THE CHURCH’S REVIVAL OF THOMISM

OR

WAS GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE A SUAREZIAN

An Examination of The Portrayal of Thomism in Dr. Tracey Rowland’s

“Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI”

by

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INTRODUCTION

The revival of Thomism signified by the first line of the title stems remotely from the First Vatican Council and directly from the initiative of Pope Leo XII and his landmark encyclical Aeterni Patris. This Papal revival of Thomism received further impetus from subsequent Popes, especially St Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI and Pius XII up to and including John Paul II with his encyclical Fides et Ratio. The corpus of Papal Teaching subsequent to the First Vatican Council about St Thomas and the principles to be followed in a renewed study of his work is readily accessible to anyone who wants to study it, and should be well grasped by any modern theologian before writing about either the nature or history of 19th and 20th century Thomism. It should be required reading for all students of philosophy and theology in Catholic institutions of higher education.

The second line in the title was chosen for two reasons: to dispel a fashionable myth surrounding one of the best Thomists of the period between the two Vatican councils; and further to specify the first line of the title by showing that the metaphysics of Suarez was not what was called for by the Papal revival of Thomism.

That such work is necessary can be perceived from what the Australian theologian Dr. Tracey Rowland had to say about the Church’s revival of Thomism, and about one of the leaders of that revival, Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, in her book Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI. The concern here is that if her claims remain unanswered then the assumption that they must have some substance is readily induced amongst those who have made neither a serious study of St Thomas nor have familiarised themselves with the corpus of Papal Teaching about St Thomas outlined above, and who are unfamiliar with the work of Garrigou-Lagrange.

The statements concerning the subject matter outlined above to be extracted from Rowland’s book Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI will be listed in this Introduction as a series of objections, and numbered sequentially as (Obj. 1), (Obj. 2), (Obj. 3), etc. At the end of each objection the page number reference from her book will be listed. After each objection an
answer will be given as (Ans. 1), (Ans. 2), (Ans. 3), etc so that the order of presentation will be (Obj. 1), (Ans. 1), (Obj. 2), (Ans. 2), etc.

It has to be remarked at the outset that what Rowland says about the Papal revival of Thomism in general and Garrigou-Lagrange in particular is thin and evanescent. She provides little evidence of having studied the Papal Teaching in question or the work of Garrigou-Lagrange, whom she singles out as one of the “great leaders” of 20th Century Thomism. Hers appears to be no more than an eclectic project of recycling what she has picked up from others without any apparent concern for the truth or falsehood of what they say. One rightly expects that she will make a meticulous effort to avoid repeating with her recycling project what she says the “proponents and theologians” of the “Thomist tradition generally” do with the “synthesis of St Thomas”.

(Obj. 1) It is thus one thing for the Thomist tradition to pride itself on its achievement of plundering the spoils of Aristotle, of its openness to the best of pagan thought, but quite another for its proponents and theologians generally to treat the synthesis of St Thomas as a kind of all-purpose garbage-recycling unit which has the capacity to pick up any rubbish and repackage it as something useful. The degree of openness of the Thomist tradition to external traditions can be exaggerated. St Thomas did not think he was building a cultural sewage treatment plant. (p 15, emphasis added.)

(Ans. 1) The dignity of a human being who is a pagan lies in his human nature not in his paganism, and if he is able to think then his thinking is like that of any other thinking human being because it is necessarily based upon metaphysical first principles; and like any other human being, baptised or unbaptised, he will assimilate the truths of the world to himself by composing and dividing in judgments the concepts he abstracts from it and about it. St Thomas’ great respect for ‘the philosopher’ was not because Aristotle was a pagan but because in Aristotle he found the best of human thought: he found what was true, and St Thomas well knew that all truth comes from God, unlike the thirteenth century reactionaries and their modern day imitators who, in the words of Chesterton, thought that, “admiring Aristotle was a weakness likely to be followed by adoring Apollo”.¹

The assimilative principle of first importance in Thomism is to admit entry to what is true in other systems and to deny entry to what is false. What the intellect assimilates to itself as truth flows from the principle that governs all human thinking in its quest for growth and precision in knowledge; to enlarge and synthesise its grasp of reality. Rowland implies that the Thomist tradition failed to see this principle of assimilation because it both assimilated Aristotle as “one thing” and “generally” picked up rubbish as “quite another”. Instead of providing substantial evidence to prove what she implies she posits a negatively constructed fact from which nothing can be concluded. It is a non-sequitur to conclude anything from the fact that “St Thomas did not think he was building a cultural sewage treatment plant” because that negatively constructed fact tells us nothing about what St Thomas actually did think he was doing. That statement

would still be true and just as uninformative if St Thomas had been designing the blue prints of what would later inspire others to build the Hoover Dam.

The sweeping and unsubstantiated generalisation about what Thomist theologians “generally” do with “the synthesis of St Thomas” must by default apply “generally” to Garrigou-Lagrange whom Rowland introduces by way of a “common description”.

(Obj. 2) One of the greatest leaders of the Neo-Thomists was Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange OP (1877–1964), Professor of Dogmatic and Spiritual Theology at the Angelicum from 1909 to 1959. The French writer François Mauriac described him as the monstre sacre of Thomism. Another common description is that of a ‘strict observance Thomist’. (p 18, emphasis added)

(Ans. 2) Fr. Thomas Crean O.P. corrected this caricature of the saintly Dominican by asking a question.²

So who was this man, described rudely enough by the novelist François Mauriac as “that sacred monster of Thomism”, but by Pope Paul VI as “this illustrious theologian, faithful servant of the Church and of the Holy See?”

Already at work in Rowland’s portrayal of Thomism in the person of Garrigou-Lagrange we see the logical fallacy; suggestio falsi; supressio veri (suggestion of falsehood is suppression of truth).

(Obj. 3) Though he did not attend the Council and died early in 1964, he had certainly influenced the thinking of many who did attend. The ‘Leonine’ or generation of 1879 Thomists, and the Neo-Thomists who followed them, were strongly influenced by the theology of the Counter-Reformation, especially by the works of Cajetan (1469–1534), Suárez (1548–1617), and Bellarmine (1542–1621). (p 18)

(Ans. 3) The prior influence the ‘sacred monster’ had upon the “thinking” of the “many who did attend the Council” would, so it is implied, turn out to be monstrous; but in light of what Fr. Crean quoted as the testimony of Pope Paul VI it was the good influence of an “illustrious theologian, faithful servant of the Church and of the Holy See”.

The thinness and evanescence hinted at above is evident in the absence of any consideration whatsoever of the history of theological development on one hand, and theological decline on the other hand in the four hundred years or so that lapsed between the era of the “theology of the Counter-Reformation” theologians Cajetan, Suárez, and Bellarmine and the era of the “Leonine-Thomists and neo-Thomists” who were supposedly “strongly influenced” by them. One is staggered by such a sweeping historical assumption and the misleading simplifications that result from it, even from the perspective of the Thomistic school where there had been disagreements over fundamental metaphysical questions. And this is to say nothing of the divergence that metaphysics took away from St Thomas amongst the Jesuits under the influence of Suarez.

Nevertheless of those belonging to the Jesuit schools, St Robert Bellarmine is hardly to be considered of ill influence having being declared a doctor of the Church by Pius XI. Of St Bellarmine’s appreciation of St Thomas, Garrigou-Lagrange provides us with the saints own words.³

St. Robert Bellarmine similarly speaks of St. Thomas in the introduction of his treatise on the Holy Trinity: “Certainly, if everyone proposes with such order, facility, and brevity to us, as I venture to affirm, that he who diligently studies a few of St. Thomas’ questions finds nothing difficult either in Scriptures, the Councils, or the future Fathers of the Trinity; he will make more all-around progress in two months devoted to the Summa than in several months’ study of the Scriptures and the Fathers.” (22) Pope John XXII also said: “He (St. Thomas) has illuminated the Church more than all the other Doctors; to read his books for a year profits man more than to study the doctrine of others for his whole life.” (23)

The nexus of Rowland’s statement is the supposed strong joint influence of Cajetan and Suarez upon “neo-Thomists” and “Leonine Thomists”, and upon the Leonine renewal of the study of St Thomas. Concerning this supposed joint influence upon Garrigou-Lagrange and the Thomist tradition of which he was “one of the greatest leaders”, consider first what he said about the fundamental opposition between Cajetan and Suarez.⁴

Cajetan’s glory lies in his recognition of the true grandeur of St. Thomas, of whom he willed to be the faithful commentator. This recognition was lacking in Suarez, who deserted the master lines of Thomistic metaphysics to follow his own personal thought.

To a glib modern mind, more at home with journalistic style gossip than with the serious study of metaphysics and its fundamental importance to philosophy and theology, this statement will simply be pushed aside as the utterance of a “strict observance Thomist” or an “Aristotelian”, and a study of its truth will not be entered into. This neglect notwithstanding, the importance the Papacy attributes to the metaphysics of St Thomas is undeniable.⁵

We admonish professors to bear well in mind that they cannot set aside St Thomas, especially in metaphysical questions, without serious error.

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⁵ Pope St Pius X. Pascendi Dominici Gregis. 8 September 1907. No 45.
That warning is an implicit warning for professors to guard against the metaphysics of Suarez, and can be taken as an instance of the errors that Leo XIII counselled bishops to guard against.  

Let the universities already founded or to be founded by you illustrate and defend this doctrine, and use it for the refutation of prevailing errors. But, lest the false for the true or the corrupt for the pure be drunk in, be ye watchful that the doctrine of Thomas be drawn from his own fountains, or at least from those rivulets which, derived from the very fount, have thus far flowed, according to the established agreement of learned men, pure and clear; be careful to guard the minds of youth from those which are said to flow thence, but in reality are gathered from strange and unwholesome streams.

The desertion of Suarez from the metaphysics of St Thomas, which according to the teaching of St Pius X is a desertion that will result in serious errors, will be exposed in more detail when we come to consider the Twenty Four Thomistic Theses.

(Obj. 4) As one might expect, the Dominicans were more strongly influenced by Cajetan, while the Jesuits were steeped in the thought of Suarez and Bellarmine. The Leonine Thomists produced many translations of the works of St Thomas, including the famous Leonine critical editions under the direction of the Dominican Tommaso Maria Francesco Zigliara (1833–1893), and under their impetus Désiré-Joseph Cardinal Mercier (1861–1926) founded the Higher Institute of Philosophy at the University of Louvain which produced Le Revue néo-scolastique de Philosophie. (p 18)

(Ans. 4) This is another simplification that hides more than it discloses. It would be more informative to say that the Dominicans were steeped in the thought of St Thomas, of whom Cajetan “willed to be a faithful commentator”; and that not all Jesuits were influenced by Suarez “who deserted the master lines of Thomistic metaphysics to follow his own personal thought”; but, like Cajetan, “recognised the true grandeur of St Thomas” and willed to be faithful to him. In this respect four prominent Jesuits come to mind: Fr. Joseph Kleutgen, whom Leo XIII described as ‘Thomas Redivivus’; Fr. Matteo Liberatore; Fr. Giovanni Maria Cornoldi; and Fr. Guido Mattiussi, one of the two Thomists who authored the Twenty Four Thomistic Theses, the other being the Dominican Fr. Edouard Hugon.

Rowland is correct in identifying the role of Tommaso Maria Zigliara (a close friend of Leo XIII who appointed him to be a Cardinal in the first consistory of 1879) in relation to the Leonine edition of the works of St. Thomas. However, she leaves out the most important fact in relation to this critical edition, which given her previous advertence to the importance of Cajetan and his influence on the Leonine Thomists and neo-Thomists is a serious omission. The fact is this. The Commentary of Cajetan on the *Summa* of St Thomas was included in the Leonine edition of the works of St Thomas on the specific order of Pope Leo XIII. The reason for Rowland’s omission of this fact is to be explained by her next objection.

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6 Pope Leo XIII. *Aeterni Patris*, 4 August 1879, No 31.

(Obj. 5) Leonine and Neo-Thomists have been criticized for their heavy reliance on the sixteenth and seventeenth-century commentaries on St Thomas. They had a tendency to present the teachings of St Thomas in a simplified propositional format suitable for rote learning but not conducive to serious scholarship. (p 18)

(Ans. 5) The reason for the aforesaid omission is clear in the first sentence. Rowland wants to avoid openly criticising the Pope and what he commanded, but does it through the back door of “Leonine and Neo-Thomists”. We have noted that Leo XIII directed bishops to be “watchful that the doctrine of Thomas be drawn from his own fountains, or at least from those rivulets which, derived from the very fount, have thus far flowed, according to the established agreement of learned men”. His order to include the Commentary on the Summa of Tommaso de Vio (Cajetanus) in the Leonine edition sets an example that reinforces the directive he gave to bishops, and certainly does not contradict it.

The next sentence in Rowland’s objection can hardly be taken seriously. In Logic one learns that the proposition is the sign of the second act of the mind, judgement, that follows immediately upon the first act of the mind, apprehension. The mental act of judgement is the only way we human beings know the truth or falsehood of things, and the only way we progress from truths known to truths not yet known by composing and dividing our concepts in judgements. A proposition is true when it affirms that which is in conformity with reality, and when it denies that which is not in conformity with reality. A proposition is false when it affirms that which is not in conformity with reality, and when it denies that which is in conformity with reality.

Rowland in fact formats three propositions here in what she says about the propositional format. She could hardly do otherwise if she wants to make a statement that she has judged (rightly or wrongly) to be in conformity with reality. First proposition: “they had a tendency to present the teachings of St Thomas in a simplified propositional format”. Second proposition: “the propositional format is suitable for rote learning”. Third proposition: “the propositional format is not conducive to serious scholarship”. If her own propositions about the propositional format were true then she would be imputing to her own propositions the same attributes she says are inherent to the propositional format, by which she would have to agree (i) that what she says is suitable for rote learning; and (ii) that what she says “is not conducive to serious scholarship”.

Now it is true that the use of memory in rote learning is a great help in bringing us to the point of understanding something, especially at the beginning of our education and intellectual formation. Indeed we cannot avoid it. What Rowland means by “serious scholarship” she does not say, but if she means becoming familiar with what others have said and being able to compile impressive looking bibliographies then that could hardly be done without the use of one’s memory, or at least remembering where and in what order one had filed the welter of notes one had made of all those hard to remember details.

Really “serious scholarship” rises above this all nigh universal modern fixation with research into what others have said to examine the truth of what they say and of things as they are in reality: to the acquisition of truth and wisdom and the perfection of our God given intelligence: to present our Divine Master with an increase of a talent He gave us, which is only an increase if it has been
used in the service of Truth. If “serious scholarship” means no more than becoming familiar with what others have said then those so ‘educated’ risk the all too real danger of learning much but acquiring little or no wisdom. They become ‘educated’ beyond their ability to analyse and resolve propositions. That is why St Thomas and Aristotle put Logic at the beginning of philosophical studies.

Garrigou-Lagrange is a first rate example of a master and teacher of philosophy and theology who exhibited outstanding scholarship as anyone who has some familiarity with his work would know. His mind was penetrating, logical, profound in the breadth and depth of its grasp of reality and principles; encyclopaedic in its intimate knowledge of the work of a truly vast array of authors and subjects. He was in fact an “incontestable genius” as Fr Romanus Cessario O.P. has noted. His work is impregnated with a deep sense of Faith and devotion, and always directed to the sanity and salvation of souls. Is Rowland suggesting that the courses and manuals that such outstanding masters produce for the education of beginners in seminaries, and the salvation and sanity of the flocks these beginners will one day teach after they become proficient is not a work of serious scholarship?

(Obj. 6) Their attempts at an anachronistic reading of Aquinas as an interlocutor of Descartes or Kant have also met criticism.

(Ans. 6) It should be recalled that those being collected under the word “their” are those of whom Garrigou-Lagrange was “one of the greatest leaders” and that recycling rubbish is something that “thomists generally do with the synthesis of St Thomas”. So far as Garrigou-Lagrange is concerned the insinuation that he read Aquinas as an interlocutor of Descartes or Kant is false in two propositions. (1) It affirms that which is not in conformity with reality, which would still be the case if Garrigou-Lagrange had never said a single thing about Descartes or Kant. (2) It denies that which is in conformity with reality: a fact that will become evident to those who study his two volume *God His Existence and Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies*. In these marvellous volumes Garrigou-Lagrange explains in wonderful order the principles of metaphysics and St Thomas’ five proofs of the existence of God that depend on these principles. He examines in great detail the opposition or antinomies of Kant in particular and agnosticism in general against these principles and proofs; unmasks the errors therein; and shows up how they destroy metaphysics and the proofs of the existence of God.

As a first rebuttal of the idea that Garrigou-Lagrange “read Aquinas as an interlocutor of Descartes or Kant” the following is offered.8

At the origin of all these errors [of agnosticism], from the times of Hume and Kant, there is the following: *The essential relation of the intellect with extra-mental being is suppressed;* so the modern intellect can no longer raise itself with certainty to God, First Being; it falls on itself and finally says that God does not exist in the transcendent order, but that he *becomes in us*. So it was that the agnosticism of Kant led to the pantheism of Fichte and to the absolute evolutionism of Hegel: evolutionism that finds itself in the most errant forms of contemporary idealism.

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Man no longer lives of God, but only of himself and is moving toward death, through the agony and desperation of which current existentialism treats, that is, as someone said, the anticipated experience not of heaven, but of hell.

It is thus necessary to save the intellect, heal it, make it understand that the first principles of natural reason or common sense have an ontological value, that they are laws of being which allow one to arrive at true certainty regarding the existence of God, upon which rests the immutable dogmas of the faith.

We find the defense of the ontological value and the transcendent or analytic value of the first notions and first principles in Thomism; this is not a superficial defense, like that of the philosophy of common sense proposed by the Scots Reid and Dugald Stewart, but extremely deep, which collects the fruits of the thought of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Fathers of the Church, and, above all, Saint Augustine. We have there an intellectual patrimony of an incommensurate value, which restores to the human intellect the knowledge of what is de facto, makes it to understand again its true nature, and so permits it to rediscover the way that leads to God, first cause and ultimate end, as well as to direct the will toward this supreme end.

Thomism corresponds to the profound needs of the modern world because it restores the love of truth for the sake of truth itself. Now, without this love of truth for itself, it is not possible to obtain true infused charity, the supernatural love of God for the sake of God Himself, nor to arrive at the infused contemplation of God sought for Himself, that is, at the contemplation that proceeds from the living faith enriched by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, first of all, knowledge and wisdom.

In speaking of the importance of first principles, Pope Pius XI noted this about St Thomas.9

His teaching with regard to the power or value of the human mind is irrefragable.

“The human mind has a natural knowledge of being and the things which are in themselves part of being as such, and this knowledge is the foundation of our knowledge of first principles” (Contra Gentes, II, 1xxxiii). Such a doctrine goes to the root of the errors and opinions of those modern philosophers who maintain that it is not being itself which is perceived in the act of intellection, but some modification of the percipient; the logical consequence of such errors is agnosticism, which was so vigorously condemned in the Encyclical Pascendi.

Another of the leading Thomists being broadsided as one who supposedly “read Aquinas as an interlocutor of Descartes or Kant” is Fr. Guido Mattiussi S.J., one of the authors of The Twenty Four Thomistic Theses. He is best known for his Il Veleno Kantiano (The Poison of Kant). He was also the author of the anti-modernist oath promulgated by St. Pius X.

In the context of the anti-modernist oath and the condemnation of Modernist Agnosticism by the encyclical Pascendi, we will now see that Garrigou-Lagrange – “one of the greatest leaders” of

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9 Pope Pius XI. Studiorum Ducem. 29 June 1923. No 15.
those who supposedly attempted, according to Rowland, to “read Aquinas as an interlocutor of Kant” - would, in his own words, have been teaching modernism and heresy if what Rowland insinuates is true.¹⁰

The teaching contained in the Antimodernist Oath may without difficulty be supplemented by what is said on this point in the paragraph commencing with the words “Atque haec” of the encyclical Pascendi. (See Denz., n. 2081). The Modernists “repudiate all ontological realism as absurd and baneful ... as an appearance beyond the scope of thought, which by its very definition denotes something absolutely unthinkable. We shall never succeed in explaining away this objection, and must therefore conclude, in agreement with all modern philosophy, that a certain type of idealism has obtruded itself upon us.” (E. Le Roy, “Comment se pose le Probleme de Dieu” in the Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale, March and July 1907, pp. 495 and 488). Kantian and post-Kantian criticism had almost ruined the foundation of the traditional proofs of the existence of God, namely, the objectivity of the principles of right reasoning. The encyclical Pascendi condemns this “phenomenalism” and reminds us that its agnostic consequences have been denounced by the Vatican Council. The condemnation reads as follows: “And to begin with the philosopher, the Modernists posit as the basis of their religious philosophy the doctrine known as agnosticism. Human reason, strictly limited in range to ‘phenomena’, which means to the appearance of things exactly as they appear, has neither the power nor the right to go beyond these limits, and is, therefore, incapable of acquiring any knowledge of God, not even knowledge, by means of created things, of His existence. From this they infer (1) that God cannot be the direct object of our knowledge; (2) that His actual intervention in this world of ours cannot be a historical fact. In the light of such principles, what becomes of natural theology, of the motives of credibility, of external revelation? TheModernists have given them up as belonging to intellectualism, a system which, they say, is to be considered as ridiculous and long ago obsolete. That the Catholic Church has publicly condemned these monstrous errors is for them no deterrent. For the Vatican Council has decreed ... ” (here the canons of the Council are quoted which refer to the knowledge of God from the two sources of reasoning and revelation. (See Denz., n. 2072).

The agnostic denial of the possibility of demonstrating the existence of God, is, therefore, a heresy.

Rowland should have studied the work of Garrigou-Lagrange before taking on her project of making statements about him.

(Obj. 7) They are remarkable above all for their general ahistorical temper. (p 18)

To the contrary the leader of those who were supposedly “remarkable above all for their general ahistorical temper” had an acute appreciation of the role of historical studies.  

The desire of the true philosopher is, indeed, to acquire an accurate knowledge of philosophy, but he does not consider the temporal sequence of doctrines, as if these were the criterion or sign of their relative truth, and as if this sequence of doctrines were always and necessarily an evolution in the ascendant order, but never a regression and senile decline. From the fact that Scotus came after St. Thomas [Aquinas], it does not follow that his doctrine is truer, and that later on there is greater perfection in the eclecticism of Suarez.

We must use the historical method in the history of doctrines, and this is indeed of great help in understanding the state and difficulty of the question, so as to give us, as it were, a panorama of the solutions of any great problem. But in philosophy we must employ the analytic and synthetic method proportionate to it. In theology, however, we rely first upon proofs taken from the authority of Holy Scripture or divine tradition, or even the writings of the holy Fathers, and in the second place on arguments drawn from reason, while, of course, not neglecting the history of problems and their solution.

At the level of first principles it is readily seen that one need not be familiar with the history of philosophy in order to grasp the principle of non-contradiction: it is the first metaphysical or “ahistorical” principle, and is the same for Adam and all his progeny, regardless of what those who deny either its ontological or logical validity may say about it. Indeed any historical study cannot proceed according to principle unless one adheres to it. We either grasp this principle or we grasp nothing because our minds can only function under its administration, and that administration is proportioned by the real world outside the mind. We may never have heard of Euclid nor know anything about the history of Geometry but that neither prevent us from understanding the definition of a triangle nor from learning the principles and theorems of geometry. In fact if a teacher of geometry ignored the “ahistorical” principles of geometry and taught only the history of geometry his students would learn no geometrical truths. A study of the history of Dogma is neither a requirement for believing the truths of dogma nor for professing the Nicene Creed at Mass on Sunday.

Rowland’s objection suggests that historical research takes the place of first importance in philosophical and theological studies, and because of their supposed neglect of it, the neo-Thomists are constrained to be deficient by principle in their own domain of Thomism. The objection goes to the heart of what a Thomist needs to do in order to be a good Thomist and to make fruitful progress in his study of Thomism. The best reply to this contention is the one given by Garrigou-Lagrange, and it should be taken to heart by all who would seriously study Thomism. 

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Finally, what is needed to study Thomism fruitfully? What method must one follow?

1) **One needs to consider it in its organic totality and not in a fragmentary manner.** One does not comprehend it except in the light of its principles themselves which need to be deepened. Otherwise, one knows it only externally, as one would know a city by having crossed its peripheral quarters, without having visited its central plaza from which all its streets radiate in every direction.

2) **A frank and profound love for truth in itself, objectively considered, is needed;** beyond any subjective, even religious pragmatism and beyond any intellectual fashion, it will surpass every fashion. Truth is not what we want, nor is it the conformity of certain judgments with our more or less correct desires. Truth is not what pleases this or that generation and what will be disdained by the next generation. Thirty or forty years ago it was necessary to be Bergsonians to enjoy some consideration in the intellectual world; today, Bergsonism has already passed out of style. Truth is not what pleases, but **what is,** and it is founded, first and foremost, on the fundamental laws of reality which are also those of the thinker, of the natural intellect, and of every thinker worthy of this name.

3) To study Thomism fruitfully, **a true docility toward Saint Thomas is needed;** do not be esteemed superior to him, as certain historians of philosophy do, in a more or less conscious way, who consider his doctrine as one of many and who judge it from on high, without ever realizing that one of the greatest graces bestowed by God to his Church was endowing her a St. Augustine and a St. Thomas. Historians, moreover, who do not intellectually exceed a certain relativism nor ever attain doctrinal stability. For example, they recognize in the doctrine of potentiality and actuality an admirable hypothesis or a postulate liberally accepted by the spirit, without realizing that the proofs of the existence of God, founded on this doctrine, would thereby lose every demonstrative value and would not surpass speculative probabilism.

To know the doctrine of Saint Thomas more and better, it is also necessary to love it: then what could diminish it and alter it is quickly seen, like when one loves the Gospel and the Church, he immediately intuits what is opposed to them. He who loves possesses these intuitions, the Saints say.

4) **Lastly, humility and prayer in the search of truth is needed.** Truth, indeed, is, under various points of view, one and multiple, simple and complex, manifest and mysterious. It cannot be attained in its profundity and elevation except by following the great geniuses that God has given us as beacons and guides. Otherwise, we resemble him who plans to ascend a tall mountain without an expert guide, thus exposing himself to the danger of falling in some precipice. This occurred more times: in philosophy, to Descartes, Malebranche, and again to Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Fichte, Hegel and many others; in theology, to the Pelagians and, in an opposite sense, to Luther, Calvin, and Jansen.
This knowledge of the mysteries — we repeat — is given by the conformity of the intellect with the same divine reality and not only with the subjective exigencies of human action. In this new declaration of the Church, the traditional definition of truth is always underlined, which is the conformity of the intellect with extra-mental reality itself. This is the notion of truth that Thomism constantly defends, as will be clear from its principle metaphysical theses that we will now consider.

(Obj. 8) They were focused on defending the faith to Rationalists and had little to say to those who represented the Romantic reaction to Rationalism and for whom historical and cultural particularity and individuality and the reasons of the heart were key themes. (p 18, emphasis added).

(Ans. 8) The Teaching of Vatican I and St Thomas on Faith and Reason, not only defends Faith and Reason against the assaults of rationalism, but equally defends Faith and Reason against the more insidious inroads of Fideism. The “Romantic reaction”, of which Rowland is something of a spokesperson, is essentially a manifestation of Fideism and its rejection of the power and validity of the principles of reason. Fideism falls back on the supernaturalism of ‘Faith alone’ to know the truth of extra-mental reality.

We repeat the remedy Garrigou-Lagrange offered. “It is thus necessary to save the intellect, heal it, make it understand that the first principles of natural reason or common sense have an ontological value, that they are laws of being which allow one to arrive at true certainty regarding the existence of God, upon which rests the immutable dogmas of the faith.”

(Obj. 9) The French intellectual historian Etienne Gilson (1884–1978) referred to the scholarship of the Leonine era as a ‘brew of watered-down philosophia aristotelico-thomistica concocted to give off a vague deism fit only for the use of right-thinking candidates for high-school diplomas and arts degrees’ and he described the works of Cajetan as ‘in every respect the consummate example of a corruptorium Thomae’. His contemporary the Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895–1990) agreed, and described Leonine Thomism as a miserable abus of classical Thomism. (pp 18-19)

(Ans. 9) Apparently we are to conclude that “scholarship” aimed at forming minds that think rightly about reality and God is a corruption of Thomism, and that Leo XIII was responsible for inaugurating this “miserable abus of classical Thomism” in the modern era.

(Obj. 10) In recent times Alasdair MacIntyre has similarly criticized leading Leonine Thomists for ‘deforming central Christian positions for apologetic purposes’ and in particular for reworking Thomistic themes in Kantian terms. In order to defend Aquinas and, more broadly, Christianity at the Bar of the Enlightenment, they tacitly or even wittingly accepted the Kantian account of rationality and tried to squeeze Thomist thought into its parameters. (p 19)

(Ans. 10) Rowland neglects to say if MacIntyre named Garrigou-Lagrange as one of those “leading Leonine Thomists”, but she has already said that recycling rubbish is something that Thomists “generally do”. In (Ans. 6) we gave some attention to Garrigou-Lagrange’s steadfast opposition to Kantianism and agnosticism in service of the Papal condemnation in Pascendi of these evils.

The Encyclical \textit{Pascendi} likewise condemns the theory of “immanence, which is the positive side of the system of Modernism, just as Agnosticism is the negative side. Once natural theology is repudiated ... all external revelation abolished, the explanation of the fact of religion must be sought in man himself, in vital immanence and the subconscious self” (Denz., n. 2074)

Finally the Encyclical declares inadequate the proof for the existence of God based upon the theory of immanence, as is evident from the following paragraph: “If now, passing onto the believer, we want to know what, according to the Modernist view, distinguishes the Modernist from the philosopher, the first thing to notice is that the philosopher admits the divine reality as the object of faith, but for him this reality exists only in the soul of the believer, that is to say, as object of his sentiment and his affirmations, which are limited to the sphere of phenomena. If God exists as a separate being, apart from individual sentiments and affirmations, this fact does not interest the philosopher, and he abstracts from it entirely. Not so with the believer. For him, God really exists, independently of the believer; he is certain of it, and in this he differs from the philosopher. If you ask on what foundation this certainty rests, the Modernists reply, on ‘individual experience’. In taking this attitude, they separate themselves from the Rationalists, only to fall into the error of Protestants and certain pseudo-mystics [See, e.g. the errors of Michael de Molinos; Denz., n. 1273]. They explain this process as follows. If we scrutinize the religious sentiment, we discover a certain intuition of the heart, by means of which and without any intermediate process, man grasps the reality of God and from it concludes that He exists, with a certainty that surpasses the certainty of any of the sciences. And this is truly an experience, superior to any mental process. Many look upon it with contempt and deny it as, e.g. the Rationalists, but that is simply and solely because they refuse to place themselves into the necessary moral conditions. Therefore, according to the Modernists, the true and proper explanation why one believes is to be sought in this experience. How contrary to the Catholic faith all this is, we have already seen in a decree of the Vatican Council. Further on we shall see that such a view opens wide the door to atheism.” No one was surprised that modernism was condemned, except those who were unaware of the definitions of the Vatican Council against Fideism. (pp 28-29).

Concerning this method [the immanent method of ‘individual experience’ exposed above], the Encyclical \textit{Pascendi} says: “We cannot refrain from once more and very strongly deploiring the fact that there are Catholics who, while repudiating immanence as a doctrine, nevertheless employ it as a system of apologetics; they do so, we may say, with such a lack of discretion, that they seem to admit in human
nature not only a capacity and fittingness for the supernatural order – both of which Catholic apologists have always been careful to emphasise – but assert that it truly and rigorously demands the same”. (Denz., n. 2103). (p 43).

The sort of demonstration of the existence of God admitted by those who adopt the method of immanence – since they hold that the Scholastic proofs are inadequate – is practically a defense of the theory that, in our present condition, in order to be sure of God’s existence (since human nature left to itself is incapable of this), we have an absolute claim upon the necessary help in the supernatural order. P. Chossat, S.J. (loc cit., cols 864-870) points out that if some theologians admitted that, in our present condition, we cannot be certain of the existence of God without supernatural help, they were considering only the actual fact, or the conditions under which this natural potency operates, by which we acquire a knowledge of God; they did not deny this potency, nor in any way restrict its specification. They distinguished carefully between essence and existence, specification and operation, right and fact. What these theologians meant is that, in our present state, due to original sin, a supernatural help is required for the will to apply (operative order) the intellect to the consideration of God in preference to any other object, and also to eliminate (removens prohibens, a purely negative process) the moral dispositions which prevent us from perceiving the cogency of the proofs; but they did not maintain the necessity of this help for the will in the order of specification, so that it might contribute in some particular way to modify the proofs for the existence of God. They considered these proofs sufficient just as they are. (pp 43-44).

The distinction between specification and operation, between right and fact, can find no place in this new system of apologetics. The reason for this is that the defenders of this system have discarded the classical proofs for the existence of God as unconvincing, and have chosen to adopt the Kantian view that reason of itself, by its very nature, cannot prove the existence of God with a certainty that is objectively sufficient. From this it follows that the supernatural – no matter what Blondel [ed. and de Lubac] may say – not only makes its demands felt, but is also absolutely required by us. It seems therefore, that this teaching of the modern school of apologists can no more be reconciled with the definition of the Vatican Council than could the views held by the Traditionalists of Louvain and the Fideists of Bautain’s school. These apologists, though starting from different points, arrive at the same conclusions as those who held that the supernatural gifts belonged by right to the first man in a state of innocence, and who exaggerated the fall from original justice so as to admit with Luther, Calvin, Baius, Jansenius and Quesnel that reason is incapable of proving the existence of God. (p 44).

Rowland’s insinuation that Garrigou-Lagrange “reworked Thomistic themes in Kantian terms” for “apologetic purposes” is to be dismissed as bearing no resemblance to the truth. Likewise to
be dismissed as bearing no resemblance to the truth is her further insinuation that Garrigou-Lagrange “tacitly or even wittingly accepted the Kantian account of rationality”.14

In the second operation of the mind, that of judgement, we also see the falsity of these two systems [Empirical Nominalism and Subjective Conceptualism] and the truth of traditional Realism. What radically differentiates judgement from the association of ideas by which the Empirics seek to explain this mental process, is that this association is merely a mechanical juxtaposition of two images, whereas judgment by the verb “is” constitutes the very soul of every judgement. As Aristotle remarks (Met., Bk, V. C, vii), “there is no difference between these two propositions: ‘this man is in good health’, and this ‘man is healthy’; nor between these: ‘this man is walking, advancing on the road’, and ‘this man walks, advances on the road’; and the same is true of other cases”. By using the copula “is” we affirm that the being called man is (i.e. is the same as) the being that is in good health. Empiricism is sufficiently refuted by this simple observation. As J. J. Rousseau remarked. “the distinctive sign of an intelligent being is the ability to give a meaning to this little word is, which he utters every time he pronounces a judgement.

At the same time we perceive the falsity of the subjectivist Rationalism of Kant, as proved by Msgr. Sentroul in his thesis, “L’objet de la Metaphysique selon Kant et Aristote” (Louvain, 1905, a work crowned by the Kantgesellschaft of Halle). “Kant, maintaining the very opposite of what Aristotle taught,” says this writer, “failed to realise that all knowledge expresses itself exactly in the verb to be, the copula of every judgement, ... that the union of the predicate with the subject by means of the verb to be, used as the sign of identity between the terms, constitutes the formal essence of every judgement. ... The knowledge of anything consists precisely in perceiving its identity with itself from two different points of view (Met., Bk. V, C, vii). To know what a triangle is, means to know that it is a certain figure; the cause to know that the effect is included in it; the man, to know that he is endowed with the power of imagination. And to take a purely accidental judgement, to say of some particular wall that it is white, is to say of this wall that it is a white wall. ... If the subject and the predicate refer to each other in such a way that they can be connected by the verb to be, this is because both predicate and subject express one and the same reality (either possible or actual).” Kant acknowledges identity only in what he calls analytical judgements, pure tautologies in his opinion, and not in extended judgements, which alone add to the sum of human knowledge and which synthetical a priori or a posterior, because they are formed, according to his view, by the juxtaposition of distinct notions. He thus misunderstood the fundamental law of all judgment. Msgr. Sentroul truly remarks that “a judgement formed by the juxtaposition or the convergence of various notions would be a false judgement, since it would express identity between two terms which are not identical, but merely related to each other in some other way. ... Aristotle’s principle of distinction between propositions is not the identification or non-

identification of the predicate with the subject: he distinguishes them according as the knowledge of this identity (not logical, but real) is derived solely from the analysis of the ideas or from the scrutiny of existing things”. Like the sophists of old Kant must maintain that we have no right to say, “the man is good”, but only “the man is the man, the good is the good”; but this amounts to a denial of the possibility of any judgment whatever. (Cf. Plato, Sophist., 251 B., Aristotle, Met., Bk. V, C. 29). The reason of this opposition between Kant and the traditional philosophy is that Kant, starting with the subject, considers the categories as purely logical, whereas Scholastic philosophy, which starts from being, regards the categories as partly logical and partly ontological. What was separated by abstraction from the real is thus reconstructed and restored to it by the affirmative judgement, and the entire life of the intellect can be explained by its ordination to being.

As for the necessity of starting from being, we have already seen that it is mandatory, under pain of rendering absurd all the elements – the object, the idea, the act of thinking and the intellectual faculty of knowledge.

In the act of reasoning the human intellect compares the subjects and predicates of two propositions by means of the medium of demonstration, or the middle term, which appears in each of the propositions being compared. The major premise is the proposition that contains the predicate of the conclusion, and the minor premise is the proposition that contains the subject of the conclusion. These propositions form the premises of the syllogism or argument and allow the intellect to move from two known truths to a previously unknown third truth by a further act of judgement. This is the act of reasoning. Kant who “misunderstood the fundamental law of all judgment” denies ontological validity to the act of judgment, which act is the act that allows us first to form the premises of the argument, and then to draw a conclusion from the premises by a third act of judgment.

Given her earlier objection against the propositional format it is evident Rowland does not understand the act of judgment and the act of reasoning that is constituted by it. From this fact and from what she has imputed against Garrigou-Lagrange about the act of reasoning, that he “tacitly or even wittingly accepted the Kantian account of rationality”, it is evident that she does not know what she is talking about. She has heard others like MacIntyre say such things about some Thomists whom she does not identify, and she simply re-edits what they say as convenient aids to the impression she wants to convey about Thomism in general and about whom it takes her fancy to convey it in particular.

One further comment is appropriate. Rowland proposes that Thomists generally are guilty of “deforming central Christian positions”. The dogma of the Trinity could hardly be described as merely a “central Christian position”: as something that has the character of an opinion.

(Obj. 11) To these criticisms are added the complaint that the typically Leonine presentation of St Thomas’s thought was often quite off-putting. The Thomist tradition was treated as an architectural model which had to be taken apart piece by piece with the smallest conceptual components subjected to rigorous analysis. It was precisely the presentation of the faith in this
manner which led Ratzinger, von Balthasar, and others of their generation to complain that they found Thomism dry and unable to convey a sense of the glory of Revelation. It was a much contracted presentation of the kerygma. (p 19)

(Ans. 11) Rowland’s book has as part of its title *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*. Under the umbrella of that title the final two sentences in (Obj. 11) convey a completely misleading impression about the Teaching of Benedict XVI regarding the *Summa* of St. Thomas.15

Let us too, therefore, learn from the teaching of St Thomas and from his masterpiece, the *Summa Theologiae*. It was left unfinished, yet it is a monumental work: it contains 512 questions and 2,669 articles. It consists of concentrated reasoning in which the human mind is applied to the mysteries of faith, with clarity and depth to the mysteries of faith, alternating questions with answers in which St Thomas deepens the teaching that comes from Sacred Scripture and from the Fathers of the Church, especially St Augustine. In this reflection, in meeting the true questions of his time, that are also often our own questions, St Thomas, also by employing the method and thought of the ancient philosophers, and of Aristotle in particular, thus arrives at precise, lucid and pertinent formulations of the truths of faith in which truth is a gift of faith, shines out and becomes accessible to us, for our reflection. However, this effort of the human mind Aquinas reminds us with his own life is always illumined by prayer, by the light that comes from on high. Only those who live with God and with his mysteries can also understand what they say to us.

The *Summa* of St Thomas: the work of a truly architectonic mind which, if it was to be put together all “had” in the mystified words of Rowland, “to be” put together “piece by piece with the smallest conceptual components” having been “subjected to rigorous analysis”, or in the perceptive words of Benedict XVI with “concentrated reasoning”. In reality there is no other way for humans to put anything together other than piece by piece following a reasoned plan. One observes that Rowland’s book has been put together “piece by piece” according to a plan, or “architectural model”; and one clearly sees that a “rigorous analysis” of the “conceptual components” forming her statements about Garrigou-Lagrange and the Papal revival of Thomism is not present in the constructed product.

Rowland’s objection against the “Thomist tradition” is aimed at the work that is the source of the tradition, the *Summa* of St. Thomas.16

Some modern writers say that the structure of the Theological Summa is artificial, as in the case of eclectic syncretism in which heterogeneous elements are mechanically and, as it were, accidentally joined together. However, not only all the commentators of the Angelic Doctor, but many contemporary historians (e.g., Father Grabmann (20)) point out that the Theological Summa from beginning to end constitutes one organic whole. The orderly arrangement of the three parts, containing thirty-eight

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treatises (about three thousand articles, almost ten thousand objections), is effected with superb constructive skill. Furthermore, the divisions are not accidental, but have their foundation in the very nature of things. Notwithstanding so great a complexity of questions, the whole doctrinal edifice, as it is well called, is simple in its magnitude, like the Egyptian pyramids or the Gothic cathedrals, not even one column of which can be changed without destroying the perfect harmony of the edifice.

Benedict XVI, if we are to believe Rowland, thought that the *Summa* was “dry and unable to convey a sense of the glory of Revelation. It was a much contracted presentation of the kerygma”. In reality Benedict XVI noted about the *Summa* that St. Thomas “arrives at precise, lucid and pertinent formulations of the truths of faith in which truth is a gift of faith, shines out and becomes accessible to us, for our reflection”.

Wanting to attack the doctrine of St. Thomas but wanting to avoid being seen as an opponent of his teaching she follows the lead of others (e.g. de Lubac) and attacks instead the teaching of those who repeat faithfully the teaching of St. Thomas e.g. Garrigou-Lagrange or anyone else in the “Thomist tradition” (e.g. Cajetan) who wrote a commentary on the *Summa*, which commentaries have also been complained about by Rowland as being “remarkable above all for their general ahistorical temper”. The best answer to this double edged sword of “serious scholarship” is to allow Garrigou-Lagrange to point up its dullness by an exposition from his Commentary on the First part of the *Summa* where he specially addressed in the Introduction the method of St Thomas in composing the Summa; where he gave an overview of pertinent facts in the history of theological development and decline; and where he commented upon the right and wrong ways to approach historical studies. As the tract is rather long it will not be reproduced here, but is included at the end as Appendix A.

*(Obj. 12)* The Ressourcement scholars (so named because they created the series Sources chrétiennes, a collection of bilingual critical editions of patristic texts) led the charge against the pre-conciliar Thomists. They argued that the Thomism which had flourished since the publication of *Aeterni Patris* not only represented a distortion of classical Thomism, but that it had unwittingly fostered the secularization of western culture with its ‘two-tier’ theory of the relationship between nature and grace. The two-tiered theory was especially strong in pre-conciliar Jesuit thought. By this reading, Cajetan and in particular Suarez, who fostered the theory in the post-Reformation era (in an attempt to defend the intrinsic goodness of human nature against the Protestant emphasis on its depravity), were partly to blame for the Modernist crisis at the turn of the twentieth century and the intense secularization of western culture which followed in subsequent decades. (p 19)

*(Ans. 12)* Here the common enough logical fallacy, *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this, therefore because of this) comes into play: ‘after *Aeterni Patris*, therefore because of *Aeterni Patris*.’ Nowhere has Rowland supplied any evidence to show that the Papal revival of Thomism beginning with Leo XIII or the teaching of Garrigou-Lagrange, whom she singles out as a “one of the greatest leaders” amongst the “pre-conciliar Thomists”, is a “distortion of classical Thomism”. She seems to think that she can say whatever it pleases her to say, and about whomsoever it pleases her to say it.
In light of her previous objection about the use of architectural models in theology, Rowland’s metaphor “two-tier” borrowed from architecture to serve as a “conceptual component” of her mental construct is something she overlooked whileequivocating Cajetan with Suarez, little realising that it was from Suarez, not from Cajetan, that the “distortion of classical Thomism” took impetus and that one of the errors inherent in this distortion is his theory that obediential potency is imperfect act.17

In the supernatural order we find still another consequence from the idea of potency, namely, obediential potency, that is, the aptitude of created nature, either to receive a supernatural gift or to be elevated to produce a supernatural effect. This potency St. Thomas conceives as the nature itself, of the soul, say, as far as that nature is suited for elevation to a superior order. This suitableness means no more than non-repugnance, since God can do in us anything that is not self-contradictory. [232].

For Suarez, [233] on the contrary, this obediential potency, which he regards as an imperfect act, is rather an active potency, as if the vitality of our supernatural acts were natural, instead of being a new, supernatural life. Thomists answer Suarez thus: An obediential potency, if active, would be natural, as being a property of our nature, and simultaneously supernatural, as being proportioned to an object formally supernatural. [234].

Rowland’s error about the relationship between nature and grace - like that of de Lubac whom she follows - is based upon the error of Suarez just exposed. About the right relationship between nature and grace let us hear from a humble Franciscan saint who bore the stigmata of Our Saviour for fifty years.18

We Christians are images of God twice over, by nature and by grace. By nature we are given intelligence, memory and will; by grace we are made holy through our baptism, which imprints on our soul the beautiful image of God. Yes sanctifying grace impresses the image of God upon us in such a way that we become divine by participation.

On Rowland’s assertion we should attribute to St. Pio of Pietrelcina the concomitant fallacy that he “unwittingly fostered the secularization of western culture”, and that he was “partly to blame for the Modernist crisis at the turn of the twentieth century and the intense secularization of western culture which followed in subsequent decades” because like the Papacy, St Thomas, Cajetan and Garrigou-Lagrange he upheld Catholic Teaching on the distinction between nature and grace (emphasis added).19

With this impiety spreading in every direction, it has come about, alas, that many even among the children of the Catholic Church have strayed from the path of

genuine piety, and as the truth was gradually diluted in them, their Catholic sensibility was weakened. Led away by diverse and strange teachings [see Heb 13, 9] and confusing nature and grace, human knowledge and divine faith, they are found to distort the genuine sense of the dogmas which Holy mother Church holds and teaches, and to endanger the integrity and genuineness of the faith.

On the distinction between nature and grace all that needs to be said is that Rowland is the one who, in the words quoted above from the First Vatican Council, is “confusing nature and grace”. Note also the words “confusing ... human knowledge and divine faith” that oppose and reject Fideism.

(Obj. 13) The two-tiered approach became very popular with Catholic scholars in Protestant countries who were trying to build bridges between the Liberal tradition and Catholicism. The idea was that Catholics and non-Catholics could find common ground on the territory of ‘pure nature’, while the more socially contentious supernatural beliefs and aspirations of Catholics could be relegated to the privacy of the individual soul. (pp 19-20)

(Ans. 13) Note the dependence on metaphors: “two-tiered”, “build bridges”, “common ground on the territory”; borrowed from architecture, civil engineering and land surveying in a statement that is supposed to tell us something about the method and work of “Catholic scholars” within “Catholicism”. The right way for “Catholic scholars” to speak about “Catholicism” is with exactness, and not roughly as with “the idea was”. The need to speak with exactness is seen in what Garrigou-Lagrange said about terminological precision and in what he said about adopting metaphors.

The exactness of terms is always reputed by the Supreme Pontiffs as a characteristic of Thomism. One reads in the Office of Saint Thomas: “Stylus brevis, grata facundia: celsa, clara, firma sententia.” (27) This exactness of terms comes from the fact that the concepts and judgments that they express were considered in the objective light of being and principles, with the aim of understanding the nature of things and their properties and not only, as in every pragmatism, with the aim of directing human activity toward a given end that is supposed good. Because of this, Thomism excludes, when possible, the metaphor, a source of confusion and inexactness; it does not resort to it except when lacking the proper terms, and then it expressly says that it speaks metaphorically. The philosopher who, on the contrary, begins with expressing himself in metaphors, when he could and should preserve the exactness of terms, condemns himself to an eternal “roughly”, in such wise that he is no longer given to distinguish in his proofs and assertions what is only probable from what is truly certain.

The harmony of the parts in the doctrine of Saint Thomas is no less affirmed. It derives from a virtue that it has possessed in great exquisiteness: the sense of measure, balance, that has never permitted it to put one element in more light to the disadvantage of another.

Thereby it is the greatest classic of theology, very contrary to all the romantic exaggerations that capriciously dramatize the great problems and arrive at such antinomies between thesis and antithesis by rendering impossible the attainment of the superior synthesis that would truly and immutably reconcile the diverse aspects of reality. Thereby, the great unresolved problems, which are already considered as unsolvable, are substituted for the great truths. In the doctrine of Saint Thomas there is a manifest harmony between sense and intelligence, between traditional knowledge and the personal effort to deepen the tradition, between intelligence and liberty, between reason and faith, and from here the balance of all the other parts derives.

(Obj. 14) However, Garrigou-Lagrange and other leading Dominican scholars such as Marie-Michel Labourdette (1908–1990) of the Revue Thomiste could not accept that so eminent a member of their Order as Cajetan could have misinterpreted Aquinas, albeit unwittingly, and led the Church along the paths of a secularizing dualism. (p 20)

(Ans. 14) Rowland has repeatedly “misinterpreted Aquinas” about the distinction between nature and grace because, in the words quoted above from the First Vatican Council in (Ans. 12), she is “confusing nature and grace”. On the two orders of nature and grace Garrigou-Lagrange upholds Catholic Teaching. 21

According to the testimonies of several Popes, the doctrine of Saint Thomas is the most perfect philosophical and theological synthesis and the most secure expression of the truth in the order of nature as well as in that of grace.

For Rowland and all others who follow de Lubac in contradicting Vatican I on this Catholic doctrine there is only a single order of ‘graced-nature’. One would like Rowland to defend her theology of personal sin; her theology of Original Sin; and her theology of the Immaculate Conception.

(Obj. 15) Further, those who wish to read Gaudium et spes as endorsing a simplistic ‘accommodation to the culture of modernity’ pastoral strategy are relying on the same account of nature and grace as defended by Garrigou-Lagrange. This only illustrates de Lubac’s somewhat provocative point that the turn of the century Modernists and Garrigou-Lagrange were operating from the same nature and grace first principles. (p 37)

(Ans. 15) The relativism latent in the first sentence can be seen by way of a simple comparison. Those “who wish to read” two plus two one way endorse their accommodation to arithmetic as defended by one school of mathematicians. Those “who wish to read” two plus two another way endorse their accommodation to arithmetic as defended by another school of mathematicians.

The consequences of Fideism are seen in the expression “nature and grace first principles”. First principles are from being taken as ontological, and are not derived by the intellect from a previous act of faith in the supernatural order. If the intellect is not functioning under the administration of the first principle - the only principle under which it can function - then it does

not function at all and could never make an act of faith that requires it first to understand the difference between truth and falsehood.\textsuperscript{22}

What the intellect first of all spontaneously perceives in being, is the truth of the principle of identity and of the principle of non-contradiction. For “that which before aught else falls under apprehension, is being, the notion of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Therefore, the first indemonstrable principle is that the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time; this is based on the notion of being and not-being, and on this principle all others are based as is stated by the Philosopher in Met., IV, c. 6, n. 10.” (St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 94, a. 2.)

In the Ia IIae, q. 1, a. 7, he writes: “The articles of faith serve the same purpose with regard to revealed truths, as self-evident principles do with regard to the truths acquired by natural reason. And in these principles there prevails a certain order, as some are positively included in others. Thus, all principles are finally reduced to this one, as to their first: ‘It is impossible for the same thing to be affirmed and denied at the same time,’ as is evident from what the Philosopher says in the Fourth Book of his Metaphysics.”

A truth which has not been sufficiently emphasized is that, when we set down as an established fact the necessity and the objectivity of the principle of identity, it means that this principle is the ultimate basis of every proof for the existence of God, who is the self-subsisting Being, “ipsum esse subsistens.” In explaining how the principle of identity is the fundamental law of thought and of reality, we are led to conclude that the fundamental reality, the Absolute, is in all things one and for all purposes identical with itself, Being itself, pure actuality, and, therefore, necessarily distinct from the world, which is composite and changing.

In the light of the first principle of natural reason we understand that nature is nature and is not non-nature; and in the light of Faith we understand the revealed truth that grace is grace and is not non-grace. To deny the principle of contradiction by proposing that nature is non-nature or grace is non-grace or nature as Rowland does to get an inadmissible single order of “nature and grace first principles” is logically absurd and ontologically unrealizable. Furthermore to deny the first principle of reality and of thought is to deny the principle on which are based “every proof of the existence of God”. The result is philosophical scepticism and practical fideism.

Her comment about ‘pastoral strategy’ makes no sense, but we should note that on the First Easter Sunday “He Who Is” instituted a principal of pastoral practice that will remain in the Church until the end of time.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{23} John 20: 23
He breathed on them and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Those whose sins you forgive are forgiven. Those whose sins you retain are retained.”

From which it is clear that ‘those who you vivify with the life of grace are vivified with the life of grace, and those who you do not vivify with the life of grace are not vivified with the life of grace.’

The “provocative point” made in Rowland’s second sentence applies rather to those who confound the order of grace with the order of nature (emphasis added). 24

The sentimentalism of the Modernists, through conforming to the method and doctrine of immanence, shows an unmistakable tendency to confound the order of grace with the order of nature, our higher with our merely sensitive faculties. This confusion leads a man to deny the necessity of mortification and the cross. Following St. Thomas, St. John of the Cross, on the contrary states in the strongest terms that the order of nature is infinitely below the order of grace and declares the latter absolutely inaccessible to the natural powers of man or angel, no matter how fully those powers are developed. Because he believes so firmly in the infinite transcendence of the supernatural order, he insists, more than anyone else has ever done, on the passive purification of the spirit to free the acts of the theological virtues from every natural alloy. Because together with St. Thomas and contrary to nominalist empiricists he is fully convinced of the absolute superiority of our intellect enlightened by faith and of our will animated by charity over our imagination and sensitive appetite, he insists on the passive purification of the senses. These three orders, infinitely distant from one another, are so constituted – not in virtue of a free decree of God, as Duns Scotus would have it, but by their very nature, because of the very nature of God and His intimate life, inaccessible to the natural power of every created intellect, actual and possible alike.

Like St. Thomas, St. John of the Cross keeps repeating that imagination and emotion could be developed to infinity within their own order without ever attaining to the lowest degree of intellectual or moral life, just as the intellectual and volitional powers natural to men and angels too could continue growing steadily and constantly without becoming worth the least degree of that grace, infused faith, and charity to be found in a baptised infant. St. Thomas says: “the good of grace in one is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe”. (ST. Ia, IIae, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2um.). These primordial truths so clearly stated by St. Thomas have been misunderstood by the nominalist theologians and their successors and more recently by the Modernists, even when writing about the “dark night”. No one, perhaps, has had a deeper insight into the practical consequences of these truths on the supernatural life than St. John of the Cross. The same cannot be said of Baruzi, whose recent work testifies to his bondage to the principles of idealistic immanentism.

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In light of the foregoing, “de Lubac’s somewhat provocative point that the turn of the century Modernists and Garrigou-Lagrange were operating from the same nature and grace first principles” is a myth that is going out of fashion. It points up the worth of Rowland’s freewheeling journalism which is also going out of fashion.

(Obj. 16) However, the point is that when it comes to debates about how Gaudium et spes is to be interpreted it is not a macro-level choice between reading it with Augustinian spectacles and reading it with Thomist spectacles. It is more of a micro-level choice between reading it with the mindset of de Lubac or Rahner in relation to the specific issue of the nature and grace relationship, and here it is significant that de Lubac claimed that his position was classically Thomist, notwithstanding the judgements of Garrigou-Lagrange and Labourdette. (pp 150-151)

(Ans. 16) The first question that must be asked is how many pairs of spectacles does a relativist need in order to see what is in plain view? What are “macro-level choices” and “micro-level choices”? Are there “macro-level choices” about two plus two and “micro-level choices” about two plus two? Forgotten is the principle that choices are either right or wrong in light of the objective truth of what one is choosing.

Rowland continues to labour de Lubac’s error by misinterpreting Gaudium et spes so as to transpose a theological ‘graced-nature’ form into the domain of culture as its constitutive principle. If Gaudium et spes is to be rightly understood it must be understood in light of the principles in which it was written. The presence of St. Thomas in the documents of Vatican II is evident for all who have eyes to see him.

The Introduction ends at this point. In the next section we will consider the capital theses in the work of St Thomas specified by the Papacy as the principles to be followed in a renewed study of St. Thomas. These are the Twenty Four Thomistic Theses.

**THE TWENTY FOUR THOMISTIC THESES**

It is our task here to give an exposition of the essence of Thomism and of the principles specified by the Papacy to be followed in the study of it. Our exposition will be drawn from Papal Teaching and from the work of Garrigou-Lagrange. Let us begin with the principle characteristics of Thomism.25

These three characteristics — realism, intellectualism, theocentrism — are the essence itself of Thomism.

From these derive the other characteristics: its organic unity, universality, elevation, depth of its principles, exactness of its terms, manifest harmony, and perfect balance of its parts. *Its unity is not* artificial or fictitious like that of an eclectic system, lacking directive principles and picking up good or bad elements left and right; it is not forced or imperious, as it would make a system too narrow, founded upon a mother-idea incapable of explanation, without doing violence to the diverse aspects of reality. It is an *organic unity*, similar to a living being, a unity founded on the nature itself of

things, not only on the coordination of created agents and God, but on the subordination of all the causes to the supreme Cause.

These characteristics of Thomism diminish and even vanish in the eclecticism in the works of Suarez and of his disciples. Suarez wanted to find a middle-way between Saint Thomas and Scotus, but he frequently vacillates between the one and the other and inclines at times toward nominalism, without accounting for the deviation of the latter. This will be seen further on in the position held by Suarez regarding the principle theses of Thomistic metaphysics, of which we will recall the foundation and connection.

This eclecticism diminishes the force of speculative reason, and it practically inclines toward a certain not-very-conscious fideism in which every serious and profound intellectual life disappears.

Hence, the little watchful interest, the scant response that they provoke anti-Thomistic, most risky and subversive theses.

Let us gain an initial grasp of the extent of this opposition between Suarez and the Twenty Four Theses of St. Thomas.26

La Ciencia Tomista, May-June 1917, p. 385, notes that: “El centenario de Suarez”, published alongside the list of twenty-four propositions, which, according to the Sacred Congregation of Studies, express the fundamental theses of the philosophy of St. Thomas, twenty-four propositions of Suarez on the same questions; of these latter, twenty-three are formally in opposition to the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor.

This Suarezian “opposition to the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor” is a divergence in “fundamental theses” away from that insisted upon by Leo XIII and formalised by St Pius X in the Twenty Four Thomistic Theses.27

By the Motu Proprio of June 29, 1914, Pius X prescribed that all courses in philosophy should teach “the principles and the major doctrines of St. Thomas,” and that in the centers of theological studies the Summa theologiae should be the textbook.

Origin Of The Twenty-Four Theses.

The state of things which Pius X intended to remedy has been well described above (p. 294 ff.) by Cardinal Villeneuve. We repeat here briefly the Cardinal’s contentions:

a) Authors try to make St. Thomas the mouthpiece of their own pet theories.

b) Hence contradictory presentations by teachers and writers, confusion and disgust among students.

c) Hence, Thomism reduced to the minimum on which all Catholic thinkers can
agree, hence to a blunted traditionalism and an implicit fideism.

d) Hence, carelessness in the presence of extremely improbable new doctrines,
abdication of thought in the domain of piety, practical scepticism in philosophy,
mysticism based on emotion.

Against this withered and confused Thomism, Pius X prescribes return to the major
doctrines of St. Thomas. What are these major doctrines? The Congregation of
Sacred Studies, having examined the twenty-four fundamental theses presented by
Thomistic professors of various institutions, replied, with the approval of the Holy
Father, that these same twenty-four theses contain the principles and major doctrines
of St. Thomas. [1335]

What shall be the binding force of these theses? They are safe norms of intellectual
guidance. [1336] This decision of the Congregation, confirmed by Benedict XV, was
published March 7, 1916.

The text of Garrigou-Lagrange containing the Address of Cardinal Villeneuve is worth quoting
in full for its clear explanation of (i) the evils of eclecticism and (ii) the principles of assimilation
guiding the true Thomistic synthesis. This will be done in Appendix B.

It is well known that de Lubac expressed dissatisfaction with the ‘Thomism’ he was taught whilst
a seminary student. The “withered and confused Thomism” identified by Garrigou-Lagrange was
to be found in the courses and manuals of the Jesuit schools where the influence of Suarez was predominat.
Pedro Descoqs S.J. the leading Suarezian of that era was de Lubac’s philosophy
professor. It is also interesting to note that Pope Francis has recently made similar remarks about
his seminary formation. This is hardly surprising when it is realised that he is a Jesuit, and was
probably taught by Suarezians. The Papal directives regarding the “fundamental theses” of St
Thomas were obviously not receieved with the obedience required.28

Forgetting The Twenty-Four Theses.

We have noted above the state of things that led to the formation of the twenty-four
theses. Now, thirty years later, the same conditions seem to have returned. Lip-
service to St. Thomas is universal, but the theses defended under his name are often
worlds apart, and even contradict the holy doctor. Can a man be called Thomist by
the mere fact that he admits the dogmas defined by the Church, even while he
follows Descartes in his teachings on the spiritual life, or denies the evident principle
of causality, and hence the validity of proof for the existence of God.

A small error in principle is a great error in conclusion. This is the word of St.
Thomas, repeated by Pius X. To reject the first of the twenty-four theses is to reject
them all. This reflection led the Church to approve the twenty-four.

28 Op Cit. pp 312-313.
It is the “withered and confused Thomism” identified by Garrigou-Lagrange that Rowland has lumped with authentic Thomism. She does the same thing in her book *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: after Vatican II*, wherein she proposes as constituting the “Thomist Tradition” such incongruities as “Transcendental Thomism”, “Whig Thomism”, “Augustinian Thomism”, and the sire of all intellectual monsters “post-modern Thomism” and its progeny “post-modern Augustinian Thomism”. That book exhibits on a grander scale the same confusion and lack of discrimination in regard to the “Thomist Tradition” that we have seen in her statements about the “Thomist Tradition” in Ratzinger’s *Faith*, both of which re-edit in one form or another as supposed constituents of the “Thomist Tradition” the evils identified in the checklist supplied by Garrigou-Lagrange above: “a) Authors try to make St. Thomas the mouthpiece of their own pet theories; b) Hence contradictory presentations by teachers and writers, confusion and disgust among students; c) Hence, Thomism reduced to the minimum on which all Catholic thinkers can agree, hence to a blunted traditionalism and an implicit fideism; d) Hence, carelessness in the presence of extremely improbable new doctrines, abdication of thought in the domain of piety, practical scepticism in philosophy, mysticism based on emotion.”

Rowland repeatedly suggests that Garrigou-Lagrange is a leading teacher of this decapitated Thomism. Not to be found in her work is the truth of the matter: Garrigou-Lagrange strenuously opposed eclecticism and repeatedly emphasised and explained the remedy for its evils: the prescription of St. Pius X to “return to the major doctrines of St. Thomas” specified in the Twenty-Four Thomistic Theses. It is to that emphasis and explanation that we shall now return.

The first of the Twenty Four runs as follows.29

Potency and Act so divide being that whatsoever exists either is a Pure Act, or is necessarily composed of Potency and Act, as to its primary and intrinsic principles.

The division of being into act and potency was seen by Aristotle to be the solution of the opposing errors of Parmenides and Heraclitus while retaining what was true in both these extremes.30

Ch 5 ACT AND POTENCY

The doctrine on act and potency is the soul of Aristotelian philosophy, deepened and developed by St. Thomas. [147].

According to this philosophy, all corporeal beings, even all finite beings, are composed of potency and act, at least of essence and existence, of an essence which can exist, which limits existence, and of an existence which actualizes this essence.

God alone is pure act, because His essence is identified with His existence. He alone is Being itself, eternally subsistent.

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29 Potentia et actus ita dividunt ens, ut quidquid est, vel sit actus purus, vel ex potentia et actu tamquam primis atque intrinsecis principiis necessario coalescat.

The great commentators often note that the definition of potency determines the Thomistic synthesis. When potency is conceived as really distinct from all act, even the least imperfect, then we have the Thomistic position. If, on the other hand, potency is conceived as an imperfect act, then we have the position of some Scholastics, in particular of Suarez, and especially of Leibnitz, for whom potency is a force, a virtual act, merely impeded in its activity, as, for example, in the restrained force of a spring.

This conceptual difference in the primordial division of created being into potency and act has far-reaching consequences, which it is our task to pursue.

Many authors of manuals of philosophy ignore this divergence and give hardly more than nominal definitions of potency and act. They offer us the accepted axioms, but they do not make clear why it is necessary to admit potency as a reality between absolute nothing and actually existing being. Nor do they show how and wherein real potency is distinguished, on the one hand, from privation and simple possibility, and on the other from even the most imperfect act.

We are now to insist on this point, and then proceed to show what consequences follow, both in the order of being and in the order of operation. [148].

5.1 Article One: Potency Really Distinct From Act.31

According to Aristotle, [149] real distinction between potency and act is absolutely necessary if, granting the multiplied facts of motion and mutation in the sense world, facts affirmed by experience, we are to reconcile these facts with the principle of contradiction or identity. Here Aristotle [150] steers between Parmenides, who denies the reality of motion, and Heraclitus, who makes motion and change the one reality.

Parmenides has two arguments. The first runs thus: [151] If a thing arrives at existence it comes either from being or from nothing. Now it cannot come from being (statue from existing statue). Still less can it come from nothing. Therefore all becoming is impossible. This argument is based on the principle of contradiction or identity, which Parmenides thus formulates: Being is, non-being is not; you will never get beyond this thought.

Multiplicity of beings, he argues again from the same principle, is likewise impossible. Being, he says, cannot be limited, diversified, and multiplied by its own homogeneous self, but only by something else. Now that which is other than being is non-being, and non-being is not, is nothing. Being remains eternally what it is,
absolutely one, identical with itself, immutable. Limited, finite beings are simply an illusion. Thus Parmenides ends in a monism absolutely static which absorbs the world in God.

Heraclitus is at the opposite pole. Everything is in motion, in process of becoming, and the opposition of being to non-being is an opposition purely abstract, even merely a matter of words. For, he argues, in the process of becoming, which is its own sufficient reason, being and non-being are dynamically identified. That which is in the process of becoming is already, and nevertheless is not yet. Hence, for Heraclitus, the principle of contradiction is not a law of being, not even of the intelligence. It is a mere law of speech, to avoid self-contradiction. Universal becoming is to itself sufficient reason, it has no need of a first cause or of a last end.

Thus Heraclitus, like Parmenides, ends in pantheism. But, whereas the pantheism of Parmenides is static, an absorption of the world into God, the pantheism of Heraclitus is evolutionist, and ultimately atheistic, for it tends to absorb God into the world. Cosmic evolution is self-creative. God, too, is forever in the process of becoming, hence will never be God.

Aristotle, against Heraclitus, holds that the principle of contradiction or of identity is a law, not merely of the inferior reason and of speech, but of the higher intelligence, and primarily of objective reality. [152] Then he turns to solve the arguments of Parmenides.

Plato, attempting an answer to Parmenides, had admitted, on the one side, an unchangeable world of intelligible ideas, and on the other, a sense world in perpetual movement. To explain this movement, he held that matter, always transformable, is a medium between being and nothing, is “non-being which somehow exists.” Thus, as he said, he held his hand on the formula of Parmenides, by affirming that non-being still in some way is. [153] Confusedly, we may say, he prepared the Aristotelian solution, deepened by St. Thomas.

Aristotle’s solution, more clear and profound than Plato’s, rests on his distinction of potency from act, a distinction his thought could not escape. [154].

In fact, that which is in process of becoming cannot arise from an actual being, which already exists. The statue, in process of becoming, does not come from the statue which already exists. But the thing in process of becoming was at first there in potency, and hence arises from unterminated being, from real and objective potency, which is thus a medium between the existing being and mere nothing. Thus the statue, while in process, comes from the wood, considered not as existing wood, but as *sculptilis*. Further, the statue, after completion, is composed of wood and the form received from the sculptor, which form can give place to another. The plant is composed of matter and specific (substantial) form (oak or beech): and the animal likewise (lion, deer).
The reality of potency is thus a necessary prerequisite if we are to harmonize the data of sense (e.g.: multiplicity and mutation) with the principle of contradiction or of identity, with the fundamental laws, that is, of reality and of thought. That which begins, since it cannot come either from actuality or from nothing, must come from a reality as yet undetermined, but determinable, from a subject that is transformable, as is the prime matter in all bodies, or as is second matter, in wood, say, or sand, or marble, or seed. In the works above cited St. Thomas gives explicit development to this conception of the Stagirite. Let us briefly note these clarifications.

a) Potency, that which is determinable, transformable, is not mere nothing. “From nothing, nothing comes,” [155] said Parmenides. And this is true, even admitting creation *ex nihilo*, because creation is instantaneous, unpreceded by a process of becoming, [156] with which we are here concerned.

b) Potency, the transformable, is not the mere negation of determined form, not the privation, in wood, say, of the statue form. For negation, privation, is in itself nothing, hence again “from nothing comes nothing.” Further, the privation of statue-form is found in gases and liquids, say, out of which the statue cannot be made.

c) Potency, the determinable, out of which arises the statue, is not the essence of the wood, which makes wood to be actually wood. Neither is it the actual figure of the wood to be carved, because what already is is not in process of becoming. [157].

d) Neither is potency identified with the imperfect figure of the statue that is in process of becoming, for that figure is imperfect actuality. The imperfect figure is not the determinable potency, but is already motion toward the statue to be.

But now this determinableness, transformableness: what is it positively? What is this real, objective potency, presupposed to motion, to mutation, to transformation? It is a real capacity to receive a definite, determined form, the form, say, of the statue, a capacity which is not in air or water, but is in wood, or marble, or sand. This capacity to become a statue is the statue in potency.

Here lies Aristotle’s superiority to Plato. Plato speaks of “non-being which in some way is.” He seems to be thinking of privation or simple possibility, or of an imperfect actuality. His conception of matter, and of non-being in general, remains quite obscure when compared with the Aristotelian concept of potency, passive or active.

St. Thomas excels in explaining this distinction, just now noted, between passive potency and active potency. Real passive potency is not simple possibility. Simple possibility is prerequired and suffices for creation *ex nihilo*. But it does not suffice as prerequisite for motion, change, mutation. Mutation presupposes a real subject, determinable, transformable, mutable, whereas creation is the production of the entire created being, without any presupposed real potency. [158] Now, since active potency, active power, must be greater in proportion to its passive correlative, it follows that when passive potency is reduced to zero, the active potency must be
infinite. In other words, the most universal of effects, the being of all things, cannot be produced except by the most universal of all causes, that is, by the Supreme Being. [159].

Real potency admitted, we have against Parmenides the explanation, not merely of mutation and becoming, but also of multiplicity. Form, of itself unlimited, is limited by the potency into which it is received. The form, say of Apollo, can be multiplied by being received into different parts of wood or marble. And from this viewpoint, as long as that which was in potency is now in act, this real potency remains beneath the act. The wood, by receiving the statue-form, limits and holds this form and can even lose it and receive another form. The form of Apollo, as long as it remains in this particular piece of wood, is thereby limited, individualized, and as such, irreproducible. But a similar form can be reproduced in another portion of matter and that in indefinitum.

5.2 Article Two: Act Limited By Potency

Act, being completion, perfection, is not potency, which is the capacity to receive perfection: and act, perfection, is limited only by the potency which is its recipient. This truth is thus expressed in two texts of St. Thomas: “Form, even the lowest material form, if it be supposed, either really or mentally, separate from matter, is specifically one and one only. If whiteness, e. g.: be understood as apart from any subject of whiteness, it becomes impossible to suppose many whitenesses.” [160] Again: “Things which agree in species and differ by number, agree in form and differ only in matter. Hence since the angels are not composed of matter and form, it is impossible to have two angels agreeing in species.” [161].

This doctrine is embodied in the second of the twenty-four theses, approved by the Sacred Congregation of Studies in 1914. That thesis runs thus: “Act, perfection, is limited only by potency, which is the capability of receiving perfection. Hence, in an order of pure act, only one unlimited act can exist. But where act is limited and multiplied, there act enters into real composition with potency.” [162].

From this principle, upheld by St. Thomas and his entire school, follow many consequences, both in the order of being and in the order of activity, since activity is proportioned to the agent’s mode of being.

5.3 Article Three: The Consequences.

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32 Ibid. p 36. Notes [160] De spiritualibus creaturis, a. 8; [161] Ia, q. 50, a. 4; [162] From this doctrine Suarez differs. Disp. Met., XXX, sect. 2, no. 18; XXXI, sect. 13, nos. 14 f. De angelis, I, XII, XV.
33 Ibid. pp 36-43. Notes [163] Non est quid, nec quale, nec quantam, nec aliquid hujusmodi In Met, VII (VI) lect. 2, 6; [164] Corruptio unius est generatio alterius; [165] Ia, 15. A. 3, Suarez differs from this doctrine; Disp. met., XIII, sect. 5; XXXIII, sect. 6, no. 3 and sect. 9; [166] Cf. St. Thomas, Ia, q. 7, a. 1; [167] Ibid. [168] Illud quod est maxime formale omnium est ipsum esse (ibid); [169] Ia, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3. Ipsum esse est perfectissimum omnium; comparator enim adomnian ut actus; nihil enim habet actualitatem, nisi in quantum est; unde ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum et etiam ipsarum
First we will indicate, rising from lower to higher, the consequences in the order of being.

a) Matter is not form; it is really distinct from form. Let us look attentively at substantial mutation. We take two instances. First, a lion is burned, and there remain only ashes and bones. Secondly, food, by assimilative, digestive power, is changed into human flesh. These substantial mutations necessarily presuppose in the thing to be changed a subject capable of a new form but in no way as yet determined to that form, because, if it had already some such determination, that determination would have to be a substance (like air or water): and the mutations in question would no longer be substantial, but only accidental.

The subject of these mutations, therefore, must be purely potential, pure potency. Prime matter is not combustible, not “chiselable,” and yet is really determinable, always transformable. This pure potency, this simple, real capacity, to receive a new substantial form, is not mere nothing (from nothing, nothing comes); nor is it mere privation of the form to come; nor is it something substantial already determined. It is not, says St. Thomas, [163] substance or quality or quantity or anything like these. Nor is it the beginning (\textit{inchoatio}) of the form to come. It is not an imperfect act. The wood which can be carved is not yet, as such, the beginning of the statue-form. The imperfect act is already motion toward the form. It is not the potency prerequired before motion can begin.

This capacity to receive a substantial form is therefore a reality, a real potency, which is not an actuality. It is not the substantial form, being opposed to it, as the determinable, the transformable, is opposed to its content. Now, if, in reality, antecedently to any act of our mind, matter, pure potency, is not the substantial form, then it is really distinct from form. Rather, it is separable from form, for it can lose the form it has received, and receive another though it cannot exist deprived of

all form. Corruption of one form involves necessarily the generation of another form. [164].

From the distinction, then, of potency from act arises between prime matter and form that distinction required to explain substantial mutation. Consequently prime matter has no existence of its own. Having no actuality of itself, it exists only by the existence of the composite. Thomas says: “Matter of itself has neither existence nor cognoscibility” [165].

In this same manner Aquinas, after Aristotle, explains the multiplication of substantial form, since matter remains under form, limits that form, and can lose that form. The specific form of lion, a form which is indefinitely multipliable, is, by the matter in which it exists, limited to constitute this individual lion, this begotten and corruptible composite.

Aristotle already taught this doctrine. In the first two books of his *Physica* he shows with admirable clearness the truth, at least in the sense world, of this principle. Act, he says, is limited and multiplied by potency. Act determines potency, actualizes potency, but is limited by that same potency. The figure of Apollo actualizes this portion of wax, but is also limited by it, enclosed in it, as content in vessel, and as such is thus no longer multipliable, though it can be multiplied in other portions of wax or marble. [166].

Aristotle studied this principle in the sense world. St. Thomas extends the principle, elevates it, sees its consequences, not only in the sense world, but universally, in all orders of being, spiritual as well as corporeal, even in the infinity of God.

b) Created essence is not its own existence, but really distinguished from that existence. The reason, says St. Thomas, why the substantial, specific form is limited in sense objects (e.g.: lion) lies precisely in this: Form, act, perfection, precisely by being received into a really containing capacity, is thereby necessarily limited (made captive) by that container. Under this formula, the principle holds good even in the supersense order: Act, he says, being perfection, can be limited only by the potency, the capacity which receives that perfection. [167] Now, he continues, existence is actuality, even the ultimate actuality. [168] And he develops this thought as follows: “Existence is the most perfect of realities. It is everywhere the ultimate actuality, since nothing has actuality except as it is. Hence existence is the actuality of all things, even of forms themselves. Hence existence is never related as receiver is related to content, but rather as content to receiver. When I speak of the existence of a man, say, or of a horse, or of anything else whatever, that existence is in the order of form, not of matter. It is the received perfection, not the subject which receives existence.” [169].

Further, since existence (*esse*) is of itself unlimited, it is limited in fact only by the potency into which it is received, that is, by the finite essence capable of existence. By opposition, then “as the divine existence (God’s existence) is not a received
existence, but existence itself, subsistent, independent existence, it is clear that God is
infinitely and supremely perfect.” [170] Consequently God is really and essentially
distinct from the world of finite things. [171].

This doctrine is affirmed by the first of the twenty-four Thomistic theses: Potency
and act divide being in such fashion that everything which exists is either pure act, or
then is necessarily composed of potency and act, as of two primary and intrinsic
principles. [172].

For Suarez, on the contrary, everything that is, even prime matter, is of itself in act
though it may be in potency to something else. Since he does not conceive potency
[173] as the simple capacity of perfection, he denies the universality of the principle:
act is limited only by potency. Here are his words: “Act is perhaps limited by itself, or
by the agent which produces the act.”

The question arises: Does this principle, “act is limited only by potency,” admit
demonstration? In answer, we say that it cannot be proved by a direct and illative
process of reasoning, because we are not dealing here with a conclusion properly so
called, but truly with a first principle, which is self-evident (per se notum): on condition
that we correctly interpret the meaning of its terms, subject and predicate.
Nevertheless the explanation of these terms can be expressed in a form of reasoning,
not illative, but explicative, containing at the same time an indirect demonstration,
which shows that denial of the principle leads to absurdity. This explicative argument
may be formulated as here follows.

An act, a perfection, which in its own order is of itself unlimited (for example,
existence or wisdom or love) cannot in fact be limited except by something else not
of its own order, something which is related to that perfection and gives the reason
for that limitation. Now, nothing else can be assigned as limiting that act, that
perfection, except the real potency, the capacity for receiving that act, that perfection.
Therefore that act, as perfection of itself unlimited, cannot be limited except by the
potency which receives that act.

The major proposition of this explicative argument is evident. If, indeed, the act (of
existence, of wisdom, of love) is not of itself limited, it cannot in fact be limited except
by something extraneous to itself, something which gives the reason for the
limitation. Thus the existence of the stone (or plant, animal, man) is limited by its
nature, by its essence, which is susceptible of existence (quid capax existendi). Essence,
nature, gives the reason of limitation, because it is intrinsically related to existence, it
is a limited capability of existence. Similarly wisdom in man is limited by the limited
capability of his intelligence, and love by the limited capacity of his loving power.

Nor is the minor proposition of the argument less certain. If you would explain how
an act, a perfection, of itself unlimited is in point of fact limited, it is not sufficient,
pace Suarez, to appeal to the agent which produces that act, because the agent is an
extrinsic cause, whereas we are concerned with finding the reason for this act’s
intrinsic limitation, the reason why the being, the existence, of the stone, say (or of
the plant, the animal, the man): remains limited, even though the notion of being, of
existence implies no limit, much less of different limits. Just as the sculptor cannot
make a statue of Apollo limited to a portion of space, unless there is a subject (wood,
marble, sand) capable of receiving the form of that statue: so likewise the author of
nature cannot produce the stone (or the plant, the animal, the man) unless there is a
subject capable of receiving existence, and of limiting that existence according to the
different capacities found in stone, plant, and animal.

Hence St. Thomas says: “God produces simultaneously existence and the subject
which receives existence.” [175] And again: “In the idea of a made thing lies the
impossibility of its essence being its existence because subsistent, independent
existence is not created existence.” [176].

Were this position not admitted, the argument of Parmenides, renewed by Spinoza,
would be insoluble. Parmenides denied multiplicity in the sense world, because being
cannot be limited, diversified, multiplied of itself, he says, but only by something
other than itself, and the only thing other than being is non-being, is pure nothing.

To this argument our two teachers reply: Besides existence there is a real capacity
which receives and limits existence. [177] This capacity, this recipient, which limits
existence, is not nothing, is not privation, is not imperfect existence; it is real
objective potency, really distinct from existence, just as the transformable wood
remains under the statue figure it has received, just as prime matter remains under
the substantial form, really distinct from that form which it can lose. As, antecedently
to consideration by our mind, matter is not form, is opposed to form, as that which
is transformable is opposed to that which informs, thus likewise the essence of the
stone (the plant, the animal) is not its existence. Essence, as essence (quid capax
existendi): does not contain actual existence, which is a predicate, not essential, but
contingent. Nor does the idea of existence as such imply either limitation or diversity
in limitation (as, say, between stone and plant).

To repeat: Finite essence is opposed to its existence as the perfectible to actualizing
perfection, as the limit to the limited thing, as the container to the content.
Antecedently to any thought of ours, this proposition is true: Finite essence is not its
own existence. Now, if in an affirmative judgment, the verb “is” expresses real
identity between subject and predicate, [178] then the negation denies this real
identity and thus affirms real distinction.

How is this distinction to be perceived? Not by the senses, not by the imagination,
but by the intellect, which penetrating more deeply (intus legit): sees that finite
essence, as subject, does not contain existence, which is not an essential predicate,
since it is contingent.

A wide difference separates this position from that which says: Being is the most
simple of ideas, hence all that in any way exists is being in act, though it may often be
in potency to something else. Thus prime matter is already imperfectly in act, and finite essence is also in act, and is not really distinct from its existence. Thus Suarez. [179].

A follower of Suarez, P. Descoqs, S. J. writes thus concerning the first [180] of the twenty-four Thomistic theses: “Now if it is maintained that this thesis reproduces faithfully the teaching of Cajetan, and of subsequent authors inspired by Cajetan, I would certainly not demur. But however hard he tries, no one will show, and the chief commentators, however hard they have tried, have not been able to show, that the said teaching is found in the Master.” [181].

Must we then say that the Congregation of Studies was in error, when, in 1914, it approved as genuine expression of the doctrine of St. Thomas, both that first thesis here in question and the other theses derived from that first? Is it true, as the article just cited maintains, [182] that St. Thomas never said that, in every created substance there is, not merely a logical composition, but a real composition of two principles really distinct, one of these principles, essence, subjective potency, being correlated to the other, existence, which is its act?

Now surely St. Thomas does say just this, and says it repeatedly. Beyond texts already cited, listen to the following passage: “Everything that is in the genus of substance is composed by a real composition, because, being substance, it is subsistent (independent) in its being. Hence its existence is something other than itself, otherwise it could not by its existence differ from other substances with which in essence it agrees, this condition being required in all things which are directly in the predicaments. Hence everything that is in the genus of substance is composed, at least of existence and essence (quod est).” [183] The beginning of this passage shows that the composition in question is not merely logical, but is real. Thus the passage says exactly what the first of the twenty-four theses says.

Let us hear another passage. “Just as every act (existence) is related to the subject in which it is, just so is every duration related to its now. That act however, that existence, which is measured by time, differs from its subject both in reality (secundum rem): because the movable thing is not motion, and in succession, because the substance of the movable thing is permanent, not successive. But that act, which is measured by aevum, namely, the existence of the thing which is aeviternal, differs from its subject in reality, but not in succession, because both subject and existence are each without succession. Thus we understand the difference between aevum and its now. But that existence which is measured by eternity is in reality identified with its subject, and differs from it only by way of thought.” [184].

The first text just quoted says that in every predicamental substance there is a real composition between potency and act. The second text says that in substances measured by aevum (the angels) there is real distinction between existence and its subject. This is exactly the doctrine expressed by the first of the twenty-four theses.
We may add one more quotation from St. Thomas: “Hence each created substance is composed of potency and act, that is, of subject and existence, as Boethius says, just as the white thing is composed of white thing and whiteness.” [186] Now the saint certainly holds that there is real distinction between the white subject and its whiteness, between substance and accident. In both cases then, between substance and accident, and between essence and existence, we have a distinction which is not merely logical, subsequent to our way of thinking, but real, an expression of objective reality.

Antecedently to our way of thinking, so we may summarize Aristotle, matter is not the substantial form, and matter and form are two distinct intrinsic causes. St. Thomas supplements Aristotle with this remark: In every created being there is a real composition of potency and act, at least of essence and existence. [187] Were it otherwise, the argument of Parmenides against multiplicity of beings would remain insoluble. As the form is multiplied by the diverse portions of matter into which it is received, just so is existence (esse) multiplied by the diverse essences, or better, diverse subjects, [188] into which it is received.

To realize this truth you have but to read one chapter in Contra Gentes. [189] The composition there defended is not at all merely logical composition (of genus and differentia specifica, included in the definition of pure spirits): but rather a real composition: essence is not really identified with existence, which only contingently belongs to essence.

Throughout his works, St. Thomas continually affirms that God alone is pure act, that in Him alone is essence identified with existence. [190] In this unvaried proposition he sees the deepest foundation of distinction between uncreated being and created being. [191] Texts like these could be endlessly multiplied. See Del Prado, [192] where you will find them in abundance.

The first of the twenty-four theses, then, belongs to St. Thomas. In defending that thesis we are not pursuing a false scent, a false intellectual direction, on one of the most important points of philosophy, namely, the real and essential distinction between God and the creature, between pure act, sovereignly simple and immutable, and the creature always composed and changing. [193].

On this point, it is clear, there is a very notable difference between St. Thomas and Suarez, who in some measure returns to the position of Duns Scotus. Now this difference rests on a difference still more fundamental, namely, a difference in the very idea of being (enti): which ontology deals with before it deals with the divisions of being. To this question we now turn.
The Idea Of Being.\[34\]

Being, for St. Thomas, [194] is a notion, not univocal but analogous, since otherwise it could not be divided and diversified. A univocal idea (e. g.: genus) is diversified by differences extrinsic to genus (animality, e. g.: by specific animal differences). Now, nothing is extrinsic to being (\textit{ens}). Here Parmenides enters. Being, he says, cannot be something other than being, and the only other thing than being is nothing, is non-being, and non-being is not. St. Thomas replies: “Parmenides and his followers were deceived in this: They used the word being (\textit{ens}) as if it were univocal, one in idea and nature, as if it were a genus. This is an impossible position. Being (\textit{ens}) is not a genus, since it is found in things generically diversified.” [195].

Duns Scotus [196] returns in a manner to the position of Parmenides, that being is a univocal notion. Suarez, [197] seeking a middle way between Aquinas and Scotus, maintains that the objective concept of being (\textit{ens}) is simply one (\textit{simpliciter unus}): and that consequently everything that is in any manner (e. g. matter and essence) is being in act (\textit{ens in actu}). This viewpoint granted, we can no longer conceive pure potency. It would be \textit{extra ens}, hence, simply nothing. The Aristotelian notion of real potency (medium between actuality and nothing) disappears, and the argument of Parmenides is insoluble.

We understand now why, shortly after the Council of Trent, a Thomist, Reginaldus, O. P.: [198] formulated as follows the three principles of St. Thomas:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Ens (being)} is a notion transcendent and analogous, not univocal. God is pure act,
  \item God alone is His own existence.
  \item Things absolute have species from themselves; things relative from something else.
\end{itemize}

Metaphysical Idea Of God.\[35\]

From this initial ontological divergence we have noted between St. Thomas and Suarez there arises another divergence, this time at the summit of metaphysics. Thomists maintain that the supreme truth of Christian philosophy is the following: In God alone are essence and existence identified. Now this is denied by those who refuse to admit the real distinction between created essence and existenced.

\[34\] \textit{Ibid.} pp 43-44. Notes [194] Ens non est univocum, sed analogum, alioquin diversificari non posset; [195] In Metaphy. Bk. 1, chap. 5, lect. 9. See fourth of the twenty-four Thomistic theses; [196] OpusOxon. Bk. 1, dist. 3, q. 2, nos. 5 ff; dist. V, q. 1; dist. 8, q. 3; IV Met. q. 1; [197] Disp. met. II, sect. 2, no. 34; XV, sect. 9; XXX and XXXXI; [198] Doctrinae D. Thomae tria principia: a) Ens est transcendent et analogum, nonunivocum. b) Deus est actus purus, solus Deus est suum esse. c) Absoluta specificantur a se, relative ab alio.

According to Thomists this supreme truth is the terminus, the goal, of the ascending road which rises from the sense world to God, and the point of departure on the descending road, which deduces the attributes of God and determines the relation between God and the world. [199].

From this supreme truth, that God alone is His own existence, follow, according to Thomists, many other truths, formulated in the twenty-four Thomistic theses. We will deal with this problem later on, when we come to examine the structure of the theological treatise, De Deo uno. Here we but note the chief truths thus derived.

Consequences Of This Distinction.36

God, since He is subsisting and unreceived being, is infinite in perfection. [200] In Him there are no accidents, because existence is the ultimate actuality, hence cannot be furtheractualized and determined. [201] Consequently He is thought itself, wisdom itself, [202] love itself. [203].

Further, concerning God’s relations to creatures we have many other consequences of the real distinction between act and potency. Many positions which we have already met on the ascending road now reappear, seen as we follow the road descending from on high. There cannot be, for example, two angels of the same species, for each angel is pure form, irreceivable in matter. [204] The rational soul is the one sole substantial form of the human composite, since otherwise man would not be simply a natural, substantial unity, [205] but merely one per accidens (as is, e.g.: the unity between material substance and the accident of quantity). For substantial unity cannot arise from actuality plus actuality, but only from its own characteristic potency and its own characteristic actuality. [206] Consequently the human composite has but one sole existence (see the sixteenth of the twenty-four Thomistic theses). Similarly, in every material substance there is but one existence, since neither matter nor form has an existence of its own; they are not id quod est, but id quo [207] (see the ninth of the twenty-four). The principle of individuation, which distinguishes, e.g.: two perfectly similar drops of water, is matter signed with quantity, the matter, that is, into which the substantial form of water has been received, but that matter as proportioned to this quantity (proper to this drop) rather than to another quantity (proper to another drop). [208].

Again, prime matter cannot exist except under some form, for that would be “being in actuality without act, a contradiction in terms.” [209] Prime matter is not “that which is (id quod est)”, but “that by which a thing is material, and hence limited.” [210]

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36 Ibid. pp 44-45. Notes [200] Ipsum esse subsistens et irreceptum. Ia, q. 7, a. 1; [201] Ia, q. 3, a. 6; [202] Ipsum intelligere subsistens. Ia, q. 14, a. 1; [203] Ia, q. 19, a. 1; q. 20, a. 1; [204] Ia, q. 50, a. 4; [205] Unum per se, una natura; [206] Ex actu et actu non fit unum per se, sed solum ex propria potentia et proprio actu. Ia, q. 76 a. 4; [207] Id quo aliquid est materiale et id quo aliquod corpus est in tali specie; [208] See the ninth of the twenty-four these; [209] Ia, q. 66, a. 1; [210] Id quo forma recepta limitatur et multiplicatur; [211] Ia, q. 15, a. 3, ad. 3; [212] Ia, q. 85, a. 1; [213] Ia, q. 14, a. 1; q. 78, a. 3. See the eighteenth of the twenty-four theses.
Consequently “matter of itself has no existence, and no cognoscibility.” [211] Matter, namely, is knowable only by its relation to form, by its capacity to receive form. The form of sense things, on the contrary, being distinct from matter, is of itself and directly knowable in potency. [212] Here is the reason for the objectivity of our intellectual knowledge of sense objects. Here also the reason why immateriality is the root of both intelligibility and intellectuality. [213].

5.4 Article Four: Applications of the Principle.37

We come now to the applications of our principle in the order of action, operation, which follows the order of being. [214] Here we will briefly indicate the chief consequences, on which we must later dwell more at length.

Powers, faculties, habitudes differ specifically, not of themselves, but by the formal object, the act to which they are proportioned. [215] Consequently the soul faculties are really distinct from the soul, and each is really distinct from all others. [216] No sense faculty can grasp the proper object of the intelligence, nor sense appetite the proper object of the will. [217]

“Whatever is moved (changed) is moved by something else.” [218] This principle is derived from the real distinction between potency and act. Nothing can pass from potency to act except by a being already in act, otherwise the more would come from the less. In this principle is founded the proof from motion, from change, for God’s existence. [219] Now, for Suarez, this principle is uncertain, for he says, “there are many things which, by virtual acts, are seen to move and reduce themselves to formal acts, as may be seen in appetite or will.” [220] Against this position we must note that if our will is not its own operation, its own act of willing, if “God alone is His own will, as He is His own act of existence, and His own act of knowing,” then it follows that our will is only a potency, only a capability of willing, and cannot consequently

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37 Ibid. pp 45-49. Notes [214] Operari sequitur esse, et modus operandi modum essendi; [215] Ia, q. 77, a. 3; Ia IIae, q. 54, a. 2; Ia IIae, q. 5, a. 3; [216] Ia, q. 77, a. 1, 2, 3; [217] Ia, q. 79, a. 3; [218] Omne quod movetur movetur ab alio; [219] Ia, q. a. a. 3; [220] Multa sunt quae per actum virtualem videntur sese movere et reducere ad actum formalem, ut in appetitu seu voluntate videre licet. Disp. met. XXIX, 1; [221] Ia, q. 105 a. 4, 5; [222] Quantumcumque natura aliqua corporalis vel spiritualis praenatur perfecta, non potest in suum actum procedere, nisi movetur a Deo. Ia IIae, q. 109, a. 1; [223] Si procedatur in infinitum in causis efficientibus non erit prima causa efficiens, et sic non erit nec effectus ultimus, nec causae efficientes mediae, quod patet esse falsum. Ia, q. 2, a. 3, 2a via; [224] See the twenty second of the twenty-four theses; [225] In causis per se subordinatis non repugnant infinitas causas, si sint, simul operari. Disp. met. XXIX 1, 2; XXI, 2; [226] Ibid; [227] Concursus simultaneous; [228] Partialitate causae, si non effectus; [229] Cf. Disp. met. XX, 2, 3; XXII, 2, no. 51; [230] Quando causae subordinatae sunt inter se, necesse non est, ut superior in eo ordine semper moveat inferiorem, etiamsi essentieliter subordinatae sint inter se et a se mutuo pendant in producendo aliquot effectum; sed satis est si immediate influent in effectum. Concordia, disp. XXVI, in fine; [231] Ia, q. 2, a. 3; q. 105, a. 5; [232] Cf. St. Thomas, compend. Theol. 104; IIIa, q. 11, ad. 1; [233] De gratia, VI 5; [234] Cf. John of St. Thomas, In Iam, q. 12, a. 1, 4 (disp. XIV, a. 2, nos. 17 ff; [235] Ia, q. 17, a. 1; [236] Potentia dicitur ad actum; [237] Cf. Ia, q. 105, a. 4; Ia IIae, q. 10, a. 4; [238] Deus sub ratione deitas; [239] On this subject, see Acta secundi congressus thomistici internationalis Rome, 1936, pp. 379-408; Garrigou-Lagrange, De relationibus inter philosophiam et religionem, ac de natura philosophiae christianae.
be reduced to act except by divine motion. Were it otherwise, the more would come from the less, the more perfect from the less perfect, contrary to the principle of causality. [221] St. Thomas speaks universally: "However perfect you conceive any created nature, corporeal or spiritual, it cannot proceed to its act unless it is moved thereto by God." [222].

The next consequence deals with causal subordination. In a series of causes which are subordinated necessarily (per se, not per accidens): there is no infinite regress; we must reach a supreme and highest cause, without which there would be no activity of intermediate causes, and no effect. [223].

We are dealing with necessary subordination. In accidental subordination, regress in infinitum is not an absurdity. In human lineage, for example, the generative act of the father depends, not necessarily, but accidentally, on the grandfather, who may be dead. But such infinite regress is absurd in a series necessarily subordinated, as, for example, in the following: "the moon is attracted by the earth, the earth by the sun, the sun by another center, and thus to infinity. Such regress, we must say, is absurd. If there is no first center of attraction, here and now in operation, then there would be no attraction anywhere. Without an actually operating spring the clock simply stops. All its wheels, even were they infinite in number, cause no effect." [224].

This position Suarez denies. He speaks thus: "In causes necessarily (per se) subordinated, it is no absurdity to say that these causes, though they be infinite in number, can nevertheless operate simultaneously." [225] Consequently Suarez [226] denies the demonstrative validity of the proofs offered by St. Thomas for God’s existence. He explains his reason for departing from the Angelic Doctor. He substitutes for divine motion what he calls “simultaneous cooperation.” [227] The First Cause, he says, does not bring the intermediate second cause to its act, is not the cause of its activity. In a series of subordinated causes, higher causes have influence, not on lower causes, but only on their common effect. All the causes are but partial causes, influencing not the other causes, but the effect only. [228] All the causes are coordinated rather than subordinated. Hence the term: simultaneous concursus, illustrated in two men drawing a boat. [229].

This view of Suarez is found also in Molina. Molina says: “When causes are subordinated, it is not necessary that the superior cause moves the inferior cause, even though the two causes be essentially subordinated and depend on each other in producing a common effect. It suffices if each has immediate influence on the effect.” [230] This position of Molina supposes that active potency can, without impulse from a higher cause, reduce itself to act. But he confuses active potency with virtual act, which of itself leads to complete act. Now, since a virtual act is more perfect than potency, we have again, contrary to the principle of causality, the more perfect issuing from the less perfect.
St. Thomas and his school maintain this principle: No created cause is its own existence, or its own activity, hence can never act without divine premotion. In this principle lies the heart of the proofs, by way of causality, for God’s existence. [231].

All these consequences, to repeat, follow from the real distinction between potency and act. From it proceed: the real distinction between matter and form, the real distinction between finite essence and existence, the real distinction between active potency and its operation.

In the supernatural order we find still another consequence from the idea of potency, namely, obediential potency, that is, the aptitude of created nature, either to receive a supernatural gift or to be elevated to produce a supernatural effect. This potency St. Thomas conceives as the nature itself, of the soul, say, as far as that nature is suited for elevation to a superior order. This suitableness means no more than non-repugnance, since God can do in us anything that is not self-contradictory. [232].

For Suarez, [233] on the contrary, this obediential potency, which he regards as an imperfect act, is rather an active potency, as if the vitality of our supernatural acts were natural, instead of being a new, supernatural life. Thomists answer Suarez thus: An obediential potency, if active, would be natural, as being a property of our nature, and simultaneously supernatural, as being proportioned to an object formally supernatural. [234].

A last important consequence, again in the supernatural order, of the real distinction between potency and act, between essence and existence, runs as follows: In Christ there is, for both natures, the divine and the human, one sole existence, the existence, namely, of the Word who has assumed human nature. [235] Suarez, on the contrary, who denies real distinction between created essence and its existence, has to admit two existences in Christ. This position reduces notably the intimacy of the hypostatic union.

Such then are the principal irradiations of the Aristotelian distinction between potency and act. Real, objective potency is not act, however imperfect. But it is essentially proportioned to act. [236] Next come consequences in the four kinds of causes, with the absurdity, in necessary causal subordination, of regress in infinitum, either in efficient causality or in final causality. Culmination of these consequences is the existence of God, pure act, at the summit of all existence, since the more cannot come from the less, and in the giver there is more than in the receiver. The first cause, therefore, of all things cannot be something that is not as yet, but is still in process of becoming, even if you call that process self-creating evolution. The first cause is act, existing from all eternity, is self-subsisting Being, in whom alone essence and existence are identified. Already here we see that nothing, absolutely no reality, can exist without Him, without depending on Him, without a relation to Him of causal dependence on Him. Our free act of will, being a reality, has to Him the same
relation of causal dependence, and is thereby, as we shall see, not destroyed, but on the contrary, made an actual reality. [237].

This metaphysical synthesis, as elaborated by Aquinas, while far more perfect than the doctrine explicitly taught by Aristotle, is nevertheless, philosophically speaking, merely the full development of that doctrine. In Aristotle the doctrine is still a child. In Aquinas it has grown to full age. Now this progress, intrinsically philosophic, was not carried on without the extrinsic concurrence of divine revelation. Revelation, for St. Thomas, was not, in philosophy, a principle of demonstration. But it was a guiding star. The revealed doctrine of free creation *ex nihilo* was, in particular, a precious guide. But under this continued extrinsic guidance, philosophy, metaphysics, guarded its own formal object, to which it is by nature proportioned, namely, being as being, known in the minor sense world. By this formal object, metaphysics remains specifically distinct from theology, which has its own distinctive formal object, namely, God as He is in Himself. [238] God in His own inner life, known only by divine revelation. And here we can already foresee what harmony, in the mind of St. Thomas, unites these two syntheses, a harmony wherein metaphysics gladly becomes the subordinated instrument of theology. [239].

THE FIVE WAYS OF ST. THOMAS THAT PROVE GOD EXISTS

The five proofs for the existence of God that St. Thomas formulated have long been accepted by the Church as apodictic, i.e. as demonstrations from which the conclusion that God exists is drawn in each of the five instances with absolute certainty. 38

The arguments adduced by St. Thomas to prove the existence of God and that God alone is subsisting Being Itself are still today, as they were in the Middle Ages, the most cogent of all arguments and clearly confirm that dogma of the Church which was solemnly proclaimed at the Vatican Council and succinctly expressed by Pius X as follows: “The certain knowledge of God as the first principle of creation and its end and demonstrable proof of His existence can be inferred, like the knowledge of a cause from its effect, by the light of the natural reason, from creation, that is to say the visible works of creation” (Motu Proprio *Sacrorum Antistitum* of the 1st September, 1910).

These “arguments adduced by St. Thomas to prove the existence of God” are specified in the twenty-second of the twenty four theses, which runs as follows. 39

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38 Pius XI. *Studiorum Ducem*. 29 June 1923. no. 16.

39 Deum esse neque immediata intuitione percipimus, neque a priori demonstramus, sed utique a posteriori, hoc est, per ea que facit sunt, ducto argumento ab effectibus ad causam: videlicet, a rebus que moverunt ad sui motus principium et primum motorem immobilem; a processu rerum mundanarum e causis inter se subordinatis, ad primam causam incausatam; a corruptibilibus que æqualiter se habent ad esse et non esse, ad ens absolute necessarium; ab ipsis secundum minoratas perfectiones essendi, vivendi, intelligendi, plus et minus sunt, vivunt, intelligent, ad eum qui est maxime intelligens, maxime vivens, maxime ens; denique, ab ordine universi ad intellectum separatum qui res ordinavit, disposit, et dirigat ad finem.
That God exists we do not know by immediate intuition, nor do we demonstrate it a priori, but certainly a posteriori, that is, by things which are made, arguing from effect to cause. Namely, from things, which are in movement and cannot be the adequate principle of their motion, to the first mover immovable; from the procession of worldly things from causes, which are subordinated to each other, to the first uncaused cause; from corruptible things, which are indifferent alike to being and non-being, to the absolutely necessary being; from things, which, according to their limited perfection of existence, life, intelligence, are more or less perfect in their being, their life, their intelligence, to Him who is intelligent, living, and being in the highest degree; finally, from the order, which exists in the universe, to the existence of a separate intelligence which ordained, disposed, and directs things to their end.

It is a common ploy amongst sophists and their fellow travellers to pick on a ‘straw man’: an argument for God’s existence that is erroneous and not a proof of God’s existence, from which they then declare that they have proved that God does not exist. That which is misunderstood by some contemporary apologists is that these sophists have managed only to show that a particular argument is invalid; and that to show up the invalidity of one or more arguments does not warrant the assumption that God does not exist: all that can be said is that a particular argument failed in its claim. Concerning valid arguments that do prove God’s existence, Garrigou-Lagrange makes the following instructive point in relating such arguments to the five ways of St. Thomas.40

These five arguments are typical and universal in range. All others can be reduced to them.

That is to say, any truly valid argument that one may formulate that proves God exists can be reduced to one of the five arguments of St. Thomas. The need to rightly understand these five arguments is of high importance. However before we come to study the five arguments in some detail, it is first necessary to remove some common misconceptions about certain types of arguments for God’s Existence so that we may clearly see in which orders of knowledge arguments for God’s Existence are either inappropriate or impossible, and in which sole order of knowledge arguments can prove that God exists. Here we are speaking of the three orders of human knowledge which correspond to the three degrees of formal abstraction from matter. In the order of knowledge pertaining to the first degree of formal abstraction from matter we have philosophy of nature (i.e. the philosophy of moveable being as being) called Physics by the Scholastics, and empirical science. In the order of knowledge pertaining to the second degree of formal abstraction we have mathematics: both of discrete quantity, arithmetic; and of continuous quantity, geometry. In the order of knowledge pertaining to the third degree of formal abstraction we have metaphysics (i.e. the philosophy of being as being). Let us understand what is meant by the three degrees or levels of formal abstraction from matter.41

The first level, that of physics, abstracts only from individual matter: e.g., from the water of this stream and from the water of that torrent, to consider the nature of water and its properties.

The second level of abstraction, that of mathematics, abstracts from all the sensible qualities to consider quantity, either discrete (numbers) or continuous (extension, its figures and its dimensions).

The third level of abstraction, in metaphysics, abstracts from each subject, and thereby it permits us to know the most universal laws of being and action, which are applied to all beings, material or immaterial alike.

From which we can see that according to the level of abstraction from matter there are had the three orders of knowledge that correspond respectively in ascending order of abstraction to (1) philosophy of nature or physics (not to be confused with post Galilean or modern physics) and empirical or positive science, (2) mathematics and (3) metaphysics. This gives us the necessary foundation from which to understand why reasoning in the first two orders of knowledge cannot demonstrate the existence of God, and why reasoning in the metaphysical order of knowledge can demonstrate the existence of God.42

(no. 7) It seems hardly necessary for us to point out that we do not claim to give a scientific demonstration for the existence of God, if by that term is understood, as is often the case nowadays, a process that does not go beyond the data of observation and experience. But if reason tells us that beings and phenomena, which are objects of experience, cannot explain themselves, but of necessity require the presence of a cause which renders them real and intelligible; if reason furthermore establishes the fact that this cause must be sought for beyond the limits of observation and experience—then we shall have a demonstration, not indeed scientific in the modern acceptation of the term, but philosophical or metaphysical. (See Zigliara, *Summa Philosophica*, Vol. I, p. 157). And if we also bear in mind, with Aristotle, that science does not really differ from ordinary knowledge, and that any branch of knowledge may be truly termed a science only when it gives the “why” or the necessary raison d’être of what is affirmed, then we shall see that metaphysics merits the name of science far more than any of the so-called positive sciences. “Scire simpliciter est cognoscere causam, propter quam res est et non potest aliter se habere,” i.e., to know is simply to perceive the reason why a thing is actually so, and cannot be otherwise. (*Post. Analyt.*, Bk. I; Commentary of St. Thomas, 4th lesson).

The positive sciences cannot give us this propter quid, this raison d’être, that would make intelligible the laws, which, after all, are but general facts. As Aristotle expresses it, they remain sciences of the quia, which means that they state the fact without being able to explain it, without giving the reason why it is so and not otherwise. The inductive method of reasoning, which can be traced back to the principle of causality, enables

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us to conclude with physical certainty that heat is the cause of the expansion of iron, but we do not see “why” this effect is to be assigned precisely to this cause and not to any other. We account for the antecedent phenomenon merely by empirical and extrinsic processes of reasoning, and this is because we do not know why heat and iron are specifically constituted as they are. When positive science proceeds from general facts or laws, to explain the reasons for these laws, it can only provide us with temporary working hypotheses, which are not so much explanations as convenient representations apt to classify the facts. Scientists state that the distance traversed by all falling bodies through space is proportionate to the square of the time taken. That is a general fact or law; but what is the nature of the force that causes bodies to fall in this way? Are they driven towards one another or mutually attracted? If there is mutual attraction, how are we to explain it? It is a mystery. The laws according to which light travels have been discovered; but what is light? Is it a vibration of a rarefied medium, the ether, or is it an extremely rapid current of impalpable matter? Neither hypothesis claims to be the true solution, excluding the other as false. The scientist’s only concern is to give a more or less convenient classification of the phenomena.

The intelligible element found in the positive sciences is to be explained by the fact that they have recourse to the metaphysical principles of causality, induction, and finality. Since their objects, as Aristotle has pointed out, are essentially material and changeable, they reach but the fringe of being, and consequently of intelligibility. (Phys., Bk. II, ch. 1; Bk. VI, ch. 1). The objects accessible to our senses are hardly intelligible in themselves. They belong to the domain of the hypothetical and conjectural, to that which Plato termed δόξα (opinion). The intelligible world is the sole object of true science (ἐπιστήμη). In fact, the certitude properly called scientific grows in proportion as what one affirms approaches nearer to those first principles which are, as it were, the very structure of reason—the principle of identity implied in the idea of being, that most simple and universal of all ideas, the principles of contradiction, causality, and finality. If the principle of identity and non-contradiction is not only a law of thought, but also of being, if the other principles (in order to escape the charge of absurdity) must necessarily be referred to it, then every assertion necessarily connected with such principles will have metaphysical or absolute certainty, and its negation implies a contradiction. On the other hand, no assertion relying solely on the testimony of the senses can possess other than physical certainty, and, finally, every assertion based on human testimony cannot have other than moral certainty. That is why, according to the traditional philosophy, metaphysics—the science of pure being and of the first principles of being—deserves to be called “the first of all sciences,” for it is more of a science than all the other sciences. The demonstration of the existence of God must, therefore, be in itself far more exacting than is usually the case nowadays with scientific demonstrations. It must not only establish, by reasons drawn from observation, that the world has need of an infinitely perfect cause, but also why it needs this cause and no other. Moreover, the reason given must not be a mere working hypothesis, but definitive; it must necessarily flow from the highest
principle of our intelligence and from the very first of all our ideas, namely, that of being.

This demonstration, though far excelling the empirical demonstrations in point of rigor and certainty, will, however, not be so readily understood by us, at least when presented in scientific form. As Aristotle remarked (Met., Bk. I; Commentary of St. Thomas, Lect. 2; Met., Bk. II, Lect. 5; Bk. VI, Lect. 1), the realities of sense perception are in themselves not so readily knowable, because they are material and changeable (the mind must abstract from material conditions, since they are a hindrance to intelligibility), but are more readily knowable by us, since they constitute the direct object of sensible intuition, and we acquire our ideas through the senses. Metaphysical truths and realities of the purely intelligible order, though they are more easily knowable in themselves, are not so easily known by us, because sensible intuition cannot reach them. The image accompanying the idea is extremely deficient, and the idea which we obtain through the medium of the senses, is but an analogical expression of the purely intelligible reality.

Between the physical sciences (which abstract only from individual matter and consider matter in common, such as, for instance, the sensible qualities, not of any particular molecule of water, but of water in general), and metaphysics (which abstracts from all matter), is the science of mathematics (which abstracts from sensible qualities and considers quantity as either continuous or discrete). It is, to a certain extent, a combination of the rigorous exactitude of metaphysics and the facility of the physical sciences, because its proper object, quantity, on the one hand, may in itself be defined by terms that are intellectual and fixed, and, on the other hand, it may be adequately expressed by the ideas we derive from the senses, and made clear by appropriate illustrations. In this way a superficial aspect of being is presented to us, evidently very different from pure being, which is the object of metaphysics. We cannot claim to prove the existence of God by a mathematical demonstration; the nominal definition of God assures us that, if He exists, He does not belong to the order of quantity, because He is the first cause and final end, two aspects of causality with which mathematics is not concerned.

Our demonstration will, therefore, be more exact in itself than any empirical demonstration could be, but it will not be as easy to understand as is a mathematical demonstration; to grasp its full force, a certain philosophical training is required, and conflicting moral dispositions can prevent a man from perceiving its efficacy. “Some there are who do not grasp what is said to them, unless it is presented in a mathematical form. Others refuse to accept anything that does not appeal to the senses. That which is more according to general custom is better known to us, for habit becomes second nature. Aristotle observes that we must not expect the same degree of certitude from physics, mathematics, and metaphysics.” (St. Thomas, Comment. in II Met., Lect. 5).
This difficulty, for the rest, applies only to the scientific form of the demonstration. Reason spontaneously rises to a certain knowledge of God's existence by a very simple inference derived from the principle of causality. The sensus communis need not bother itself with the difficulties presented by objectivity and the transcendental and analogical value of the principle of causality, but quite naturally arrives at a knowledge of the first cause, one and unchangeable, of multiple and changeable beings. The orderly arrangement of things in this world and the existence of intelligent beings prove that the first cause is intelligent; the moral obligation made known by conscience necessarily calls for a legislator; lastly, the principle of finality demands that there should be a supreme, sovereignly good end, for which we are made, and which, therefore, is superior to us. The manner in which we shall present the traditional proofs for the existence of God, from the point of view of the philosophy of being, (which in reality is but an explanation and vindication of the sensus communis), makes it unnecessary for us to treat ex professo of the problems arising from spontaneous knowledge. The teaching of Catholic theology on this point will be found in the Dictionnaire de Théol. Cath., art. “Dieu,” cols. 874-923.

Now let us rewrite the first part of the twenty-second of the twenty four theses.

a) That God exists we do not know by immediate intuition, nor do we demonstrate it a priori, but certainly a posteriori, that is, by things which are made, arguing from effect to cause.

Here follows the explanation.43

(no. 8) How shall we proceed in the philosophical demonstration of the existence of God? The Vatican Council tells us that it is from created things that God can be known with certainty (e rebus creatis certo cognosci potest). We do not, therefore, as the Ontologists contended, come to know of God’s existence and His attributes by a direct intuition of His essence. This vision is the ultimate crowning of the supernatural order. The created intellect, by its unaided natural powers, can by no means rise to such a knowledge; created and finite as it is, the intellect has for its proportionate object created and finite being, and possesses direct knowledge only of creatures. (St. Thomas, Summa Theol., Ia, q. 12, a. 4). By means of created things it can come to know God, not indeed as He is in Himself, in that which essentially constitutes Him what He is (quidditative; see infra, no. 32), not in the eminent simplicity of His Godhead, as if the intellect had an intuitive perception of this, but only in so far as there is an analogical similarity between Him and His works. The great number of analogical concepts derived from created things, to which we must have recourse in order to form an idea of God, is sufficient proof that we have not that immediate intuition of which the Ontologists speak.

Might not the existence of God be a self-evident truth (veritas per se nota), which needs not to be proved, as, for instance, is the principle of identity: “That which is, is,” or

the principle of contradiction: “What is, cannot at the same time and in the same sense be and not be”? Or at least, might it not be possible to give an a priori demonstration of the existence of God, abstracting from contingent realities? St. Anselm and the defenders of the ontological argument thought so. St. Anselm points out that existence is implied in the notion conveyed to the mind of every man by the word “God.” When one fully realizes what is meant by that word, he says, one conceives of a being greater than which none can be conceived. But if such a being does not exist, then it is possible to conceive of another being, which has all the qualifications of the former, and which, in addition, really exists, and so it would be greater than the being considered to be the greatest that can be conceived. Therefore, if we wish to retain the meaning that the word “God” conveys to the mind, we must affirm that God exists.

The proposition, “God exists” or “the most perfect being that can be thought of, really exists,” is, according to St. Anselm, evident in itself and also for us (per se nota quoad nos); and in this respect it does not differ from those other two principles, “That which is, is,” and, “What is, cannot at the same time and in the same sense be and not be.”

St. Thomas and many other theologians reject St. Anselm’s view on this point. Without doubt, they say, in itself (quoad se), the essence of God implies His existence, since God is the necessary being and cannot but exist; but the proposition, “God exists,” is not in itself evident for us (quoad nos). In fact, we do not know the divine essence such as it is in itself (quidditative); we can reach it only by means of positive analogical concepts which reveal to us the traits it has in common with created things; but what it possesses as peculiarly its own, this we know only in a negative way (non finite being) or relatively (supreme being). It follows that we know the Deity just as we know all other essences, in an abstract way. This abstract idea which the mention of the word “God” awakens in us, though it differs from all other ideas in that it implies aseity or essential existence (existentiam signatam), abstracts, like all other ideas, from actual or de facto existence (ab existentia exercita).

To the a priori argument of St. Anselm we reply by distinguishing the minor. St. Anselm says: If the most perfect being that can be conceived did not exist, it would be possible to conceive of a being which has all the qualifications of the former, plus existence, so that this latter being would then be more perfect than the most perfect being that can be conceived. I admit that if this being did not exist, and was not conceived as self-existing, it would be possible to conceive one more perfect. But I deny the assertion that if it did not exist, though it was at the same time conceived as self-existing, then it would be possible to conceive of a more perfect being. Hence it is not logical to conclude: “Therefore, God exists”; all that can be logically concluded is: Therefore, God must be conceived as self-existing, and in truth does so exist, and is entirely independent of any other being, if He exists. (St. Thomas, Summa Theol., Ia, q. 2, a. 1). ....
We cannot affirm the possibility of God \textit{a priori}. We only know that our ideas of being, goodness, intelligence, liberty, acquired from finite things, can be applied by way of analogy to a reality of another order, and that if a reality of another order is required to account as \textit{cause} for the finite beings from which we derived these ideas, that cause must necessarily have a similarity, at least analogical, to its effects. (St. Thomas, \textit{Summa Theol.}, Ia, q. 4, a. 3; q. 88, a. 3; see infra, no. 29). ....

(no. 9) We cannot, therefore, demonstrate \textit{a priori} that the essence of God is possible, and even less, that it exists; but there is another kind of demonstration, known as \textit{a posteriori}. These two demonstrations, like every process of reasoning, proceed from the better known to the less known; but when we demonstrate anything \textit{a priori}, the better known is at the same time not only the source, but also the \textit{raison d'être} of our knowledge. To demonstrate \textit{a priori} means to give the reason why (\textit{propter quid}) the predicate of the conclusion necessarily belongs to the subject. This demonstration presupposes that one knows the essence of the subject, which is the reason for what has been demonstrated as belonging to that subject. Thus, it is demonstrated \textit{a priori} that man is free, because he is a rational being and knows, not only this or that particular good, but good in general.

The \textit{a posteriori} demonstration, like the preceding, is a syllogism that results in a necessary conclusion; but here the better known is not the \textit{raison d'être} of what we know by it; only in the order of things known by us does it come first; in the order of reality it is not dependent upon our knowledge. The knowledge of the effect necessarily leads us to conclude to the existence of the cause. This \textit{a posteriori} demonstration does not tell us why (\textit{propter quid}) the predicate of the conclusion necessarily belongs to the subject; it merely establishes \textit{that} (\textit{quia}) the predicate refers to the subject, that the cause exists. It does not give us the reason for what is affirmed by the conclusion, but only the \textit{raison d'être} of the affirmation of the object. Without knowing God as He is in Himself, as the ontological argument demands, we nevertheless can know by such a demonstration that He is. “To be can mean either of two things. It may mean the act of being, or it may mean the composition of a proposition effected by the mind in joining a predicate to a subject. Taking \textit{to be} in the former sense, we cannot understand the being of God, nor His essence; but only in the second sense. For we know that this proposition which we form about God when we say God is, is true, and we know this from His effects.” (St. Thomas, \textit{Summa Theol.}, Ia, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2um). This \textit{a posteriori} demonstration proving that God exists, in itself is superior to any empirical demonstration; for, as we have already remarked, it will have to explain just \textit{why} the world demands a cause corresponding to the nominal definition of God, and which cannot be attributed to any other cause. (See supra, no. 7).

This \textit{a posteriori} demonstration, or demonstration from the effect, cannot be considered a strictly metaphysical process, unless it argues from the \textit{proper effect} to the \textit{proper cause}, which means to the necessary and immediate cause of the effect. “From every effect,” says St. Thomas, “the existence of its proper cause can be
demonstrated; because, since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist.” (Ia, q. 2, a. 2). “Every effect depends upon its cause, in so far as it is its cause.” (Ia, q. 104, a. 1).

The proper cause in metaphysics is that which the Scholastics, following Aristotle, call *causa per se primo*, i.e., the absolutely first cause. (See Aristotle, *Il Phys.*, c. iii; *V Met.*, c. ii; St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, Ia, q. 45, a. 5; Commentary of Cajetan, q. 104, a. 1; John of St. Thomas, *In Iam*, q. 44, *De Creatione*, disp. XVIII, a. 1 and 4).

These articles of St. Thomas, taken from his treatise on creation and the divine government of the world (conservation in being and divine movement), are the veritable and indispensable commentary on the proofs for the existence of God as given in the first part of the *Summa Theologica*, q. 2, a. 2. Theological speculation follows the reverse order of philosophical speculation; it argues from God to created things, and discusses the great metaphysical problems concerning God and the world, not with reference to the existence of God, but as presented by creation, conservation, and divine movement.

Why does St. Thomas say: “*Ex quolibet effectu potest demonstrari propriae causae ejus esse* (from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated)”? It is because, if any other than the *proper cause* is assigned, the demonstration is not conclusive. For instance, it would be false to argue: “This man exists; therefore his father exists also”; and yet the father is in a certain sense the cause of the existence of his son, who often survives him. In like manner, every phenomenon presupposes an antecedent phenomenon; but frequently all trace of the latter is gone, whereas the former endures. The agnostics also refuse to acknowledge the principle of St. Thomas just mentioned, but say that from every effect it can be demonstrated, not that its cause exists, but that it has existed. Thus, they would argue that local movement presupposes a certain form of caloric energy which has disappeared; that another phenomenon preceded this one, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

The answer which St. Thomas would give to this would be that in the principle just mentioned the *proper cause* means that cause from which the effect necessarily and immediately proceeds. Now, if the proper causes of effects, however particular and momentary they may be, are also particular and transient, then the proper causes of universal and permanent effects are likewise universal and permanent, and hence belong to a higher order. For instance, to say that this particular animal is the direct cause of this other animal, does not suffice to explain the presence of animal life on the surface of the earth, which compels us to have recourse to more important and general principles, such as the sun, which is the permanent source of the heat required for the generation of plants and animals, and for their continuance in life. In like manner, this particular motor, which was itself set in motion by something else, truly accounts for the presence of this movement, but it does not explain the movement in itself; and if this movement (wherever it may be found) does not contain in itself a sufficient reason for its existence, it demands a universal cause,
constantly in action and of a higher order, a source of energy which does not stand in need of actuation or conservation, but which produces and conserves all movement in the universe.

This argumentation is based on Aristotle’s profound analysis of the notion of the proper cause, which we were able to give only in a brief note, but which must be studied for a complete understanding of the demonstrability of God’s existence. [2]

The principle here invoked, “that the proper effect demonstrates the existence of the proper cause,” may in the last analysis be reduced to the principle of causality, which gives us the metaphysical aspect of being, and may be formulated thus: “That which exists, but not by itself, exists in virtue of some other being, which is self-sufficient.” A contingent existence cannot have its completely sufficient cause in another contingent existence as dependent as itself; but both equally demand a necessary existence of a higher order.

Let us now rewrite the second part of the twenty-second thesis.

b) Namely, from things, which are in movement and cannot be the adequate principle of their motion, to the first mover immovable (first argument – the argument from motion); from the procession of worldly things from causes, which are subordinated to each other, to the first uncaused cause (second argument – argument from effects to causes); from corruptible things, which are indifferent alike to being and non-being, to the absolutely necessary being (third argument – the argument from contingency); from things, which, according to their limited perfection of existence, life, intelligence, are more or less perfect in their being, their life, their intelligence, to Him who is intelligent, living, and being in the highest degree (fourth argument – argument from the grades or degrees of perfection found in created reality); finally, from the order, which exists in the universe, to the existence of a separate intelligence which ordained, disposed, and directs things to their end (fifth argument, the teleological argument - argument from the goal or end to which things are purposed or designed).

Each of the five arguments has for its foundation the principle: “The proper effect demonstrates the existence of the proper cause,” and may be formulated thus: “That which exists, but not by itself, exists in virtue of some other being, which is self-sufficient.”

In the first of the five arguments “that which exists” is motion. Expressed in terms of the principle of causality, the argument is thus seen to be: Movement as it is movement is the proper effect of a proper cause - the first immovable mover, which, since movement is given, must exist.

The “first immovable mover” is what we call God. ‘Immovable’ does not mean static or lifeless, but rather an unlimited vitality without beginning or end that can neither lose or gain perfection. i.e. in which there can be no transition from potency to act because it is pure Act in which there is no potency.
In the second of the five arguments “that which exists” is caused or conditioned causality. Expressed in terms of the principle of causality, the argument is thus seen to be: Caused causality as it is caused causality is the proper effect of a proper cause: the first uncaused cause, which, since caused causality is given, must exist.

The “first uncaused cause” is what we call God. The first cause cannot cause itself because to cause it must first be. Therefore it is uncaused.

In the third of the five arguments “that which exists” is contingent being i.e. beings that can be or can be-not, i.e. it is not necessary that contingent beings exist: they can come into existence and can go out of existence. Expressed in terms of the principle of causality, the argument is thus seen to be: Contingent being as it is contingent being is the proper effect of a proper cause: a necessary being causing the being of contingent beings, which, since contingent being is given, must exist.

In the fourth of the five arguments “that which exists” are the grades or degrees of perfection found in things i.e. in things which exhibit limited perfection. Expressed in terms of the principle of causality, the argument is thus seen to be: That which is perfect by diminished perfection, as it is thus perfect, is the proper effect of a proper cause: the first most perfect, which since things of diminished perfection exist, must exist.

In the fifth of the five arguments “that which exists” are things which are ordered to an end i.e. which exhibit teleological order. Expressed in terms of the principle of causality, the argument is thus seen to be: Teleological order as it is teleological order, is the proper effect of a proper cause: a supreme intelligent orderer or designer, who, since teleological order is given, must exist.

The Universality and Order of These Proofs

The five proofs given by St. Thomas are most universal in scope, being deduced from the highest metaphysical principles. The starting point, which is also the minor, and which is previously enunciated in each of these proofs, is the fact as established in any created being whatever, namely, the fact of corporeal or spiritual motion, of causality, of contingency, of composition and imperfection, and of ordination in the passive sense. But the principle or the major in each of these a posteriori demonstrations is the principle of causality with its corollary: that there is no process to infinity in directly subordinated causes. The first proof is concerned with the supreme and efficient cause of motion, the second with conditioned causality, the third with contingency, the fourth with composite and imperfect being, and the fifth

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44 Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange O.P. The One God: A Commentary on the First part of St Thomas’ Theological Summa. Chapter 2: The Existence of God, Third Article: Whether God Exists. p. 155. Note [110] Ia q.79, a.9; [111] Suarez (Disp. Met., XXIX, sec. 1, no. 7), in rejecting the necessity of the divine premotion for our will to act, does not admit the universality of the principle that whatever is set in motion, is set in motion by another. Also in not admitting a real distinction between created essence and existence [ed. see the third of the twenty-four theses], he likewise failed to understand the other proofs of St. Thomas, especially the third and fourth. It is the opinion of the Thomists that Suarez deprives these proofs of their demonstrative value.
with the orderly arrangement of things in the world. The fourth and fifth proofs treat also, and especially so, of the supreme and exemplary directive cause. The terminating point of these five proofs is the existence of the self-substituting Being, who is absolutely simple and unchangeable, and hence really and essentially distinct from the world that is composite and changeable. The ultimate objective, indeed, no matter which of these proofs we take, is the establishing of some divine attribute, and this latter can be predicated only of the essentially self-substituting Being. (109)

The five proofs reach this summit, as constituting the supreme truth in the order of finding, from which afterward the divine attributes are deduced. This highest truth, which is also revealed (“I Am Who Am”), is, so to speak, the golden key to the entire treatise on the one God. It is the culminating point in the way of finding and the beginning in the way of judgment, and in this transcendent truth is contained the supreme reasons of things. (110)

This must be carefully noted, because several theologians, such as Suarez, (111) not understanding these five proofs, so changed them as to deprive them of all demonstrative validity.

Here we repeat Rowland’s (obj. 3).

Though he [Garrigou-Lagrange] did not attend the Council and died early in 1964, he had certainly influenced the thinking of many who did attend. The ‘Leonine’ or generation of 1879 Thomists, and the Neo-Thomists who followed them, were strongly influenced by the theology of the Counter-Reformation, especially by the works of Cajetan (1469–1534), Suárez (1548–1617), and Bellarmine (1542–1621). (p 18)

Contrary to what Rowland here imputes to Garrigou-Lagrange, the only sense in which it could be said that he was influenced would be to say that it was love of truth that influenced him to defend the teaching of St. Thomas against the errors of Suárez. We have seen abundant evidence of this in his defence of the Twenty Four Thomistic Theses and the Proofs for God’s Existence.

CONCLUSION

Rowland’s objections, sufficiently repelled in the Introduction, have served a useful purpose. They have prompted us to give an exposition of the principles of authentic Thomism: the principles to be followed according to the mind of the Church for a renewed study of St. Thomas. In the course of this work we have seen that the errors of Suarez are to be excluded if one wishes to be faithful to St. Thomas and the major principles of his philosophy as specified by the Supreme Pontiffs; and we have seen that authentic Thomism excludes the logical errors of Kant, and opposes the principles of immanence latent in agnosticism and Kantianism: the basis of Modernism (synthesis of all heresies, St. Pius X). On all fronts Fr. Reginald Garrigou-
Lagrange has been our guide and teacher. We now understand that fear is the reason for
describing this loyal and formidable son of St. Thomas as the 'sacred monster of Thomism'.

Again, if we are to avoid the errors which are the source and fountain-head of all the
miseries of our time, the teaching of Aquinas must be adhered to more religiously
than ever. For Thomas refutes the theories propounded by Modernists in every
sphere, in philosophy, by protecting, as We have reminded you, the force and power
of the human mind and by demonstrating the existence of God by the most cogent
arguments; in dogmatic theology, by distinguishing the supernatural from the natural
order and explaining the reasons for belief and the dogmas themselves; in theology,
by showing that the articles of faith are not based upon mere opinion but upon truth
and therefore cannot possibly change; in exegesis, by transmitting the true
conception of divine inspiration; in the science of morals, in sociology and law, by
laying down sound principles of legal and social, commutative and distributive,
justice and explaining the relations between justice and charity; in the theory of
asceticism, by his precepts concerning the perfection of the Christian life and his
confutation of the enemies of the religious orders in his own day. Lastly, against the
much vaunted liberty of the human reason and its independence in regard to God he
asserts the rights of primary Truth and the authority over us of the Supreme Master.
It is therefore clear why Modernists are so amply justified in fearing no Doctor of the
Church so much as Thomas Aquinas.

In our exposition of the teaching of St. Thomas taken from the works of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange,
it is to be noted that he referred repeatedly to the actual works of the Angelic doctor, especially
the Summa, and explained in great detail and depth the teaching of St. Thomas. One sees that this
outstanding feature of his work cannot be squared off with Rowland’s claim in (Obj. 5) above
that he and like minded Thomists “relied heavily on the sixteenth and seventeenth-century
commentaries on St Thomas”.

Further to counter the thrust of Rowland’s insinuations against Garrigou-Lagrange and the Papal
revival of the doctrine of St. Thomas, we repeat a Papal exhortation that Garrigou-Lagrange
embodied and exemplified for over sixty years of his teaching life in service of Holy Mother
Church.

Accordingly, just as it was said to the Egyptians of old in time of famine: “Go to
Joseph,” so that they should receive a supply of corn from him to nourish their
bodies, so We now say to all such as are desirous of the truth: “Go to Thomas,” and
ask him to give you from his ample store the food of substantial doctrine wherewith
to nourish your souls unto eternal life. Evidence that such food is ready to hand and
accessible to all men was given on oath at the hearing of the case for the
canonization of Thomas himself, in the following words: “Innumerable secular and
religious masters flourished under the lucid and limpid teaching of this Doctor,

45 Pius XI. Studorium Ducem. 29 June 1923. No. 27.
46 Ibid. n. 28.
because his method was concise, clear and easily followed ... even laymen and persons of little instruction are eager to possess his writings.”

If study of the writings of St. Thomas is difficult of accomplishment - as it may well be for anyone who has been subjected from childhood to the modern education system – then let your novice master, so to speak, be the Dominican friar whom we have quoted repeatedly and at length throughout. You will be hard pressed to find a clearer or better teacher of the philosophical and theological doctrines of the Angelic doctor than Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange O.P. Rowland could be compared to Garrigou-Lagrange in the same way Chesterton compared Luther to St. Thomas.47

On a great map like the mind of Aquinas, the mind of Luther would be almost invisible.

APPENDIX A

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE SUMMA OF ST. THOMAS.

We shall deal here in more detail with Rowland’s objection against the supposed neglect of history in the teaching of Garrigou-Lagrange et al., and with her objection against the architecture of the *Summa*.

(Obj. 7) They are remarkable above all for their general ahistorical temper. (p 18)

(Obj. 11) ... the typically Leonine presentation of St Thomas’s thought was often quite off-putting. The Thomist tradition was treated as an architectural model which had to be taken apart piece by piece with the smallest conceptual components subjected to rigorous analysis. It was precisely the presentation of the faith in this manner which led Ratzinger, von Balthasar, and others of their generation to complain that they found Thomism dry and unable to convey a sense of the glory of Revelation. It was a much contracted presentation of the kerygma. (p 19)

The following exposition can be taken as the answer of Garrigou-Lagrange to the two foregoing objections.48

INTRODUCTION

*The importance and significance of the Theological Summa of St Thomas*

Since this volume is an explanation of the first part of the *Theological Summa* of St. Thomas, it is expedient by way of introduction, first to show the importance or value and the significance of this work from two points of view, historical and theoretical. Our reference to the history of theology concerns only those matters about which one is not allowed to plead ignorance.

I) In the history of theology generally three periods are distinguished. First we have the patristic period, which extends from the first century to the eighth, and this is chiefly apologetic, polemic, and positive. Then we have the period of the Middle Ages, from the eighth century to the fifteenth, and this is the scholastic period. Finally there is the modern period, from the sixteenth century to the present time, and this period is chiefly positive and critical.

In each successive age the progress of theology is clearly seen, since, whatever period we take, a certain function of theology comes particularly into prominence, according to the necessities of the times. In this evolution we have the manifestation of something that is truly providential.

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Thus in the patristic period, theology is primarily apologetic (second century) for the conversion of the world from paganism to Christianity. It afterward becomes chiefly polemic in tone, being directed particularly against the heresies cropping up within the fold of the Church, and these heresies, such as Arianism, Nestorianism and Monophysitism, are concerned with the more important dogmas, such as the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. Theology must then defend the principles of faith from the very sources of revelation, namely, from Holy Scripture and tradition. Thus theology gradually assumes the form which is called positive, that is, it gathers together the various points of revealed doctrine as contained in Holy Scripture and divine tradition. But a systematic theology, combining all that is of faith and what is connected with it, so as to form one body of teaching, did not yet exist in the patristic period, except in certain works of St. Augustine (1) and St. John Damascene.

But in the second period, the Middle Ages, we find systematic or Scholastic theology definitely established, which didactically and speculatively expounds and defends what is of faith, and which deduces from it theological conclusions. Thus there is gradually formed a body of teaching which, though subordinate to what is strictly of faith, includes the science of theology, as it is commonly accepted in the Church, and which transcends, by reason of its universality and certainty, the various theological systems more or less in opposition to one another. In this age the theological Summae were written, which are so called because each is a complete treatise on all subjects pertaining to theology, and according as these various subjects are considered under the light of the higher principles of faith and reason.

In the third or modern period, theology again becomes chiefly both polemic and positive against the Protestants, and apologetic against the rationalists. We may call this third period critical or reflexive, and in this period, too, we see clearly the progress made in theology, since critical reflection normally follows direct knowledge. As St. Thomas says: “human reasoning, by way of seeking and finding, advances from certain things simply understood, namely, the first principles; and again, by way of judgment returns by analysis to first principles, in the light of which it examines what it has found.” (3) Thus in this third period, we find developing a more critical knowledge and defense, against Protestants and rationalists, of the very foundations of the faith or sources of revelation, namely, Holy Scripture and divine tradition, and as a result of this we have the fundamental treatises on revelation, the Church, the de loci’s (theological sources), this last being a scientific method of sacred theology.

In this we readily see the progress made in theology which, like a tree, grows and is perpetually renewed as a result of the more diligent efforts made in acquiring a knowledge of the sources, these being, as it were, the roots from which it proceeds.

2) We should note in the history of theology three brilliant epochs, each following immediately the close of an ecumenical council. Thus, after the First Council of

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Nicaea (325) against Arianism, in the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century the greater Fathers of the Church flourished. In the East, in the Greek Church, we have St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Cyril of Alexandria. In the West we have St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Leo the Great.

Similarly, in the second epoch, after the Fourth Lateran Council, held in the year 1215 against the Albigenses and Waldensians, the thirteenth century saw the rise of the great theologians St. Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas.

Finally, the third brilliant epoch in the history of theology is at the time of the Council of Trent (1545-63). Even before this time there had been some celebrated theologians, such as Cajetan and Sylvester of Ferrara, and during the period of the council and afterward we have Soto, Bannez, Tolet, Medina, the Salmanticenses, John of St. Thomas, and Suarez in speculative theology. But all these theologians are commentators of the Summa of St. Thomas, even Suarez, although he pursues his own eclectic method. During the same period Cano, St. Robert Bellarmine, Natalis Alexander, and Bossuet are prominent in the art of controversy; and in exegesis we have Maldonatus, Cornelius a Lapide, and others.

In like manner, after the Vatican Council (1869-70) there is a revival of theology in the works of Joseph Kleutgen, S.J., Scheeben, Schwane, Hefele; and in the revival of Thomism we have Sanseverino, Cornoldi, S.J., Zigliara, O.P., and others. In several of his encyclicals, especially in the Aeterni Patris (1879), Leo XIII highly recommends the doctrine of St. Thomas.

From the fact that these three golden ages of sacred theology follow in the wake of ecumenical councils, it is seen how the Holy Spirit directs, by the living voice of the authoritative teaching of the Church, the progressive knowledge of dogmatic truths with regard to those matters that are of faith, and the progress of theology in questions subordinate to faith. For God, by His special providence, watches over His science, that is, theology, which in the strict sense is the science of God proceeding from divine revelation. On the other hand, in these three generally accepted periods preparations were somehow made for the ecumenical councils then held by reason of the inquiries of the theologians during these times of preparation. Thus human labor is the disposing cause, and God assisting the Church teaching is the principal cause, of the progressive understanding of dogma in matters of faith, and also in consequence of this of the progress itself made in theology.

3) It is to be observed that in each of these three periods there is time of preparation, a time of splendor, and a stationary time when compendiums and compilations make their appearance. Finally, there is the period of more or less pronounced decline, as in the seventh, the fourteenth, and the eighteenth centuries.
In the time of splendor, the wonderful harmony in the various functions of theology is particularly in evidence, a harmony which the human mind cannot attain suddenly. Generally speaking, during the time of preparation there are two tendencies to some extent opposed to each other, because of a certain excess in each case. Some, for instance, exaggerate the necessity of speculation, as the Alexandrian school does; others devote themselves exclusively to the positive study of Holy Scripture, as the school of Antioch does. Likewise, in the Middle Ages, in the twelfth century, Abelard, assigning too much to the role of reason, falls into many errors, while, on the other hand, several of the school of St. Victor stress too much the mystic element and do not rely sufficiently upon reason.

Contrary to this, in the golden age, especially in the thirteenth century, the doctors succeed in effecting a marvellous reconciliation between the various functions of theology, which is then perfected in its positive, speculative, and even affective aspects. For we then see all the great theologians writing commentaries on Holy Scripture; they have a profound knowledge of the teaching of the Fathers, and they are conspicuous for their wisdom or exalted perception of the mysteries that are most productive of fruit in the Christian life.

This we see is the case in the thirteenth century, in which we detect notable differences as to genius, inclination, and method among the greater theologians.

Thus St. Bonaventure in his works is generally faithful to the teaching of St. Augustine. His preference is for Platonic instead of Aristotelian philosophy, giving precedence to the will over the intellect, and he devotes himself more to mystic contemplation than to speculative theology. At the same time St. Albert the Great, who is profoundly versed in philosophical subjects, purges Aristotelian philosophy of the errors injected into it by the Arabian commentators and accommodates it to the uses of theology as an instrument that is more precise and exact than Platonic philosophy.

Finally, St. Thomas completed what St. Albert had begun. He showed the value of the foundations of Aristotelian philosophy with regard to first ideas and first principles of reason, as also in determining the constitutive principles of both natural things and human nature. Thus he determines more accurately what is the proper object of our intellect and hence what absolutely transcends our natural knowledge, and even the natural knowledge of any created intellect. Better, therefore, than any of his predecessors, St. Thomas distinguished between natural reason and supernatural faith, though he showed how they are interrelated. With wonderful logical order he expounded the various parts of theology according as it treats of God as He is in Himself, how all things proceed from Him, and how He is the final end of all things. Thus he collected all the theological material so as to form one body of doctrine, and this he did by a display of qualities rarely united in one individual, namely, with great simplicity as well as profundity of thought, and also with great rigor of logic as well as with a deep sense of the inaccessibility of the mystery. Therefore his doctrine was
praised in the highest terms by the Supreme Pontiffs. Leo XIII wrote as follows: “Among the scholastic doctors, the chief and master of all, towers Thomas Aquinas, who, as Cajetan observes, (4) because ‘he most venerated the ancient doctors of the Church, in a certain way seems to have inherited the intellect of all.’ The doctrines of those illustrious men, like the scattered members of a body, Thomas collected together and cemented, distributed in wonderful order, and so increased with important additions that he is rightly and deservedly esteemed the special bulwark and glory of the Catholic faith....

“Moreover, the Angelic Doctor pushed his philosophic conclusions into the reasons and principles of the things which are most comprehensive and contain in their bosom, so to say, the seeds of almost infinite truths, to be unfolded in good time by later masters and with a goodly yield. And as he also used this philosophic method in the refutation of error, he won the title to distinction for himself: that single-handed he victoriously combated the errors of former times, and supplied invincible arms to rout those which might in after times spring up.”

“Again, clearly distinguishing, as is fitting, reason from faith, while happily associating the one with the other, he both preserved the rights and had regard for the dignity of each; so much so, indeed, that reason, borne on the wings of Thomas to its human height can scarcely rise higher, while faith could scarcely expect more or stronger aids from reason than those which she has already obtained through Thomas.” (5)

In the same encyclical various testimonies of the Sovereign Pontiffs are quoted, and we would draw especial attention to the crowning point of these, which is the judgment by Innocent VI, who writes: “His teaching above that of others, the canons alone excepted, possesses such an elegance of phraseology, a manner of statement, and a soundness in its propositions, that those who hold to it are never found swerving from the path of truth, and he who dares to assail it will always be suspected of error.” (6) After the thirteenth century scholastic theology gradually begins to decline, just as following the age of the greater Fathers, after the fourth and fifth centuries, we have that of the minor Fathers, from the sixth to the eighth centuries.

Even after the beginning of the fourteenth century, John Duns Scotus in many of his metaphysical questions receded from the logical method of St. Thomas and established a new school of thought. Duns Scotus disagrees with St. Thomas on two points.

1) He admits a new distinction, namely, an actual-formal distinction on the part of the object, which he considers a possible distinction between the real and the logical, whereas the Thomists say that distinction either precedes the consideration of the mind, and is real, or else it does not, and then it is logical. There is no possible intermediary. Scotus substitutes this formal distinction sometimes for the real
distinction which St. Thomas holds, for instance, between created essence and existence, between the soul and its faculties, and between the faculties themselves, and thus he paves the way for nominalism. But sometimes Scotus tends toward extreme realism, substituting the formal distinction for the logical distinction which St. Thomas admits, for instance, between the divine attributes, and between the various metaphysical grades in the created being, for instance, between animality, vitality, substance, and being. Hence being is conceived as univocal, for the distinction between being and the substance of both God and creatures is formal, before any consideration of the mind. This new teaching in metaphysics does not, according to the Thomists, escape the danger of pantheism; for if the created substance and the divine substance are outside of being, since they are formally distinguished from it as objective realities, then they are non-entities, because outside of being is not-being; and so there would be but one thing. (7) Moreover, by such formalism, Scholasticism ends in subtleties and a war of words.

2) Voluntarism is another innovation introduced by Scotus. Thus he maintains that the distinction between the orders of nature and grace depends upon God’s free will, as if grace were not supernaturally essential, but only actually so. This same voluntarism makes Scotus affirm that God could have established another natural moral law regulating the duties among human beings, and so He could revoke such precepts as “thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal.” Thus Scotus paves the way for the contingency and positivism of the nominalists of the fourteenth century. (8)

Footnotes

1. Cf. De Trinitate, PL, XLII
2. Cf. De fide orthodoxa, PG, XCV.
3. Summa theol., Ia, q. 79, a.8
4. Cf. Cajetan, Com. in Summam S. Thomae, IIa IIae, q. 148, a.4 in fine. (Tr.)
6. Sermon on St. Thomas.
7. Cf. Vacant, Etudes comparees sur la philosophie de saint Thomas et sur celle de Duns Scot, 1891, p. 25
8. Ibid., pp. 14-16, 19 f.
INTRODUCTION (cont)

About the same time Roger Bacon, a prodigy of erudition, though not free from rash opinions, here and there in his writings speaks with contempt of Aristotle’s philosophy, and of St. Albert and St. Thomas, whom he calls children.

Thomas Sutton, O.P., said to be English by birth (+1310), was one among others who in his commentaries on the four books of the Sentences wrote in defense of St. Thomas against Scotus. But Peter Aureolus, O.M., Anthony Andrea, O.M., Richard of Middletown, O.M., took up the defense of Scotus’ doctrine, and Gerard of Bonn, O.D.C., strove to reconcile the opinions of each school.

Throughout the fourteenth century and in the early fifteenth century, scholastic theology gradually resolved itself into a war of words, railleries, and useless subtleties. The chief reason for this decline was the revival of nominalism, which maintains that universals are mere concepts of the mind or common names. Hence not even an imperfect knowledge of the nature of things can be acquired, whether of corporeal things or of the soul and its faculties, or the foundation of the natural law, or the essence of grace and the essential distinction between it and our nature.

Thus the advocates of nominalism deny the principle that the faculties, habits, and acts are specified by the formal object. Wherefore nominalists, especially William Ockham, despising the sound and lofty doctrine of their predecessors, prepared the downfall of solid scholastic theology, and prepared for the errors of Luther, whose teachers in the schools of Wittenberg were nominalists.

In the fifteenth century a revival in scholastic theology began with John Capreolus, O.P. (+1444), who is called the prince of Thomists, with Juan de Torquemada, O.P. (+1468), who wrote the Summa de Ecclesia, with Cajetan, O.P. (+1534), the distinguished defender of Thomistic doctrine, who was practically the first in the schools to explain the Theological Summa of St. Thomas instead of the Sentences. In this same period we have Conrad Kollin, O.P. (+1536), who wrote a series of commentaries on the Summa contra Gentes. These last mentioned theologians prepared the way for the theology of modern times, which began with the sixteenth century. Its first task was to refute the errors of this time, namely, Protestantism, Baianism, and Jansenism. These attenuated forms of Lutheranism deny the essential distinction between the order of nature and that of grace, and give a distorted notion of predestination and the divine motion.

Most prominent among the controversialists who labored to refute these errors are St. Robert Bellarmine, S.J. (+1621), Cano (+1560), and Bossuet (+1704). Among scholastic theologians, in the Dominican order we have Victoria (+1546), Soto (+1560), Bannez (+1604), John of St. Thomas (+1644), and Gonet +1681); among the Carmelites we have the theologians of Salamanca, who wrote the best
commentaries on the works of St. Thomas. In the Society of Jesus we have Toletus (+1596), Suarez (+1617), Molina (+1600), and Lugo (+1660), who proposed a different interpretation of the Angelic Doctor's teaching. Suarez, the eclectic, sought to steer a middle course between St. Thomas and Scotus, and receded less than Molina did from the Thomistic doctrine on predestination and grace.

Eminent in positive theology during this time are Batavius, Thomassin, Combefis, and others.

In the eighteenth century there was a gradual decline in theology from its former splendor. Yet we still have such Thomists as Charles Rene Billuart and Cardinal Louis Gotti, who defended the teaching of the Angelic Doctor with clarity and soundness of argument; St. Alphonsus Liguori, who wrote particularly on moral subjects, has received the title of Doctor of the Church.

Finally, after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, when peace was again restored, the study of both positive and speculative theology gradually began to flourish, and later on a special incentive was offered for the advancement of theology by the Vatican Council in its condemnation of Positivism and agnosticism. The fruits of this were seen in Modernism, condemned by Pius X. This Sovereign Pontiff, like Leo XIII, again highly recommended the study of St. Thomas' works and wrote: “But we warn teachers to bear in mind that a slight departure from the teaching of Aquinas, especially in metaphysics, is very detrimental. As Aquinas himself says, ‘a slight error in the beginning is a great error in the end’.” (9)

Finally, the Code of Canon Law, promulgated by the authority of Benedict XV in 1918, says: “Mental philosophy and theology must be taught according to the method, teaching and principles of the Angelic Doctor, to which the professors should religiously adhere.” (10) This is stated again in the new law for the doctorate promulgated by Pius XI (11).

All these testimonies, whether of the Sovereign Pontiffs or of the theologians who always have recourse to the Theological Summa of St. Thomas, most clearly proclaim its value and significance. All know of the works that have been written in recent times concerning the Theological Summa. (12).

The method of St Thomas, especially the structure of the articles of the Theological Summa

Many seem to think that before Descartes wrote his Discourse on Method, traditional philosophy was not yet fully and unmistakably cognizant of the rules governing sound reasoning for the construction and teaching of knowledge. Many others, on the contrary, think that Descartes, who despised history and his predecessors, could easily have found out from these latter the true rules of method. Some logicians are even of the opinion that a discourse on method could have been written, more scientific than Descartes', one in accordance with the teachings of Aristotle and St. Thomas. I should like in this article to explain briefly the main features of St.
Thomas’ method. Let us see first, by way of a statement of the question, what several of our contemporaries have to say about it. Then we shall see how the Angelic Doctor found the solid foundation of this method in Aristotle’s writings and how he made use of analysis in inductive inquiry, and also of synthesis in demonstration. Finally, we shall see how he closely connected analysis and synthesis in the light of divine contemplation.

On the various judgements about this method

Nowadays there are some who say that the method of St. Thomas is too scholastic and artificial, that it is not sufficiently historical and real. It is, so they say, too much an *apriori* method, almost always a process of deduction and analysis, or else in the analysis itself there is too much abstraction. It even seems at times to confound logical abstractions with the objectivity of things. Some, though, not realizing that they are nominalists, nowadays assert that “St. Thomas speaks sometimes of matter and form, of essence and existence, as if these were distinct realities.” (13) To be sure, for the Angelic Doctor, even before any consideration of the mind, matter is not form, created essence is not existence; and therefore, before any consideration of the mind, matter is distinct from form, and essence from existence. Yet form and essence are not, for St. Thomas, that which is, but that by which something is; nor does it follow that they are merely logical entities and not realities (14). But in these days many no longer know how to distinguish between metaphysical abstraction of direct consideration and logical abstraction of reflex consideration (15). Therefore they think only *that which is* is real, namely, the concrete singular. Hence, for them, the abstract object not only is not concrete, but it is not real. Thus the essence of man, of virtue, of society, and such things, would not be anything real, and the whole of metaphysics, not excepting the principle of contradiction, would be reduced to logic, logical abstractions, logical being, or, as they say, to extreme intellectualism that is without reality and lifeless. They would not dare to say explicitly that the abstract principle of contradiction (that some thing cannot at the same time be and not be) is not a law of real being but only a logical law governing the operations of the mind, as the laws of syllogism are. To such extreme admission, however, is one brought by this silly and at the present day common enough objection.

Moreover, several say that the method of St. Thomas often proceeds, not according to the natural way in which the mind operates, but in the conventional way of the schools of the thirteenth century, namely, by first proposing objections, at least three, which might be proposed afterward with better results; for, placed at the beginning, they are a source of obscurity rather than of light to the mind. Furthermore, it is indeed surprising, some say, that St. Thomas begins by setting forth the errors, introducing them with the formula *Videtur quod non*, and only after this comes the true doctrine, which is proved in very few words by an appeal to authority, more at length, however, in a theoretical manner; and finally the objections are solved.
Therefore some nowadays, in philosophy and also in speculative theology, depart from this method which, so they say, is too scholastic. Already in the time of Pius IX, as is evident from the thirteenth proposition of the Syllabus, several said: “The method and principles by which the old scholastic doctors cultivated theology are not at all suitable to the demands of our times and to the progress of the sciences.”

Some, not considering the profound difference between St. Thomas’ method of procedure and the merely *apriori* synthetic method adopted by Spinoza, seem to admit that St. Thomas’ method and even St. Bonaventure’s, from the abuse of philosophical deduction, lead to rationalism and pantheism, as seen from the propositions to which the Sacred Congregation of the Index ordered Augustine Bonnetty to give his assent 1855 in writing. (16)

Now some depart from St. Thomas’ method, preferring the historical not only for the useful and necessary investigation in the history of philosophy and theology, but also for a more or less direct knowledge of even philosophical or theological truth. This mode of procedure was indeed already in vogue among the followers of idealistic evolutionism, especially with Hegel, and later on we come across it, though in a modified form, in many works of modern authors. Whatever these modifications may be, this method, so it seems, tends by its very nature to confuse philosophy with the history of philosophy, and thus is established a certain philosophy of the history of doctrines, one that is more or less according to the tenets of evolutionism.

According to this view, which is not infrequent today, among all the systems appearing in the course of time in accordance with the evolution of ideas, no system is absolutely true, but each is relatively true, that is, in opposition to another preceding doctrine, or else to some other brief evolutionary period of the past. They say, that, for instance, Thomism was relatively true in the thirteenth in opposition to the doctrine of certain Augustinians, which it surpassed; but it, too, is not absolutely but relatively false with respect to the subsequent system which, either as an antithesis or as a superior synthesis, is of a higher order in the evolution of ideas. Thus Scotism, coming at a later date, would be truer than St. Thomas’ doctrine, and this by the momentum of its progress in the history of philosophy and theology. Then why should not this be so for the nominalism of William Ockham? In like manner, the eclecticism of Suarez, which often seeks to steer a middle, course between the system of St. Thomas and that of Scotus, would be a still more perfect synthesis and the beginning of a new process and progress among the modern intellectuals.

If it were so, nothing would be absolutely true, not even the principle of contradiction, at least as a law of being and higher reason, as Hegel admits. All the more so, none of the accepted definitions would be absolutely true, and hence from none of them could the true properties of things be deduced. There would be only relative truth, in its reference to the present state of knowledge, and this rather as regards the already superseded past than the unknown future. Even for knowing the relative truth of any doctrine, it would be necessary to have full knowledge of the
preceding periods of evolution, which were the prerequisites for the manifestation of its ultimate development. By way of illustration, we may say that for a knowledge of what ought to be our philosophical conception according to the intellectual exigencies of the twentieth century, we would have to go through Kantianism and Hegelianism, and then vitally reconsider Thomism so as to render it truly presentable to modern minds. Yet this new cogitation, as regards the mental attitude of the twentieth century, would not be absolutely but only relatively true, just as the cogitation of St. Thomas was relatively true in the thirteenth century.

This conception of truth, however, does not seem to differ from that of the Modernists, who said: “Truth is no more immutable, than man himself is, in that it is developed with, in, and by him.” (18) But this proposition, if we wish to consider the question more seriously, presupposes immanence or absolute evolutionism. According to this theory, as Pius IX said in the first proposition of the Syllabus: “In effect God is produced in man and in the world, and all things are God and have the very substance of God, and God is one and the same thing with the world, and, therefore, spirit with matter, necessity with liberty, good with evil, justice with injustice.” (19) Indeed the charge is made against St. Thomas that his method - as if it did not differ from Spinoza’s - leads, to pantheism; and now the new historical method, which is evolitional in its tone of thought, leads to the form opposed to it, which is pantheism. Spinoza, indeed, identified all things with the immobile God, while the evolutionists reduce God to universal evolution. According to the evolutionists, God is really in a process of becoming both in man and in the world, and He never will be in the true sense, as Renan said. Thus nothing would be absolutely true and nothing absolutely false. There would be only relative truth and relative falsehood. Only relativity would be absolute.

The above-mentioned confusion between history and philosophy corresponds to the desires neither of the true historian nor of the true philosopher. But the true historian seeks, to acquire a knowledge of history from the facts, before the uncertain philosophy of history is established. The desire of the true philosopher is, indeed, to acquire an accurate knowledge of philosophy, but he does not consider the temporal sequence of doctrines, as if these were the criterion or sign of their relative truth, and as if this sequence doctrines were always and necessarily an evolution in the ascendant order, but never a regression and senile decline. From the fact that Scotus came after St. Thomas, it does not follow that his doctrine is truer, and that later on there is greater perfection in the eclecticism of Suarez.

We must use the historical method in the history of doctrines, and this is indeed of great help in understanding the state and difficulty of the question, so as to give us, as it were, a panorama, of the solutions of any great problem. But in philosophy we must employ the analytic and synthetic method proportionate to it. In theology, however, we rely first upon proofs taken from the authority of Holy Scripture or divine tradition, or even the writings of the holy Fathers, and in the second place on
arguments drawn from reason, while, of course, not neglecting the history of
problems and their solutions.

Footnotes


12. Consult the commentaries of Father Buonpensiere, O.P., Father del Prado, O.P.,
Father Bilet, S.J., Father Mattiussi, S.J., and others. Many articles have appeared in
periodicals, especially in the *Revue Thomiste, Bulletin Thomiste, Revue des sciences
philosophiques et theologiques, Angelicum, Gregorianum*. There are also many monographs
on some particular part of the Summa, and several articles in the *Dictionnaire de
theologie catholique* and in other contemporary encyclopedias.

to remain true to the tradition of the schools we should be led to believe that from
the beginning Thomism committed the mistake of confusing the logical and the real.
... St. Thomas speaks of essence as if it were a reality. ... He reasons about the matter
and form of corporeal things as if they were distinct realities that are in opposition.”

14. *Summa theol.*, Ia, q. 15, a.1 ad 2um; q. 54, a.1.

15. According to the teaching of St. Thomas (I *Sent.*, d.2, a.3, c; *De potentia*, q.7, a.9),
the direct consideration of metaphysics, which is called *first intention*, is concerned
with the object as conceived by the mind, with the real nature itself of individualized
things; as, for instance, the essence of man; whereas the reflex consideration of logic,
which is called *second intention*, is concerned with the object only according to the
subjective mode of its existence in the mind; thus, for instance, logic considers the
formal universality of any predicate or subject, or the laws of the syllogism. Likewise
the distinction is said to be real when it precedes the consideration of the mind, and
logical when it follows this consideration. In fact, however, before the consideration
of the mind, matter is not form; it can even be separated from this latter so as to
receive another form.

16. Denz., no. 1713.

17. Ibid., no. 1652.

18. Ibid., no. 2058.

19. Ibid., no. 1701
If we consider, however, the works of St. Thomas, we shall see that the common Doctor of the Church did not despise history, as was the case with Descartes, but, so far as possible in his time, he made use of the history of doctrines, appropriating whatever truth he found in the writings of the ancient philosophers, especially Aristotle, as well as in the works of the Fathers and other Doctors of the Church. Often, too, with very keen mental perception, St. Thomas has recourse to the history of errors in formulating his objections, since Providence permits errors so that the truth may become more apparent, and permits evils so that greater good may result therefrom.

If we consider the general structure of St. Thomas’ articles, we detect in it a scientific application of method, which the Angelic Doctor had previously discussed at length in his commentary on Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics. This work of Aristotle treats of the search for real definition by the division of the genus and the inductive and comparative inquiry into the specific difference; it also discusses *apriori* and *aposteriori* demonstrations, and especially the middle term in demonstration.

Some modern writers say that the structure of the *Theological Summa* is artificial, as in the case of eclectic syncretism in which heterogeneous elements are mechanically and, as it were, accidentally joined together. However, not only all the commentators of the Angelic Doctor, but many contemporary historians (e.g., Father Grabmann (20)) point out that the *Theological Summa* from beginning to end constitutes one organic whole. The orderly arrangement of the three parts, containing thirty-eight treatises (about three thousand articles, almost ten thousand objections), is effected with superb constructive skill. Furthermore, the divisions are not accidental, but have their foundation in the very nature of things. Notwithstanding so great a complexity of questions, the whole doctrinal edifice, as it is well called, is simple in its magnitude, like the Egyptian pyramids or the Gothic cathedrals, not even one column of which can be changed without destroying the perfect harmony of the edifice. But what is the foundation of this method of doctrinal construction?

For a closer inspection of this architecture, attention must be drawn to the general way the articles are composed in accordance with the technique of scholastic exposition, to which St. Thomas adheres, as he didactically proceeds in the *Summa theologica* and the *Quaestiones disputatae*. But he dispensed himself from this in the *Opuscula* and the *Summa contra Gentes*, where he often juxtaposes arguments at the reader’s choice, not explicitly distinguishing between direct and indirect arguments, or between those derived from proper and those from common principles.

This art or technique, which to some seems too conventional, truly corresponds to the normal progress of the intellect in the philosophical or theological investigation of truth. Why, in the *Summa theologica*, do we always find at the beginning of each article three objections, which are introduced by the formula, *Videtur quod non?* Why
does an article in the *Quaestiones disputatae* often begin with ten objections against one part of the contradiction and ten or twelve against the other?

To some it seems that these objections should follow the demonstration of the truth. On the contrary, according to Aristotle’s method and that of almost all the doctors, in the beginning there must be a statement of the question and of what is essentially the point at issue in the difficulty to be solved. It is about this that the methodical doubt is chiefly concerned, and the Stagirite spoke of it long before Descartes, and with shrewder judgment, too, not by doubting the validity of the first principles of reason, but by solving the objections of the skeptics. (21)

The necessity of this methodical doubt is well shown by St. Thomas. Aristotle said: “With a view to the science which we are investigating, we must first approach the subjects about which it behooves us first to raise doubts. ... The difficulty to be solved must first be examined.” (22) Concerning this the Angelic Doctor says: “Just as he who wishes to free himself from a chain that binds him, must first inspect the chain and the way it binds him, so he who wishes to solve a doubt must first examine all the difficulties and their causes. ... Those who wish to search for truth, not taking doubt first into consideration, are like those who do not know where they are going ... hence they cannot go by a direct route, unless perhaps they do so by chance ... nor can they know when they find the truth sought, and when they do not. ... Just as in judgments no one can give a decision unless he hears the reasons for and against, so he who has to examine philosophical questions is necessarily in a better position to judge if he has informed himself of practically all the reasons for the doubts raised by the adversaries. On account of these reasons it was Aristotle’s custom in almost all his works to prepare for the search or determination of the truth by recounting the doubts raised against it.” (23) In this the philosopher’s critical spirit manifests itself, nor is it a matter of little importance for one to be well aware of the nature of the difficulty to be solved. Such must be the method of procedure, at least for the great and fundamental questions; otherwise the true difficulty of the problem sometimes remains almost unknown even to the very end of the thesis, or else it receives but a passing comment in the last objection.

But the state and difficulty of the question to be solved are made manifest by the opposite solutions that have already been given by the predecessors, or by the opposing arguments for and against the thesis. This was Aristotle’s method of procedure, and St. Thomas followed him, especially in his *Quaestiones disputatae*, in which first he sets forth the opposition, so to say, between thesis and antithesis, the mind being fully aware of the nature of the difficulty to be solved before it proceeds to the development of the superior synthesis. And this is part of the truth contained in the Hegelian method, which Hegel did not retain in its purity of form. Thus the hearers do not let the merits of their case consist in the solution of accidental difficulties, nor do they ask useless questions, which distract the mind from the main point at issue; but at once they go to the very root of the difficulty. Thus the theses must be elaborated in harmony with the teaching of St. Thomas and that is why they
are enunciated in the form of a question by means of the particle “Whether,” and not in the form of a positive statement; for the complete solution is to be found only at the end, and often many propositions are required so as fully to express the meaning.

In the *Summa theologica*, because St. Thomas proceeds with more brevity of diction than in the *Quaestiones disputatae*, there are only three principal objections; sometimes they are most striking gems, and in opposition to these there is the counterargument, which generally is taken from authority. St. Thomas does not develop these arguments from authority, but gives only one in each case, sometimes expressed in very few words, because he presupposes what was already said by him in his commentaries on Holy Scripture, especially on the Epistles and Gospels, and also in his *Catena aurea*. Evidently, in our days, these arguments from authority, especially on dogmatic subjects, must be developed, so that whatever is declared by the Church as the proximate rule of faith may be clearly and explicitly known and what is the foundation for this both in Scripture and in tradition.

The body of the article is variously constructed in accordance with the different questions to be solved. But, as the Angelic Doctor explains elsewhere, (24) there are four scientific questions: (i) whether a thing is, for instance, whether God is; (2) what He is; (3) whether He is such by nature, for instance, whether He is free; (4) for what purpose He is such, for instance, for what purpose or why He is free? These four questions are evidently different in nature, notwithstanding the identity of the classical formula in the *Summa theologica*: “Whether this is ...

The question whether a thing is presupposes what it means in name or the nominal definition, that is, what the name of the thing means according to conventional use. This leads up to the question about what the thing is, just as the third question, whether a thing is of such a nature, leads up to the fourth: for what purpose it is of such a nature. In all these questions, as Aristotle said, (25) the middle term in the demonstration must be the subject of special consideration. When the argumentative part of the article answers the question, whether a thing is, for instance, whether God is, then, as the Angelic Doctor says: “it is necessary to accept as the middle term the meaning of the word,” (26) for instance, this name “God.” That is, the name “God” means the first uncaused cause; and the first uncaused cause exists, for everything that comes into being has a cause, and there is no process to infinity in directly subordinated causes. Therefore God exists.

It must especially be taken into consideration how St. Thomas answers the question about the quiddity and purpose of things.
Footnotes


21. Metaphysics, Bk. IV.

22. Ibid., Bk. III, chap. i, lect. i.

23. Com. on Metaphysics, Bk. III, chap. i, lect. i.


25. Ibid.

26. *Summa theol.*, la, q.2, a.2 ad 2um.

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On the inductive search for definitions

But when it is asked what a thing is, for instance, what is the human soul, what is charity or faith, it is a question of seeking for a real definition in accordance with laws laid down by Aristotle in one of his works, (27) in which it is shown that the meaning of a definition cannot be demonstrated, unless there are two definitions of the same thing, one of which, obtained by means of final or efficient causality, contains the reason for which of the other, namely, of the essential definition. Thus the circle and its circumference is defined as a figure, every point of which circumference is equally distant from the center, because it is formed by the revolution of a straight line around one of its extremities. But, with the exception of these cases, the definition cannot be demonstrated either a posteriori, as the existence of a cause can be demonstrated from its effects, or a priori, as a property is deduced from the essence; for the definition of a thing is the very means by which its properties are demonstrated, nor is there any process to infinity in this but if the real definition cannot be demonstrated, it is to be sought for by beginning with the nominal or conventional definition, which determines only what is the subject of discussion. The transition from the nominal to the real and essential definition is effected, as shown in the same work just quoted, (28) by the gradual process of the division of the genera from the highest to the lowest, and by the inductive ascent to the specific difference from a comparison of similar and dissimilar things. (29) This method of finding definitions that truly expresses the reality and essence of things, is most admirably retained by St. Thomas. While several modern authors right at the beginning propose definitions that are some times very complex, as if they had received them by revelation, often not saying how they obtained them, St. Thomas at the beginning of each treatise inquires throughout several articles into the definition of the thing in question, for instance, the definition of charity, as being a friendship between God and man, and also a special and most sublime virtue. He also inquires into the definition of the four kinds of justice: equalizing, legal, distributive, and
commutative, into the definition of prudence, and so on. In these articles there is no inquiry into the middle term of the demonstration, since the quest of the definition is not demonstration; but in this inductive inquiry the holy Doctor often adduces the most appropriate of observations, as Father Simon Deploige observed, (30) for instance, in the case of social matters. Thus the transition is made gradually from natural reason or common sense of mankind to philosophic reason.

This search for the definition is evidently of great importance, for all the demonstrations of the properties of anything have their foundation in its definition. In like manner, the direct division of any whole rests upon its definition; even universal principles are derived from rightly constituted and interconnected primary notions, and these principles, in the metaphysical order, are in every case true. Thus St. Thomas with profound penetration of thought decisively distinguishes between the antecedent and consequent wills from the very definition of the will, the object of which is good, this latter being formally not in the mind but in the things themselves. He says: “The will is directed to things as they are in themselves, and in themselves they exist under particular qualifications (here and now). Hence we will a thing simply, inasmuch as we will it when all particular circumstances are considered, and this is what is meant by willing consequently.” (31) On the other hand, as stated in this same article, we will some good antecedently, as long as we will it when all particular circumstances are not considered, but according as it is absolutely good in itself; and this is to will it in a qualified manner and not simply. From these definitions thus established, St. Thomas deduces in the same article this most universal principle: “Thus it is clear that whatever God simply wills, takes place; although what He wills antecedently may not take place.” But this double proposition virtually contains the whole teaching of St. Thomas about efficacious grace. If, indeed, the above-stated definitions of the consequent and antecedent wills have metaphysical validity, the same must be said of the principle that has its foundation in them. Then not even the least good act and most easy of performance right at the moment happens as dependent solely upon God’s antecedent will, or without a decree of His consequent will, the causality of which is infallible, although it most admirably preserves intact human liberty, for, as just stated: “Whatever God simply wills, takes place; although what He wills antecedently may not take place.” If any good act, even most easy to perform right at the moment, were to happen without such a decree of the consequent will, then the principle enunciated by St. Thomas would no longer be metaphysically true, and this would mean the complete ruination of his doctrine concerning God’s foreknowledge and consequent will. If this principle were of no metaphysical validity, it would amount to nothing more than saying that salutary acts in the majority of cases do not take place unless they have been consequentially willed by God, or, in other words, the universal Ordainer did not ordain all good things but only very many. This doctrine would be of no value either philosophically or theologically. But the principles that have been formulated in this order are not metaphysically and universally, or in every case, true unless they
have their foundation in the due or correct definition of the subject. In this we clearly see the importance of searching for real definitions.

Footnotes

30. Cf. The Conflict between Ethics and Sociology (1938), pp.273 ff. In matters of faith the development of dogma consists in this transition, from a confused to a distinct notion, for instance, from the most confused notion of the human soul to this notion: that the human soul is by itself and essentially the form of the body. This proposition does not enunciate a property but the definition of the soul, which was known before in a confused manner. But if from the definition of man it is demonstrated that he is free, then this enunciates a property of his intellectual nature, and this is a new truth distinct from the definition of man. But often the search for the true definition entails more labor than the deduction of its properties from the same definition.

31. Summa theol., la, q. 19, a.6 ad lum.

On the middle term in demonstration

From the articles, however, in which a methodical inquiry is instituted into the real definition of anything, we must distinguish and otherwise explain those in which St. Thomas solves the question, whether a thing is of such a nature, and often he solves as one question the composite: For what purpose is it of such a nature? Examples of such are: when he asks whether the human soul is incorruptible (that is, whether and for what purpose it is incorruptible); whether man is free, whether faith is most certain, whether it belongs to God alone to create, whether and for what purpose Christ’s passion was the cause of our salvation by way of merit, and other similar questions. In these cases the solution of the question for what purpose, refers to a true and indeed a priori demonstration, nor does it mean one derived from common but from proper principles. Hence in these last-mentioned articles that are strictly demonstrative, whether they are deduced from reason alone or from faith and reason, a special inquiry must be made into the middle term of the demonstration, which is, as it were, the golden key of the article.

The title of the article gives the two terms of the conclusion, namely, the minor and the major; the middle term must be assigned by which the other two can be united in a scientific conclusion, and this term assigns “why a thing is and cannot be otherwise than it is.” It is the very Aristotelian definition of scientific knowledge. (32)

Sometimes, however, in the composition of the body of these articles, St. Thomas begins with the major and through the minor descends to the conclusion, so that the argument is easily presented in scholastic form as to make it clear what is the middle
term in the demonstration. Thus, in the question, “Whether the human soul is incorruptible,” (33) the argument may be condensed into the following syllogism: Every simple and subsistent form is absolutely incorruptible. But the human soul is a simple and subsistent form. Therefore the human soul is incorruptible. Likewise, in the question, “Whether it belongs to God alone to create,” (34) the argument may be reduced to this syllogism: The most universal effects must be reduced to the most universal and first cause, and that is God. Now being itself, which is absolutely produced in creation, is the most universal of effects. Therefore to produce being absolutely, not as this or that being, or to create, belongs to God alone.

Often, too, St. Thomas begins with the minor, the subject of which is already given in the title and will appear again as the subject of the conclusion. Thus by the minor he ascends from the subject of the title to the middle term in the demonstration. Afterward he enunciates the major, its subject being the same middle term, its predicate being the major term of the title, which in the conclusion must be joined to the minor term. Thus often the process of proof in the article is by the ascent from the minor to the middle term in the demonstration, and by the descent from the major to the conclusion. We have an example of this in the question: “Whether any created good constitutes man’s happiness.” (35) St. Thomas replies by enunciating first the minor: Happiness is the perfect good, completely lulling the rational appetite which is specified by universal good; now the perfect good, which completely lulls the rational appetite that is specified by universal good, cannot be anything created or limited; therefore man’s happiness cannot consist in any created good.

If we wish to present the argument in syllogistic form, the major must be enunciated first. In the generality of cases, by retaining the very propositions of St. Thomas, the argument can be reduced to scholastic form. It is better, however, to keep to the Doctor’s own terms than to change them so as to follow an excessive logical formalism. Finally, the major or minor must be defended against the attacks made upon it by the opponents of St. Thomas.

In the explanation of the body of the article the middle term of the demonstration must be the subject of diligent inquiry, or, if there are several subordinate middle terms, evidently we must concentrate our attention upon the principal one. The reason is that, as St. Thomas often remarks “the conclusions are known materially; but the middle terms in the demonstration are the formal cause of our knowledge, and by these the conclusions are known.” (36) Thus it is known formally for what purpose a thing is of such a nature, for instance, why man is free. It is because he has knowledge of universal good that his attitude toward some particular good is one of dominating indifference. Or again, why man is a social being; this is because of the requirements of his specific act, which are to know those things which he needs to know. Because of his very limited intelligence he needs the assistance of others.

Thus there is only one formal or proximate middle term, which is the definition of the thing as to its essence, from which the first property is to be deduced, and from
this first property the one subordinate to this, and so on in ascending order. Nevertheless, anything that has already been demonstrated directly and from the properties of the thing by means of the formal cause, can still be demonstrated in other ways, for instance, by means of its proper final cause, or even from its common principles, or indirectly either by what signifies it or by the method of reduction to absurdity. Thus St. Thomas in the books of the Contra Gentes makes use of these direct or indirect arguments so as to reach the same conclusion and places them together, not giving the reason why they are six or ten in number. But in the Summa theologica and the Quaestiones disputatione there is usually only one direct argument, which is of the formal kind and is deduced from the properties of a thing, introducing the proximately formal middle term, or if the holy Doctor gives two or three arguments he assigns the scientific reason why and how there are two or three methods of argumentation.

Therefore the middle term in the demonstration must be clearly presented, which in the syllogism of the first figure is the subject of the major and the predicate of the minor and we know that the modes of the other figures can be reduced to the modes of the first figure.

Therefore this middle term thus clearly stated presents itself as the keystone of the article, inserted in the syllogism as a precious jewel set in a ring. Thus we make use of logic, not indeed for its own sake, but that by it we may acquire a direct knowledge of the middle term or principle in which the truth of the conclusion must be considered, or at least of the main conclusion, if there are several conclusions in the article, as sometimes happens. Having accomplished this task to commit to memory what is of first importance in the article, it is enough to bear in mind the middle term. When the question is again posited, the major and minor terms are included in it; hence in replying to the question it suffices to enunciate the middle term in the demonstration, so that again we may have the demonstration of the conclusion. In illustration of this let us take the question: “Whether the human soul is incorruptible?” It suffices to reply to this: “Every simple and subsistent form … Therefore the human soul is incorruptible.”

If the middle term in the demonstration of the article is thus carefully taken into consideration, this makes us see more clearly, without the aid of a syllogism, the solution of the objections which were presented in the beginning of the article. As a matter of fact, St. Thomas casts upon the solution of the objections the searchlight of the middle term in the demonstration, and by means of this light the distinction to be made is easily discovered and understood. After this, whatever doubts and corollaries there may be, these can be profitably presented. This method was often adopted by the Salmanticenses.

The stand taken by St. Thomas, if properly understood, is seen to be the just mean and summit between and above the two extremes: on the one hand, of empiric nominalism - which retains a certain objectivity of experience, though denying the
necessity and universality of knowledge - and on the other, of the idealism of the conceptualists or subjectivists, which retains a certain necessity and universality of knowledge, although without any ontological validity, that is, without any true objectivity.

Thus St. Thomas’ method of procedure in the construction of his articles is far more in accordance with the natural progress of the mind in its search for truth than is the method adopted by several Scholastics of a later date, who in the beginning multiply the preliminary remarks about those things that have already been explained by them and that do not need any further explanation. Often also they materially juxtapose these various preliminary remarks, not showing the essential relation between them, and then they propose the argument in the briefest manner, so that the middle term in the demonstration is not sufficiently clear, and sometimes several arguments in succession are proposed in which the direct formal argument deduced from the properties of a thing is not sufficiently distinguished from the others, or from those derived from the common principles, or from the indirect arguments. This later method is rather mechanical, whereas the method of St. Thomas is organic, according to the natural process of the mind in operation.

Lastly, the importance of the middle term in the demonstration is clearly perceived from the rules to be observed in scholastic disputations. The objector, in accordance with these rules, by clever argumentation, so as to overthrow the conclusion, must attack by three successive objections in scholastic form the middle term in the demonstration, which is, so to speak, the chief point of attack to be defended in the article, and, as it were, the citadel of the defender. But the defender of this citadel must train upon the objector the light of the middle term in the form of a brilliant distinction that is not accidentally but directly and truly to the point. Thus after a well-ordered scholastic demonstration, which is of reasonable difficulty, the truth of the article, having been sifted and freed of all its difficulties, becomes increasingly clear, and is certainly confirmed by this austere criticism which is, as it were, the acid that attacks all metals, gold alone excepted.

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Footnotes

33. Summa theol., Ia, q.75, a.6.
34. Ibid., q.45, a.5.
35. Ibid., Ia IIae, q.2, a.8.
36. Ibid., IIA IIae, q. 1, a. 1, c.
In this way St. Thomas perfectly observed the rules of method in general, namely, by always beginning from the more known, by proceeding gradually and not jumping to the conclusion. He never reaches the more remote conclusions before the immediate conclusions are known with certainty. Thus the connection between them is clearly perceived, and all the conclusions make up a truly organic body of doctrine.

In like manner he perfectly applied the rules of the analytic method in the order of finding, especially so, in the direct and not accidental division of the complex subject to be considered, until he reaches the transcendental notions and first principles. Thus, after carefully considering the parts, he arrives at a correct judgment of the whole. He likewise most adroitly made use of the analytic method in the inductive and comparative inquiry into the specific difference of a thing so as to discover the distinct real definitions contained in a confused manner in the nominal ones.

With an equal degree of perfection he employed the synthetic method in his doctrine, both in the questions to be proposed and in the manner of solving them. For in proposing the questions he always begins from the more universal and gradually descends to the less universal, from the essence to the properties, from causes to effects. Likewise, in solving the questions he always starts from principles either revealed or directly known, or derived from experience and from the definition of the thing in question; nor does he depart from the certain principles because of the obscurity of the mystery to which these principles lead, as in the case of the questions on grace and free will. Hence we may say that the element of truth contained in the rules of method as formulated by Descartes, was already perfectly known by the Angelic Doctor.

Thus the Theological Summa is a splendid example of this synthetic method in the orderly arrangement of theological knowledge. It first treats of God’s existence and His nature, then of His attributes, in the third place of the three Persons, fourthly of God’s actions ad extra, and so on for the rest. In this orderly arrangement anyone can see that St. Thomas far surpasses the Master of the Sentences, who treats but incidentally of moral theology, discussing faith, hope, and charity on the occasion of the following question: “Whether Christ had faith, hope, and charity,” (37) and treating of sin in general when the question of original sin presents itself. (38)

Finally, and this must especially be noticed, the Angelic Doctor succeeded exceedingly well in combining analysis and synthesis, according as ascendant analysis, which terminates in principles and causes, is the principle of descendant analysis. For analysis, having finished with natural philosophy, in ontology ascends to consider the notions of analogous being, act and potency, as also the universal principles of reason and being, which illumine the whole synthesis of general metaphysics. After this the mind ascends to consider the pure Act, the Supreme Being, which is required in the final analysis, the true notion of which is, as it were, the sun of all synthesis in
the universality of its scope, which is knowledge of all beings inasmuch as they are beings. (39)

By no means do we find in the system of St. Thomas this abuse of the apriori method which, as clearly seen in the works of Spinoza, excludes by means of mathematics the consideration of efficient and final causes, and hence leads to rationalism and pantheism, as if all things could be deduced from God’s nature in a geometrical way. (40) By way of investigation and analysis St. Thomas ascends by the light of the first principles of reason from sensible things and the most certain facts of experience to the supreme and most universal cause who, since He is infinitely perfect and in no way stands in need of creatures, created all things with absolute freedom. (41) Then by the way of synthesis, the holy Doctor judges of all things by means of a lofty principle. As he himself says: “By way of judgment, from eternal things already known, we judge of temporal things, and according to laws of things eternal we dispose of temporal things.” (42) In accordance with this union of analysis and synthesis, presented by the Angelic Doctor, as Father del Prado shows, (43) the supreme truth of Christian philosophy, in which the analytic method, or method of finding in the ascending order, terminates, and which is the principle of the synthetic method of judgment, is this: God is the self-subsisting Being, I am who am. In other words only in God are essence and existence identical. (44) This is the golden key of the whole doctrinal edifice, which is constructed by the Angelic Doctor with such penetration of thought and fixity of principles that, as Leo XIII testified (45) no one surpassed him in this. Avoiding both nominalism, which denies the objectivity of metaphysics, reducing it to logic, and the extreme realism of Plato, which on no just grounds considers the universal to exist formally apart from the thing, St. Thomas admirably distinguished between logic and metaphysics, between logical and real being. (46) He clearly shows that, before our mind considers the question, the essence of any finite being is not its existence, and that hence only in God are essence and existence identical. (47) This is the culminating point of the five proofs for God’s existence, the terminus in the ascending order by the method of finding, and it is the principle of judgment from the highest cause by the synthetic method.

For many years the more we have studied this Theological Summa, the more we have seen the beauty of its structure. The expositions and demonstrations are simple and clear, especially if they are compared with the commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, and superfluous questions are avoided in accordance with the Angelic Doctor’s plan as stated in the Prologue. Likewise, repetitions are eliminated, as much as possible, because subjects are always treated in a general way before they receive special consideration, and St. Thomas does not refer his reader to what is to be said later on. In this simplicity and clarity, the Angelic Doctor evidently far surpasses not only his predecessors, but even Scotus and Suarez.

The perfection of this edifice is in great part due to the consummate skill with which he effects the divisions between the treatises or the questions or the articles or the arguments. These divisions, of course, are not extrinsic but intrinsic, arranged in
accordance with the formal point of view of the whole to be divided, and effected by means of members that are truly opposites to each other, so that the divisions are adequate, with subordinate subdivisions; yet all is done with discretion and not by descending to the least details. Thus by a gradual process the light of the principles reaches to the ultimate conclusions that are, nevertheless, still universal - for speculative knowledge does not descend to the particular - and thus it is essentially distinct from experience and prudence.

Footnotes

37. Cf. III Sent., d.23.
38. Cf. II Sent., d.35 f
39. See St. Thomas, Com. on Post. Anal., Bk. II, lect. 20; Bk. I, lect. 22 f.; Com. on Metaphysics, Bk. I, lect. 1f; Bk. IX, lect. 5; also Summa theol., Ila IIae, q.9, a.2; Contra Gentes, Bk. I, chaps. 3, 9; Summa theol., Ila IIae, q. 112, a.5.
41. Summa theol., Ia, q.19, a. 3.
42. Ibid., q. 79, a. 9.
43. De veritate fundamentali philosophiae christianae (Fribourg, 1911).
44. Summa theol., Ia, q.3, a.4.
46 Summa theol., Ia, q.85, a.2 ad 2um.
47. Ibid., q.3, a.4.

The doctrine of St Thomas proceeds from the fullness of his contemplation

In addition to all these considerations, we must finally say that the Angelic Doctor never cherished method for its own sake, but for the purpose of finding out the truth and transmitting it to posterity, especially divine truth to which he especially directed his attention. On the contrary, just as many hunters find greater delight in the sport of hunting than in the game they take, so some evidently have in mind the mode of demonstrating the truth rather than the actual discovery of the truth itself, even when they are investigating things most sublime, such as the infinite value of Christ’s merits or the divine processions. This is a deformation of the theologian’s
profession, when he is not sufficiently contemplative. He then digresses too much and is too much given to argumentation.

Nevertheless, in the hours of study we must give careful consideration to the proper method, which, as we acquire the habit, we unconsciously make use of little by little, as is the case with a musician who is practicing to play on the guitar or the harp. Thus the greater facility gradually acquired in the use of the proper method disposes a person for a correct knowledge of the different parts of philosophy and theology, and by this very fact, for the contemplation of truth from which proceeds the living doctrine that illuminates the mind and inflames the heart. The Angelic Doctor says that doctrine and preaching must “proceed from the fullness of contemplation.” (48) It was so when he taught. Just as only those musicians make good use of their method who, under the influence of a certain inspiration, fully penetrate the soul of a symphony, so St. Thomas employed his scientific method, inspired as it were from above, illuminated by the light of vivid faith and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and this light absolutely transcends all systems and all knowledge acquired by human efforts. Thus only by this supernatural light does theology attain its end, and then we find verified in it the words of the Vatican Council: “Reason, indeed, enlightened by faith, when it seeks earnestly, piously, and calmly, attains by a gift from God some, and that a very fruitful, understanding of mysteries…. But reason never becomes capable of apprehending mysteries as it does those truths which constitute its proper object. For in this mortal life we are pilgrims, not yet with God: we walk by faith and not by sight.” (49)

Therefore St. Thomas, before he dictated or wrote or preached, used to recite this prayer, “Ineffable Creator, who out of the treasures of Thy wisdom hast appointed three hierarchies of angels and set them in admirable order high above the heavens and hast disposed the diverse portions of the universe in such marvelous arrays, Thou who art called the true source of light and supereminent principle of wisdom, be pleased to cast a beam of Thy radiance upon the darkness of my mind and dispel from me the double darkness of sin and ignorance in which I have been born.”

“Thou who makest eloquent the tongues of little children, (50) fashion my words and pour upon my lips the grace of Thy benediction. Grant me penetration to understand, capacity to retain, method and facility in study, subtlety in interpretation, and abundant grace of expression.”

“Order the beginning, direct the progress, and perfect the achievement of my work, Thou who art true God and man and livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen.”

This prayer was heard; for in the holy Doctor’s works on the logical method is to be seen the light of the gifts of the Holy Ghost as also the gratuitously given grace of the “word of wisdom,” (51) as Pope Pius XI says. (52) Therefore, in a certain responsory in the office for the feast of St. Thomas, we read: “There is brevity of style, a pleasing eloquence, sublimity, clarity, and well-founded opinion.”
There is sublimity, because the knowledge is derived from the highest of causes; there is clarity, because by the light of the highest principles he penetrates to the very source of the question; there is well-founded opinion, because “he assigns the cause why the thing is and cannot be otherwise than it is,” according to the Aristotelian definition of knowledge. (53) This pleasing eloquence coupled with a brevity of style is the result of a vivid and supernatural contemplation, by which the holy Doctor was conversant not only with the literal but also with the spiritual interpretation of Holy Scripture. He knew, be sure, that, especially for the discussion of divine subjects, prayer and contemplation were no less necessary than laborious efforts in the pursuit of knowledge; and when difficulties arose, he did not pray less so as to give himself more time for study, but in preference to this he spent more time in prayer. This truth is of great importance for renewing the spirit of study in theology, so that it may be something vital and productive of its due effects. Concerning the holy Doctor’s contemplation, Pope Pius XI wrote as follows: “The more readily to obtain these illuminations from above, he would often abstain from food, spend whole nights in prayerful vigil, and, surrendering to a holy impulse, would repeatedly lean his head against the tabernacle and would constantly turn his eyes with sorrow and love toward the image of Jesus crucified. To his friend St. Bonaventure he confided that whatever he knew he had for the most part learned from the book of the crucifix.” (54) Christ indeed had said: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” (55) Of course, books give us the letter, but study without prayer and the interior life does not attain to the spiritual meaning.

Whoever considers the light of divine contemplation from which this great synthesis of St. Thomas proceeds cannot say that this doctrine is extreme intellectualism, devoid of reality and lifeless.

By an intellectual process, as befitting a science, and not according to the tenets of “sentimentalism,” St. Thomas treats of God, our natural and supernatural states. But he never separates our intellectual life from the influence exerted upon it by the will or even by the sensitive faculties; for he shows to our complete satisfaction the mutual relations between the faculties. He says, indeed: “If therefore the intellect and the will be considered with regard to themselves, then the intellect is the higher power … . For the object of the intellect is simpler, and more absolute than the object of the will.” (56) Being is prior to and more universal than good; thus the intellect is simpler and higher than the will which it directs. Yet the holy Doctor adds: “But relatively and by comparison with something else, we find that the will is sometimes higher than the intellect … thus the love of God (at least in this life) is better than the knowledge of God.” (57) The reason is that the intellect draws to itself the thing understood even though this is superior to it, whereas the will is drawn to the thing. Thus charity is the most excellent of all the virtues. (58) St. Thomas also says: “Some are hearers that they may know, and these build upon intellect (only, and not upon charity); and this is building upon sand.” (59)
This doctrine is not, indeed, extreme intellectualism. Concerning all these things St. Thomas speaks not oratorically but scientifically, as befitting his scope, which is the search not for the beauty that attracts as in poetic art, but for the truth, without which there cannot be any true goodness or beauty.

St. Thomas excludes the particular from knowledge in the strict sense, since nothing is knowable except by way of abstraction from individualized matter. He certainly affirms that “the knowledge of singulars does not pertain to the perfection of the intellective soul in speculative knowledge”; but he adds immediately that “it pertains to the perfection of the same in practical knowledge,” (60) namely, of prudence and the gift of counsel. It pertains also to either external or internal experience, which the Angelic Doctor certainly did not despise. He even asserts that the just person can have by the gift of wisdom “a quasi-experimental knowledge” (61) of the presence of God in the soul and of the mysteries of salvation, according to the following text of St. Paul: “For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God.” (62) He gives this testimony “through the effect of filial love which God produces in us.” (63)

The holy Doctor possessed this mystic experience in the highest degree, and it certainly influenced the construction of his theological synthesis, but, as it were, from on high, by conforming and elucidating his faith. But knowledge in the strict sense, whether philosophical or theological, which is acquired by study, is essentially distinct from any individual experience whatever, even the most sublime, and is concerned only with universals either in predication or being or causation.” (64)

But the universal in predication is fundamentally in individual things, and expresses what is necessary and negatively eternal in them, namely, what is true not only here and now, but always. It is (Greek: to ti en einai): the being what is was intended to be. (65) Therefore the holy Doctor says: “So far as universals taken as logical entities are concerned, so far as they are the cause of knowledge and demonstration, they are more truly beings than particulars are, because the former are incorruptible, whereas the latter are not. But as regards natural subsistence, particulars are more truly beings, because they are called first and principal substances.” (66) Thus reality is preserved absolutely intact.

Hence in scientific knowledge, and rightly so, St. Thomas reduces all things to universal principles that are fundamental, necessary, and perpetual laws not only of the mind but of being, and of being whether natural or supernatural.

Thus his method is of great help in remedying the defects of modern philosophy, in which the distinction between the internal senses and the intellect, between nature and grace, gradually disappeared. With the elimination of ontological validity from the first principles of reason there is nothing firm and stable left in the speculative order and a fortiori in the practical order. (67)
The Theological Summa of St. Thomas, constructed as it is according to the above-mentioned method, since it avoids the opposite extremes of rationalism and fideism, is a work that is both truly scientific and always elucidated by the light of supernatural revelation. It is, therefore, truly a classical and perennial work, not indeed of extreme intellectualism, but of “sacred theology” that has been raised to the status of a true science notwithstanding the obscurity of faith. It constitutes a really organic body of doctrine, and is truly a single science, though subordinated to God’s knowledge and to that which the blessed have of Him, and bears, as it were, the stamp (in us) of the divine science, (68) considering all things under the formality of God as author of grace and as the ultimate end.

Footnotes

48. Ibid., IIa IIae, q. 188, a.6.
49 Deniz., 1796; II Cor. 5:7.
50. Wis. 10: 21.
51. 1 Cor. 12: 8.
54. Encyclical Studiorum ducem.
55. John 6: 64.
56. Summa theol., Ia, q. 82, a. 3.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., IIa IIae, q. 23, a.6.
60. Summa theol., IIIa, q.11i, a. 1 ad 3um.
61 Cf. I Sent. d. 14, q.2, a.2 ad 3um; Summa theol., Ia, q.43, a.3; IIa IIaeC, q.45, a. 2.
63 Cf. St. Thomas, Com. on Rom. 8: i6.
64 Summa theol., Ia, q, 1, a.2 ad 2um; IIa IIae, q.45, a.2.
65. Cf. Aristotle’s Metaphysics, 1041, a.27. On the etymology of Aristotle’s description of essence, Dr. Coffey remarks (Ontology, p. 75, no. 1), “that the
expression (Gk: τὸ τί εἶναι) is not easy to explain. He presumes that the phrase (Gk: τὸ εἶναι) supposes a dative understood, such as: (Gk: τὸ anthropo εἶναι) (“the being proper to man”). To the question (Gk: τί εἶναι to anthropo εἶναι) (“What is the being proper to man?”), the answer is: that which gives the definition of man, that which explains what he is: (Gk: τί εἶ). Is the imperfect (Gk τί εἶ) an archaic form for the present, (Gk τί εἰστι); or is it a deliberate suggestion of the profound doctrine that the essence is ideal, or possible, that it is anterior to its actual, physical realization? Commentators are not agreed. Cf. Matthias Kappes, Aristoteles Lexicon, p. 25; Mercier, Ontologie, p. 30.” Father Clarke, S.J. (Logic, p. 5, no. 2) remarks: “Quidditas is the somewhat barbarous but very expressive equivalent of the Aristotelian phrase (Gk: τὸ τί εἶναι). The essence or quiddity of a thing consists in its corresponding to the pattern after which it was fashioned. Hence (Gk τί εἶ) means, what is its nature? What was it intended to be by the Creator? And therefore (Gk: τὸ τί εἶναι) means the being what it was intended to be by its Creator.” Father Garrigou-Lagrange seems to incline to this latter view. (Tr.)

APPENDIX B

THE EVILS OF ECLECTICISM AND THE PRINCIPLES OF ASSIMILATION GUIDING THE TRUE THOMISTIC SYNTHESIS.

We shall deal here in more detail with Rowland’s objection that Thomists, as a general rule, were indiscriminate about what they assimilated into the Thomistic Synthesis.

(Obj. 1) It is thus one thing for the Thomist tradition to pride itself on its achievement of plundering the spoils of Aristotle, of its openness to the best of pagan thought, but quite another for its proponents and theologians *generally* to treat the synthesis of St Thomas as a kind of all-purpose garbage-recycling unit which has the capacity to pick up any rubbish and repackage it as something useful. The degree of openness of the Thomist tradition to external traditions can be exaggerated. St Thomas did not think he was building a cultural sewage treatment plant.

It will be recalled that this objection is being imputed principally against Garrigou-Lagrange. We shall let him answer this charge of eclecticism, and provide us with the principles that guide authentic assimilation.49

In the first six parts of this work we studied what may be called the dogmatic portion of the Summa. In the seventh part we expounded the moral portions. Our exposition has shown how faithful the saint has remained to his initial announcement [1324] that dogmatic theology and moral theology are not two distinct branches of knowledge, but only two parts of one and the same branch of knowledge. Like God’s knowledge from which it descends, theology is, pre-eminently and simultaneously, both speculative and practical, having throughout but one sole object: God revealed in His own inner life, God as source and goal of all creation.

This conception of theology is at war with what we may call Christian eclecticism. Hence we add here two articles, one, an exposition of the evils of eclecticism, the other devoted to the power of Thomism in remedying these evils.

Article One: Thomism And Eclecticism

This article reproduces substantially the important discourse of his eminence, J. M. R. Villeneuve, archbishop of Quebec, delivered May 24, 1936, at the close of the Thomistic Convention in Ottawa, Canada. [1325].

Thomism is concerned primarily with principles and doctrinal order, wherein lie its unity and its power. Eclecticism, led by a false idea of fraternal charity, seeks to harmonize all systems of philosophy and theology. Especially after Pope Leo XIII the Church has repeatedly declared that she holds to Thomism; but eclecticism says equivalently: Very well, let us accept Thomism, but not be too explicit in

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contradicting doctrines opposed to Thomism. Let us cultivate harmony as much as possible.

This is to seek peace where there can be no peace. The fundamental principles of the doctrine of St. Thomas, they would say, are those accepted by all the philosophers in the Church. Those points on which the Angelic Doctor is not in accord with other masters, with Scotus, say, or with Suarez, are of secondary importance, or even at times useless subtleties, which it is wise to ignore, or at least to treat as mere matters of history. The Cardinal says:

In fact, the points of doctrine on which all Catholic philosophers, or nearly all, are in accord, are those defined by the Church as the preambles of faith. But all other points of Thomistic doctrine, viz.: real distinction of potency from act, of matter from form, of created essence from its existence, of substance from accidents, of person from nature—these, according to eclecticism, are not fundamental principles of the doctrine of St. Thomas. And they say the same of his doctrine that habits and acts are specifically proportioned to their formal objects. All these assertions, they say, are disputed among Catholic teachers, and hence are unimportant.

These points of doctrine, which eclecticism considers unimportant, are, on the contrary, says the Cardinal, the major pronouncements of Thomism as codified in the Twenty-four Theses. [1326] Without these principles thus codified, says the Cardinal of Quebec, Thomism would be a corpse. [1327] The importance of these Thomistic fundamentals is set in relief by a series of Suaresian counter-theses, published by the Ciencia Tomista. [1328].

In the following two paragraphs Cardinal Villeneuve signalizes the consequences of contemporary eclecticism.

Since the days of Leo XIII many authors have tried, not to agree with St. Thomas, but to get him to agree with themselves. Consequences the most opposite have been drawn from his writings. Hence incredible confusion about what he really taught. Hence a race of students to whom his doctrine is a heap of contradictories. What ignoble treatment for a man in whom, as Leo XIII wrote, human reason reached unsurpassable heights! Thence arose the opinion that all points of doctrine not unanimously accepted by Catholic philosophers are doubtful. The final conclusion was that, in order to give St. Thomas uncontradicted praise, he was allowed to have as his own only what all Catholics agree on, that is, the definitions of faith and the nearest safeguards of that faith. Now this process, which reduces Thomistic doctrine to a spineless mass of banalities, of unanalyzed and unorganized postulates, results in a traditionalism without substance or life, in a
practical fideism, a lack of interest in questions of faith. Hence the lack
of vigilant reaction against the most improbable novelties.

If we once grant that the criterion of truth, which ought to be intrinsic
evidence deriving from first principles, lies instead in external acceptance
by a majority, then we condemn reason to atrophy, to dullness, to self-
abdication. Man learns to get along without mental exertion. He lives on
a plane of neutral persuasion, led by public rumor. Reason is looked
upon as incapable of finding the truth. We might be inclined to trace this
abdication to a laudable humility. But, judged by its fruits, it engenders
philosophic skepticism, conscious or unconscious, in an atmosphere
ruled by mystic sentimentalism and hollow faith.

Eclecticism, we may add, entertains doubts about the classic proofs of God’s
existence, hardly allowing any argument to stand as proposed by St. Thomas.

“If we must leave out of philosophy,” the Cardinal continues, “all questions not
admitted unanimously by Catholics, then we must omit the deepest and most
important questions, we must leave out metaphysics itself, and with that we will have
removed from St. Thomas the very marrow of his system, that wherein he outstrips
common sense, that which his genius has discovered.”

Further, we may add, with such a decapitated Thomism, we could no longer defend
common sense itself. With Thomas Reid’s Scotch School we would, after renouncing
philosophy in favor of common sense, find ourselves unable to analyze that common
sense, to anchor it in self-evident, necessary, and universal principles.

Does charity oblige us to sacrifice depth and exactness of thought to unity of spirit?
No, replies the Cardinal; that which wounds charity is not truth nor the love of truth,
but selfishness, individual and corporate. Genuine doctrinal harmony lies along the
road to which the Church points when she says: Go to Thomas. Loyalty to Thomas,
far from curtailing intellectual freedom, widens and deepens that freedom, gives it an
unfailing springboard, firm and elastic, to soar ever higher out of error into truth.
“You shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free.” [1329].

Article Two: The Assimilative Power Of Thomism

A doctrine’s assimilative power is in proportion to the elevation and universality of
its principles. Here, then, we wish to show that Thomism can assimilate all the
elements of truth to be found in the three principal tendencies which characterize
contemporary philosophy. Let us begin with an outline of these three tendencies.

The first of these is agnosticism, either empiric agnosticism, in the wake of
positivism, or idealist agnosticism, an offshoot of Kantianism. Here belongs the neo-
positivism of Carnap, Wittgenstein, Rougier, and of the group called the Vienna
Circle. [1330] In all these we find the re-edited Nominalism of Hume and Comte.
Here belongs also the phenomenology of Husserl, which holds that the object of philosophy is the immediate datum of experience. All these philosophies are concerned, not with being, but with phenomena, to use the terms of Parmenides in pointing out the two roads which the human spirit can follow.

The second tendency is evolutionist in character. Like agnosticism, it appears in two forms: one idealist, in the wake of Hegel, represented by Gentile in Italy, by Leon Brunschvicg in France; the other empiric, in the creative evolution of Bergson, who, however, toward the end of life, turned again, like Blondel, in the direction of traditional philosophy, led by the power of an intellectual and spiritual life devoted to the search for the Absolute.

The third tendency is the metaphysical trend of the modern German school. It appears under three chief forms: voluntarism in Max Scheler; natural philosophy in Driesch, who leans on Aristotle; and ontology in Hartmann of Heidelberg, who gives a Platonic interpretation of Aristotle's metaphysics. The great problems of old, we see, compel attention still: the constitution of bodies, the essence of life, sensation, knowledge, freedom, and morality, the distinction between God and the world. And as the ancient problems reappear, so reappear the ancient antinomies; mechanism or dynamism, empiricism or intellectualism, monism or theism. Let us now see how Thomism assimilates, in transcendent unity, all that is true in these opposed theories.

1. The Generative Principle

In Thomism, which is simply a deepened form of perennial philosophy, we find again what is best in the thought of Aristotle, Plato, and Augustine. This philosophy, says Bergson, is nothing but the natural development of ordinary human intelligence. This philosophy, therefore, is open to all genuine progress in science. It is not, like Hegelianism, the huge a priori construction of one bewitching genius, but a temple that rests on a broad inductive base, centuries-old, but perpetually repaired by the most attentive study of all attainable fact, a study strikingly exemplified in the work of Albert the Great, the teacher of St. Thomas.

This inductive basis presupposed, Thomistic metaphysics continues through the ages to scrutinize the relations between intelligible being and becoming, the passage from potency to act, the various kinds of causes. By these two characteristics, one positive, the other intellectual, Thomism is deeply opposed to Kantianism and its offshoots. Thomism, because it remains in continual contact with facts, and because it simultaneously studies the laws of being, becoming, and causality, accepts all the genuine elements found in systems otherwise mutually contradictory. This power of absorption and assimilation is a criterion of its validity, both for thought and for life.

Here we introduce a profound remark of Leibnitz, though he himself only glimpsed its consequences. Speaking of the philosophia perennis, he says that philosophic systems are generally true in what they affirm, but false in what they deny. This remark, which has its roots in Aristotle and Aquinas, must be understood of genuine
and constituent affirmations, not of negations disguised as affirmations. Thus materialism is true in its affirmation of matter, false in its denial of spirit. The reverse is true of idealism. Similarly, though Leibnitz did not see it fully, psychological determination is true in affirming that the intellect guides the free choice of the will, but false in denying genuine freedom of will. And the reverse is true of “Libertism,” which dreams of a freedom unfettered by intellectual guidance.

But this remark, applied eclectically by Leibnitz, holds good likewise from the higher viewpoint of Aristotle and Aquinas. Each successive system affirms some element of reality even while it often denies another element of reality. This denial, then, as Hegel said, provokes a counter-denial, before the mind has reached a higher synthesis.

We hold, then, that Aristotelian-Thomistic thought, far from being an immature a priori construction, remains always on the alert for every aspect of reality, eager not to limit that reality which dominates our ever-growing sense experience, external and internal, but eager also not to limit our intelligence, intuitive in its principles, discursive in its conclusions. Thus, while it rests on common sense, it rises far above common sense, by its discovery of the natural subordination in which sense knowledge stands to intellect. The common sense of Thomas Reid does not build a foundation for Thomas Aquinas.

This traditional philosophy differs further from eclecticism because, not content to limit itself to choosing, without a directive principle, what seems most plausible in various systems, it begins rather with a superior principle that illumines from on high the great problems of all times. This principle, itself derived from that of contradiction and causality, is the distinction of potency from act, a distinction without which, as Aristotle says and Thomas reaffirms, it is impossible to answer both Heraclitus, who defends universal evolution, and Parmenides, who defends a changeless monism.

Potency distinct from act explains the process of becoming, the passage from one form to another, the passage from seed to plant, from potentiality to actuality. This process presupposes an agent that prepossesses the perfection in question, and a directing intelligence toward the perfection to be realized. The process of becoming is essentially subordinated to the being which is its goal. Becoming is not, as Descartes would have it, a mere local movement defined by its points of rest, but a function of being in its passage from potency to act.

The process of becoming therefore presupposes four sources: matter as passive potency, as capacity proportioned to the perfection it is to receive; act in three fashions, first in the actualizing agent, secondly in the form which terminates becoming, thirdly in the purpose toward which the form tends.

Finite beings are conceived as composed of potency and act, of matter and form, and, more generally, of real essence and existence, essence limiting the existence
which actualizes it, as matter limits its actualizing form. Then, preceding all beings composed and limited, must be pure act, if it is true that actuality is more perfect than potentiality, that actual perfection is something higher than mere capacity to receive perfection, that what is is something more than what as yet is not. This is a most fundamental tenet of Thomism. At the summit of all reality we must find, not the endless evolutionary process of Heraclitus or Hegel, but pure actuality, being itself, truth itself, goodness itself, unlimited by matter, or essence, or any receiving capacity whatever. This doctrine on the supreme reality, called by Aristotle the self-existing and self-comprehending act of understanding, [1331] contained also in Plato’s thought, is fortified and elevated by the revealed truth of the freedom of God’s creative act, revealed, it is true, but still attainable by reason, hence not a mystery essentially supernatural like the Trinity.

Let us now see the assimilative power of this generative principle on ascending philosophical levels: in cosmology, in anthropology, in criteriology, in ethics, in natural theology. By way of general remark, let us note that Thomistic assimilation is due to the Thomistic method of research. In meeting any great problem Thomism begins by recalling extreme solutions that are mutually contradictory. Next it notes eclectic solutions which fluctuate between those extremes. Lastly, it rises to a higher synthesis which incorporates all the elements of reality found in its successive surveys of positions which remain extreme. This ultimate metaphysical synthesis it is which Thomism offers as substructure of the faith.

1. Cosmology

Mechanism affirms the existence of local motion, of extension in three dimensions, often of atoms, but denies sense qualities, natural activity and finality. Hence it cannot well explain weight, resistance, heat, electricity, affinity, cohesion, and so on. Dynamism, on the contrary, affirming sense qualities, natural activity, and finality, reduces everything to mere force, denying any extension properly so called, and denying also the principle that activity presupposes being. Now the doctrine of matter and form accepts all that is positive in these two extreme conceptions. By two principles, distinct but intimately united, it explains both extension and force. Extension has its source in matter, which is common to all bodies, capable of receiving the specific form, the essential structure, of iron, say, or gold, or hydrogen, or oxygen. And the doctrine of specific form explains, far better than does Plato’s idea or the monad of Leibnitz, all the natural qualities, characteristics, and specific activities of bodies, in full harmony with the principle that specific activity presupposes specific being.

Matter, being a purely receptive capacity, while it is not yet substance, is still a substantial element, meant to blend with form into a natural unity, not accidental but essential.
This doctrine explains too how extension can be mathematically, not actually, divisible into infinity. Extension cannot be composed of indivisible points, which would be all identical if they were in contact, and if not in contact would be discontinuous. Hence the parts of extension must be themselves extended, capable indeed of mathematical division but not of physical.

Mechanism tries in vain to reduce plant life to physico-chemical developments of a vegetative germ, which produces, here a grain of corn, and there an oak, or from an egg brings forth a bird, a fish, or a snake. Must there not be, asks Claude Bernard, some force that guides evolution? In the germ, in the embryo, if it is to evolve into definite and determined structure, there must be a vital and specifying principle, which Aristotle called the vegetative soul of the plant and the sense soul of the animal. This doctrine assimilates, without eclecticism, all that is positive in mechanism and dynamism even while it rejects their negations.

2. Anthropology

Man is by nature a unified whole, one, not accidentally but per se and essentially. He is not two complete substances accidentally juxtaposed. Matter in the human composite is actualized by one sole specific and substantial form, which is the radical principle of life, vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual. This would be impossible if one and the same soul were the proximate principle of all man’s actions, but it is possible if the soul has a hierarchy of faculties. Here, again, we have an application, not eclectic, but spontaneous and daring, of the distinction between potency and act. The essence of the soul is proportioned to the existence which actualizes it, and each faculty is proportioned to its own act. The soul, therefore, cannot act without its faculties, can understand only by its intellect, and will only by its will.

Here Leibnitz and Descartes represent extremes. Leibnitz, misunderstanding the Aristotelian term dynamis, which may be either passive or active, puts the principle of mere force and power in the place of potency and act. Descartes, at the opposite extreme, sees in the mental activity of thought the sole principle of philosophizing about man. Leibnitz neglects to reduce force, and Descartes neglects to reduce thought, to functions of being.

Man’s intellect, to go further, since it attains universal and necessary truth, is not limited by material conditions and material organs. Hence man’s soul, the source of his intellect, is independent of matter, and hence survives the corruption of the human organism.

3. Criteriology

The extremes here are empiricism and intellectualism. Thomism accepts both the inductive method of empiricism and the deductive method of intellectualism. But Thomism insists further that the first principles from which deduction proceeds are not mere subjective laws of the mind but objective laws of reality. Without, say, the
principle of contradiction, the principle of Descartes (“I think, therefore I am”) may be a mere subjective illusion. Perhaps, since one contradictory (I think) does not objectively exclude its opposite (I do not think): perhaps thinking is not essentially distinct from non-thinking. Perhaps, further, thought is buried in the subconscious, its beginning unknown and its end. Perhaps, again, “I am” and “I am not” are both true. Perhaps, finally, the word “I” stands for a mere transient process, unsupported by any individual permanent and thinking subject.

But if, on the contrary, the objective reality of the sense world is the first object of the human intellect, then, by reflection on the source of its act, the intellect grasps its own existence with absolute certitude, knows itself in an objectively existing faculty, capable of penetrating through sense phenomena into the nature and characteristics of the objective world. It sees then its own immeasurable heights above, say the imagination, which however rich it may be and fertile, can never grasp the “why” of any motion, of a clock, for example.

By this same line of thought we distinguish further the will, illumined by intellect, from sense appetite, guided by sense knowledge. As the object of the intellect is objective and universal truth, so the object of the will is objective and universal good.

4. Freedom and morality

By normal development of the distinction between potency and act Thomism rises above the psychological determinism of Leibnitz and the freedom of equilibrium conceived by Scotus, Suarez, Descartes, and certain moderns, Secretan, for example, and J. Lequier. Thomas admits the positive point of psychological determinism, namely, that intelligence guides man’s act of choice, but he goes on to show that it depends on the will itself whether the intellect’s practical judgment shall or shall not terminate deliberation. [1332] Why? Because, granted that the intellect has to propose its object to the will, it is the will which moves the intellect to deliberate, and this deliberation can end only when the will freely accepts what the intellect proposes. Intellect and will are inseparably related.

What then is free will? Free will, in God, in angel, and in man, is indifference, both of judgment and of choice, in the presence of any object which, however good otherwise, is in some way unattractive. God, when seen face to face, is in every way attractive, and draws our love infallibly and invincibly. But even God is in some way unattractive as long as we must know Him abstractly, as long as we feel His commandments to be a burden.

Why is the will thus free and indifferent in the presence of an object in any way unattractive? Because the will’s adequate object is unlimited and universal good. Hence even the moral law does not necessitate the will. I see the better road, I approve it speculatively, but I follow, in fact and by choice, the worse road.
Thomism, further, admits fully the morality governed by duty and the longing for happiness. Why? Because the object of the will, as opposed to sense appetite, is the good proposed by reason. Hence the will, being essentially proportioned to rational good, is under obligation to will that good, since otherwise it acts against its own constitution, created by the author of its nature as preparation for possessing Himself, the Sovereign Good. Always, we see, the same principle: potency is naturally proportioned to the act for which the creature was created.

5. Natural theology

That which is, is more than that which can be, more than that which is on the road to be. This principle led Aristotle and Aquinas to find, at the summit of all reality, pure act, understanding of understanding, sovereign good. But Aquinas rises above Aristotle and Leibnitz, for whom the world is a necessary consequence of God. St. Thomas shows, on the contrary, the reason why we must say with revelation that God is sovereignly free, to create or not to create, to create in time rather than from eternity. The reason lies in God’s infinite plentitude of being, truth, and goodness, which creatures can do nothing to increase. After creation, there are more beings, it is true, but not more being, not more perfection, wisdom, or love. “God is none the greater for having created the universe.” God alone, He who is, can say, not merely “I have being, truth, and life,” but rather “I am being itself, truth itself, life itself.”

Hence the supreme truth of Christian philosophy is this: In God alone is essence identified with existence. The creature is only a capability to exist, it is created and preserved by Him who is. Further, the creature, not being its own existence, is not its own action, and cannot pass from potency to act, either in the order of nature or in that of grace, except by divine causality.

We have thus shown how Thomism is an elevated synthesis, which, while it rejects unfounded denials, assimilates the positive tendencies of current philosophical and theological conceptions. This synthesis recognizes that reality itself is incomparably more rich than our ideas of that reality. In a word, Thomism is characterized by a sense of mystery, [1333] which is the source of contemplation. God’s truth, beauty, and holiness are continually recognized as transcending all philosophy, theology, and mysticism, as uncreated richness to be attained only by the beatific vision, and even under that vision, however clearly understood, as something which only God Himself can comprehend in all its infinite fullness. Thomism thus keeps ever awake our natural, conditional, and inefficacious desire to see God as He is. Thus we grow in appreciation of the gifts of grace and charity, which move us, efficaciously, to desire and to merit the divine vision.

This power of assimilation is therefore a genuine criterion whereby to appraise the validity and scope of Thomism, from the lowest material elements up to God’s own inner life. Economy demands that any system have one mother-idea, as radiating center. The mother-idea of Thomism is that of God as pure act, in whom alone is
essence identified with existence. This principle, the keystone of Christian philosophy, enables us to explain, as far as can be done here below, what revelation teaches of the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, the unity of existence in the three divine persons, the unity of existence in Christ. [1334] It explains likewise the mystery of grace. All that is good in our free acts comes from God as first cause, just as it comes from us as second causes. And when we freely obey, when we accept rather than resist grace, all that is good in that act comes from the source of all good. Nothing escapes that divine and universal cause, who without violence actualizes human freedom, just as connaturally as He actualizes the tree to bloom and bear fruit.

Let Thomism then be judged by its principles, necessary and universal, all subordinated to one keystone principle, not a restricted principle as is that of human freedom, but by the uncreated principle of Him who is, on whom everything depends, in the order of being and activity, in the order of grace and of nature. This is the system which, in the judgment of the Church, most nearly approaches the ideal of theology, the supreme branch of knowledge.

Footnotes
1324. Ia, q. 1, a. 3.
1325. See Revue de “Universite d’Ottawa, October-December, 1936.
1327. See p. 6, note 2.
1329. John 8: 32.
1330. Wiener Kreis.
1331. Noesis noeseos.
1332. See our work, Dieu, son existence et sa nature, 6th ed. pp 604-609.
1333. We need so to view the world as to combine an idea of wonder and an idea of welcome. Chesterton. Orthodoxy. (Tr.)
1334. Cf. Ia, q. 28, a. 2; IIIa, q. 17, a. 2, corp. and ad 3.