

Participation and Theology: A Response to Schindler's "What's the Difference?"

CHRISTOPHER J. MALLOY
University of Dallas
Irving, Texas

SCHINDLER RAISES an intriguing question: How can we uphold the goodness of creatures as creatures, the goodness of difference as difference, in a monotheistic context? Specifically, Christian philosophy asks whether in God there may be difference, so that the difference of creatures from God might receive ultimate justification. In this paper, I note the strengths of Schindler's proposal, attempt to further his core concern by reference to Christ's theandric action, and present four suggestions/criticisms. Chiefly, I ask whether Schindler observes with sufficient care the distinction between analogy and metaphor and whether, in the end, his solution begs the question.¹

In the Scriptures we read, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory" (Ps 115:1 RSV). As Kenneth Branagh portrays it, the men of England hymned the glory of God with these words from Psalm 115 after triumphantly destroying the French. Yet, what of English valor? Was it nothing indeed? A newer revelation includes the anguish of Paul: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24).

The history of the effects of these texts among Christians is, in part, agonizing. The eclectic Gnostics found choice portions with which to defend their thesis that the creator God was fallen. The Manicheans called the creator of flesh evil. Ancient and medieval Christians worked mightily to fight off these and recurring anti-Semitic forms of "Christianity."

¹ David C. Schindler, "What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context." Both articles first appeared in *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3 (2005); www.anselm.edu/library/SAJ/Vol3No1.html.

The image of Thomas Aquinas slamming his heavy fist on the King's table is particularly evocative. Sadly, corruption among the members of the Catholic Church provoked a return to dismal readings of Paul's groaning. John Calvin proclaimed, "Their [that is, infants'] whole nature is a seed of sin . . . [which is] only hateful and abhorrent to God."²

Enlightenment thinkers were, quite understandably, not happy with this ante-proclamation of the Good News. Ludwig Feuerbach says it well in *The Christian Faith*: "What faith denies on earth it affirms in heaven; what it renounces here it recovers a hundred-fold there."³ His criticism is not that Christianity is simply delayed gratification; it is rather that Christianity calls man "other" than God, thus giving God all the glory and man all the guilt and wretchedness of a sinner. If we are to bring the fire of our native *eros* back to Christianity, we would do well in assenting to the Enlightenment critique, yet not without a difference. Indeed, those who confess the thrice-holy God cannot join hands with Schleiermacher in his rereading of the Trinity as merely a way of speaking about individual and ecclesiastical experience of a mono-personal God. Today, we do well to attend to postmodernity's "valorization" of difference or alterity.

On this score, Professor Schindler has admirably striven, in Christian fashion, to engage postmodernity's concern to preserve difference in his remarkably broad and deep paper. It is well-researched, speculatively original, and carefully articulated and argued. I am honored and also humbled to be a respondent to my colleague, with whom I have had a number of vigorous conversations since graduate school.

My response is divided into three main parts: (1) a concise recapitulation of some of Schindler's key contributions; (2) a proposed application of these contributions to the theandric action of Christ; and (3) suggestions and concerns.

Recapitulation of Some Key Contributions

I can hardly hope to be exhaustive here. First, Schindler puts his finger on the pulse of creaturely angst in identifying what I will call the excruciating dilemma or conundrum. Philosophically, a most perplexing question must be asked, a twist on Heidegger's "Why should there be anything?" The

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20, The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John Baillie, John McNeill, and Henry Von Dusen (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 251. The Latin reads, "Imo tota eorum natura, quoddam est peccati semen: ideo non odiosa et abominabilis Deo esse non potest," bk. 2, ch. 1, no. 8.

³ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Christian Faith*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), appendix, no. 17, p. 316.

question is, “What accounts for difference?” The possible answers are unappetizing. As Schindler notes, “The alternatives would seem to be to affirm the Gnostic ultimacy of two principles, which is inherently irrational, or to affirm difference as an ‘unjustifiable’ fall from unity.”⁴ Thomas would concur that, even if we were to entertain a “benign” Gnosticism, we would still be left with a chaotic heap of juxtaposed created beings. Any harmony in the dissonance would result purely from chance.⁵ But, both fall and fate falter as answers to the question. Yet, we are even more hard-pressed by a Jewish-Christian exigency, for the Scriptures affirm the goodness of creatures as creatures: “For though lovest all things that exist, and hast loathing for none of the things which thou hast made, for thou wouldst not have made anything if thou hadst hated it” (Wis 11:24). So, we can put the question differently: What accounts for the goodness of difference as difference? Schindler’s lucid identification of this question and of the excruciating dilemma that faces those who face it is most intriguing and merits perusal.

Second, Schindler presents a serious defense of the goodness of created being. It is one thing to affirm that creatures are good, but it is as we have seen an arduous undertaking to exhibit this intelligibly to those who confess (or conclude to) one ultimate source of all that is. Schindler has striven mightily to do this. Key to his effort is affirming the goodness of difference as difference. An appropriate illustration of this contention might be the difference between the sensitivity of a dog and the knowledge of an angel. A dog can know and an angel can know, but they do so in different ways. However, the fact that a dog’s mode of knowing is different from the angel’s does not *eo ipso* mean that the dog’s mode is a sheer fall from that of the angel. By rejecting a sheer fall in the hierarchy of beings, Schindler means (I believe) to reject the notion that things “higher” sufficiently contain that which things “lower” contain in a simply lower manner. Such would be the case if the angel had everything the dog has and more. Such a notion of the hierarchy of beings participating makes us wonder why there ought to be “lesser” things rather than no-things. Schindler rejects participation as fall; he wishes to say the opposite: The dog’s mode is different and as different is good. Therefore, the dog’s mode of knowing somehow exceeds that of the angel. The dog’s mode of knowing adds to, rather than subtracts from, the manifestation of being. Of course, by stressing the “excess” of the participant, Schindler is not discountenancing the fact that the participant is also, in another respect, certainly less than the participated. Schindler’s task—to defend

⁴ Schindler, “What’s the Difference,” 587.

⁵ See Thomas’s critique of Avicenna, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 47, a. 1. This critique would apply *a fortiori* to any form of polytheism.

the goodness of finite beings—leads him to stress one side of this reciprocity, although he clearly clarifies that the reciprocity between participant and participated is “asymmetrical.”

Third, Schindler’s affirmation of the goodness of difference as difference implies a positive stance in the debate about the “real” distinction between existence (*esse*) and essence. As Schindler notes, the rediscovery of “esse” in Thomistic thought led some philosophers to reduce essence to existence, thereby dissolving the distinction between them. As understandable as such dissolution may be—for there is nothing outside of being—it nonetheless deprives essence of its determining character; it leaves unintelligible the fact that being actually is restricted in beings.⁶ Schindler is concerned that such a line of thinking ultimately implies the imperfection of finite being as finite.

Fourth, the second and third contributions come together nicely in Schindler’s account of creation. Although there is a distinction between a creature and its *esse*, the creature is not simply “fallen” from the perfection of *esse*. How? The essence principle, not identical to the *esse* in which it participates, nonetheless contributes something positive without being in itself actual. Essence can make this contribution because it derives its perfection from God through the act of creation.⁷ Creaturely essence is a way in which God’s being can be imitated. God himself renders creatures actual by constituting them as existent and as existent in certain ways. Thus, the positivity of the difference of essence need not be reduced to non-subsistent *esse* in such a way as to void the real distinction, since God himself is the source of both *esse* and essence. Therefore, the affirmation of the goodness of difference as difference does not entail the demolition of the structure of participation: X receives its reality from or after Y.

Fifth, there are many theological riches in Schindler’s argument. He carefully follows out the path of philosophical inquiry to the wonder: Might there be difference in God? Trinitarian revelation supplies an affirmative response. At this point, Schindler is in the good company of numerous contemporary theologians who are returning to the riches latent within the Trinitarian doctrine, rebelling against Schleiermacher’s mono-personalism.⁸

⁶ On this note, Schindler’s thought accords with Wippel’s defense of the real distinction. Wippel contends that essence as non-being is not “absolute nothing” but relative non-being. See John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 187–90.

⁷ Schindler, “What’s the Difference,” 608–9.

⁸ For a fine example of retrieval of patristic thought, relevant in this regard, see Khaled Anatolios, “The Immediately Triune God: A Patristic Response to Schleiermacher,” *Pro Ecclesia* 10 (2001): 159–78. See also the moving work of

A Possible Theological Implication

Leaving the realm of contemporary theology aside, I would suggest that Schindler's insights harmonize well with significant elements of many Christian traditions, especially Catholic and Orthodox traditions. These elements have a common note: the reality of secondary causality. Schindler provides a metaphysical articulation that supports the Catholic and Orthodox conviction that created beings can and do exercise genuine secondary causality.

My basis for drawing out this implication of Schindler's thought is the following axiom: *operare sequitur esse*. The "esse" in this axiom stands rather for the concrete, subsisting *ens* than non-subsistent *esse*. Thus, to operate or to act follows upon the thing that is. This axiom enables us, if we accept Schindler's argument, to ground the claim that created beings genuinely act to bring about certain effects. Further, the contribution created beings make to their effects is not that which mere puppets make by the manipulation of puppeteers. If limited beings are not simply "deficient" and therefore "fallen" participants of the participated, so too, their actions are not simply "deficient" manifestations of a putatively solitary source of action, the participated.

I will now, all-too-briefly, touch upon one area in which this general implication bears out: the theandric action of Christ and, within this, the sacramental dispensation of divine grace. At a certain point in the Christian tradition (though this development emerged from disparate and ancient seeds), some theologians came to distinguish the actions of Christ into three categories: properly divine, properly human, and theandric (precisely understood). I wish to focus on the third category, but first a word on the other two.

Actions properly divine are those that are accomplished by the Incarnate Son of God through his divine nature without the cooperation of his human nature. Such actions might include his "having coming forth"

Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Staniloae, "The Holy Trinity: Structure of Supreme Love," in *The Experience of God* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), 245–80. I would only note that Staniloae does not exhibit sufficient appreciation of the Western understanding of the Trinity. He also fails to cite Richard of St. Victor (from the Middle Ages) and to acknowledge any breadth of Western thought in the twentieth century. Support for a richer reading of even standard Western treatments can be found in the following remarkable essay on the thought of Thomas Aquinas, generally impugned as neglecting the persons of the Trinity: Gilles Emery, "Essentialism or Personalism in the Treatise on God in Saint Thomas Aquinas?" trans. Matthew Levering, *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 521–63. This essay may be found with other excellent essays in a collection titled *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ypsilanti, MI: Sapientia Press, 2003).

("coming forth" eternally) from the Father⁹ or his being "begotten" of the Father.¹⁰ Turning to the realm of the Son's creative action, one can think of all things being created "through him" (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). "To create" is an a-temporal action (Heb 1:3) not predicable of the Son with respect to his human nature.¹¹ Of course, some might dispute the very category of "properly" divine actions, arguing that I am being a bit Nestorian. Yet, this category has a strong place in tradition, a place thought to have been safely guarded from such a heresy.¹²

Actions "properly" human are those that require no advertence to the divine nature to explain or account for the production of the effect. Such

⁹ exêlthon (Jn 8:42). Jerome renders both this and ekporeuetai (Jn 15:26) with forms of the Latin "procedere." This was unfortunate even if inevitable; it continues to cause difficulties between East (from the Father through the Son, or [as Photius would have it] from the Father "alone") and West (*filioque*: from the Father and from the Son). Nevertheless, despite the need for distinction here, if the two "comings forth" from the Father are not to be absolutely equivocal—in no way analogical—then one cannot simply be faulted for naming them both with the Latin "procedere" in theological reflection. Scriptural translation and creedal issues are other matters.

¹⁰ Whether the New Testament reveals the Son's eternal generation is sometimes disputed. There are no indisputable "proof texts." Nevertheless, systematic theologians can approach the scriptural witness in terms of Newman's analysis of inference by "convergent probabilities." The very names "Son" and "Father" are suggestive of generation. The divinity of the Son in the overall witness would require that this generation be eternal. There are also texts identifying the Son as "Only-Begotten" with the Greek "monogenês" (see Jn 1:14, 3:16; and 1 Jn 4:19). We even see "monogenês theos" in Jn 1:18. On text-critical issues pertaining to "monogenês theos," see Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 169–70. Finally, the monotheism ineliminable from Christianity requires that one hypostasis be source without source, radically first; the East expresses this by the doctrine of the monarchy of the Father.

¹¹ Aquinas held, against Avicenna, that no created thing can be given power to create (see Thomas Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 45, a. 5). I would contend that the hymn in Col 1:16—"in him all things were created"—must be read in reference to exemplar causality or to the order of finality and not in reference to either material or instrumental efficient causality. Otherwise, from whence does the Son derive his human nature?

¹² Pope Agatho hints at this category in his "suggestion," writing, "Jesus . . . in his holy Gospels shews forth in some instances human things, in others divine, and still in others both together, making a manifestation concerning himself in order that he might instruct his faithful to believe and preach that he is both true God and true man." Pope St. Agatho, "The Letter of Agatho, Pope of Old Rome, to the Emperor," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, ed. Henry Percival, vol. 14, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 333a.

actions might include Jesus' being hungry, sleeping, digesting, and the like. These actions are sufficiently accounted for by advertence to Jesus' human nature. I must make a significant qualification with respect to this category. Jesus' human nature is not autonomous with respect to his divine nature. I would thus distance myself from what I think is problematic in Karl Rahner's reflections on Christ as mediator.¹³ All of his human actions are directed, ultimately, by the efficacy of the divine nature. This is true not simply because all created effects are in the hands of divine providence. Ineffably more forcefully, this is true because Jesus' actions are those of the divine Son of God. Two points are in order. First, by his divine nature the Son infallibly directs his human actions, without excluding his human freedom. Further, his human actions are actions of the divine Son.¹⁴ Therefore, every human action is in fact an action of the Son of God. Any human action of Christ can, therefore, be called "theandric." Nevertheless, this term has in certain theological traditions come to be used with greater precision, as we shall see. Notwithstanding this qualification, "properly human actions" demand no recourse to the divine nature in terms of the sufficient explanation of the proximate causes of their effects. Thus, they fall under the category "properly" human, to be understood in light of this qualification.

Finally, we come to the third category, theandric actions. The term "theandric" appears to have first been employed in the fifth century by

¹³ Rahner writes, "The real initiative, in some true sense, of the man Jesus with regard to God [should be] given its *genuine* (anti-monothelite) meaning." The bracketed verb "should be" is my interpretation of Rahner's meaning in context. At first sight, Rahner's reasoning appears to mirror the core concern Schindler presents in his paper: Rahner warns that Christ must not be made into "a mere 'manifestation' of God himself and ultimately of him alone, such that the 'appearance' has no independent validity at all with respect to the one who appears" (Karl Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," in *God, Christ, Mary, Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, vol. 1 of *Theological Investigations* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 156). Rahner's desire to defend against docetism is laudable, but his introduction of an "independent 'I-center'" (ibid., 159) into the humanated Word leaves something to be desired. Most problematic is his suggestion—in tension with the sixth of Cyril's twelve canons, upheld as a test of orthodoxy by Constantinople II—that Jesus the man faces the eternal Son in adoration: Rahner attributes to Jesus "a genuine, spontaneous, free, spiritual, active center, a human selfconsciousness, which as creaturely faces the eternal Word in a genuinely human attitude of adoration, obedience, a most radical sense of creaturehood" (ibid., 158).

¹⁴ The communication of idioms demands at least the following: First, that nothing said of one nature can be predicated of the other nature abstractly; second, that whatever is said of either nature must be predicated of the one divine person.

Dionysius the (pseudo-) Areopagite, in his epistle to the monk, Gaius.¹⁵ The term has meant different things to different theologians. It came to be employed by those supportive of the heresy called monoenergism (solely one divine-human operation in Christ) and was condemned as such by Pope St. Martin I in a synod at the Lateran in A.D. 649. It was there that Maximus defended Martin against the imperial heresy.¹⁶ Yet, the orthodoxy of Dionysius was not to be lost, and Damascene read him in a manner that supported the two operations, distinct but inseparable. John of Damascene thus rescued Dionysius from the abuse of heretics.¹⁷ Later in certain traditions, the term came to be used to stand for those actions by which the Son produces effects that, according to their very character, can be produced only by divine power but which are in fact produced through the cooperation of the human nature.¹⁸ Two criteria are involved in isolating theandric actions: The effect can be sufficiently accounted for only by recourse to the divine nature; yet, the effect is in fact worked out through the mediation of the human nature.

The theo-logic behind this category is as follows. On the one hand, every nature has its proper operation; on the other hand, the human nature is truly divinized and (it may safely be added) divinizing. Agatho supplies the logic for the first premise and explicitly holds the second. As to the first, he contends, “No nature can have anything or any motion which pertains to another nature but only that which is naturally given by creation.”¹⁹ Thus, the divine nature cannot have a human motion, nor can the human nature have a properly divine motion. Notwithstanding, this important axiom does not prevent the “deification” of the human nature of Jesus. Thus, Jesus’ human nature is “transfigured” without being destroyed or altered (made essentially other).²⁰ Jesus’ “being deified” in his

¹⁵ For a brief history of the term, see David Coffey, “The Theandric Nature of Christ,” *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 407. See also A. Michel, “Théandrique [opération],” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris: Ané, 1946), vol. 15.1, col. 205–16.

¹⁶ See Coffey, “The Theandric Nature of Christ,” 407.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 407f.

¹⁸ Spanish theologians Fernando Ocáriz et al. state in sober fashion: “The conservation in existence of all creation (cf. Heb 1:3) is a divine action of Jesus; his speaking, walking etc. are human actions; his theandric actions are the miracles, in which through his human action (speaking, etc.), his divinity produces an effect which only God can bring about (for example, raising a dead person to life).” F. Ocáriz, L. F. Mateo Seco, and J. A. Riestra, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ: A Christology and Soteriology Textbook*, trans. Michael Adams and James Gavigan (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1994), 102.

¹⁹ Pope Agatho, “The Letter of Agatho,” 334b.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 334a, 334b, and 335b.

human nature is not an action. Nevertheless, when he is considered to “redeem” us through his cross, to “forgive” us by his words of consolation, to “deify” us through his life-giving flesh, he produces through his human activity effects that can be accounted for only by the divine energy. Supporting this reading is Constantinople II’s condemnation of the chief hero of the neo-Chalcedonians, Theodore of Mopsuestia. Constantinople II rejected Theodore’s reading of John 20:22–23, the scene in which Jesus breathes on his disciples, pours forth the Spirit, and endows them with authority to forgive sins. According to the council, Theodore read the scene thus: “When after the resurrection the Lord breathed upon his disciples, saying, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost,’ he did not really give them the Holy Spirit, but . . . he breathed upon them only as a sign.”²¹ One sees implicitly contained in this condemnation both Christological and sacramental implications. Jesus’ action in this passage is not to be divided into two separate actions, each achieved by a distinct hypostasis. Clearly, the breathing is “properly” human (with the due qualification). Clearly, too, “sending the Spirit” is properly divine. However, the council suggests that the two actions form a unity, so that the sending is accomplished through the breathing and the words said humanly. In short, the human action is not merely significant of a separate divine action; rather, through the human action the divine effect is accomplished.

Theandric actions thus involve a special participation of the human nature in the divine *activity*. As Thomas Aquinas describes such actions, they involve the employment of the human nature as special instrument of the divine power.²² The human nature enjoys the influx of divine energy so that what are properly divine effects are accomplished through the instrumentality of the human nature. Thus, the human nature is a special instrument of the divine energy; it is not merely the sign and guarantee that the deed stated humanly will be accomplished (is being accomplished) by the separate action of the divinity. Thomas states, “By

²¹ Constantinople II, in Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 315.

²² See disputed question *De unione verbi incarnati*, art. 5, esp. ad 1, 2. Ad 1 introduces the category of “instrument” to articulate Jesus’ accomplishing our salvation through his human nature. Ad 2 speaks of a healing miracle: “Put a quod divina virtus sanabat leprosum coexistente tactu humani corporis, qui sortiebatur efficaciam ex virtute divina.” This treatise was written around Easter, 1272 (see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996], 336f). To be sure, Thomas will speak of any of Christ’s human actions as “instrumental” with respect to the divine person; however, he also speaks of certain human actions as “instrumental” in a special way, as sharing the power to achieve something surpassing the capacity of Jesus’ human nature.

way of efficiency . . . Christ's flesh, wherein he endured the Passion, is the instrument of the Godhead, so that his sufferings and actions operate with Divine power for expelling sin."²³

The term "instrument" calls to our twenty-first-century minds something quite utilitarian and un-free. To appreciate Thomas's claim that Christ's human nature participates in the power of the divine causality, we should turn to the characteristics he associates with a usefully employed instrument. There are three: (1) It cannot bring about the effect on its own; (2) it does have the necessary characteristics to contribute dispositively to its effect; and (3) in light of these characteristics, aspects of its effect are due to its proper operation.²⁴ Let us take a saw as an initially helpful example: (1) A saw cannot cut by itself, for it must be wielded by another; (2) but a saw is jagged, sharp, and hard enough to contribute to the effect of cutting wood; and (3) cutting wood is its proper operation. A saw is thus a usefully employed "instrument" of cutting. When an instrument is wielded, it participates in the power of the primary agent to achieve an effect. Now, Jesus' human nature is not inert, as is the saw. Thus, the category "instrument" is analogously employed, for Jesus in his human nature freely cooperates in the redemption of sinful man.

Thomas links Jesus' free cooperation with sacramental action in an extraordinary way. As he hung upon the cross and was raised from the dead, Jesus intended the salvation of every human person. More, Jesus intended this not in some vague manner; rather, he intended this for every human being who was and is and is to come; he intended, further, every distinct application of the sacraments. Jesus did this not simply as divine but also as human.²⁵ Such was Thomas's opinion, although it sounds incredible to many today. Thomas locates the fittingness for such claims in Jesus' headship or kingship (1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:20–23).²⁶ He finds the condition for the possibility of Jesus efficiently causing the

²³ ST III, q. 49, a. 1 (trans. Benzinger; see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1948]). When stated, the translation is from the Benzinger edition. Otherwise, translations are mine.

²⁴ See Rudi A. Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, trans. with the help of Anthony P. Runia, vol. 46, *Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. Jan Aersten, Tzotcho Boiadjief, Mark Jordan, and Andreas Speer (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 170–75. See also, Aquinas, ST I, q. 45, a. 5.

²⁵ See Colman O'Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, rev. ed. (New York: Alba House, 1991), 56.

²⁶ See ST III, q. 8.

salvation of every human being in Jesus' having the beatific vision of God even while a wayfarer.²⁷

Thomas calls the Son's humanity the "conjoined instrument" of the divinity, in distinction from the sacramental action itself, which is a "separated instrument." Thus, the Son of God, the primary agent, brings about certain effects in virtue of his divine nature through (1) the mediation of his human nature, and (2) the mediation of a creaturely event (a sacrament). For Thomas, precisely through sacraments, and not merely at their occasion, the Holy Trinity—the second Person of whom is incarnate—produces the divine effect, grace.²⁸ The sacramental action can be an instrument because it is endowed transiently with created power to accomplish certain effects, chiefly, the remission of sins and the infusion or the increase of sanctifying grace. Thomas's claim about sacramental efficiency may well hardly impress contemporary Catholics. Thomas's audacity can only be seen in contrast with Bonaventure's favored opinion—a cautious denial of such efficiency and of the efficiency of Christ's very death and resurrection.²⁹ Against this backdrop, one can appreciate all the more Thomas's reading of some of Christ's actions as theandric (in the way specified above). I believe Schindler's thesis points in favor of Thomas's opinions on these matters. I turn now to some suggestions and concerns about Schindler's argument.

Suggestions and Concerns

Hierarchy as Fall or as Ordered Whole of Irreducibly Different Parts?

I suggest that one can better ground Schindler's core concern—to affirm the goodness of creatures as creatures—by examining difference relationally and by attending to the hierarchical structure of created being. Before offering a brief sketch in this direction, I wish to draw several distinctions regarding the terms "imperfection" and "evil."

²⁷ See *ST* III, q. 10, esp. a. 2. For a recent article questioning the validity of attempts to downplay or deny Jesus' beatific vision, especially on the cross, see Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 120–32.

²⁸ See *ST* III, q. 62, a. 4.

²⁹ Bonaventure held that Christ's death and resurrection caused our justification by way of merit and finality but not by way of efficiency (see Bonaventure, *Liber III sententiarum*, dist. 19, art. 1, q. 1, resp., in vol. 3, *Opera theologica selecta* [Florence: Quaracchi, 1941], p. 393a). For his view of the sacraments, to be praised for its openness of mind but criticized for its insufficient appreciation of the category "instrumental efficient cause," see Bonaventure, *Liber IV sententiarum*, dist. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 4, in *Opera theologica selecta*, vol. 4 (Florence: Quaracchi, 1949), 12b–18a. Bonaventure closes on a salutary note: He is not certain of his own opinion.

Schindler engagingly protests the “fallout” of both Plato’s and Plotinus’s schemes of participation. Insofar as one is *not* the Good, one is *not* good. Difference from the Good renders one un-like the Good, the more so the more one differs from the Good. As we “descend” from the Good, we stumble upon a progressive dilution in the hierarchy of things fallen from the Good to a greater and greater degree. Schindler observes that since the Good is perfect, to be not good is to be imperfect. He concludes: To be imperfect is to be defective; to be defective is to be fallen or evil. Although I concur with Schindler’s insistence that creatures as creatures are good, I suggest that the slide from imperfection to evil calls for qualification.³⁰

Thomas describes imperfection with respect to its contrary, perfection. Imperfection is simply the lack of some perfection. Imperfection is removed by the advent of the perfection.³¹ Although evil is necessarily imperfection, imperfection is not necessarily evil. Evil is a species of imperfection: It is lack of a *due* perfection.³² Now, there are two types of “due perfection,” physical and volitional. Lack of a good due to one’s physical makeup constitutes physical evil: the loss of an arm, blindness, and so on. Lack of proper volitional order to the divine good will is moral evil.³³ Physical and moral evil are radically different. Moral evil implies fault and sin, whereas physical evil implies neither.³⁴ Therefore, physical evil and moral evil are both “evil” only in a generic sense.

Now, there are imperfections that properly accompany the state of certain things. Take, for example, things that develop toward their perfec-

³⁰ Schindler *presupposes* this slide in his assessment of the Platonic heritage (586–87, 599–600), even though a Christian may *accept* that heritage (the lower is imperfect) without taking the final step (the imperfect is evil). Schindler manifests the slide in his own thought on being (605; 606; 612; 613; 614; and 615). If as Schindler argues, “our only way out” (601) is Trinitarian doctrine, then, even prescinding from *Adam’s* fall, philosophy becomes *per se* pessimistic, and human nature, corrupt.

³¹ “Perfectio adveniēns tollit imperfectionem sibi oppositam.” *ST* I, q. 62, a. 7, ad 1.

³² *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1.

³³ In every evil act, there is some un-intelligible disconnect between the *factum* and the divine order. Although one may correlate the physical elements of an evil act (for example, hijackers and a plane, or soldiers and a nation) and even many of its intentional elements (motives, habits, circumstances, etc.), one cannot correlate the moral defect itself with the divine truth and goodness in any way whatsoever. See Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 1, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 113–16 and 331–32.

³⁴ Except if we consider the fact of human suffering as necessarily tied with the primal human transgression, with Rom 5:12.

tions.³⁵ That some things do “not yet” have the perfections to which they are ordained does not render them evil, only mobile. To be mobile, in the most general sense of the term, is to be able to change. Following Thomas and Aristotle, I would define motion as follows: the act of something potential insofar as it is potential.³⁶ Potency is related to act as imperfection to perfection. Thus, intrinsic to the nature of motion is imperfection, but this imperfection is not an evil.

Finally, things can be considered imperfect relative to one another in that one attains a higher end than another or in that one attains the same end more excellently than another. Those that attain a lesser end can be considered “imperfect” in comparison to those that attain a higher end, since the former lack the end the latter have. There are grades of being—the more perfect and the less perfect—but this “hierarchical differentiation” does not imply that any “level” is evil.³⁷ My conviction is that attention to the hierarchy of created being in the thought of Thomas Aquinas might further ground Schindler’s core concern. Thomas’s thought on hierarchy is intimately linked with his relational understanding of difference, which I link with Thomas’s term “division.”

Since division is a transcendental, I turn to the work of Jan Aertsen, who has supplied a lucid analysis of Thomas’s deduction of the transcendentals. The transcendentals—certain of our concepts about the real—follow upon being and thus belong to all things that are. However, we do not comprehend all transcendentals at once, according to Thomas. Rather, we arrive at them in a determinate order, in accordance with the way we know. Aertsen sums up: We arrive first at “being”; second at “non-being” (simple negation); third at “division” (this being is not that being); fourth at “one” (this being is not divided in itself); and fifth at “multitude” (a transcendental concept, not reducible to number/plurality).³⁸ Aertsen observes that the movement from step 1 to step 2 is readily acceptable, but

³⁵ See *ST* I, q. 95, a. 3.

³⁶ See *ST* I–II, q. 67, a. 4; and *In XI Met*, lectio 9, esp. no. 2294. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XI, ch. 9. According to Guy Mansini, Aristotle’s definition of motion is the only adequate definition man has ever produced. See Guy Mansini, “Balthasar and the Theodramatic Enrichment of the Trinity” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 517–19.

³⁷ By contrast, see Schindler, “What’s the Difference?” 599–600. Again, Thomas would share the presupposition (the lower is imperfect) without taking the final step.

³⁸ Multitude is to be distinguished from multiplicity, for the former is a transcendental concept not reducible to number (multiplicity), which measures material beings. See Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Jan Aertsen (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 221. I am indebted to John Finley, Professor at Thomas Aquinas College, for pointing out this text

the movement from step 2 (non-being) to step 3 (division) is not readily discernible. Aertsen supplies a compelling link: Thomas also understands the term “thing” (*res*) as a transcendental, especially in his “central text,” *De veritate*, 1.1.³⁹ Thomas therein distinguishes absolute and relational transcendentals. Absolute transcendentals do not involve relation; chief among these is being. We can refer to that which is under the aspect of its quiddity or essence. To do this, we employ the term “thing (*res*).”⁴⁰ Since essence involves, in all creatures, limitation of the act of being, there appears to be non-being indirectly associated with the transcendental “thing (*res*).” When we compare two things (*res* and *res*), we proceed relationally. We can then affirm that this being is not that being: This thing (*res*) is not that thing (*res*).⁴¹ This affirmation is division, also a transcendental, but said relatively, not absolutely. We can use the word “something” (*aliquid* or *aliud quid*) to signify “this thing” as not being another thing.⁴²

Aertsen rightly emphasizes the dependence of the term “aliquid” upon the term “res.” Beings are not divided from each other insofar as they have being but “insofar as they have determinate modes of being.”⁴³ The movements from step 3 to step 4 and from step 4 to step 5 are straightforward. Step 4, “one,” follows division as its negation: This being is *not* divided from itself. With step 5, we arrive at “multitude,” which involves the affirmation of division and indivision. It requires more than one, so that one being is not another being: This is division or alterity. At the same time, the transcendental “multitude” implies the integrity of each being, for each being must be undivided from itself.⁴⁴ To sum up: Division, with which I would link difference, is a relational transcendental. Given that it is relational, division is best contemplated not of things in isolation but of things in relation

to me. He and Prof. Giuseppe Butera of Providence College helped me to focus attention on the relational character of “difference.”

³⁹ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 222.

⁴⁰ “Non autem invenitur aliquid affirmative dictum absolute quod possit accipi in omni ente, nisi essentia eius, secundum quam esse dicitur; et sic imponitur hoc nomen *res*, quod in hoc differt ab ente, secundum Avicennam in principio metaphys., quod ens sumitur ab actu essendi, sed nomen rei exprimit quidditatem vel essentiam entis. Negatio autem consequens omne ens absolute, est indivisio; et hanc exprimit hoc nomen unum: nihil aliud enim est unum quam ens indivisum.” Aquinas, *De veritate*, 1.1.

⁴¹ See Aquinas, *In X Met*, lec. 4, no. 1997.

⁴² “Uno modo secundum divisionem unius ab altero; et hoc exprimit hoc nomen aliquid: dicitur enim aliquid quasi aliud quid; unde sicut ens dicitur unum, in quantum est indivisum in se, ita dicitur aliquid, in quantum est ab aliis divisum.” Aquinas, *De veritate*, 1.1.

⁴³ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 223.

⁴⁴ *ST I*, q. 30, a. 3.

to one another: This thing is not that thing; this thing is none of the other things that are (and the same applies for everything that is).

If we proceed in this way, we are led quite readily to Thomas's conception of the universe as a hierarchically heterogeneous whole composed of irreducibly diverse parts.⁴⁵ For Thomas, a hierarchical vision of created reality is a given: "Therefore, it is necessary that all things that are diversified according to a diverse participation of being, so that they are more perfect or less perfect, are caused by one first being, which exists most perfectly."⁴⁶ Notwithstanding this hierarchical vision, Thomas affirms that creatures "lower" in the hierarchy express the divine goodness in ways that creatures "higher" in the hierarchy do not and cannot: "Because God's goodness cannot be sufficiently represented by one creature, he produced many and diverse creatures, so that what is lacking to one in representing the divine goodness may be supplied from another. For, the goodness which is in God simply and uniformly is in creatures in a divided and multiplied manner."⁴⁷ The reason higher creatures can rightly be said to fail *with respect to lower creatures* is the surpassing goodness of God. So, it is the failure of higher creatures with respect to God that frees up lower creatures to be good in ways higher creatures cannot. Hence, Thomas shares Schindler's affirmation that the "not" present in difference bespeaks an irreducible perfection, irreducible, that is, to some being higher in the created hierarchy.

Thomas thus leads his reader to contemplate created differences in their relational totality: The difference of some being (*aliquid*) from another (*aliquid*) constitutes partially the goodness of the whole. Thomas writes, "Thus the whole universe more perfectly participates and represents the divine goodness than any other creature."⁴⁸ Faithful to Schindler's concern and

⁴⁵ For the affirmation of hierarchy as intrinsic to created beings, which more or less approach the perfection of God, see, for example, *ST I*, q. 44, a. 1; *I*, q. 47, a. 2. Thomas speaks of an ordered multitude or heterogeneous whole, the parts of which have not the form of the whole (*ST I*, q. 11, a. 2, ad 2). The unity of world-order is attributable ultimately to one principle, God (*ST I*, q. 11, a. 3).

⁴⁶ *ST I*, q. 44, a. 1: "Necesse est igitur omnia quae diversificantur secundum diversam participationem essendi, ut sint perfectius vel minus perfecte, causari ab uno primo ente, quod perfectissime est."

⁴⁷ *ST I*, q. 47, a. 1: "Et quia per unam creaturam sufficienter repraesentari non potest, produxit multas creaturas et diversas, ut quod deest uni ad repraesentandam divinam bonitatem, suppleatur ex alia: nam bonitas quae in Deo est simpliciter et uniformiter, in creaturis est multipliciter et divisim."

⁴⁸ *ST I*, q. 47, a. 1: "Unde perfectius participat divinam bonitatem, et repraesentat eam, totum universum, quam alia quaecumque creatura." So, we read in Genesis that on the first five days God pronounced each thing "good" but on the sixth day he pronounced all things "very good." Thomas writes, "It is the part of the best agent to produce an effect which is best in its entirety; but this does not

Thomas's opinion, we might rephrase this: Therefore, the whole as a whole is the better for different things. As far as his vision of creation goes, Thomas is as far from Plotinus's reduction of beauty to unity as is possible for a Christian. As Aertsen notes, "multitude" is anything but imperfection: "The thesis that multitude is a sign of perfection is the complement of Thomas's view on the transcendental of the 'many,' for transcendentals express general perfections of being."⁴⁹ Aertsen draws attention to a particularly startling text from Thomas, a text that explosively affirms Schindler's core concern: *ST I*, q. 50, a. 3. We hear in this text that multitude implies perfection. Since multitude is a sign of perfection, the more perfect creatures are, the more of them there will be: "Hence it must be said that the angels, even inasmuch as they are immaterial substances, exist in exceeding great number, far beyond all material multitude."⁵⁰ When we think of hierarchy, we usually picture a progressive "thinning out" at the top. Thomas turns this "pyramidal" structure on its head, but without losing hierarchy!

I suggest that examination of Thomas's thought on relationally whole multitudes—whether this be the universe, the Mystical Body of Christ, or something else—would provide grounds for furthering the core of Schindler's thesis. I would maintain that considering difference relationally and with respect to the whole does not annihilate difference. Rather, it explores difference in a way that accords with its nature. Now I turn to my second concern.

*From "Excess" Vis-à-Vis esse to "Excess"
Vis-à-Vis Any Participatum*

Key to Schindler's thesis is the claim that the one participating must enjoy some excess vis-à-vis that in which it participates. He writes, "There has to be some sense in which the *participans* exceeds the *participatum*, however paradoxical that may seem. More concretely, it means, for example, that the sensible world would have to exceed the intelligible world *in some positive way*, and not simply by virtue of a progressive dilution."⁵¹

mean that He makes every part of the whole the best absolutely, but [best] in proportion to the whole; in the case of an animal, for instance, its goodness would be taken away if every part of it had the dignity of an eye. Thus, therefore, God also made the universe to be best as a whole, according to the mode of a creature; whereas He did not make each single creature best, but one better than another" (*ST I*, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1; trans. Benzinger). Here, before citing Genesis, Thomas is obviously hinting at 1 Cor 12. In fact, "Inequality comes from the perfection of the whole." *Ibid.*, ad 3; trans. Benzinger.

⁴⁹ Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 225.

⁵⁰ *ST I*, q. 50, a. 3, trans. Benzinger.

⁵¹ Schindler, "What's the Difference?" 600.

My question is, does the excess of the subsistent image—or, likewise, the excess of the non-subsistent essence—in relation to a non-subsistent perfection serve as warrant to conclude to some excess of every *participans* in relation to its *participatum*? Most precisely, do Schindler's observations on participation in *esse* apply *also* to the participation of finite beings in the Infinite Act that is God? The answer appears to be a cautious "yes," for Schindler is attempting to affirm the goodness of creatures as different from God. Creatures must somehow exceed God.

This possible implication chafes against Aquinas's thought. For Thomas, creatures are perfect precisely by their *likeness* to the divine goodness.⁵² Would it not seem, then, that from Thomas's perspective one cannot affirm that creatures are good insofar as they are different from God? Let us recall the nature of "difference" or, rather, division. Granted, we can and must affirm that creature *X* is good insofar as it is different from creature *Y*. We can do so because implicit in the division "*X* is not *Y*" is the affirmation of the being of *X* as a thing (*res*) and of *Y* as a thing (*res*), together with the alterity that distinguishes them. Thus, *X* is good as being "not *Y*" not simply and absolutely—for even non-being shares in being "not *Y*"—but rather because of the determinate being *X* itself enjoys; it is the distinctiveness of *this* being that is, as it were, tucked into the goodness of its difference when we say, "*X* is not *Y*."

But if we consider *X* as not-like God and *Y* as not-like God, how can we affirm their being good? Do they get their goodness from some other principle, à la benign Gnosticism? Are they good in themselves and from themselves? But Gnosticism is to be rejected. Has Schindler, then, taken us out of the excruciating conundrum?

Analogy vs. Metaphor: The Moment of Truth

Schindler's Argument

Schindler tacitly anticipates the foregoing critique by arguing for the possibility that difference itself is in God. Let us consider the argument in brief. First, Schindler clearly recognizes that all perfections found in

⁵² ST I, q. 44, a. 4, ad 3: "Nothing has the character of the good and desirable, except according as it participates in the likeness of God" (Nihil habet rationem boni et appetibilis, nisi secundum quod participat Dei similitudinem). See also *ibid.*, resp. and ad 2. This "likeness" can be considered to be twofold, one in the order of existence—every creature imitates God insofar as it is—and one in the order of essence—every creature is an imitation of the divine exemplar (of a divine idea). Thus, a creature is good both by its essence and by its existence, since by each it imitates the divine goodness. This is not, of course, to reify either of these principles of that which is.

creatures must somehow be found in God. This insight is both Thomistic and monotheistic. In Thomistic fashion, Schindler affirms (in a different context) that an effect necessarily has a similarity to its cause.⁵³ Thomas grounds this claim in another claim: Every agent acts so as to produce its like.⁵⁴ The ultimate inference one can draw from these claims is this: “In God are the perfections of all things.”⁵⁵ So, there is no perfection in an effect not to be found somehow in the cause.⁵⁶ On this point, Thomas and Schindler are simply monotheistic, since for monotheists there cannot be two (or more) ultimate principles of that which is.

Second, implicit in Schindler’s thesis is a differentiation between being “different” from God and—to use a new phrase for clarity’s sake—being “un-like” God. If we could find difference to be in God himself, if God were somehow different from God while remaining one ultimate principle, then a creature’s being different from God would not make the creature un-like God. In short, if difference from God were found in God, a creature could be good precisely as being different from God.⁵⁷ Here, Schindler deftly navigates the distinction between philosophy and theology. Philosophically, he raises an urgent question: Might there be difference in the one ultimate principle? Christian revelation—and it alone—responds affirmatively.

Effectively, Schindler’s proposal implies an answer to the difficulty I noted previously: It is not that creatures provide something not found in the divine perfection in such a way that there is more than one ultimate principle (Gnosticism), yet it is not that creaturely difference from the divine implies a fall from perfection in such a way that creatures are implicitly evil. A creature’s difference from God, rather than rendering it un-like God, actually manifests God’s being different from God. Both Thomas’s axiom—things are good insofar as they are like God—and also the goodness of difference are paradoxically retained.

Unpacking the Logic

Inherent in the logic is the desire not to allow limitation to be “imperfect.” That this is the inherent logic is clear from several considerations:

⁵³ Schindler, “What’s the Difference?” 611.

⁵⁴ *ST* I, q. 19, a. 4: “Ex habitudine effectuum ad causam. Secundum hoc enim effectus procedunt a causa agente, secundum quod praexistunt in ea: quia omne agens agit sibi simile. Praexistunt autem effectus in causa secundum modum causae.”

⁵⁵ *ST* I, q. 4, a. 2: “In Deo sunt perfectiones omnium rerum.”

⁵⁶ *ST* I, q. 4, a. 2: “Quidquid perfectionis est in effectu, oportet inveniri in causa effectiva.”

⁵⁷ Schindler, “What’s the Difference?” 615–16.

logic, implicit affirmation, and explicit affirmation in another text. First, Schindler's logic implies that limitation is not imperfection. He affirms the goodness of difference as difference. Yet, as discussed above, creaturely difference necessarily imports limitation. "This creature" is "not that creature" because neither of them has being to the fullest extent. Now, if creaturely difference as difference must be wholly good, limitation itself, inherent in creaturely difference, must not be imperfect. Second, Schindler implicitly affirms the goodness of limitation by criticizing an interpretation of participation according to which the participant is

defined specifically by a lack. Act is infinite and perfect; potency must therefore be imperfect precisely *because of* its limitation and the finitude such a limitation implies. Here we have a straightforward example of what Derrida would have criticized as a simple "binary opposition." If it is true, we cannot but think of creation as a kind of fall from true perfection.⁵⁸

In short, limitation is not imperfection. Third, in his recent book, Schindler frankly and eloquently defends this claim: "We need to ask in what way limitation is itself a perfection."⁵⁹ As inductive proof of this, he calls to mind that without limitation, one cannot live in accordance with what St. Paul calls the "greatest gift," love (1 Cor 13:13): "Thus, limitation is part of what enables beings to come together, in freedom and spontaneity, to make room for each other, to dwell within one another—in short, it is the precondition for love and for . . . reciprocal self-fulfillment."⁶⁰

I propose to run the course of Schindler's logic a bit further. If limitation is a precondition for the greatest of perfections, must it not also be said of the divine, albeit differently? Since many creaturely perfections are dependent upon limitations, should not these limitations, which free creatures up for perfection, also be said of God, albeit differently? Let us consider the perfection that is motion. For mobile beings, motion is perfection, since by it developing beings develop. Yet motion also inherently involves limitation, for it is the act of something potential insofar as it is yet in potentiality. Schindler implies that motion must somehow be found in God, *with* the limitation that makes it possible, albeit in a different way. A noteworthy thinker who makes this very suggestion with respect to the Triune relations is Hans Urs von Balthasar: "Something like infinite 'duration' and infinite 'space' must be attributed to the [Trinitarian]

⁵⁸ Ibid., 605–6.

⁵⁹ D. C. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 68.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 68–69.

acts of reciprocal love so that the life of the *communio*, of fellowship, can develop.”⁶¹ This leads to the affirmation that God in his interpersonal triune relations is always “ever greater,” not simply than creaturely understanding of him but, more precisely, than himself.⁶² Schindler appears to support the logic behind von Balthasar’s contention: “If we do not equate the divine identity simply with one aspect of created being to the exclusion of what we see as the limitations of finitude, then we are freed to see this ‘limitation’ in a new way.”⁶³

Evaluation

Has the excruciating conundrum satisfactorily been resolved? The chief question that must be asked here is the question of truth: “Is it so?” Can limitation be said of God? The question “Is it true?” belongs to the properly scientific moment of theological discourse.⁶⁴ Essential to Thomas’s scientific manner of proceeding is his distinction between things said of God “metaphorically” (improper analogy) and things said of him “analogically” (proper analogy). Things said metaphorically are falsifiable, while things said analogously are not. Technical explication of this distinction is by no means a straightforward matter.⁶⁵ Although an adequate technical account is beyond the scope of this article, I hope the following brief sketch suffices for my purposes here.

Naming is a function of knowing, for we name as we know.⁶⁶ The way we think we name reflects the way we think we know. As is well-known, analogous use of a name stands between univocal and purely equivocal

⁶¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, vol. 2 of *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 257.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶³ Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 68.

⁶⁴ I have treated the topic of the “moment of truth” more generally in a presentation titled, “Towards a Moment of Integrated Discourse: A Query,” delivered at the Habits of Mind Seminar, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN, July 14–16, 2005.

⁶⁵ This is so even if we prescind from the insights of literary critics who take a much different approach than does Thomas Aquinas.

⁶⁶ For this account of analogy, I am indebted to Ralph McInerny, both as mentor and as author of *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996). Proponents of the “analogy of being,” of which I consider myself one, will only mistakenly critique McInerny’s account as being “purely logical.” His point is that naming is one thing while being is another. He does not dispute that to which people refer as “the analogy of being.” He rather, and accurately, contends that for Thomas patterns of naming are not necessarily identical with relations among beings (see Aquinas, *SCG* 1.34). I must also express my gratitude to Prof. John Finley for his keen insights on the relationship between “*modi significandi*” and “*res significatae*.”

uses. Univocal use of a name involves identical accounts of the name in two or more uses: Sam is a man, Dan is a man. If names were said of creatures and of God in univocal fashion, God would be placed under a genus and would thus be conceived as one among many, a *là* onto-theology. Thomas will have none of that. Purely equivocal use of a name involves diverse and unrelated accounts of the name in two or more uses. No valid syllogism follows from purely equivocal naming. Take the following as an example:

A trunk is wooden or metal storage box.

Every elephant has a trunk.

Therefore, every elephant has a wooden or metal storage box.

Since no valid syllogism follows from pure equivocation, no knowledge results either.⁶⁷ Therefore, if names could be said of creatures and of God only in purely equivocal ways, we could know nothing at all of God. Although many may disagree, Thomas will have nothing of that either, since, he contends, God is known through his effects not simply as the cause without defect but also as the one who really has, in supereminent fashion, the perfections manifest among creatures.⁶⁸ Therefore, there must be a way of naming him that falls between univocal and purely equivocal naming: This is analogy. Analogous use of a term involves different but related accounts of the term. Since the accounts are different, they are not univocal but equivocal. Since they are related, they are not purely equivocal.

Now, we must distinguish between analogy and metaphor. I will do so with an eye to their functional differentiation in discourse, though I am aware that they may be logically seen as a sharing genus. Let us first recall that every name signifies a thing under some aspect, just as we know things under certain aspects. I call a man “father,” while my mother calls him “husband,” while his employees call him “boss.” That aspect under which we name something is the “*res significata*,” the thing signified, to be distinguished from the *suppositum* or actual thing for which the name concretely stands in a given utterance.⁶⁹ Attention to the *res significata* is crucial in the distinction between metaphor and analogy. The *res significata* of analogy is pliable enough that it can be signified under different

⁶⁷ See SCG 1.33, no. 4.

⁶⁸ See ST I, q. 12, a. 12; and I, q. 13, a. 1, and a. 2.

⁶⁹ The *suppositum* in the utterance “father” is a human being who is my father; the *res significata* is the note “male principle of biological being.” Of course, if we are to use “Father” of God analogically, which I would argue revelation bids us do, the note at stake here must be made more precise: “conjoined principle of being in the same nature.” See ST I, q. 27, a. 2.

lights (*modi significandi*), yielding different but related meanings. For instance, “healthy” is pliable enough to be signified as accident of dog, as caused by food, and as illustrated by urine. Terms that are not so pliable make fruitful metaphors: He’s a horse! The *res significata* of the term “horse” is restricted in scope, calling to mind precisely things we call “horse.” Metaphors work by their tension rather than their pliability: The *res significata* is bound up with one thing and as such implicitly compared to another. There is indeed some similarity that allows the metaphor to work—we get neither laughs nor insight by saying, “Silicon is an Elephant”—yet there is the inherently restricted signifying range of the term that provides the tension.

When it comes to naming God, only certain terms can be used of him and of creatures in properly analogous ways. A name whose *res significata* imports no imperfection whatsoever can be used to signify God and creatures analogously. Such names are said of God primarily—in terms of their *res significatae*—because all perfections are most perfectly and supereminently contained in God in simple fashion. A name whose *res significata* is intrinsically bound up with limitation cannot be said of God and creatures analogously.⁷⁰ Of course, every name, being a sign of our knowledge, is inherently limited in terms of its mode of signifying. Nevertheless, according to Aquinas, some names designate perfections without importing limitation in these designations, *res significatae*, but only in the mode of signifying.

The import of the distinction between metaphor and analogy is profound. Metaphorically grounded propositions are literally falsifiable because the *res significata* is—functionally, that is—inherently limited. When I hear it said, “God is the lion of Judah,” I indeed gain insight into God and his power, but, in order to sift this insight in the properly scientific moment of theology, I must also say, “God is not a lion, literally speaking. In contrast, analogical names are said of God truly and primarily. They cannot be falsified in terms of their *res significatae* but only in terms of their inherently creaturely *modi significandi*. It was in part failure to distinguish metaphor and analogy that kept at bay the conversion of Augustine of Hippo, for he was greatly troubled by God’s walking in the

⁷⁰ SCG 1.30: “Quia enim omnem perfectionem creaturae est in deo invenire sed per alium modum eminentiorem, quaecumque nomina absolute perfectionem absque defectu designant, de deo praedicantur et de aliis rebus: sicut est bonitas, sapientia, esse, et alia huiusmodi. Quodcumque vero nomen huiusmodi perfectiones exprimit cum modo proprio creaturis, de deo dici non potest nisi per similitudinem et metaphoram, per quam quae sunt unius rei alteri solent adaptari, sicut aliquis homo dicitur lapis propter duritiam intellectus.”

by bodily man's being in the divine image. Augustine could not be false to his God-given intelligence.⁷¹ Since the very truth of theological propositions is at stake in the distinction between metaphorical and analogous utterances, it is crucial for theology to undergo the excruciating question, "Is it so?" But, by what criteria is one to make this judgment?

One source of criteria is reason. We can legitimately appeal to reason if faith and reason are (1) not to involve "two truths," and (2) not to involve contradiction. Reason, then, can assist us in interpreting scriptural, liturgical, traditional, and theological statements about God.⁷² Let us examine God's mutability as a relevant test case. The systematic theologian encounters God's "repentance" throughout the Old Testament (for example, Gen 6:6), just as Augustine encountered God's bodily walking. Repentance involves change. But change or motion is the act of something potential insofar as it is potential. Change thus implies the following: subject of change, really distinguishable perfection, composition of subject and perfection-being-acquired, relative imperfection of the subject, and succession.

Now, can we affirm that God is composed of subject and accident (or worse, prime matter and ever-newly acquired substantial form)?⁷³ Can we affirm that God is on the way to some actuality? Can we situate him within the eschatological "not yet" under which we groan? Is God not really the restful End (*telos* and *terminus*) of our drama towards him? Or,

⁷¹ The force of both metaphor and analogy presupposes the similarity of creatures to God. However, in the former case, the name signifies a necessarily restricted scope of being. In the latter case, names do not contain any inherently restricting implication. Because similarity is present in both cases, describing analogy as "similarity within a greater difference" is insufficient to distinguish these modes of discourse. Lateran Council IV's teaching that every similarity is exceeded by an ever-greater dissimilarity remains true for both accounts and cannot help us distinguish these modes of discourse.

⁷² See Étienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), esp. 78–85. Gilson's narration (on the pages that follow) of the increasing skepticism that followed in the wake of Franciscan victories makes one wonder whether the contemporary refusal to allow philosophy (and necessary arguments) to propose preambles for the faith—for that, it is said, would shackle God, and who could bend the knee to the *Primum Movens*?—is leading to a similar nominalism.

⁷³ All composed beings are greater than the sum of their parts. In composed things, one part may be active while another is passive. Thus, some composed beings can "move themselves" through their active part. But the active part cannot be the cause of the whole, since the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Now, no caused thing can be cause of itself. Therefore, all composed beings are caused by some other. If God is composed, he is caused. Again, no composed being is identifiable with its parts. Therefore, were God composed, He would not be identifiable with part of Him. Would this part, then, be not adorable?

on the contrary, is his life itself a drama? But *can* there be “drama without end”, or, to the contrary, would not any drama deprived of ultimate, restful end, lose its *via* by irresolution? Would a drama without end not seem wearying? In any case, has anyone arrived at an adequate definition of motion that also avoids these implications, so that motion can be said analogously of God, its *res significata* being freed from limitation? It would seem, however, that Schindler is not moved by these questions, for he presses the matter further.

Participation Within the Trinity?

Turning his attention to the structure of participation as such, Schindler concludes with a radical proposal. The Son participates in the Father:

It is this Trinitarian mystery that finally justifies the infinite variety of structures of participation within the created order, for here we have an Other, the Son, who participates, so to speak, in the Father's being, not at all as a defective copy, but as Perfect Image, and thus as an Other to the Father who, as “not” the Father and in this sense as *more* than just the Father alone, is by that very token also perfectly equal to Him, an expression not of himself but of the Father's love. Participation, and the difference that lies within it, thus becomes not *simply* a figure of created being in opposition to the first principle but the very reality of the first principle itself. In other words, participation, being an image and therefore not one's own source, is no longer simply that which marks the difference between the creature and God, as it necessarily seems to in religions and philosophies outside of Trinitarian Christianity, because now God, too, “participates” in God: the Son and Spirit “share” in God's being!⁷⁴

The argument runs thus. The predicate “to participate” must be said of all that participate in goodness. If “to participate” implied imperfection, creaturely participants would necessarily lack goodness insofar as they were not identifiable with the Good. This is not tolerable. Therefore, “to participate” does not imply imperfection. Indeed, participation is a perfection; it has its own positivity as such. But if it has its own positivity, surely it has this only from the ultimate, transcendent source of all positivity, God. Therefore, in God is to be found “to participate.” This conclusion seems to lead to the following two dilemmas.

First Dilemma

On the one hand, can we meaningfully ascribe “to participate” to the Son? First, let us specify the meaning of the term “to participate.” I suggest

⁷⁴ Schindler, “What's the Difference?” 615.

the following: To have in limited fashion some perfection from another, to which it properly belongs. Implicit constituents of participation are the following: alterity of participant and participated, derivation of perfection from the participated, the participant's limited enjoyment of the perfection, and some real composition in the participant. Now, if we accept this as the meaning of participation, we can apply the term analogously of several different types of participation, each of which designates its referent via this note (*res significata*)—albeit differently (with different *modi significandi*).⁷⁵ One example is material substances participating in perfections properly belonging to other material substances: The iron participates in the heat of the fire. Another example is intelligent beings participating in the light of divine truth. Yet another example is holy creatures participating in divine sanctity. Each of these is an example of substance-accident participation. Nevertheless, quite different kinds of having are involved. Since in each case the mode of “having” and the perfections had differ, so do our modes of signifying them. Still, we designate each of the participants under the note “having limitedly some perfection from another to which it properly belongs.” This note is pliable enough to cover a range of phenomena that exhibit the note differently, so that we can have an analogous extension of the term “participation.” Philosophers venture forth to stranger terrain: Every created being is not identical with its own *esse* but participates in *esse*. Although we have ventured forth quite far, we still find the note with which we began: having limitedly some perfection from another to which it properly belongs. Now, if we use the term “to participate” but fail to wield it under this note, do we not risk falling into an uninformative equivocation?

My question is, how is Schindler predicting “to participate” of the Son? If he is to retain analogy, he ought to retain in his predication the note by which things said to participate are signified. This note connotes alterity, derivation, limitation, and composition. Clearly, the Son is other than the Father. Clearly, too, the Son derives his subsistence from the Father. However, can one affirm that the Son is limited or that the Son is composed? Schindler would certainly agree, with Athanasius *contra mundum*, that the Son is not “less” than God the Father. But, Thomas insists that we must say even more. For Thomas, each person is the *whole* God! There is no real distinction whatsoever between any hypostasis and

⁷⁵ Note that mode of signifying does not merely play a part in differentiating the way in which the *res significata* is enjoyed; it also “comes along with” signification, even in unintended ways, as, for example, when one says “good” of God the mode of signifying imports something concreated, whereas God is simple.

the divine being. The distinction is purely notional.⁷⁶ I believe that this contention is a matter of faith.⁷⁷ Now, if we employ the term participation to signify “having limitedly some perfection from another, to which it properly belongs” how can we avoid subordinationism?

A related question is, How we can avoid importing some kind of composition into the person participating, some kind of differentiation between the being he receives and the person receiving? Perhaps suggestive of such a differentiation is the following citation from Schindler’s paper: “Though there is an identity between the divine nature and the hypostases, *they* are at the same time not simply the same.”⁷⁸ What are the terms of the “they” that are being differentiated here? One wants to read here “Father” as differentiated from “Son,” etc. However, if that is the case, why the wording “not simply the same”? Father and Son are, according to Thomas, relatively opposed subsisting relations. They are wholly other. Schindler agrees with Thomas emphatically here. So, the wording “not simply the same” is understated. For this reason, I wonder whether Schindler is rather somehow really differentiating the Father from the divine being and the Son from the divine being. Such a differentiation seems to be the purport of the following text from his book: “As Siewerth describes it, the ultimate difference in God is between Being and Subsistence, or Being and Persons.” Schindler continues, “The

⁷⁶ ST I, q. 28, a. 2: “Sic igitur ex ea parte qua relatio in rebus creatis habet esse accidentale in subiecto, relatio realiter existens in Deo habet esse essentiae divinae, *idem omnino ei existens*” [emphasis added].

⁷⁷ I would draw attention to two ecclesial statements, by no means isolated expressions. First, the Eleventh Council of Toledo teaches: “Therefore, we confess [*confitemur*] and believe [*credimus*] that, taken singly, each person is the whole God and that all three persons are one God. In them there is one, undivided and equal deity, majesty, or power; it is neither reduced in any one singly nor increased in the three” (Singulariter ergo, et unaquaeque persona plenus Deus et totae tres personae unus Deus confitemur [*sic!*] et creditur: una illis vel indivisa atque aequalis Deitas, maiestas sive potestas, nec minoratur in singulis, nec augetur in tribus), *DS*, no. 529 {279}. This synod, which took place in the year 675, has produced the magisterium’s single best scientific “treatise” on the Triune God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* cites this synod as authoritative, even though it is not an ecumenical council.

Second, in its Decree for the Jacobites, the Ecumenical Council of Florence stated: “These three persons are one God and not three gods. The reason is that there is one substance of the three, one essence, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, one eternity, and all things are one where the opposition of relation does not impose itself” (Hae tres personae sunt unus Deus, et non tres dii: quia trium est una substantia, una essentia, una natura, una divinitas, una immensitas, una aeternitas, omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio), *DS* no. 1330 {703}.

⁷⁸ Schindler, “What’s the Difference?” 615, emphasis added.

mystery of the Trinity is the mystery of the relation between Being (Substance) and Persons (Hypostases)."⁷⁹ Composition in the Son and differentiation between hypostasis and divine being appear to me to be problematic. Both of these appear to be included ineluctably as things signified when we say, "The Son participates in the Father." This is the first side of the first dilemma.

On the other hand, if we attempt to evade the foregoing, does not the excruciating conundrum come back to haunt us? Let us suppose that we can preserve the analogy of participation, and thus clarity of meaning, by eliminating those two troublesome notes, limitation and composition. We are left with derivation and alterity. Let derivation and alterity be what we mean by "participation." Now that we have eliminated the two troublesome notes, we ought to face the question of the difference of a creature's participation from that of the Son. Let us ask, "What accounts for every creature's inherently limited reception of being?" To answer, we cannot appeal to our new rendering of "participation": but, if "not participation," then something else. Let us call it *Q*. *Q* accounts for the limited reception of being and implies real composition. Now, a difficulty arises. If *Q* differentiates between a creature's reception of being and the Son's reception of being, then *Q* is predicable only of creatures. If *Q* is predicable only of creatures, then *Q* inherently implies limitation with respect to the first principle. We find no "*Q*" in the Triune Godhead. Therefore, *Q*—that which establishes the difference of creatures from the Son—is imperfect: since imperfect, therefore defective, therefore evil. The initial conundrum comes home to roost. I turn now to the second dilemma.

Second Dilemma

How does the creature, precisely as different from the Triune Creator, have its "excess" vis-à-vis its Trinitarian Creator? In order to pursue this question, I must lay aside the first dilemma. Let us presume, then, that it is possible to speak analogically of "participation" of the Son and of creatures, without (1) the problematic implications of restriction and composition, and without (2) the avoidance of the regrettable return of the initial conundrum. I ask, whence comes the creaturely excess?

On the one hand, if the creature has its excess, its difference, not from the Trinitarian Creator, then not all perfections are traced back to the ultimate principle. We seem to end in a benign Gnosticism. But this is fatuous.

On the other hand, we can avoid Gnosticism by affirming that the creature's difference from God lies somehow "within" the difference

⁷⁹ Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 72.

found in God. In this way, the creature offers nothing that it has not received; yet, since God is different from God, the creature, too, can be different from God without thereby being imperfect. The creature derives its finite difference from God from the infinite difference of God from God, Light from Light. The problem, as I see it, is this: In suggesting that the creature derives its difference from the Trinitarian difference, in suggesting that the creature lies “within” the Trinitarian difference, are we not implying that the creature is a “mere participation,” a “merely partial” manifestation of the Trinitarian difference? But if a merely partial manifestation, then the creature does not really contribute an excess not always already to be found in God. The creature still is “not” the Triune unity-in-difference. So far, the creature is imperfect: but, if imperfect, then evil. Are we not left with the excruciating dilemma with which we began: Creaturely difference makes no difference?

Conclusion

I am not certain that Schindler can find a consistent way out of these dilemmas. Still, his quest to find some way to articulate the goodness of creatures as creatures is intriguing and praiseworthy. It may well be that the ultimate problem is identifying the following two claims: (1) creatures as creatures are good; (2) difference as difference is good.⁸⁰ In any case, we must respond to Feuerbach and others who rightly criticize what they wrongly mistake to be Christian. No creature is goodness itself, yet creatures are admitted into real albeit partial shares of the divine goodness. At the end of our labors, though we—feeling Paul’s anguish and falling silent about things we thought we once knew—may protest, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty” (Lk 17:10), yet another may say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21). N V

⁸⁰ I reached this insight in conversation with my colleagues, Prof. William Brownberger of The University of Dallas and Prof. John Finley.