

Engaging the Thomistic Tradition and Contemporary Culture Simultaneously: A Response to Burrell, Healy, and Schindler

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I WOULD like first to thank Fr. Burrell and Drs. Healy and Schindler for their attentive reading and extremely thoughtful responses to my book, a work that does not merit the careful attention that they have given to it. Each of them offers both appreciation and critique, on a subject that is itself important: the nature of philosophical theology. In what follows I will not seek to respond comprehensively to the many and intricate themes elaborated in the previous three essays. Instead, I will take three controversial topics or themes—each of which recurs in more than one of these essays—and respond to them in turn. The idea is not to try to elaborate a final word on the topic under consideration, but to advance the conversation in substantive ways. I will treat briefly then the following: (1) creation and the philosophical order of discovery versus the order of sapiential judgment; (2) Cajetan and the analogical naming of God; and (3) Christian philosophy.

I. Creation: Philosophical Order of Discovery and Sapiential Judgment

A central argument of the work under consideration is that metaphysical argumentation—especially when treating of God and the idea of “creation”—needs to give careful attention to the distinction between the order of progressive discovery of the principles of metaphysics (*via inventionis*) and the ultimate order of judgment regarding those principles, in light of what is most ultimate (judgment *in via iudicii*). For example, it is one

thing to argue progressively (a) that the human being comes to know conceptually by virtue of the power of the agent intellect, (b) that this power for universal abstraction implies that there is a faculty of the soul (intellect) that is immaterial, (c) that this immateriality of the faculty of the intellect implies also that the soul is in some way itself subsistently immaterial and incorruptible, and then to see (d) in light of metaphysical argumentations for the existence of God as the universal author of created being, that the spiritual soul of the human being must be created immediately by God in the body of the newly conceived human being, without the intermediary of human parents. This is an abbreviated version of a progressive “ascent” toward discovery *in via inventionis*. It is another thing, however, to see the same principles in light of what is ultimate, *in via iudicii*, in light of the wisdom of God the Creator, as one can best come to know this wisdom through the work of philosophy. So for instance, in light of the creation of the soul by God, who is himself subsistent intellect and wisdom, one can judge that the human soul has intellectual powers as a created imitation of God’s own uncreated light and by a certain form of participation in God’s exemplary act of knowing. One can judge that knowledge in an intellectual human creature is only a “proper accident” or property of the subsistent person, whereas in God intellect and subsistence just are in some unfathomable way identical. (God is his wisdom.) Likewise, we can consider from this perspective that even the very first act of human knowledge (the simplest, most seemingly “banal” abstract knowledge of the medium sized dry goods around us) is already a participation (however faint) in the eternal truth of God, and that the dynamic ordering of the human person toward the search for the truth about things in the world is itself already sustained in being by God in view of the possibility of a yet greater encounter with the truth about God. In other words, the knowledge of God is “prefigured” in a certain sense in every other act of ordinary knowledge, as our human potency for the truth is progressively unveiled and its inner tendency toward God becomes more manifest. Nevertheless, *in via inventionis*, this ultimate perspective of seeing the intellectual tendency of the mind toward God is not evident. The judgment “from the top down” that sees the work of the mind in light of God cannot be smuggled in from the beginning *as a logical premise of philosophical demonstration itself*. This would amount to an illicit, artificial hijacking of the integral work of the philosophical endeavor. Rather, this more ultimate perspective comes only at the *term* of the order of investigation and discovery, and as its most sublime, profound, and even in a sense “mysterious” result. In light of the metaphysical discovery of God, everything that has previously been known has to be reevaluated anew, because God is the transcendent cause of all that is.

David Burrell on the one hand and Healy and Schindler on the other differ by extremes when it comes to this general thesis regarding the order of discovery as distinct from the order of final judgment. They differ by extremes, however, because of a common concern that they share: an intellectual discomfort with a certain Aristotelian interpretation of Aquinas. For his part, Burrell has defended a conception of Aquinas's philosophical theology that leans heavily upon the initial importance of *monotheistic faith* as a catalyst for medieval thinking about God.¹ He alludes in his essay, therefore, to his ambivalence about the idea of a philosophical demonstration of creation that might depend in some real sense upon Aristotelian metaphysical premises. On this reading, creation is not so much something to be *demonstrated*, for Aquinas, as it is something to be presumed ("pre-philosophically" in faith) and then *explicated* grammatically and metaphysically. Aquinas's philosophical theology can be seen in one sense, then, as a carefully determined linguistic study in what we can and cannot say regarding the truths of monotheistic faith in the Creator, from the side of mere human reason. The language of metaphysics in Aquinas thus serves to manifest the truth of the Creator and to protect us from betraying the transcendence of the God of revelation. This anti-rationalist vision of human reason intends to underscore where the soul's authentic source of mystical transformation lies: not in rationalist demonstrations, but through experience of the energies of grace and divine love.

Healy and Schindler, meanwhile, are worried that the Aristotelian-Thomistic account I have offered delivers not too much but far *too little* to human reason *philosophically*. They claim, especially, that there must be some form of aprioristic knowledge of God that undergirds the rational search for God "from the beginning." Likewise, both Healy and Schindler underscore that there are elements of Aquinas's metaphysics of being that we must "always, already" somehow know from the start, or which at any rate cannot be made to fit squarely within an Aristotelian approach to progressive metaphysical discovery. Among these are: the participated character of being, an initial intuitive grasp of the transcendentals, and the "intensive" notion of *esse* that Aquinas creatively adapted from Neo-platonic sources. Why do they insist so much on aprioristic knowledge? Here in fact they are implicitly appealing, through Balthasar's re-reading of the history of

¹ See the statements to this effect in Burrell's "Analogy, Creation, and Theological Language" in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 77–98, esp. 78, and the argument in David Burrell, C.S.C., *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 3, 12–13, 135–45.

philosophy, to the importance of Maurice Blondel: all knowledge we gain—even through our initial desire for truth in ordinary life—is always, already an anticipation of the desire for the immediate vision of the truth of God himself.² So the ultimate term of human knowing (even in its supernatural mode) is in some sense anticipated “pre-theoretically” in the initial impulses of human *intellectus* (that is, in basic human insights into ordinary reality). Every act of knowing is an anticipation of the fullness of the knowledge of God, and every act of desire for the truth is an un-explicated intimation of the possibility of the beatific vision.³ Evidently, whereas Burrell would like to assign the tasks of human reason a more moderate horizon of exercise, in service of divine revelation, Healy and Schindler seem to wish to assign to reason “from the start” a strong set of pro-theological or proto-supernatural impulses. Both views seek to negotiate the relations of faith and reason in such a way as to demonstrate the integral cooperation of the two, but they do so from somewhat competing angles.

What these two viewpoints share, however, is an ambivalence about the role played by an Aristotelian doctrine of gradual discovery, especially as it is applied within a Thomistic metaphysics to the truth of creation. For one side (Burrell) the insistence is upon what must be given from the start by faith, that which Aristotle could not have arrived at himself, and which Aquinas did not come to unaided by revelation. For the other side (Healy, Schindler) the truth of revelation is also genetically primal, but philosophical dimensions of the human person also always, already correspond to and anticipate this gift in the form of aprioristic tendencies toward knowledge of God the Creator. The innate teleological end of nature is the world of grace.

What might we say to these two extremes? Briefly, three things. First, it is true that for Aquinas and Aristotle alike, not *all* knowledge *per se* is attained to *a posteriori*. Following Aristotle, Aquinas argues in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (Book I, lec. 1) that precisely in order to make rational arguments about anything one must first know something else by way of simple apprehensions that precede reasoning.⁴ In Thomistic terms: *intellectus* (apprehension/insight) of basic truths gives the epistemological prerequisite

² See in particular the argument of Maurice Blondel, *L'Action: Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique* (Paris: Alcan, 1893). Apriorist conceptions of knowledge of God are also espoused in *L'Être et les êtres: Essai d'ontologie concrète et intégrale* (Paris: Alcan, 1935).

³ The idea that human natural desire tends implicitly toward the aspiration to the grace of the vision of God is of course a core theme of Blondel's *L'Action*.

⁴ See *Posterior Analytics* I, 1, 71a. Aquinas's commentary on this text touches immediately upon the issue at hand: “Now Plato maintained that science is not caused

for *ratio* or rational argumentation. Were this not the case, we would fall into the error of thinking we had to prove everything we know demonstratively, which is absurd.⁵ But what do we know prior to all argumentation? Aquinas himself specifically speaks about the categorial modes of being (substances, with their various essential natures, quantities, qualities, relations, habits, etc.) as the ontological ground from which we take our initial apprehensions of the reality and that we implicitly name in ordinary language.⁶ This knowledge is imperfect, however, and needs to develop through progressive analysis of reality. It is for this reason that a theoretical and rational study of metaphysical principles and causes must be developed.⁷

Second, then, if human beings do advance intellectually only through rational consideration, analysis and progressive insight (which is the case) then there has to be a progressive study of the principles of being, running

by syllogisms, but by the impression of ideal forms in our souls. He also said that the material forms in natural things flow from these ideal forms, so that these material forms participate in some way in forms separated from matter. From this it follows that natural agents do not cause the forms of inferior things; all they do is prepare matter to participate in separated forms. Similarly, study and practice do not cause science in us; all they do is remove impediments to scientific knowledge, and restore as it were, a remembrance of things that we know naturally by the impression of separated forms. Aristotle held a contrary view on both points. He maintained that natural forms are made actual by forms existing in matter, i.e., by the forms of natural agents, and, similarly, that science is made actual in us through some kind of pre-existing knowledge. This implies that science results from a syllogism of some kind of argument. For when we argue, we proceed from one thing to another." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, trans. R. Berquist (South Bend, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 2007).

⁵ See *Post. Anal.* I, 3, 72b5–9, and Aquinas's *In Post. Anal.* I, 7.

⁶ *In Post. Anal.*, Prologue.

⁷ See *In Post. Anal.* I, 3. Responding to Plato's problem in the *Meno* of the slave boy who can infer geometrical truths, Aquinas writes: "Learning, properly speaking, is the coming-to-be of science in us. But that which comes to be, prior to its coming to be, was not being in the full sense. In one sense it was being, and in another sense it was non-being, i.e., it was being in potency and non-being in act. To come to be is to be brought from potency to act. What we learn, therefore, is neither fully known beforehand, as Plato thought, nor is it altogether unknown. . . . What we learn was known potentially or virtually in universal principles which were foreknown. But if we understand knowledge [*scientia*] in its proper sense as actual knowledge, then what we learn was *not* foreknown. To learn, therefore, is to be brought from potential or virtual knowledge to knowledge which is proper and actual." Aquinas goes on in I, 4 to note how Aristotle shows that the progress of scientific understanding takes place through the knowledge of causes and the demonstrative reasoning that accompanies such knowledge. To illustrate the thesis, he gives explicit examples from passages in the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle, regarding the science of being.

from such features of reality as substances and their properties, to potentiality for being versus being in actuality, to existence as distinct from essence, and the consideration of more ultimate themes: participated being and how we see the 'transcendental' features of being (unity, goodness, truth, beauty) in light of the created character of being. Evidently major Thomistic scholars have argued for decades about the precise order in which these diverse principles might be most coherently and convincingly assembled and presented within a progressive scientific study of being. Some (like Wippel and Norris Clarke) begin with participation. Others (like Gilson, Fabro and Elders) begin with the real distinction between essence and existence or the transcendentals. Others (like McNerny and Ashley) start with form and matter (and the philosophy of nature more generally). Others (Garrigou-Lagrange and myself) with substance and accidents and the act/potency distinction. Naturally, not everyone can stand in equally stolid company. But regardless of the diversity of views in such a domain (and all joking aside), the truth is that the various practitioners of this discipline *do all agree* that *all* of these diverse principles and themes are in fact constitutive dimensions of the science of metaphysics, that they are *interrelated* and *must be shown to be so* in any integral presentation of Thomistic ontology. Thus the study of such principles (in whatever precise order that is deemed most adequate) seeks to explicate the initial *intellectus* regarding the structure of being, allowing it to move out into a deeper rational *scientia*, or scientific understanding of the structure of the real. It is precisely this deeper scientific form of study that permits in turn a yet-more-ultimate set of considerations regarding the demonstrative knowledge of the existence of God, and the philosophical consideration of creation.

Last, whatever one might say as a non-Thomist, the fact of the matter is that Aquinas, *pace* Bonaventure, does not think the ontological argument (based upon aprioristic knowledge of God) is a viable or realistic option. Blondel and Aquinas part company on this score.⁸ Meanwhile, Aquinas does think that creation (defined as the understanding of the total ontological dependence of creatures upon the first cause for the reception of their very being) is demonstrable by natural reason.⁹ He even clearly states

⁸ Blondel presents a version of the ontological argument for the existence of God in *L'Action*, 339–50, as a core idea of that work. Aquinas argues in a contrary sense: *ST* I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1 and 2. On Aquinas's rejection of Bonaventure's use of the ontological argument, see the recent study by Anna Bonta Moreland, *Known by Nature: Thomas Aquinas on Natural Knowledge of God* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2010), 147–48.

⁹ Aquinas says this in the most evident fashion in *ScG* I, c. 9, para. 2–4, and the affirmation there is supported in turn by the basic outline and arguments of *ScG* II.

that he thinks philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Proclus, did attain to some form of explicit philosophical awareness of the truth of creation, strictly conceived.¹⁰ Aquinas affirms that there is a uniquely *a posteriori* form of demonstrative philosophical knowledge of creation as such, and he aims to show this in multiple texts, not least in the second book of the *Summa contra Gentiles*.¹¹ Consequently, it is clear that he does think (a) that there is a distinctly philosophical scientific order of knowledge that leads progressively to the understanding of creation, (b) that this order of discovery does not depend upon faith as such for the reception of its own *intrinsic* principles as a *philosophical* argument, and (c) that this form of philosophical discovery does allow us to judge all things sapientially in light of God, seeing him in a more ultimate stage of rational reflection as the author of all that exists, so that we can re-read, as it were, all that exists in the light of God's creative activity and wisdom.

Of course there is such a thing as *pre*-philosophical or *pre*-demonstrative natural knowledge of God in human beings. Aquinas argues in *Summa contra Gentiles* III that all human beings are capable of forming an imperfect metaphysical understanding of the existence of God, based on their ordinary experiences of the created order.¹² Children at a very young age can be inducted into a deep sense of the reality of God and his providence. All this, however, is distinct from an aprioristic intuition that precedes (or merely coincides with) the mind's encounter with sensate realities. And at any rate it is, as has been stated, precisely *pre*-philosophical. The problem with putting too much of the work of knowledge of God "upfront" as it were, in aprioristic intuitivism, is that this risks to collapse the order of discovery and the order of sapiential judgment into one another, substituting for reasoned argumentation a more poetical, intuitive and associative form of thought.¹³ Rich and seemingly religious as such thought may

¹⁰ For texts of Aquinas on Plato and Aristotle, see Mark Johnson, "Did St. Thomas Attribute a Doctrine of Creation to Aristotle?" *New Scholasticism* 63 (1989): 129–55, and Lawrence Dewan, O.P., "Thomas Aquinas, Creation and Two Historians," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 50 (1994): 363–87. Aquinas discusses the philosophical doctrine of creation in Proclus in *In De Causis*, commenting on Proposition 4: "The first of created things is being, and no created thing is before it." See on this point, Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 166–70.

¹¹ Regarding the uniquely *a posteriori* character of our knowledge of God the Creator, see the very unequivocal claims in *ScG* I, cc. 10–11. Likewise: *ST* I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1 and 2.

¹² See in particular *ScG* III, c. 38.

¹³ Consider in this respect a citation from Blondel, *L'Action*, 435–36: "There is, then, no object whose reality can be conceived and affirmed without our having

be, it can have two unfortunate effects: it can block a metaphysical science of being from developing as such (i.e., a disciplined and progressive structure of reflection, instead of intuitions alone) and more importantly, it can obscure the grounds or ultimate reasons for the judgment of wisdom itself. That is to say, by initially trying overly to sacralize ordinary human intuition artificially, we might paradoxically render opaque how the study of ordinary things leads us eventually to the sure demonstrative awareness (in philosophical terms) that even the very initial and ordinary forms of knowledge we have are (from the beginning) a true participation in the knowledge that God has of himself. A progressive order of discovery and an ultimate and more sublime form of ordering judgment in light of God are interrelated forms of knowledge and so the refusal of the former can easily undermine the practice of the latter. The immanent and transcendent poles of God's presence to reason are not to be opposed to one another, of course, but the grasp of their simultaneous reality occurs *for us* according to a certain order.

II. Cajetan and the Analogical Naming of God

A second topic pertains to analogical naming of God. Here again, the essays diverge, along lines in accord with the former topic. David Burrell is concerned that my account of divine names is overly burdened by a simplistic and artificial dualism of "positive" or "affirmative" names (such as goodness, wisdom, etc.) versus "negative" names (simplicity, infinity). Furthermore, he is not convinced that *ST* I, qq. 3–11 even constitutes a treatment of divine names at all, and that it may be better characterized as an exercise in identifying formal features of our language as it comes to signify what God is, and truth be told, more precisely what God is not. He is worried that my account of analogical naming, then, claims to deliver more than it can by way of a kataphatic aspiration to signify what God is in himself. He is also concerned that it seeks to do this wrongly,

embraced in an act of thought the total series, without our actually submitting ourselves to the exigencies of the alternative it imposes on us, in a word, without passing through the point where there shines forth the truth of the Being who illumines every reason and before which every will must take a stand. We have the idea of an objective reality; we affirm the reality of objects. But to do so we must implicitly pose the problem of our destiny and subordinate to an option all that we are and all that is for us. We do not reach being and beings, save by passing through this alternative; depending on the way we decide, the sense of being is inevitably changed. The knowledge of being implicates the necessity of the option; being in knowledge is not before but after the freedom of choice." Trans. by J. M. Somerville, as cited in Henri Bouillard, S.J., *Blondel and Christianity* (Washington, DC: Corpus Books, 1969), 110.

or with insufficient attention to the linguistic forms of Aquinas's discussions of knowledge of God. Schindler, meanwhile, finds the discussion of analogy in the book helpful but wonders if there is enough continuity safeguarded between creaturely significations and those terms taken from creatures that are employed to signify the reality of God. To simplify drastically, while Burrell worries that the account I offer might aspire to too much by way of the practice of naming God, Schindler is worried that it might deliver too little. One is worried about an absence of apophaticism and the other an excess of apophaticism. Or so it seems to me.

Rather than attempt to respond to these concerns directly, I would like to present briefly an expansion on the perspective offered in the book, by way of an appeal to analogy theory in Thomas de Vio Cajetan's reading of Aquinas. Cajetan makes two distinctions regarding analogy that are pertinent to the discussion under question (both of which have been pointed out to me by Joshua Hochschild); I think these distinctions might serve as a kind of indirect but substantive response to the opposed concerns of Burrell and Schindler.

First, in his treatise on analogy *De Nominum Analogia* (from 1498), when speaking about analogy of attribution Cajetan distinguishes between "formal" and "material" considerations of this analogy.¹⁴ Formally (in itself per se) the analogy of attribution involves the denomination of secondary analogates by reference to something extrinsic, the primary analogate. So a medicine might be called "healthy" analogically because the medicine is the cause of something extrinsic to it, namely, the health in the animal. Both the medicine and the animal can be called "healthy," yet health is present formally only in one (the animal) and not formally in the other (the medicine). (We do not inquire into the declining or recovering health of a medicine.) "Materially," however, it may happen that a secondary analogate may in fact share in the same formality or property that is found in the primary analogate. Cajetan gives the examples of being and goodness: an accident can be called a being on account of its relation to substance, which is a being more properly, just as the cause of the being of the accident is the being of the substance. And yet both the substance and the accident each truly "exist," albeit in analogically similar ways—accidents do have their own appropriate degree of being, although being is more in the substance than it is in the accident. It is an

¹⁴ Cajetan, *De Nominum Analogia* II, c. 11. See the particularly helpful study of Joshua Hochschild, *The Semantics of Analogy: Rereading Cajetan's De Nominum Analogia* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). In what follows, I am greatly indebted to comments from and conversations with Dr. Hochschild.

open question, then, for Cajetan, given an individual case, whether the formal features of our analogical language are being employed to designate accurately (or to “map onto”) *real ontological similitudes in the reality itself*. But Aquinas is clear that in the case of our terms used to signify God, this is precisely what we are doing: taking terms derived from creaturely existents and purifying them of all significations that would be *trompeuse* in order to signify (however imperfectly) something of God that is true in itself.¹⁵ Aquinas follows Aristotle in arguing that every grammatical statement we make is either an affirmation (i.e., positive) or a negation, and so when we speak of God, we necessarily speak in affirmations or negations. There are no other options.¹⁶ The point here, however, is twofold: first, even if positive and negative terms are lodged formally in our language, “materially” the language of God is meant to denote, well . . . God. And so it is not strange but actually correct to take the exercise of *ST* I, qq. 3–11 to be precisely about the naming of God, precisely through the complex web of semantic indications to which David Burrell gives such splendid and brilliant attention in his book *Aquinas: God and Action*. Second, as Aristotle teaches in the *Posterior Analytics*, and as Aquinas *explicitly* appeals to in his theory of discourse concerning God: every negative judgment we make implies dependence upon some prior and more fundamental positive judgment.¹⁷ To say “John is not here” presupposes some more primal understanding of where “here” is, who “John” is, etc. And likewise, to denote the divine simplicity, infinity, eternity, and so forth negatively is not only to affirm what God is not, but also to presuppose kataphatic, non-apprehensive knowledge of what God is: pure actuality, perfection, subsistent goodness, subsistent wisdom, etc. The negative names therefore not only presuppose but also color or qualify in important ways our use of the affirmative or positive names of God.¹⁸ They invite us to consider more truthfully the Creator in his transcendence as utterly differentiated from all creatures, and they allow us to denote his corresponding incomprehensibility.

Cajetan makes a second distinction in his commentary on *ST* I, q. 13, a. 6 that is quite pertinent to this discussion as well.¹⁹ There he notes that the four term analogy “of proper proportionality” (*A* is to *B* as *C* is to *D*)

¹⁵ *ST* I, q. 13, a. 2.

¹⁶ *In Post. Anal.* I, lec. 39.

¹⁷ *In Post. Anal.* I, lec. 39, n. 8 and lec. 40, n. 1. In his *De potentia Dei*, q. 7, a. 5, Aquinas applies this idea explicitly to the question of divine naming within the context of his discussion of the exaggerated apophaticism of Maimonides.

¹⁸ See *ScG* I, c. 14, para. 3; *De potentia Dei*, q. 9, a. 7.

¹⁹ *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia*. Leonine edition, vol. IV, 151–52.

allows one to compare terms or items without necessarily implying a relation of causal dependence between them.²⁰ This is a point Aquinas makes in *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 11. To employ an example from St. Thomas, sight is to the eye as understanding is to the intellect. But the act of seeing is not the cause of the act of understanding, nor vice versa.²¹ What *is* signified, however, by this form of analogy is the intrinsic formal resemblance between two things. So eyes formally do see as actions, and intelligence understands. The intrinsic form or resemblance between two beings as *each existing intrinsically* in two distinct ways is most carefully safeguarded by this form of analogy.²² Meanwhile, analogy of attribution (*B* is analogous to *A* because *B* is somehow related to *A*) may more readily denote something that proper proportionality does not, since the relation of *B* to *A* may be a causal one, and we know that an effect can be understood as an imitation or participation in the cause.²³ The point Cajetan makes here in regard to qq. 13, aa. 5–6 is that Aquinas employs the analogy of attribution to discuss how we can name God from creatures, because he is concerned to show how we can derive names from creaturely effects that can truly designate the transcendent cause, who is the Creator. And yet, in doing so, we are not “assimilating” God conceptually to the prison of our understanding of creaturely modes of being. Why not? Precisely because the attribution of the term *is* analogical: it respects the absolute differentiation between Creator and creature, and the corresponding incomprehensibility of the mystery of God. This differentiation is safeguarded by our realization that God is *ipsum esse subsistens*. He is infinitely perfect and therefore has no composition of created, participated *esse* such that he might be denoted under the auspices of creaturely forms.

If we stopped at this point, we might have enough to counter the concerns of Schindler, simply by insisting that the analogy of attribution does allow us adequately to signify something of what God is in himself, from creatures, without recourse on our part to any *a priori* knowledge of God. Analogy of attribution allows us to signify thus because its correct use is based upon a knowledge of God derived from his created effects, through metaphysical argumentation.

²⁰ Cajetan, Commentary on *ST* I, q. 13, a. 6, IV.

²¹ The example is discussed helpfully by Joshua P. Hochschild, “Analogy in Logic, Metaphysics & Theology: Did St. Thomas Change His Mind about Proportionality?” (forthcoming).

²² Commentary on *ST* I, q. 13, a. 6, IV. See the similar argument in *De Nom. Analogia* III, 29 on the different significations of analogies of attribution and proportionality.

²³ Commentary on *ST* I, q. 13, a. 6, IX, XII.

And yet it was a concern of Cajetan (in dialogue with Scotists) to safeguard the fact that the significations of goodness, wisdom, existence, etc. really do in some way carry over analogically into the designation of the hidden, inner life of God. Here he notes, arguably rightly, that the analogy of attribution which Aquinas employs to name God (in the *ScG* and the *ST*) does itself also presuppose in turn a use of the analogy of proper proportionality. For formally the analogy of attribution is employed to signify extrinsic causality and participation, while formally the analogy of proper proportionality is employed to signify how things are both intrinsically alike and unlike (by diverse affirmations qualified with negations). And so here the two “formal features” of analogy can be said to converge on the same matter. Attribution taken individually can be employed to signify a *causal* relationship between secondary and primary analogates. Proportionality taken individually can be employed to signify the way in which one analogate may resemble another *intrinsically*. Only if both are employed together, however, can we signify that creatures resemble what God is in himself *intrinsically*, yet they do so only very imperfectly, through the means of a causal resemblance, as effects reflecting their transcendent source. For God is recognized first and foremost only as a hidden cause of creatures that are his effects, and yet the effects must resemble the cause ontologically in some way. Consequently, we can use both forms of analogy together to emphasize simultaneously both extrinsic causality and intrinsic resemblance, respectively. Attribution is the epistemological ground for the articulation of the creature-Creator analogy, while proportionality brings it to perfection. For example, we may say that God, who is denominated “good” by analogy of attribution as the cause of creaturely goodness, also contains in himself, as cause, an intrinsic superior goodness in which created goodness participates, and so he is also denominated “good” by analogy of proportionality. The two analogies together help to capture the intrinsic likeness of creatures to God (*per viam causalitatis*) as well as the radical otherness of divine goodness from all creaturely finite goodness (*per viam remotionis*), and so also to maintain that the incomprehensible goodness of God, which remains utterly in darkness to our natural human reason, is super-eminent to that of all creatures (*per viam eminentiae*). Because this relationship of causality is formally extrinsic but also implies a relationship of likeness, the use of the analogy of attribution not only lays the groundwork for respecting the transcendent alterity of God; it also invites us to use proper proportionality to consider the likeness-amidst-utter difference that creatures have, even to the unknown God.²⁴

²⁴ For a similar argument, see F. X. Maquart, *Elementa Philosophiae* (Paris: Andreas Blot, 1938), Vol. II, 35–42.

It seems to me that this interpretation of Aquinas offered by Cajetan satisfies, or at least offers substantive responses to, the twin and opposed concerns of Burrell and Schindler.

III. Christian Philosophy

Healy and Schindler are concerned about my orthodoxy. In citing selected texts from papal writings, they hope to signal that we live in a post-Neoscholastic Church, and that there is the danger in my book of the idea of a philosophy “separated” from the influences of faith. Personally I am skeptical about the claim that the Catholic magisterium or the modern popes would resent the renewal of Aristotelian-Thomistic studies today, nor do I think that one is required (by the canons of a sound hermeneutic of the Second Vatican Council) to believe that a radical break has occurred with regard to the Church’s long-standing recommendation of the study of Thomistic philosophy. But these are topics for another day. The more substantive question to address in this context is Schindler’s claim that the Thomistic approach the book outlines represents a kind of “epistemological Semipelagianism,” a philosophy that would seek to approach God apart from or in purposeful ignorance of key resources of faith and theology as gainsays to the tasks of philosophy.²⁵ What are the influences of theology upon the objects and actions of philosophy? Or more succinctly: what do we mean by “Christian philosophy?”

The term “Semipelagianism” has its origins in the late sixteenth century. It was employed in the Lutheran *Book of Concord* and subsequently by Dominicans and Augustinians, in disputes with the Society of Jesus regarding Luis Molina’s *Concordia* and throughout the subsequent *De Auxiliis* controversy. The term was employed then and has been used since that time, in particular, to denote the perceived theological errors of the monastic communities of southern Gaul in the fifth century, with whom Prosper of Aquitaine debated in defense of Augustine’s mature doctrine of grace. Dominicans and others feared that these errors were repeating themselves (in a different but similar form) in the teachings of Molina. Employed in this way, Semipelagianism denotes pejoratively a particular account of the relationship between grace and free will in ethical actions. Whereas Pelagianism denotes the idea that natural human acts of the will can lead to righteousness before God and salvation (apart from grace), Semipelagianism denotes the idea that the human free will can dispose itself either to integral natural righteousness or even to the merit of grace independently

²⁵ This criticism echoes in some respects one that is found among Protestant critics of Thomism. Robert Jenson is known to have employed an almost identical term for Thomistic natural theology: “epistemological works righteousness.”

of or apart from the prevenient work of grace. On this account, even if salvation is by grace alone (*pace* Pelagianism), the reparation of nature and its dispositions for grace can occur morally in the human will (to some extent at least) independently of grace (*pace* Augustinianism).

In speaking of epistemological Semipelagianism, then, Schindler is purposefully making an interesting analogical comparison, suggesting that a certain form of Thomistic rational theology would seek to acquire an integral form of wholeness, either as a predisposition to or in autonomous independence from, the world of grace, theology, and faith.

It is important to realize that it was not only Dominicans and Augustinians who classically employed the term “Semipelagian” to characterize their theological opponents. The term was also employed by the followers of Michael Baius and Cornelius Jansen to characterize the ideas of Dominicans, as well as Jesuits. And here the term acquired a different meaning. For while it is a fully legitimate concern to insist upon the intimately interrelated domains of grace and nature, reason and faith, it is also an important concern to insist on their real distinction. And it is the absence of a true distinction of grace and nature in the thought of Baius that initially caused him to come under censor from Pope St. Pius V.²⁶ For Baius, like the Jansenists who came after him, in truth thought the distinction between nature and grace to be in a certain respect a result of the fall of man.²⁷ Consequently, the true nature of the human free will of man could be identified only within actions of charity.²⁸ Supernatural and natural converged into one “form” of charity, such that nature and grace were seemingly difficult to distinguish formally. When this idea was condemned by Rome, the response that subsequently was given by the followers of Baius to the scholastics was that they were “Semipelagian” for their insistence on the clear distinction of the realms of nature and grace.²⁹

In truth then we need to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, epistemological Semipelagianism, which would fail to identify the profound ways that philosophy and theology are called upon to interact and mutually affect one another, and, on the other hand, epistemological Baianism,

²⁶ See the condemned propositions from the 1567 bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*, in Denzinger, 15th edition, nn. 1001–1080.

²⁷ Denz. 1004, 1007.

²⁸ Denz. 1016, 1020, 1025, 1027.

²⁹ This issue eventually entered into the magisterium, as the Jansenist Augustinians began to reject under this name certain scholastic formulations of the doctrine of grace. See the 4th and 5th condemned propositions drawn from the *Augustinus* of Jansenius (Denz. 2001–2007): “(4) It is semi-Pelagian to say prevenient grace can be resisted or accepted by the human will. (5) It is semi-Pelagian to say that Christ died for everyone.”

which would risk to collapse all philosophy into the world of theology, so that all seeming philosophical and ontological reflection is in some way “always, already” implicitly either Christology (Barth) or theological anthropology (arguably Rahner and the late Przywara as well).³⁰ The First Vatican Council (in *Dei Filius*) rightly insisted on the distinction of principles and objects of study in the dual orders of natural and supernatural knowledge, against the latter danger of a confusion. The Second Vatican Council (in *Gaudium et Spes*, for instance) emphasized the historical inter-relations of grace and nature, faith and reason, especially in addressing the concrete existential questions of the human condition. Our task is to read Vatican I and Vatican II on this question not in opposition to each other, but within the context of a hermeneutic of profound continuity. In that way the two documents enrich each other. In fact, that is the direction that has been charted out by Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998).³¹ Whether Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar adequately navigated within the territory between the two problematic extremes is of course disputable, but that they sought to do so is clear. Modern Thomism, however, has most certainly sought out an appropriate theological balance in this domain, and has done so in promising ways.

To consider briefly the topic of “Christian philosophy” then, we can make two distinctions, both of which stem from the thinking of Jacques Maritain (in his reading of St. Thomas) and both of which are present in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.³² The first of these is the distinction between the *objective* mutual influences of theological faith upon philosophical reason (and vice versa) as compared to the mutual *subjective* influences. The objects of faith influence philosophical reason when a truth of divine revelation and sacred theology invites human reason to the consideration

³⁰ On the later doctrine of Erich Przywara, see Kenneth Oakes, “The Cross and the *Analogia Entis* in Erich Przywara,” in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Anti-Christ or the Wisdom of God?* ed. Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 147–71; see also, Richard Schenk, O.P., “Analogy as the *discrimen naturae et gratiae*: Thomism and Ecumenical Learning,” in White, *Analogy of Being*, 172–91.

³¹ I am thinking here in particular of *Fides et Ratio*, 75–79.

³² See in particular the analysis of the concept of “Christian philosophy” by Jacques Maritain in *De la philosophie chrétienne* (1932), and *Science et Sagesse* (1935), in his *Oeuvres Complètes*, vols. 5 and 6 (Fribourg and Paris: Éditions Universitaires de Fribourg et Éditions St. Paul, 1982 and 1984). What I will articulate below is highly indebted to him, but also to Georges Cottier, O.P. in his book *Les chemins de la raison: Questions d’épistémologie théologique et philosophique* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 1997). One cannot help but notice both that the language in Cottier’s book on Christian philosophy is heavily indebted to Maritain, and that it is virtually identical in various places with the language of *Fides et Ratio* 75–79.

of a deeper understanding of the structure of reality, and does so in ways that can affect reflection not only theologically as such, but also within the domain, so to speak, of philosophy as such. The process can work in the other direction as well, as when philosophical ideas affect the way we explicate or approach our theological understanding of divinely revealed mysteries. So for example, historically, Christian *theological* reflection upon the mystery of the divine persons (including the mystery of the hypostatic union) has stimulated a deeper metaphysical and *philosophical* reflection upon human personhood in general. But also simultaneously, a deeper philosophical reflection on human personhood (as we find, say, in Aquinas) has affected the ways theologians conceive of the mystery of the Triune persons in analogical distinction to created persons. Similar reflections could be offered regarding topics such as the metaphysics of the one God, creation, the natural law, the ethics of marriage, etc.

Subjective influences, by contrast, correspond not to the respective objects of philosophy and sacred theology (and their inevitable influence upon each other), but to the broader ways that grace (or its rejection or absence) affects the subject who carries out philosophical study as such. Or the ways that grace (or its rejection or absence) affects philosophical culture over time more generally, within the existential mesh of history. Here the key issue is how the presence of grace conditions the development of the intellect not directly (through the objects of revelation being considered, for example) but indirectly in and through the effects of grace on other faculties, such as the will (principally), as well as the passions. Grace gives the spiritual heart and the emotional and sensate dimensions of the human person a deeper inclination and zeal to study even certain natural topics (such as those pertaining to God, the soul, or the status of objective moral claims). The absence or refusal of grace can incline the will away from whole traditions of philosophy as well as particular philosophical topics. A culture of banalization of the human person through technology, materialism, sensualism, and addiction can form generations of persons in which there occurs a certain typical habituation of the passions and a corresponding secular set of intellectual pursuits and interests. By such a process, the culture itself becomes seemingly impervious to deeper philosophical and moral truths. Therefore, it is the case that there exists in the human person a natural *structure* objectively capable of potentially discovering profound philosophical truths about the human person. However, subjectively, this structure remains inert or unactualized, thwarted existentially by the cultural and historical as well as personal conditions in which the person or a particular society might try to philosophize.

This last idea brings us to a second Thomistic distinction one can make between *the order of specification* and the *concrete exercise* of that order. Aquinas introduces this distinction in *De Malo*, q. 6 and *ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 1 (as well as other texts) in order to discuss the dual primacy of the will and the intellect. The intellect has a primacy over the will in the order of specification, because what we know formally specifies our act of desiring or willing, and we can love only what we first know. The will, however, has a primacy in the concrete exercise of the life of the mind, because the will moves the intellect to consider this or that object and to focus on this or that discipline or interest. Maritain (and the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* after him) employ Aquinas's distinction slightly differently in order to treat the question of Christian philosophy.³³ This treatment builds upon and expands the use of the previous distinction (objective and subjective mutual influences).

In the order of specification, then, philosophy and theology are both characterized by distinct objects: they are specifically distinct subject matters that give rise to distinguishable disciplines of study and thought.³⁴ The sapiential discipline of *sacra doctrina* is formally distinct from that of philosophy, and each science has its own first principles and final ends of reflection. (This was the concern of *Dei Filius* at Vatican I.) Consequently, *Fides et Ratio* insists on the idea of an “autonomy” of specification when it comes to philosophy, which does not receive its first principles or final ends from supernaturally revealed faith as such.³⁵ Meanwhile, in its concrete exercise, philosophy is subject in a profound way to Christian influences, both objectively (through the consideration of objects of divine revelation, even from a philosophical point of view) and subjectively, through the effects of grace upon human persons and their cultures, within the existential mesh of human history.³⁶ Consequently, we can speak of philosophy being a distinctly natural discipline in the order of specification, wholly

³³ See *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 16, 43, 45, 48, 67, 75, 76, 100. See the study of this aspect of the encyclical by Jean-Miguel Garrigues, O.P., “Autonomie Spécifique et Ouverture Personnelle de la Raison à la Foi,” *Nova et Vetera* (French edition) 73, vol. 4 (1998): 95–106.

³⁴ *Fides et Ratio* 76.

³⁵ *Fides et Ratio* 75: “Moreover, the demand for a valid autonomy of thought should be respected even when theological discourse makes use of philosophical concepts and arguments. Indeed, to argue according to rigorous rational criteria is to guarantee that the results attained are universally valid. This also confirms the principle that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it: the assent of faith, engaging the intellect and will, does not destroy but perfects the free will of each believer who deep within welcomes what has been revealed.”

³⁶ *Fides et Ratio* 76.

distinguishable from the mystery of divine revelation and from grace as such. To fail to do so is to fall into epistemological Baianism. But we must also insist upon the fact that philosophy is always subject in its concrete exercise to the effects of grace present in a culture or in particular human persons, or to the rejection and absence of such grace. To fail to do so is to fall into epistemological Semipelagianism.

Philosophy, then, has a true autonomy of specification vis-à-vis theology, but not an autonomy in its concrete exercise or historical mode of being. We should rightly insist on a distinction of orders, but not a separation or absence of mutual influence. This is true also of natural theology: it is something structurally possible for human nature, but in its concrete exercise it will be highly conditioned by the presence of divine revelation, both with regard to the consideration of certain "objective" dimensions of the study (as, for example, historically in the metaphysical consideration of divine unity, omnipotence, and omniscience) and in the subjective dispositions it meets in those who might pursue its study (or fail to) in any given age, cultural setting, or in the course of one's own personal history.

Schindler and Healy are concerned that the resurgence of a certain kind of Aristotelian Thomism might insist too strongly on the first trait (autonomy) while failing in various ways to allow for and acknowledge the role of grace in the concrete history of human philosophizing. In some circumstances, this problematic tendency might well arise. Let me conclude, however, by noting two counterpoints that need to be kept equally before our eyes when thinking about the renewal of natural theology within the context of "Christian philosophy." First, the orders of theological faith and human philosophical reason, while distinguishable, are not intended to be separated but tend inherently under grace toward greater and greater mutual interaction and, in a qualified way, toward mutual influence. But it is equally the case that they also tend *precisely insofar as they mutually influence each other* to become each more themselves, in terms of their own inner tendencies and capacities. The person of faith becomes more aware over time of the primacy and distinctness of the supernatural with respect to the natural, but the philosophical believer also becomes equally aware over time of the integrity or dignity of philosophical argument as such, according to its own inner structure and teleological orientation, in distinction from theological understanding and argumentation. This does not mean one's philosophy is less dependent upon influences from theology or that it influences less the way theology is conducted. Just the opposite is implied: a greater sense of the dignity and gratuity of divine revelation can make philoso-

phy more docile to influences received from faith. And a greater sense of the integrity of genuine philosophical discovery can greatly enrich theology in its rightful assimilation of philosophical concepts and ideas, in view of uniquely theological ends.

Second, and last, grace presupposes nature in such a way that a culture of grace (and a fortiori a culture of healthy theology) requires a culture of knowledge of nature and of philosophical learning. It is not absurd that one might be concerned about an excessively rationalistic Neoscholasticism. But it is equally important to avoid a culture of theological fideism that has no sufficient grounding in: the philosophical knowledge of nature, classical virtue theory, natural law, philosophical understanding of modern science and cosmology, or, above all, philosophical ways of speaking truthfully about God. For a theology that can no longer speak of God metaphysically is no theology at all, and will inevitably become (despite whatever kind of Christocentric intentions are present) a mere narrative theology, or in spite of everything, a mere “theological anthropology.” It is precisely to ensure a genuinely Christian philosophy, then (that is to say, a philosophy that is ultimately theocentric in orientation, capable of cooperating with divine revelation) that we need also to be attentive to the integrity of philosophy according to its own inner structure and form of development. This is particularly true with regard to natural theology, which allows human beings to speak rightly and well of God in his incomprehensible transcendence, his immanence to creation, and his sapiential wisdom which governs all creatures. To do this in Catholic theology today, there is a need for renewal of the study of the metaphysics of Aquinas, his treatment of the “names” of the one God, and his profound philosophical reflection about the structure of human persons and of reality more generally. This form of renewed Thomistic thinking need not cut us off from the deepest forms of conversation with our contemporaries. On the contrary: if it is done rightly, it can help facilitate conversation at a level of profundity and effectiveness that few other intellectual resources in the Catholic tradition have the power to do. N-V