is often considered equivalent in the literature,[87] has increasingly been applied in a wide range of social sciences[88] to such an extent that, according to some, it

[83] Pomiankowski–Iwasa 1998. 928. For the initial rejection of the idea see further Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. 229: "The Handicap Principle is a very simple idea: waste can make sense, because by wasting one proves conclusively that one has enough assets to waste and more. The investment – the waste itself – is just what makes the advertisement reliable. This idea seemed so obvious to us that we assumed at first that it must already be widely accepted, and so we searched the existing literature for discussions of it. […] to our great surprise, this idea, which struck us as self-evident, was bitterly resisted by the scientific establishment." What seems obvious to one, however, might well seem counterintuitive to others: "Zahavi's initially counterintuitive idea is now generally thought workable by theorists, who at first resisted it" (LaPorte 2002. 88; see further LaPorte 2001).

[84] Grafen 1990; Maynard Smith 1991.

[85] Grafen 1990. 532.

[86] Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. XIV: "in order to be reliable, signals have to be costly"; Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. 58: "all signals have a cost – they impose a handicap – and that is what guarantees that they are reliable"; for the context-independence and signal selection see Zahavi–Zahavi 1997. 40. See further Zahavi 2008. 2: „The handicap principle is an essential component in all signals and shows why signals take the form they do."

[87] Grose 2011. 684.

[88] With regard to the costliness of religious signals and on the explanations of certain characteristics associated with religion as adaptive traits vs. evolutionary byproducts – above all and among many others – see: Alcorta–Sosis 2003; Bulbulia 2004; and Powell–Clarke 2012.

lead to a kind of handicapitis and the proliferation of panglossic pseudo-explanations.[89]

Critics of the uncritical application of the handicap principle drew attention to the fact that to determine whether or not a particular signal is "costly," i.e., to determine the cost of a given signal, we need to clarify the concept of different cost types, we should be able to properly measure costs and we need an appropriate currency to avoid the currency ambiguity in the cost-benefit profile of the signal.[90]

Furthermore, and this is what leads us back to the SCG of Aquinas, speculations with regard to the scope of the handicap principle should take into account the context in which the signalling takes place.[91] For if there is no conflict of interest between the signaller and receiver, and, consequently, no inclination to mislead each other, signals can be cost-free and honest at the same time, since each participant's fitness is fostered by the other's survival.[92] Therefore wastefulness, in a context without conflicting interest, is not a necessary condition of the reliability of the signal.

What about contexts where conflict of interest prevails or at least plays some role in social interactions?[93] Should signals contain strategic cost to maintain honesty if there is a tendency in conflicting individuals to deceive each other?

It appears that they should not.[94] For the necessary condition of honest communication is not that the signal itself be costly, but that the recipients of the signal be able to verify that the signaller actually has the unobservable quality

[89] Pomiankowski–Iwasa 1998. 930. As Jonathan Grose pointed out, the theory of costly signalling has been developed parallel in economics and biology. Somewhat surprisingly, human sciences have principally been influenced by biology and not economics. See Grose 2011. 689–690.

[90] See, e.g., Grose 2011. 682–694.

[91] It seems that the representatives of the handicap principle have worked with different concepts of the "signal" when they sought to apply the principle to different contexts. Szabolcs Számadó points out that Alan Grafen has distinguished between "informative" signals and indexes (revealing handicaps) on the one hand and "persuasive" signals on the other. These latter are used by animals in the event of a conflict of interest, and the Grafen model sought only to demonstrate the validity of the handicap principle in relation to persuasive signals. Grafen therefore uses a different concept of "signal" than Zahavi, who extended his theory by reference to the Grafen model (Számadó 2012. 282).

[92] Maynard Smith 1991. 1035: "Thus it has been shown, for a simple model, that honest signals must be costly if there is a conflict of interest between signaller and receiver, but that cost-free signals can be honest if there is no such conflict."

[93] If Zahavi is right when claiming that "it is difficult to imagine any social interaction in which there is no potential for conflict at some time or another," then all honest signals must be costly in one way or other (see Zahavi 1993. 227). Nonetheless, possible contexts where all cost-free signals are honest can be imagined as it is certainly the case with Aquinas when he talks about a context where "the uniformity of life," which means a "uniformity in charity's way" "preserves us from error" (In DDN 4.11; see footnotes 119 and 175 below).

[94] Even if conflicting individuals are communicating, some signals will be cost-free and honest, because they will have no or minimal incentive to deceive each other with regard to certain information. What is more, if we suppose that all signalling happens in a social inter-

indicated. Honest communication can be warranted even if signallers use conventional signals which – apart from the cost of production – can be arbitrarily cheap.[95] Strategic cost appears in these contexts as a potential cost, in so far as dishonest signallers have to expect a penalty imposed by the recipients of the signal. It is therefore not the actual, unbearable cost that keeps cheaters from giving misleading signals, but rather the potential cost of cheating that is higher than the potential gains expected to be realized through deception.[96]

Since the strategic cost of the signal in this case is paid by the signaller as a result of punishment, cautious and accurate communication is in the best interest of an honest signaller to reduce the chance of costly, and possibly even fatal mistakes.[97]

V. AQUINAS'S SECOND ASSUMPTION: MENTAL PROCESSES ARE PRINCIPALLY HIDDEN FROM FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS AND CAN ONLY BE ACCESSED BY GOD.

1. A Great Chain of Degradation

Returning to Aquinas's narrative, the reason we can consider the signals of the apostles and disciples reliable is that their counterintuitive doctrines and counterproductive behaviour imposed a cost that made them less efficient and less well-adapted to their environment.[98] Their wasteful signals and the successful spread of Christianity, in Aquinas's view, clearly indicate that the early Christians possessed the hidden qualities characteristic to the one true religion.

According to Aquinas, however, the only tool that was available for the early propagators of the doctrines of Christianity – the human language – proved to be ineffective in itself when it came to the second aspect of truth. This is the reason oral utterances representing the hidden aspect of divine truth needed confirmation when early Christians began to preach.[99] Furthermore, this is why Aquinas

action in which there are potential or actual conflicts, there will still be "guarantee-free" false signals. See LaPorte 2002. 92–94.

[95] "Conventional signal" refers here to a signal whose meaning is not in any way implied by its form. For this definition see, e.g., Maynard Smith – Harper 2003. 11, 15 and Hurd–Enquist 2005. 1168.

[96] Lachmann–Számadó–Bergstrom 2001. 13189–13194; Számadó 2011. 3–10; Fraser 2012. 263–278; Higham 2014. 8–11.

[97] Lachmann–Számadó–Bergstrom 2001. 13191.

[98] See footnote 60 above.

[99] See footnote 52 above.

thinks that the role model of the God-man can be a more effective motivating force than words: facta magis provocant ad agendum quam verba.[100]

Still, in the absence of self-certifying religious signals that cannot permanently be produced on a wider social scale to indicate the possession of true religious qualities, the most accessible tool to present divine teaching is human language.[101]

Let us see how Aquinas characterized the historical process that had led to a situation where religious quality was not any more as obvious as – in Aquinas's view – it once had been.

In Aquinas's narrative, the transmission of the second aspect of the truth concerning God's true nature took place gradually, following a certain order. God first reveals "invisible things whose vision is beatifying, and to which faith applies" to the angels "through open vision," then – "by the intermediary ministry

[100] See SCG 4.55: "Et licet homines ad humilitatem informari potuerint divinis sermonibus instructi […], ut decimaoctava ratio proponebat: tamen ad agendum magis provocant facta quam verba et tanto efficacius facta movent, quanto certior opinio bonitatis habetur de eo qui huiusmodi operatur. Unde, licet aliorum hominum multa humilitatis exempla invenirentur, tamen expedientissimum fuit ut ad hoc hominis Dei provocarentur exemplo, quem constat errare non potuisse; et cuius humilitas tanto est mirabilior quanto maiestas sublimior." "One grants also that men instructed by the divine lessons were able to be informed about humility […] for all that, deeds are more provocative of action than words; and deeds move the more effectively, the more certain is the opinion of the goodness of him who performs such deeds. Hence, although many examples of humility of other men are discoverable, it was most expeditious to arouse men to humility by the example of the God-man. He clearly could not make a mistake, and His humility is the more wondrous as His majesty is the more sublime." (Leonina 15. 181b; Marietti 3. 356. n. 3951. ET 4. 243. n. 21.)

[101] Aquinas thinks that there are and there will be people able to imitate the way of life that is attributed to the role model and his immediate followers. He was certainly convinced that – among others – the members of the Dominican order belong to this group. Their renouncement, in Aquinas's view, is highly functional, but – as a pattern of behaviour – cannot be extended beyond a reasonable limit. See SCG 3.135: "As a matter of fact, those who adopt voluntary poverty in order to follow Christ renounce all things so that they may serve the common welfare, enlightening the people by their wisdom, learning, and examples, or strengthening them by prayer and intercession." ("Qui autem voluntariam paupertatem assumunt ut Christum sequantur, ad hoc utique omnia dimittunt ut communi utilitati deserviant, sapientia et eruditione et exemplis populum illustrantes, vel oratione et intercessione sustentantes.") (Leonina 14. 408a; Marietti 3, 204. n. 3090; ET 3/2. 186. n. 15.) As for the possibilities and limits of action for those people who "renounce all things" see SCG 3.136: "in the case of things that are necessary for the group, it is not necessary for the assignment to be given to each person in the group; indeed, this is not even possible. For it is clear that many things are needed by a group of men, such as food, drink, clothing, housing and the like, which cannot all be procured by one man. And so, different tasks must be given to different persons, just as different organs of the body are directed to different functions." With regard to sexual activities as a precondition for procreation: "since procreation is not a matter of the need of the individual but of the need of the whole species, it is not necessary for all men to devote themselves to acts of generation; instead, certain men, refraining from these acts, undertake other functions, such as the military life or contemplation" (ET 3/2. 192. n. 9). On how and why, according to Aquinas, "relativity" is "an essential characteristic of poverty" in SCG, see Horst 1992. 46–54.

of the angels" – these invisible things are "manifested to certain men," not as a vision, but "through a kind of certitude resulting from divine revelation." However, because those "things that man knows" cannot properly be conveyed "to the knowledge of another man, except by speech," in order to be able to instruct others these men were "given the grace of speech, in keeping with what the benefit of those who were to be instructed demanded."[102] The oral teachings of the disciples and apostles, as we saw earlier, was confirmed by miracles and by the ability of prophecy whereby they were able to see some future events and "things generally concealed from men." A further grade in the process of transmission appears when those things that are revealed are not only "recounted orally to their contemporaries," but also are "written down for the instruction of men to come." It follows, in Aquinas's view, that there should be some people who "would interpret this kind of writings" for those who – and this is "the last degree" – "faithfully believe the things that are revealed to others, and interpreted by still others."[103]

Although in the relevant passages of the SCG Aquinas presents the transmission of divine revelation as a historical process, it is clear that his narrative fits into a more general metaphysical framework where a being's perfection and power is a function of its position relative to the first principle. Introducing his narrative in SCG 3.154, Aquinas stresses that "wherever there is an order among things, it is necessary that, the nearer one thing is to the first principle, the stronger *(virtuosius)* it must be."[104] "Virtuositas" refers here to the strength in a metaphysical sense that follows the natures or essences of things.[105] By the same token, if we apply the same principle inversely, we will get a great chain of degradation: as we move away from the first principle, the metaphysical strength

[102] SCG 3.154: "So, since those who receive a revelation from God, according to the divinely established order, should instruct others, it was necessary for them also to be given the grace of speech, in keeping with what the benefit of those who were to be instructed demanded. Hence, it is said in Isaias (50:4): 'The Lord hath given me a learned tongue, that I should know how to uphold by word him that is weary.' And the Lord says to the disciples, in Luke (21:15): 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay.' And also for this reason, when it was necessary for the truth of the faith to be preached by a few men to different peoples, some were divinely instructed to speak with divers tongues, as is said in Acts (2:4): 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost: and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak'." (ET 3/2. 241. n. 7.) For this see Augustinus: *Epistula* 137 (CCSL 31, B. p. 270): "Impleti autem sancto spiritu loquuntur repente linguis omnium gentium, arguunt fidenter errores, praedicant saluberrimam ueritatem […]."

[103] See SCG 3.154. ET 3/2. 242. n. 9 and ET 3/2. 248. n. 19–20.

[104] SCG 3.154: "In quibuscumque autem est aliquis ordo, oportet quod, quanto aliquid est propinquius primo principio, tanto virtuosius inveniatur" (Leonina 14. 449a. Marietti 3. 228–229. n. 3256. ET 3/2. 240. n. 2).

[105] See SCG 3.105: "Cum enim virtus essentiam consequatur, virtutis diversitas essentialium principiorum diversitatem ostendit. "Indeed, since power results from essence, a diversity of power manifests a diversity of essential principles" (Leonina 14. 330a; Marietti 3. 158. n. 2800; ET 3/2. 94. n. 2).

that characterizes the existence and operation of things is fading away on the lower grades of being with their ever growing weakness and imperfection.[106]

Now, if we have a look at some of Aquinas's rare digressions into the characterizing features of the social world of common people in SCG, we can see that he tends to use concept pairs constitutive of this framework: entity vs. non-entity, unity vs. plurality/division/ diversity/multiplicity, good vs. evil, perfection vs. imperfection, order vs. disorder/inordinateness, truth vs. falsity/error/deception, infallibility vs. fallibility, virtue vs. sin, perfection vs. imperfection/defectability, immutability vs. mutability, constancy vs. inconstancy, stability vs. instability/ variability, virtuosity/power vs. infirmity/weakness.[107]

We have to stress that Aquinas did not regard non-entity, disorder, defect, error, evil and the like as characteristic of nature.[108] In Aquinas's view, nature itself is – in the broadest metaphysical sense – without any qualification: good.[109] "Being" and "good" are co-extensive, convertible, and transcendental terms that can be predicated about anything that falls under any of the ten Aristotelian categories.[110]

Nonetheless, there is a significant difference in the way the two terms are used. Whereas the word "being" is used in an "absolute sense," "good" is a relative term, since something is called "good" only if it is ordered to an end, whether or

[106] For the principle as used conversely by Aquinas see, e.g., SCG 4.1: "Et quia in summo rerum vertice Deo perfectissima unitas invenitur; et unumquodque, quanto est magis unum, tanto est magis virtuosum et dignius consequens est ut quantum a primo principio receditur, tanto maior diversitas et variatio inveniatur in rebus." "And because in the highest summit of things, God, one finds the most perfect unity – and because everything, the more it is one, is the more powerful and more worthy – it follows that the farther one gets from the first principle, the greater is the diversity and variation one finds in things." (Leonina 15. 3b; Marietti 3. 242. n. 3339; ET 4. 35–36. n. 2.)

[107] When listing these pairs of opposition, I am neither striving for completeness, nor dealing with the logical relations between the pairs I sorted here. I also disregard the possible problems of synonymy. For "Platonism" and "Neoplatonism" in Aquinas's metaphysics see among many others: Henle 1970; O'Rourke 1992; Aertsen 1992; Hankey 2002; Wippel 1987; Wippel 2007b.

[108] See, e.g., SCG 3.107: "Omnis […] defectus et corruptio est praeter naturam: quia natura intendit esse et perfectionem rei." "[…] all defect and corruption are apart from nature, because nature intends the being and perfection of the thing" (Leonina 14, 336b; Marietti 3, 162. n. 2829; ET 3/2. 102. n. 10).

[109] For "natura" in this sense see: "primo enim modo dicitur natura, secundum quod communiter ad omnia entia se habet, prout natura definitur omne id, quod intellectu quoquo modo capi potest" (In Sent II.37.1.1 co.); "alio modo dicitur natura quaelibet substantia vel etiam quodlibet ens" (ST 1a2ae.10.1 co).

[110] SCG 3.7: "Omne igitur quod est, quocumque modo sit, inquantum est ens, bonum est" (Leonina 14. 19b; Marietti 3. 9. n. 1917). SCG 3.10: "Malum autem non potest esse neque materia neque forma: ostensum est enim supra quod tam ens actu, quam ens in potentia, est bonum" (Leonina 14. 25a; Marietti 3. 12. n. 1938). SCG 3.11: "Nam bonum communiter dicitur sicut et ens: cum omne ens, inquantum huiusmodi, sit bonum, ut probatum est" (Leonina 14. 31b; Marietti 3. 15. n. 1957).

not this end is accomplished.[111] Goodness therefore, although it refers to the same things as "being," has a different meaning as it expresses desirability.[112]

In the case of human beings, as already noted, the major obstacle to achieving their end is the misrepresentation of what good is.[113] Epistemological malfunctioning regularly happens on account of the metaphysical position of the species that defines its capabilities and – through the determination of the mode of reception if there is anything to be received – the possible ways of its members' communication with its environment.[114] At the same time, although disorder, defect, error, evil and the like are not characteristic of nature, we cannot say that the effects of the activities implied in human being's social communication are *simpliciter* nothing. Therefore, in Aquinas's view, we cannot consider relevant human features, such as error or sin, *simpliciter* nothing.[115] They arise from and are results of basic and permanent human activities and can have a considerable effect not only on our social life but even on our biological constitution.[116]

Let's see a few examples of how Aquinas sees multiplicity, imperfection, disorder and the like in the texture of everyday human world.

[111] SCG 3.20: "Ens enim absolute dicitur, bonum autem etiam in ordine consistit: non enim solum aliquid bonum dicitur quia est finis, vel quia est obtinens finem; sed, etiam si nondum ad finem pervenerit, dummodo sit ordinatum in finem, ex hoc ipso dicitur bonum." "For being is a term used absolutely, while good also includes a relation. In fact, a thing is not called good simply because it is an end, or because it has achieved the end; provided it be ordered to the end, it may be called good because of this relation." As Aquinas himself draws attention to it, this characteristic of "good" seems to modify – albeit in a non-substantial sense – the coextensivity of "being" and "good." SCG 3.20: "In quo apparet quod bonum quodammodo amplioris est ambitus quam ens: propter quod Dionysius dicit, iv cap. de div. nom., quod bonum se extendit ad existentia et non existentia." "It is apparent in this conclusion that good is, in a way, of wider scope than being. For this reason, Dionysius says, in the fourth chapter of On the Divine Names: 'the good extends to existent beings and also to non-existent ones'." For both passages see Leonina 14. 46b–47a; Marietti 3. 24. n. 2013; ET 3/1. 79. n. 5.

[112] For the convertibility of "being" and "good" see Stump 2003. 62–65; Stump–Kretzmann 1991. 98–128; MacDonald 1991. 31–55; MacDonald 1992. 176; Aertsen 1991. 56–73; Aertsen 1996. 290–334. esp. 303–319.

[113] See III.4. and the footnotes 68–73 above.

[114] For the principle "what is received is received according to the mode of the receiver" in Aquinas, see Wippel 2007a. As for Aquinas himself see, e.g., SCG 2.50: "Omne quod est in aliquo est in eo per modum recipientis." SCG 2.74: "Quod recipitur in aliquo, est in eo per modum recipientis."

[115] See, e.g., QQ I.9.1 co: "Respondeo. Dicendum, quod peccatum, maxime transgressionis, est actus inordinatus. Ex parte ergo actus, peccatum est natura aliqua; sed inordinatio est privatio, et secundum hanc peccatum dicitur nihil." "Answer: Sin, especially that of transgression, is a disordered act. As an act, therefore, sin is some sort of entity, but its disorder is a privation, which is why sin is called nothing." (Translated by Turner Nevitt and Brian Davies. Thomas Aquinas 2020. 209.)

[116] Sin – as Aquinas notices – can even affect bodily constitution. SCG 4.73: "Ex infirmitate igitur animae, quae est peccatum, interdum infirmitas derivatur ad corpus, hoc divino iudicio dispensante"; „from the infirmity of the soul which is sin infirmity sometimes flows into the body, when the divine judgment so disposes" (Leonina 15. 233a; Marietti 3. 380. n. 4081; ET IV 282. n. 1).

2. How can we characterize a world that is as far from the first principle as our social world?

In Aquinas's view, it belongs to the human condition that „all things that are within our power are found to be multiple, variable, and defectable," and these features are characterizing our choices and intellectual operations. Aquinas says that „our acts of choice have the character of multiplicity, since choices are made of different things, by different people, in different ways". In addition, human choices are also mutable, partly because of the inconstancy of the human soul *(animi levitas)* that „is not firmly fixed on the ultimate end," partly because of „the fluctuating character of the things which provide our circumstantial environment *(res quae nos extra circumstant)*." Lastly, our sins *(peccata)* also show that human choices are defectable.[117]

His characterization of human intellectual operations *(intelligentia)* runs parallel with that of the human choices. Human cognition „has the quality of multiplicity", for we are relied upon the objects of the senses from which „we gather, as it were," the truth that we can grasp by our intellect. It owes its mutability to „the discursive movement from one thing to another, proceeding from known things to unknown ones." The equivalent of sin in the field of human intellectual operations is error that displays the defectability of human cognition: our intellectual operations are „defectable, because of the admixture of imagination with sensation," as the errors of human beings show.[118]

In Aquinas's view, our moral choices and our cognition are in a dependence relation to the social and natural environment to which these decisions and our intellectual operations are directed. All this makes us vulnerable and prone to moral and intellectual corruption. As Aquinas stresses: „what depends on many can be destroyed in many ways."[119]

All this seems to be true when it comes to human signalling systems, first and foremost the language we use. When discussing the problem in his Sentence-commentary whether or not taking an oath is desirable, Aquinas argues that – even if oath can be necessary under certain circumstances – it is not de-

[117] See SCG 3.91. ET 3/2. 40. n. 3–4; Leonina 14, 277a–278a; Marietti 3. 132. n. 2663–2664.
[118] See SCG 3.91. ET 3/2. 41. n. 5; Leonina 14, 278a; Marietti 3. 132. n. 2665.
[119] SCG 3.31: "cum quod a multis dependet, destrui multipliciter possit" (Leonina 14. 87b; Marietti 3. 41. n. 2128; ET 3/1. 118. n. 5). Nevertheless, what depends on many can be preserved as well and ordered to one goal according to Aquinas. In his Commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus* Aquinas contrasts the "tortuous and deformed ways" that are "the cause of error" with the "way of uniformity" that "preserves us from error." See In DDN 4.11: "Viae enim tortuosae et difformes sunt causa erroris; uniformitas viae praeservat ab errore […]" (Thomas Aquinas 1950. 148. n. 450). This is a general principle, even though it is placed in the context of love (a divine name in Pseudo-Dionysius) in this commentary. For a different context, but still with reference to Pseudo-Dionysius see, e.g., DV 14.8 co: "Et sic fidelis 'per simplicem et semper eodem modo se habentem veritatem liberatur ab instabili erroris varietate', ut dicit Dionysius VII cap. De divinis nominibus" (Leonina 22. 460a).

sirable for its own sake *(per se)*. According to Aquinas, a part of the reason is that the utterances of human beings are "the least truthful" *(veritas autem humanorum verborum est minimae firmitatis)*, both because human reason easily falls in error, and because human language is prone to be defective.[120]

As Aquinas's scattered remarks on the social world of common people show, the many ways of defectability and disorder pervade the whole of human society.

Human power, for example, is "imperfect to the highest degree" *(imperfectissima)*, says Aquinas when arguing against the claim that worldly power is the highest good for men, "since it is rooted in the wills and the opinions of men, in which there is the greatest inconstancy."[121] The possession of riches which is desired by many cannot be the highest good for many reasons. One of these reasons is that riches are "unstable" *(instabiles sunt)*.[122] An object of desire in civic life is celebrity *(famae celebritas)*. People, however, "can deceive and be deceived" *(et decipi et decipere possunt)*, therefore it is not human opinion that can make renown the blessed.[123]

[120] See In Sent III.39.1.2 quaestiuncula 1. co: "Veritas autem humanorum verborum est minimae firmitatis, tum ex hoc quod error facile rationi accidit, tum ex hoc quod lingua prona est ad defectum; et ideo divinam veritatem, quae est omnino infallibilis, ad dicta nostra confirmanda assumere non multum convenit, nisi necessitas incumbat." Although Aquinas does not explicitly say this, the defectability of the human language seems to be linked to the diversity of things and the diversity of the modes of representations. See, e.g., SCG 3.97: "Quia vero omnem creatam substantiam a perfectione divinae bonitatis deficere necesse est, ut perfectius divinae bonitatis similitudo rebus communicaretur, oportuit esse diversitatem in rebus, ut quod perfecte ab uno aliquo repraesentari non potest, per diversa diversimode perfectiori modo repraesentaretur nam et homo, cum mentis conceptum uno vocali verbo videt sufficienter exprimi non posse, verba diversimode multiplicat ad exprimendam per diversa suae mentis conceptionem." "However, since every created substance must fall short of the perfection of divine goodness, in order that the likeness of divine goodness might be more perfectly communicated to things, it was necessary for there to be a diversity of things, so that what could not be perfectly represented by one thing might be, in more perfect fashion, represented by a variety of things in different ways. For instance, when a man sees that his mental conception cannot be expressed adequately by one spoken word, he multiplies his words in various ways, to express his mental conception through a variety of means." (ET 3/2. 66. n. 2; Leonina 14, 299a; Marietti 3. 146. n. 2724.)

[121] SCG 3.31: "Si aliqua potestas est summum bonum, oportet illam esse perfectissimam. Potestas autem humana est imperfectissima: radicatur enim in hominum voluntatibus et opinionibus, in quibus est maxima inconstantia. Et quanto maior reputatur potestas, tanto a pluribus dependet: quod etiam ad eius debilitatem pertinet; cum quod a multis dependet, destrui multipliciter possit." (Leonina 14, 87b; Marietti 3. 41. n. 2128; ET 3/1. 118. n. 5.) See also footnote 119 above.

[122] SCG 3.30. Leonina 14, 86b; Marietti 3. 40. n. 2123; ET 3/1. 117. n. 7.

[123] SCG 3.63: "Consequitur etiam civilem vitam aliud appetibile, quod est famae celebritas: per cuius inordinatum appetitum homines inanis gloriae cupidi dicuntur. Beati autem per illam visionem redduntur celebres, non secundum hominum, qui et decipi et decipere possunt, opinionem sed secundum verissimam cognitionem et Dei et omnium beatorum." "Another object of desire associated with civic life is popular renown; by an inordinate desire for this men are deemed lovers of vainglory. Now, the blessed are made men of renown by

The consequences of multiplicity, disorder and the like (inconstancy, instability, proneness to error, deceiving and being deceived etc.) also seem to be a major issue when it comes to the transmission of divine revelation.

3. Before SCG

Aquinas seems to have been well aware of the problem before he embarked on writing the *Summa contra gentiles*. In an article of the fourteenth question of *De veritate*, written shortly before SCG, he is treating a problem („is it necessary for man to have faith?") that returns again in SCG 1.5 just before he begins to talk about the assent to the revealed propositions in 1.6.[124] But even more important is that one of the objections raised in this article can be seen as a prequel to SCG 1.6 that, in turn, can be regarded as an extended reflection on a problem he had already raised in *De veritate* but never comprehensively treated.[125]

The objection refers to the possibility that the content of the propositions representing God's true nature (the articles of faith) might have been corrupted through the long transmission process down to the present (i.e., the 1250's). As it is the case with a chain of syllogisms, where one of the many intermediary propositions is false or dubious and it makes the whole argument invalid *(inefficax)*, the divine truth also can be corrupted if the chain of tradition contains only one false or dubious claim with regard to God's true nature. We cannot be certain, however – so the objection continues – that the long transmission process of the divine revelation which has taken place through a diversity of intermediaries *(per media diversa)* was always free of errors, as this is a tradition based on oral transmission and those people who handed down the divine truth „were human

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this vision, not according to the opinion of men, who can deceive and be deceived, but in accord with the truest knowledge, both of God and of all the blessed." (Leonina 14, 176b; Marietti 3. 83. n. 2379; ET 3/1. 207. n. 5.)

[124] DV 14.10; see Leonina 22. Vol 2. 464–468. The group of disputed questions (253 articles arranged in 29 questions) that we know today under the title "Quaestiones disputatae de veritate" dates from Aquinas's first magisterium at the University of Paris (1256 –1259). Question 14 probably dates from 1257–1258. See Eschmann 1956. 389–391; Weisheipl 1983. 123–126; Torrell 1996. 59–67, and 334–335. For a comparision of certain parts of the DV and the introduction of SCG see Synave 1930. who compares DV 14.10 and SCG 1.4.

[125] Aquinas's short answer in his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* does not seem to take into account the possibility that divine revelation as transmitted and interpreted on lower degrees can be corrupted by errors. See DV 14.10 ad 11: "Ad undecimum dicendum, quod omnia media per quae ad nos fides venit, suspicione carent. Prophetis enim et apostolis credimus ex hoc quod Deus eis testimonium perhibuit miracula faciendo, ut dicitur Marc., cap. XVI, 20 sermonem confirmante sequentibus signis. Successoribus autem apostolorum et prophetarum non credimus nisi in quantum nobis ea annuntiant quae illi in scriptis reliquerunt." (Leonina 22. Vol 2. 468b.)

beings who can be deceived and can deceive others, too" *(cum homines fuerint et decipi et decipere potuerunt)*.[126]

It is remarkable that the transmission process this objection describes is completely in line with what Aquinas says about the transmission of divine revelation later in SCG. In addition, it is also in line with his claims on the general principles of degradation of a being's perfection and virtuosity as a function of its position relative to the first principle. We could even characterize the transmission process described by the objection as one of those tortuous and deformed routes *(viae tortuosae et difformes)* that – as Aquinas elsewhere says – are the causes of error.[127]

Aquinas's short answer in *De veritate* is somewhat perplexing as he does not seem to take into account the possibility that divine revelation as transmitted and interpreted on lower degrees can be corrupted by errors. Consequently, he does not seem to answer the problem the objection raises.[128]

Nevertheless, we can make a distinction between two different approaches to the issue the objection introduces. We can consider the objection either a *quaestio facti* or a *quaestio iuris*. In his short answer, Aquinas treats the objection as a *quaestio facti*, but not as a *quaestio iuris*. Accordingly, he simply states that there has been no deterioration in the content of the message God revealed to the apostles and prophets, but does not say anything about the reason it could not happen or about what ensured it would not happen.

In SCG 1.6, by asking whether it is foolish to assent to the articles of faith, Aquinas continues exactly where the aforementioned objection ended: „stultum videtur his assentire quae sunt fidei."[129] As we saw earlier, SCG 1.6 contains an even stronger argument for the trustworthiness of the testimonies of those people who were supposed to transmit the divine revelation than just the routine references to New Testament miracles. However, the possibility of errors

[126] DV 14.10 obj. 11: "Praeterea, quando aliquid confirmatur per plura media, si unum illorum non habet firmitatem, tota confirmatio efficacia caret; ut patet in deductionibus syllogismorum, in quibus una de multis propositionibus falsa vel dubia existente, probatio inefficax est. Sed ea quae sunt fidei, in nos per multa media devenerunt. A Deo enim dicta sunt apostolis vel prophetis, a quibus in successores eorum, et deinceps in alios et sic usque ad nos pervenerunt per media diversa. Non autem in omnibus istis mediis certum est esse infallibilem veritatem quia cum homines fuerint et decipi et decipere potuerunt. Ergo nullam certitudinem habere possumus de his quae sunt fidei; et ita stultum videtur his assentire." (Leonina 22. Vol 2. 466a.)

[127] See footnote 119 above.

[128] "Ad undecimum dicendum, quod omnia media per quae ad nos fides venit, suspicione carent. Prophetis enim et apostolis credimus ex hoc quod Deus eis testimonium perhibuit miracula faciendo, ut dicitur Marc., cap. XVI, 20 sermonem confirmante sequentibus signis. Successoribus autem apostolorum et prophetarum non credimus nisi in quantum nobis ea annuntiant quae illi in scriptis reliquerunt." (Leonina 22. Vol 2. 468b.)

[129] See footnote 126, with some modification of the word order from the original Latin text.

along the transmission process of divine truth in connection with the human condition that makes us all prone to error and deception is a further issue left untreated in *De veritate*.

4. Occulta cordis: errors, and their whereabout

The basic problem Aquinas seems to be facing when writing the *Summa contra Gentiles* is how to ensure that the religious quality of Christianity be preserved in a context where, on a wider social scale, the signalling of cooperative intent – as it is based on the conventional signals of human language – is not costly but cheap, consequently errors are common and signals – including religious signals – can be easily faked.

There is, however, a fundamental problem with errors. According to Aquinas, the errors of people and their intention to deceive others are – in principle – inaccessible to other minds, except for God.[130]

But prior to discussing this matter, let us briefly consider what error is and why it matters beyond its epistemological significance.

Aquinas considers the natural process of human cognition from perception to intellectual apprehension principally reliable. This reliability is based on the fact that neither the senses nor the intellect is mistaken regarding their proper object.[131] The possibility of error arises when it comes to judgment and reasoning.

[130] See the references below from footnote 147 on.

[131] It is well known that Aquinas follows Aristotle in this matter. See, e.g. – among many other similar references – SCG 1.59: "[…] intellectus apprehendens quod quid est dicitur quidem per se semper esse verus, ut patet in iii de anima", "the intellect that apprehends what a thing is is always said to be through itself true, as appears in De anima III" (ET 1. 202. n. 3; Leonina 13. 167b; Marietti 2. 71. n. 496). For the relevant passages in Aristotle's *De anima* see the twelfth century translation of James of Venice as revised by Guillelmus de Moerbeke, used by Aquinas and edited by René-A. Gauthier in Leonina 45,1: "Est autem dictio quidem aliquid de aliquo, sicut affirmatio, uera aut falsa omnis; intellectus autem non omnis set qui est ipsius quid est secundum hoc quod aliquid erat esse uerus est, et non aliquid de aliquo, set sicut uidere proprii uerum est, si autem homo album aut non, non uerum semper. Sic autem se habent quecunque sine materia sunt." (*De anima* III, 5: 430b26–31; Leonina 45,1. 224b.) See further *De anima* III, 10 (433a 26): "Intellectus quidem igitur omnis rectus est" (Leonina 45,1. 244a) and – for the proper object of the senses – see *De anima* II, 6 (418a11): "Dico autem proprium quidem quod non contingit altero sensu sentiri, et circa quod non contingat errare, ut visus coloris et auditus soni et gustus humoris" (Leonina 45,1. 118a). For Aquinas on the proper object and truth of intellect and the senses see ST 1a.58.5 co.: „Intellectus autem circa quod quid est semper verus est, sicut et sensus circa proprium obiectum, ut dicitur in III De anima."

From a metaphysical perspective, error as an opposite of truth pairs with defectus, disorder and the like when it comes to the great chain of degradation that – as we saw above – serves as a fundamental framework in Aquinas's thinking. Intellect, one of the cognitive powers *(potentia cognoscitiva)* of humans, cannot be in error when it understands its object: „in eo […] quod quis intelligit, non errat." Error is a defect that results from an imperfect operation of the intellect: „ex defectu enim intelligendi provenit omnis error."[132]

Aquinas attributes three different kinds of operation to the reason.[133] The first is what he calls the understanding of indivisibles *(indivisibilium intelligentia)*. It is a single act of the intellect, whereby we capture the essence of things. As a simple, uncomplex apprehension the "understanding of indivisibles" can neither

[132] SCG 3.108: "In eo autem quod quis intelligit, non errat: ex defectu enim intelligendi provenit omnis error." "Now, one does not err in regard to the object which one understands, since all error arises from a failure to understand" (Leonina 14. 339-a Marietti 3. 163. n. 2833; ET 3/2. 104. n. 2). Aquinas is talking – in general – about intellectual substances in this passage.

[133] Sometimes, with reference to Aristotle's *De anima,* Aquinas only mentions two operations of the intellect. See, e.g., DV 14.1: "Intellectus enim nostri, secundum philosophum in Lib. de anima, duplex est operatio. Una qua format simplices rerum quidditates; ut quid est homo, vel quid est animal: in qua quidem operatione non invenitur verum per se et falsum, sicut nec in vocibus incomplexis. Alia operatio intellectus est secundum quam componit et dividit, affirmando vel negando: et in hac iam invenitur verum et falsum, sicut et in voce complexa, quae est eius signum." See Aristotle, *De anima* III, 5 (430a 26–28): "Est autem dictio quidem aliquid de aliquo, sicut affirmatio, uera aut falsa omnis; intellectus autem non omnis set qui est ipsius quid est secundum hoc quod aliquid erat esse uerus est, et non aliquid de aliquo, set sicut uidere proprii uerum est, si autem homo album aut non, non uerum semper" (Leonina 45,1. 224b). For the third kind of operation see, e.g., Aquinas's preface to his commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*: "Sunt autem rationis tres actus: quorum primi duo sunt rationis, secundum quod est intellectus quidam. Una enim actio intellectus est intelligentia indivisibilium sive incomplexorum, secundum quam concipit quid est res. Et haec operatio a quibusdam dicitur informatio intellectus sive imaginatio per intellectum. […] Secunda vero operatio intellectus est compositio vel divisio intellectus, in qua est iam verum vel falsum. […] Tertius vero actus rationis est secundum id quod est proprium rationis, scilicet discurrere ab uno in aliud, ut per id quod est notum deveniat in cognitionem ignoti." (Leonina 1,2. 4a–5a.) "Therefore one should understand the parts of logic in terms of the diversity of acts of reason. There are three acts of the reason. The first two of these are of reason understood as intellect. The first act of intellect is understanding of indivisible or noncompounded things, according to which it conceives what a thing is. Some call this operation the informing of the intellect or representation through the intellect. […] The second operation of intellect is the combining or dividing of powers of understanding, in which true and false are now introduced; […] The third act of reason is of reasoning understood in its proper sense, that is, to reason back and forth from one thing to another, so that by what is known one may arrive at a knowledge of what is unknown […]." For the English translation see Copeland–Sluiter 2012. 790. For Aquinas's terminology and his distinction between two and three kinds of operations see Schmidt 1966. 50–1. For the three different kinds of operation in detail see Schmidt 1966. 175–301.

be true nor false.[134] It is unclear what exactly Aquinas means by the infallibility of the intellect with regard to the essence of things.[135]

Be that as it may, the notions of falsity and truth imply the connection and separation of different things, therefore error is made possible only by the second and third act of the intellect, i.e., composition and division, on the one hand, and discursive reasoning *(ratiocinatio)* on the other.[136] Composition and division are acts whereby the intellect combines and separates simple concepts that make up a mental complex. A mental complex *(propositio, oratio, enuntiabile)* as a result of affirmation or negation either correctly represents the relation between certain things and their properties or not. If it does, the proposition is true, if it does not, it is false. The same conformity requirement applies to discoursive reasoning. Discursive reasoning makes possible to get knowledge of things we cannot apprehend, either because they are not present or because they are not available to us due to our sense-bound cognition.[137]

In Aquinas's view, what is formed by our different mental acts, i.e., the intention conceived *(intentio intellecta)* or the concept of the intellect *(conceptio intellectus)* is different from both the thing understood (even if it is the intellect itself) and the intelligible form which is the principle of the intellect's operation. Furthermore, it is different from this operation itself, as it is regarded as the terminus of the intellect's operation and a quasi-something constituted by this operation *(quasi quoddam per ipsam constitutum)*.[138] It is crucial that Aquinas considers

[134] See the Latin translation of Aristotle's *De anima* III, 5 (430a26): "Indiuisibilium quidem igitur intelligencia in hiis est circa que non est falsum, in quibus autem et falsum iam et uerum est, compositio quedam iam intellectuum est, sicut eorum que unum sunt." See, further, Aquinas's commentary: "et haec intelligentia est in his circa que non est falsum, tum quia incomplexa neque sunt vera neque falsa, tum quia intellectus non decipitur in eo quod quid est" (Leonina 45,1. 224b).

[135] For the issues raised by Aquinas's claim see Kretzmann 1992. 169–189. For the infallibility of the senses see further Pasnau 2004. 188–189.

[136] For the delicate task of distinguishing between the simplex and complex apprehensions see SCG 3.108: "falsity occurs in our case in the intellectual operation of composing and dividing, as a result of the fact that it does not apprehend the quiddity of a thing simply, but, rather, combines something with the thing that is apprehended. Of course, in the operation of the intellect, whereby it apprehends that which is, no falsity occurs except accidentally, by virtue of mixing, even in this operation, some part of the operation of the intellect composing and dividing. Indeed, this happens because our intellect does not immediately attain the knowledge of the quiddity of a thing, but with a certain order in the process of inquiry. For example, we first apprehend animal, then we divide it into the opposed differences, and, leaving one aside, we put the other with the genus, until we come to the definition of the species. Now, falsity may occur in this process if something is taken as a difference in the genus which is not a difference in the genus. Of course, to proceed in this way to the quidditative knowledge of something pertains to an intellect reasoning discursively from one thing to another." (ET 3/2. 105–106. n. 5.)

[137] For truth in judgement and for conformity see Schmidt 1966. 215–221 and 237–238. On discursive reasoning see Schmidt 1966. 242f.

[138] DP 8.1: "Quae quidem conceptio a tribus praedictis differt. A re quidem intellecta, quia res intellecta est interdum extra intellectum, conceptio autem intellectus non est nisi

the intention or concept of the intellect the likeness of the thing represented. The intention is a quasi-something that comes about by a natural process of causation when the intellect comprehends a multitude of forms, stands in a similarity relation with the form of the thing conceived, but it is not a sign of it.[139]

Now, this intention or concept can „properly" be called a „word", says Aquinas, since it is the immediate significatum of the „exterior" word we use, i.e., the immediate significatum of a vocal or written word or a string of vocal or written words in a language.[140] Hence the exterior word is only related to anything else

in intellectu; et iterum conceptio intellectus ordinatur ad rem intellectam sicut ad finem: propter hoc enim intellectus conceptionem rei in se format ut rem intellectam cognoscat. Differt autem a specie intelligibili: nam species intelligibilis, qua fit intellectus in actu, consideratur ut principium actionis intellectus, cum omne agens agat secundum quod est in actu; actu autem fit per aliquam formam, quam oportet esse actionis principium. Differt autem ab actione intellectus: quia praedicta conceptio consideratur ut terminus actionis, et quasi quoddam per ipsam constitutum. Intellectus enim sua actione format rei definitionem, vel etiam propositionem affirmativam seu negativam." "The concept differs from the other three aforementioned things. It differs from the thing understood in that the thing understood is sometimes outside the intellect, but the intellect's concept is only in the intellect. Also, the intellect's concept is ordered to the thing understood as its end, since the intellect forms within itself the concept of a thing in order to know the thing known. The concept differs from the intelligible form, since we consider the intelligible form that makes the intellect actual as the source of the intellect's action, inasmuch as every active thing acts insofar as it is actual, and a form, which needs to be the source of action, makes the active thing actual. And the concept differs from the intellect's action in that we consider the aforementioned concept as the terminus of an action and as if something constituted by it, since the intellect by its action forms the definition of a thing or an affirmative or negative proposition." (Translated by Richard J. Regan, see Thomas Aquinas 2012. 228.) The concept of the intellect is only "as it were" something *(quasi quoddam)*, since it is an "ens rationis" whose existence consists only in being conceived by the intellect. For this latter see, e.g., SCG 4.11: "esse intentionis intellectae in ipso intelligi consistit" (Leonina 15. 32b; Marietti 3. 265. n. 3466). For the concept of "ens rationis" in Aquinas see Klima 1996. 91–97 and Klima 1993. 25–36.

[139] See, e.g., Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Hermeneutics* (16a3–9): "Ubi attendendum est quod litteras dixit esse notas, idest signa uocum, et uoces passionum animae similiter; passiones autem animae dicit esse similitudines rerum. Et hoc ideo, quia res non cognoscitur ab anima nisi per aliquam sui similitudinem existentem uel in sensu uel in intellectu; littere autem ita sunt signa uocum, et uoces passionum quod non attenditur ibi aliqua ratio similitudinis, set sola ratio institutionis, sicut et in multis aliis signis, ut tuba est signum belli; in passionibus autem animae oportet attendi rationem similitudinis ad exprimendas res, quia eas naturaliter designant, non ex institutione." "Notice he says here that letters are signs, i.e., signs of vocal sounds, and similarly vocal sounds are signs of passions of the soul, but that passions of the soul are likenesses of things. This is because a thing is not known by the soul unless there is some likeness of the thing existing either in the sense or in the intellect. Now letters are signs of vocal sounds and vocal sounds of passions in such a way that we do not attend to any idea of likeness in regard to them but only one of institution, as is the case in regard to many other signs, for example, the trumpet as a sign of war. But in the passions of the soul we have to take into account the idea of a likeness to the things represented, since passions of the soul designate things naturally, not by institution." (Leonina 1,1 12a–b; translated by Jean T. Oesterle, see Thomas Aquinas 1962. 27.)

[140] SCG 4.11: "Dico autem intentionem intellectam id quod intellectus in seipso concipit de re intellecta. Quae quidem in nobis neque est ipsa res quae intelligitur; neque est ipsa substantia intellectus; sed est quaedam similitudo concepta in intellectu de re intellecta,

in the world, including the intellect itself, by means of the interior word.[141] This word, which is also called the „word of the heart" by Aquinas,[142] can be both

quam voces exteriores significant; unde et ipsa intentio verbum interius nominatur, quod est exteriori verbo significatum." "Now, I mean by the intention understood what the intellect conceives in itself of the thing understood. To be sure, in us this is neither the thing which is understood nor is it the very substance of the intellect. But it is a certain likeness of the thing understood conceived in the intellect, and which the exterior words signify. So, the intention itself is named the interior word which is signified by the exterior word." (ET 4. 81. n. 6.) DP 8.1 co.: „Haec autem conceptio intellectus in nobis proprie verbum dicitur: hoc enim est quod verbo exteriori significatur: vox enim exterior neque significat ipsum intellectum, neque speciem intelligibilem, neque actum intellectus, sed intellectus conceptionem qua mediante refertur ad rem. Huiusmodi ergo conceptio, sive verbum, qua intellectus noster intelligit rem aliam a se, ab alio exoritur, et aliud repraesentat. Oritur quidem ab intellectu per suum actum; est vero similitudo rei intellectae." "We properly call this intellectual concept in us a word, since it is what an external word signifies, inasmuch as an external word signifies the intellect's concept, by means of which an external word is related to a thing, and does not signify the very thing understood, the intelligible form, or the act of the intellect. Therefore, such a concept, or word, whereby our intellect understands something different from itself, arises from, and represents, something else." (Translated by Richard J. Regan, see Thomas Aquinas 2012. 228–229). Aquinas's *De potentia* dates probably from 1265–1266 and the passage above represents Aquinas's definitive usage of the word "verbum" in his epistemology and theology. Aquinas's usage of the term took its final form at the time of writing the *Summa contra Gentiles* as shown by the subsequent redactions of SCG I.53. For the development of Aquinas's usage of "verbum" see Goris 2007. 62–78; Porro 2016. 140–146. For the different redactions of SCG I.53 see Leonina 13. Appendix 20*a–21*a; Marietti 2. Appendix II. 8. 322–324 and Geiger 1963. 221–240.

[141] See, e.g., Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Hermeneutics* (16a3–9): "But here Aristotle is speaking of vocal sounds that are significant by human institution. Therefore passions in the soul must be understood here as conceptions of the intellect, and names, verbs, and speech, signify these conceptions of the intellect immediately according to the teaching of Aristotle. They cannot immediately signify things, as is clear from the mode of signifying, for the name man signifies human nature in abstraction from singulars; hence it is impossible that it immediately signify a singular man. The Platonists for this reason held that it signified the separated idea of man. But because in Aristotles teaching man in the abstract does not really subsist, but is only in the mind, it was necessary for Aristotle to say that vocal sounds signify the conceptions of the intellect immediately and things by means of them." (Leonina 1,1 10b–11a; Translated by Jean T. Oesterle, see Thomas Aquinas 1962. 25.) For the semantic principles underlying Aquinas's metaphysics see Klima 1996, especially 90–118. For a more general account of what Gyula Klima calls "via antiqua semantics" see Klima 2008. 392–405. For Aquinas's theory of language see further Klima 2011a. 371–389.

[142] A phrase of biblical and patristic origin. See Rom 10:8 "sed quid dicit prope est verbum in ore tuo et in corde tuo hoc est verbum fidei quod praedicamus." See further 1 Cor 14:24–25: "occulta cordis eius manifesta fiunt." The whole passage is illuminating, especially as Aquinas refers to it SCG 3.154 (see footnote 147 below). See 1 Cor 14:24–25: "si autem omnes prophetent intret autem quis infidelis vel idiota convincitur ab omnibus diiudicatur ab omnibus occulta cordis eius manifesta fiunt et ita cadens in faciem adorabit Deum". Aquinas often hints at Augustine with respect to "verbum cordis". See e.g.: QQ V.5.2: "Respondeo dicendum quod secundum Augustinum, XV De trinitate, verbum cordis importat quoddam procedens a mente, sive ab intellectu." Sometimes it is referred to as "cogitatio cordis." See, e.g., DV 4.1, sed contra 4: "Praeterea, verbum, secundum Augustinum in xv de trinit., nihil est aliud quam cogitatio formata" and DV 8.13. See further the *locus classicus* in Augustinus Hipponensis: *De trinitate* lib. 15, cap. 10: "[…] formata quippe cogitatio ab ea re quam scimus uerbum est quod in corde dicimus, quod nec graecum est nec latinum nec linguae alicuius

uncomplex and complex (formed or misformed by composition and division), therefore it can misrepresent the world, even if it is the principal tool of our intellectual cognition and by its nature – i.e. under circumstances when it is not constituted by an imperfect operation of the intellect – correctly represents things *(res intellectae)* as their likeness.[143]

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alterius, sed cum id opus est in eorum quibus loquimur perferre notitiam aliquod signum quo significetur assumitur" and *De trinitate* lib. 14, cap. 7: "[…] sed quia ibi uerbum esse sine cogitatione non potest (cogitamus enim omne quod dicimus etiam illo interiore uerbo quod ad nullius gentis pertinet linguam), in tribus potius illis imago ista cognoscitur, memoria scilicet, intellegentia, uoluntate."

[143] QQ V.5.2: "Est autem duplex operatio intellectus, secundum philosophum in iii de anima. Una quidem quae vocatur indivisibilium intelligentia, per quam intellectus format in seipso definitionem, vel conceptum alicuius incomplexi. Alia autem operatio est intellectus componentis et dividentis, secundum quam format enuntiationem. Et utrumque istorum per operationem intellectus constitutorum vocatur verbum cordis, quorum primum significatur per terminum incomplexum, secundum vero significatur per orationem." "But, as the Philosopher says in book III of On the Soul, the intellect has two acts. One act is called the apprehension of indivisibles, by which the intellect forms within itself a definition or a concept of something simple. The other is the intellect's act of combining and dividing, by which it forms a proposition. Each of the things constituted by these acts of intellect is called a mental word", i.e., the word of the heart *(verbum cordis)*. (Translated by Turner Nevitt and Brian Davies. Thomas Aquinas 2020. 403.) In this passage, Aquinas calls both the incomplex and the complex internal conceptual structures "words". Has his usage of the term "verbum" in the context of mental representations any philosophical relevance? If so, how could we characterize the language-like behaviour of concepts that are – in Aquinas's view – natural likenesses of the things conceived? According to a sophisticated proposal, we should make a distinction between semantic and syntactic compositionality. On the level of the formal concepts as likenesses, we cannot talk about syntactic rules that organize mental representations in language-like expressions. However, if we take into account the content of these representations, we have to acknowledge semantic compositionality by virtue of the semantic values these "words" naturally carry. For this approach see Pasnau 1997. 558–575; Klima 2001. xxxvii–xxxix; Hochschild 2015. 29–45. For the concept of mental representation see Klima 2011b. 7–15. In contrast, according to John O'Callaghan, Aquinas's terminology does not have any philosophical significance. It is only "a theological metaphor" that the various *verbum mentis* interpretations mistakenly turn into a philosophical doctrine. See O'Callaghan 2000. 103–119. If we have a look at the issue from the perspective of errors that Aquinas seeks to eliminate by writing the *Summa contra Gentiles*, it seems clear that, in Aquinas's view, (1) one of the operations of the intellect (composition and division) is a necessary condition for making an error and (2) there is a "conformity" between the sign (vocal utterance) and what it is the sign of (the conception of intellect) to the extent that the former is – "according to the order of nature" – not only similar to the latter, but also "imitates" it, just like an effect imitates its cause (see In PH I, ; Leonina I*, 1. 14a–b. Thomas Aquinas 1962. 30). Now, it is not easy to see how the composition and division of mental words can be a cause of vocal utterances in this sense without exhibiting syntactical compositionality, if it is syntactical compositionality that makes it possible to attribute truth value to a vocal utterance in the first place. As a matter of fact, Aquinas cannot avoid unequivocally referring to syntactic compositionality when talking about the making of falsity in human mind. SCG 3.108 speaks for itself: "Moreover, falsity occurs in our case in the intellectual operation of composing and dividing, as a result of the fact that it does not apprehend the quiddity of a thing simply, but, rather, combines something with the thing that is apprehended [*rei apprehensae aliquid componit*]. Of course, in the operation of the intellect, whereby it apprehends that which is, no falsity occurs except accidentally, by virtue of mixing, even in this operation, some part of the operation

Conventional linguistic signals *(exterior words),* on the other hand, are arbitrary in two respects. Firstly, they are not world-bound, since their form is not implied by the meaning associated with them. Secondly, they are not even interior-word-bound, since – being artifacts – their use is dependent on the will. The interior word therefore is a final and an efficient cause of the exterior word: we use the latter to make manifest what we think, and we produce the exterior word just as a craftsman produces an artifact based on the blueprint in his mind.[144]

Although the interior word is „naturally prior" to the exterior word,[145] and human beings are providentially given the ability to use the exterior word to make our knowledge of the world accessible to others,[146] it is nevertheless a deep and

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of the intellect composing and dividing. Indeed, this happens because our intellect does not immediately attain the knowledge of the quiddity of a thing, but with a certain order in the process of inquiry. For example, we first apprehend animal, then we divide it into the opposed differences, and, leaving one aside, we put the other with the genus, until we come to the definition of the species. Now, falsity may occur in this process if something is taken as a difference in the genus which is not a difference in the genus. Of course, to proceed in this way to the quidditative knowledge of something pertains to an intellect reasoning discursively from one thing to another. [*Sic autem procedere ad cognoscendum de aliquo quid est, est intellectus ratiocinando discurrentis de uno ad aliud*]." (Leonina 14. 339b; Marietti 3. 164. n. 2836; ET 3/2. 105–106. n. 5.) I think, it seems reasonable to assume that the intentional objects of a "discursively reasoning" intellect should certainly exhibit syntactical complexity. If this is the case, then Aquinas's semantics is clearly inconsistent. Aquinas, however, did not seem to be worried about all this when mixing up some highly influential remarks of Aristotle, Augustinian conjectures, florilegical elements of biblical folklore and theological speculations. What did deeply worry him, especially when writing the SCG, was that some seemingly dysfunctional quasi-entities (errors) seem to have the causal efficacy "to entice away the minds of humans from God," "to whom faith seeks to lead them" [*hominum mentes a Deo abducit, in quem fides dirigere nititur*] (SCG 2,3. Leonina 13. 278b; Marietti 2. 117. n. 869; ET 2. 34. n. 6).

[144] See, e.g., DV 4.1: "Finalis quidem quia verbum vocale ad hoc a nobis exprimitur ut interius verbum manifestetur, unde oportet quod verbum interius sit illud quod significatur per exterius verbum; verbum autem quod exterius profertur significat id quod intellectum est, non ipsum intelligere neque hoc intellectum qui est habitus vel potentia nisi quatenus et haec intellecta sunt; unde verbum interius est ipsum interius intellectum. Efficiens autem quia verbum prolatum exterius, cum sit significativum ad placitum, eius principium est voluntas sicut et ceterorum artificiatorum, et ideo sicut aliorum artificiatorum praeexistit in mente artificis imago quaedam exterioris artificii, ita in mente proferentis verbum exterius praeexistit quoddam exemplar exterioris verbi." (Leonina 22. 119b–120a.) See further SCG 2.1: "[…] consideratio enim et voluntas artificis principium est et ratio aedificationis"; "in the thought and will of the craftsman lie the principle and plan of the work of building" (Leonina 13. 271b; Marietti 2. 115. n. 854; ET 2. 29. n. 3).

[145] DV 4.1 co.: "et ideo, quia verbum exterius cum sit sensibile est magis notum nobis quam interius, secundum nominis impositionem per prius vocale verbum dicitur verbum qua verbum interius, quamvis verbum interius naturaliter sit prius utpote exterioris causa et efficiens et finalis" (Leonina 22. 119b).

[146] See, e.g., SCG 3.147: "[..] because they can reach intelligible truth by their natural operation, it is clear that divine provision is made for them in a different way than for other things. Inasmuch as man is given understanding and reason, by which he can both discern and investigate the truth; as he is also given sensory powers, both internal and external, whereby he is helped to seek the truth; as he is also given the use of speech, by the functioning of which he

fundamental conviction of Aquinas's that the words or cogitations of the heart are principally hidden from our fellow human beings.[147]

This hiddenness – from a philosophical perspective – seems to be a consequence of Aquinas's semantic theory that regards external signals as *ad placitum* indicators of internal conceptual structures already having natural meaning as the likenesses of things. Aquinas stresses that the use of these structures depends on the human will, an active principle which is different from nature,[148] therefore only those can have a knowledge of them who are in the position to know the will that determines the way in which they are used.[149] Now, in Aqui-

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is enabled to convey to another person the truth that he conceives in his mind (datus est etiam ei loquelae usus, per cuius officium veritate quam aliquis mente concipit, alteri manifestare possit) – thus constituted, men may help themselves in the process of knowing the truth, just as they may in regard to the other needs of life for man is 'a naturally social animal'." (Leonina 14. 435b–436a; Marietti 3. 221. n. 3202; ET 3/2. 223. n. 2.) See further Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Hermeneutics* (16a3–9): "Now if man were by nature a solitary animal the passions of the soul by which he was conformed to things so as to have knowledge of them would be sufficient for him; but since he is by nature a political and social animal it was necessary that his conceptions be made known to others. This he does through vocal sound. Therefore there had to be significant vocal sounds in order that men might live together." (Leonina 1,1 9b. Translated by Jean T. Oesterle, see Thomas Aquinas 1962. 24).

147 See, e.g., SCG 3.154: "Non autem per hoc prophetiae donum sufficiens testimonium fidei adhiberetur, nisi esset de his quae a solo Deo cognosci possunt: sicut et miracula talia sunt quod solus Deus ea potest operari. Huiusmodi autem praecipue sunt in rebus inferioribus occulta cordium, quae solus Deus cognoscere potest, ut supra ostensum est; et futura contingentia, quae etiam soli divinae cognitioni subsunt […]." "However, an adequate testimony to the faith is not supplied by this gift of prophecy unless it were concerned with things that can be known by God alone, just as miracles are of such nature that God alone can work them. Now, these things are especially, in the affairs of this world, the secrets of our hearts, which God alone can know, as we showed above, and contingent future events which also come only under divine cognition […]." (Leonina 14. 450b; Marietti 3. 230. n. 3264; ET 3/2. 243.) "As we showed above": Aquinas refers to SCG 1.68 in which he shows that "God knows the thoughts of the mind and the motions of the will." (Leonina 13. 198–199; Marietti 2. 79–80. 567–574; ET 1. 225–227. n. 1–8.) See further – among many others – DV 8.13, co: "Unde motus voluntatis et cordis cogitatio non potest cognosci in aliquibus similitudinibus rerum naturalium, sed solum in essentia divina, quae in voluntatem imprimit." In Sent IV.45. 3.1 resp. ad argum. 5: "Ad quintum dicendum, quod cogitationes cordium solus Deus per seipsum novit; sed tamen alii cognoscere possunt quatenus eis revelatur vel per visionem verbi, vel quocumque alio modo." Similarly in ST 1a.57.4 co: "Alio modo possunt cognosci cogitationes, prout sunt in intellectu; et affectiones, prout sunt in voluntate. Et sic solus Deus cogitationes cordium et affectiones voluntatum cognoscere potest." ST 2a2ae.83.4: "Tum quia plerumque oratio magis agitur interiori actu, quem solus Deus cognoscit, quam voce, secundum illud quod apostolus dicit, i ad cor. xiv, orabo spiritu, orabo et mente." ST 3a.64.1: "[…] solus Deus illabitur animae […]."

148 "voluntas et natura duo principia activa ponuntur." See footnotes 32 above and 151 below.

149 See Aquinas's responses to the questions whether angels (including daemons) know the hidden, interior thoughts of our heart. See, e.g., DV 8.13: "Responsio. Dicendum, quod Angeli cogitationes cordium per se et directe intueri non possunt. Ad hoc enim quod mens aliquid actu cogitet, requiritur intentio voluntatis, qua mens convertatur actu ad speciem quam habet […]" (Leonina 22. 261b). See further DM 16.8: "Set quantum ad usum considerandum est quod usus specierum intelligibilium, qui est actualis cogitatio, dependet ex voluntate: uti-

nas's view, it is „only the person willing and thinking" who knows his or her own cogitations,[150] and God Himself, as He only knows an agent's voluntary acts through their cause and not only from their effects.[151]

The idea that – apart from the person herself – only God knows a person's willing and thinking is part of the traditional biblical and patristic lore.[152] Usual-

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mur enim speciebus habitualiter in nobis existentibus cum volumus;" "But regarding our use of the forms, we should note that such use, that is, actual thinking, depends on our will. For we use our habitual forms when we will to do so." (Leonina 23. 321a; translated by Richard J. Regan, see Thomas Aquinas 2012. 2003. 493.)

[150] For the two ways in which the cogitations of human beings – at least "in a certain manner" *(aliqualiter)* – can be known to us see DM 16.8. co.: "uno modo secundum quod uidentur in se ipsis, sicut aliquis homo proprias cogitationes cognoscit, alio modo per aliqua corporalia signa"; "one may know them in two ways: in one way as one perceives them in themselves; in a second way by certain physical signs" (Leonina 23. 320b; translated by Richard J. Regan, see Thomas Aquinas 2003. 492). For "the person willing and thinking" also see DM 16.8. co: "Vnde cum uoluntas interius non possit <moueri> ab alio nisi a Deo, cuius ordini immediate subest motus uoluntatis, et per consequens uoluntarie cogitationis, non potest cognosci neque a demonibus, neque a quocumque alio nisi ab ipso Deo, et ab homine uolente et cogitante." "And so since only God, to whose ordination the movement of the will, and so voluntary thoughts, are directly subject, can move the will internally, neither devils nor anyone else but God and the person willing and thinking can know such thoughts." (Leonina 23. 321b; Thomas Aquinas 2003. 494.) See further: *In Symbolum apostolorum reportatio*, art. 3: "Nullus autem cognoscit verbum dum est in corde hominis, nisi ille qui concipit; sed tunc primo cognoscitur cum profertur" (Thomas Aquinas 1954. 200). DV 4.1, ad 5: "Ad quintum dicendum quod, quamvis apud nos manifestatio que est ad alterum non fiat nisi per verbum vocale, tamen manifestatio ad seipsum fit etiam per verbum cordis, et haec manifestatio aliam praecedit, et ideo etiam verbum interius verbum per prius dicitur" (Leonina 22. 121a). Aquinas neither assumes that our self-knowledge is infallible nor that we have privileged access to our cognitions and volitions, as God also has access to them. For self-knowledge and the problem of other minds in Aquinas see Pasnau 2004. 330–360.

[151] SCG 3.56: "Quid autem velit aliquis volens, non potest cognosci per cognitionem substantiae ipsius: nam voluntas non tendit in sua volita omnino naturaliter; propter quod voluntas et natura duo principia activa ponuntur. Non potest igitur aliquis intellectus cognoscere quid volens velit, nisi forte per aliquos effectus, sicut, cum videmus aliquem voluntarie operantem, scimus quid voluerit; aut per causam, sicut Deus voluntates nostras sicut et alios suos effectus, cognoscit per hoc quod est nobis causa volendi; aut per hoc quod aliquis alteri suam voluntatem insinuat, ut cum aliquis loquendo suum affectum exprimit." "However, what a volitional agent wills cannot be known through a knowledge of his substance, for the will does not incline to its object in a purely natural way; this is why the will and nature are said to be two active principles. So, an intellect cannot know what a volitional agent wills except, perhaps, through certain effects. For instance, when we see someone acting voluntarily we may know what he wishes: either through their cause, as God knows our will acts, just as He does His other effects, because He is for us a cause of our willing; or by means of one person indicating his wish to another, as when a man expresses his feeling in speech." (Leonina 14. 155b–156a. Marietti 3. 76. n. 2328. ET 3/1. 190. n. 5.)

[152] 1 Cor 2:11: "quis enim scit hominum quae sint hominis nisi spiritus hominis qui in ipso est ita et quae Dei sunt nemo cognovit nisi Spiritus Dei"; see SCG 3.59: "Hinc est quod dicitur i cor. 2-11: quae sunt hominis nemo novit nisi spiritus hominis, qui in ipso est" (Leonina 14. 164b; Marietti 3. 80. n. 2352). SCG 4.17: "Quis enim scit quae sunt hominis nisi spiritus hominis, qui in ipso est?" (Leonina 15. 69a; Marietti 3. 279. n. 3532). Aquinas's references on Paul's text are based on Ambrose's *De Spiritu Sancto* II. c. 11. See Leonina 23. 320, footnote 147.

ly, its various expressions can be considered common phrases that are intended to draw attention to divine omniscience and justice in various contexts.[153]

Aquinas, however, regarded the hiddenness of the cogitations of our heart as a severe structural constraint on human knowledge and communication that cannot be removed under any circumstances. In Aquinas's view, only God's direct intervention can ensure that a human being has knowledge of other people's cogitations which are principally and naturally hidden from anyone else.

An illuminating example is to be found in his *Commentary on the Sentences*.

In the second book Aquinas discusses the question whether Adam could be deceived before the Fall. He makes the following argument in favour of the affirmative answer: it is clear that before the fall Adam could not know the secret of the heart of the other, since even the angels do not know it, but only God alone does. However, there may have been somebody who claimed to think of something he did not really think of, and Adam may have believed him, because he did not know that the other was lying. Thus it seems that Adam was deceived.[154]

Aquinas – who argues for the infallibility of Adam's cognition – disagrees with the conclusion of the argument. He does not deny, however, the inscrutability of the "secrets of the heart" *(secreta cordis)* but refers instead to the divine providence (omnipotence) which ensured that Adam would not be deceived before the fall. Even *in primo statu*, the intervention of the divine omnipotence, that is, a miracle is necessary to know other people's cogitations of the heart.[155] This saves Adam's intellect from falsity that – just as monsters cannot appear in unspoiled nature – cannot occur *in statu innocentiae*.[156]

[153] Aquinas most often refers to Psalms 7:10: "et scrutans corda et renes Deus"; Jer 11:20: "tu autem Domine Sabaoth qui iudicas iuste et probas renes et cor"; 17:10: "ego Dominus scrutans cor et probans renes"; 20:12: "tu Domine exercituum probator iusti qui vides renes et cor"; Acts 2:23 "ego sum scrutans renes et corda"; 1 Cor 14:25 „occulta cordis eius manifesta fiunt" (for the latter see also footnote 142); Jer 17:9–10: "pravum est cor hominis et inscrutabile quis cognoscet illud? Ego dominus scrutans corda et probans renes." Mt 9:4: "et cum vidisset Iesus cogitationes eorum dixit"; Lc 9:47: "Iesus videns cogitationes cordis illorum"; Lk 16:15: "Deus autem novit corda vestra."

[154] In Sent II.23.2.3 arg. 3: „Praeterea, constat quod Adam in primo statu secreta cordis alterius hominis scire non potuisset, cum nec Angeli hoc sciant, sed solus Deus. Potuit autem contingere ut aliquis diceret se illud cogitare quod non cogitabat, nec Adam eum mentiri credidisset, cum hoc certitudinaliter non cognovisset. Ergo videtur quod deceptus fuisset." (Thomas Aquinas 1929. 578.) On the "Adamic cognition" and its infallibility in *statu primo* see Kretzmann 1992. 165–168.

[155] In Sent II.23.2.3 arg. 3: „Ad tertium dicendum, quod sicut divina providentia corpus hominis servasset illaesum ab omnibus exterioribus laesuris, ita etiam servasset intellectum hominis indeceptum in omnibus quae suam cognitionem impediebant, ut statim intelligeret, si quis falsum pro vero sibi diceret" (Thomas Aquinas 1929. 579).

[156] DV 18.6 co: "Unde sicut in conceptione humani corporis in statu innocentiae nulla monstruositas accidisset ita etiam in intellectu eius nulla falsitas esse posset" (Leonina 22, 2. 552b).

The weight of Aquinas's conviction is also shown by his remark in SCG 3.154: to know another fellow human being's willing and thinking is clearly equivalent to having an insight into a future contingent event that – *ipso facto* – is not existent yet. The ability to look into what is hidden in another human being's heart, along with the ability to know and reveal future event is one of the miracles that confirmed the apostles and disciples' oral teaching with regard to the aspect of God's nature that cannot be evident for us via demonstration.

> However, an adequate testimony to the faith is not supplied by this gift of prophecy unless it were concerned with things that can be known by God alone, just as miracles are of such nature that God alone can work them. Now, these things are especially, in the affairs of this world, the secrets of our hearts, which God alone can know […] and contingent future events which also come only under divine cognition, for He sees them in themselves because they are present to Him by reason of His eternity […].[157]

This assumption of principal hiddenness of our interior cogitations dramatically reduces the philosophical and theological relevance of external physical signals if it comes to knowing our fellow human beings' emotions, desires, intentions and thoughts. This is not only true for conventional linguistic signals that can easily be deceptive, but also for non-conventional, universal and hard to fake emotional displays in humans. For example, when investigating whether angels (including daemons) know the cogitations of our heart, Aquinas argues that they can only have accidental, indirect and occasional knowledge of human beings' interior cogitations "through certain physical signs" *(per aliqua corporalia signa)*,[158] such as when we turn pale while being afraid of something or blush while being ashamed, or show signs of being joyful or sad when affected by our cogitations.[159]

Aquinas's quasi incidental remarks on possible human apprehension of such signals and the interior states they display are particularly noteworthy. If an emotional state *(passio)* which is based on some internal cogitation is "forceful enough", says Aquinas, then also its external appearance will have an indication *(indicium)* that even "the less sophisticated persons" *(grossiores)* can grasp.[160] If "an emotion be milder, skilled doctors can detect it from change in the heartbeat that they note by the pulse" which is in line with Aquinas's general obser-

[157] SCG 3.154. See ET 3/2. 243. n. 10. See also footnote 147 above.

[158] DV 8.13: "angeli cogitationes cordium per se et directe intueri non possunt […]"; "Sed per accidens potest cognoscere cogitationem cordis quandoque […]" (Leonina 22. 261b).

[159] DM 16.8 (Leonina 23. 320) and DV 8.13 (Leonina 22. 261b).

[160] DM 16.8 (Leonina 23. 320): "Que si fuerit uehemens, etiam in exteriori apparentia habet aliquod indicium per quod potest etiam a grossioribus deprehendi […]."

vation: "sometimes" "even doctors" are able to know "the passions of our heart" if "an actual cogitation results in a motion in the body".[161]

It certainly never happens in Aquinas's world that ordinary human beings just signal states of affairs and respond to each other's signals without further theoretical and practical ado.[162] In Aquinas's view, even in the most obvious cases of emotional displays there must be "indicia" at hand that enable the adequately equipped intellect to draw practical inferences in order to get information from another person's "word of the heart" that might represent or misrepresent aspects of the world as their exact or distorted "likeness". Aquinas thinks that this kind of task is easier to accomplish for angels (including daemons) who are much more skillful and sophisticated than human beings, but the semantic, metaphysical and theological framework that imposes structural constraints on his treatment of the problem is all the same.

This framework rules out the universal adequation of internal representations and external signals as a consequence of pure natural processes, since both internal representations and external signals in human beings – as we saw earlier – are subject to a principle different from nature: will.[163] For the same reason, this framework also excludes that our will-dependent, complex internal representations naturally meet the conformity requirement set as a standard for truth by Aquinas. In Aquinas's view, making an error literally means to produce something unnatural: errors are the monsters of our interior world.

> […] false judgments in the area of intellectual operations are like monsters among natural things; they are not in accord with nature, but apart from nature.[164]

[161] See DM 16.8 (Leonina 23. 321b; translated by Richard J. Regan, see Thomas Aquinas 2012. 2003. 493). See also DV 8.13 (Leonina 22. 261b): "uno modo inquantum ex cogitatione actuali resultat aliquis motus in corpore dum aliquis gaudio vel tristitia afficitur ex his quae cogitat, et sic cor quodammodo movetur, – per hunc enim modum etiam medici quandoque possunt passionem cordis cognoscere."

[162] In reality, infants can reliably distinguish justified from unjustified emotional displays already at an age of 18 months. See Chiarella–Poulin-Dubois 2013.

[163] See footnote 148 and the passage from SCG 3.56 in footnote 151 above. See further, e.g., Aquinas's reply in DV 8.13 where he states that the motion of the will does not depend on or has any connection whatsoever with any natural cause. "Motus autem voluntatis alterius non potest Angelo notus esse naturali cognitione, quia Angelus naturaliter cognoscit per formas sibi inditas, quae sunt similitudines rerum in natura existentium; motus autem voluntatis non habet dependentiam nec connexionem ad aliquam causam naturalem, sed solum ad causam divinam, quae in voluntatem sola imprimere potest. Unde motus voluntatis et cordis cogitatio non potest cognosci in aliquibus similitudinibus rerum naturalium, sed solum in essentia divina, quae in voluntatem imprimit." (Leonina 22. 261b.)

[164] SCG 3.107: "Nullus autem intellectus talis potest esse: falsa enim iudicia in operationibus intellectus sunt sicut monstra in rebus naturalibus, quae non sunt secundum naturam, sed praeter naturam; nam bonum intellectus, et eius finis naturalis est cognitio veritatis" (Leonina 14. 336b; Marietti 3. 162. n. 2828; ET 3/2. 102. n. 9). Aquinas regards reasoning as a form of human imitation of nature's work. See, e.g., the *Prologue* to his commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*: "Attendendum autem est quod actus rationis similes sunt quantum

Consequently, making internal states respond to the world by eliminating errors and making external states respond to internal states are permanent requirements to be achieved for a human being.[165] If either of these requirements remains unfulfilled, then error, deception and lying occur.[166]

Now, what if Adam's state of innocence when no deception can occur is over and the apostles and disciples who had an insight into what could be known by God alone are not living among us anymore? How can anyone be certain about other people's cogitations – including their errors and deceptive intent – if people communicate with each other without benefit of divine intervention: as ordinary people usually do? How can we be certain that someone really possesses the religious quality displayed with conventional signals or even emotions? If it is not obvious that a religious signaller possesses the quality indicated by her signals, because low-cost conventional signals are used that can be easily faked and, in addition, we assume – as Aquinas does – that: (1) conventional signals are primarily signs of mental quasi-entities, and (2) these are in principle inaccessible to other people, then we are facing a frightening, dreadful world from the religious point of view: that of an opaque and possibly deceptive interior world of beliefs and desires of our fellow human beings.

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ad aliquid actibus nature; unde et ars imitatur naturam in quantum potest. In actibus autem nature inuenitur triplex diuersitas: in quibusdam enim natura ex necessitate agit, ita quod non potest deficere; in quibusdam uero natura ut frequentius operatur, licet quandoque et possit deficere a proprio actu, unde in hiis necesse est esse duplicem actum: unum qui sit ut in pluribus, sicut cum ex semine generatur animal perfectum, alium vero quando natura deficit ab eo quod est sibi conueniens, sicut cum ex semine generatur aliquod monstrum, propter corruptionem alicuius principii." "It should be noted that acts of reason are similar to some degree to acts of nature, whence art imitates nature insofar as it can. We find a threefold diversity in acts of nature: in some, nature acts from necessity, so that it cannot fail; in some acts, nature is usually effective; however sometimes it can fail in its act. In these latter cases there must be a twofold act: one which happens most of the time, as when a perfect animal is generated from a seed; and one which happens when nature lacks something befitting it, as when a monster is generated from a seed because some principal element is corrupted." For the English translation see Copeland–Sluiter 2012. 790.

[165] See ST 2a2ae.184.5 arg. 2: "Praeterea, status exterior debet interiori statui respondere, alioquin incurritur mendacium, quod non solum est in falsis verbis, sed etiam in simulatis operibus […]. (This part of the objection is not against Aquinas's position). See further ST 2a2ae.94.2 co.: "Nam cum exterior cultus sit signum interioris cultus, sicut est perniciosum mendacium si quis verbis asserat contrarium eius quod per veram fidem tenet in corde, ita etiam est perniciosa falsitas si quis exteriorem cultum exhibeat alicui contra id quod sentit in mente."

[166] Aquinas, as do many of his contemporaries, frequently uses the passive form of the Latin verb "to deceive" to refer to the state when someone is in error, and the words "error" and "to be deceived" in a phrase together (e.g., "errare sive decipi"), thus referring to our intuition that to err is nothing other than lightheartedly adhere or assent to something false, that is: to be deceived. See ST 1a.94.4 co.: "Respondeo dicendum quod quidam dixerunt quod in nomine deceptionis duo possunt intelligi, scilicet qualiscumque existimatio levis, qua aliquis adhaeret falso tanquam vero, sine assensu credulitatis; et iterum firma credulitas."

VI. AQUINAS'S THIRD ASSUMPTION: A VAST PART OF HUMAN MISERY COMES FROM DECEPTION AND ERROR

According to Aquinas, Socrates "was right in a sense" when he held that all virtue was knowledge and all sin was ignorance. Since Aquinas holds that the will has a natural inclination to follow the good or at least what is considered good by the willing person, the pursuit of evil can only be the consequence of ignorance or error that makes the bad seem good.[167]

Not only is sin based on error in Aquinas's view, but also the opposite is true: error itself is sin or comes from sin.[168] For, in Aquinas's view, making an error is

[167] See SCG 3.108: "Nullum autem voluntatis peccatum potest esse absque errore: quia voluntas semper tendit in bonum apprehensum; unde, nisi in apprehensione boni erretur, non potest esse in voluntate peccatum." "Moreover, no sin can occur in the will without error, since the will always tends toward the good as apprehended. Consequently, unless there is an error in the apprehension of the good, there cannot be a sin in the will." (Leonina 14. 339a; Marietti 3. 163. n. 2833; ET 3/2. 104. n. 2). See further SCG 4.70: „Omne peccatum ex quadam ignorantia contingit: unde dicit philosophus quod omnis malus est ignorans; et in proverbiis dicitur: errant qui operantur malum. Tunc igitur solum homo securus potest esse a peccato secundum voluntatem, quando secundum intellectum securus est ab ignorantia et errore." "[…] every sin comes about from a kind of ignorance. Thus, the Philosopher says that every evil man is ignorant; and we read in Proverbs (14: 22): They err that work evil. Therefore, then, a man can be secure from sin in the will, only when his intellect is secure from ignorance and from error." (Leonina 15. 220b–221a; Marietti 3. 373. n. 4048. ET 4. 272–273. n. 4.) SCG 4.92: „Peccatum in voluntate non accidit sine aliquali ignorantia intellectus: nihil enim volumus nisi bonum verum vel apparens; propter quod dicitur Proverb. XIV: *Errant qui operantur malum*; et philosophus III Ethic., dicit quod *omnis malus ignorans*. Sed anima quae est vere beata, nullo modo potest esse ignorans: cum in Deo omnia videat quae pertinent ad suam perfectionem." "Sin cannot take place in the will without some sort of ignorance in the intellect, for we will nothing but the good whether true or apparent. For this reason Proverbs (14: 22) says: They err who work evil; and in the Ethics the Philosopher says every evil man is ignorant. But the soul which is truly happy cannot be in ignorance at all, since in God it sees everything which belongs to its perfection." (Leonina 15. 288b; Marietti 3. 413. n. 4262; ET 4. 370. n. 6). For Aquinas's stock references that he steadily uses when discussing the connections between ignorance, error, and sin, see *Proverbs* 14,22 ("errant qui operantur malum misericordia et veritas praeparant bona") and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 1 (1110b 26–30): "Ebrius enim vel qui irascitur non videtur propter ignorantiam operari, sed propter aliquod eorum quae dicta sunt, non sciens autem sed ignorans. Ignorat quidem igitur omnis malus quae oportet operari et a quibus fugiendum et propter tale peccatum iniusti et universaliter mali fiunt." (In NE, Leonina 47. Vol. 1. 125.) For Aquinas's reference to Socrates see ST 1a2ae.77.2 co.: „Respondeo dicendum quod opinio Socratis fuit, ut philosophus dicit in VII Ethic., quod scientia nunquam posset superari a passione. Unde ponebat omnes virtutes esse scientias, et omnia peccata esse ignorantias. In quo quidem aliqualiter recte sapiebat. Quia cum voluntas sit boni vel apparentis boni, nunquam voluntas in malum moveretur, nisi id quod non est bonum, aliqualiter rationi bonum appareret, et propter hoc voluntas nunquam in malum tenderet, nisi cum aliqua ignorantia vel errore rationis. Unde dicitur Prov. XIV, errant qui operantur malum." For acrasia, error and sin see further Pasnau 2004. 241ff.

[168] See Kretzmann 1992. 180–181. See further SCG 1.61, with reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 2 (1139a 27): "Sicut *verum est bonum intellectus, ita falsum est malum ipsius*: naturaliter enim appetimus verum cognoscere et refugimus falso decipi." "Again, as the true is the good of the intellect, so the false is its evil. For we naturally seek to know the truth

a presumptuous act against truth, as it is a mental act by means of which we approve something false as true.[169] Aquinas takes Socrates' position even further, in so far as, under certain conditions, he attaches moral value not only to error as a presumptuous act, but also to ignorance as an act of negligence. Although sheer ignorance, unlike error, does not imply forming an opinion about things we do not know, being ignorant amounts to depriving ourselves of the knowledge of things we should know.[170]

What are those things that should not even be ignored? In Aquinas's view, the things that direct people in their actions have to be known by everyone. This general human obligation does not merely mean the acceptance and correct application of moral rules, but – according to Aquinas – it is also an eminently religious issue. Aquinas henceforth stresses that everyone must know what belongs to faith because faith directs our intentions.[171]

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and flee from being deceived by the false." (Leonina 13. 175b; Marietti 2. 72. n. 513; ET 1. 207. n. 8.) Aquinas explicitly says that error is sin: "error evidently has the nature of sin." See footnote 169 below.

[169] See DM 3.7 co.: „Error autem est approbare falsa pro veris; unde addit actum quendam super ignorantiam: potest enim esse ignorantia sine hoc quod aliquis de ignotis sententiam ferat, et tunc est ignorans, et non errans; set quando iam falsam sententiam fert de his quae nescit, tunc proprie dicitur errare. Et quia peccatum in actu consistit error manifeste habet rationem peccati. Non enim est absque praesumptione, quod aliquis de ignoratis sententiam ferat […]." "And error consists of assenting to false things as true. And so error adds an act over and above ignorance. For there can be ignorance without a person making judgments about unknown things, and then the person is ignorant but not erroneous. But when a person makes judgments about things of which the person is ignorant, then we speak in a strict sense about the person erring. And since sin consists of an act, error evidently has the nature of sin. For it is presumptuous for a person to make judgments about things of which the person is ignorant […]." (Translated by Richard Regan, see Thomas Aquinas 2003. 163.) For the quasi-definition of "error" that Aquinas uses in this passage see Augustine's *Enchiridion* 17: "pro uero quippe approbat falsum, quod est erroris proprium" (Augustinus 1969. 57). For error as a presumptuous act see further In Ioh. caput 4. lectio 2: "Quidam namque participant eam obnubilantes tenebris erroris, et isti adorant in monte quia omnis error ex superbia causatur […]." For the moral weight of "superbia" see Augustinus: *De civitate Dei* 12, 6: "Cum vero causa miseriae malorum angelorum quaeritur, ea merito occurrit, quod ab illo, qui summe est, aversi ad se ipsos conversi sunt, qui non summe sunt; et hoc vitium quid aliud quam superbia nuncupetur? *Initium* quippe *omnis peccati superbia*." (Augustinus 1993a. 518–519.)

[170] DM 3.7 co.: "Set ignorantia de se rationem pene dicit, non autem omnis ignorantia habet rationem culpe: ignorare enim ea que quis non tenetur scire absque culpa est, set ignorantia illa qua quis ignorat ea que tenetur scire non est absque peccato." "[…] ignorance of itself indicates the character of punishment, although not every ignorance has the character of moral wrong. For example, being ignorant of things that one is not bound to know involves no moral wrong, but the ignorance whereby one does not know things that one is bound to know involves sin." (Leonina 23. 81a; Thomas Aquinas 2003. 163.)

[171] DM 3.7 co.: „Tenetur autem scire quilibet ea quibus dirigatur in propriis actibus. Unde omnis homo tenetur scire ea quae fidei sunt, quia fides intentionem dirigit […]" "And everyone is obliged to know the things that guide human persons in their actions. And so every human being is obliged to know things belonging to faith, since faith guides our striving […]" (Leonina 23. 81a; Thomas Aquinas 2003. 163.)

> Faith guides the present life. In order that anyone live well, it is required that they know whatever is necessary for living well. […] Faith, however, teaches all those things necessary for living well.[172]

Error and deception in this context are of particular importance, because they prove to be the major hindrance to human happiness.

> […] felicity excludes all unhappiness, for no man can be at once unhappy and happy. Now, deception and error constitute a great part of unhappiness; in fact, that is what all men naturally avoid.[173]

Error and deception, as we saw earlier, belong to the lower grades in the great chain of degradation where defect, disorder and division prevail. In Aquinas's view, the main reason that error and deception exert a divisive force in social life is that their presence in our mental universe prevents us from learning the most important things that are necessary for living a happy life. They are fundamentally shattering human social relations and leading to misery already in this life, because they are persistently misguiding us all. In contrast, Catholic religion can be our guide for living well, because it is directed towards the first, simple and unchangeable truth which is contrary to falsity. As there is only one way of being truthful compared with the infinitely diverse ways to be in error,[174] truth is a unifying force in the lives of all those who have faith, i.e., who have an intellectual insight to what human beings in this life can apprehend from God's true nature in the hope of future life and happiness.[175]

[172] "quia fides dirigit uitam presentemj nam homo ad hoc quod bene uiuat, oportet quod sciat necessaria ad bene uiuendum." […] "Fides autem docet omnia necessaria ad bene uiuendum." See Ayo 2005. 19–21.

[173] SCG 3.39: „Felicitas omnem miseriam excludit: nemo enim simul miser et felix esse potest. Deceptio autem et error magna pars miseriae est: hoc est enim quod omnes naturaliter fugiunt." (Leonina 14. 96a; Marietti 3. 45. n. 2170; ET 3/1. 128. n. 4.)

[174] This is because errors can be infinitely multiplied *(errores possunt in infinitum multiplicari)*. See ST 2a2ae.10.5 co. and ad 1: "Unde in generali possunt assignari tres praedictae species infidelitatis. Si vero distinguantur infidelitatis species secundum errorem in diversis quae ad fidem pertinent, sic non sunt determinatae infidelitatis species, possunt enim errores in infinitum multiplicari, ut patet per Augustinum, in libro de haeresibus." "[…] fides est una virtus, ex hoc quod adhaeret uni primae veritati; sed infidelitatis species sunt multae, ex hoc quod infideles diversas falsas sententias sequuntur." See further In Sent III.23.2.4 qc. 2 co.: „Objectum autem fidei est veritas prima, quae est simplex et invariabilis. Et ideo in fide invenitur duplex unitas: ex hoc enim quod unum et simplex est cui fides innititur, habitus fidei in habente non dividitur in plures habitus: ex hoc autem quod veritas est, habet potentiam uniendi diversos habentes fidem in similitudinem unius fidei, quae attenditur secundum idem creditum: quia, sicut dicit Dionysius, veritas habet vim colligendi et uniendi, e contrario error et ignorantia divisiva sunt."

[175] In DDN 4.4: "Et hoc, consequenter, exponit ex opposito sicut enim ignorantia est divisiva eorum qui in errorem inducuntur, ita praesentia intellectualis luminis, per quod cognoscitur veritas, congregat eos qui illuminantur, ad invicem et unit eos in una veritate cog-

Consequently, error is seen by Aquinas as the single most important and disruptive threat to the unity of his contemporary social environment. Since this unity, according to Aquinas, must rest on the Catholic faith as a unifying force, it is hardly surprising that – in his vast work on the problem of evil, *De malo* – after nescience, ignorance and error he introduces heresy as the ultimate degree of cognitive defect *(defectus cognitionis)*. Heresy is neither a mere ignorance with regard to what we should know, nor is it just a presumptuos action against truth, i.e., error, but it is a conscious and stubborn adherence *(pertinacia)* to an error.[176] In Aquinas's interpretation, the word "haeresis" most importantly refers to the divisive force that operates in a heretical act. Heresy is the breakdown of unity through the conscious choice of someone who persistently adheres to their erroneous position against the Catholic public opinion *(praeter communem opinionem)*.[177]

For Aquinas, as is well known, heresy was intolerable. If it is not possible to convert the heretics, says he famously in the *Summa theologiae*, the Church –

nita; manifestum est enim quod circa unum non contingit nisi uno modo verum dicere, sed multipliciter errare a veritate contingit." (Thomas Aquinas 1950. 109. n. 332.) See further In Matth 24.1: "Unde quia veritati non adhaeserunt, dati sunt erroribus. Et hoc accidit in Simone mago, qui libros scripsit, et appellavit se librum Dei, Deum magnum, omnia Dei, et multos seduxit. Illorum enim est seduci qui divisi sunt in errores, quia stultorum infinitus est numerus, eccle. i, 15. Unde veritas congregat, error autem dividit, et hoc est periculum." (Reportatio of Léger of Besançon; see Thomas Aquinas 1951. 297. n. 1911.) Furthermore, see the already cited passage from In DDN 4.11: "Viae enim tortuosae et difformes sunt causa erroris; uniformitas viae praeservat ab errore" (Thomas Aquinas 1950. 148. n. 450).

[176] DM 8.1 ad 7: "Ad septimum dicendum quod quatuor uidentur ad defectum cognitionis pertinere, scilicet nescientia, ignorantia, error et heresis. Inter que nescientia est communius, quia importat simplicem carentiam scientie: unde et in angelis Dionisius quandam nescientiam ponit, ut patet in VI cap. Ecclesiastice ierarchie ; ignorantia uero est quedam nescientia, eorum scilicet que homo natus est scire et debet ; error uero supra ignorantiam addit applicationem mentis ad contrarium ueritatis : ad errorem enim pertinet approbare falsa pro ueris ; set heresis supra errorem addit aliquid et ex parte materie, quia est error eorum que ad fidem pertinent, et ex parte errantis, quia importat pertinaciam que sola facit hereticum […]." "Four things seem to belong to deficient knowledge, namely, lack of knowledge, ignorance, error, and heresy. Of these, lack of knowledge is the most common, since it signifies the simple absence of knowledge, and so also Dionysius supposes some lack of knowledge in angels, as his work On Ecclesiastical Hierarchy makes clear. And ignorance is a kind of lack of knowledge, namely, of things that human beings are by nature constituted to know and ought to know. And error adds to ignorance the turning of the mind to the contrary of truth, since it belongs to error to approve the false as true. And heresy adds to error something both regarding the matter, since heresy consists of error about things that belong to faith, and regarding the one in error, since heresy implies obstinacy, which alone produces a heretic." (See Leonina 23. 195b–196a; Thomas Aquinas 2003. 323.)

[177] In Sent IV.13.2.1 co.: „Respondeo dicendum, quod nomen haeresis Graecum est, et electionem importat secundum Isidorum; unde et haeretica divisiva dicuntur. Et quia in electione fit divisio unius ab altero, electio pro haeresis dicitur, ut patet 9 Metaphys. Divisio autem contingit alicui parti per recessum a toto. Prima autem congregatio quae est in hominibus, est per viam cognitionis, quia ex hac omnes aliae oriuntur; unde et haeresis consistit in singulari opinione praeter communem opinionem." (Thomas Aquinas 1929. 564.)

"looking after the salvation of others" – separates them by excommunication (i.e., confirms, in reality, their already separate status) and delivers them "to a secular tribunal to be exterminated thereby from the world by death."[178] A heretic – by virtue of their avowed position – is outside the truth. Even while heretics tell the truth, they are always lying, as there cannot be a heretic without secret cogitations of the heart being infected with errors. Using the words of one of the most faithful followers of Aquinas, Bernardus Guidonis: when we proceed against heretics it can be very difficult to „find the truth against them."[179]

Nonetheless, however dramatic the consequences of breaking with Catholic unity should be according to Aquinas, we cannot say that he wrote the *Summa contra Gentiles* against heresies, much less against heretics, ancient or contemporary. He, famously again, refers to the difficulty of proceeding "against the errors of particular persons" *(contra singulorum errores),* partly due to a lack of knowledge about their theoretical positions.[180] As we have seen, Aquinas most likely was not familiar with contemporary heretics and their teachings. As we have also seen, he did not write SCG against gentiles either – as the work's non-authentic title suggests – or anyone else as a person or a member of a group. We cannot even say that he wrote the book against infidels, as the work's more accurate, possibly authentic title suggests. He writes SCG in order to manifest the truth and eliminate the errors opposite to it. Anyone can be therefore an ally of Aquinas's in SCG if they represent a true theoretical position, regardless of religious and socio-cultural identity and vice versa: Aquinas thinks errors are to be destroyed no matter whose errors they are.

Aquinas's epic fight for the truth in SCG takes place in a spiritual space that abounds in errors and is only populated by the avatars of the imaginary opponents of the work in so far as certain types of errors can be attributed to them.

[178] See ST 2a2ae.11.3 co.: „Respondeo dicendum quod circa haereticos duo sunt consideranda, unum quidem ex parte ipsorum; aliud ex parte Ecclesiae. Ex parte quidem ipsorum est peccatum per quod meruerunt non solum ab Ecclesia per excommunicationem separari, sed etiam per mortem a mundo excludi. Multo enim gravius est corrumpere fidem, per quam est animae vita, quam falsare pecuniam, per quam temporali vitae subvenitur. Unde si falsarii pecuniae, vel alii malefactores, statim per saeculares principes iuste morti traduntur; multo magis haeretici, statim cum de haeresi convincuntur, possent non solum excommunicari, sed et iuste occidi. Ex parte autem Ecclesiae est misericordia, ad errantium conversionem. Et ideo non statim condemnat, sed post primam et secundam correctionem, ut apostolus docet. Postmodum vero, si adhuc pertinax inveniatur, Ecclesia, de eius conversione non sperans, aliorum saluti providet, eum ab Ecclesia separando per excommunicationis sententiam; et ulterius relinquit eum iudicio saeculari a mundo exterminandum per mortem."

[179] Bernard Gui talks about the method and the difficulties to question and examine the Pseudo-Apostles when mentioning this serious issue: "Est autem sciendum quod valde difficile est ipsos examinare et veritatem contra eos invenire […]" (Bernard Gui 1964. I. 96).

[180] See SCG I.2: "Contra singulorum autem errores difficile est procedere […]" (Leonina 13. 6b; Marietti 2. 3. n. 10). See further ET 1. 62. n. 3, but the English translation is inaccurate there.

Aquinas thinks, however, that these errors can take root in human minds and, as a consequence of their causal efficacy, they can ruin human cooperation and happiness.

VII. SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE IN AN OPAQUE, ERROR-PRONE AND DECEPTIVE WORLD

Seen from this perspective, the *Summa contra Gentiles* is – quite literally – a struggle for souls. Aquinas seeks to ensure religious unity by what he thinks is a heroic and decisive battle that will result in establishing proper conditions for communication and cooperation without error and deception in society.

Aquinas often uses terms and metaphors borrowed from warfare in his works.[181] In his controversy against certain secular Parisian theologians, Aquinas argues that during their warfare the friars use spiritual rather than physical weapons, i.e., "sacred doctrines in order to overcome the errors."[182] Although a spiritual war always takes place in the spiritual space inhabited by mental entities ("the words of the heart") and is fought with only symbolic tools, the outcome of the fight cannot be considered symbolic.

It is real, not only in terms of its effects in so far as the identification of errors makes possible to identify pertinent people („errings", „schismatics", „heretics" etc.) even if they are not the adversaries of Aquinas in SCG, but also because, as we have seen, Aquinas believes that the most important events of human life and faith take place in the human soul.[183] The correct representation of the world, the possibility of cautious and accurate communication to avoid misunderstandings and punishment, and ultimately human happiness, worldly and eternal, depend on mental contents hidden in the non-transparent world of human minds.

[181] See Synan 1988. 404–437.

[182] CI 2.1: „ Magis videtur remotum a religionis proposito corporalis militia, quae armis corporalibus exercetur, quam militia spiritualis, quae utitur armis spiritualibus, scilicet sacris documentis ad errorum impugnationem […]" (Leonina 41, pars A 58). The work was written in Paris in 1256. See Torrell 1996. 79–80 and 346.

[183] See section 5.4 above. See further SCG 3.119: "Et quia per interiores actus directe in Deum tendimus, ideo interioribus actibus proprie Deum colimus." "And since we directly tend toward God through interior acts, we therefore properly give cult to God by interior acts." (Leonina 14. 370b. Marietti 3. 177. n. 2913. ET 3/2. 132. n. 6.) *Sermo IV* (*Osanna filio Dauid*): "Dicunt alii: Magis laudabiles sunt qui bene uiuunt in seculo quam qui in religione; et ponunt exemplum et dicunt quod magis laudabilis est miles qui regi bene conseruat debile castrum quam qui forte. Deciperis: consideras quod seruire Deo sit solum in actibus exterioribus et non in actibus interioribus uirtutum. Principales autem actus sunt interiores uirtutes ut sapiencia, prudencia." (Leonina 44,1. 45.) In Sent IV.13.2.1 arg. 5: "Sed fides non consistit in verbis oris, sed in assensu cordis" (Thomas Aquinas 1929. 563).

The purpose of a spiritual army such as the Dominican order, according to Aquinas, is that, as he writes, "to win over the people opposed to God."[184] The struggles of Dominicans to fight heretics are also described by contemporaries as a spiritual battle, which is an equivalent complement to the real fight. "At that time, the count of Montfort [was] fighting against heretics with the material sword, and blessed Dominic with the sword of the word of God."[185]

Aquinas, as a member of the Dominican order, regarded this spiritual struggle as his most important vocation. This might be one of the reasons that the *Summa contra Gentiles* can be considered the most personal work of Aquinas.[186] Another reason is that by writing the work, Aquinas gave voice to his deepest convictions about how an opaque and deceptive social world abundant in cheap and easy to fake signals could be transformed with spiritual arms into a uniform common life that can, on his view, at least, lead people to ultimate happiness.

REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Summa Contra Gentiles

Leonina: *Leonina*, followed by an Arabic number refers to the respective volume of the so-called Leonine Edition of Aquinas's works (*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII. P. M. edita*. Roma 1882–). In addition to the page number, I will also give the respective column number (e.g., Leonina 13. 17a). The critical edition of the *Summa contra Gentiles* is found in three volumes: *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*. Tom. XIII–XV. Romae, Typis Riccardi Garroni. 1918–1930.

Marietti: *Marietti* always refers to the three-volume Marietti-edition of the *Summa contra Gentiles* in this paper. The first Arabic number refers to the respective volume, the second to the page number, and the third introduced by "n" to the paragraph number (e.g., Marietti 2. 8. n. 35). The bibliographical data of the three volumes:

Petrus Marc – Ceslaus Pera – Petrus Caramello (eds.) *S. Thomae Aquinatis Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium qui dicitur Summa contra Gentiles*. Vol. I. Introductio. Torino–Paris, Marietti–Lethielleux. 1967.

[184] In 2 Tim 2.1: „Sed militiae spiritualis finis est, ut victoriam habeant ab hominibus, qui sunt contra Deum […]" "But the end of the spiritual army is to have victory over men who are against God […]" (Thomas Aquinas 2007. 111).

[185] See Gerardus de Fracheto's *Cronica Ordinis*: "Illo quoque tempore comes Montisfortis pugnans contra hereticos gladio materiali et beatus Dominicus gladio verbi Dei […]." (Gerardus de Fracheto 1896. 322; English translation by Christine Caldwell Ames, see Ames 2009. 37.) Bernard Gui applies a similar metaphor when referring to the *Summa contra Gentiles* in his legend: "Supervacuum est autem recensendo errores describere quos idem veritatis doctor scripturarum suarum tanquam falce acutissima valuit extirpare. Sic contra gentilium errorem et stultitiam in archu et gladio doctrine sue prevaluit, quod in simili conflictu sibi hactenus modernis temporibus similis nullus fuit, sicut liber ejusdem qui summa contra gentiles pretitulatur, evidentius manifestat." (See Bernard Gui 1968. 144.)

[186] See Gauthier 1993. 176 and 180.

Ceslaus Pera – Petrus Marc – Petrus Caramello (eds.) *S. Thomae Aquinatis Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium seu "Summa contra Gentiles"*. Vol. II. Torino–Roma, Marietti. 1961.

Ceslaus Pera – Petrus Marc – Petrus Caramello (eds.) *S. Thomae Aquinatis Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium seu "Summa contra Gentiles"*. Vol. III. Torino–Roma, Marietti. 1961.

ET : ET refers to the five-volume English translation of the work I'm using. The first Arabic number refers to the respective volume, the second to the page number, and the third introduced by "n" to the paragraph number (e.g., ET 1. 71. n. 1). The bibliographical data of the individual volumes:

ET 1 – Saint Thomas Aquinas: *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles. Book One: God*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Anton C. Pegis. Garden City/NY, Image Books. 1955.

ET 2 – Saint Thomas Aquinas: *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles. Book Two: Creation*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by James F. Anderson. Garden City/NY, Image Books. 1956.

ET 3/1 – Saint Thomas Aquinas: *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles. Book Three: Providence*. Part I. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Vernon J. Bourke. Garden City/NY, Image Books. 1956.

ET 3/2 – Saint Thomas Aquinas: *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles. Book Three: Providence*. Part II. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Vernon J. Bourke. Garden City/NY, Image Books. 1956.

ET 4 – Saint Thomas Aquinas: *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles. Book Four: Salvation*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Charles J. O'Neil. Garden City/NY, Image Books. 1957.

Summa contra Gentiles is abbreviated as SCG throughout the paper. The first Arabic number after SCG refers to the respective book, and the second to the respective chapter of the work. E.g., SCG 1.6: the sixth chapter of the first book of the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

For the Aquinas Institute's online Latin-English edition of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, see <https://aquinas.cc>. For a Latin edition online, see <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org>.

Further Abbreviations:

BDT	Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate
CI	Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem
DM	Quaestiones disputatae de malo
DP	Quaestiones disputatae de potentia
DUI	De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas
DV	Quaestiones disputatae de veritate
In DDN	Expositio super Dionysium De divinis Nominibus
In Ioh	Super Evangelium Iohannis (reportatio)
In LP	Expositio libri Posteriorum
In Matth	Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura
In NE	Sententia libri Ethicorum
In PH	Expositio libri Peryermenias
In Sent	Scriptum super libros Sententiarum
In Symb	Expositio Super Symbolum Apostolorum / Collationes Credo in Deum
In Tim	Super Ad Timotheum
QQ	Quaestiones quodlibetales
ST	Summa theologiae

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Nicolas Faucher

Croyance volontaire et devoir moral chez Pierre de Jean Olivi*

INTRODUCTION

Pierre de Jean Olivi (v. 1248–1298) est un auteur connu pour l'importance qu'il accorde au sujet conscient dans la vie spirituelle et morale. La conscience que ce dernier a de lui-même, de sa liberté ou du bien trouve sa racine dans des expériences subjectives irréductibles qui suffisent à garantir les fondements de son existence et des principes qui la guident[1]. Il n'est pas surprenant, à cet égard, que le rapport subjectif que nous entretenons à nos croyances – c'est-à-dire l'attention réflexive que nous portons aux jugements intellectuels qui les constituent et aux motivations affectives de ces jugements – soit, chez Olivi, l'objet d'une attention récurrente. L'idée de croyance est bien sûr fondamentale pour tout théologien catholique. Mais le franciscain se distingue par l'étroitesse du lien qu'il admet entre croyance, affectivité et volonté, non seulement dans la vie religieuse, ce qu'il partage avec les autres théologiens de son temps, mais aussi dans toutes sortes d'autres circonstances de la vie sociale et morale de l'individu[2].

Je me propose ici d'examiner cette singularité de l'auteur au prisme d'une notion centrale, celle de croyance volontaire, dont je montrerai qu'elle fonde selon lui la vie morale et sociale de l'individu. Une croyance volontaire se comprend ici comme un assentiment intellectuel fort, peu ou pas sujet au doute, et que le croyant suscite volontairement en lui-même à l'égard d'un certain objet proposi-

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[1] Cf. entre autres S. Brower-Toland, « Olivi on Consciousness and Self-Knowledge: The Phenomenology, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Mind's Reflexivity », *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, 1 (2013), p. 136–171 ; R. Pasnau, « Olivi on Human Freedom », in A. Boureau, S. Piron (ed.), *Pierre De Jean Olivi (1248–1298) : Pensée scolastique, dissidence spirituelle et société*, Paris, Vrin, 1999, p. 15–25 ; S. Piron, « L'expérience subjective selon Pierre de Jean Olivi », in O. Boulnois (ed.), *Généalogies du sujet : de Saint Anselme à Malebranche*, Paris, Vrin, 2007, p. 43–54.

[2] Cf. N. Faucher, *La volonté de croire au Moyen Âge*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2019, p. 141–193.

tionnel indépendamment de l'évaluation rationnelle qu'il peut faire de la vérité ou de la probabilité de cet objet. A quoi sert cette croyance volontaire ? A-t-elle pour but de nous rapprocher d'une vérité inaccessible ou indémontrable, que nos moyens rationnels ne nous permettent pas d'atteindre bien que nous ayons de bonnes raisons d'y croire, quoiqu'elles soient insuffisantes pour y contraindre notre intellect ? Ou bien a-t-elle pour but, sans souci de la vraisemblance subjective ou même de de la vérité objective de ce que l'on croit, d'agir moralement, que ce soit en accomplissant le devoir de croire décrété par Dieu ou en accomplissant les actions vertueuses que permet la croyance ?

Au travers de son œuvre, Olivi accorde une grande place à la croyance volontaire. Elle est nécessaire à l'accomplissement de devoirs et d'activités variés. L'idée d'introduire une telle croyance comme condition de possibilité de certaines activités, et notamment de l'accomplissement de certains devoirs, n'est pas sans poser problème, comme un exemple employé par notre auteur le fait apparaître clairement. Selon lui, il est admis qu'il faut éviter les vices. Mais, pour ce faire, il faut croire volontairement que ce sont des vices[3]. Il y a là, à ce qu'il semble, la possibilité d'une régression à l'infini ou d'une circularité. Si nous produisons des jugements moraux du fait d'un acte de volonté et non d'un examen rationnel, la justification de ces jugements moraux devra être morale et non spéculative. Il faudra montrer pourquoi il est bon de vouloir poser ces jugements et non prouver qu'ils sont vrais. Mais, pour montrer cela, il faudra avoir recours à d'autres jugements moraux. Ainsi, tout jugement moral appellera, pour expliquer sa production, un acte de volonté, et tout acte de volonté appellera, pour être justifié, un jugement moral, et ainsi à l'infini[4].

Notons que ce problème est tout à fait différent de celui de la *vis obligandi*, dont parle Sylvain Piron dans son étude du *Quid ponat ius*[5] : il n'est pas question ici de se demander ce qui confère à nos jugements moraux une force d'obligation mais bien par quel type d'opération intellectuelle ou volontaire ils adviennent et sont justifiés. Que l'on veuille croire que tel principe oblige en vertu du jugement de notre conscience, erronée ou non, de l'autorité de Dieu ou de l'autorité de l'Eglise est une question parallèle et indifférente à la question de

[3] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione, quaestiones de virtutibus*, A. Emmen, E. Stadter (ed.), Grottaferrata, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1981, q. VIII, p. 322 : « Certum est enim nos teneri vitare vitia et esse absque vitio. Sed vitare non possum, nisi firmiter credendo et tenendo ipsa esse vitia, nullatenus habenda vel committenda. Dato igitur quod ratio haec mihi non probet, nihilominus obligatus sum ad ea vitanda, ac per consequens ad credendum ipsa esse mala et fugienda. Praeterea, constat quod tenemur vitare abominandos errores, fundamenta divini cultus ac verae pietatis et justitiae subvertentes. Ergo quamvis nobis non sint ratione probata, tenemur credere illa esse errores abominandos. »

[4] C'est un problème, semblable que posera, au XIVe siècle, Walter Chatton, *Reportatio et Lectura super Sententias: Collatio ad Librum Primum et Prologus*, ed. Wey J., Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989, p. 67.

[5] S. Piron, « La question *Quid ponat ius ?* » *Oliviana* 5 (2016).

la nature volontaire de cette croyance. Ce qui nous intéresse ici est seulement le jugement subjectif que le fidèle est capable d'émettre concernant la nature de ses propres jugements moraux.

Nous nous intéresserons plus particulièrement à l'exploration de cette possible circularité du jugement moral ; mais aussi à l'examen du danger que peut représenter la promotion de la croyance volontaire à l'égard du respect de la vérité objective. Ce sera pour moi l'occasion d'émettre quelques hypothèses générales sur la conception olivienne de la vie morale, à l'égard tant du progrès spirituel permis par le renforcement mutuel de la croyance volontaire et de l'affectivité morale que de l'importance absolue du respect des normes morales dans la vie de l'individu.

Dans la première partie du présent article, je rappellerai la doctrine olivienne de la foi et le rapport qu'elle entretient avec sa pensée des croyances volontaires ordinaires, non liées à des considérations religieuses. Dans une seconde partie, j'examinerai un cas particulier riche d'enseignements pour notre propos : celui du fils adultérin, au sujet duquel Olivi demande à la fois si la révélation de son état est souhaitable et quelle obligation morale a ce fils à l'égard de la croyance qu'il entretient d'être réellement la progéniture de son père supposé. Pour finir, nous chercherons à émettre deux hypothèses sur les raisons pour lesquelles le franciscain estime que, dans la très grande majorité des cas, il est préférable qu'un tel fils conserve sa croyance fausse et nous en tirerons des conséquences sur le lien général que fait Olivi entre vie morale et croyance volontaire.

FOI ET CROYANCES VOLONTAIRES ORDINAIRES

C'est dans la doctrine de la foi de Pierre de Jean Olivi, qui a été l'objet de plusieurs études récentes[6], que sont détaillés certains des mécanismes fondamentaux de la croyance volontaire. En rappeler les grandes lignes nous permettra de mieux souligner l'originalité de la position de notre auteur concernant la place des croyances volontaires dans la vie ordinaire : pour Olivi, la croyance propre à la foi consiste dans un assentiment intellectuel ferme, c'est-à-dire dépourvu d'hésitation et affecté d'une certitude subjective absolue. Une certitude si grande peut être produite par l'évidence absolue d'une appréhension qui contraint l'intellect à l'assentiment, lorsqu'elle concerne une proposition connue par soi telle que « Le tout est plus grand que la partie. » A partir du moment où le sens des

[6] N. Faucher, *La volonté de croire au Moyen Âge*, *op. cit.*, p. 141–193 ; N. Faucher, « What Does a Habitus of the Soul Do? The Case of the Habitus of Faith in Bonaventure, Peter John Olivi and John Duns Scotus », in N. Faucher, M. Roques (ed.), *The Ontology, Psychology and Axiology of Habits* (Habitus) *in Medieval Philosophy*, Berlin, Springer, 2018, p. 107–126 ; Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Questions sur la foi*, introduction, traduction et notes de N. Faucher, Paris, Vrin, 2020.

termes de cette proposition est connu et que cette proposition elle-même est appréhendée, il est impossible à l'intellect humain de ne pas y assentir. Dans le cas d'une proposition de foi, au contraire, aucune contrainte d'évidence ne s'impose à l'intellect. La proposition est pourtant crue d'une façon tout aussi absolument certaine. Cette certitude provient alors non d'une propriété particulière de la proposition elle-même mais de la volonté du sujet croyant qui commande à son intellect de prêter son assentiment à cette proposition. Pour autant, l'assentiment de foi ne se prête pas au hasard, selon le bon plaisir de la volonté, sans quoi il ne serait pas vertueux mais léger et capricieux. Il faut donc que le sujet ait au préalable connaissance, sinon de la vérité de la proposition, du moins du fait qu'il a le devoir de la croire.

Jusqu'à ce point, Olivi partage le point de vue des autres théologiens de son temps. C'est sur la modalité particulière de la connaissance que le fidèle a de son devoir de croire qu'il se détache de la doctrine commune. La plupart des théologiens du XIII^e^ siècle tiennent en effet, nonobstant quelques variations, la thèse selon laquelle la connaissance morale du devoir de croire dépend d'une aide divine. Cette aide peut être ponctuelle, lorsque Dieu communique directement et exceptionnellement une vérité à un individu donné, ou habituelle, lorsque le chrétien, baptisé, reçoit divers habitus surnaturels. Ces habitus surnaturels sont au moins au nombre de trois : foi, espérance et charité. Chacun d'entre eux rend plus faciles, plus rapides, plus agréables, mais surtout méritoires, aux yeux de Dieu, les actes qui en procèdent. L'habitus de foi a cependant une propriété particulière : non seulement il rend plus facile l'acte de foi mais il permet encore de discerner les propositions de foi des autres, au moyen d'une connaissance intuitive et immédiate de leur crédentité, c'est-à-dire du devoir que l'on a de les croire. On sait ainsi que chacun des objets de foi doit être cru à égalité, sans privilégier l'un sur l'autre[7].

Pour Olivi, cependant, l'un des objets de foi, à savoir l'existence d'un Dieu suprême que l'on a le devoir de vénérer, a un statut singulier : ce n'est pas quelque habitus surnaturel mais un instinct naturel qui nous fait appréhender le devoir que nous avons d'y croire. En effet, pour vénérer Dieu, il convient de croire à son existence ; s'il faut le vénérer, il faut donc croire qu'il existe. Cette croyance étant posée, c'est par une autre forme d'appréhension que l'on connaît les autres objets de foi comme objets qu'il faut croire pour mieux vénérer Dieu. Ces objets secondaires sont dits « luire » *(relucere)* et c'est en apercevant cette lueur que l'on sait qu'il faut les croire. Qu'il s'agisse ici d'un processus surnaturel ou non n'est pas clair. Il est certain en tout cas qu'Olivi admet, pour l'objet

[7] Sur les conceptions médiévales de la foi en général, cf. N. Faucher, *La volonté de croire*, *op. cit.* ; Ch. Grellard, *De la certitude volontaire*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2014.

primaire comme pour les objets secondaires de la foi, une capacité du croyant de savoir ce qu'il doit croire[8].

Une autre originalité de la doctrine d'Olivi consiste dans l'omniprésence qu'elle semble poser d'une croyance volontaire dans la vie ordinaire de l'homme, indépendamment de sa vie spirituelle. Cette croyance est semblable, par sa certitude subjective, à la croyance fidèle, quoiqu'elle ne soit pas méritoire, ni ne porte nécessairement sur le vrai. Sa valeur semble du reste essentiellement pratique et instrumentale. En effet, elle ne répond pas à un devoir autonome de croire, comme le fait l'acte de foi. Elle répond au contraire à un devoir ou une volonté d'accomplir telle ou telle action qui demeurerait impossible sans cette croyance volontaire. Dans ses questions sur la foi, issues de ce qui nous reste du troisième livre de son commentaire des *Sentences*, Olivi en prend de multiples exemples : la piété filiale (je dois croire que mes parents sont mes parents pour la leur manifester comme il convient) ; l'accomplissement d'une entreprise commerciale (je dois croire que mon entreprise sera couronnée de succès pour m'y engager) ; la vie en collectivité (je dois croire que l'on ne me ment pas et que l'on ne complote pas contre moi en permanence pour pouvoir participer à la vie de la cité) ; l'apprentissage (je dois croire ce que me dit mon enseignant avant de pouvoir le prouver par moi-même) ; et d'autres encore[9].

Tous ces cas ont en commun de requérir une croyance portant sur des propositions particulières qu'il est impossible de démontrer et qui sont parfois même improbables, comme c'est sans doute le cas de l'enfant qui ne ressemble pas à ses parents mais doit néanmoins croire qu'il en est bien le descendant pour leur manifester de la piété, en se fondant seulement sur leur témoignage et celui des voisins[10].

Si le devoir de croire, dans la vie ordinaire, est purement pratique ou instrumentale, la question d'un possible hiatus entre norme morale et norme épistémique semble se poser : la volonté d'accomplir notre devoir ou d'agir dans un certain sens n'implique-t-elle pas un mépris de la vérité objective, qui nous serait, au fond, indifférente ? Plus problématique : accepter que nous devions croire volontairement sans preuves ou contre les preuves que nous avons afin d'accomplir un devoir n'est-il pas contraire à l'accomplissement même de ce

[8] Sur cette connaissance, cf. N. Faucher, *La volonté de croire*, *op. cit.*, p. 170-180.

[9] Cf. Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione*, *quaestiones de virtutibus*, q. VIII, p. 318–320.

[10] Cf. Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione*, *quaestiones de virtutibus*, q. VIII, p. 318–319 : « Multa enim praeterita credere oportet, sine quorum credulitate non potest debita reverentia et pietas haberi aut reddi; quae tamen non possunt nobis innotescere per rationis evidentiam sumptam ex habitudinibus rei creditae. Quamvis enim filius non assimiletur patri et matri, nihilominus debet credere se esse genitum ab eis : alias enim nec ad ipsos nec ad attinentes sibi per ipsos habebit affectionem et oboedientiam seu reverentiam debitam. Et tamen constat quod talis nulla ratione scire potest se esse genitum ab eis, sed solum habet inniti communi testimonio parentum et vicinorum. »

devoir ? Si celui que je prends pour mon père n'est pas mon père mais que je m'impose néanmoins de le croire pour pouvoir lui manifester de la piété, n'ai-je pas fait preuve envers un individu donné d'une piété qui ne lui revient pas, tandis que j'ai lésé mon véritable père de celle qui lui revient ?

Si Olivi ne développe guère plus ces cas ordinaires de croyance volontaire dans ses questions sur la foi, une variation de l'un d'entre eux se trouve abordée à deux reprises, dans son *Traité des contrats*[11] et dans ses *Quodlibeta*[12]. Là où il est question d'un enfant qui ne ressemble pas à ses parents dans le commentaire des *Sentences,* ces deux dernières œuvres traitent d'un fils adultérin qui ignore que son père n'est pas son père, ainsi que des conséquences morales et juridiques de cette situation et du rapport qu'il convient d'entretenir à cette vérité qui dérange. C'est aux deux examens de cette situation que nous allons à présent nous intéresser.

LE FILS ADULTÉRIN

C'est dans le cadre d'une discussion sur la notion de restitution qu'Olivi aborde le cas qui nous intéresse dans le *Traité des contrats*. Conformément à l'objet de l'ouvrage de morale économique où elle s'inscrit, cette discussion examine si et de quelle manière il est moralement acceptable de restituer des biens que l'on doit à autrui, que ce soit aux termes d'un contrat explicite que chacun veut respecter, selon les règles implicites que chacun est tenu d'observer ou suite à la mauvaise acquisition d'un bien, dérobé, donné par erreur, ou dans d'autres cas de figure encore.

Juste avant de traiter du cas du fils adultérin, Olivi aborde la question du moment opportun d'une restitution et indique clairement que le devoir de restituer, même quand il est avéré, ne tient pas nécessairement face à d'autres considérations morales :

> « Il faut enfin savoir que, à chaque fois qu'un bien temporel ne peut être restitué sans faire courir le danger évident d'un dommage incomparablement supérieur à la chose due, tel qu'un danger de mort, un scandale, un péché mortel ou une très grave infamie, c'est alors exactement comme si le débiteur était incapable de restituer. »[13]

[11] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Traité des contrats,* présentation, édition critique, traduction et commentaire de S. Piron, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2012, part. III, art. 4, 297–301. Les traductions employées sont celles de S. Piron, que je remercie de m'avoir fait connaître ce texte.

[12] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quodlibeta quinque,* S. Defraia (ed.), Grottaferrata, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 2002, quodlibet IV, q. XX, p. 266–269.

[13] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Traité des contrats,* part. III, art. 4, p. 294–297.

Deux exemples de ce cas de figure sont pris : un homme qui aurait fait injustement perdre à un autre une somme d'argent ou un bien par un faux témoignage mais ne peut se rétracter sans danger de mort ou risquer un scandale et n'a pas non plus les moyens de rembourser ; un autre qui ferait courir à ses filles un risque considérable de se prostituer et à ses fils de brigander s'il remboursait tout ce qu'il doit. Dans les deux cas, il est moralement acceptable que celui qui ne peut restituer ce qu'il doit en partie ou en totalité ne le fasse pas, pourvu qu'il en soit sincèrement affligé.

Le cas du fils adultérin est envisagé sous cet angle : celui-ci a bénéficié ou hérité des biens de son père putatif sans y avoir droit. Comme dans les deux cas de figure précités, il sera question ici de comparer le bénéfice moral qu'il y aurait à restituer les biens et celui qu'il y aurait à maintenir le statu quo. La question est toutefois plus complexe que dans les deux cas de figure précités car le protagoniste n'est pas le fils qui devrait restituer mais sa mère et la question qui se pose n'est pas d'abord celle de savoir si elle doit restituer quoi que ce soit mais si elle doit révéler que son fils n'est pas issu de son mari. Il n'est donc pas question de savoir s'il est bon ou mauvais que le fils restitue mais s'il est bon ou mauvais de révéler une vérité qui fera apparaître une situation moralement problématique qui devra conduire à se demander s'il faut restituer. La réponse d'Olivi paraît sans ambiguïté : cette vérité ne doit pas être révélée[14].

Il convient tout d'abord de noter qu'à aucun moment le franciscain ne met en avant un quelconque impératif épistémique d'après lequel il serait bon, dans l'absolu, de faire connaître une vérité donnée plutôt que de la celer. Le seul bien, implicite, qu'il y aurait ici à révéler l'adultère serait dans la correction possible de l'injustice faite au père trompé et à ses véritables enfants. Bien sûr, on pourrait se dire qu'une réflexion sur la valeur absolue de la connaissance de la vérité n'a pas sa place dans un traité de morale économique et que c'est la raison pour laquelle elle n'apparaît pas ici. Mais les textes parallèles auxquels j'ai fait allusion plus haut ne le font pas apparaître davantage, non plus, à ma connaissance, qu'aucun autre texte d'Olivi. Je ne crois pas qu'il serait juste d'en faire une singularité d'Olivi. Il n'est pas du tout certain qu'un tel impératif apparaisse chez aucun autre auteur médiéval. L'idée d'une norme épistémique absolue imposant d'atteindre la vérité ou de minimiser les chances de se tromper est, à mon avis, absente du Moyen Âge. Cela ne signifie pas que l'on puisse jouer sans limite avec la vérité ou mentir à son prochain impunément mais simplement qu'une telle condamnation correspond à un devoir moral commensurable

[14] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Traité des contrats*, part. III, art. 4, p. 297 : « Il en va aussi de même pour la femme dont le fils adultérin a été élevé avec les biens du mari, et dont il hérite, à qui l'on ne doit jamais conseiller de révéler cela à son mari, mais au contraire le lui interdire, et cela pour quatre raisons. » Comme nous le verrons plus bas, il est néanmoins des circonstances particulières où il est préférable que la mère révèle, mais seulement dans le cas où de forts soupçons d'adultère ont été soulevés par ailleurs.

à d'autres devoirs, plutôt qu'à un devoir épistémique que chacun pourrait reconnaître indépendamment d'enjeux moraux. Je prends les textes ici examinés comme une illustration de l'absence d'un tel devoir épistémique.

LE POINT DE VUE DE LA MÈRE

Examinons à présent les raisons morales que la mère a de ne pas révéler son adultère[15]. Elles sont au nombre de cinq. Les quatre premières (nous aborderons la cinquième quand nous traiterons du point de vue du père) concernent aux premier chef la femme : 1) le scandale induit troublerait le mari et ses amis et empêcherait toute vie sereine avec cette femme ; 2) la femme mettrait en péril sa propre réputation ; 3) elle-même et son fils, ainsi que le véritable père de ce dernier risqueraient d'être tués par vengeance ; 4) quand bien même la mère souhaiterait en cela réparer une injustice, rien n'oblige à ce qu'on la prenne au sérieux si sa seule parole est garante de la véracité de ce qu'elle révèle. En d'autres termes, non seulement le mal qui suivrait un éventuel dévoilement serait terrible mais encore le gain qui en découlerait, tant en termes moraux que dans le rapport à la vérité, serait faible, car le témoignage humain, indépendamment de confirmations extrinsèques, n'a pas à être pris pour argent comptant sans raison précise de prêter foi aux propos d'une mère qui pourrait bien, par défaut de connaissance, d'intelligence ou du fait d'une mauvaise intention, chercher à tromper. Sachant qu'on pourrait la soupçonner de tout cela, la mère sait aussi que sa révélation pourrait fort bien n'avoir pas l'effet escompté.

Il est intéressant de noter que la complexité du rapport à la vérité se retrouve dans certaines questions quodlibétiques relativement proches matériellement de celle du fils adultérin et que l'on pourrait être tenté de rapprocher aussi concernant le fond des sujets traités : les questions 9 et 10 du *Quodlibet* IV. Il est question dans le premier cas d'un prêtre à qui l'on demanderait, dans un procès, s'il sait quelque chose des agissements de l'accusé qui s'est confessé auprès de lui de sorte que le prêtre en sait en effet quelque chose. Lui est-il permis de

[15] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Traité des contrats*, part. III, art. 4, p. 297 : « La première [raison] provient du danger de scandale du mari et de ses amis à qui on le révélerait. Non seulement ils en seraient troublés en eux-mêmes, mais ils ne pourraient ensuite que difficilement vivre avec elle dans la paix, l'amitié et la concorde. La deuxième tient à sa propre diffamation : en effet, l'épouse qui aurait auparavant une bonne renommée, se l'ôterait elle-même et se diffamerait gravement. La troisième tient au danger de mort de l'épouse et de son enfant adultérin : elle pourrait en effet probablement craindre d'être tuée par son mari ou l'un de ses proches ou de ses amis, et le même danger pèserait sur son amant. La quatrième est que ni l'homme, ni le fils, ni le juge public n'est tenu de croire la femme qui révélerait cela, à moins qu'elle ne prouve ses dires par des signes infaillibles, des preuves flagrantes ou des témoins appropriés, car sa seule parole ne suffirait pas à déshériter un tel fils. »

dire qu'il n'en sait rien ?[16] Le second cas est celui d'un individu qui, allant à l'Eglise pour rejoindre un homme afin de traiter d'une affaire avec lui *(ut ibi cum aliquo aliqua tractet)*, pour dissimuler cela, irait également prier. Il donnerait à la question : « Pourquoi vas-tu à l'Eglise ? » la réponse suivante : « Pour prier. » Dissimulant l'autre intention, ment-il à celui qui l'interroge ?[17] Dans les deux cas, dit Olivi, il n'y a pas de faute ni de mensonge, pour des raisons que résument bien Irène Rosier-Catach et Alain Boureau, qui sont liées aux conditions d'énonciation spécifiques dans lesquels se trouvent les locuteurs et qui autorisent à évaluer leurs propos selon des considérations très spécifiques qui ne sont pas forcément accessibles au commun[18].

Les deux exemples ont en commun de concerner une parole énoncée par un locuteur qui a l'effet, à tout le moins, de ne pas engendrer chez son interlocuteur une croyance vraie alors qu'elle le pourrait, en d'autres termes de faire une rétention d'information. Il est pertinent d'évoquer, au sujet de ces deux exemples, la dichotomie entre, d'une part, ce qui est énoncé, et qui pourrait se présenter comme un mensonge si l'on s'en tenait à la question de savoir si les propos tenus, dans leur sens le plus commun, sont vrais ; et l'intention du locuteur, qui se trouve dans une situation sociale spécifique autorisant à évaluer ces propos dans un contexte spécifique qui permet de ne pas les considérer comme des mensonges ou des marques de duplicité. La rétention d'information n'est pas envisagée en elle-même comme un problème mais seulement comme une occasion de réfléchir sur la qualification de mensonge concernant les propos par lesquels a lieu cette rétention.

Mais le cas qui nous occupe est fort différent des deux cas énoncés plus haut, pour deux raisons. La première est que la mère qui ne révèle pas la vérité sait fort bien quelles sont les conséquences de sa rétention d'information : à défaut de tromper (au sens de produire intentionnellement une croyance fausse chez autrui), elle laisse du moins perdurer sans obstacle, par son silence, une croyance fausse et qu'elle sait fausse. Il n'existe ici aucune ambiguïté dans l'énonciation qui laisserait comprendre autre chose, précisément parce qu'il n'y a pas d'énonciation. L'attitude de la mère n'est ni un mensonge ni un propos ambigu réclamant un examen pour échapper à l'accusation de mensonge. Il n'y a donc pas lieu de se demander si l'intention de la mère change quoi que ce soit à l'évaluation de ce qu'elle doit faire et la mère ne se voit d'ailleurs attribuer aucune intention particulière. Le devoir du confesseur est de rappeler à la mère quelle intention elle doit avoir - le bien de son mari et de son fils ainsi que son propre bien - et quelles actions doivent être accomplies ou retenues pour réaliser cette

[16] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quodlibeta quinque*, quodlibet IV, q. IX, p. 231–234.
[17] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quodlibeta quinque*, quodlibet IV, q. X, p. 235–239.
[18] A. Boureau, I. Rosier-Catach, « Droit et théologie dans la pensée scolastique » *Revue de synthèse* 129 (2008), p. 523–525.

intention, en fonction de ce qui est connu de la réalité de son adultère passé : si rien ne laisse penser qu'il sera connu un jour, il faut se taire pour préserver la tranquillité et la réputation de tous ; si, au contraire, les soupçons se multiplient et engendrent des situations de tension inextricables que la révélation de la vérité pourra mitiger, il faut alors la révéler.

La deuxième raison de cette différence est que ce qui est ici concerné n'est pas un propos occasionnel suscitant potentiellement une croyance fausse à un moment isolé du temps et sur un fait ponctuel mais un silence durable entretenant une croyance fausse perdurant sur une période indéfinie et engageant de nombreux actes de la part de tous les individus considérés. On imagine d'ailleurs que ce genre de situation ne peut qu'engendrer d'innombrables occasions de mensonge, dès que la mère silencieuse parlera en quelque manière de ce fils supposé à son mari. On pourra ainsi s'étonner qu'Olivi ne prenne pas en considération les conséquences possibles, énoncées de manière éloquente par Augustin, parlant des suites d'un mensonge qui se voulait bien intentionné :

> « Ajoutons, chose plus déplorable encore, que, si une fois nous accordons qu'il soit permis de sauver ce malade par un mensonge au sujet de son fils, le mal va croître peu à peu, insensiblement et par de faibles degrés s'élever à une telle montagne de mensonges criminels, qu'il n'y aura plus moyen d'opposer un obstacle à un désastre, devenu immense par une suite d'additions successives. Aussi est-ce avec une grande sagesse qu'il est écrit : «Celui qui dédaigne les petites choses, tombera peu à peu.» (II Cor. II, 15, 16). »[19]

Sans doute pourrait-on avancer quelque chose de tout à fait semblable au sujet de la situation du fils adultérin examinée par notre auteur. Mais lui ne le fait pas.

LE POINT DE VUE DU PÈRE

Au fil de l'examen des conséquences possibles de la révélation maternelle, on voit qu'il est facile de déterminer ce qu'il y a de bon ou plutôt, en l'occurrence, de mauvais dans une telle révélation, tandis qu'il est plus difficile de prétendre instaurer un rapport transparent à la vérité des faits qui pourrait peser dans la balance face à ces conséquences indésirables. La présentation d'Olivi n'incite donc pas à tenter de dévoiler la vérité. Mais le franciscain va plus loin, lorsqu'il aborde la situation du point de vue du père et nous donne à cette occasion la cinquième raison qu'a la mère de ne pas révéler son adultère[20]. Le père celui-ci

[19] Augustin, *Contra mendacium,* PL 40, c. 18, n. 37, trad. Devoille légèrement modifiée.

[20] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Traité des contrats,* part. III, art. 4, p. 297–299 : « On peut encore apporter une cinquième raison, car le mari subirait en cela un bien plus grand dommage qu'en

a des droits sur son fils, de l'amour pour lui et la joie d'être père. Or ce qui crée l'affection, l'autorité et l'obligation qui lient un père et son fils n'est nullement la vérité objective de la filiation mais bien la croyance, partagée par le père et le fils, qu'ils entretiennent un lien de filiation biologique. Si cette croyance était attaquée, on attaquerait l'heureux état dans lequel père et fils se trouvent. Ce n'est du reste pas seulement du point de vue des hommes qu'il faudrait s'en remettre à ce que nous croyons comme à un pis-aller de telle sorte que l'on prendrait acte de la possibilité de faire une injustice au véritable père en le privant de ce bonheur et de ces droits. En effet, c'est aussi aux yeux de Dieu lui-même que la croyance crée l'obligation, et non la vérité des faits :

> « En effet le fils, même selon Dieu, n'est pas tenu d'obéir ni de témoigner une révérence filiale à son vrai père, mais seulement à son père putatif. Et le vrai père n'est pas tenu de l'aimer comme un fils ni de le considérer comme tel, tandis que le père putatif l'est. »

Pour être plus précis, si la source de l'obligation générale qui lie parents et enfants leur est sans doute extérieure (c'est du fait du commandement divin ou de la loi naturelle que l'on a le devoir d'honorer son père et sa mère), c'est la croyance du fils que celui-ci est son père et celle-là sa mère qui crée l'obligation particulière qu'il a envers eux et non, selon l'expression d'Olivi la « vérité corporelle de la génération ». Peu importe, donc, que cette croyance soit vraie, il faut seulement qu'elle existe pour que l'on puisse s'acquitter de ses obligations. C'est quand elle est menacée qu'un problème survient, par exemple si de forts soupçons pesaient sur la réalité de cette paternité. Alors seulement, et dans le cas où les dangers susmentionnés pour la mère seraient modérés et pourraient même en être diminués, cette dernière devrait révéler son adultère. Mais ce cas est bien rare, et la seule obligation qui pèse toujours sur la mère est, sans rien

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élevant et en instituant comme héritier ce fils qui n'est pas sien mais qu'il estime être sien et qui croit l'être. Il est en effet certain qu'une telle appréciation mutuelle, de paternité et de filiation, constitue une plus grande et plus forte source d'union et d'amitié ou de plaisir mutuel et de réjouissances entre le père et le fils que ne le serait la seule vérité corporelle de la génération sans une telle estimation. En effet, en supprimant totalement une telle appréciation, le père se comporterait vis-à-vis de son propre fils comme envers un étranger, et inversement. Prenons deux hommes, dont l'un croit fermement et est cru être le père dudit fils, mais ne l'est pas ; l'autre ne le croit pas ni ne l'est cru, et pourtant il l'est. Que l'on cherche lequel des deux a plus de bien ou de joie, de droit et d'autorité sur ledit fils : sans le moindre doute, nous sentons que le père putatif en a incomparablement plus que le vrai. En effet le fils, même selon Dieu, n'est pas tenu d'obéir ni de témoigner une révérence filiale à son vrai père, mais seulement à son père putatif. Et le vrai père n'est pas tenu de l'aimer comme un fils ni de le considérer comme tel, tandis que le père putatif l'est. En outre, il serait très ignominieux à cet homme que l'on révèle, à lui-même ou à d'autres, que sa femme a conçu un enfant d'un adultère. C'est pourquoi il est bien plus honorable, réjouissant et glorieux pour cet homme que cela demeure totalement caché, y compris à lui-même. »

révéler de ce qu'elle sait, d'indemniser, par les moyens qui sont les siens, son mari et ses enfants légitimes[21]. On est en droit de se demander si le fils adultérin n'en tirerait pas légitimement un sentiment d'injustice et un trouble mais Olivi n'aborde pas ce point.

LE POINT DE VUE DU FILS

Pour finir, dans le dernier paragraphe du texte du *Traité des contrats* sur le fils adultérin, Olivi se place du point de vue de ce fils. Ce point de vue est adopté dans l'ensemble de la question quodlibétique qui reprend cette question du fils adultérin. Comme ces deux textes expriment, avec des accents différents, la même position, nous les traiterons ensemble.

Ils sont en effet l'occasion pour Olivi de donner des précisions sur la nature exacte de la croyance qui crée l'obligation. Ce n'est de fait pas n'importe quelle croyance qui est ici en jeu. Les termes latins qu'emploie notre auteur sont ceux de *credulitas* et de *credere,* des termes qui apparaissent également dans les questions *de fide* et qui semblent revêtir pour le franciscain un sens large. Une *credulitas,* un *credere* est un ici assentiment intellectuel au sens le plus large du terme, qui peut aussi bien procéder d'une démonstration probable ou scientifique, d'une évidence immédiate ou encore du commandement de croire que la volonté adresse à l'intellect. Parmi ces différents types d'assentiment intellectuel, les seuls qui soient susceptibles de susciter l'obligation morale sont les croyances fermes, quelle que soit leur origine. Il en allait de même du cas cité en introduction de la croyance dans les vices : seule une croyance ferme et non hésitante qu'il y a des vices et qu'ils sont d'une certaine nature permet de les éviter. Cela implique, pour le fils adultérin, qu'il n'est tenu à rendre les biens dont il a bénéficié par erreur que s'il croit fermement ce que dit sa mère. S'il a des raisons légitimes de douter de sa parole (par exemple si elle ne l'aime pas et souhaite lui nuire), alors il n'est tenu à rien, indique le texte du *Traité des contrats*[22].

[21] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Traité des contrats,* part. III, art. 4, p. 299–301 : « Tu vois donc quel bien l'épouse ôterait au père putatif en lui révélant son propre crime ; assurément presque autant que si elle lui enlevait son vrai fils qu'il avait considéré comme tel. Toutefois, si de sérieux soupçons à ce sujet et une forte occasion de soupçonner s'étaient fait jour chez le mari ou d'autres et si l'on peut et doit fortement et très probablement croire, par des causes certaines et suffisantes, qu'aucun des trois dangers évoqués plus haut ne s'ensuivrait ou ne s'accroîtrait, mais diminuerait plutôt, et en outre si l'on présume fermement que le fils céderait volontairement ses biens au mari : alors, seulement, elle devrait ou pourrait révéler. Mais ces trois conditions ne sont pas souvent réunies et l'on doit présumer qu'elles ne le sont que très rarement. Cependant, la femme, sans enfreindre le droit humain et sans se diffamer, peut et doit indemniser son mari et ses enfants légitimes au moyen de sa dot et de ses autres biens. »

[22] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Traité des contrats,* part. III, art. 4, p. 301 : « Si l'on se demande si un tel fils, croyant par les paroles de sa mère être bâtard, serait tenu de rendre les biens qu'il a reçus du mari de sa mère aux autres fils ou aux héritiers du mari, il faut dire que s'il croit

La question XX de *Quodlibet* IV nous donne plus d'information sur les bonnes raisons qu'il aurait de croire sa mère. Il convient que ce soient des raisons déterminantes de penser qu'elle dit vrai :

> « Il faut dire que, s'il est suffisamment établi aux yeux d'un tel fils qu'il n'a pas été engendré par un tel <père>, il doit rendre l'héritage qui lui a été légué comme à un fils. Mais quelle certitude suffit à l'obliger à faire restitution, voilà qui n'est pas facile à déterminer, si ce n'est quand elle a trait à quelque chose d'incontournable d'une façon absolument manifeste, comme lorsqu'il est établi aux yeux de toute la ville ou de tout le voisinage qu'il a été conçu et qu'il est né alors que le père était demeuré séparé de la mère pendant toute une année et bien plus encore, et ceci par la distance la plus grande. On voit aussi assez bien qu'il doit croire sa mère si elle n'est pas la mère des autres fils de son père putatif et s'il semble n'y avoir aucune raison pour laquelle elle voudrait priver injustement son propre fils de son héritage et le donner à d'autres et qu'il y a toute raison de penser le contraire. »[23]

En règle générale, chez Olivi, comme chez les autres théologiens catholiques de son temps, l'idée de croyance ferme renvoie à une croyance dépourvue de toute hésitation, soit qu'elle procède d'une évidence immédiate ou d'une démonstration scientifique, soit qu'elle procède de la volonté qui force l'intellect à assentir sans le moindre doute[24]. Les cas évoqués ici par Olivi ne relèvent pas exactement de cette catégorie : les témoignages, même les plus nombreux et les plus autorisés, peuvent toujours être faux, même de manière très improbable, et celui d'une mère peut l'être aussi, par exemple pour les raisons qu'indique le *Traité des contrats*[25]. Disons donc qu'Olivi inclut dans les croyances qui suscitent l'obligation à la fois les croyances absolument fermes et les opinions ayant trait

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cela sans le moindre doute, et qu'il a des raisons de le croire, il y est tenu selon Dieu mais non pas selon le droit humain. En revanche, s'il n'a pas de raisons ni de motifs suffisants pour le croire, il n'est pas tenu de rendre, une fois qu'il lui est devenu manifeste, par lui-même ou par un autre, qu'il n'a pas de raison suffisante ou convenable de le croire ; par exemple, si la mère aime davantage les autres enfants de son mari, ou parce qu'elle est présumée le haïr lui-même ou sa femme, ou parce qu'elle est imbécile et de peu de sens, et parce qu'il n'est pas évident qu'elle l'ait conçu, non de son mari, mais de son amant ; cela n'est en effet pas toujours certain dans tout adultère. »

[23] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quodlibeta quinque*, quodlibet IV, q. XX, p. 267 : « Dicendum quod si tali filio sufficienter constat se non fuisse genitum a tali, debet hereditatem sibi tanquam filio legatam reddere. Que autem sit hec sufficientia certitudinis ipsum obligans ad reddendum, non est facile determinare nisi quando est nimis patens intergiuersabilis, ut cum toti urbi uel uicinie constat ipsum fuisse conceptum et natum, patre per totum illum annum et multo amplius absente matre, et hoc per remotissima spatia terre. Satis etiam uidetur quod debeat credere matri que non est mater ceterorum filiorum patris putatiui, et de qua nulla apparet ratio quare uellet proprium filium iniuste exheredari et alienis dari ; sed potius omnis ratio occurrit in contrarium. » Les traductions sont les nôtres.

[24] Cf. N. Faucher, *La volonté de croire*, *op. cit.*

[25] Cf. n. 15.

à quelque chose d'extrêmement probable. Notons en outre qu'une probabilité qui suffirait à justifier la sentence d'un juge dans un tribunal pourrait ne pas suffire à obliger un sujet dans son for intérieur[26]. Le seuil de probabilité susceptible de justifier un jugement moral est en effet plus élevé que celui qui peut justifier un jugement forensique.

Ce qui suit est plus intéressant pour nous :

> « Cependant, tant que le fils ne croit pas cela, il n'est pas tenu de faire restitution ni non plus de s'induire à croire. Il n'est en effet pas tenu d'éradiquer de lui-même l'affection filiale et le jugement, qui est et fut le sien, portant sur le fait que son père putatif est son vrai père, jugement qui est à juste titre le sien, depuis l'origine jusqu'à l'instant considéré, et qu'il a mérité par sa révérence et son obéissance filiales ; bien au contraire, il est tenu de nourrir ce jugement autant qu'il le peut. »[27]

Ce passage peut s'interpréter de deux manières, selon les deux façons possibles d'atteindre une certitude telle qu'elle oblige moralement. La première consiste à dire que, s'il ne connaît pas de raison déterminante qui l'obligerait à changer de croyance, un individu n'est pas dans l'obligation d'en chercher simplement parce qu'il se pourrait qu'il en existe. Autrement dit, puisque c'est la croyance qui crée l'obligation, le devoir d'un individu est de chercher à accomplir les devoirs que ses croyances lui imposent à un moment donné du temps et non de chercher d'hypothétiques autres croyances pour remplir d'hypothétiques autres devoirs. Rien n'indique par ailleurs qu'une croyance forte qui s'appuierait sur des preuves plus déterminantes qu'une autre ou dont on aurait plus de preuves strictement rationnelles de la vérité serait le principe d'obligations morales de plus grande valeur.

Cependant, pour Olivi, comme pour beaucoup de penseurs du XIII^e^ siècle, la recherche de preuves n'est pas la seule manière de croire fermement. Comme nous l'avons dit, la volonté est tout autant capable de faire croire l'intellect, sans

[26] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quodlibeta quinque*, quodlibet IV, q. XX, p. 266–267 : « Item, si in foro ciuili per testes sufficientes et per presumptiones uel rationes cogentes probaretur ille non esse uerus filius patris putatiui, iuste iudicaretur ad reddendum hereditatem sibi legatam; ergo in foro conscientie non minus tenebitur, ex quo sibi constat se non fuisse uerum filium illius. » ; p. 269 : « Ad secundum dicendum quod aliquando sufficiunt aliqua testimonia forensi iudicio, que non sufficiunt interno iudicio conscientie huius. Vnde et iudex cogitur aliquando iudicare secundum dicta testium, quamuis in sua conscientia credat eos falsum dixisse. »

[27] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quodlibeta quinque*, quodlibet IV, q. XX, p. 267 : « Quamdiu tamen filius hoc non credit, non tenetur reddere ; nec etiam tenetur se inducere ad credendum. Non enim tenetur exradicare a se filialem affectum et estimationem quam habet et habuit ad patrem putatiuum tanquam ad uerum patrem, et quam ab initio usque nunc iusto titulo possidet, et quam per filialem reuerentiam et obedientiam promeruit, irnmo tenetur eam pro posse nutrire. »

preuves[28]. On pourrait donc comprendre le passage de la manière suivante : non seulement le fils adultérin qui n'a pas de preuves déterminantes de la réalité de sa filiation n'est pas en devoir d'en chercher, il est même en devoir de renforcer, par sa volonté, la croyance que son père présumé est bel et bien son père, au mépris éventuel de tel ou tel signe de la vérité.

La raison en est que la croyance dans cette filiation fausse est la condition de possibilité non seulement de l'affection forte qui unit le fils à son père supposé et serait « éradiquée » si cette croyance venait à disparaître, mais encore de l'accomplissement du devoir du fils à l'égard du père. C'est exactement ce qu'indique le passage des questions *de fide* que je citais dans la première partie : même un fils qui ne ressemblerait pas à ses parents aurait le devoir, selon l'expression d'Olivi, de « croire sans raison » qu'il est leur fils, c'est-à-dire d'accorder une croyance dont la fermeté n'est pas proportionnée aux preuves disponibles mais est produite par la volonté en raison du devoir d'accomplir l'acte que permet cette croyance, en l'occurrence de manifester de la piété filiale. Il s'agit en d'autres termes d'une croyance irrationnelle mais raisonnable.

Si l'on peut comprendre les raisons qu'a Olivi de déconseiller à la mère adultère de révéler sa faute, de même que celles qu'il avance pour montrer que le père présumé serait lésé par la connaissance de cette vérité parce que privé d'un fils avec qui il a noué une relation de paternité, il est plus difficile de comprendre pourquoi un fils adultérin ne souhaiterait pas connaître son véritable père. Il ne serait privé ni d'un père, ni d'une occasion de démontrer sa piété filiale. Sans doute aurait-il à souffrir de ce changement mais ce serait après tout aussi une occasion d'aimer un nouveau père ou d'agir moralement en rendant leurs biens à ceux qui en ont été lésés. A cet égard, il est différent de l'orphelin, qui serait tout à fait privé de père ou de l'enfant de père inconnu, qui n'aurait aucune chance de le retrouver. Pour terminer, j'émettrai quelques hypothèses sur les raisons que le franciscain a de privilégier ainsi ce statu quo.

VIE MORALE, CROYANCES VOLONTAIRES ET VÉRITÉ

Dans un traité sur l'humilité attribué jusqu'à récemment à Bonaventure, Olivi, de façon originale et imagée, fait allusion au jeu que le sujet moral peut pratiquer avec la vérité qui le concerne dans le cadre d'exercices spirituels :

> « Troisièmement, cela peut se produire [à savoir il peut arriver que l'homme s'estime véritablement inférieur à tous les hommes et plus vil qu'eux] par une forte affection et

[28] Cf. N. Faucher, *La volonté de croire*, *op. cit.*, p. 152–155.

> un goût pour ses défaillances. En effet, de même que celui qui souffre d'une douleur aux dents s'estime souffrir plus que tout autre, non tant qu'il voie que sa douleur est plus grande, mais parce qu'il est tourné vers sa douleur de manière plus intime et plus forte que vers une autre ; il doit en aller de même aussi pour ce qui concerne notre sujet. Et de cette troisième manière, saint Paul, « vase d'élection », « docteur des peuples », se dit le « premier », c'est-à-dire le plus grand, des pécheurs. »[29]

Olivi propose ici un exercice d'humilité. Que l'on soit ou non le plus grand des pécheurs, si l'on se concentre sur la peine et la souffrance que notre péché, si peu important soit-il, nous inspire, on formera le jugement, très probablement faux, qu'il n'existe pas de pire pécheur que soi-même. Il en va de même d'une douleur dentaire obsédante pouvant donner l'impression, très probablement fausse, qu'aucune souffrance supérieure n'existe. Il est question ici de jouer avec notre attention à notre intériorité et notre affectivité pour susciter en nous un jugement très probablement faux mais spirituellement fécond en ce qu'il nous rend sensible à nos multiples défaillances morales. L'humilité qui en découle doit nous conduire à un désir d'amélioration et à nous abandonner à Dieu pour le réaliser.

Bien sûr, on pourrait dire qu'il n'est question ici que d'une suspension temporaire n'engageant pas le jugement du sujet sur la vérité, à la façon dont, par une suspension d'incrédulité, une fiction peut sembler plus vraie, plus sensible ou plus authentique que la réalité extérieure, sans pour autant qu'à aucun moment nous croyions à la réalité de l'univers fictionnel. Cependant, la façon dont Olivi, dans son commentaire des *Sentences*, décrit le rapport entre affectivité et assentiment de foi[30], semblable à ce que l'on trouve dans cet exemple de la rage de dents, incite à prendre davantage au sérieux ce jugement intellectuel. Il est en effet question, dans les deux cas, d'appliquer fortement l'intellect à son objet, de le concentrer sur lui afin de l'y unir intimement, de telle sorte qu'il finisse par entretenir une croyance à son sujet. Il est clair que ce mécanisme peut donner lieu à des croyances fermes et indubitables dont la vérité n'est pas garantie et peut même être tout à fait improbable. Olivi ne voit en effet pas de

[29] Pierre de Jean Olivi (attribué à Bonaventure de Bagnoregio), *Compendium de virtute humilitatis*, in PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas (ed.), *Opera omnia*, VIII, Quaracchi, 1898, cap. 3, p. 662 : « Tertio fit hoc [i.e. homo veraciter se potest reputare omnibus hominibus inferiorem et viliorem] per fortem affectum et gustum suorum defectuum. Sicut enim patiens dolorem dentium se aestimat prae aliis pati, non quod tantum videat dolorem suum esse maiorem, sed quia intimius et fortius dolorem suum quam alium advertit ; sic etiam in proposito debet esse. Et hoc tertio modo *vas electionis*, beatus Paulus, *doctor gentium*, dicit se *primum*, id est maximum peccatorem. »

[30] Cf. Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione, quaestiones de virtutibus*, q. VIII, p. 321 : « […] intellectus movetur et applicatur a voluntate ad illa quae volumus cogitare, et secundum hoc quod magis volumus vel nolumus, majus et minus applicatur vel retrahitur. Constat autem quod quanto fortius applicatur, tanto ceteris paribus fortiori nexu invisceratur et unitur suo objecto, ac per consequens et tanto firmius et intensius assentit. »

difficulté à admettre un conflit entre préférence affective et évaluation rationnelle d'une situation même en dehors d'un contexte religieux, lorsqu'un ami, par exemple, croit que son ami est innocent, alors que les preuves disponibles penchent contre lui[31].

C'est ainsi l'attachement affectif à un objet qui, indépendamment de ce que l'on sait de lui, renforce l'assentiment intellectuel qui a trait soit à cet objet (quand il s'agit d'une proposition), soit à une proposition qui concerne cet objet (quand il s'agit de croire au sujet d'un ami, de Dieu ou de son père une proposition donnée). Mais l'assentiment intellectuel ainsi produit, nous l'avons vu, est aussi la condition de l'attachement affectif à cet objet, comme lorsque ma croyance que mon père putatif est mon père est la condition d'une union affective étroite avec lui, union qui accomplit le devoir que j'ai à son égard. De la même manière, le devoir que j'ai de vénérer Dieu suppose de croire qu'il existe et qu'il est mon Dieu. Ce renforcement mutuel de l'attachement et de l'assentiment peut paraître circulaire mais il me semble s'inscrire sans grande difficulté dans l'idée olivienne d'un progrès dans la foi qui correspond aussi à un progrès dans l'affection. De même, dit Olivi, que la croyance dans certaines propositions permet de mieux croire à d'autres propositions, de même certaines amours permettent de mieux en éprouver d'autres, comme lorsque l'amour du prochain, plus immédiatement accessible à nous que l'amour de Dieu, nous dispose à mieux aimer ce dernier[32].

Une première hypothèse peut donc être émise : si je me trouve dans une relation affective forte et ancienne avec mon père putatif qui correspond à, renforce et est renforcée par un assentiment ferme au fait qu'il est réellement mon père, alors je suis dans une situation privilégiée tant du point de vue de la joie que j'éprouve dans cette relation que du point de vue moral, puisque l'union affective dans laquelle je me trouve avec lui fait partie de la piété filiale que je lui

[31] Cf. Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione, quaestiones de virtutibus*, q. VIII, p. 321 : « Quod autem [credere sine ratione] sit possibile, ostendit primo dominium voluntatis super potentias et super suos actus ; de qua constat quod potest amore affici nunc ad hoc, nunc ad oppositum, et libentius consentire in unum eorum credendum quam in reliquum. Unde et videmus multos libentius credere et praesumere mala de inimico quam de amico, et bona libentius et facilius de amico quam de inimico, quamquam plures rationes habeant pro parte contraria quam pro sua. »

[32] Cf. Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione, quaestiones de virtutibus*, q. IX, p. 344 : « Sciendum etiam quod [ratio pri]mitatis et poste[rioritatis aliquando] provenit ex parte credendorum, aliquando ex modo et ordine tradendi et proponendi illa, secundum quod quaedam sunt primo a Deo propalata ac deinde alia; aliquando ex parte dispositionis ipsius credentis, qui est magis dispositus et assuefactus ad unum firmius vel magis explicite credendum quam reliquum, quamvis ultimum de se sit primo et principalius credibile. Et secundum hoc contingit quod, sicut membra mutuo se iuvant, ita quod etiam inferiora in aliquo iuvant superiora, sic fides et notitia unius articuli iuvat ad fidem et notitiam alterius etiam de se principalioris. Sicut enim amor proximi disponit et elevat ad perfectiorem amorem Dei, licet amor Dei sit simpliciter prior illo et causa illius, sic et in proposito : fides inferioris articuli disponit et manuducit ad perfectiorem et explicatiorem fidem alterius superioris articuli. »

dois. Apprendre que mon père est quelqu'un d'autre m'obligerait en quelque sorte à tout recommencer et il n'est pas du tout certain que j'atteindrai jamais une situation aussi favorable que la situation présente. Voilà donc une première raison de maintenir le statu quo : mieux vaut en quelque sorte ignorer au paradis que connaître en enfer.

On peut s'interroger sur le genre de rapport au monde et aux autres qu'une telle conception autoriserait. Si l'on pousse l'analyse d'Olivi à son terme, on voit bien qu'une société où toutes les relations particulières seraient fondées sur des croyances fausses mais fermes, motivées par des affections qui permettraient de respecter les obligations morales qui s'imposent à nous, ne serait pas moins bonne qu'une société où toutes les relations particulières seraient connues de façon évidente. On voit bien que s'ouvre là un horizon social et politique où la prétention à la vérité pourrait n'être qu'un outil au service du maintien de l'ordre social ou de la préservation de telle ou telle tradition ou continuité familiale ou communautaire.

Il ne faut cependant pas caricaturer le rapport d'Olivi à la vérité, notamment à la vérité morale et religieuse. On pourrait en effet naturellement être tenté de lui attribuer une préférence pour la subjectivité et l'intuition, pourvu qu'elles mènent dans la bonne direction. Ainsi, quiconque entretiendrait une croyance de bonne foi et en tirerait des principes moraux acceptables devrait être encouragé dans cette direction. Il n'en est rien et Olivi invite à plusieurs reprises le croyant à se méfier de ses intuitions et même de ce qu'il pourrait prendre comme une révélation surnaturelle ou l'enseignement d'une autorité incontestable. Toute conviction intime doit être passée au crible non seulement de l'Ecriture et de l'enseignement de l'Eglise mais doit encore être l'objet d'une méfiance importance, car il y aurait de l'orgueil à se croire le dépositaire de quelque connaissance ou révélation exceptionnelle par son contenu nouveau ou son origine[33].

C'est que le franciscain a une conception exigeante du devoir qui s'impose au fidèle comme de la connaissance qu'il peut avoir de ce devoir. En examinant cette conception, nous en viendrons, pour conclure, à émettre une seconde hypothèse sur les raisons de préférer une croyance ferme, même lorsque des raisons existent de la mettre en doute, à une absence de croyance.

Si l'on revient à la question de la croyance en Dieu, il semble que l'on prenne conscience du devoir que l'on a de l'entretenir à partir de la simple appréhension de l'idée d'un Dieu suprême qu'il nous faudrait vénérer. Il suffit alors de considérer cette idée pour estimer possible l'existence d'un tel Dieu et pour

[33] Cf. Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Epistola ad Fratrem R.,* in C. Kilmer, E. Marmurzstejn (ed.), « Petrus Ioannis Olivi, Epistola ad Fratrem *R.* », *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 91 (1998), p. 61–63 ; Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Remedia contra temptationes spirituals*, in R. Manselli, *Spirituali e beghini in Provenza*, Rome, Istituto Storico Italiano Per il Medio Evo, 1959, p. 283–285.

considérer comme convenable que l'on se soumette à cet être suprême et que l'on s'en remette entièrement à lui, surtout étant donné notre propre insignifiance et nos divers défauts[34]. Il faut pour cela croire en lui et croire toute sortes d'autres choses pour le vénérer et s'approcher de lui. Au cœur de l'intuition fondamentale qui nous conduit à la foi se trouve donc l'idée que notre nature est telle qu'il lui convient de se soumettre à une norme absolue qui s'impose à elle, celle de Dieu. Toutes les conséquences particulières qui s'ensuivent nous sont connues par ailleurs, du fait de la « luisance » que j'évoquais en première partie et qui permet, de manière immédiate, d'appréhender le devoir que l'on a de croire les propositions de foi aussitôt qu'on les saisit.

On pourrait donc dire qu'Olivi a une préférence pour la norme, c'est-à-dire une préférence générale pour les situations où un impératif moral juste s'impose au sujet moral. Avant même que l'on sache quelles sont nos obligations, nous pouvons avoir le sentiment, la conviction qu'il nous convient d'avoir une obligation juste, quelle qu'elle soit. Si l'on applique cette conviction à des cas plus ordinaires, il est plus difficile de voir comment cette intuition générale peut s'appliquer à des cas particuliers. Certes, je peux savoir qu'il est bon d'aimer sa famille, de penser le meilleur de ses amis et ainsi d'autres principes, mais cela ne me dit pas si j'ai une famille ni qui elle est, pas plus que cela ne m'indique que je dois avoir des amis : je sais simplement comment me comporter si d'aventure j'en ai. Si l'on admet une préférence pour la norme, on peut penser qu'Olivi estime qu'il faut rechercher autant que l'on peut les situations où l'on est soumis à un impératif moral plutôt que de ne pas l'être. Mais, en généralisant l'exemple du fils adultérin et avec toute la prudence qu'implique une généralisation à par-

[34] Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, B. Jansen (ed.), Grottaferrata, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, vol. 3, 1926, appendix, qq. *De deo cognoscendo*, q. III, p. 544–545, « Clamat hoc etiam tertio specialiter internus instinctus conscientiae. Est enim mens sibi conscia praecedentis nihilitatis. Sentit enim intime se aliquando non fuisse, et est conscia suae nihilitatis, passibilitatis et defectibilitatis et indigentiae. Sentit enim se multis et quasi infinitis indigere et multa et quasi infinita se posse pati et multipliciter se posse deficere. Et ideo, cum audit vel per se concipit altitudinem summi entis summamque eius iustitiam et potestatem et bonitatem, quodam naturali instinctu timore tam reverentiae quam poenae concutitur et in ipsius cogitatu et auditu admirationis stupore repletur et quodam naturali amore eius afficitur. Statim enim quodam naturalissimo instinctu ex sensu inferioritatis sentit se posse habere superius quem timere et revereri debeat, immo, acsi ipsum sentiret, mens cogitatu vel auditu sic afficitur, quantum est de se vi naturalis instinctus. Qui multo magis appareret, si non esset corruptio perversarum affectionum. » ; cf. aussi Pierre de Jean Olivi, *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione, quaestiones de virtutibus*, q. VIII, p. 354 : « [...] sufficit [ad aliquod obiectum credendum] quod prius apprehendat in aliquo obiecto rationem finis vel principalitatis solum cogitando quid est quod dicitur per nomen; non autem oportet quod prius hoc credat aut iudicet ita esse, sicut in praecedenti quaestione satis est ostensum. Quando autem dicimus quod nos credimus Deo propter se et cetera propter ipsum, non est sensus quod illa credamus propter hoc quod ipse sit, sed potius quod propter hoc credimus illa, ut perfectius Deum credamus et ut perfectius Deo per fidem adhaereamus. Vel sensus est quod credimus illa propter Deum testificantem illa et in illis quodammodo relucentem. »

tir d'un seul cas, on voit que le fait ou non d'être dans des situations de ce type dépend des croyances fermes que l'on entretient : la croyance que l'on a un père qui est cet homme, une mère qui est cette femme, un ami, etc. On doit donc préférer une situation de certitude qui nous permet de suivre un impératif moral, d'obéir à une norme, à une situation d'incertitude ou de flottement qui ne nous le permettrait pas ou ne nous permettrait pas de le faire aussi bien.

En d'autres termes, le but d'Olivi, si l'on peut en juger par l'examen des quelques textes étudiés ici, est de réduire autant que possible les contextes d'incertitude morale parce que ce sont des contextes dans lesquels on ne sait plus quelle norme morale appliquer ni même si une norme s'applique et qu'il est toujours préférable d'appliquer une norme, du moins une norme juste, que de ne pas en appliquer. En conséquence, mieux vaut en rester à une croyance qui pourrait être mise en doute, tout en faisant le maximum pour qu'elle ne le soit pas, plutôt que de chercher coûte que coûte une vérité dont la connaissance n'aurait pour effet que de nous plonger dans l'incertitude morale.

CONCLUSION

Au fil de ce travail, j'ai proposé une comparaison entre croyance volontaire dans le domaine religieux et dans le domaine ordinaire ; j'ai examiné en détail une situation particulière, celle du fils adultérin, et établi les raisons pour lesquelles Olivi estime dans la plupart des cas préférable que la vérité de la filiation d'un tel individu demeure cachée tandis que la croyance fausse de cet individu à l'égard de sa filiation doit plutôt être entretenue et encouragée que combattue. J'ai émis deux hypothèses sur les raisons de cette opinion : d'une part, il faut toujours préférer une situation où croyance, affectivité et sens du devoir se sont renforcés au fil du temps au bouleversement de cette situation ; d'autre part, il est toujours préférable d'être soumis à un impératif moral et de savoir et de pouvoir s'y conformer que de ne pas l'être.

Dans les deux cas, rechercher la vérité ou éviter l'erreur n'apparaissent pas comme des buts autonomes méritant d'être mentionnés ou mis en concurrence avec des buts moraux. L'idée d'une préférence pour les situations où une norme s'applique, pourvu qu'elle soit juste, permet en outre d'éviter le risque de la circularité mentionnée en introduction : à partir de cette préférence et connaissant une norme générale, il est toujours préférable d'avoir une croyance à l'égard des objets particuliers auxquels s'applique cette norme et des manières particulières dont elle s'applique que de n'avoir pas une telle croyance. Cette préférence, prise comme un principe général de la morale, n'appellerait pas de justification ultérieure et justifierait toute croyance volontaire aboutissant à une clarification de la situation morale du sujet.

Dans les matières morales touchant au divin, il est toujours essentiel de chercher à se rapprocher d'une vérité que l'on n'est jamais sûr d'atteindre, car Dieu est vérité et se rapprocher de cette vérité en s'appuyant sur des garanties sûres est essentiel ; dans les matières morales touchant à l'humain, au contraire, on peut – et parfois on doit – s'abstenir de chercher, voire même dissimuler certaines vérités dont la connaissance aurait pour conséquence le désordre et la souffrance des parties prenantes et rendrait plus difficile ou empêcherait l'accomplissement du devoir moral de chacun, par exemple celui d'avoir de la piété filiale pour ses parents. Cela s'explique par le fait que l'obligation morale et la vie affective ne sont pas conditionnées à des connaissances ou à des croyances strictement dépendantes du fonctionnement de notre raison mais au contraire à des croyances que nous pouvons susciter en nous-mêmes sans considération de ce que nous pouvons savoir de leur vérité. Le rapport que nous entretenons à la vérité est entièrement mis au service de notre volonté morale et aucune norme épistémique absolue ne vient faire pièce aux normes morales que nous nous reconnaissons. Même dans le cas de la vérité religieuse, c'est parce qu'il est bon de l'atteindre, que Dieu nous le commande, que cela nous est nécessaire pour l'adorer qu'il nous faut y croire et non parce que c'est une vérité qui satisfait notre raison. Si l'examen de la croyance volontaire chez Olivi nous fait apercevoir quelque chose de sa pensée, c'est donc sans doute ce caractère radicalement instrumental du rapport au vrai pour l'individu moral.

Magali Roques

William of Ockham on the Ontology of Social Objects (in His Academic Writings)*

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the ontology of social realities as found in William of Ockham's academic writings. It focuses on only one kind of social reality, namely, those that are called "voluntary signs" by the Franciscan theologians who defend a pragmatic approach to the origin of signification, such as Roger Bacon or Peter John Olivi. Voluntary signs are those signs that depend on human convention to have any signification or social function, i.e., for medieval authors, to be efficacious.[1] In the Franciscan tradition, and in Ockham, paradigmatic examples of voluntary signs are monetary price or value *(pretium)*, spoken words, and also the sacraments.

In his academic writings, Ockham restricts himself to the question of what sort of ontology is needed to account for how a social function (e.g., economic exchange) can be imposed on a material thing (e.g., a coin). This question will have a long-lasting appeal, and early modern authors such as Pufendorf will continue to ask whether social entities, usually called *entia moralia*, have a being that is irreducible or not to that of physical things (e.g., Lutterbeck 2009).

Ockham's ontology of social entities in his academic writings is almost completely unexplored, with the exception of Jenny Pelletier's seminal studies (2020; forthcoming).[2] The main reason for this is that the textual basis is tenu-

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[1] Among many other publications on late medieval pragmatic views, see the recent volume by Beriou et al. 2014.

[2] Ockham's writings are usually divided into two parts. The first part comprises the works that Ockham wrote during his academic career in England. The second part comprises the

ous, and Ockham's view on social entities needs some reconstruction in order to be presented as an articulated whole. However, such a reconstruction is far from impossible, especially since his ontology of social realities is part of the Franciscan tradition that investigates the grounds for social and economic relations. As with earlier Franciscan theologians such as Peter John Olivi, Ockham's thought on this topic is included within broader considerations about other social relationships that ground ownership or property right *(dominium)*, meaning *(significatio)*, and the sacraments (defined as efficacious signs).[3] This comes as no surprise, since for Franciscan theologians property rights and the sacraments are both voluntary signs: by definition, they are assigned a social or soteriological function on the basis of a voluntary agreement between social agents.

To be more precise, the question is not on which basis the value of a coin is determined, i.e., the intrinsic properties of the coin or exchange and need. This question is dealt with in treatises on money or contracts, the most famous being those of Peter John Olivi and Nicole Oresme.[4] In theological writings from the 13th and 14th centuries, the question is rather how something material can have any social function at all. This leads to a broader issue, that of the interaction between social philosophy, economics, and theology in the late Middle Ages. In one of the few papers on this issue, William Courtenay asks the seminal question: is the covenant between God and human beings, which makes the sacraments a *sine qua non* condition for receiving grace, the model for the covenant between human beings that grounds social exchanges, including economic exchanges?

Courtenay argues that in the nominalist tradition of the late Middle Ages, and in Ockham especially, the order of priority is the reverse: the covenant between God and human beings, which makes the sacraments efficacious, is conceived on the model of the covenant between human beings grounding economic ex-

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polemical works that Ockham wrote at the court of Ludwig of Bavaria, after he flew from Avignon in 1324. The relation between the two parts of Ockham's writings is much debated in the literature. In this paper, my intention is not to take a stance on this issue, but to explore the theological and social consequences of Ockham's ontology of relations (of reason). This is the reason why I restrict the focus of this paper to Ockham's academic writings.

[3] For Peter John Olivi, see Toivanen 2016a. For the thirteenth-century Franciscan tradition as a whole, see Rosier-Catach 2004.

[4] See Petrus Johannis Olivi 2012; and Nicole Oresme 1990. In the theological context that is of interest to me in this paper, money is identified, following Gratian, as "the numerable physical coin of specified and unchanging weight and value. This identification is underscored through the linking of the coin to fixed and quantifiable measures of wheat, wine, and oil" (Kaye 2005. 28). Schematically, two positions on the nature of money are represented in the medieval period. Theologians like Thomas Aquinas claim that the value of money is determined by means of social exchanges. Philosophers like Oresme claim that the value of money also depends on the nature of the metal used as the standard. For a presentation of these different positions, see Langholm 1983. For an overview of medieval economic thought, see Wood 2002; and Lambertini 2019. For a more specific study of the Franciscan contribution to medieval economic thought, see Todeschini 2009. 92–129.

changes (Courtenay 1972). In claiming this, he gives some textual basis for Max Weber's idea that there are "affinities" between Protestant religious ethics and the "spirit of capitalism," since Courtenay relates morality and economy to the nominalist theology of salvation, often considered a forerunner of Protestant covenantal theologies.[5]

According to Courtenay, then, the question of what there is in our social ontology is not merely descriptive. It is also an explanation of what social exchanges are grounded in. I fully agree with Courtenay on this point. As will appear below, Ockham defends the reductionist view that a social object such as monetary value or a sacrament is nothing more than the (ordered) collection of a material object and a shared intention. But Ockham's analysis of this shared intention is not only descriptive. It also amounts to an explanation of why the covenant that underlies any kind of social exchange has to be conceived on the model of the covenant between God and human beings that originally concerned the efficacy of the sacraments. As we shall see, the core of the explanation is the structure of the voluntary mental act, which is common to God and creatures. So, although I am deeply indebted to Courtenay for identifying the philosophical issue underlying Ockham's social philosophy in his academic writings, I believe that the texts investigated here do not confirm his interpretation. On my reading, theology is prior to economics in explaining why voluntary signs are socially efficacious.

To defend this claim, I will proceed in three steps. In the first part, I will present the principle that underlies Ockham's reductionist view of the ontology of social objects. The second part will be dedicated to an analysis of the metaphysical structure of social objects, which Ockham conceives as an ordered collection of a physical object and a shared intention. Lastly, I will investigate the working and ground of the analogy between human voluntary signs and the sacraments.

II. THE GOLDEN RULE IN ONTOLOGY: THE EXTENDED TRUTH-MAKER PRINCIPLE

At the end of the 13th century, the ontology of relations gave rise to a sustained discussion on the correct formulation of a rule that spells out the ontological import of relational terms such as 'father' and 'motion.' The basic question is whether some propositions can become true or false without any change in the

[5] More precisely, Weber posits an "elective affinity" between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, an affinity that in principle could work in both ways. However, Weber has often been understood as giving the priority to economy over ethics. I thank Roberto Lambertini for his help on this point. For a genealogy of the various historiographical schemata that have dominated the writing of the history of medieval economic thought since the 19th century, see Todeschini 1994. 39–113.

ontology, following the intuition that relations have less ontological weight than the core elements of ontology such as substances. Although the question is raised in the context of the ontology of relations, an adequate answer will have a more general scope. This kind of answer can be seen as providing a kind of "Golden Rule of Ontology," which goes well beyond the problem of universals and encompasses the ontological status of any conceivable thing, be it singular, universal, or otherwise. It has an analogous status to that of the Truthmaker Principle, according to which "necessarily, if *p* is true, then there is some entity in virtue of which it is true" (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2005. 18).[6]

The most interesting texts dealing with this Golden Rule are theological in nature and investigate the nature of what were called "voluntary signs" *(signa voluntaria)*. A paradigmatic example of voluntary signs is the sacraments. As it has been shown by Irène Rosier-Catach, the Augustinian definition of a sacrament as an efficacious sign gave rise to intense debates on the nature of the sacraments.[7] Questions were raised about what kind of causation is at work in a sacrament. In Ockham's time, two main theories were in competition. The defenders of "physical causality" claim that there is a power *(virtus)* in the sacrament that is a real quality that acts on the soul so that it can receive grace.[8] By contrast, the defenders of "covenantal theology" argue that a sacrament is not a cause properly speaking, but a relation to God, who is the sole cause of grace. Defenders of covenantal theology appeal to analogies between the sacraments and the voluntary signs by means of which human beings enter into covenants, thereby reinforcing the aged-old inclination to see in the sacraments part of what Saint Paul called the "economy of grace" (Eph 1:10).[9]

The defenders of covenantal theology, following William of Auvergne, include general accounts of relations in their theology of the sacraments. Their aim is to prove that some real relations do not add anything to the ontology, although they exist in some sense, since they have effects on social exchanges (Rosier-Catach 2004. 160). For instance, in the short question "Quid ponat ius?", which opens his theology of the sacraments, Peter John Olivi deals with the ontology of relations in order to answer questions about the ontological import of words expressing social obligations. He claims that social relations are real but do not add anything to the ontology, if "ontology" is understood in the

[6] Recent studies have shown that the Truth-maker Principle can be traced back to chapter 12 of the *Categories* 14b16–22. The reception of Aristotle's principle in early modern scholasticism has been studied by Brian Embry 2015, but the medieval background remains underinvestigated.

[7] My summary here is based on Rosier-Catach's seminal research on this topic. See esp. Rosier-Catach 2004.

[8] For a presentation of this theory, see Rosier-Catach 2004. 125.

[9] For this influential metaphor, see Todeschini 1994. For canonical texts, see John Duns Scotus, *Rep. Par.* IV, d. 1, q. 2, §2 (1639. 564). See also John Duns Scotus, *Ord.* IV, d. 1, pars 2, q. 1, nn. 189–192 (2008. 65–67).

Quinean sense – which is the one that I adopt in this paper – i.e., as the set of all existing things, that is, of our ontological commitments (cf. Quine 1948).[10]

By contrast, John Duns Scotus defends an extreme realist position on all kinds of relations. To defend his account, he appeals to a principle that is quite close to the Truth-maker Principle as it is used today:

> There is never a passage *(transitus)* from one contradictory to the other without a change *(mutatio):* for if there were no change in something, there would be no reason why one contradictory can be true now rather than the other.[11]

In other words, there is no change in truth value without a change in the ontology. For example, if I am on the left of a column, I am the bearer of a relation that accounts for this fact and is really distinct from me. If I change my position and go to the right of the column, then the former relation is destroyed and a new one is produced, which accounts for the fact that I am now on the right of the column.

Ockham's famous criticism of Scotus's theory of relations includes a new formulation of the Golden Rule of Ontology. It is the following:

> It is impossible that contradictories be successively true about the same thing unless [1] because of the locomotion of something, or [2] because of the passage of time, or [3] because of the production or destruction of something.[12]

The rule is divided into three different cases. I will present them in a different order than Ockham, from the more ontologically loaded to the less ontologically loaded. First, a change in truth value can be accounted for by means of the production or the destruction of something, i.e., by the addition or the removal of a thing in the ontology. For instance, a white thing can become similar to another white thing that is newly produced. Similarity does not add anything to the ontology, but the production of a second thing similar to the first does (*Rep*. II, q. 2; 1981. 38–39). Second, a change in the truth value of a proposition about a local motion – for example, "This mobile thing is moved by that mover," a mobile thing being designated – does not presuppose that local motion is a thing really distinct from the mobile thing: a mere change in spatial relations

[10] For Olivi's text, see note 20.

[11] John Duns Scotus, *Ord*. I, d. 30, qq. 1–2, n. 41 (1963. 186–187). For Ockham's version of Scotus's rule, see William of Ockham, *Ord*., d. 30, q. 1 (2000. 282. ll. 6–7).

[12] William of Ockham, *Ord*. I, d. 30, q. 4 (2000. 369. ll. 7–9), trans. Henninger 1989. 128–129 (with a commentary on this text). For an even more complete formulation, see *Ord*., d. 30, q. 2 (2000. 328).

is enough (*Quodl.* I, q. 5; 1980. 33. ll. 107–110).[13] In this case, there is no change in the ontology.

What interests me in this paper is the third case, which deals with the passage of time. Following Ockham's reductionist move, it can only be analogous to the second case, that of local motion, rather than to the first case. The mere passage of time does not imply any change in the ontology. But, to my knowledge, Ockham does not spend much time explaining the function of the passage of time in his version of the Golden Rule of Ontology, while he takes great care, in his various commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics*, to explain his reductionist analysis of the ontological status of local motion. The hypothesis that I want to defend is that the clause of the passage of time accounts for the ontology of social objects, which are relational in nature. I base my reading on an understudied aspect of the famous debate between Ockham and Walter Chatton on Ockham's principle of parsimony.

Chatton is famous for his formulation of an opposite principle, which has often been called the "anti-razor."[14] The anti-razor is a methodological precept that Chatton uses against Ockham in order to defend anti-reductionist theses on the ontological status of motion and more generally of relations. It is the following:

> An affirmative proposition, when it is made true [*verificatur*], is made true only by things: if three things do not suffice to make it true, a fourth has to be posited, and so on.[15]

Scholars have remarked that Chatton's principle is a typical example of a principle of explanatory sufficiency.[16] Indeed, it is first and foremost a rule that helps to determine the conditions necessary for the truth of singular affirmative propositions in the present tense. It is a general answer to the question: How is one to decide the number of things to be stipulated in order to account for the truth of an affirmative proposition in the present tense? According to Chatton's principle, one has to determine how many things are required case by case. It is thus an inductive rule of reasoning concerning the ontological commitment of our propositions.[17]

[13] See also *Ord.* I, d. 30, q. 1 (2000. 313).

[14] Ockham gives several formulations of the principle of parsimony. The most famous is "Frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora." For an analysis of these different formulations, see Roques 2014. Part of this section is a summary of the second part of this paper, which also includes the relevant texts and literature. For Chatton's use of the anti-razor in his defence of his realist view on the categories, see Pelletier 2016.

[15] Walter Chatton, *Rep.* I, d. 30, q. 1, a. 4 (2002. 237. ll. 57–59). For a more detailed formulation, see *Lect.* I, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1 (2008. 2. ll. 14–20).

[16] As argued by Maurer. See Maurer 1990. 432–434.

[17] For an extensive study on Chatton's anti-razor, see Keele 2002.

Ockham responds that Chatton's principle is not necessarily false but is at least poorly interpreted, because what suffices to make a proposition true can be different at different times (*Quodl.* I, q. 5; 1980. 32. ll. 71–74). Ockham proposes a new formulation of the principle of parsimony that complements his reply. It is the following:

> When a proposition is made true by things, if two things are sufficient for its truth, then it is superfluous to posit a third.[18]

When looking for the truth conditions of a proposition, one has to look for sufficient, not necessary conditions, because the truth conditions of propositions can change with time. What Ockham means by this cryptic answer becomes clearer when one examines the case from which he draws his reply. The question is about the ontological status of local motion: in order to account for local motion, is it necessary to posit as an entity the motion itself, in addition to the places in which the thing in motion is successively located and the moving thing itself? Chatton takes the example of the proposition "This – a thing that moves being designated – is moved by this agent." He explains that the agent that causes the motion and the mobile thing are not sufficient to account for the truth of this proposition, since it might happen that God acts in place of the agent when the mobile thing is moving. Consequently, a third thing has to be posited, namely, the ontological trace of the causal process at the origin of the motion in the mobile, which in Chatton's view is a relational thing which he calls "passive motion" (*Rep.* II, d. 2, q. 1; 2004. 87. l. 26–88, l. 4).

Ockham disagrees with Chatton's analysis. He does not believe that a relational thing has to be posited in order to account for the truth conditions of the proposition "This is moved by this agent," a mobile thing being designated (*Quodl.* I, q. 5; 1980. 33–34. ll. 107–112). He argues by way of a counterexample. He takes the proposition "This angel is created by God" as written in a book. At the instant of the angel's creation, the proposition is true; later on, the proposition is false, because then the angel is not created by God but is conserved by Him. Three things (God, the angel, and the book) were sufficient to account for the truth of the proposition at the instant when the angel was created, but at a later instant the proposition is false, without any change in the ontology, *because of the mere passage of time* (*Quodl.* I, q. 5; 1980. 32–33. ll. 75–95). At an instant after its creation, the angel is not created by God anymore: it is conserved by God in its being.

The case of the conservation of the angel is a clear example of the third case in Ockham's Truth-making Principle, namely, a change in truth value because

[18] William of Ockham, *Quodl.* IV, q. 24 (1980. 413. ll. 15–17), trans. Freddoso and Kelley (William of Ockham 1991. 341).

of the mere passage of time (or a change in any equivalent order of anteriority and posteriority when time does not exist, e.g., before the creation of the world). What is most interesting for us is that Chatton, in the most detailed text dedicated to his anti-razor, concedes to Ockham that the mere passage of time is sometimes sufficient to account for a change in the truth value of a proposition. Here we come to the heart of the hypothesis that I explore in this paper. The example that Chatton uses is concerned with the transfer of property right *(dominium)*. It is the following:

> I concede that the passage of time is sufficient for the proposition to be false. For instance, as if the king wills that such a castle be yours only on Sunday, then on Sunday the following is true: "This castle is yours," but after Sunday it is false. So, it was said above in the thesis proposed that it is required that things be uniformly present in place and duration just as the proposition requires in order for it to be true. But it is not so when the passage of time multiplies the proposition. For if things were equally present for the duration that the truth of the proposition requires, it would not be the case that the proposition is false at the same time. (*Lect.* I, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1; 2008. 24. ll. 10–19.)

A proposition stating that a property belongs to a given person can be true at one time and false at another – and this is what the multiplication of the proposition means: time 'tokenizes' it by indexing it to a temporal assignment, so to speak – without any change in the ontology, that is, because of the mere expression of an intention by the right person (namely, the king). This comes as no surprise for readers familiar with Ockham's solution to the problem of future contingents, prescience, and predestination. Indeed, Ockham believes that what he calls the mere passage of time can change the truth-value of any proposition about something future relatively to the time at which the proposition is contingently true. As is well known, this claim is at the core of his solution to the question of future contingents.[19] So, the proposition "There will be a sea battle tomorrow" can be true now, but false after the time designated by the proposition, because a king decided that the battle would not take place. This explains why a change in the intentions of the social agents present in the situation described by Chatton in the text quoted above is equivalent, for both Ockham and Chatton, to the mere passage of time – an equivalence on which I will come back in more details in the third section of this paper.

One could object that because for Ockham a proposition is not a propositional content that has an invariable truth-value but a sentence-token that is temporally indexed, some propositions (i.e., the propositions indexed in a relevant

[19] William of Ockham, *Tract.*, q. 2 (1968. 525). For more on this question, as well as a list of the most important references, see Roques 2015.

way) can change their truth value simply because time passes, not *also* because someone took the free decision to change a contingent chain of events. For instance, the proposition "Less time has passed since John Kennedy's death than between his birth and his death" was true until May 2010 and it has become false from May 2010 onwards. It has become false only because of the passage of time.[20] This is true, but the clause of the passage of time in the Golden Rule of Ontology does not include a restriction to such propositions. The proposition under discussion between Chatton and Ockham requires the free decision of a person for the proposition to change its truth-value. One could object that the change in truth-value can be grounded in a change in the ontology, namely the production of a new mental act, namely the king's decision to transfer ownership. However, as will appear below, the relevant factor is the very content of the act of will under discussion, i.e., what the kind decides, not the act of will as a mental act itself, i.e., not the fact that there is a new thing in the kind's mind. Consequently, I take it that some changes in truth-value are grounded in Ockham's view on free will, something for which I will argue in the last part of this paper.

For Chatton and Ockham, someone owns something because of an agreement between two persons, the former owner and the new owner. The Franciscan idea that the signification of voluntary signs depends on an agreement between people, and not on any natural property of the sign, is clearly in the background (e.g., Mora Màrquez 2011). This suggests that economic exchanges are voluntary. Chatton's text also suggests that the owner of the castle can be deprived of his property temporarily because of the arbitrary will of a superior. Thus, it seems that the owner of something is free to use it as he wants, except when a superior authority decides otherwise. God leaves human beings free to use their goods as they want, on the basis of pre-existing political hierarchies.

This appeal to the will of the speakers/social agents for determining the value of a sign is quite common in the Franciscan order. For instance, Peter John Olivi claims that political laws can be changed without any change in the ontology. More generally, "Any voluntary sign can have its signification assigned or removed or varied in many ways, while the sign itself varies in no way with respect to its real existence" (*Quid ponat ius*, 1945. 320; 2016. 4).[21]

In the end, Chatton departs from Scotus's extreme realism and accepts that some changes in truth value do not require a change in the ontology. Like Ockham and other members of the Franciscan order, Chatton adopts a voluntarist conception of right and economy, which goes along with reductionist ontology

[20] This objection was made by Claude Panaccio to me in private correspondance.

[21] For a commentary on this text, see Rode 2014, Toivanen 2016b. For Olivi's conception of relation, see also *Quodl.* III, q. 2 (2002. 171–175). On Olivi's view on relations, see Boureau 1999; Rosier-Catach 2004. 160–166.

about social objects.[22] This voluntarist conception moves beyond Aristotle's theory of economic exchange, which was conceived as the satisfaction of a mutual need. Social agents are free to use social objects as they want, as will appear in the second part of this paper, which is dedicated to an analysis of Ockham's view on the ontological status of relations of reason that include social objects distinctively.

III. RELATIONS OF REASON

Voluntary signs, Ockham argues, are relations of a special kind, distinct from the relations that hold between physical objects. They are called "relations of reason". Neither kind of relation, however, adds anything to the ontology; relations are not things that exist over and above the things that are related to one another (*Quodl.* VI, q. 15; 1980. 636. ll. 16–19).[23] However, this does not mean that relations do not exist in some sense; relations are the things related themselves, taken collectively (*Quodl.* VI, q. 25; 1980. 678–679. ll. 9–26).

If a relation is nothing more than the *relata* taken collectively, how are we to distinguish between two relations that relate the very same individuals? For instance, Plato could be similar to Socrates by his whiteness but could also be to Socrates' left. If both relations are nothing more than Plato and Socrates taken together, it is difficult to see how the two relations are distinct. Ockham answers that the semantic analysis of the terms corresponding to each relation will be different. This is why a relation can be described in two ways, either as the collection of the *relata*, or as a term that primarily signifies the things that are related and that connote how they are related to one another (*Ord.* I, d. 30. q. 1; 2000. 314. ll. 14–18). This semantic analysis is based on a distinction between two kinds of terms: absolute terms (i.e., natural-kind terms) and connotative terms. In a nutshell, connotation is a way to select a subclass of referents among things at no ontological cost. Absolute terms are those terms that signify all what they do in the same way. Paradigmatic examples of these terms are substance terms, such as 'man' and 'animal.' By contrast, connotative terms signify some things primarily and other things secondarily. For instance, the term 'white' signifies white things primarily and it signifies the whitenesses that inhere in them

[22] For the Franciscan context and especially Peter John Olivi, see Cecarelli 1999.

[23] For Ockham's view on relations, see Adams 1987a, 261–265; Henninger 1989. 136–140; Beretta 1999. Ockham's semantics of relational terms has been very important in the recent discussion on the function of mental language in Ockham's semantics. On this debate, see Panaccio 2004. 63–64.

secondarily.[24] Relative terms are a subclass of connotative terms (*Rep*. II, q. 2; 1981. 39. ll. 8–15).

Now, signification and the other social objects under discussion in this paper are relations of a special kind, which require an operation of the mind to be said to exist (*Ord*. d. 35. q. 4; 2000. 385. ll. 16–24).[25] In this part, I want to argue, Ockham's core idea is that social relations, like any kind of relation, do not add anything to the ontology and, more importantly, that they cannot be reduced to relations that hold between extramental things.[26]

Ockham develops his ideas on this subject in the context of his analysis of second intentions, traditionally considered paradigmatic examples of relations of reason.[27] On the traditional view, according to Ockham, the signification of an utterance such as 'name' is an entity that has a special mode of being as an *ens rationis*. A being of reason exists in virtue of a relation that it has to the mental act by means of which it was instituted and in virtue of the relation that it has to reality by means of the first-order terms that it classifies.[28] Ockham believes that it is unnecessary to posit such a special mode of being in order to account for the semantics of second intentions. This is why he reworks the semantics of second-order terms to avoid this unfortunate result. For him, the spoken word 'name' signifies categorematic words that signify dogs, cats, human beings, etc., nominally, that is the way a name does, i.e., *sine tempore*, as opposed to a verb, according to *Peri Hermeneias*; it also connotes the act of will by means of which the name-giver attributed this signification to the utterance 'name' – or a given signification to each name (e.g., either "'name' means names," or "'dog' means dogs" "human being' means human beings", etc.). There is no need to posit a relation with a special mode of being above and beyond the *relata* (that is, all the existing names and the decision of the name-giver) in order to explain the signification of the spoken word 'name' or that of each spoken word that is a name (*Quodl*. VI, q. 30; 1980. 699–700. ll. 26–33).[29] The will of the speakers is part of the meaning of this second-order term: their commitment to following the decision of the name-giver is inscribed into its very semiotic structure, be

[24] Ockham's theory of connotation is summed up in *SL* I, 10 (1975. 35–38); for an extensive study, see Panaccio 2004. 63–84.

[25] For Ockham's distinction between these two kinds of relation, see Henninger 1989. 136–140.

[26] Although I cannot argue for this in this paper, I believe that real relations are taken care of by the first two cases of the Golden Rule of Ontology (production or destruction of a thing that changes relational facts about another thing, and local motion, which accounts for all spatial relations).

[27] For a presentation of the theory in use at Ockham's time, see Pini 2002. 45–137.

[28] For a more detailed presentation of how these two views differ, see Klima 1993. For a commentary on Ockham's texts about relations of reason, see Pelletier 2020.

[29] For a more detailed account of *impositio* and an explanation of what has been called in Ockham scholarship "subordination", see Panaccio 2004. 170–172. I thank Gyula Klima for his help on this point.

this commitment implicit or explicit. In other words, the condition of the use of a voluntary sign such as a second-order term is in some way part of its nature.[30]

The upshot of all this is that the ontological status of a relation of reason is no different than that of a real relation because a mental act is part of its nature. The very same analysis is given of both kinds of relation: "I say that a relation of reason can be understood in two ways: in one way, [as standing] for that spoken word or concept that brings in something or some things; in another way, [as standing] for the signified [things] themselves" (*Ord.* d. 35. q. 4; 2000. 470. ll. 13–16).

Like a real relation, a relation of reason is the collection of the entities signified by the corresponding relative term. This analysis holds for any kind of voluntary sign, including linguistic signs; there is a pragmatic dimension in Ockham's theory of linguistic signs. This is something that remains unnoticed if one restricts oneself to the famous definition of the sign at the opening of the *Sum of Logic*, which defines a linguistic sign by means of its function in a proposition, namely that of suppositing for what it signifies (*SL* I, 1; 1975. 8–9). In the commentary on the *Sentences*, a (spoken) sign, like the spoken term 'human being', is said to be connotative (*Ord.* d. 35, q. 4; 2000. 471. ll. 4–19). It signifies human beings and as a sign it connotes the past act of the will by means of which the decision was taken to use the utterance 'human being' in order to designate human beings. Consequently, it refers to all human beings *and* to a mental act.[31]

Now, how shall we describe the exact contribution of the mental act in the constitutive structure of a relation of reason? In order to answer this question, a distinction between two kinds of relation of reason must be introduced. Traditionally, relations of reason – that is, second intentions – are conceived of as the product of the classificatory activity of the mind; they do not require an act of the will, but an intellectual act of comparison. Ockham acknowledges that the term 'relation of reason' can be used to designate such second-order terms, such as 'intelligible', 'subject', and 'predicate', which are the product of the reflexive

[30] For a more substantive development on this point, see Marmo 2013.

[31] The term 'human being' is a paradigmatic example of an absolute term in Ockham's logic. On what grounds could it be said to be connotative? One interpretation of Ockham's claim here about 'human being' could be that mental language is only composed of absolute terms while spoken language only includes connotative terms, which all connote that their signification depends on an agreement between speakers. I thank Costantino Marmo for this suggestion. This would presumably have no implication for Ockham's supposition theory, and even if it did to some degree, it could be left aside when investigating the logical structure of spoken sentences because this connotation would be common to all spoken terms. Another interpretation is possible, which Claude Panaccio explained to me in private conversation, according to which the term 'human being' is indeed absolute. What is under discussion is not its signification, but the truth-conditions of the proposition "'Human being' signifies human beings." This proposition is made true by spoken words, human beings, and act of will, past or present. In this proposition, act of will is connoted by the verb "to signify," not by the term 'human being,' which is therefore absolute, not connotative.

activity of the mind (*Ord.* d. 35, q. 4; 2000. 472. ll. 4–10). When they are grasped, an act of the will can occur, but not necessarily: the mind is active when it grasps and uses such terms, but the activity is not necessarily voluntary.

In a stricter sense, however, a relation of reason does require an act of the will in addition to an act of the intellect to be said to exist. With this extension of the meaning of 'relation of reason', Ockham – following John Duns Scotus – goes well beyond the traditional usage of the term, by including into relations of reason all signs that are the product of an agreement between social agents. This is the beginning of a new stage in the history of ontology, as the fate of the category of *entia moralia* in early modern political philosophy attests.[32]

Indeed, paradigmatic examples of the second kind of relation of reason are social objects such as monetary value and money, linguistic signs, property, and servitude. Ockham presents this kind of relation in the following way:

> In another way, one can speak of a 'relative of reason' when a thing is not such as is said to be by such a name unless an act of the intellect or will concurs. And when neither of these concurs, it is possible for the extremes to remain and for neither of them to be such as it is said to be by such a relative. These are of the following sort: 'monetary price' [*pretium*], 'sign,' 'property right' [*dominium*], 'servitude' [*servitus*] inasmuch as they suit creatures. For a spoken word is not a sign, nor is a coin monetary price [*pretium*] or money [*pecunia*], except because by a prior act of the intellect we will to use the word or the coin in this way. (*Ord.* d. 35, q. 4; 2000. 472–473. ll. 11–18.)[33]

A coin has no monetary value unless at least one – but in fact two, as will appear below –persons decides to use it with a certain value. The precise contribution of the will of the users is made clearer in the remainder of the text:

> And in virtue of the fact that such an act of will is posited in us – or at some point was, and there has not been a contrary act of will – straightaway and without anything else added, the spoken word is a sign and the coin [*nummus*] is monetary price [*pretium*], just as in virtue of the fact that something is a creature, nothing else being posited, God is its cause such that nothing else is required [for it being caused] except the creature and God. And if the creature is not posited, God is not the cause of the creature. Thus, even regardless of whatever is posited about the spoken word and whatever is considered about it and whatever it is compared to, if there is no act of will by which we will to use it to stand for the thing, it will not be a sign. And this is [what is] the noun 'relative of reason,' with 'relative of reason' taken in the strictest sense. (*Ord.* d. 35, q. 4; 2000. 472. l. 19–473; l. 5.)

[32] In the vast literature on this question, see, e.g., Pink 2009. For Duns Scotus in particular, see Hoffmann 2013.

[33] See also *Quodl.* VI, q. 29; 1980. 698. ll. 99–103), and *Quodl.* VI, q. 30; 1980. 700. l. 34–36.

A relation of reason is the collection of a material object and a mental act, but it must be emphasized that a relation of dependence holds between them. This relation of dependence is not temporal but existential: the mental act is existentially prior to the social function attributed to the material object. Indeed, the social function attributed to the object will cease to exist as soon as the contrary mental act is formed. The comparison with God's relation to his creatures reinforces Ockham's analysis: for God to be creative, nothing more is required than His free act of will and the creature.

In other words, what is distinctively social in social objects such as monetary value is explained in terms of the mental acts of the agents. The question, then, is whether an explicit covenant is necessary for a material object to be used with a determinate social function. Is money what it is only because I decide (consciously or not) to follow a pre-existing convention, or do I have to express my agreement to use the object with the function that has been endowed to it? Ockham does not give a detailed answer to this question in his academic writings. He insists that what makes a relation of reason is a past or present act of the will, preceded by an act of the intellect (*Ord.* d. 30, q. 5; 2000. 476. ll. 7–12). This means that the required commitment is either explicitly stated or implicit: I can use a term or a coin with the signification or value ascribed to it by others or by a hypothetical "name-giver" without having to explicitly claim that I use it in this way, so long as the consensus in my community holds. This guarantees that voluntary signs are immutable at least temporarily, as required for the social function of the object to hold.

Ockham is completely silent about other social factors, social institutions in charge of expressing and regulating the conditions of use of social objects. This is confirmed by the fact that in his academic writings Ockham is surprisingly silent on the function of the Church in the right performance of the sacrament – an aspect of his theology of the sacraments that stands in sharp contrast with his numerous developments on ecclesiology in his polemical writings. In his academic writings, Ockham's view on the ontology of social objects is purely voluntarist.

That said, the question I raised in part 1 remains: How can propositions about social objects of the kind under study in this paper change their truth value just because of the mere passage of time? Let me come back to an objection to which I alluded in part 1. An act of the will is a real quality inhering in the intellective soul. If I decide to no longer use a coin of such a value for a monetary exchange, there is a real change in the ontology of my mind. Couldn't this change in the ontology account for the change in the truth value of the proposition "This coin is worth two cows?" If this were the case, propositions of this kind would be included in case 1 of the Golden Rule of Ontology: a thing, namely a mental quality, is produced or destroyed. But the discussion between Ockham and Chatton, as well as the example of a proposition stating the difference between

creation and conservation, suggest that such propositions are included in case 3 of the Golden Rule of Ontology: what is relevant is the passage of time, not the changes in the ontology of the mind.

How can we explain this? I would venture to claim that the only way to capture Ockham's intuition is as follows: what counts must be the content of volition, not the act of will itself. What I mean by this is that the existence of act of will is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the existence of a given social object. Only the content of the act of will determines the value to be attributed to a coin. Only this value is relevant for social exchanges: the production of some new quality in my mind when I convene with my neighbour to exchange a cow with a coin does not change anything with regard to the social function attributed to the coin. Real natural changes are not relevant, only the content of the social agents' intentions are. In other words, the social world is not reducible to the natural world. In the third part of this paper, I will argue that this is justifiable in the case of God, since His acts of will are not really distinct from His intellections or from His intellect and will. The core of my argument will be that the case of God's will can and must be extended to that of the human will because of Ockham's view on the freedom of the will, and that it is the best way to account for the status of social objects such as those under study here in the Golden Rule of Ontology.

IV. COVENANTAL THEOLOGY AND MONETARY VALUE

In order to answer the question of whether the case of God's will can be extended to that of the human will, we must look more closely at the analogy that Ockham, following his fellow Franciscans, draws between sacramental signs and human voluntary signs in order to explain in which sense a sacrament is the cause of grace.

For defenders of the covenantal view on the sacraments, a sacrament is a material object endowed with the function of contributing to the preparation of one's salvation by the will of God. On Courtenay's interpretation, the core argument of the defenders of the covenantal view is that just as a monetary sign has a given value simply because a group of people decides so, so too is a sacrament a cause of grace simply because God decides so, and He is obeyed by the people who wish to attain salvation. William Courtenay believes that, like his former Franciscan confrères, Ockham gives priority to monetary value in the analogy between monetary value and the sacraments.[34] However, as I said in the introduction, I do not believe that the texts support such a reading. I want to suggest that the reverse order makes better sense of the texts: the economy of salvation

[34] See Courtenay 1972, especially 188 and 202.

has explanatory priority over the economic model of exchange value within and across human communities. This reading, unlike Courtenay's, is able to account for the relation between time and will in the Golden Rule of Ontology.

In order to make this point, we have to analyse the working of God's will in the doctrine of justification. Justification is the process whereby someone becomes pleasing to God, a process which precedes God's acceptance of the person by virtue of her merit. As is well known, Ockham's doctrine of justification underlies his sacramental theology and is grounded in the idea that a sacrament is a mere *sine qua non* cause of grace.[35]

Before investigating the working of God's will in more detail, let me spell out the relation that holds between Ockham's doctrine of justification and his sacramental theology. Ockham famously claims that an act can be meritorious, even if it is not done in a state of grace, if grace is conceived of as a quality infused by God in the intellective soul of the agent (*Quodl.* VI, q. 4; 1980. 598. ll. 54–60).[36] But grace, in the sense of a divine acceptation that is in itself independent of any infused virtue, is a relation between human beings and God (*Ord.* d. 17, q. 1; 1977. 466). Grace as an infused virtue is only something that makes a believer good in this life. It is not *necessary* for salvation. Grace as divine acceptation is *necessary* and *sufficient*.

As a result, changes in divine acceptation do not imply any change in the ontology. I will take an example illustrating this crucial step in my argument. Let us grant that from eternity God decided to save half of the human population depending on their merits. He makes everything in the world such that human beings are fitted to deserve their salvation. So, at any instant T_1 half of the human population deserve their salvation. But at T_2, God decides to damn the human beings that He wanted to save, irrespective of their merit, and He does not inform those human beings of His decision. At T_2, the proposition "these human beings are damned from eternity" is true. But the world at T_2 is indiscernible from the world at T_1, except that one proposition: "these human beings deserve salvation," has become false. Both worlds are indiscernible except that time has passed, which has been sufficient to make a proposition false, i.e., the proposition that "these human beings deserve salvation."[37]

This background explains what is distinctive in Ockham's view on the sacraments. Indeed, Ockham is not content with criticizing those theologians who

[35] On Ockham's doctrine of justification, see Wood 1999; and Adams 1987a. 1257–1299. See also Vignaux's classic book (Vignaux 1934).

[36] See also *Quaest. var.* 6, art. 9; 1984a, 288, ll. 43–49. On this subject, see Vignaux 1934.

[37] There can be no temporal change in God's will, because God is properly speaking immutable. The same holds of his knowledge. However, God's change of act of will, as well as the changes in his knowledge of future contingents, is best phrased in temporal terms "by equivalence," to use Ockham's vocabulary, especially because there are no relations of priority in God except between the Divine Persons. On this subject, see especially *Tract.* q. 1, sexta suppositio (1978. 516-518) and *Tract.* q. 2, art. 3. (1978. 524–527).

believe that grace is an infused virtue that necessitates God to accept someone. He also opposes the theologians who believe that the ritual that makes a sacrament efficacious is a sufficient cause of the production of (operating) grace in the soul of the believer. According to Ockham, for God to enter into a covenant *(pactum)* with human beings means that He expresses His decision that the habit of grace infused with the sacrament makes the believer able to act meritoriously (*Rep*. IV, qq. 10–11; 1984b. 215. l. 11–216, l. 5).[38] As a result, a sacrament is a mere *causa sine qua non* of grace, i.e., the correlation between receiving a sacrament and receiving the habit of grace has the causal efficacy it has only because God wills it and told it to human beings.[39]

Ockham provides some details when he proposes a definition of the character, i.e., an indelible spiritual mark infused by God through baptism:

> […] I say that [a character] is dispositive [*dispositivum*] [of grace] as [being] a *causa sine qua non*, and this solely in virtue of divine will and ordering, and not in virtue of the nature of the thing, because, although *sine qua non* causes are not posited in natural [things], they can be posited in voluntary [things] […]. And so, a character can be such a dispositive sign without which God does not will to infuse grace. (*Rep*. IV, q. 2 (1984b, 33, ll. 7–17.)

The relation between the sacrament and its effect holds not in virtue of the "nature of the thing" – that is, in virtue of the very nature of the sacrament – but in virtue of the "divine will and ordering." The covenant between God and man is God's free decision that obliges man because of God's authority. To make this clear, one can take the example of Ockham's analysis of prophecy in his *Treatise on Predestination*. A prophetic statement is a disguised conditional that shows the right direction that creatures have to follow if they want to be saved (*Tract*., q. 1; 1978. 513).[40] Human beings are free to follow the suggestion or to act in a different way.

This covenant is not conceived on the model of economic exchange, which nowadays presupposes an agreement between equals. It holds only because it is a kind of prescription that a human being obliges herself to execute on the grounds that, unless she receives the sacraments as performed by the Church, she will not be able to receive grace. Similarly, when a king decides what value is to be attributed to a coin, his subjects have no choice but to follow his deci-

[38] For an overview of the core ideas associated with covenantal theology, see McGrath (1986. 119–154). For further discussion of this issue, see Courtenay 1971. 94–119.

[39] On this subject, see Goddu 1996.

[40] Ockham's change of opinion in *Quodl*. IV, q. 4 (1980. 315–316) is well documented. For a review of the literature and a more substantive discussion, see Roques (forthcoming). I thank Roberto Limonta for having pointed to me the relevance of Ockham's analysis of prophecy for the discussion of Ockham's covenantal theology.

sion, or else they will lose their money. The value of money is explained here solely on the grounds of the authority of the decision-maker; market forces do not affect it. In this model, the covenant creates the obligation of an inferior towards his superior, be it God, the king, or any other person possessing the right authority in the relevant circumstances.

This view of power and authority comes from the fact that covenantal theology is a model for thinking of the *efficacy* of voluntary signs, especially the immediacy of this efficacy and how it can be changed, i.e., by the mere passage of time. Let me spell out why this is the case by using an example, that of God's creation. In order to make a proposition such as "A rock is created" true, only God, the rock, and a relation of temporal priority are required. At the instant after the rock is created, the proposition is false, but the proposition "A rock is conserved" is now true (*Quodl.* VII, q. 1; 1980. 704. ll. 16–27). In a nutshell, God's act of willing to create a thing is effective in the very instant in which it is formed, just as the monetary value of a coin holds in the very instant in which the relevant authority decides so. Moreover, this efficacy lasts as long as the relevant authority does not decide otherwise.

How is this possible? I believe that this claim finds its grounds in the distinctive feature of Ockham's account of the freedom of the will. Ockham is known to defend a strong form of psychological voluntarism, that is, the view that the will is free to follow or not to follow the dictates of reason.[41] The will spontaneously causes its own action, in the sense that no reason outside the will explains why the will makes this choice rather than another or no choice at all. In other words, the will possesses a liberty of indifference (*Ord.* I, d. 1, q. 6; 1967. 501. ll. 2–24).[42]

In this, Ockham follows the path opened by Scotus. But Ockham's account of the freedom of the will has a distinctive feature that he elaborates in reaction to Scotus's libertarian version of the liberty of indifference. Scotus accepts what is called nowadays the Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP). In Scotus's version of this principle, the will has a capacity for opposites without succession: at the very instant at which the will wills something, it could will the opposite. This view is corroborated by the positing of instants of nature whose function is to spell out relations of priority among the elements of an act that takes place instantaneously.[43]

[41] For an overview of medieval psychological voluntarism, see Hoffmann 2010. For Ockham's conception of the freedom of the will, see Adams 1987a. 1115–1150; and 1299–1347; Adams 1987b, esp. 233; Adams 1999.

[42] See also *Rep.* IV, q. 16 (1984b. 358. ll. 3–5); *Ord.* I, d. 1, q. 6 (1967. 501–502). Ockham famously claims that the will can will evil under the aspect of evil. See, e.g., *Quaest. var.*, q. 7, a. 3 (1984a. 367) and *Rep.* IV, q. 16 (1984b, 357–358). But since it is not relevant for my point, I will leave this issue aside. For more on this issue, see Adams 1987a. 1987b. 1999.

[43] For John Duns Scotus's view on the instants of nature, see *Ord.* I, d. 39, qq. 1–5 (1963. 428–429); for Ockham's criticism, see his *Ord.* d. 38, q. 1 (2000. 581). For his criticism of syn-

Ockham is strongly opposed to such a view. He claims that for the will to be free it suffices that it can cease to produce its effect at any time *after* its production, if the circumstances remain the same (Tract. q. 3; 1978., 536. ll. 93–98). In order to defend his claim, he famously tries to reduce Scotus's doctrine of synchronic contingency to contradiction by saying that the acceptance of the principle of the necessity of the past – which Scotus accepts – entails the acceptance of the principle of the necessity of the present – which Scotus denies by positing instants of nature that are intended to make synchronic contingency possible.[44]

The crucial point for me is that this holds for both the human will and the divine will, Ockham believes, because there are no more instants of nature in the mind of God than in His creation. Unlike Scotus, Ockham believes that a *real* temporal succession is required to account for the change in the truth value of any proposition (*Ord*., d. 38, q. 1; 2000. 581. ll. 9–22). Sometimes this temporal succession also suffices to account for this change, as when there is no sufficient reason for the change in truth value other than the expression of an act of will, be it divine or human. But sometimes also the production of a thing (as when a thing is created by God), or a local motion is required.

It cannot be proved that God is free, any more than it can be proved that a human being is free (*Rep*. II, qq. 3–4; 1981. 55. ll. 16–18).[45] The freedom of the will is merely a fact of experience. Consequently, it cannot be proved that a mere succession in time requires a change in a free will and my point remains a mere hypothesis that aims at making sense of the Golden Rule of Ontology, and especially the clause of the passage of time. But there is no other explanation available in Ockham's texts and there is no incoherence in claiming such a thing. At bottom, it seems to me that it accounts nicely for the possibility of reductionist ontology of social objects such as the one that Ockham defends.

One can thus conclude that the analogy between the divine decision to make the sacraments efficacious and the human decision to give a social function to a material object, as well as the decision to maintain this efficacy and this function, finds its ground in Ockham's account of the freedom of the will. But Ockham's account of the freedom of the human will is derived by analogy from his account of the freedom of the divine will. In this sense, the analogy between Ockham's covenantal theology of the sacrament and his ontology of monetary

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chronic contingency, see *Ord*. d. 38, q. 1 (2000. 578) and *Tract*., q. 3 (1978. 534). For Scotus's view on the principle of the necessity of the present and instants of nature, see esp. the classic paper by Normore 1996. Scotus's psychological and theological voluntarism has been much debated in recent scholarship. See esp. Wolter 1986. 1–30; Williams 1998. 162–181; and Ingham 2001. 173–216. For a concise presentation of Scotus's view on the freedom of the will and how it relates to Scotus's "dual affections," see Williams 2003. 347–348.

[44] On this subject, see the classic introduction by Kretzmann and Adams in William of Ockham 1983. 24–28; as well as Adams 1987a. 1115–1150. For a more recent assessment of Ockham's position, see Roques (forthcoming).

[45] On divine freedom in Ockham, see Klocker 1985.

value does not really go both ways: the divine covenant is the model for the human covenant about monetary value. This is why I believe that the textual basis does not confirm Courtenay's idea that in late medieval nominalist theology the economy of salvation is conceived on the model of economic exchange. It is rather the reverse.

As I said before, an important aspect of Ockham's analysis is that it is not restricted to the sacraments, but also holds for other social realities such as linguistic signs, property right *(dominium)*, monetary value *(pretium)* and servitude (*Ord*. d. 35, q. 4; 2000. 472. ll. 15–21). In this text, Ockham explains that, because voluntary signs are relatives of reason, they have a social function only with reference to an act of will. This act, however, can either be present or past. The absence of a contrary act of will regarding a past act might be conceived as equivalent to an implicit acceptation by the users. So, in principle, a mere agreement suffices for the social value ascribed to a material object to persist in a social group.[46] Coercive power is not required for the social agreement to be binding – only authority is. Authority just is the social efficacy implied by the very existence of the agreement – be it implicit or explicit – between users.

In a word, then, I believe that Ockham's doctrine of the freedom of the will is grounded in the possibility that the truth value of a proposition can change because of the mere passage of time, which in turn is grounded in Ockham's reductionist ontology of social objects of the kind that has been under discussion in this paper.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, my aim was twofold. First, I endeavoured to show that Ockham analyses the ontology of a certain kind of social objects, namely material objects endowed with a social function such as monetary value, linguistic signs, and the sacraments, in a reductionist way. Ockham believes that these objects do exist, but that they are not really distinct from natural things. A social object of the kind discussed here is the ordered collection of a material object and a shared intention. In this sense, Ockham has reductionist ontology of social objects; they do not constitute an irreducible ontological category.

Although social objects of the kind that were under discussion in this paper require an act of will to exist, their existence is not merely mental in the sense of being pure fictions of the mind, since they have a power, namely, the power to change or influence the acts and decisions of others. As a result, a clear distinction can be drawn between the social and the non-social or natural. For

[46] I thank Costantino Marmo for helping me with this point.

something material to count as social, it has to depend upon a shared intention for its existence and nothing more is required.

However, social objects of the kind discussed in this paper do not exhaust the social world, and Ockham does not give them priority over other kinds of social entities, such as social groups and institutions. We therefore must not exaggerate the status of this kind of social object in Ockham's social ontology.

This leads me to my second aim, which was to tackle the larger issue of the relationship between social philosophy, theology, and economics in Ockham's academic writings. My starting point was Courtenay's hypothesis that for Ockham and the nominalist tradition of the 14th century, the covenant that makes the sacraments a *sine qua non* condition for receiving grace is conceived on the model of the covenant that is grounded in economic exchange. I argued that the only way to include Ockham's voluntarist account of social ontology into his metaphysics was to assume that the human will is structured in the same way as the divine will. In particular, for human beings as for God, a decision is effective at the instant at which it is taken, but a new act of will takes time. This is not surprising given Ockham's discussion of Scotus's view on the freedom of the will as regards the question of future contingents, divine prescience and predestination. My reading arrives at a result opposite to that of Courtenay. It seems to me that in the analogy between the economy of salvation and economic exchange, the economy of salvation comes first and helps to make sense of the nature of economic exchange.

In any case, I want to emphasize the point that for Ockham the ground of social objects such as monetary value and linguistic signs is merely human, in the sense that human beings are completely free to grant such or such social value to such or such material object. Ockham's appeal to theological assumptions has only a heuristic function in his analysis of social objects such as monetary value, linguistic signs, or property right and servitude. The working of the sacraments is something like a limit case that helps make sense of the working of other voluntary signs.

I also want to highlight that in Ockham's academic writings the anthropological background of his view on the nature of social objects is quite sparse. One cannot be sure whether it is part of being human to be able to come to an agreement on values (economic, social, or political).[47] It is also impossible to derive from Ockham's texts a view on the economic agent as an agent that aims to maximize utility. But a key element of this anthropology is the claim that the will is free. At bottom, it guarantees that the social order persists. The question raised by Ockham's ontology of social objects is about the foundation of political power.

[47] In his political works, Ockham is clearer on this question. Cf. *Breviloquium*, III, 8 (1997. 188), where he claims that God gave human beings after the Fall the power to establish rulers.

My final word will therefore be that, when discussing the medieval interpretation of social exchange, in particular economic exchange, we should not necessarily search for the origins of the modern market economy. Rather, we should investigate why Ockham and many other theologians before him felt the need to lean on an analogy between the sacraments and monetary value in order to theorize the grounds of economic exchange. What does it say about the anthropological roots of this social ontology? My guess is that it presupposes an ordered society, based on the existence of hierarchical relations between unequal persons. The freedom at stake here is not political freedom, that is, the freedom of equal persons, but that of inferior subjects who need a compelling reason to submit themselves to the commands of a superior: the idea that everyone, including the king, is submitted to God.

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György Geréby

The Changeability of the Past: Medieval and Modern

A Common Theme between Peter Damian and Hans Jonas

I. INTRODUCTION

What does conventional wisdom mean by "one should not cry over spilt milk?" Why do we shrug and say "let bygones be bygones forever", and on what grounds do we accept such common phrases as "what is done is done" or that something "is finished for good?"

In what follows, I will look at two lines of argumentation addressing the problem of an unchangeable past. The first approach is that of Hans Jonas (1903–1993), the German-born Jewish philosopher. Jonas didn't address the problem of the changeability of the past directly, but I suggest that it is implied by two of his positions. The Benedictine Cardinal Peter Damian (c. 1007–1072/3), however, addressed the issue explicitly. The two thinkers never had anything to do with each other, but their intellectual coincidence is, despite their differences, remarkable.

Let me begin with the standard view. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle pointed out that it is a characteristic feature of the past that "nobody desires a past event."[1] Nobody living in the present moment seeks to capture Troy. One cannot eat *the same* piece of cake that somebody else consumed yesterday (Anscombe 1950). Indeed, the changing of something implies its existence. What does not exist cannot change. Hence, if it were possible to change the past, it would have to exist in some way. Therefore, it would have to be part of the present, which is a contradiction.

Aristotle adds another point. Desiring and striving are about the future and the possible. The common intuition is that the past, once it has happened, cannot *not* have occurred. In other words, the past cannot unoccur; it must ever be accepted as fact. The past implies irrevocability. Therefore Aristotle can be seen to comfortably endorse the following quote from Agathon, the dramatist, who said that "even the most powerful divinity is deprived of only one thing,

[1] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139b5–13.

namely, to make events that happened in the past not to have happened."[2] An impossible task cannot be performed even by an immortal will. Or, as the contemporary philosopher, Geoffrey Brown, would say "not even God has the ability to alter the past (which is admittedly senseless)" (Brown 1985. 83–86). Past and future are fundamentally asymmetric.

Besides the asymmetry, Aristotle points out a connection between the future and the past. Future and past are tied together not only in the sense that time is continuous with the present: the change in one affects the other. In the case of connected events, whatever was the case in the past, it had always been true before something was the case that it would be the case. Again, whatever is the case now, was to be the case in the future of the antecedent time. That is to say, to change the past, one would also have to change the future (in the antecedent past). I suggest that Aristotle means the following conditional:

> (1) If something was (or is) the case, then it had been (or was) the case that this event would (or will) be the case (for every instance of time before the particular event).[3]

Therefore, any change in an event retroactively changes its preceding past and its concomitant future. That is, a change concerning an event in the past would eventually affect all preceding and all consequent times that had been connected to it or that refer to it. As a consequence, an event of the past, by having happened, in a certain sense even becomes accidentally necessary (Freddoso 1983). "Necessary" is not to be taken here in the sense of absolute necessity since the event could have been a contingent fact before its occurrence, but even a contingent fact becomes necessary in the sense that once something is the case, it's obtaining at that moment will remain true for all subsequent moments of time. By being permanently fixed to a particular point in time, it will become a future-in-the-past truth forever for any time before the event, and a past truth for all subsequent parts of time. Consider the case of my giving this lecture to you today. On the Aristotelian analysis, it had always been true previously that I would give a lecture today (given the fact that I am giving it now). Furthermore, it will always be true in the future that I gave a lecture today. The past event assumes a truth-value forever, in the sense of "freezing" the truth-values with respect to before and after. This bears repeating: The past becomes necessary not in the sense of absolute or essential necessity (since the event itself, that is, my lecturing, is not a necessary event – since I could have become ill, and so on), but rather in the accidental sense of its having become an element of the past. Therefore, if present and past are connected in this way, the past cannot be

[2] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139b9–11.
[3] Based on Aristotle *Physics* bk. VI, ch. 3.

changed, since such an attempt would mean that all preceding and consequent events would have to be supplanted.

We are left to contend with a paradox. While we accept that the past does not exist anymore, it nevertheless remains fixed forever linked to the events that did happen. Diodorus Cronus in his Master Argument meant most probably this when he referred to it as a principle that "every past is necessarily true."[4] Once something becomes past, its factuality cannot change, since it will be embedded in its respective past and future.

We have spoken about the accidental necessity of the past. But the very nature of the past has not been yet clarified. And the nature of the past seems to hold a mystery. It does not exist anymore, and since it does not exist anymore, it cannot happen anymore. The past has passed away. As Elisabeth Anscombe noted, if Parmenides's principle generally applies, in the case of the past, it yields a puzzling result. Parmenides's principle says:

(2) "It is the same thing that can be thought and can be."

Now the past does not exist. It neither is nor can it be. Therefore, the past cannot be thought of. However, we do think about it. Thus, conversely, since we can think of it, it must exist. But it doesn't. The perplexity remains since any empirical evidence is principally unavailable about it. There are no sense-data possible about things or events past. They are gone as these things, and events belong to the past. But then how do we think about the past? We do have a sense for the past – how is it then possible? What is the alternative?

We are faced with the following:

(3) The past is necessary in an accidental sense,

(4) but it does not exist.

(5) Therefore, something is accidentally necessary that does not exist.

What can we make out of this perplexing situation?

In the following, I will try to present two different strategies of thinking about this problem. After considering the two analyses, I hope that an interesting affinity emerges, overarching the difference between centuries and ways of analysis, both medieval and modern.

[4] For Diodorus Cronus' Master Argument see Seymour 1976.

II. THE RECONSTRUCTED ARGUMENT OF HANS JONAS

As it was suggested above, Jonas' position is implied by two of his independently formulated views.[5] The first position, or idea I would like to present as a premiss, was born out from Hans Jonas' reflection on historical knowledge. Against the backdrop delineated above, Jonas claims that, while we understand that history is about the past, we do not understand the nature of that past and do not know what history is about. History claims to know about the past. Modern history, as Leopold von Ranke's program famously declared, aspires to inquire and to reach conclusions about "how things really happened." Therefore, it sets out to speak about facts in history, that is, past facts. If there cannot be (cannot exist) past facts – how does his approach help us to know the facts of the past?

The discipline of history assumes that there is something which lies there objectively. Facts are supposed to be objective, things that are "out there" waiting for being discovered. Considering, however, that the past does not exist anymore, how could one say that there are past facts? How can there be objective facts? Where can those facts be found? How is the past knowable at all?

Jonas begins his inquiry by pointing out the obvious need for the truth-conditions of (present) statements about past facts. If the historian says that an event happened in such-and-such a way, the historian claims that the sentence describing the fact is true.[6]

Thus we come to

> (6) If a proposition about the past claims to be true, that is, it claims that an event happened in the past, then it is implied that the event must have existed at that time.

However, the event cannot exist, since the past does not exist, as we have seen. How then can the historian claim truth for his statements? Does it make any sense to state, or deny the truth about a non-existent event? To say so would be similar to making a claim about how fast Pegasus flies. Since Pegasus does not exist, it is totally moot to ask whether Pegasus flies faster or slower than the speed of sound.

This is not the case, however, with history. Jonas points out that history is not entirely fiction. Our life is based on history with its claims about past events, and they form part of our basic discourse. The present is a result of past events.

A preponderance of talk about past events is necessarily based on or associated with presently available evidence: Such things as archaeological finds, records, documents, inscriptions, charters, and objects of art, buildings or other

[5] The two articles are Jonas 1972a and 1972b.

[6] Jonas did not consider the option that history is narrative, in the sense of Hayden-White, because if the past is rhetoric, fiction, or narrative, it cannot lay claim on truth.

data. History assumes propositions about these data to be starting points, or, to put it in another way, as premises for drawing inferences. The criteria of the verifiability of historical claims, then, depending on the available data, and the methods of inference. This can be called the empiricist view of the past. However, most such talk about the past reveals principled flaws affecting historical claims made by empirical propositions. First of all, Jonas reminds us that we are not in a Laplacean universe. Laplace, the great early 19th-century physicist, famously claimed that his equations could effectively describe not only all events in the past but in the future of the universe. He went on to claim that, provided we know all the deterministic laws of nature, one can produce an effectively complete snapshot of the values of every parameter at any given moment. For him, past, present and future mutually entail each other. The present would then hold the key for the past.

This view would not do for Jonas. The assumption of absolute causal determinism is only part of the problem. Whether or not modern physics can accept this, can be set aside. The second, more significant issue is that a given event is not necessarily the result of one and only one unique set of causes. No proof has yet been offered for the strict unicity of antecedent causes for all present state of affairs. Therefore, arguing from presently available facts with the help of inferential methods is not sufficient to establish truth in history.

Third, there can be truths in history that are not approachable by the causal determinism of Laplace. In fact, some facts of history are not approachable at all.

Let us call this third problem the "problem of residual truths in history." These are unapproachable by the sheer fact that they leave no trace, no identifiable residue that could serve as starting points for their reconstruction. There is nowhere from which to begin tracing them back to their past existence. An example of such a truth would be weather on a particular day in 500 BC. Or the price of an amphora of wine at the Megara market on that day. To be sure, there was the weather, and there was a price. However, there is no way to approach them, that is, to know the answer to these questions.

This is the reason why Jonas differentiates between historical verifiability and truth. This distinction will be of crucial importance. We may not be in the position to verify any claim made about the thoughts of Caesar when he crossed the Rubicon, but one has to assume that indeed there were thoughts in his mind at that point. We don't know the real physiognomy of the Egyptian pharaoh Echnaton, but it is not unreasonable to maintain that he had a particular physique: Stature, facial characteristics, weight, the colour of skin, and other properties. Answers to these questions may never be reached: Still, the possibility of their truth is undeniable. Caesar or Echnaton were not figments of imagination. They were not angels or ghosts. The unknowability of residual facts offers artists the freedom to portray and characterise such unknown faces, much as they do it in depicting St. George, or St. Catherine of Alexandria.

So again, the opinions we hold about the past are subject to personal perceptions and interests. Rarely do two eye-witnesses tell of an event in precisely the same way. The judge, however, ought to assume that there is a common reality behind the different testimonies, which can be concluded on the basis of evidence, even if the judgement eludes being logically indisputable. The arbitration assumes existential import: The assumption that the event did happen in a particular way. Our access to historical facts can be changed, by accident, or even intentionally, when political powers set out to alter the evidence about the past, for example by annihilating documents. However powerful these forces may be, and whatever success they may achieve in eradicating memories, or documents of the past, one thing they cannot do. None can eradicate the difference between true and false, truth and lies. Hence we find, if one maintains the need for the truth value of statements about the past, then the past ought to contain unchangeable facts. One can doubt the truth of a particular statement, but that it ought to be bivalent. This methodical principle cannot be held in doubt.

To illustrate his point, Jonas offers the case of an infamous document forgery, the Donation of Constantine.[7] Throughout many centuries, it was considered to be genuine; that is, its claims were held to be true. After the forgery has been revealed in the fifteenth century, it became clear that the donation never happened, and that throughout those centuries it was a falsehood. It was a falsehood, though, says Jonas, even in the period when everybody thought it was genuine. No one knew the truth – but the truth was there (Jonas 1972a. 175).

In his analysis Jonas is clearly committed, therefore, to two assumptions:

(7) The reality of time.

(8) The correspondence theory of truth with respect to past events.

If these two assumptions are granted, concludes Jonas, the past must exist in some sense. This mode of existence cannot be "real," but they still must be guaranteed. At this point he makes a daring suggestion. The guarantee for the existence of the past truth is the existence of a great intellect, which ought to be postulated in order to retain the meaning of all statements about the past. This is an immense mind, in which all past events persevere. This mind or intellect is not like Laplace's infinitely powerful calculator of causal chains, but rather a mind retaining all individual events of the past in his universal memory. It is neither the realm of ideal Platonic existence since events are not copies of the paradigms of this mind; nor is it the universal intellect of Plotinus, which timelessly guarantees the existence of the realm of events, that is, of the cosmos; nor

[7] The Donation of Constantine is a forged medieval document granting land and the imperial insignia to the bishops of Rome, that is, the Popes.

is it the absolute spirit of Hegel, in development towards realising itself – but rather a mind which guarantees the permanence of the events of the world. Thereby – says Jonas – this mind is not beyond the world, but it can participate in the world of individual events by knowing all of them.

I will come back to the idea of participation soon.

Jonas himself does not call his argument a proof for the existence of God. Justly so. One can (and many philosophers have done so) either deny the existence of time, or the correspondence theory of truth, even if there is a price to be paid for these denials. Such a price would be that any history going beyond the mere presently available facts would then become a narrative of the present, and thereby basic elements of human discourse would be forfeited.

But even if one accepts Jonas's argument, one objection could readily arise. Why is this mind necessary for securing the existence of the past? Would not something like collective human memory, sometimes referred to as cultural memory, do the same job? (By cultural memory one could mean the united memory of a social group, of a community, or the combined memory of a given society.) Unfortunately, such an assumption would not do. As we have just seen, the Donation of Constantine – or, to cite a more modern example – the storming of the Winter Palace in 1917 in St. Petersburg at the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution – were collective delusions. Societies adopt delusions, and there is no guarantee that they cannot. (In fact, one could list endless examples for such delusions.)

Jonas here stops short of explaining the nature of this supreme mind, but he devoted another article sometime earlier to his concept of God, entitled "The Concept of God after Auschwitz." What is the God of Jonas like? Jonas now speaks as a theologian. He claims that Auschwitz poses a unique difficulty for Jews, understood as the people of the covenant with God. If God is the Lord of History, then

(9) Salvation is in the world.

(10) The world is not under the heavy spell of evil.[8]

The special difficulty for Jonas arises from the singular tragedy of Auschwitz, which contradicts both of these essential Jewish assumptions about God. In short, according to Jonas, the evil symbolised by the "Endlösung" is beyond the scope of theological justification offered by traditional theology. In confronting this issue, Jonas looks to Maimonides for 'traditional theology' and his concept of a transcendent God. According to Jonas, the "heavy spell of evil" is mani-

[8] Jonas juxtaposes these two points to the Christians, for whom Salvation is from above, and the world's evils are due to the original sin. These claims are problematic but do not affect the argument.

fested in the Shoah in a way that goes beyond the tribulations that befell the biblical Job. Thereby, it cannot be explained in terms of the traditional theodicy. The Shoah, for Jonas, requires a different justification, and this difference implies the necessary revision of the traditional (Aristotelian, or Maimonidean) concept of God. In a nutshell, Jonas conceives of a God with restricted powers; a self-limiting, and suffering God who is compassionate with his creation. One could summarise Jonas' new concept of God as follows:

(11) God exercises self-limitation when relating to the creation.[9]

(12) Thereby, creation has relative independence from God.

(13) Divine foreknowledge is limited to the possibilities inherent in the creation.

(14) God compassionately suffers with His creation – permanently, from the moment of creation (as opposed to a temporal suffering of God in Christianity).

(15) No atemporality, impassibility, or unchangeability apply to God. Just the opposite: God is temporal, suffering, and changeable.

(16) Absolute goodness, absolute power (omnipotence), and comprehensibility (intelligibility) are incompatible.

(17) Eternity is affected by temporal events.

For the informed listener, it emerges that by (15), Jonas changes the traditional assumption of the spirituality of God, together with the assumption of foreknowledge.

As Jonas sees it, God is neither transcendent nor omnipotent. He concludes that God is affected by what happens in creation, and because of his own self-limitation, God is "powerless" in the realm of the physical world. Jonas even goes as far as to claim that the three traditional divine predicates: Absolute goodness, absolute power (omnipotence), and comprehensibility (intelligibility) are incompatible. Two of them together exclude the third. Goodness and power exclude comprehensibility in the face of the evil in the creation. Comprehensibility and power exclude goodness, since if this world is designed by God as it is, He cannot be good. Finally, comprehensibility and goodness exclude power since the creation shows manifest independence. Jonas wants to maintain comprehensibility (intelligibility) because of the Torah, but then either goodness

[9] Here Jonas alludes to the tzim-tzum [withdrawal] of God in the Kabbala, which creates the space required by the creation.

or absolute power must be sacrificed. Jonas decides to sacrifice absolute power, which results in the abandoning of the traditional theistic predicates.

God, thus, exchanges the transcendence for a capability to have and utilise an eternal memory of all things temporal. God changes – which is indeed no small step away from traditional theology that maintained with Plato that the "first and most important" distinction is that between permanence and change.[10]

Jonas expressly formulates it against Plato, that

(18) God is changing; therefore God is "in becoming."

Now the non-Platonic character of God ought to imply that God does not possess an eternal mind entertaining all possible events in the world. That is, God does not have eternally infinite memory, but a memory that it is constantly growing, and thereby changing. Instead of an unchangeable eternity, Jonas assumes an eternity which accumulates the "harvest of the passing time."

And we reach, at last, the moment when Jonas' analysis becomes relevant to our problem. If God is an intellect that is inherently changeable with respect to an awareness of the events of the world, and there is no other way that the past can exist, but to be in the divine mind, then the past is solely and only retained by the divine mind. And since the maintainer of the past is also changeable, its retention will also be changeable. If the divine mind might change, so also can the past eventually change. Conversely, if this mind is capable of growing, it might be capable of diminishing. If God is affected by events in the world, and God can affect the world (which is a triviality according to Jonas), the only guarantee against the changeability of the past is God's will to retain it in a particular way. This changeable will, however, is not what the Late Antique and medieval authors held was the eternal will of God.

Jonas himself – to my knowledge – never connected his two arguments. Following the tenor of his considerations, however, he may have thought about this implication.

He was not alone in arriving at this startling conclusion.

III. THE ANALYSIS OF PETER DAMIAN[11]

The other important attempt at the problem of the necessity or contingency of the past happened nine hundred years earlier, in 1057. In this year, at the high table of the monastery of Monte Cassino, a debate arose between abbot Deside-

[10] Plato, *Timaeus* 27d5–28a4.

[11] I quote according to the Patrologia Latina. The numbering is followed by the Cantin, 1972 edition, too. Cf. Gaskin 1997.

rius and bishop Peter Damian. The debate addressed a thorny theological problem brought up by the readings during the dinner. In the reading Jerome, the fourth-century church father, in a contemporary debate about the importance of virginity maintained that such a loss would have an incorrigible result. For substantiating his point, he took sides with Agathon and Aristotle mentioned above, claiming that while God can do everything, not even God can restore a virgin after her fall.[12] God may forgive her, Jerome says, but even He cannot make undone what has been done – as a winning argument to stress the importance of retaining innocence.

Bishop Peter expressed his dissatisfaction with Jerome's view, which was defended by Abbot Desiderius. Theirs must have been a pretty heated debate since Peter later recollected his views in a treatise devoted to the subject, the *Epistle on divine omnipotence*. In this treatise, he squarely rejected Jerome's position. The rejection was explained in a careful and complex argumentation.

First, Peter distinguished between the physical restoration of the „signs of virginity" and the genuine ability to restore the quality of virginity itself; that is, to undo the event of the past. All agreed and credited God's omnipotence with the capacity to be able to accomplish the first task.[13] It is not the first problem which deserves our attention, but the second.

Peter makes it clear that the interesting issue pertains to the logical nature of past events.

> (18) If God, as you assert, is omnipotent in everything, can He act in such a way that the things that have been made were not made? He can certainly destroy all the things that have been made so that they no longer exist now, but one cannot see how He can bring it about that the things which have been made were not made. Of course, it can be brought about that Rome does not exist now and henceforth, but that she should not in ancient times have been founded – one cannot conceive how that could be brought about.[14]

From among the Biblical examples, the realm that existed before the flood or the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah exemplify the concept of destruction, but these events are not removals of their past being. The question is whether even their one-time occurrence, that is, their past existence can be removed from the record of the past.

[12] Hieronymus, *Ep ad Eustochium*, 5. PL 22: 337.
[13] As it happens, specialised clinics today can hardly satisfy the need for such restorations.
[14] Petrus Damiani, *De divina omnipotentia* PL 145. 601C tr. R. Gaskin.

The original consensus about the impossibility of this latter task was shared by important Church Fathers, Augustine among them. Peter, therefore, had to challenge two substantial authorities. Augustine argued in the following way, going a step beyond the rather simplistic statement of Jerome:

> (19) Whoever says if God is omnipotent, let Him bring it about that the things which have been made were not made, does not see that he is really saying this: let Him bring it about that those things which are true are, by that very token in virtue of which they are true, false.[15]

Augustine doesn't argue it in detail, but he seems to assume that the annihilation of a past event implies that another event takes over the role of the original past event. The truth of the original past event, however, will remain in effect in the form that the opposite of the new situation was the case before the change in the past occurred. Therefore, the truth of the changed event will have to remain forever, together with the truth of the supplanting event. To restate: The annihilation of a past event would simultaneously create the opposite truth value, and both will remain standing. But not so fast, says Augustine. In considering the principle of non-contradiction, this can not hold. The principle of non-contradiction holds universally; hence it can be safely assumed that not even God can bring about a contradiction. It is impossible even in theology that the same thing would both exist and not exist, or, in other words, they would be both true and false at the same time.

Jerome's and Augustine's joint position seems to have decided the issue. In discussions about divine omnipotence, essentially the same line of thought as that of Augustine will be retained by Thomas Aquinas and many other leading theologians of the period.

Peter Damien, however, was not satisfied either with the common-sense solution or with Augustine's stricture. But his respect for the tradition he was confronting is evident by the unusually subtle formulations he would devise in advancing his argument.

He seems to have realised that, for Augustine, there remains a problem in that his solution does not imply the annihilation of the past, but merely creates an alternative past next to the former one.

Augustine's argument depends on the contradiction implied by simultaneously assumed opposite truths, along with the validity of the principle of non-contradiction. It is by these assumptions that Augustine can exclude the possibility that the very same event both was and was not. To reject the principle of non-contradiction, and to allow such a case of simultaneous contradictory pasts would have been viable for Peter, except it would then have left him with

[15] Augustinus, *Contra Faustum* 26. PL 42. 481. Tr. R. Gaskin.

the implication of a redoubled past (that is, allowing the coexistence of alternative pasts). However, *praeterita non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitate*, the past should not be multiplied without necessity.

A question surfaces: Does the annihilation of the past really imply such a contradiction?

It is here that Peter adopted a strategy that departed from Augustine's. He observed that the necessity of a past event is conditional on its occurrence. That is if something occurred in the past, and thereby something becomes a past event, only then does it become (accidentally) necessarily true. It is not simply necessary, however, that the event occurs at all. Past necessity is contingent on the occurrence of the event (in fact, this is why it is called accidental necessity) – as in fact Aristotle's logical formulation above clearly pointed this out.[16] Then, if an event in the past is changed to its opposite, the new one will be *the event* which becomes conditionally necessarily true, by virtue of being a past event.

Peter, in this way, finds a solution to Augustine's problem. God does not create an alternative past but replaces it entirely.

In modern parlance, Augustine's interpretation of changing the past would imply that changing the past would bring God to the impossible situation that –p, while it was the case that p. ('p' here is a proposition variable, describing a past event.)

(20) $-p$ AND p

(Of course, at a given time *t*.) This would be a trivial contradiction, indeed. To avoid this problem, Peter Damiani offers a different solution. To avoid the trap of the simple contradiction, he is coming up with a very different suggestion:

(21) – p INSTEAD OF p, for every occurrence of p.

The difference Peter Damiani suggests is that instead of the conjunction operator, he introduces the "instead of" monadic replacement operator. This is not an object-language operator, like the conjunction, but it belongs to the metalanguage. The replacement operator changes the original proposition, or event by replacing it with another proposition, or event.

The original event ceased to exist, since – let us remember – there is no ontological box in which it could be shelved. The meta-level device does not allow

[16] Historians could object that Peter did not have access to the *Nicomachean Ethics* mentioned above. True, but he did have access to the *Perihermenias*, which was a basic textbook in the education of the period, and Peter seems to have been a very accomplished thinker who could discover the problem on his own.

the joining of the two propositions about the past but replaces the alternative altogether, and in all places. There remains no room for a contradiction.

It does not matter whether p is indeed only a singular proposition, or an abbreviation for the original event and its branchings. That is, to use the example of Peter, if God chooses to change the past with respect to the foundation of Rome, the whole history affected by this event, meaning its consequences or branchings will be annihilated.

By taking this tack, Peter deftly disentangles himself from Augustine's problem. The danger of the infringement on the principle of non-contradiction is neutralised by the „replacement operator."

How could our ideas about God accommodate this possibility? Jonas suggested that divine immutability should be given up. Peter turns to the analysis of the divine will instead. For him divine unchangeability can also offer an opportunity for the divine capacity to change the past.

Peter's approach is based on Boethius, who in the 6th century offered a famous solution for the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and providence in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, a standard textbook in the Latin West. Boethius' solution is the following, cast in simplified formulae. God has simultaneous knowledge of all things past, present and future: but He has this all-embracing simultaneous knowledge instantaneously and at the same time. The simplicity of all-embracing and instantaneous knowledge, however, excludes the ordinary sequencing of past, present and future. The normal temporal ordering, indeed, any kind of ordering of the events is excluded. The normal sequence of events, which is coterminous with time, loses is validity: God's knowledge is a knowledge of all sequences of all events all at once. This way of knowing, therefore, precludes temporality. For God, there is no 'before' and 'after'; therefore, everything exists in simultaneity.

> (22) For the divine perception runs ahead over every *future* event and turns it back and recalls it to the *present* of its own knowledge, and does not alternate, […] foreknowing now this, now that, but itself remaining still anticipates and embraces […] changes at one stroke. [My emphasis.][17]

In this text, Boethius speaks about foreknowledge; therefore, there is no need for him to mention the past, but the missing bit can be easily supplemented. It is his definition, after all, that eternity is the "the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life."[18]

[17] Boëthius, *De consolatione Philosophiae* V, prose 6. 37–40; see Boëthius 1973. 433. H. Stewart, E. Rand, and S. Tester. Loeb Cl. Lib.

[18] Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio. *De Consolatione Philosophiae* V. prose 6. ll. 9-11; see Boëthius 1973. 423.

On the power of His timeless eternity, God can intervene in the temporal world in a way that is only temporally describable for human beings. Natural language cannot be trusted to describe this intervention of God since verbs are tensed, conforming to the worldly events that are ordered in sequence. Peter continues:

> (23) God *is* able in His invariable and ever-constant eternity [to bring it about] that what had been made, according to our transience, was not made; so that we may indeed say: God *can now* act in such a way that Rome, which was founded in ancient times, was not founded.[19]

The present tense used throughout is important: The correct way of saying is the use of „can" (*potest*) all the time since there is no past capacity or future capacity for God.

> (24) "As regards His eternity, whatever God was able [to do], He is also able [to do], because His presence is never turned into past."[20]

The first past tensed phrase ("was able [to do]") is the human language, while the second phrase ("is also able [to do]") is the correct description of the situation. Peter, therefore, feels entitled to say that God's power over the past is a power which he enjoys in every moment, yes, in the present moment, too.

Peter's (and Boethius') analysis of time can be represented with a geometrical analogy. Events can be laid out like a series of points on a line. Keeping to this image, God could be now represented as a point external to the line, to which all points can be connected. On this geometrical image God's eternity can be coordinated, or associated with the sequence of all points, allowing the use of a temporal language in the world, but at the same time excluding temporal language in His case. Again, this solution saves the problem of unchangeability, too: If there is no separation of events, and no sequencing or ordering, there is trivially no possibility for a difference of states, which is a prerequisite for change.

In historical terms, while some theologians, including Anselm of Canterbury, Gilbert of Poitiers, William of Auxerre, or Alain of Lille in the 12th century, the majority of theologians, especially during the 13th century rejected his views, most notably among them Thomas Aquinas. However, then, a revival of the issue emerged in the middle of the 14th century. Thomas Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini and Peter of Ailly not only accepted the divine changeability of the past but developed Peter Damian's ideas even further (Gaskin 1997).

[19] Peter Damien 619A.
[20] Peter Damien 619B.

One of the most interesting continuations of the argument was formulated by Cardinal Peter of Ailly (following suggestions by Gregory of Rimini).

Peter of Ailly analysed the status of prophetic statements. Prophecies are sent by God, and they are, by definition, about the future. Now propositions about the future do not yet have a definite truth value as future contingents, by a standard assumption. The prophet, therefore, using a temporal language, speaks about a contingent future event. But then a problem arises: The prophet's condition implies a prophetic statement, which is, logically speaking, a future contingent proposition. In God's knowledge, however, the statement has a definite truth value. Therefore it must be the case that either God cheats the prophet in the sense that He does not tell the prophet that instead of a *future contingent* statement He is saying something which *is already true* – or God has to retroactively change the status of the prophecy from contingent to necessary, once it will have become true. And, as can easily be guessed, if confronted with such a dilemma, it looked better for many to rather accept the changeability of the past, than to allow for the untruthfulness of God.

IV. SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I tried to present two ways of approaching the problem of the changeability of the past, a seemingly awkward issue leading to fundamental metaphysical and theological issues.

First, the two reasonable premises (7 and 8) lead Hans Jonas to the assumption of the existence of a universal mind, which retains in a way past states of affairs, or past events.[21] Peter Damien does not explicitly speak about these premises, but he clearly implies them. The retention of the past in a mind is another common point for both Jonas and Peter. Their ideas about the character of this mind, however, is different.

Jonas is motivated by an extraordinary problem of theodicy, which is not considered by Peter. Jonas concludes that the divine mind ought to have a changeable character. While Peter retains the unchangeability, he does leave open a changeability of the divine mind in terms of its *content*. Events present to the divine mind can be changeable. Peter Damien, after charting the limits of divine omnipotence, concluded the possibility of changing the past should remain open. Both, therefore, allow for the contingency of the past.

What about the differences in their approaches? First of all, Jonas does not speak explicitly about changing the past, the way that Peter does. But then,

[21] The assumption of the existence of the past is common also in modern discussions about the possibility of time travel, even though this latter implies a crude form of existential import.

Peter does not explicitly discuss the ontological issues of the past, as Jonas does. Peter assumes the existence of a divine mind, while this is an open task Jonas sets for himself to establish to his satisfaction.

Again, certainly for Jonas, the three concepts of absolute goodness, absolute power (omnipotence), and comprehensibility (intelligibility) are taken to be inconsistent. Consequently, for Jonas, God is not transcendent. An immanent deity implies changeability. God, for Jonas, is in fact, suffering and is not omnipotent.

One would think that Peter represents a diametrically opposite picture since divine unchangeability and omnipotence are his starting points. Yet, this is not exactly the case. Peter certainly assumes an opposite position about divine omnipotence, which is emphasised even at the expense of the laws of logic, since these laws are also created by God. Again, Peter was a Christian who believed in the Word incarnate, including the total transcendence of God the Father. He also maintained at the same time God's immanence, limitation and suffering in the Christ. And finally, for Peter, it was precisely the transcendence of the divine mind that allowed him to assume the changing of the past, that is, the direct involvement of God in the affairs of the world.

I would like to highlight one explicit, and important common point: Both Jonas and Peter staunchly maintain divine and human freedom of action, at the expense of metaphysical necessity.

These theological points are not side issues, since they show that the positions of Jonas and Peter are much less far apart in the metaphysical sense than it would seem from the historical and denominational point of view. The structural similarity points to the fact that the idea that the past is not necessary, and that it can be changed under certain specific conditions, requires ultimately a theological context. Without the theological context, the past would have to remain untouched: If there is no God, there can be no meaningful agency which would have a chance or an interest in affecting the non-existent past.

It seems that the whole question of the changeability of the past can only emerge if there is an appropriate external agent who is credited with the capacity of extending over past events. This is why, I suspect, neither Aristotle nor Agathon could imagine such a situation. As a test case, one could also look at recent articles investigating the possibility of changing the past, like the article of Peter Vranas in 2005 (see Vranas 2005). Now all these analyses assume (without further analysis) the existence either of "time-travellers," or "time-machines" – which I take, are the functional (albeit limited) equivalents to the medieval assumptions of God.

In closing, let me add two more remarks. The idea of the changeability of the past, obscure and obnoxious it may seem at first sight, has some interesting areas of application.

The first case where such a retroactive intervention is justified, once again in a theological context, is the remission of sins. The idea of the remission of sins (*aphienai tas hamartias* in the New Testament language) implies that a certain event in the past ceases to exist. It ought to discontinue, since the forgiving of sins cannot just mean that some sin ceases to be attributed to somebody, while it continues to remain in existence as a past event. If a sin is not expunged from existence, it will retain its sinful character, even if the punishment or the satisfaction has been absolved. In legal terms: A crime may become unpunishable because of a lapse of a statute of limitations or may be pardoned, but the fact of the crime remains. 'He was pardoned for his crime' is the way to phrase this scenario. Remission, however, if I understand it correctly, is not lapse of a statute of limitations or pardon. The difference is precisely this: In the case of the lapse of a statute of limitations or pardon, the fact of the crime remains, while it only loses its liability for legal action. It is only the legal action which is cancelled. Personal remorse may – and probably even should – survive. It seems to me that theologically speaking about the individual remission of sins implies that the sin itself discontinues existing, even in the individual conscience. I take it that there is no other chance for maintaining with the Scriptures that only God can 'forgive sin,' that is, expunge it from existence, and not any human tribunal.[22]

Secondly, the contingency of the past allows for a different take on the notion of history. As Peter's example about the foundation of Rome shows, the facts of the past depend on the divine intellect. Not to say that Peter had adopted an anti-realist stance about past events. He does not speak about it explicitly, but past events do not become subjective for him. Even if states of affairs are conditional on divine providence and will, what is brought about, whether as a result of subsequent changes, exists as the past in its given form. But if history is directed by providence, and past events can be annihilated by God, the course of history becomes contingent on the divine mind. Independent of ordinary epistemological scepticism, there remains the possibility that objective events will disappear or emerge, so to say, due to theological reasons. It is probably not an accident that for Peter, and his fellow theologians, Christians or Jews, history is something that must be remembered. This remembrance is not the result of the discovery of objective facts but is normative, based on the Commandments. Both are constituted by theologically grounded concepts of the past. The past is normative as part of the Covenant. Again, I think it is not a mere accident that in Talmudic Jewish thought, it is the Torah that is immutable and not the past. Similarly, Christians can also point to Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."

[22] Mt 9,6: "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Clearly a divine attribute.

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Dániel Schmal

Tradition and Novelty in Early Modern Scholasticism: The Case of Nicolás Martínez and Leonard Lessius

INTRODUCTION

Comparisons between late scholastic authors and seventeenth-century philosophers belonging to the "modern" camp are often limited to the analysis of their respective ideas either in terms of continuity and discontinuity or, in a more sociological vein, in relation to their methodology, social background and even the media with which they conveyed the message.[1] In this article I will approach the comparison from a different angle, arguing that the differences between the early modern writers who work in the scholastic tradition and their "modern" counterparts can be highlighted by their respective relation to the past in general and to certain authorities in particular. This thesis aims to convey something more than the platitude that scholastic writers tend to indulge in uncritical respect for authorities whereas Descartes and his coterie have the courage to free themselves from the burden of the past. After many decades of research into the relationship between late scholasticism and early modern thought, this view must either be completely rejected or relegated to the mythology of modernity.[2] I argue that the microstructure of argumentation in many late scholastic writers is shaped by a tension between two opposing efforts: to reform certain aspects of traditional wisdom and to maintain it by incorporating new elements rather than adding them as new perspectives.

One aspect of this attitude has been intensely studied. The highly sophisticated scholastic system of doxastic obligations and theories about degrees of commitment, issues arising from medieval scholasticism, have been explored because of their historical links with the modern theory of probability.[3] I fo-

[1] See for example the case studies presented in chapter VI. 4. in Leinsle 1995. 328 ff.

[2] More than a hundred years after the publication of Gilson 1913, this point hardly needs extensive argumentation. Since Gilson's pioneering work, a large number of studies have confirmed that Descartes is indebted to figures of scholasticism in many ways. One of the best surveys of the outcome is still Ariew 1999. Also see Secada 2000.

[3] For an overview, see Schussler 2014.

cus on another side of the story, employing certain interpretive techniques to consider the late scholastic attempt to align new ideas with authoritative views transmitted by tradition. I will advance two closely related historical cases, each of which represents a particular strategy for combining respect for the past with experimentation in unexplored intellectual fields. While relying on inherited knowledge and trying untrodden paths are inherent to creative thinking in all ages, a strong sense of doctrinal unity, coupled with an institutional *esprit de corps* and an aversion to what scholastic thinkers call *novitas*, are particular marks of post-Tridentine sensitivity in the Roman Catholic Church.

The case-studies address two different topics: the metaphysics of possibility and that of free will. These have been chosen as typical of the complex attitude to which, for the sake of brevity, I will refer as "techniques of alignment." These techniques are advancing rational arguments for a position while showing that the thesis in question was implicit in the authoritative texts of the past already. The authors chosen for this study, Nicolás Martínez and Leonard Lessius, can be used to illustrate tensions within the scholastic tradition, for they both belong to the Society of Jesus whose members – despite the particular weight they gave to doctrinal unity and strict personal obedience – have often earned the title of *novatores* in the eyes of their more traditional-minded colleagues.

1. NICOLÁS MARTÍNEZ ON CREATED ESSENCES

The first case to analyze with an eye towards the techniques of alignment comes from a typical seventeenth-century treatise, *Deus sciens sive de scientia Dei* by a Jesuit professor at the Coleggio Romano, Nicolás Martínez (1617–1676).[4] One of the chapters of this *opus magnum* deals with the question of the necessary connection between God and the *possibility* of creatures. So much is clear from the outset that no necessary connection exists between God and creatures, for creation is not an automatic emanation of the divine essence. As this thesis is

[4] Nicolás Martínez was born in Seville on January 21, 1617 and entered the Society of Jesus in 1629. He taught grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and theology in different institutions. Having taken his fourth vow in 1650, he held one of the two chairs of scholastic theology at Collegio Romano in Rome between 1659 and 1675 (see the *Elenco dei professori* in Villoslada 1954. 222.). He died in Ecija on September 30, 1676. Sommervogel 1893–1894. V. 634. mentions three published works by Martínez, the second of which is of particular interest to us. This is the *Deus sciens, sive De scientia Dei controversiae quatuor scholasticae*, first published posthumously in 1678 (Martínez 1678) and reedited in 1738 (Martínez 1738). On his unpublished manuscripts, see the Scholasticon homepage (https://scholasticon.msh-lse.fr/Database/Scholastiques_fr.php?ID=877) For the texts preserved in the *Fondo Curia* (Rome), see the analysis by Carla d'Agata at https://archiviopug.org/2011/06/03/nicolas-martinez-s-j-1617-1676-analisi-codicologica-carla-dagata/ (accessed: 20. 10. 2020.). Many studies are available for general information on this subject. Let me refer to only two, one oriented towards theology and one providing a philosophical framework: Mondin 1996. 284. ff.; Sleigh et alii 1998. 1195–1206.

de fide, that is, it serves as one of the traditional pillars of Christian doctrine, the question posed by Martínez does not concern the relationship between God and actual creation, but only addresses the *possibility* of creatures. He asks if the logical possibility of creaturely essences is given in a necessary manner by the essence of God.

One of the traditional answers to this question was provided by Thomas Aquinas. He held that possible creatures cannot be separated from the divine being, for their essences are nothing but potential participations or potential limitations of divine perfection, so once the divine being is given, possible modes of participation are also given.[5] The truth of this explanation was hotly debated among late scholastic thinkers. This is how Martínez sums up one of the most important objections to Aquinas' view:

> Others, on the contrary, consider that God – internally and by himself – is so independent of the intrinsic possibility of creatures just explained [that is, their logical possibility defined in terms of the non-contradictory character of their components], that they say that God would remain the same, and would retain the same power as he now enjoys, even if all possibilities of creatures had turned into impossibility or all their impossibilities into possibility.[6]

Presenting the arguments of those who challenge Thomas Aquinas on the grounds that no change in the modality of creatures would result in a real change

[5] Cf. 1ST q. 15. a. 2. resp.: "Ipse enim essentiam suam perfecte cognoscit, unde cognoscit eam secundum omnem modum quo cognoscibilis est. Potest autem cognosci non solum secundum quod in se est, sed secundum quod est participabilis secundum aliquem modum similitudinis a creaturis. Unaquaeque autem creatura habet propriam speciem, secundum quod aliquo modo participat divinae essentiae similitudinem. Sic igitur inquantum Deus cognoscit suam essentiam ut sic imitabilem a tali creatura, cognoscit eam ut propriam rationem et ideam huius creaturae." (4:202a.) Cf. "Propria enim natura uniuscuiusque consistit, secundum quod per aliquem modum divinam perfectionem participat" (1ST q. 14. a. 6. resp., 4:176b.); and ibid. ad 3.: "[Divina essentia] potest accipi ut propria ratio uniuscuiusque, secundum quod diversimode est participabilis vel imitabilis a diversis creaturis." (4:177b.) Because *participation* and *imitability* are, as the last quote highlights, equivalents, the first is often replaced by *similarity* in the appropriate context: "Cum enim [Deus] sciat alia a se per essentiam suam, inquantum est similitudo rerum velut principium activum earum, necesse est quod essentia sua sit principium sufficiens cognoscendi omnia quae per ipsum fiunt, non solum in universali, sed etiam in singulari." (1ST q. 14. a. 11. resp., 4:183b.) Cf. *Summa contra gentiles* I. 49, 13:142a.

[6] Nicolás Martínez: *Deus sciens sive de scientia Dei controversiae quatuor scholasticae,* controversia 2. disp. 4. s. 1., p. 87a. (References are made to the Venice edition: Martínez 1738.) "Alii contra Deum concipiunt adeo ex se et ab intrinseco inconnexum cum creaturarum possibilitate intrinseca explicata, ut dicant eundem Deum futurum et eandem potentiam habiturum ac nunc habet, sive omnia possibilia impossibilia fiant, sive impossibilia possibilia." The opposite, Thomist view is this: "Aliqui enim existimant Deum ex se et ab intrinseco esse connexum cum possibilitate intrinseca, seu non repugnantia creaturarum possibilium, et cum impossibilitate seu repugnantia inpossibilium adeo ut si creatura possibilis mutaretur in inpossibilem, aut inpossibile in possibilem, Dei quoque perfectio mutaretur et esset necessarium ponere alium Deum." *(Ibid.)*

in God, Martínez points to one of the main sources of opposition to Thomist metaphysics in the early modern age. The intention behind this anti-Thomist argument, Martínez continues, is to bring out divine transcendence more effectively by severing the logical links not only between the divine substance and the created world as it exists after the act of creation, but also between God and the *mere possibility* of the creature, too.[7] In accordance with a more general concern that permeates early modern metaphysics, the main purpose behind this objection is to put additional weight on the "greatness" of God by emphasizing his absolute independence from all finite beings, even from possible essences. From this perspective, the argument seems to be in line with early modern attempts to transform God into some sort of "Absolute."

Let us dwell for a moment on the strange thought experiment presented in the above passage. It is an idea which could be regarded as the reverse of the famous supposition made by Hugo Grotius, who, in the Preface of his *De iure belli et pacis*, famously claimed that the fundamental principles of his work would be true "even if God did not exist" *(etiamsi daretur…)*.[8] It has often been noted since the publication of the book in 1625 that Grotius owed this *suppositio impossibilis* to certain late scholastic authors.[9] The thought experiment Martínez refers to seems to be the opposite of Grotius' idea, for what Aquinas' opponents are asserting in this summary is not that finite essences would remain the same even without God, but conversely that God would be what he is even if no creature existed or was possible at all.

What is Martínez's judgment on this approach, which claims to defend divine transcendence by loosening the links between God's holiness and the possibility of creatures? At first glance, one might think that the Jesuit author – in accordance with the official regulations of his order – sided with Aquinas, but a closer examination of the details highlights some puzzling points in his arguments. Before solemnly announcing that Aquinas's doctrine is correct, Martínez refutes all the arguments supporting St. Thomas's position one by one. As a result, there seems to be a tension between his final statement and the argumentative part of his work which, strangely enough, appears to provide a thoroughgoing rebuttal of the Thomist position. I argue that despite these puzzling aspects of his reasoning, Martínez's procedure is not contradictory. If one is prepared to make an

[7] On the Scotist background of this much debated development, see Normore 2003. To the early modern debates Coombs 1993 provides an excellent introduction to the early modern debates.

[8] *De Jure belli et pacis*, *Prolegomena* 11. §: "Et haec quidem quae jam diximus, locum aliquem haberent, etiamsi daremus, quod sine summo scelere dari nequit, non esse Deum…" (Grotius 1853. xlvi). "And indeed, all we have now said would take place, though we should even grant, what without the greatest Wickedness cannot be granted, that there is no God…" (The Preliminary Discourse, Grotius 2005. 89).

[9] A number of studies have documented the scholastic antecedents of the *etiamsi daretur*. See, for instance, St Leger 1962 and Crowe 1977. 223 ff. (chapter IX).

effort to dispel this seeming confusion in his work, one can detect some intriguing aspects of early modern scholastic thought concerning doctrinal authorities.

Martínez's reasoning unfolds in four stages. First, he presents the Thomist argument, the essence of which can be summarized in a few words: it is generally accepted that one of the divine attributes is God's perfect identity with himself *(summa identitas)*. A self-identical being cannot be the subject of contradictory predicates at the same time and in the same respect, so for instance the same thing cannot be simultaneously white and not white. Now, if the modal value of a given possibility were to change according to the hypothesis stated above – were, for instance, the nature of light to become impossible (the result of which would be a *lux chimerica*) –, we would conclude that God had changed his nature and ceased to be the same as he was. The reason for this conclusion is that, having accepted that God coexists (or is "compossible") with light, we must admit after the change that the same God is also compossible with the impossibility of the light. But this would be disastrous for divine self-identity: as essences belong eternally to God, a God who coexists with the possibility of light cannot be the same being as the one who coexists with its impossibility. The result of the Thomist argument, concludes Martínez, is that changing the modality would jeopardize the divine essence.

How convincing is this reasoning? Here is Martínez's judgment: "There are arguments that, when put on paper, make people laugh but surprise those who face them unexpectedly. These arguments are of this kind…" [10] The reason, he continues, is that in the aforementioned example the contradiction lies in the object, namely, in the light, not in God. On the assumption that Peter is both white and non-white, the coexistence of God with such a person would lead to a contradiction, it is true, but the source of the contradiction in that case would be Peter and not the divine essence.[11] In light of this, Martínez proposes a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic contradiction. If Peter's nature involves contradiction, any other substance's coexistence with him would also be contradictory. However, from the perspective of the other substance, the contradiction would come from without. Martínez therefore concludes that, with regard to the metaphysical possibility of an object, the question of whether the object can be put into contradictory *external* relations is completely irrelevant:

> My answer is that the self-identity of a being does not require in itself and intrinsically that no externally contradictory propositions be made about it. For even though extrinsic contradictions [*contradictoria extrinseca*] cannot be true about the same thing,

[10] Martínez, *loc. cit.* 87b: "Aliqua sunt argumenta quae in charta risum in voce admirationem pariunt iis quibus improvisa adveniunt, eiusmodi est argumentum praesens [in quo nihil video acuminis, ut tanti habeatur]."

[11] *Ibid.*, Martínez 1738. 88b.

> this comes from the nature and the essence of these predicates – in the same way as two contradictory propositions cannot be true at the same time not because the nature of time excludes that light and dark exist together, but on account of the nature of light and dark.[12]

This is the second step in Martínez's reasoning. He argues against the Thomist doctrine, pointing out that the change of modality in a created essence would have no effect at all on the nature of God. "For me," he adds, "to coexist with a chimera, it is not my nature but that of the chimera that must be changed and made existent."[13]

Having presented and rejected the Thomist view, Martínez approaches the same question from a different angle, and this is the third step in his reasoning. The question he wants to explore concerns the degrees of necessity: he asks if divine perfection is more necessary than the possibility of creatures. He refers to two widely shared positions in this regard. The first comes from Francisco Suárez, who maintains that there is no difference in degree between the different types of necessity, so the intrinsic possibility of a creature, defined in terms of the non-contradiction of its essence, is as necessary as the existence of the divine attributes, say the omnipotence of God. From this modal equality it follows that, according to Suárez, no creature can be deprived of its intrinsic possibility without preventing God from producing it, which would harm divine omnipotence and destroy the very possibility of God.[14] It can be seen that by endorsing the equality-thesis Suárez sided with the Thomists: the modality of the creator and the modality of the creature are of the same type and are linked to each other. The second point of view Martínez alludes to is the opinion of Gábriel Vázquez (1549–1604) who admitted different degrees of necessity and argued that changing a creature's nature from possible to impossible would not imply the impossibility of God.[15] This is how Martínez sums up the opposing views:

> The difference between these two opinions is that the latter [Vázquez's position] accepts the principle under discussion, namely, that divine perfection enjoys a higher degree of necessity […], in order to defend that God bears no relation to the non-con-

[12] *Ibid.*, Martínez 1738. 89a: "Respondeo identitatem rei secum ipsa non petere ex se et ab intrinseco quod de illa non possint verificari contradictoria extrinseca, licet enim de eadem re non possint dici contradictoria extrinseca, id provenit ex natura et quidditate illorum praedicatorum, sicut licet in eodem tempore non possint verificari duo contradictoria, id provenit non quia tempus exigat essentialiter quod lux et tenebrae sint incompossibilia, sed ex natura ipsa lucis et tenebrarum."

[13] *Ibid.*: "Ut ego sim coexistens chymerae, non est necessarium mutare meam naturam, sed mutare naturam chymerae, et reddere illam existentem."

[14] Francisco Suárez: *De trinitate personarum*, 9. cp. 6. n. 19–21 (Suarez 1856–1878. I. 739b–740a).

[15] 1a q. 25. disp. 104. cp. 6 (Vázquez 1600. 803b ff.)

> tradictory nature of the creature. By contrast, the first opinion, defending that God is connected with creaturely non-contradiction, must fight, by necessity as it were, for the view that divine perfection is no more necessary than this non-contradiction [in the creature].[16]

The debate between Suárez and Vázquez is closely connected to the question under consideration, i.e., the relationship between God and the metaphysical possibility of the creature. Suárez, as far as he finds this relationship necessary, comes close to the Thomist position, but the price to pay for the agreement with Aquinas is that he must commit himself to a common modal order encompassing both God and the creatures.[17] Vázquez, on the other hand, wanting to preserve the hierarchical difference in necessity between God and the creature, rejects modal community and denies that the possibility of God and the possibility of the creature stand or fall together. Hence he needs to admit that neither would the impossibility of God imply any intrinsic contradiction in the creature (which would be Grotius' famous idea), nor would the impossibility of the creature entail the impossibility of God (which would be the reverse case mentioned above).

Before moving on in following Martínez's reasoning, let us pause for a moment to come to a partial conclusion. In this debate we can see the split of something that once formed a unitary whole: Suárez can only maintain the ontological asymmetry between the creator and the creature (a sort of Platonic hierarchy) by abandoning their modal difference, while Vázquez prefers to give up the ontological hierarchy to save modal asymmetry. In other words, at a point where the Platonic hierarchy of beings used to posit a broad difference between the creator and the creature, we find ourselves at a crossroads: either we join Vázquez arguing that the possibility of God does not depend on the possibility of the creature, an argument that jeopardies the ontological dependence of essences, or we agree with Suárez in saying that created essences necessarily depend on God, although this move makes them (the essences as mere possibilities) share the modal status of God. The choice is either – or.

Having shown all the pros and cons of the Thomist arguments, Martínez finally comes to the conclusion that the necessity of God is greater than the necessity of the creature's essence, because God, an infinitely perfect being, does

[16] Martínez, *op.cit.*, controversia 2., disp. 4. s. 2., 90a: "Inter utramque sententiam haec est differentia quod secunda, ut defendat Deum esse inconnexum cum non repugnantia creaturarum, assumit hoc principium, videlicet, quod divina perfectio est magis necessaria quam illa non repugnantia. Prima vero sententia ut defendat Deum esse connexum cum illa non repugnantia creaturarum, quasi necessaria consequentiae lege defendit non esse maiorem necessitatem divinae perfectionis quam illius non repugnantiae."

[17] As far as the concept of *possibility* is concerned, however, this account ends up moving away from the Thomist mainstream to such an extent that Jacob Schmutz sees Suárez's theory as one of the main challenges to the standard scholastic view. Cf. Schmutz 2002. 190.

not need anything else for him to exist. By contrast, the necessity of a created essence implies only a possible existence, which makes it much inferior to divine nature. This is Vázquez's view which, although it looks like a final conclusion, does not represent the last step in Martínez's reasoning. After bringing the point home, he adds one last step. "But once," he says, "something more necessary is connected to something less necessary, the former assimilates the latter to itself extrinsically."[18] This sounds technical enough to hide the message. What Martínez is pleading for at this last stage is that although created essences are less necessary than God in principle, the fact that they are "implemented" or subsist in him – a relation which is external to their nature – confers on them the same necessity as possessed by God, *ex post facto* so to speak. At this fourth stage, Martínez seems to rehabilitate the authority of the Thomistic principle he has just ruined. By saying that the essences which, by their intrinsic nature, enjoy a certain logical independence participate in the perfections of God, Martínez stresses the role of the *external* relationship that binds them to God. Giving back thereby to Thomas Aquinas his original standing as an *auctoritas*, Martínez brings his doctrine back in line with the official teaching but does not restore the force of the Thomistic arguments. For in Martínez the relation between God and the essences is not the intimate relation supposed by Aquinas, but an extrinsic relation between the creator and the essences which subsist (one could say: happen to subsist) in the divine essence. In short, essences do not subsist in God as forms of participation, but as autonomous possibilities which, for some ontological reasons which remain external to their intrinsic nature, are incapable of possessing a real existence elsewhere than in God. Still more briefly put, essences depend on God but the basis of this relationship is not participation but *implementation*.

We can see a strange maneuver in Martínez's doctrine. While echoing Aquinas' teaching, the explanation he attaches to it runs counter to the Thomist doctrine and ultimately amounts to denying it. Or, more precisely, by applying the fundamental *distinction* between internal and external factors in the modal nature of essences, Martínez succeeded in making room for Thomist insights from an external point of view, while denying their relevance from another, internal perspective. This form of traditionalism resembles those renovated historic buildings where the precious façade is preserved, but the interior living quarters are completely demolished and rebuilt.

[18] Martínez, *op.cit.*, controversia 2, disp. 4. s. 3, Martínez 1738. 92b: "Magis necessarium connexum cum minus necessario illud reddit aequaliter sibi necessarium extrinsice."

2. LEONARD LESSIUS AND THE CREATURE'S DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Similar methods can be observed in the writings of Leonard Lessius (Lenaert Leys, 1554–1623),[19] a famous Flemish Jesuit, who, besides his main work in moral theology, was also a well-known expert on economic questions of his time. Furthermore, he was one of the first theologians to adopt a more radical form of libertarianism in response to the Prostestant challenge. According to the libertarians (later called Molinists),[20] a voluntary act is free when it cannot be deduced from any previous temporal, logical or metaphysical description of the world.[21] In other words, the knowledge of a free decision cannot be derived from antecedent causes, the content of the will can only be known through the knowledge of the decision itself. It is well known that this concept of free will poses serious difficulties for the Augustinian-Thomist account of providence: based on this hypothesis even God is incapable of knowing free decisions through the metaphysical dependence of all beings on him as the first cause of all creatures.[22] In light of this, it is not surprising that Lessius seeks to prove that God's knowledge of created events does not rest entirely on the creature's causal dependence on the creator but is realized, partly at least, through the cognitive (or noetic) supereminence of God over all possibilities.[23]

[19] Lessius' biography is much better known than the life of Martínez. See Sommervogel 1893–1894. IV. 1726–1751 and Ram 1861. Lessius was born in Brecht on October 1, 1554. Having entered the Jesuit order in 1572, he completed his studies in Rome under Francisco Suárez and Roberto Bellarmino. Between 1585–1600 he was professor of theology at the Jesuit College of Louvain, where his arguments against Michael De Bay (Baius) against predestination and grace raised a bitter quarrel with his Augustinian colleagues at the university. He died in Louvain, 15 January 1623. (For a concise bibliography, see the *Scolasticon* homepage: https://scholasticon.msh-lse.fr/Database/Scholastiques_fr.php?ID=795, accessed: 20. 10. 2020.)

[20] From the vast secondary literature on Molinism I suggest some recent presentations: Cruz 2013; Marschler 2016. Chapter 2.3. (Molinism); Gerace 2019.

[21] Cf. with the definition of free will given by Molina: „Quo pacto illud agens liberum dicitur quod positis omnibus requisitis ad agendum potest agere et non agere aut ita agere unum ut contrarium etiam agere possit." *Concordia*, pars 1, disp. 2, n. 3., Molina 1953. 14. (In Alfred J. Freddoso's translation: "That agent is called 'free' who, with all the prerequisites for acting having been posited, is able to act and is able not to act, or is able to do one thing in such a way that he is also able to do some contrary thing," Freddoso 1998. 463.)

[22] This raises concerns for the interpretation of divine providence, as it runs counter to the famous principle by Aquinas: "Cum ergo nihil aliud sit Dei providentia quam ratio ordinis rerum in finem, ut dictum est, necesse est omnia, inquantum participant esse, intantum subdi divinae providentiae" (1ST q. 22. a. 2. resp., 4:265a).

[23] By the terms *cognitive* or *noetic supereminence* I am referring to a group of similar theses that attempt to reconcile divine foreknowledge with human freedom by putting the *ratio cognitionis* exclusively in the divine essence or, more specifically, in the epistemic perfection of the divine intellect. Therefore, in using these terms, I want to cover all versions distinguished by Matava 2016. 148 ff. The most famous variant of these theories, which significantly differs from the solutions presented by Lessius and Suárez, is the theory of *supercomprehension*

According to Lessius' critics, the noetic supereminence in the above reasoning may lead theologians to deny the Christian tradition, because it invites them to abandon the age-old truth that creatures exist more perfectly and – by implication – in a more intelligible manner in the First Cause than in themselves.[24] The charge against Lessius, Molina and their fellow-Jesuits is that they degrade divine perfection, as, by saying that the decision of free will does not preexist eminently in God, they are admitting that the act of free will is a metaphysically perfect and independent being (like God). The final verdict is that Lessius' view is injurious to Christian metaphysics, since it denies the principle that the closer things come to the source of their being in God, the more real and self-identical they become.[25]

Given these criticisms, it may be surprising that the first authority Lessius chooses to cite in support of his views is Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, one of the founding fathers of the tradition from which he appears to be drifting away. He quotes *The Divine Names* in arguing against the traditional understanding of divine knowledge:

> For the Mind of God gains not Its knowledge of things from those things; but of Itself and in Itself It possesses, and hath conceived beforehand in a causal manner, the cognizance and the knowledge and the being of them all. And It doth not perceive each class specifically, but in one embracing causality It knows and maintains all things – even as Light possesses beforehand in itself a causal knowledge of the darkness, not knowing the darkness in any other way than from the Light.[26]

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attributed to Molina based on the textual evidence found in his *Concordia* pars IV. q. 14. a. 13. disp. 53. Here, Molina characterizes 'middle knowledge' as stemming *ex altissima et inscrutabili comprehensione cuiusque liberi arbitrii* (n. 9., Molina 1953. 340.) For the theory of supercomprehension see Freddoso 1988.

[24] In Aquinas' phrasing: "Alia autem a se videt non in ipsis, sed in seipso, inquantum essentia sua continet similitudinem aliorum ab ipso" (1ST q. 14. a. 5. resp., 4:172a).

[25] See the Báñezian position summarized by Alfred J. Freddoso: "Bañezians have no special problem here: God knows conditional future contingents in the same way He knows absolute future contingents, namely, in and through His decreeing that they obtain" (Freddoso 1988. 51).

[26] *De divinis nominibus* 7. 2: Οὐ γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ὄντων τὰ ὄντα μανθάνων οἶδεν ὁ θεῖος νοῦς, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐν ἑαυτῷ κατ' αἰτίαν τὴν πάντων εἴδησιν καὶ γνώσιν καὶ οὐσίαν προέχει καὶ προσυνείληφεν οὐ κατ' ἰδίαν ἑκάστοις ἐπιβάλλων, ἀλλὰ κατὰ μίαν τῆς αἰτιας περιοχὴν τὰ πάντα εἰδὼς καὶ συνέχων ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ φῶς κατ' αἰτίαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν εἴδησιν τοῦ σκότους προείληφεν οὐκ ἄλλοθεν εἰδὼς τὸ σκότος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ φωτός. (Migne PG 3:869AB–870B; Dionysius 1990. 196–197.) In this 1620 work Lessius uses the translation to be reproduced in Migne, prepared by a Belgian Jesuit, Balthasar Cordier (1592–1650), long before its publication in 1634. (Or did the translator include in his edition of 1634 the rendering of such an excellent classical scholar as Lessius? Cf. note 19 below.) "Non enim ex rebus ipsis res discens novit eas divina mens, sed ex se ipsa et in se ipsa, secundum causam omnium scientiam et notionem et essentiam praehabet, et ante comprehendit, non singulis secundum cuiusque speciem intendens, sed secundum unicam causae complexionem cuncta sciens et continens; sicut et lux secundum causam tenebrarum

To read this passage in Lessius as a citation in favor of his point is confusing because one would be hard-pressed to find a better summary of the position which he wants to challenge, as we can see from the tenor of the passage taken from the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. The Areopagite claims that the divine knowledge of created things does not derive from the things themselves, but comes from God and exists in him as in their cause (ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐν ἑαυτῷ κατ' αἰτίαν). Lessius, after having outlined, as it were, the structure of the traditional truth by quoting Dionysius, goes on to indicate some reasons for raising doubts about it.

> Some will make this objection: how can God know all things by knowing his own essence when there are many truths which are not caused by him? Such are all the connections of free will with sinful acts in human beings and in evil spirits, for example the fact that Peter will deny Christ, Judas will betray him, the Antichrist will persecute the Church and extoll himself as an object of worship. These complex situations and proposals do not come from him. How then can he know them in himself as in their cause?[27]

The objection is straightforward: the causal account of divine knowledge cannot explain how God comes to know the outcome of a free decision tending to something wrong. For the sake of simplicity, and hopefully without distorting Lessius' reasoning, I bypass the complications arising from the fact that the objection does not directly address the problem of free will but appeals to the widely shared principle that God cannot cause evil. Lessius' subsequent argumentation shows that, rather than focusing narrowly on evil deeds, his worry concerns free decision in general. As regards this more sweeping point, Lessius admits the difficulty raised by the objector and agrees that the phenomenon of free will poses insurmountable obstacles to the causal account. Lessius' follow-up argument is very instructive, for what he does after admitting the objection is not to repudiate the original Dionysian formulae but to offer a number of distinctions attesting to the polysemy of the text and the resulting tradition.[28]

Accordingly, in the next step, Lessius submits that the Dionysian principle transmitted through the ages by a long and respectable tradition of commentary

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notionem anticipat, non aliunde quam ex luce tenebras noscens." Leonardus Lessius: *De perfectionibus moribusque divinis* VI. 1. 3 (Lessius 1620. 71). English translation: Dionysius 1979. 150. [Instead of *casuality*, I wrote *causality* in accordance with the original.]

[27] *Ibid.* VI. 1. 5, Lessius 1620. 72: "Dicet aliquis, quomodo Deus cognoscit omne verum in essentia sua seu ex vi cogitationis suae essentiae, cum plurima sint vera quorum ipse non est causa: ut sunt omnes complexiones liberi arbitrii cum peccato in hominubus et daemonibus, ut quod Petrus negabit Christum, quod Iudas illum prodet, quod Antichristus persequetur ecclesiam, et faciet se adorari. Talium enim coniunctionum et complexarum veritatum ipse non est auctor. Quomodo ergo cognoscit eas in se tamquam in causa?"

[28] Lessius' interpretation is referred to, approvingly it seems, in the commentary to the 1634 Latin translation of the *Divine names* by Balthasar Cordier (Cordier 1634. 754ab).

can be formulated as follows: (P) *God knows all things by knowing himself as a cause,* where "all things" refers to the existence of anything God decided to create. Having summed up the idea of Dionysus' thesis in this way, Lessius goes on to argue that (P) can have four meanings according to the four different meanings of the term *cause*.

(P1) God knows all things by knowing himself as a *necessary* cause.
(P2) God knows all things by knowing himself as a *free* cause.
(P3) *God knows all things by knowing* himself as a *free* cause that permits everything it has to.
(P4) God knows all things by knowing himself as a *partly necessary*, *partly free* cause.

These different renderings of (P) refer to four different theories about the causal role God is supposed to play in the universe. What makes the situation remarkable is that all can be expressed through the same time-honored formula (P). Lessius' point is that if rendered as (P1) or (P2) the statement is false, but if rendered as (P3) or (P4) it is flawless. Let us take a closer look at the first two options. On reading (P1), it becomes apparent that the thesis is wrong, because the created world is not an automatic emanation of the divine essence. As created events do not flow necessarily from God's eternal nature, God cannot know them in himself as if knowing their necessary cause. The central point in Lessius' reasoning is the rejection of (P2). The claim that God knows all existent beings (all contingent things or events) in *himself as in their free cause* seems to be in accordance with the opinion of Duns Scotus and the scholastic mainstream.[29] From this perspective, God has always been free to create or not to create, but after he has decided to create he is able to know the contingent events of the world by consulting his own will which never remains without causal efficacy. Despite the consensus of so many theologians about this doctrine,[30] Lessius argues to abandon (P2) on the grounds that, taken at face value, it has negative consequences either for human beings or for God. If the will of God cannot be thwarted by the creature, (P2) is detrimental to human freedom, for in this case divine will would prevail over everything that happens by acting as inevitable fate.[31] If, on the contrary, free will can counter divine volitions, they cannot serve as a source of certain knowledge for God, and the result can at best yield

[29] For Scotus' view (with references), see Cross 1999. 52–55.

[30] See the position to which Lessius alludes in order to criticize it in the second chapter of his *De gratia efficaci, decretis divinis, libertate arbitrii et praescientia Dei conditionata disputatio apologetica* (1610): "Cognoscit igitur Deus affectus liberos in suis causis determinantis, cum universas causas creatas in sua essentia cognoscat, prout est prima causa omnibus causis esse conferens, virtutem communicans et determinationem praefigens ad operandum, cui moventi nihil valet resistere." (Lessius 1610. 5.)

[31] Cf. *De gratia efficaci…*, cp. 3. n. 11 and 21, Lessius 1610. 13 ff. and 20, see esp. 13: "Hinc sequi videtur primo vitam humanam perpetuo fato alligatam esse, nec posse nos plura aut

probable knowledge. Needless to say, in this case (P2) would annihilate divine omniscience.

The rejection of (P1) and (P2) is perfectly understandable in the light of Lessius' concern that creaturely free acts cannot be known to God as a result of his knowing his own divine will. The truth value of propositions about free events, Lessius insists, must be independent of the divine will. On the other hand, he maintains that God knows the future from all eternity, that is, the eternal intellect of God has a precise knowledge of the truth value of each pair of propositions expressing free alternatives about the future. But let us repeat the crucial point, that the medium in which God comes to know them cannot be his own will, it must rather be something prevolitional, because the divine intellect is cognizant of all the acts of a free creature *prior to* his making – and, consequently, knowing – any decisions. (Note that the priority at hand is the logical priority of the cause over the effect, so what we have here is the so-called "priority of nature" and not a temporal priority.)[32] The fact that free decisions cannot be known through the divine will is motivated by the nature of freedom, a power which cannot be put into action by anything other than itself, so the prevolitional knowledge of human decisions in God is a *sine qua non* condition for saving the idea of Providence.

Thus the way out from the labyrinth for Lessius is to assert that before making any decision to create, God already knows all the decisions that any human being would make without constraint in all possible situations (that is, in any situation that would come true if it pleased God to produce it). In other words, before creation, God not only knows all logically possible worlds and all their possible combinations, but – and this is the central point of Lessius' reasoning – he knows how free agents would actually decide (independently of God) in any possible situation they could face.[33] For Eternal Wisdom knows "not only what things he would be able to produce, but even what they [i.e., free creatures] actually produce on each supposition and under each condition."[34]

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pauciora facere quam facimus, nec alia, nec aliis temporibus vel momentis, nec aliis locis, nec alio modo vel ordine, nec circa alia obiecta, nec ob alios fines…"

[32] On the concept of "priority of nature" or "instants of nature" in Scotus see Normore 2003. 133 ff.

[33] Lessius' arguments rely on the doctrine of *scientia media* that he shares with Molinism. Lessius' account of grace became widely known during his clash with the Faculty of Theology of Leuven in 1587–1588, the time of which almost coincided with the publication of Molina's *Concordia* (1588). Though their views, probably developed in parallel and without influencing one another, differ on certain points, they overlap considerably. For the historical relationship between the two Jesuit theologians see the dissertation of Eleonora Rai, who states that "i due teologi avevano sviluppato riflessioni analoghe, ma senza influenzarsi reciprocamente" (Rai 2012–2013. ch. 2, esp. 142). See also her rich and informative article Rai 2020.

[34] *Op. cit.* VI. 2. n. 18, Lessius 1620. 77. "…non solum quae fieri possunt a singulis, sed etiam quae re ipsa fierent a singulis quavis hypothesi facta, quavis occasione proposita…"

Given these requirements, it is not surprising that at this juncture Lessius also seems to resort to the noetic excellence of God:

> …God sees all of these things in the most distinct and perfect way, and what is more, He also grasps [in advance] with the greatest clarity what my free choice will embrace and do out of all the possibilities.[35]

To sum up, what God foreknows about the outcome of a creature's free decision in a certain situation is not only a pair of alternatives (either *this* or *that*), but the definite truth of one of them through the noetic perfection of the divine intellect. This account, stemming from the distinctions applied to (P), results in a thoroughgoing reinterpretation of the time-sanctioned Dionysian formula. On the one hand, Lessius subscribes to the traditional thesis that *God knows all things through the knowledge of his own essence*. On the other hand, however, it is not the causal role of the divine essence that is of interest to him, but God's noetic excellence, because this is the medium through which his knowledge reaches everything. Divine knowledge, Lessius explains, "issues from the infinite efficacy of the eyes of God *(ex infinita efficacitate)* the rays of which extend to the fullness of time, attain and reach everything that exists at any moment."[36] Lessius' words may remind us of the Baroque iconography of the eye of God. The image refers not only to the Judge who "searches the reins and hearts" (*Revelation* 2:23), but also to the infinite penetration of the divine sight, a power that, according to Lessius and other *neoterici*, works independently of the causal order stemming from God.

As in the case of Martínez, Lessius' method also has its ambiguities. On the one hand, he clearly shows great respect for the tradition of metaphysics when he attempts to "shed more light on the subject"[37] by introducing a number of new distinctions. At the same time, however, one may wonder whether in doing so he ends up, perhaps *malgré lui*, raising questions about the strength of the whole edifice. Thus, the situation comes close to the one observed in Martínez's work. The authority of Pseudo-Dionysius is reaffirmed here in the same way as the *auctoritas* of Thomas Aquinas is reestablished in his Andalusian colleague's work. Both resort to metaphysical distinctions which are alien to the original context of the texts to which they apply them. New patterns of thought

[35] *Ibid.*: "Deus autem omnes illas distinctissime et perfectissime videt, et simul ulterius penetrat quidnam in singulis libertas mea esset amplexura, quid factura."

[36] *Op.cit.* VI. 2. n. 23., Lessius 1620. 79: "…id provenire ex infinita efficacitate oculi divini cuius radius se extendit per totum tempus, tangens et incurrens in omnia quae in aliqua parte temporis existunt." Cf. *In D. Thomam de beatudine, de incarnatione verbi… (In III. partem Thomae de incarnatione Verbi)* q. 11. a. 1. dub. 5. n. 14, Lessius 1648. 407b, where having rejected all alternative explanations, Lessius asserts that Jesus Christ was able to foresee future contingents "ex efficatia luminis" communicated to him by God *(ex peculiari influxu divino)*.

[37] *Op.cit.* VI. 1. n. 7., Lessius 1620. 72: "maioris explicationis gratia."

that point toward some foundational values of modernity loom behind these moves. In Lessius, the Molinist account of freedom differs from corresponding medieval theories in significant ways. Similarly, in Martínez one can discern the contours of an approach which, without going so far as to divorce finite essences from God, gives them more autonomy by seeing them conceivable in themselves and independently of their causal origin.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As stated at the outset, the aim of this study has not been to analyze of basic philosophical and theological questions about free will and finite essences as discussed by Martínez and Lessius, since in recent decades these questions have been the subjects of intense scholarly interest. Rather, our attention was focused on how late scholastic writers relate to the Patristic and medieval heritage when using authoritative texts. While this broad question cannot be addressed in depth in a single article, even our two case studies have highlighted some points of interest that may contribute to an answer. In early modern scholasticism, ecclesiastical *auctoritas* continues to serve as the basis for theological argumentation and, when needed, various techniques of alignment are employed to fulfil the need for some kind of conformity. The crucial step in Martínez's and Lessius' arguments is to make distinctions between the various meanings allegedly implicit in the traditional doctrine.

Let me finish with a few more general remarks. The effort to integrate new elements into the scholastic tradition gives the impression that relevant initiatives cannot come from the outside, but must flow from within the tradition. Hence the main task of a theologian is not to modify the heritage, let alone to take issue with it, but to spell out its hidden aspects. One of the driving forces behind this methodology is a strong intellectual commitment to doctrinal unity which, coupled with institutional constraints, functions as a creative force shaping both ideas and texts throughout this period. The growing number of new distinctions that make room for different strategies of accommodation demonstrates the strength of this ideal. But, ironically, these efforts led to the opposite effect in the long run. Wanting to present new perspectives by stretching the interpretation of received opinions rather than judging them erroneous *tout court*, often helped to expose the equivocity of the tradition. So the interpretative efforts and the attempts at integration can be considered symptoms of a process which diversifies the tradition through the very effort to safeguard it.

Our findings, however, need some caveats. Note, in the first place, that in speaking of *integration* I do not envisage a two-phase process in which the creative work of knowledge-production is followed by tactical moves. Even though tactical adjustments may have occurred here and there, there is every indication

that the efforts for alignment were not a supplement to, but a fundamental feature of productive thinking. Advancing rational arguments for a position and showing that the position in question was implicit in the authoritative texts of the past were two interwoven aspects of one method. Secondly, the struggle for integrity did not exclude diversity. Scholarly work tolerated much more doubt and many more minority positions than the solemn announcements of the ecclesial authorities would suggest. Despite some post-Tridentine claims to the contrary, bitter controversies and theological debates were ubiquitous. Different factions and schools flourished, and an enormous number of texts were published with meticulous philological care, but despite the hard work devoted to translation, interpretation and publication, the observer could hardly avoid the impression that the dream of political and spiritual unity of the Church was over. The more the means of control became effective in an era marked by a denser network of communication, the more difficult it was to harmonize the dream of unity with the reality of divisions created by multiple meanings and irremediable ambiguities. But however one assesses the situation, the techniques of alignment deserve to be studied as sources of impressive intellectual richness. Shaping religious self-identity in the face of confessional diversity, these techniques reflect theological reactions to the changing intellectual climate; they can be seen as attempts to forge a more thoughtful and reflective relationship with the past while responding to the challenges that arise from the new perspectives at a time of dramatic transformation.[38]

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Summaries

György Heidl

Faith, Reason and Touch

From the start, philosophers were appalled by the Christian effort to have their teaching recognized as a philosophy, what is more, as the only true and genuine philosophy, given that the cornerstone of their philosophy was the concept of faith, and they expected their followers to have faith. Irrationalism was a recurring charge made by philosophers against Christians. The aim of this paper is to point to the various meaning of the term faith used by the Christians and the parallels between the Christian and non-Christian philosophy from this viewpoint. I offer a brief overview of the Biblical meanings of "faith," including a discussion of the philosophical concepts of faith that may have influenced early Christian spirituality. Then, I further characterize the distinctive Christian understanding of "faith" from several points of view. Finally, I draw a strong connection between "faith" and the metaphor of "touch," which will lead to fundamental questions about Christian and Platonic mysticism.

Gyula Klima

Words and What Is Beyond Words

This paper, "Words and What Is Beyond Words", directly addresses the extraordinary hermeneutical scenario generated by the improper, but not illegitimate uses of language required to talk about what is beyond the grasp of the ordinary meanings of our ordinary words. To provide a sufficiently general theoretical framework for the discussion of this hermeneutical scenario, I distinguish three typical interpretational practices, and argue for what I regard as the "the golden mean" between two bad extremes.

Joshua P. Hochschild

Thomas Aquinas, *Magister Ludi*: The Relation of Medieval Logic and Theology

This paper seeks to articulate the relationship between medieval logic and theology. Reviewing modern scholarship, we find that the purpose of medieval logic, when it is even inquired about, has proven difficult to articulate without reference to theology. This prompts reflection on the metaphors of logic as a "tool" and a "game": a tool is not merely instrumental, insofar as it can have its own intrinsic goods and can shape and be shaped by that which it serves; likewise a game, with its own intrinsic goods, may yet contribute to extrinsic goods as well. After reviewing some distinctive ways in which theology shaped developments of medieval logic, this paper summarizes key examples from the work of Thomas Aquinas where medieval logic shaped the articulation of, and is therefore crucial to a proper understanding of, theological arguments and claims. The conclusion suggests implications for future philosophical and theological work.

Gábor Borbély

The Triumph of Renouncement

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the basic assumptions that, I believe, Aquinas's ambitious work, the *Summa contra Gentiles* greatly depends on. These assumptions appear to form the bedrock of Aquinas's deep personal convictions, and as such they may have been the driving force behind his attempt to manifest the truth and eliminate all human error in this work. By casting light upon these assumptions, I aim to clarify some aspects of his „odd project" that has so stubbornly resisted attempts at contextualization. The first of these assumptions concerns the reliability of religious signalling: handicapped signals provide reliable information about the quality they display, for only high-quality signallers can afford to send them. In his attempt to justify religious commitment, Aquinas relied on the same insight that – centuries later – led to the formulation of the handicap principle in evolutionary biology. I will thus take a closer look at both the handicap principle itself and the subsequent debates on the principle in evolutionary biology in order to reveal that Aquinas addresses problems in the *Summa contra Gentiles* that can be seen at different levels of biological organization and cultural complexity in signalling systems, especially when doubts arise about the reliability of the signals, i.e., when the possibility of error and deception appears. The second of Aquinas's assumptions that I will investigate is that mental states and processes exist, yet they are principally hidden from fellow human beings to the extent that only the willing and thinking subject and God have full access to them. It thus also follows that errors (as misrepresentations of reality resulting from defective mental operations) are principally hidden and – aside from the thinking subject – they, too, can only be known by God. However, if error and deceptive intent are hidden, then how can they be identified and eliminated? What can human beings do to promote cautious and accurate communication that is in the best interest of cooperative signallers, as it reduces the chance of costly, occasionally even fatal mistakes? These are both epistemological and ethico-theological problems for Aquinas, since he holds – and this is the third assumption that I examine – that errors are chiefly responsible for human misery. In Aquinas's view, only religion can

unite people in a common form of life that, in turn, can lead them to ultimate happiness. Uniting people in a common form of life by eliminating principally hidden errors: this is the agenda that links Aquinas's deep personal convictions with his vocation as a Dominican friar and spiritual warrior.

Nicolas Faucher

Voluntary Belief and Moral Duty in Peter John Olivi

The aim of the present paper is to examine the foundational character of the notion of voluntary belief in Peter John Olivi's conception of the moral and social life of the individual subject. Voluntary belief is a form of belief that is produced because the believer wills it to occur for moral reasons rather than in response to epistemic reasons. It is considered essential for fulfilling the most basic moral duties (such as having faith or having filial piety) and for many common human activities. It is problematic, however, for the promotion of such a belief risks undervaluing respect for objective truth. It may also entail an infinite regress. If a moral belief is caused by an act of the will, as Olivi thinks, and if something is justified only when what causes is justified, then the justification of this moral belief will entail the justification of the corresponding act of the will. But it seems the justification of an act of the will must be moral rather than epistemic in nature and ultimately rest on a moral belief. If this moral belief is itself caused by an act of the will, and so on ad infinitum, there will be an infinite regress. In this paper, I will deal with these problems by first recalling the already studied Olivian doctrine of faith, which is the context in which his view on voluntary belief, be it faithful or otherwise, is detailed; second, I will examine a moral conundrum Olivi presents in two of his works: the question whether it should be revealed that an adulterous son is adulterous; third and last, I will put forward hypotheses accounting for the Franciscan's view that, in the vast majority of cases, it should not be revealed that the adulterous son is indeed adulterous and draw broader consequences from this case regarding the general link between moral life and voluntary belief that Olivi's texts suggest.

Magali Roques

William of Ockham on the Ontology of Social Objects (in His Academic Writings)

This paper deals with the ontology of social realities as found in William of Ockham's academic writings. It focuses on one class of social realities, namely, those that are called "voluntary signs" in the Middle Ages. For Franciscan theologians, like Peter John Olivi, Roger Bacon or William Ockham, voluntary signs are signs that depend on human convention to have a social function. They include not only linguistic signs, but also monetary price *(pretium)*, property right *(dominium)*, and the sacraments. For these theologians, the question is how something material likes a sign, a coin, or a ritual, can have any social function at all. I will argue that for Ockham they have a social function because a mental state is part of their nature, namely the decision to endow a material object with a social function for the first time or to follow an established social practice. How does this social process

work? For Ockham and other Franciscan theologians before him, the question is whether the model of the covenant that grounds social reality (economic and other kinds of social exchanges, including linguistic exchanges) is to be conceived analogously to the model of the covenant between God and human beings (concerning what is required for salvation, and therefore especially the sacraments). I will argue that it is, contrary to the opposite view defended in the literature that conceives of the analogy in the reverse direction.

György Geréby

The Changeability of the Past: Medieval and Modern.
A Common Theme between Peter Damian and Hans Jonas

Against the common view Hans Jonas (1903–1993) and Petrus Damiani (c. 1007–1072/3), independently from each other argued for the possibility of a contingent past. In this paper, I reconstruct and compare their positions. In the case of Jonas, the changeability is implicit, based on two considerations: the first is the result of his analysis of the conditions of truth in historical statements, while the second is the consequence of his reflections on the theological implications of the *shoah*. In Damiani's case, the changeability is explicit, an original idea against the views of Aristotle, Jerome and Augustine, based on his understanding of divine omnipotence, which is then supported with an ingenious logical analysis. While Jonas and Damiani reached their conclusions independently, both were based on theological considerations, albeit on widely different ones. The contingency of the past had also exercised the minds of most medieval theologians, as I will show this briefly by Peter of Ailly's dilemma concerning prophecies. Finally, I argue that the non-standard views of Jonas és Damiani imply consequences for the concepts of God, time, and freedom.

Dániel Schmal

Tradition and Novelty in Early Modern Scholasticism:
The Case of Nicolás Martínez and Leonard Lessius

Comparisons between late scholastic authors and seventeenth-century philosophers belonging to the "modern" camp are often limited to the analysis of their respective ideas either in terms of continuity and discontinuity or, in a more sociological vein, in relation to their methodology and social background. Taking another perspective, in this article I propose to analyse some literary and argumentative techniques employed by late scholastic writers to integrate new elements into traditional wisdom. The authors chosen for this study, Nicolás Martínez SJ (1617–1676) and Leonard Lessius SJ (1554–1623), illustrate how late scholastic writers treat the Patristic and medieval heritage when they use authoritative texts for innovative purposes. Although ecclesiastical *auctoritas* continues to serve as the basis for theological argumentation in their texts, the case studies highlight how making distinctions among meanings allegedly present in the tradition, along with other "techniques of alignment," are employed to integrate new ideas and fulfil the need for conformity at the same time.