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**ESSE/ESSENCE AND GRACE: A THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THOMIST
METHODOLOGY**

Marquette University

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ESSE/ESSENCE AND GRACE:
A THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THOMIST METHODOLOGY

by

Joyce A. Little, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
Marquette University, in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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PREFACE

This dissertation is an inquiry into Thomist method. It proceeds on the basis of two fundamental assumptions with regard to theological method. First, theological method deals with the formal structural principles employed in systematic theology. Secondly, theology itself is not concerned solely with God or with man, but with the union between the two. That union as given in Christ, the God-man, grounds the theological enterprise.

Theological method is therefore a correlation of the revelation given in Christ with methodological principles drawn from one or another of the humanistic disciplines. This dissertation deals explicitly with the correlation of the revelation and principles drawn from philosophy.

In Plato and Aristotle, we are confronted with a fundamental choice between understanding reality as either extrinsic to or immanent within the material world. Plato proceeds on the basis of a notion of reality which treats the world as fallen from the essential integrity of pure form. Matter is, for him, that which fragments or disrupts the essential integrity of pure form. Such a notion of reality as dematerialized is expressed primarily in the principle of a form/matter contradiction or tension, whereby the fundamental ambiguity or angst of fragmented human existence is given a methodological account.

Aristotle, rejecting the purely formal realm of Plato, identifies reality with the material world. Reality for Aristotle is therefore found in the material world and not apart from it. Such a notion of the

"really real" as the material world is expressed in Aristotle's principle of the complementarity between act and potency, operative at the two levels of form/matter and substance/accident.

When either the Aristotelian or the Platonic approach is employed in order to understand the structures of being or reality, we have philosophy. When either of these approaches is correlated with the Christian revelation, we have moved from philosophy to theology. While both methods or approaches are capable of a theological transformation, this dissertation deals primarily with Aristotelian method and its transformation by St. Thomas Aquinas.

This dissertation attempts to establish five points. First, the basic principle operative in Thomas' works is the act/potency complementarity which Thomas derived from Aristotle. Thomist method is therefore Aristotelian and not, as is often argued, either Platonic or a synthesis of Aristotle and Plato. Secondly, the esse/essence correlation introduced by Thomas produces a radical transformation of Aristotelian method, a transformation which Thomas himself did not fully grasp or work out. Thirdly, that transformation is explicitly theological, and not, as is generally supposed, philosophical, inasmuch as it is the means by which the Aristotelian notion of material reality as necessary and eternal is transformed into the Christian notion of material reality as contingent and created. Fourthly, an analysis of the principle of esse within Thomist methodology requires us to recognize that the created order, within such a methodological framework, cannot be understood as substantially natural, but must be recognized as substantially graced. Grace, therefore, is not solely accidental in Thomism, but operates at the level of substance as well. Fifthly, Thomas' trans-

formation of Aristotle is, methodologically speaking, necessarily Christocentric, inasmuch as an Aristotelian and, therefore, a Thomist method proceeds on the basis of an intrinsic, not an extrinsic, analysis of the world as real. Hence, the union of God and man cannot be reduced to notions of human participation in divinity which invoke an extrinsic source, whether this be Ipsum Esse, the divine essence, the Divine Ideas or the disincarnate Logos. Rather, Christ must be recognized as the immanent source of unity and value in the created order, and the participation of humanity in divinity must be recognized as a mediated participation in Christ, the God-man. The substantial grace of creation is therefore, within Thomism, inseparable from the Incarnation and gratia Christi.

The most important of these five points, the one most central to the overall purpose of the dissertation, is the final one, namely, the argument that Thomist method proceeds on the basis of an intrinsic, not an extrinsic, analysis of the material world. The first part of the dissertation focuses on the failures of Thomas and subsequent Thomist philosophers, as well as Aristotle himself, to locate within this world a unified source for the composite intrinsic principles or causes of this world. The failure to locate such an immanent source has produced successive appeals to extrinsic or dematerialized sources, whether they be the separate substances or Prime Movers of Aristotle, the Divine Ideas of Thomas or the notion of Ipsum Esse employed by participationist Thomists.

The second part of the dissertation examines contemporary Catholic theology and contemporary quantum physics, finding there the same failure, whether it be Rahner's appeal to an infinite horizon of being,

Lonergan's appeal to infinite intelligence and the unrestricted desire to know, Metz' God of the absolute future or Einstein's God who does not play dice. In all of these cases, the reality and value of the world is reduced, in Platonic fashion, to a source extrinsic to it.

However, the problems and questions which contemporary theology must face require that we locate reality and value within the world. This is most acute with regard, first, to the nature/grace problem as it presents itself in this century, for the question is not one of locating an extrinsic source of grace nor even of asserting an immanent nexus between nature and grace, but of giving some methodological account of that immanent nexus. The need to locate reality and value within the world is also acute with regard to contemporary anthropocentrism and concern for the importance of the created order itself, where once again the question is not one of referring the value of this world to an extrinsic agent, but one of discovering within this world that source which unifies it and makes it good.

Heretofore Catholic theology has failed to link Christ to creation. Yet just such a link is what we require in order to resolve both the methodological problem raised by nature and grace and the problem which contemporary historical consciousness raises when it seeks a value and unity in this material order and not apart from it.

Both of these problems are explicitly Aristotelian ones, for they address the question of an immanent source of unity and intelligibility within the world. Their resolution is found in Christ, the God-man, in whom is given the union of the human and the divine. Therefore, a Thomist theological method, which proceeds by an analysis of immanent causality within the light of the revelation of Christ as the first-born of creation (Col 1.16), the One for whom and by whom all things

exist (1 Cor 8.5f, Heb 2.10), the One in whom all things hold together (Col 1.17), the Alpha and the Omega (Apoc 22.13), provides the basis for a theology of creation in Christ which responds directly to those theological needs which are most pressing today.

English translations of the primary sources have been used extensively in this dissertation. They include, with regard to Aristotle, R. McKeon (ed.), The Basic Works of Aristotle (New York: Random House, 1941), and, with regard to St. Thomas Aquinas, On Being and Essence, translated by Armand Maurer, 2nd rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), On the Power of God, translated by the English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1952), On the Truth of the Catholic Faith (Summa Contra Gentiles), 4 volumes, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Image Books, 1955-1957), Summa Theologiae, 60 volumes, Blackfriars edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964-1976), and Truth, 3 volumes, translated by Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952-1954).

This dissertation was done with the help of a large number of people. I would like to thank, first, my fellow students, especially Kevin McMahon, Cindy Guthrie, Sr. Susan Wood, Dan Hauser, Fr. Bill Kelly and Rev. Terry Scherf, for their enormous support and encouragement. Secondly, I would like to thank the members of my board, particularly Fr. Harry R. Klocker, S.J., for their advice and suggestions. And last, but certainly not least, I would especially like to thank Fr. Donald J. Keefe, S.J., the Director of this dissertation, without whom, in all manner of way, this work could never have been done.

PART I

ESSE/ESSENCE: SUBSTANTIAL GRACE

INTRODUCTION

Twentieth century Thomist philosophy cannot be faulted for ignoring the real distinction between esse and essence. As one writer recently noted, "The year 1910 marks a watershed in the history of the real distinction debate; in that year the Jesuit Marcel Chossat rekindled the ever-smoldering embers of the real distinction controversy by doubting that St. Thomas ever held the doctrine traditionally ascribed to him."¹ Since few Thomists can be found who agree with Chossat,² the actual debate over this distinction has, in recent years, moved to higher ground. Assuming that St. Thomas did in fact draw such a distinction, most Thomists today ask whether or not that distinction and, indeed, Thomism itself, are best understood as fundamentally Aristotelian or fundamentally Neoplatonic.³ The discussion has therefore tended to focus on the centrality of esse, on the one hand, and the notion of participation, on the other.

Although disagreements among Thomists range far and run deep, these philosophers are as one in assuming the real distinction itself

¹ Germain Kopaczynski, Linguistic Ramifications of the Essence-Existence Debate (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), p. 62 (hereafter cited as Kopaczynski, Linguistic Ramifications).

² Other recent Thomists who have denied the esse-essence distinction include Francis Cunningham, Pedro Descoqs and J. P. Kenney.

³ Earlier studies supported the view of an Aristotelian Thomism. More recent works, especially those of C. Fabro, L.-B. Geiger, J. de Finance, L. de Raeymaeker, A. Little and W. N. Clarke, argue for a strong Neoplatonic influence at work in Thomas' thought.

to lie within the domain of philosophy rather than of theology. It is that assumption which Part I of this dissertation will challenge. The approach will be methodological, not historical. That is to say, no attempt will be made to claim that, in assuming the real distinction to be philosophical, contemporary Thomists are departing from what St. Thomas himself said. The textual evidence clearly indicates that Thomas did in fact understand the real distinction to lie within the domain of philosophy. Instead, Part I will proceed on a different course, one which nevertheless closely parallels in some respects the recent Thomist discussions on the real distinction.

First, the real distinction will be examined with regard to both act/potency and participation, in order to establish that the act/potency correlation is the basic methodological principle in Thomism. Such an examination parallels the current philosophical discussion on whether Thomas is Aristotelian or Neoplatonic, and that discussion will therefore be considered. Secondly, the place of esse will be appraised within Thomist methodology, with a view to establishing that, given the correct application of the act/potency principle, esse cannot properly be considered as a 'natural' element in existing things. Such an appraisal parallels the current philosophical discussion on the centrality of esse in Thomas' thinking, and that discussion will also be considered. The appraisal itself will show that, unless esse be understood as gratuitous and its gratuity to be theological, no coherent systematic account of the nature/grace relationship can be given within Thomist methodology.

CHAPTER 1

ESSE/ESSENCE: THE THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

"Si on considère l'ensemble de la philosophie de St. Thomas on est frappé du rôle organique que joue cette doctrine capitale."¹ With those words, Roland-Gosselin has pinpointed both the importance of the esse/essence distinction within Thomist philosophy and the source of the difficulties which arise when one attempts a methodological analysis of it. To paraphrase La Fontaine, all roads lead to the real distinction and, conversely, all roads lead from it. In this chapter, I will examine the real distinction both with regard to its definition and with regard to its philosophical and theological uses by St. Thomas. No attempt will be made to trace the chronological development of Thomas' thought; rather, what will be shown are the interrelationships between this distinction and the methodological principles of act/potency and participation, on the one hand, and the theological doctrines of God as *Ipsum Esse* and the world as created, on the other. Only after the major elements in the structure have been set out can any attempt be made to determine the fundamental nature of that structure.²

¹M. D. Roland-Gosselin, Le 'De Ente et Essentia' de S. Thomas d'Aquin (Paris: J. Vrin, 1926), p. 185.

²See chapter 2.

Definition of the Esse/Essence Distinction

Without debate the Scholastics accepted the fact that the essence, considered as a mere possible, was really distinct from its act of being, from esse. The precise point of contention was the following: in an actually existing concrete being, are the two elements which go to make up the being's metaphysical constitution, essence and esse, really distinct?³

To this question, Thomas' answer was consistently affirmative.

"Maturity brought about a shift in St. Thomas's position on some matters, but in the matter of the real distinction the thought of St. Thomas remained unchanged throughout his scholarly career."⁴ However, a second question remains. What sort of distinction are we talking about? Avicenna had held a real distinction between esse and essence in his account of esse as an accidental characteristic of existing essences. Giles of Rome was later to maintain a real distinction between esse and essence as two distinct things which, although they are found composed in beings, can nevertheless be separated by the power of God. Therefore, as Kopaczynski points out, it would be less confusing and more accurate were we to speak not of the real distinction, but of the Thomist real distinction.⁵

There are three basic components to the Thomist real distinction. First, in contradistinction to Giles of Rome, Thomas maintains a distinction of principles, not of things. For this reason, Thomists generally refer to it as a 'real minor' or a 'real metaphysical'

³Kopaczynski, Linguistic Ramifications, pp. 8-9.

⁴J. C. Taylor, s.v. "Essence and Existence," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 5:550.

⁵Kopaczynski, Linguistic Ramifications, pp. 9-10.

distinction.

A real distinction is found wherever there are really several things, parts, elements, and the like, independently of any act of the mind. . . . When the distinction is between complete things or beings, we speak of a major real distinction. When the distinction is between the parts (elements, principles) of one thing, we call it a minor real distinction (for example, the distinction between a man's hand and his foot; or the distinction between his color and his shape).⁶

Secondly, in contradistinction to Avicenna, Thomas maintains a real irreducibility of either of these principles to the other.⁷ There is nothing in the essence of a thing which permits us to conclude to its existence.

Finally, the real distinction is perhaps more properly thought of as a real composition. ". . . we commonly attribute to Thomas a 'distinction' of essence and existence, whereas he usually spoke of their 'composition'."⁸ In point of fact, Thomas uses the verb 'distinguerere' only once with reference to the relationship between esse and essence.⁹ The importance of this point cannot be stressed too much. There could be no composition between these principles unless they were distinct,

⁶George P. Klubertanz, Introduction to the Philosophy of Being, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), pp. 80-81.

⁷"Everything that does not belong to the concept of an essence or quiddity comes to it from outside and enters into composition with the essence" (On Being and Essence, c. 4). Later, Thomas explicitly denies the Avicennian view of esse as an accident: "For the being of a thing, although other than its essence, nevertheless is not to be understood as something superadded in the fashion of an accident, but is as it were constituted by the principles of the essence" (In IV Metaph., 2, n. 558, English translation from Joseph Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics [Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1963], p. 43).

⁸Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 421 (hereafter cited as Gilson, History).

⁹"Cum dicitur: Diversum est esse et quod est, distinguitur actus essendi ab eo cui actus ille convenit" (De Veritate 1, 1 ad 3).

and so it is not incorrect to speak here of a real distinction. Nevertheless, apart from their composition with one another, these principles have no reality.

The principles of which there is question are not beings which we could in any way consider in themselves, absolutely. They are transcendental relations and nothing else; all that we can say of them formally concerns their correlation.¹⁰

We are speaking, therefore, of "a distinction between two principles by whose union limited being is."¹¹

St. Thomas' works abound in texts regarding the real distinction, so much so, in fact, that no two Thomists employ the same selection of texts when discussing it.¹² The fact that Thomas always treats this distinction within the context of other matters contributes enormously to the diffusion of references. He does, however, deal with this distinction quite explicitly and at greatest length in Book II, chapters 52-54, of the Summa Contra Gentiles. There he discusses, first, the reality of such a distinction in intellectual creatures (chapter 52), secondly, the view that this distinction reflects an act/potency structure in those creatures (chapter 53), and, thirdly, the fact that the esse/essence composition is not identical with the form/matter composition (chapter 54). Indeed, in these three chapters we find almost

¹⁰Louis de Raeymaeker, The Philosophy of Being (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), p. 112.

¹¹Henri Renard, The Philosophy of Being (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1946), p. 40.

¹²For a thorough survey of references to the real distinction in Thomas' early writings, see Leo Sweeney, "Existence/Essence in Thomas Aquinas' Early Writings," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 37 (1963):97-131 (hereafter cited as Sweeney, "Early Writings"). For a selection and discussion of twenty-one texts drawn from a wide range of Thomas' writings, see Kopaczynski, Linguistic Ramifications, pp. 34-43.

all of the major theological and philosophical elements which play a part in Thomas' use of the real distinction. These chapters, therefore, afford us an excellent text upon which to focus in examining the various strands which enter into Thomas' treatment of the esse/essence composition.¹³

The theological elements will be considered first. The philosophical elements will then be examined in light of Thomas' theological concerns. This procedure assumes that the philosophical principles serve a theological program and are therefore controlled by that program. In proceeding thus, this chapter reflects a methodological principle which is central to the Thomist enterprise. As Thomas himself says at the beginning of his most ambitious work, the Summa Theologiae:

Holy teaching can borrow from the other sciences, not from any need to beg from them, but for the greater clarification of the things it conveys. For it takes its principles directly from God through revelation, not from the other sciences. On that account it does not rely on them as though they were in control, for their role is subsidiary and ancillary; so an architect makes use of tradesmen as a statesman employs soldiers.¹⁴

¹³ Gilson sees Summa Contra Gentiles as an important stage in Thomas' writings: "The doctrine of creation is bound to modify the notion of metaphysics itself, in that it introduces into the realm of being a first cause to whose causality everything is strictly subjected. This is why, in his Contra Gentiles, in which he does not speak as a commentator of Aristotle, but in his own name, Thomas Aquinas can take over the very formulas of Aristotle, yet give them a distinctly new turn" (Being and Some Philosophers, 2nd ed. [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952], p. 156). He later adds that chapter 54 in Book II is where Thomas proves that the distinction between substance and existence differs from the distinction between form and matter (Ibid., p. 163). W. N. Clarke notes that Contra Gentiles is the first work in which Thomas fuses act/potency and participation (limitation principle), and cites CG I, 43, and II, 52-54, as the first two places, chronologically speaking, in which these two principles appear together ("The Limitation of Act by Potency: Aristotelianism or Neoplatonism?", The New Scholasticism 26 [1952]:192, 190n [hereafter cited as Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency"]).

¹⁴ ST I, 1, 5 ad 2.

The Theological Concerns

God as Ipsum Esse

Chapter 52 ("Quod in substantiis intellectualibus differt esse et quod est") begins with a consideration of the fact that intellectual substances, although not corporeal or composed of a mixture of form and matter, nevertheless fail to enjoy the same simplicity as does God. The reasons given for this follow from the nature of subsistent being, which is incapable of division per se, inasmuch as, in subsistent being, substance and being identify. After employing a series of arguments designed to demonstrate this truth, Thomas ends the chapter with a reference to Exodus 3.14, where God reveals Himself as He Who Is. Although the text comes at the end of the chapter, everything in the chapter hinges on it. Indeed, in maintaining that God's proper nature requires that His substance be His being, Thomas refers the reader back to Book I, chapter 22, where we are told that this "sublime truth" was revealed by God to Moses ("Hanc autem sublimen veritatem Moyses a Domino est edoctus").

To say that essence and existence identify in God was not, in itself, an extraordinary thing for a Christian theologian to say. To maintain, however, as Thomas does, that God's substance is His being, to give, in other words, the final say to existence over essence, was a radical departure from his predecessors and his contemporaries, both theological and philosophical. Invoking a literal interpretation of the Qui est of Exodus, Aquinas rejected both the Greek philosophical understanding of being as limited form and the Christian theological understanding of God as infinite essence. The fact that, for Thomas, God is pure act, Ipsum Esse, was to reverberate throughout his entire

system.¹⁵

God as Creator. Since chapters 52-54 appear in Book II, that part of Contra Gentiles explicitly devoted to the question of creation, much of the discussion of God as Creator has preceded these chapters and is therefore taken for granted within them. Because all creatures derive their source of being from God (chapter 6) and are brought into being by Him (chapter 15) from nothing (chapter 16) by a free act (chapter 23), creation is discussed in chapters 52-54 in terms of causality and God is designated as primum agens (chapter 52). Again, the arguments proceed from God's nature as subsistent being. Since God alone has His being through Himself or through His own substance, all other substances must receive their being from Him. God is being; all other substances have being ("Relinquitur igitur quod, quum Deus sit esse subsistens, nihil aliud praeter ipsum est suum esse"). Because only God is uncaused being, all other beings are caused. Since God is most perfectly in act, because he is act itself (Ipse actus), all beings which have act are dependent upon him. For that reason, God alone is the first agent, just as He alone is His own being.

In fact, Thomas concludes that Ipsum Esse belongs to the first agent as His proper nature, since being is His substance ("Ipsum esse competit primo agenti secundum propriam naturam; esse enim Dei est ejus substantia"). In other words, the Ipse actus which lies behind creation is identical to the Ipsum Esse which is God. And it is precisely

¹⁵The metaphysical implications of God as Ipsum Esse are well detailed in Thomist scholarship. The theological implications have yet to be fully worked out. For an important study on the methodological principles of Thomas as they apply to theology, see Donald J. Keefe, Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich: A Comparison of Systems (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), cited hereafter as Keefe, Thomism.

because God is Ipsum Esse that He is able to effect causally a certain likeness to Himself in all created substances by imparting esse to them (chapter 53).

God as Infinite Perfection. Thomas' view of Ipsum Esse as infinite, not only in the negative sense of an absence of all limitation but in the positive sense of the plenitude of all perfection, follows from his view of God as subsistent being. Self-subsistent being is infinite because it is not terminated in anything. Therefore, subsistent being can be one only, since an infinite being must necessarily contain every perfection; if two such beings existed, they would be indistinguishable from one another (chapter 52). For Thomas, therefore, God is the source not only of being but also of every perfection, since infinite being is identical with infinite perfection.¹⁶

God as Ipsum Esse, Creator and infinite perfection come together in chapter 54, where we are told that in all created beings there is a capacity to perfect and to be perfected. What Thomas clearly has in mind here is a twofold capacity which corresponds to the composite nature of all created being which he has spent these three chapters establishing. As substances considered apart from the being which they

¹⁶This link between esse and perfection finds expression in Thomas' early writings. In a well-known passage in On Being and Essence, c. 5, Thomas writes: "Furthermore, although God is pure being, it is not necessary that he lack other perfections or excellences. On the contrary, he possesses all the perfections of every kind of thing, so that he is called absolutely perfect, as the Philosopher and Commentator say. In fact, he possesses these perfections in a more excellent way than other things, because in him they are one, whereas in other things they are diversified. This is because all these perfections belong to him in view of his simple being. In the same way if someone could produce the operations of all the qualities through one quality alone, in that one quality he would possess every quality. Similarly, God possesses all perfections in his being itself."

receive from God, they have the capacity to be perfected. As substances which enjoy a certain likeness to God by virtue of the esse which He imparts to them as Ipsum Esse, they have within themselves the capacity to perfect, a capacity which derives its efficacy from God as infinite perfection. As composite beings, their existence and perfections are a product not of their essential principles, but of their existential relation with their Creator. The distinction between essence and existence is therefore a real distinction which can be found in all created beings, material and immaterial (chapter 54).

All of the above arguments ultimately depend upon a literal reading of Exodus 3.14. Gilson has written, "we do not maintain that the text of Exodus is a revealed metaphysical definition of God; but if there is no metaphysic in Exodus there is nevertheless a metaphysic of Exodus."¹⁷ E. L. Mascall thinks that to speak of a metaphysic of Exodus is to take too narrow a view of the matter, but goes on to add that:

. . . it is, I believe, profoundly true to say that there is a metaphysic of the Old Testament and that it is substantially expressed by the Exodus text as St. Thomas interprets it. For although the Old Testament is written almost entirely in ethical and hardly at all in metaphysical terms, the declarations which it makes about the activity of God have very far-reaching metaphysical consequences, and however imperfect may have been the attempts of pre-Thomist writers to express in the Exodus Test as they understood it the Biblical truth about God, I believe that St. Thomas did succeed in this task through his radically existentialist outlook.¹⁸

The remainder of this chapter will examine the very far-reaching metaphysical consequences of Thomas' view that He Who Is is Ipsum Esse.

¹⁷ Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 433, n. 9.

¹⁸ Eric Lionel Mascall, Existence and Analogy: A Sequel to He Who Is (New York: Longmans Green, 1949), pp. 13-14 (hereafter cited as Mascall, Existence and Analogy).

The Philosophical Framework

When Thomas sets out in chapter 52 to establish the fact that intellectual substances are composed, he provides several arguments, all of which are based on the notion that only God is utterly simple. This notion is itself based on the above-mentioned understanding of God as He whose proper nature is "to be". Since being and substance identify in God, there is no basis in Him for any kind of composition. From this, Thomas derives the fundamental principle on which all of his arguments in this chapter depend: "Now being, as being, cannot be diverse; but it can be diversified by something beside itself [praeter esse]." Thus, when he argues in this chapter for a composition in intellectual creatures on the basis of 1) God's being as beyond every genus, 2) God's infinity and 3) God's uncaused nature, he is maintaining that generic/specific differences, finitude and the caused nature of intellectual creatures cannot be explained solely in terms of esse or being, because esse considered in itself is utterly simple and contains within itself no grounds for its own diversification. Hence, wherever we find creatures, we can recognize that being has entered into composition with or terminated in something other than itself.

At this point, every argument he has employed underscores the differences which obtain between God and creatures. The final two arguments of the chapter move in the opposite direction, revealing not only the uniqueness of God (perfect act and Ipsum Esse) but also the type of relationship which Thomas understands to exist between God and His creatures. In the fourth argument, Thomas maintains that, since God is "Ipse actus perfectissimus," it thereby follows that "this act is

being [esse], wherein generation and all movement terminate, since every form and act is in potentiality before it acquires being [esse]." This statement sets the stage for Thomas' discussion in chapter 53 of the act/potency composition in all intellectual creatures. In the fifth argument, Thomas insists that since God is Ipsum Esse, inasmuch as being belongs to Him according to His proper nature, it thereby follows that "that which belongs to a thing according to its proper nature does not belong to other things except by way of participation, as heat is in other bodies from fire."

Act/potency and participation are the two philosophical principles to which Thomas returns again and again in applying his doctrine of the real distinction to creatures and their relationship to God. Both are important. If either one is left out, the full significance of the real distinction cannot be understood. Their fusion in Thomas' thought constitutes, as W. N. Clarke notes, "a peculiarly original stroke of genius on his part."¹⁹ Before considering their fusion, however, each must be examined separately for the particular manner in which it enables Thomas to develop the fundamental features of the esse/essence distinction.

Act/Potency and the Real Distinction

As Gilson points out, "The composition of matter and form dominates the natural philosophy of Aristotle, but the composition of essence and existence is not Aristotelian."²⁰ Thomas was forced to make a

¹⁹W. N. Clarke, "The Meaning of Participation in St. Thomas," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 26 (1952):154 (hereafter cited as Clarke, "Meaning").

²⁰Gilson, History, p. 422.

distinction not found in Aristotle, and he was forced to do so for two reasons: 1) the Christian doctrine of a free creation ex nihilo and 2) his own rejection of the form/matter composition as coterminous with all of created reality. His reasons for rejecting form/matter as the ultimate composition in created beings are set out in chapter 54 and will be considered in more detail later in this section when that chapter is examined.

Aristotle's identification of essence and existence was unacceptable theologically, because it presupposed that the existence of a thing belongs to it by virtue of its essence. Aristotle's necessary and eternal world is the inescapable corollary of that identification. Avicenna's view of existence as an accident of essences was also unacceptable, inasmuch as, while it provided for a created world, it led to the inescapable corollary that the world is necessarily created. For if esse is accidental to essence, it pertains to the nature of essences to exist and God is thereby placed under a necessity to create them. What Thomas required was a clear distinction between esse and essence, such that existence could in no way be understood as identical with or pertaining to essences per se. "Into Aristotle's eternal world, existing outside God and without God, the Christian philosopher introduces the distinction of essence and existence."²¹

The real distinction is clearly a Thomist, not an Aristotelian, principle. Nevertheless, Thomas uses Aristotle's act/potency framework to move beyond Aristotle. More precisely, he uses two of Aristotle's principles, act/potency as a unified composition and the priority of

²¹Idem., The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, p. 68.

act, as the means by which he gets to an act/potency account of the esse/essence distinction and an Act/act account of God's action as efficient cause.

1) Act/Potency as a Unified Composition. Having considered in chapter 52 that there is a composition in intellectual creatures, Thomas turns in chapter 53 ("Quod in substantiis intellectualibus creatis est actus et potentia") to a discussion of the act/potency nature of this composition. His first argument for such a composition rests on the complementarity or proportionality which defines the relationship between act and potency.

For in whatever thing we find two, one of which is the complement of the other, the proportion of one of them to the other is as the proportion of potentiality to act; for nothing is completed except by its proper act.

Behind this view of the act/potency correlation lies the Aristotelian use of act/potency to account for the problem of being and becoming. Steering between the Scylla of Parmenidean being and the Charybdis of Heraclitean becoming, Aristotle drew upon potency to explain how that which changes is neither being nor non-being. Becoming is the passage from being in potency to being in act. In the famous Aristotelian formula, motion is the act of a being in potency in so far as it is in potency.²² Act/potency was the means by which Aristotle accounted for the intrinsic unity of a thing without denying the reality of change. Although Thomas' application of this methodological principle to the real distinction is not relevant to the problem of change, it is enormously important with regard to the question of unity in a composed thing. Hence, Thomas insists upon the 'complementarity' of

²² Aristotle deals most fully with potency and becoming in Metaphysics, Book IX.

act and potency and on act itself as that which 'completes' a thing. Act and potency are not two things, but two principles which are proportionate to one another in the unity of a single thing.²³

The proportion which Thomas has in mind here is that between the 'isness' and the 'whatness' of a thing, a proportion which applies even to intellectual substances. As he states in chapter 52,

Although intellectual substances are not corporeal, nor composed of matter and form, nor existing in matter as material forms, it is not to be supposed that they therefore equal the divine simplicity. For a certain composition is found in them by the fact that in them being [esse] is not the same as what is [quod est].

He had worked out this distinction in a much earlier work of his, On Being and Essence. In a famous passage there, he points out that it is possible to know what a man or a phoenix is, without knowing that it is. From this, he concludes that esse is other than essence or quiddity.²⁴ In intellectual substances, therefore, essence is the 'whatness' or the intelligibility of the substance. As Owens puts it, "essence may be called 'nature' in the Boethian sense of what is intelligible through the definition of the thing."²⁵ Act is the actualizing principle which makes that intelligibility an existent intelligibility.²⁶

2) Priority of Act. The second argument Thomas presents in

²³This principle has already been stated clearly in CG, I, 18: "In every composite there must be act and potency. For several things cannot become absolutely one unless among them something is act and something potency."

²⁴On Being and Essence, c. 4.

²⁵Joseph Owens, "The Accidental and Essential Character of Being in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas," Mediaeval Studies 20 (1958):26 (hereafter cited as Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character").

²⁶On esse as act, see CG I, 22 ("Esse actum quamdam nominat") and ST I, 54 1 ("Esse est actualitas substantiae vel essentiae").

chapter 53 on behalf of the act/potency correlation in things is based on the priority of act: "What ever is present in a thing from an agent must be act, for it belongs to an agent to make something in act."

This statement hearkens back to the discussion in chapter 52 on the priority of act. There he had written, "Since every agent acts in so far as it is in act, it belongs to the first agent, which is most perfect, to be most perfectly in act." The fundamental principle at work here is an Aristotelian one, the priority of act.²⁷ For Aristotle, potentially existing things are always produced by actually existing things. Something can produce an act only to the extent that it is in act itself.²⁸

Employing this principle within the context of creation, Thomas goes well beyond Aristotle in maintaining not only an act/potency relationship of esse to essence in created things, but an Act/act relationship between God and His creation. The basis for the second is the priority of Ipsum Esse over created esse, the basis for the first is the priority of created esse over created potency. What this means, in both instances, is that esse is the first effect of God's creative power. As Thomas writes elsewhere: "being [Ipsum esse] is the most common first effect and more intimate than all other effects."²⁹ That is why he argues, here in chapter 53, that whatever is from an agent is act. God as first agent produces, prior to all other effects, that being (esse) by which all substances are placed in existence. Hence, there is

²⁷ Metaphysics, IX, esp. 1049b-1051a.

²⁸ Ibid., 1049b20-28.

²⁹ De Pot., q. 3, a. 7 resp. Cf. Ibid., q. 3, a. 4 resp, and q. 3, a. 5, obj. 2 and ad 2, as well as In Lib de Causis, lect. 4, init., and CG III, 66.

an Act/act relationship between God and creation. At the same time, this esse produced by God correlates with substance as act with potency, "since act, as such, is referred to potentiality." Thus, Thomas returns full circle to the point which it is the purpose of chapter 53 to establish: "Therefore, in every created substance there is potentiality and act."

At the same time, he implicitly rules out the possibility of substance as a kind of pre-existing potency which is simply standing there waiting to be actualized: first, because potency is a principle and not a thing, and therefore cannot exist on its own, and, secondly, because act is prior to potency and therefore in no way dependent upon it except as a principle of correlation. The created esse and the created potency come into existence simultaneously, or they do not come into existence at all. For only the thing exists, not its principles of correlation. As Owens notes:

The proper effect of subsistent being is being, but that effect can be realized only in something else. In producing finite being, the first cause thereby produces the potency finite being inevitably involves. Its being maintains the priority, even though, strictly, the thing itself is what is produced. In creation, therefore, the production of the finite existential act is the production of the subject that is made to exist. It does not at all presuppose that any such subject already exists. Rather, viewed from a metaphysical standpoint, it produces the potency in sequence to, and not in priority to, the existential act that is received.³⁰

3) Agens Enim Agit Sibi Simile (Act/act). The fourth³¹ and final argument which Thomas employs in chapter 53 to establish the act/potency composition in intellectual substances proceeds on the principle that

³⁰Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics, p. 102.

³¹The third argument involves participation and will be discussed in the next section.

"The agent produces its like so far as it is in act." Referring back to chapter 6 in the same volume of Contra Gentiles, Thomas notes that it is through being itself (Ipsum esse) that every created thing bears a likeness to God. Therefore, esse is to every substance as act is to potency.

Creative causality is a key element in the esse/essence doctrine.

If the reason for the existence of this being is not found to be of the very essence, then I must look outside that essence for a principle of being. I conclude, therefore, that an existing limited and finite being is not sufficiently explained by its intrinsic structure, by the composition of act and potency. There must be other principles--extrinsic principles, to be sure, indicating not why these limited beings are such and why they are different from one another (for that is sufficiently explained by essence and "to be," matter and form, substance and accident), but simply why they are. Thus we are brought to the question of cause and of causality.³²

Efficient causality is the production of being. It cannot be otherwise.

If esse is a composing principle in all substances which comes to them from outside themselves, that esse must be the proper effect of God, whose proper nature is Ipsum Esse. Furthermore, the relationship must be that of Act to act, since created esse is the first effect of Ipsum Esse.³³

Three important points must be understood. First, God is not the essential being of all things, but rather the causal being.³⁴ This is simply another way of stating the real distinction. Only God's proper

³²Renard, The Philosophy of Being, p. 117.

³³Act/act is not, of course, the same thing as first act/second act, but the two of them are related as principles. That relationship will be explored in chapter 4.

³⁴In I Sent., d. 8, q. 1, a. 2 sol. Cf. ST I, 3, 8 ad 1: "Godhead is archetypally and causatively the being of all things, but not substantially their being."

nature is being itself. In all other beings, esse must enter into composition with a nature that is distinct from God's.

It [being] is a real nature itself, and is in fact given to other natures through efficient causality. But it cannot be given to them as a nature, and cannot enter into their natures. It is really given to them through efficient causality, it is really in them as a real act in a real potency. It is really not any of their natures nor part of their natures.³⁵

Secondly, efficient causality, for Thomas, is much more than the placing of creatures outside their cause. It is the investiture of a likeness to their cause within the very heart of each creature's existence. It is, in fact, that existence itself.

Existence may mean either a state or an act. In the first sense, it means the state in which a thing is posited by the efficacy of an efficient or a creative cause, and this is the meaning the word receives in practically all the Christian theologies outside Thomism, particularly those of Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Scotus, and Suarez. In a second sense, existence (esse, to be) points out the interior act, included in the composition of substance, in virtue of which the essence is a "being," and this is the properly Thomistic meaning of the word.³⁶

Thus Aquinas can say that, while creatures are not being per se, they do have being.³⁷ Indeed, esse in creatures is the sign of their createdness: "Now having an efficient cause is due to having real existence."³⁸ Not only is esse an intrinsic component in every created being, it is that component which is most intimate to every being. "Esse autem est illud quod est magis intimum cuilibet et quod profundius omnibus inest, cum sit formale respectu omnium quae in re sunt, ut ex

³⁵ Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics, p. 103.

³⁶ Etienne Gilson, Elements of Christian Philosophy (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 130-131.

³⁷ In De Hebdomadibus, c. 2.

³⁸ ST I, 44, 1 ad 3.

supra dictis patet."³⁹ Existence is not simply a fact about created things, it is the source of their innermost reality.

Actuality is, then, an intrinsic condition of each existent and amounts to a good deal more than setting an essence into a context of efficiency. It is the existent himself viewed in the light of what internally perfects, ennobles, constitutes, and realifies him.⁴⁰

Thirdly, the real distinction of esse and essence is also the distinction between that which is contingent and that which is necessary in the created order. Since the real distinction means that existence is not a property of essence, esse must come to substances from outside themselves. The first created effect is, therefore, as Thomas notes, created esse, which enters into the constitution of created things not by virtue of their right to command it, but by virtue of God's free decision to confer it. As Gilson points out, "The Thomist distinction between essence and existence expresses the radical contingency of existence in all that is not God."⁴¹

Essences, on the other hand, constitute the necessary component in creation. Since being cannot diversify itself and remains infinite unless it terminates in that which is other than itself (chapter 52), God's free decision to create beings within whom created esse is a constitutive component places Him under a necessity to provide an essential component by which created esse may be terminated and diversified. Please note that this necessity is methodological, not absolute. That is, it derives from the exigencies of the esse/essence distinction,

³⁹ST I, 8 1. Cf. In II Sent., I, 1, 4 sol.

⁴⁰Leo Sweeney, A Metaphysics of Authentic Existentialism (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 82.

⁴¹Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, p. 435, n. 1.

not from the exigencies of divinity.

The contingency of esse is inextricably related to God as efficient cause. Since esse cannot be produced by essences, its presence in substances requires an extrinsic source.

Whatever is contingent (whatever exists contingently) must have a sufficient reason why it exists rather than not. But this sufficient reason is not an intrinsic one, since the essence is not the "to be." Therefore, it must be an extrinsic principle; and this is what we mean by an efficient cause.⁴²

It is here that Thomas makes a decisive break with Aristotle's notion of causality. Efficient causality as the production of being is quite alien to Aristotle's eternal and uncreated world in which the primary causes are movers, not creators.

It is at this point that the limitations of an act/potency methodology become most clear. For Aristotle, act/potency is the means by which he accounts for change, and the primary cause he considers is therefore the moving cause. Thomas, however, by introducing the distinction of esse and essence, turns act/potency and efficient causality into the means by which he accounts for the static or created nature of things. As a result, a strict Aristotelian act/potency methodology places severe limitations on what he can say at this level, particularly with regard to the question of a more-than-causal account of the relationship between Ipsum Esse and creatures as constituted in part by esse and the question of what, if any, reciprocity exists between esse and essence, matters which never confronted Aristotle. That is why, as Sweeney notes in his study of early Thomist texts on the real distinction, esse and essence are set "entirely within the framework of efficient causality, of the effect-cause relation between the creature and

⁴²Renard, The Philosophy of Being, pp. 125-126.

God, of creaturehood."⁴³ Within this framework, esse is the principle of act and the source of contingency, with essence as the principle of 'whatness' or intelligibility and the source of necessity. But how these two principles compose and what sort of causal reciprocity and proportion exists between them are matters which remain largely unanswered. To deal with the relationship between Ipsum Esse and creatures composed of esse and essence in a manner that goes beyond causality and to account for the reciprocity between esse and essence, Thomas has recourse to the notion of participation.

The application of participation language to the real distinction is rare in Thomas' early writings. Act/potency and participation are developed there on separate tracks. Only with Contra Gentiles does Thomas fuse these two streams of his thought. We will therefore return to Book II, chapters 52-54, when examining his notion of participation. Before doing that, however, it is important to pause here for a moment in order to examine more closely the radical transformation which Thomas effects in the Aristotelian understanding of act/potency by his introduction of the esse/essence distinction.

Esse/Essence: The Separation of Act From Form

Chapter 54 ("Quod non est idem compositio ex materia et forma, et ex substantia et esse") deals entirely with demonstrating that the composition of substance and being is different from the form/matter composition.⁴⁴ After stating that matter is only a part of the substance

⁴³Sweeney, "Early Writings," p. 127.

⁴⁴Thomas sometimes uses substance, as he does here in chapters 52-54, in an Aristotelian fashion to refer to the form/matter composition or essence. At other times, he uses it to refer to the existing thing, i.e., the esse/essence composition. This ambiguity with regard to substance will be taken up in chapters 4 and 5, where it will be

and that form is complementary to and not identical with being, Thomas concludes that "being [esse] is compared even to the form itself as act."

Supreme in their own order, substantial forms remain the prime acts of their substances, but, though there be no form of the form, there is an act of the form. In other words, the form is such an act as still remains in potency to another act, namely, existence.⁴⁵

Thomas goes on to distinguish between the form as the quo est, the substance (form/matter) as the ipsum quod est, and esse as quo substantia denominatur ens. He notes that material beings enjoy a twofold composition, first, a substantial composition of form/matter and, secondly, an existential composition of the composed substance with esse itself. Even in beings not composed of form and matter (angels), however, he insists that there remains a composition of form and esse.⁴⁶ Thomas therefore concludes that act/potency, not form/matter, is co-terminous with all of created reality.

It is therefore clear that composition of act and potentiality has greater extension than that of form and matter. Thus, matter and form divide natural substance, while potentiality and act divide common being. Accordingly, whatever follows upon potentiality and act, as such, is common to both material and immaterial created substances, as to receive and to be received, to perfect and to be perfected.

The importance of his separation of form from act cannot be overstated.

. . . Thomas Aquinas could not posit existence (esse) as the act of a substance itself actualized by its form, without making

argued that Thomas' failure to carry completely through on his transformation of Aristotelianism was caused in great part by his failure to free himself completely from the Aristotelian notion of substance.

⁴⁵ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 174.

⁴⁶ The non-material nature of angels is one of Thomas' favorite arguments for the esse/essence composition, e.g., In II Sent., d. 3, q. 11, a.1; In Boet. de Trin., q. 5, a. 4 ad 4; ST I, 50, 2 ad 3.

a decision which, with respect to the metaphysics of Aristotle, was nothing less than a revolution. He had precisely to achieve the dissociation of the two notions of form and act. This is precisely what he has done and what probably remains, even today, the greatest contribution ever made by any single man to the science of being.⁴⁷

This dissociation marks a break not only with Greek philosophical thinking about being, but also with traditional Christian thinking about God. First, the dissociation of act from form means the separation of being from form. Greek philosophy had always understood being to be formal, just as previous Christian theologians had understood (within the basically Neoplatonic framework they took over) God's being to be essential or formal. Secondly, the dissociation of act and form also means a separation of being from limit. For Aristotle and all of his predecessors, apeiron (the unlimited) was employed as a negative concept not only in the denotative sense of that which has no bounds, but also in the connotative sense of that which is without form and therefore unintelligible. It was a privation, the absence of wholeness and completion. As Aristotle put it, "Nothing is complete (teleion) which has no end (telos); and the end is a limit."⁴⁸

With Plotinus and the Neoplatonists, an important shift in the use of apeiron took place. Here the unlimited was associated with form, so that being came to be designated as "infinite form."⁴⁹ This usage was

⁴⁷ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 174.

⁴⁸ Physics, III, 207a14.

⁴⁹ This notion of infinite form appeared in the Liber de Causis. "The essence of the doctrine was summed up and transmitted under the handy formula, 'Omnis forma pura est infinita' (every pure or unparticipated form is infinite), and appears to have been accepted in some form or other as a fundamental category of thought by most of St. Thomas's predecessors and contemporaries" (W. N. Clarke, "Meaning," pp. 149-150).

picked up by the early scholastics via Pseudo-Dionysius and John Damascene, the latter having actually referred to God as "an infinite sea."⁵⁰ By Thomas' time, the linking of infinity and God had come into its own, although there yet remained pockets of resistance among those who either still related infinity to unintelligibility or feared that if God's essence were infinite, beatitude itself was jeopardized, since, as it seemed to them, the only sort of essence to which finite minds could have access must itself be finite.⁵¹ Thus, Christian theologians were not unprepared for the notion of *Ipsum Esse* as infinite. What they were unprepared for was the notion of *Ipsum Esse* as infinite act.

Aristotle would have found both the infinity and the act unintelligible. Act for him always meant formal act. Therefore, act was inseparable from limitation and that intelligibility or 'whatness' which Thomas associates with essence, not act. Where Aristotle was concerned, "the role of form or act is to impose a limit on the formless infinity of matter in itself and thus confer upon it determination and intelligibility."⁵² Formal act in Aristotle is the highest act possible. In Thomas, it can only be understood as a potency to esse, the act which has no form and therefore is capable of actuating all forms.⁵³ This

⁵⁰C. R. S. Harris, Duns Scotus, 2 vols. (New York: The Humanities Press, 1959), 2:170-171. Leo Sweeney has done a great deal of work on the notion of infinity in the Middle Ages. See especially his "Divine Infinity: 1150-1250," The Modern Schoolman 35 (Nov 1957):38-51, and "Some Mediaeval Opponents of Divine Infinity," Mediaeval Studies 19 (1957):233-245 (hereafter cited as Sweeney, "Mediaeval Opponents").

⁵¹For discussion of this, see Sweeney, "Mediaeval Opponents," pp. 236-243.

⁵²Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency," p. 179.

⁵³"*Ipsum esse est perfectissimum omnium: comparatur enim ad omnia ut actus. Nihil enim habet actualitatem nisi in quantum est; unde ipsum*

dissociation of act from form is what enables Thomas to fuse participation and act/potency into a single framework.

Ipsium Esse and Participation

The first requisite for unravelling the complex threads which interweave to make up the Thomistic act and potency doctrine is to recognize that it contains two distinct elements. The first is a composition of two correlative metaphysical principles called act and potency, first introduced by Aristotle to explain the process of change. The second is the relating of these two principles to each other in terms of a theory of infinity and limitation, which, it must be admitted by all, cannot be found explicitly in Aristotle.⁵⁴

In his early writings, Thomas describes participation almost always in terms of reception. Thus, for example, he writes, "participare nihil aliud est quam ab alio partialiter accipere."⁵⁵ Perhaps his most descriptive text on participation appears in In Boethius de Hebdomadibus:

To participate is to receive as it were a part; and therefore when anything receives in a particular manner that which belongs to another in a universal manner, it is said to participate it; as man is said to participate animal, because he does not possess the intelligible notes (ratio) of animals according to the latter's total "community" [i.e., universality]; and for the same reason Socrates participates man; in like manner also a subject participates an accident, and matter form, because the substantial or accidental form, which of itself as such is common [or unparticularized], is determined to this or that subject; and similarly an effect is said to participate its cause, and especially when it does not equal the power of its cause, as, for example, if we say that air participates the light of the sun because it does not receive it with the same brightness that it has in the sun.⁵⁶

esse est actualitas omnium rerum et etiam ipsarum formarum" (ST I, 4, 1 ad 3.

⁵⁴ Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency," p. 172.

⁵⁵ In II de Caelo et Mundo, c. 12, lect. 18, n. 6. Cf. In Lib de Causis, lect. 4: "Secundum hoc quod participat est finitum, quia quod participatur non recipitur in participantem secundum totam suam infinitatem, sed particulariter."

⁵⁶ In Boeth. de Hebd., lect. 2.

The text doesn't include esse and essence, because they are the object of his illustrations. Nor does the text include any direct application of the act/potency principle. It is not until Contra Gentiles that Thomas explicitly fuses act/potency and participation. In Book II, chapter 52, he tells us that, because only God's proper nature is being itself, other things can possess being only by way of participation. He then adds, "Therefore, being itself belongs to all other things from the first agent by a certain participation." He concludes that substance and being are identical only in God and must therefore form a composite in all other beings.

It is only with chapter 53, however, that he explicitly incorporates participation into an act/potency framework.

Likewise, whatever participates in a thing is compared to the thing participated in as act to potentiality, since by that which is participated the participator is actualized in such and such a way. But it was shown above (c. 15 and 52) that God alone is essentially a being, whereas all other things participate in being. Therefore, every created substance is compared to its own being as potentiality to act.

Here the use of act/potency to explain participation results not only in a fusion of these two aspects of his thought, but also in a modification of the act/potency framework itself. As a result, the two basic principles related to act/potency and applied to the real distinction (act/potency as a unified composition and the priority of act) remain, but in altered forms that are able to accommodate the notion of participation. They are 1) the limitation of act by potency and 2) the perfection of act. And just as Thomas uses the original two principles to arrive at an Act/act notion of efficient causality, so he uses their modification to develop a notion of efficient causality mediated by formal causality.

1) The Limitation of Act by Potency. Clarke regards the principle "Actus non limitatur nisi per potentiam" to be the "keystone of the Thomistic metaphysical system."⁵⁷ Gilson regards it as the necessary corollary to the Thomist understanding of God as *Ipsum Esse*.

Outside the pure act of existing, if it exists, nothing can exist save as a limited act-of-being. It is therefore the hierarchy of the essences which establishes and governs that of beings, each of which expresses only the proper area of a certain act-of-being.⁵⁸

Owens reasons in a similar fashion, observing that if *esse* is, properly speaking, God's nature, then it cannot be the nature of anything else. It must therefore compose with natures different from itself.

It has to be produced as act, for it is always found as act, the act of every other act. It has to be produced, consequently, as the act of something other than itself. Every produced act of being, accordingly, involves its corresponding potency. It cannot be produced except as the act of that potency. . . . Produced being, therefore, is finite being. It is finite, not because it is being, but because it is the act of a limiting potency.⁵⁹

Thomas first states the principle that *esse* which is untermi- nated is infinite in Book I, chapter 43, of Contra Gentiles, when discussing God's infinity. There he says that "an act that exists in nothing is terminated by nothing." Noting that God is that act which in no way exists in another, he concludes that God is "*ipsum esse infinitum*." In Book II, chapter 52, he returns to this theme: "Now subsisting being must be infinite, because it is not terminated in some recipient." Here, however, the infinity of God is linked to His perfection and used

⁵⁷ Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency," p. 169.

⁵⁸ Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. L. K. Shook (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 36 (hereafter cited as Gilson, Thomas Aquinas).

⁵⁹ Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics, pp. 101-102.

to demonstrate that there can be only one God. Thus, Thomas is able to identify esse with absolute perfection. The application of an infinity/limitation interpretation to the principle of act/potency as a unified composition enables Thomas to say a good deal more about esse and essence than that they are the 'isness' and 'whatness' of an existing thing. Esse can now be seen as both an extrinsic nature (God) and an intrinsic principle of perfection, with essence functioning as an intrinsic principle limiting that perfection to the mode of a particular quiddity or intelligibility.

Act is the principle of perfection; potency is the principle of the measure in which one participates in this perfection, of the particular mode according to which it possesses this perfection, of the limits within which it receives this perfection.⁶⁰

In fact, essence as intrinsic limitation is a principle which cuts two ways simultaneously. In De Potentia, Thomas notes that esse is not limited in the same way that potency is limited by act, but rather in the fashion of act limited by potency.⁶¹ Matter, for example, is a potency limited by essence or formal act. Following this pattern, one would expect that essence, as potency, would be limited by esse. Yet essence performs the limiting function. Essence limits both that which lies below and that which lies above. In other words, form limits qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

2) Perfection of Act. As we have seen, Thomas' argument for the absolute perfection of God is based on God's nature as infinite being. Esse is pure act or, as Thomas describes it elsewhere, "actus ultimus, qui participabilis est ab omnibus, ipsum autem nihil participat."⁶²

⁶⁰ de Raeymaeker, The Philosophy of Being, p. 256.

⁶¹ De Pot., q. 7, a. 2, obj. 9.

⁶² Quaest. Disp. de An., q.u., a. 6 ad 2.

He also describes esse as that which complements every form,⁶³ or actualizes every form.⁶⁴ He even speaks of esse as that which best realizes the notion of unlimited perfect form.⁶⁵ This capacity to actualize things is inseparable from the notion of esse as good. In fact, the perfection of esse is in some sense posterior to its actualizing capacity.

. . . the act of existing lies at the very heart, or if one prefers, at the very root of the real. It is therefore the principle of the principles of reality. First absolutely, it even precedes the Good, for a being is only good in so far as it is a being, and it is a being only in virtue of the ipsum esse which permits us to say of it: this is "being."⁶⁶

Thus, Thomas tells us that the perfection of a thing depends upon the degree of actuality which it achieves.⁶⁷ He even maintains that, while living things are more important than those things which simply exist, nevertheless 'to be' is more important than 'to live', because 'to live' means not merely to possess life but to possess actual being as well.⁶⁸ Esse is "actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum."⁶⁹

If God's essence is His esse, this must necessarily lead to the corollary that created beings, by their participation in created esse, are capable of sharing in a nature which exceeds their own. And this,

⁶³ Quodl. XII, q. 5, a. 5.

⁶⁴ ST I, 4, 1 ad 3.

⁶⁵ ST I, 7, 1.

⁶⁶ Gilson, Thomas Aquinas, p. 34.

⁶⁷ ST I, 5, 1.

⁶⁸ De Pot., q. 7, a. 2 ad 9.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Cf. ST I, 4, 1 ad 3; I, 4, 2.

in fact, is what Thomas means by participation. "That belongs to another participative, which exceeds its nature, yet participates in some way in it."⁷⁰ The actualizing of a substance is, by definition, its participation in a higher act.⁷¹ The principle underlying this is: act is always more perfect than potency.⁷²

It is important to note here the absence of a formal identity between act and potency. Esse and essence are not two different grades of a single nature. As principles they represent two different natures, and their composition produces the participation of the lower nature in the higher one. Their proportion to one another, therefore, rests upon the capacity of essence to 'receive' and limit pure act without destroying that act's fundamental perfection and capacity to perfect. For that reason, Thomas can speak in chapter 54 of those features which all created beings share in common:

Accordingly, whatever follows upon potentiality and act, as such, is common to both material and immaterial created substances, as to receive and to be received, to perfect and to be perfected.

The priority of act to potency indicates a primary dependence of essence on esse. The greater perfection of act reinforces this primary dependence. That is why Thomas can speak of esse as that which perfects, essence as that which is perfected. It is also why he is able to speak of esse as that by which all creatures are likened to their Creator (chapter 53). Esse is that by which every created thing participates in Ipsum Esse. For that reason, esse is the source of goodness

⁷⁰ Comment. in ad Coloss., c. 1, lect. 4 (translation from de Raeymaeker, The Philosophy of Being, p. 31).

⁷¹ Quodl. XII, q. 5, a. 5.

⁷² De Pot., q. 7, a. 2 ad 9.

and perfection in all created things,⁷³ and thereby that principle by which they are referred to God.

3) Efficient/Formal Causality. We have already seen that, within an act/potency framework, esse is the first created effect of God as efficient cause. This places all existing things in a direct causal dependence upon God. It also makes esse the innermost reality of all beings. What is not clear within such a framework is the nature of the relationship between Ipsum Esse and created esse. Nor is the causal relationship between God and essence, on the one hand, and esse and essence, on the other, very apparent. The notion of participation allows Thomas to deal more effectively with these questions.

Esse and Existential Participation. Although chapters 52-54 do not deal at length with existential participation, all of the ingredients for it are there. In chapter 53, we are told that esse is that component through which we are likened to God. "It is through being itself [ipsum esse] that every created substance is likened to God." This follows directly upon a discussion of participation, in which all created beings are said to participate in Ipsum Esse. This participation is the third argument Thomas advances in the chapter to demonstrate the real distinction. The substance of created beings is as potency to the esse which they participate.

That esse is also the inner source of actuality for a substance becomes apparent in this chapter as well. To exist is not merely to be placed in a state of existence. It is to receive as a principle of one's own reality the very act which realifies or actualizes. The significance of existence deepens, however, in light of the previous

⁷³See ST I, 5, 1 and I, 20, 2; also CG I, 28.

chapter (52). There we are told that *Ipsum Esse* is infinite perfection. To exist is therefore to receive *esse* as an inner principle of perfection.

In one sense, this is a partial return to Aristotle. *Esse* as an intrinsic principle of existence is not unlike act as an intrinsic principle of motion. An enormously important difference remains, however. Aristotle's principle of motion is a necessary component within substances, because it belongs to them by reason of their very natures. In Thomas, *esse* is a contingent component composing with substance (form/matter). It is necessary only in the sense that without it a thing cannot exist. But it comes from a source outside the substance (from God through efficient causality) and constitutes the participation of that substance in a nature other and higher than its own. This difference between existing substances in Thomas and in Aristotle cannot be stressed too much. It is a difference to which we will return in chapter 4.

Esse in created things is a participation in *Ipsum Esse*.⁷⁴ Participation is therefore existential, not formal. This is the single most important element in the Thomist doctrine of participation.

The fundamental principle of ontology is brought to light: existence is the first act, the unique source of all participation; existence does not participate in anything, but everything participates in existence."⁷⁵

Here we have the reason why participation is necessarily linked with efficient causality, for God is the efficient, not the formal, cause of

⁷⁴"*Esse cuiuslibet rei est esse participatum, cum non sit res aliqua praeter Deum, suum esse*" (CG III, 65). Cf. *Quaest. Disp. de An.*, a. 6 ad 2; *In Boeth. de Hebd.*, lect. 2; ST I, 3, 4 and I, 75, 5 ad 4.

⁷⁵de Raeymaeker, *The Philosophy of Being*, p. 137.

esse in things.⁷⁶

In its application to being, the doctrine of participation has to be purged of any aspect of formal causality. In no sense can you say that part of being goes to each of its recipients. There is here no form to be divided among different subjects. If being as a nature may be called a form, it is a form that is entirely indivisible and unable to be shared as a nature with anything else. As the first efficient cause it can just make other natures be. In this communication of being, on the side of the first cause, there is no trace of strictly formal causality whatsoever. Being is imparted from that viewpoint, to creatures only through efficient causality. The finite nature is made to exist, without any addition at all in the order of nature. Nothing of formal nature is shared when being is participated.⁷⁷

Here, therefore, we also have that Act/act relationship between God and creation to which reference has already been made.

If the application of participation to efficient causality as creative causality marks a break with Aristotle, the interpretation of participation as existential, not formal, marks an equally sharp break with Plato. It is the necessary corollary to the earlier noted departure from the Greek view of being. If God is esse, not essence or form, participation in Him must be existential. There is no form to be shared.

A second point, which will be mentioned here and discussed at greater length later in this work,⁷⁸ should be noted. Through esse, the groundwork for a Thomist doctrine of existential dynamism is laid. It is a dynamism which cuts in two directions at once. On the one hand,

⁷⁶Thomas maintains that, while being caused doesn't enter into the definition of a thing, it is nevertheless a necessary corollary to the notion of participation: "While a relationship to a cause does not enter into the definition of a being that is caused, nevertheless it follows from what is bound up in a being by participation, for from the fact that a thing is such it follows that it is caused by another" (ST I, 44, 1 ad 1).

⁷⁷Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics, pp. 106-107.

⁷⁸See chapter 4.

Ipsium Esse and created esse form an extrinsic Act/act dynamism. Creatures are likened to God in the first instance because they exist.

". . . creatures are made to the image and likeness of God. Therefore each creature too involves existence and actuality but, unlike God, as shared, participated, limited by what each is, by its essence."⁷⁹ Esse is that by which all creatures are referred to their Creator. As efficient cause, He is the extrinsic source of their participation. Their creation is, by its very definition, a sharing in His nature. That is the meaning of participation. On the other hand, and by the same token, created esse is that principle of perfection by which essence is able to compose with a nature higher than its own. Hence, essence is that element which is said to be perfected, esse that element which is said to perfect (chapter 54). Esse and essence therefore provide the foundation for an intrinsic act/potency dynamism.

Essence and Formal Causality. Gilson notes that Thomas' reformation of Aristotelian metaphysics had two consequences with regard to causality. First, it gave a much more precise understanding of efficient causality than Aristotle had provided.

The second consequence of the Thomist reform of metaphysics has been to introduce a clear-cut distinction between the two orders of formal causality and of efficient causality. Formal causality is that which makes things to be what they are, and, in a way, it also makes them to be, since, in order to be, each and every being has to be a what. But formal causality dominates the whole realm of substances, and its proper effect is substantiality, whereas efficient causality is something quite different. It does not make beings to be what they are, it makes them "to be."⁸⁰

Or, as Owens puts it, "being for St. Thomas is the terminus of efficient

⁷⁹ Sweeney, "Early Writings," p. 98.

⁸⁰ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, pp. 168-169.

causality, but always by means of a formal cause."⁸¹ Esse is an extrinsic efficient cause, essence an intrinsic formal cause.

These two distinct forms of causality correspond to the two distinct principles which compose all existing things. They are another way of expressing the esse/essence composition.

Since they represent irreducibly distinct modes of causality, esse and existence are irreducibly distinct, but the reality of their distinction presupposes their composition, that is, it presupposes the actual reality of the thing."⁸²

Efficient/formal causality is also another way of expressing the contingency/necessity relationship between these two principles.

If the form is the cause of being in its own special way, that is, as formal cause, it will in its own order necessarily determine the essence to being. Formal causality is a necessary type of causality. All formal results follow necessarily from their formal causes, as may be seen in the procedures of mathematics. If its form determines every nature to be a being, then every nature is essentially a being. There is nothing in the form itself, however, that requires its submission to any efficient causality. That it is acted upon by another efficient cause does not follow with necessity from its own formal nature. If its act of being has to be given in this way by an external efficient cause, that act can only be accidental to it in this order of causality.⁸³

⁸¹Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 22. As Thomas puts it, "esse naturale per creationem Deus facit in nobis, nulla causa agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua causa formali; forma enim naturalis principium est esse naturalis" (De Veritate 27, 1 ad 3).

⁸²Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 172.

⁸³Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 22. Owens' identification of the contingency of esse with its accidental character in the order of formal causality is important, for it helps to explain Thomas' apparent ambivalence regarding the nature of esse. Sometimes he calls it an accident, other times he denies its accidental character. When he calls it an accident, he specifies an accident as that which does not belong to an essence, as that which lies outside the essential realm (See Comp. Theol., c. LXVI, and Quodl. XII, 5). Esse comes to essences from outside them (On Being and Essence, c. 4). Esse or efficient causality is accidental to formal causality, in that the placing of a thing in existence and the constituting of it by a composing principle of esse remain distinct from and therefore outside the order of essence or formal causality.

Because esse and essence operate on the same level and yet within two different orders of causality, their reciprocity is causal.

. . . Thomas Aquinas maintains the Aristotelian principle that causes which belong in distinct orders of causality can exert reciprocal causality. In this case, efficient causality can give existential being to substance, just as conversely, formal causality can import substantial being to actual existence. Where there is no existence, there is no substance, but where there is no substance, there is no existence. It is then literally true to say that existence is a consequence which follows from the form of essence, but not as an effect follows from the efficient cause.⁸⁴

At this point, however, a serious problem begins to make itself felt. If created esse is the first created effect, the actuality and the source of all of a thing's perfections, what role is essence left to play? That essence does have a function is apparent to everyone. The precise question is whether or not that function is positive or negative. In other words, does essence function causally only as a limiting principle or does it exercise formal causality in the full sense of producing a distinct formal element in created things?

In Clarke's words, what we are confronted with here is the question of the 'thick' versus the 'thin' essence. The thick essence

. . . is still looked on as possessing a certain positivity of its own, received indeed from existence as ultimate act, but giving it a distinct positive role of its own, precisely as distinct from the act of existence, so that the essence becomes the positive subject which exists, distinct as positive subject from the act of existence which it exercises.⁸⁵

The thin essence, on the other hand, is

. . . nothing but the interior limiting principle, the inner limit or partial negation . . . of the perfection which resides properly within the act of existence itself. The act

⁸⁴ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 169.

⁸⁵ W. N. Clarke, "What Cannot Be Said in St. Thomas' Essence-Existence Doctrine," The New Scholasticism 48 (1974):36 (hereafter cited as Clarke, "What Cannot Be Said").

of existence, accordingly, as thus limited, becomes the very subject which exists.⁸⁶

What is at stake here is nothing less than the real distinction itself. If essence is not viewed as a positive principle of correlation, esse begins to assume almost the entire burden of explanation for existing things. Clarke, who is of the 'thin essence' school, says, for example, that "on this view [thin essence] one must indeed tone down rather drastically the 'reality' and solidity of the so-called 'real distinction'".⁸⁷ He then adds:

To my mind, the essential point truly worth holding onto in the doctrine of St. Thomas is the notion of limited participation in the central perfection of existence, not the technical solution of how to express this, whether by 'real distinction,' or some other way.⁸⁸

If, however, the real distinction is not an appropriate way to express the Thomist doctrine of participation, this can only mean that the doctrine of participation has moved outside an act/potency framework and toward a much more Platonic view of reality.

This is the point at which the two major themes of modern Thomist scholarship converge: first, an increasing appreciation of the importance and priority of esse in Thomas' writings and, secondly, a renewed interest in the possibly Platonic elements in Thomas' thought. The first of these themes will be taken up in chapter 4, where the role of esse will be examined more closely within the framework of Thomist methodology. The second theme is the question of that methodology itself, whether it be Aristotelian or Platonic. Since answering that

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

question depends largely on an analysis of the formal elements in Thomas' system, chapters 2 and 3 will center on a more thorough examination of the Aristotelian/Thomist notion of essence, particularly as it relates to the question of whether Thomas employed an Aristotelian or a Platonic methodology.

CHAPTER 2

THICK OR THIN ESSENCE: THE METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

Thomist philosophy has gone through several stages in this century. These stages can be distinguished by their divergent views on the role of esse in Thomas' thinking. As the importance of esse became more apparent, questions began to arise regarding the notion of essence. These questions, in turn, fueled a growing rift between those Thomists who understand Thomas to have been fundamentally Aristotelian and those who understand him to have been fundamentally Neoplatonic. The more recent view, that of the so-called 'thin essence,' suggests that Thomas developed, in his later writings, a Neoplatonic notion of participation. One Thomist who takes this view describes Thomism as "a system which in its basic outlines reproduces certain of the structural features of a certain kind of emanationist Neo-Platonism."¹ Before examining in some detail the position of those who belong to the 'thin essence' school, we shall briefly survey the stages through which recent Thomism has passed, in order to see more clearly why this Neoplatonic interpretation of his work finds an audience among today's Thomists.

20th c. Thomism: The Shift from Aristotle to Plato

What has become known as 'Strict Observance' Thomism was the first

¹George Lindbeck, "Participation and Existence in the Interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas," Franciscan Studies 17 (June 1957):115 (hereafter cited as Lindbeck, "Participation").

clear view of Thomas' work to carry the day in this century. Associated with Thomists such as Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and expressed in the Twenty-Four Theses, this position stressed the centrality of Aristotle's act/potency schema and interpreted the real distinction as little more than a corollary to it. As the First Thesis states: "Potency and Act so divide being that whatsoever exists either is a Pure Act, or is necessarily composed of Potency and Act, as to its primordial and intrinsic principles."² Lumbreras, in his comments, notes that this statement is "true both in the existential and in the essential order."³ The Second Thesis defines act as "perfection" and potency as "limiting principle and capacity for perfection." It is only with the Third Thesis that the real distinction itself is asserted:

Wherefore, in the exclusive domain of existence itself God alone subsists, He alone is the most simple. Everything else, which participates in existence, has a nature whereby existence is restricted, and is composed of essence and existence as of two really distinct principles.⁴

As one recent Thomist has noted, the 'Strict Observance' position "tends to emphasize the continuity between Aristotle and St. Thomas, going so far as to find in Aristotle an anticipation of the Thomistic treatment of essence and existence."⁵

However attractive this position might have seemed at a time when Thomism was fighting for an objective reality over against the relativity

²Peter Lumbreras, The Twenty-Four Fundamental Theses of Official Catholic Philosophy (Notre Dame: University Press, 1923), p. 13.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

⁵Lindbeck, "Participation," (March, 1957):10.

of modernism and the élan vital of Bergson, it failed on two very important counts. First, it never appreciated the 'existential' significance of the real distinction, because it was never able to credit esse with anything beyond the 'facticity' of things. Hence it always tended, in practice, toward an 'essentialist' reading of Thomas. Secondly, in its failure to appreciate the genuine transformation Thomas had introduced into Aristotle's work, it hitched the Thomist wagon far too closely to the Aristotelian star. As Pegis has pointed out,

To identify St. Thomas with an Aristotle who is, in many important respects, his own creation, is a compliment to St. Thomas himself. To do so without realizing that St. Thomas' Aristotle is a Thomist who, on some basic fundamentals, was never an Aristotelian is a historical illusion that is both dangerous and without justification in our day.⁶

'Strict Observance' Thomism was superseded by, as Kopaczynski calls it, the 'Primacy of Esse' approach. This view is similar to 'Strict Observance' Thomism, in that it regards both esse and essence as positive principles, but, unlike the latter, it lays much greater stress on esse as the source of perfection and value in existing things. 'Primacy of Esse' Thomists are not as easily classified as 'Strict Observance' Thomists, although, broadly speaking, they divide into two groups--those who understand Thomas to have transformed Aristotle in light of Christian doctrine and those who understand him to have transformed Aristotle in light of Plato and the Neoplatonists.

The first group, spearheaded by Etienne Gilson, tends to underscore the theological elements in Thomas' thinking--particularly the Qui est of Exodus and the doctrine of creation.

⁶ Anton C. Pegis, Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas (New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1948), pp. xxviii-xxix.

. . . St. Thomas Aquinas, referring expressly to this text of Exodus, will declare that among all divine names there is one that is eminently proper to God, namely Qui est, precisely because this Qui est signifies nothing other than being itself: non significat formam aliquam sed ipsum esse. In this principle lies an inexhaustible metaphysical fecundity; all the studies that here follow will be merely studies of its results. There is but one God and this God is Being, that is the corner-stone of all Christian philosophy, and it was not Plato, it was not even Aristotle, it was Moses who put it in position.⁷

Gilson later adds that "the five Thomist proofs are hung expressly from the text of Exodus."⁸

For Gilson, the act of existing (esse) is Thomas' central insight and the key to his transformation of the eternal world of Aristotle into the created world of Scripture. It is also the only path by which we can get to a knowledge of the real distinction.

. . . so far as we are able to see, all the arguments one can use to establish the distinction between being and essence in Thomas Aquinas' doctrine presuppose the prior recognition of the notion of the "act of being" (esse).⁹

The priority which Gilson assigns to esse and the real distinction reflects his view that Thomas' Christianity introduced a genuine transformation into Aristotle's metaphysics.

Although willing to grant considerable Christian influence at work in Thomas' thought, Gilson is unwilling to concede much to Plato. His major reason for refusing to do so lies in the Thomist notion of God as Pure Act, a notion which places God "beyond essence, at the very core of being."¹⁰ For Gilson, this means that "His perfection is not a perfection received, but a perfection, so to speak, existed, and it is

⁷ Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, p. 51.

⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

⁹ Gilson, Elements of Christian Philosophy, p. 130.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

just that which will always keep Christian philosophy distinct from Platonism, in spite of all the efforts that may be made to identify them."¹¹ Even the elements of participation in Thomas can be traced directly back, in Gilson's judgment, not to Plato but to Ipsum Esse: ". . . it is one and the same thing to conceive God as pure Esse and to conceive things, so far as they are, as including in their metaphysical structure a participated image of the pure Act of Being."¹²

Although Gilson insists on the priority of esse over essence and, therefore, of efficient causality over formal causality, and of the "radical and total" difference¹³ which such a shift in priorities forges between the worlds of Aristotle and Thomas, the fact remains that Aristotle's substance, now transformed into Thomas' essence, seems, from Gilson's point of view, not to have undergone any very radical changes in Thomas' hands. Although Gilson insists that the Aristotelian substance "will have to undergo many inner transformations in order to become a created substance,"¹⁴ he nevertheless also maintains that "the Aristotelian substance remains intact in the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas,"¹⁵ and that the world of Thomas "is a world of Aristotelian substances which are in their own right."¹⁶

This position finds support in Joseph Owens, whose views on Thomas are quite similar to those of Gilson. Granting the same priority to

¹¹ Idem., The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, p. 54.

¹² Idem., Elements of Christian Philosophy, p. 133.

¹³ Idem., Being and Some Philosophers, p. 160.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 162.

esse over essence, Owens insists on a theory of participation in Thomas which avoids being Platonic through the expedient of being existential. "Existential act . . . can be a thing or a reality or a nature only in its primary instance, God. Outside God it cannot be a thing or reality or nature, but only the actualizing of some other nature."¹⁷ Therefore, Owens is drawn to the same conclusion as Gilson, namely, that while Thomism proceeds from the viewpoint of existence, it nevertheless leaves "intact all starting points in the realm of essence, both substantial and accidental."¹⁸ Unlike the new man in St. Paul, whose conversion requires him to cast off all the old trappings, this 'new' Thomist essence of Gilsonian Thomism continues to bear an uncanny resemblance to the old Aristotelian substance.

As long as Thomists could keep the motif of participation both at the periphery of their interpretation of Thomas and in isolation from any Platonic influences, as Gilson and Owens do, the positive character of the principle of essence went unchallenged. The closer, however, that participation was moved to center stage, the more difficult it became to justify the essence as fundamentally positive. This problem became increasingly severe among the second group of 'Primacy of Esse' Thomists, who approached the matter from a point of view which emphasized the participationist elements in Thomas' work as the primary force leading him to insist on the priority of the act of being.

¹⁷ Joseph Owens, "Quiddity and Real Distinction in St. Thomas Aquinas," Mediaeval Studies 27 (1965):20 (hereafter cited as Owens, "Quiddity").

¹⁸ Idem., St. Thomas and the Future of Metaphysics (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1957), p. 57.

For these Thomists,¹⁹ the notion of participation lies at the core of any philosophy of being. As de Raeymaeker puts it, "La participation sur le plan de l'être constitue le problème métaphysique par excellence, car il concerne précisément l'objet formel de la métaphysique."²⁰ An immediate problem arises, however, as soon as one combines the primacy of esse with the notion of participation. If esse is the source of all perfection, value and intelligibility, and if created things share in perfection, value and intelligibility by virtue of their existential participation in Ipsum Esse, in what sense is it possible to regard essence as a distinct principle of anything positive? Aren't the intelligibilities which we abstract from created things simply 'contractions' or limitations of esse itself? And, if this is the case, isn't essence, ontologically speaking, no more than a limiting principle which 'finitizes' what would otherwise be that infinite perfection which is esse by definition?

L.-B. Geiger made the most serious attempt, among this group of Thomists, to salvage the positive function of essence. In order to do so, he had recourse to the view that in Thomas two separate types of participation are at work--participation by composition and participation by formal hierarchy.²¹ Participation by composition is the type which Gilson and Owens accept. Namely, participation in esse is the

¹⁹ Most prominent in this group of Thomists are L.-B. Geiger, Andre Marc, Aime Forest, Cornelio Fabro and Louis de Raeymaeker.

²⁰ Louis de Raeymaeker, La Philosophie de l'être, 2nd ed. (Louvain: Editions de L'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1947), p. 39.

²¹ L.-B. Geiger, La Participation dans la Philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1953), consists of a discussion of each type of participation (Book One) and of their synthesis in Thomas (Book Two).

necessary consequence of the esse/essence composite in all created things. Participation by formal hierarchy, on the other hand, subordinates the esse/essence composition to the notion that created things participate in esse. Participation produces composition, not vice versa. This latter notion of participation necessarily stresses essence as a limiting principle rather than as a positive component within existing things.

For Geiger, this latter form of participation is pre-eminent in Thomas. Nevertheless, Geiger continued to insist that participation by composition also plays a role in Thomas' thought, and that essence therefore could never be reduced simply to a negative limiting principle without doing violence to what Thomas himself intended. "A son gré l'essence n'est pas cette pure limite négative étrangère à l'ordre de l'être."²² Geiger's view here is based on the fact that Thomas understands God to be the source of essence as well as existence.

Pour S. Thomas l'essence aussi bien que l'existence procèdent de Dieu. Dieu est certes substance absolue et existence nécessaire. Mais il est aussi plénitude absolue et simple de toute perfection représentée par les essences des créatures.²³

Paradoxically, Geiger's reason for refusing to reduce essence to a negative limiting principle turned out to be the very reason why a participationist reading of Thomas was ultimately unable to accept such a dual structure of participation. How could one talk about two distinct principles of participation emanating from one single, utterly simple source? To trace created essences to Divine Ideas didn't avail, because the Divine Ideas were in no way distinct from the Divine Essence. And to trace created essences to the Divine Essence as though

²² Ibid., p. 203.

²³ Ibid.

it were distinct from Ipsum Esse was to introduce a composition into Being which found no support in Thomas. In fact, this whole way of speaking about essences suggested that the diversity found in created beings could have its source in Being Itself, a view which, as we have already seen, Thomas himself denied.

As those Thomists committed to a participationist interpretation of the 'primacy of esse' struggled with these problems, another stage of Thomism was emerging, in which both the centrality of esse and the problematic character of essence were becoming apparent, though from quite a different perspective. Transcendental Thomism, proceeding by a method designed to meet the demands of the Kantian critique, sought in the human affirmation of being a means of demonstrating an intrinsic existential dynamism toward Ipsum Esse. Within such a framework, Maréchal, the first to apply transcendental method to Thomism, characterized the relationship between our abstractive knowledge of existing things and absolute being to be such that "La donnée subjective (ou "species") ne peut devenir objet dans la pensée qu'en se soumettant au premier principe, c'est-à-dire en revêtant une relation nécessaire à la forme absolue d'être."²⁴ To associate the intelligibilities of existing things (the positive content of essences) with "la forme absolue d'être" is to be already well on the path to identifying all perfections with esse and esse itself with intelligibility. As Helen James John describes it, "The finite essence, caught up in the drive of the intellect toward the affirmation of being, as such, reveals

²⁴ Joseph Maréchal, Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique, Cahier V: Le Thomisme devant la Philosophie critique (Louvain: Museum Les-sianum; Paris: Alcan, 1926), pp. 49-50.

itself as relative to and subordinated to that goal."²⁵ Although transcendental Thomists did not set out to establish the Platonic nature of Thomas' thinking, they nevertheless reinforced such a view by insisting on an intrinsic intellectual drive toward *Ipsum Esse* which clearly parallels the notion of existential participation as developed by so many participationist Thomists.²⁶ The notion of essence as 'thin' began, in the minds of many Thomists, to seem inescapable.

The 'Thin Essence' Position

'Thin essence' Thomism was born out of the 'primacy of esse' reading of Thomas. As soon as the full significance of *Ipsum Esse* as not only Pure Act, but source of all value and perfection, surfaced, it at once became apparent that such a notion of Being necessarily entailed a doctrine of existential participation. Such a doctrine could not but emphasize the role of essence as a limiting principle. This, however, seemed to contradict the earlier notion of essence as a positive principle of intelligibility. As D. J. B. Hawkins asked,

Is there not a contradiction in making a mere principle of limitation into a positive factor in the constitution of finite being? A limitation is a negation and nothing more. To assert a positive principle of limitation is like asserting that the surface of a sphere is distinct from the sphere

²⁵ Helen James John, The Thomist Spectrum (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), p. 145.

²⁶ Transcendental method itself introduces into Thomism a Platonic starting point not accepted by Thomas himself. As Little notes, "the Platonic method was to argue from intellectual data as such. And because intellectual data form the core of Marechal's philosophy he is probably the most Platonic of modern Thomists, even somewhat at the expense of the main element in Thomism, which is Aristotelianism" (Arthur Little, The Platonic Heritage of Thomism [Dublin: Golden Eagle Books Limited, 1949], p. 96).

itself. That is clearly nonsense and so, therefore, it will be said, is the Thomistic conception of essentia or quiddity.²⁷

The root of the problem lay in the earlier noted separation that Thomas' notion of Being introduces between act (*esse*) and form (essence), a separation unheard of in the Greek sources (both Platonic and Aristotelian) from which he draws. For Greek philosophy, act and intelligibility are indistinguishable; for Thomas they are not. Or, rather, for Thomas, act and intelligibility are indistinguishable in God, but distinguishable in created things. Or so they would appear to be, if one accepts the principle of essence as positive intelligibility and the principle of *esse* as little more than the facticity (actualizing) of that intelligibility ('Strict Observance' Thomism). Once, however, the principle of *esse* is defined as the source of perfection, such a dichotomy no longer seems possible. *Esse* itself is the fullness of intelligibility. Hence, essence as limited intelligibility can hardly be understood as 'other than' *esse*. At best, it must simply be a 'mode' of *esse*, but not a positive principle in its own right. This is the path which many Thomists saw open up before them. One is tempted to call it the narrow path, for it is the path of the 'thin essence.'

Kopaczynski characterizes Thomists on this path as "reformers," "Esseists" or "Exclusivity of *Esse*" Thomists. Their immediate forerunner is Arthur Little, who attempted to answer Hawkins' question about essence in 1949, five years before Hawkins asked it, in a book entitled The Platonic Heritage of Thomism. Their most vocal leaders have been William Carlo and W. N. Clarke. The most complete statement of their position is Carlo's The Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to

²⁷ D. J. B. Hawkins, Being and Becoming (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1954), p. 55.

Existence, published in 1966. The views of each of these three men deserve some attention.

Arthur Little: Essence as the No-Moreness of Being

Proceeding on the assumption that much of what can be found in Thomas actually stems from Platonic rather than Aristotelian sources, Little sets out to identify those areas in Thomas' thought which actually reflect Plato much more than Aristotle. As Little notes at the beginning of the second chapter:

The purpose of this chapter is to discover whether St. Thomas did in fact give to Aristotle's doctrine a more orthodox sense than that doctrine deserved. If he did it will be open to us to assign to Platonic influences many Thomistic ideas that St. Thomas himself believed to be inherited from Aristotle.²⁸

Little locates two such lacunae in Aristotle. The first of these is Aristotle's denial of God as efficient cause of the formal perfections of the world. This, in Little's judgment, prevented him from developing any doctrine of participation worthy of the name.

What Plato asserted and Aristotle denied was that this material world of ours was derived at least in its formal nature from the spiritual world. And only on this basis can any important doctrine of participation be erected.²⁹

Little then examines, in the first half of the book, the implications of efficient and formal causality in Thomas, particularly with regard to the fourth way.

Defining efficient causality as that causality by which God is able to produce a perfection which is formal in its effects because virtual within God Himself, Little concludes that the formal perfection produced by God "is, in a different order, identical with part of the

²⁸ Little, The Platonic Heritage of Thomism, p. 20.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

perfection of the cause."³⁰ Little describes the perfections which issue from the efficient causality of God as "not miniature replicas of God, but rather constituted of limiting essences that smother every divine property in them while yet leaving in their existences indications that what has been smothered is divine."³¹

What Little has in mind here is participation by formal hierarchy as defined by Geiger, which produces a universe not unlike Porphyry's tree, a universe in which each essence represents not so much a divine idea as a different grade of being. As Little puts it, "Clearly what each of these grades imitates in contraction is the whole of the base, not any part of it."³²

To the extent that essence connotes the total perfection of esse contracted to a formal, and therefore finite, mode by means of God's efficient causality, it can be said to be positive. In fact, since efficient and formal causality identify in God, the essence must connote that perfection which exists formally in the effect precisely because of its virtual and prior existence in God. The fourth way indicates clearly that Thomas recognized God to be exemplar cause of all created formalities and perfections.

The second failure which Little finds in Aristotle has to do with Aristotle's notion of passive potency.

Aristotle has hitherto been universally accepted as the vanquisher of Parmenides by his doctrine of passive potency. The contention of this chapter, mildly revolutionary to the history of philosophy and the only revolutionary contention

³⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

³¹ Ibid., p. 116.

³² Ibid.

in the book, is that Aristotle only partly understood Parmenides and definitely failed to answer him.³³

The problem, as Little sees it, is that Aristotle tried to resolve the Parmenidean dilemma by recourse to a notion of potency which left potency hanging somewhere midway between being and non-being. But, for Little, this only produces a contradiction which is unable to come to grips with the original dilemma.

How are we to conceive this compromise between being and non-being, to say nothing of exonerating the concept from contradiction? It is a reality that must be positive or not positive, that is (by the principle of the excluded middle) negative. And Aristotle seems to say that it is not quite either.³⁴

Therefore, while Plato took a view of potency as meontic non-being or the exclusion of being, Aristotle understood it to mean that which is not yet a being, that is, "being which is only part of what is required for a being."³⁵

The second half of Little's book consists of an examination of Thomas' notion of passive potency, in which Little analyzes those passages in Thomas which indicate that Thomas understood potency as non-being or the exclusion of further being.

Passive potency . . . is identified with the limit or no-more-being of a being. Therefore it is not a pure negation because it implicitly affirms as a possibility the measure of being that it is capable of determining by explicitly excluding this from its negation.³⁶

Although Little draws explicitly on seven texts from Thomas,³⁷ his

³³ Ibid., p. 184.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 186.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 185.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 201-202.

³⁷ These texts are: Comp. Theol., c. 17; CG II, 52; De Ver., 2, 3 ad 16; De Ver., 2, 2; CG I, 54; De Ver., 1, 5 ad 2; In Boeth. de Trin., 4, 1.

position rests primarily upon two arguments, both substantiated by citations from Thomas. The first of these arguments appeals to the principle that being cannot divide itself. Little relies heavily, as do other 'thin essence' Thomists, on Thomas' statement in In Boeth. de Trin. that

It cannot be that being is divided from being, in as much as it is being. Nothing is divided from being except non-being. Similarly, another being is not divided from this being, but by this that in this being there is included a negation of that being.³⁸

The second argument is a corollary to the first, namely, that the formal hierarchy of being is constituted by descending degrees of being.

Thomas is most explicit about this in De Veritate:

Hence the more closely a creature approaches God, the more it possesses of the act of existence; the further it is from Him, the more it possesses of non-existence. But, since a creature approaches God only in so far as it participates in a finite act of existence, yet its distance from God is always infinite, it is said to have more non-existence than existence.³⁹

Little concludes that, while essence implicitly refers to the positive perfection which defines the quiddity or 'whatness' of a being, it explicitly refers to the negative limiting principle which denies further esse or perfection to that being. Little concedes that this does not appear to have been Thomas' view of essence in On Being and Essence, but argues that in the later, mature Thomas, "the essence in the definition would be really identified with the act of being or existence considered as affected by the limit; but the limit itself would be the essence that is really distinct from the act of being."⁴⁰

³⁸ In Boeth. de Trin., 4, 1.

³⁹ De Veritate, 2, 3 ad 16.

⁴⁰ Little, The Platonic Heritage of Thomism, p. 193.

Hence, existing things are composites of being and non-being, in which the act of being (esse) is "shot through and through, as it were, by non-being."⁴¹

W. N. Clarke: Essence as Limiting Principle Within Esse

The discussion about essence, in this country at least, only got off the ground after the 1957 publication of G. B. Phelan's article, "The Being of Creatures."⁴² Warning against the reifying tendencies inherent in the Greek essentialist vocabulary taken over by Thomas, Phelan re-examines essence within Thomas' existentialist reformation of that Greek essentialism. Referring to the passage in Contra Gentiles II, 54, in which Thomas asserts that being cannot diversify itself and therefore must be diversified "per aliquid quod est praeter esse" (already discussed in chapter 1), Phelan suggests that the "praeter esse" to which Thomas refers there is not "non-ens" but "non-esse."⁴³ Phelan concludes that essence is therefore best understood as a "mode" of being which restricts esse.

To call it "essence" is all very well, provided essence is not regarded as some positive thing, but simply the "by which" (quo) or the mode, measure or manner in which the act, esse, is exercised. To say, for example, "Crystals

⁴¹Ibid., p. 222.

⁴²G. B. Phelan, "The Being of Creatures According to St. Thomas," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 31 (1957): 118-125 (hereafter cited as Phelan, "Being of Creatures").

⁴³Ibid., p. 122. Phelan's reason for arriving at this conclusion is quite tenuous. He notes that, in In I Phys., 6b, Thomas writes, "Quidquid est praeter ens est non-ens." Phelan therefore applies the principle he finds there to the text from CG. However, as Clarke notes in his commentary on Phelan's article, nowhere does Thomas himself say that "praeter esse" means "non-esse" (W. N. Clarke, "Commentary (b)," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 31 [1957]: 131).

are solids" means for the existential metaphysician "Crystals exercise the act of existence in a solid manner."⁴⁴

The article was accompanied by two commentaries, one by W. N. Clarke, the other by William Carlo. Clarke's commentary is an early indication of the direction in which his own thought was moving. Rejecting the traditional view of essence as possessing "a certain density or perfection of its own,"⁴⁵ Clarke locates the positive perfection found in a finite being within esse itself, "with the essence playing the role not so much of subject as of intrinsic limit or, more accurately, of measure, or mode, or determination, molding the basic perfection of esse from within and not from without."⁴⁶ Later, Clarke would characterize this essence as 'thin.'

Clarke's primary concern is to recover the explicitly Neoplatonic elements at work in Thomas' thought. For him, the primary structure of Thomas' work is that of participation/limitation, which enables Thomas to transplant the Porphyrian tree of universal concepts from the rarified atmosphere of Plato's Forms into the Aristotelian world of concrete experience.⁴⁷ Because Thomas used the act/potency framework of Aristotle to accomplish this transplantation, we can rightly characterize his work as a synthesis of Plato and Aristotle, though rather more Platonic than Aristotelian.

Such, then, . . . are the essential characteristics of the Thomistic doctrine of participation: a formal relational framework, clearly recognizable as taken over from the Neoplatonic

⁴⁴Phelan, "Being of Creatures," p. 124.

⁴⁵Clarke, "Commentary (b)," p. 129.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency," p. 191.

tradition, transposed--at least in its realistic applications--into the technical Aristotelian terms of act and potency, its ontological content emptied of the original Platonic ultra-realism of forms and replaced with the one basic analogical perfection of esse, and the whole applied with a consummate sense of analogy to the different orders both of reality and of ideas--such is the highly original synthesis that is Thomistic participation.⁴⁸

William Carlo: Essence as the Place Where Esse Stops

Carlo's major concern is one of freeing a genuine Christian existentialism from the tyranny of Greek essentialism. If this sounds something like the nominalist project, it is in fact quite the opposite. Unlike Ockham, who sought to free the concrete singular from the abstract universal, thus atomizing the world, Carlo seeks to free the single, all-embracing metaphysical principle of being (esse) from the atomizing effects of essentialist diversification.

The unity and plurality of things are certainly fundamental metaphysical facts of the universe. But they are not the most basic and foundational aspects of reality. Things are one because of their esse. God is Simple because He is Ipsum Esse. Creatures are composite only because they are limited esses that unite with other limited esses in secondary causality, and can, consequently, be separated. Unity and plurality have to be based on and rooted in being and ultimately in esse. In a metaphysics of being as esse we can explain all the facts of the universe including unity and plurality. Unity and plurality cannot of themselves found a metaphysics. They must be rooted in being, not unity but the one, not plurality but the many; one what? one being; many what? many beings.⁴⁹

After summarizing the various historical controversies regarding the true nature of the real distinction, Carlo concludes, "The history of the controversies on the relations of essence and esse has a significant message to teach us. Namely, that the roof of the universe can be occupied by only one principle, Ipsum Esse Subsistens and that the roof

⁴⁸ Idem., "Meaning," p. 157.

⁴⁹ William Carlo, The Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to Existence in Existential Metaphysics (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966), p. 107 (hereafter cited as Carlo, Ultimate Reducibility).

of metaphysics can be occupied by only one principle, esse."⁵⁰

For Carlo, the Greek understanding of essence is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of creation. ". . . the notion of essence was conceived to explain the Greek eternal universe and its ratio essendi was to function within such a universe."⁵¹ Addressing himself to those Thomists who suppose that such essences can enter the Thomist universe intact (he has Owens in particular in mind here), Carlo asks, "Can the eternal essence of Greek metaphysics become contingent by any sort of addition, no matter how complex? Is essence indifferent to being eternal or created?"⁵² Arguing that if a created being is one, then essence and existence must identify, inasmuch as composite things are separable and distinct,⁵³ Carlo maintains that, "As all creatures flow from God, so all other principles flow from esse in the creative act. Creation is not a marriage, a joining of esse and essence, but a true birth."⁵⁴

Because a true Christian metaphysics is centered on the createdness of things, it is therefore much more concerned with the existence of things than with their diversification. Hence, the ultimate characteristic of such a universe and of all things within it is their isness. "Thus the introduction of esse is the distinguishing mark of a Christian metaphysics of being."⁵⁵ Since the positing of a real distinction between essence and existence is, in fact, the positing of an extrinsic

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 111.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵² Ibid., p. 7.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 109.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

limitation of esse, such a distinction introduces a fundamental and unacceptable dichotomy into a true metaphysics of being.⁵⁶

The 'Primacy of Esse' view (for which Carlo gives Gilson the lion's share of the credit) is, in Carlo's judgment, "a halfway house to the doctrine of the Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to Existence. Existence cannot stand self-sufficiently alongside the Platonic essence but must encompass and include it in the theory of essence as a Mode of Esse"⁵⁷ Essence, therefore, and in this he agrees with Clarke, must be understood as intrinsic to esse, operating from within esse to produce the limited finite beings of the created world.

In order to illustrate what he means by this notion of essence, Carlo employs two metaphors. First, he asks us to envision existence as though it were a liquid in process of being poured from a pitcher. Add to that a sudden drop in temperature, and the liquid freezes before it hits the ground. Under these circumstances,

The shape it assumes is the determination of its own substance. Essence is not something extrinsic to existence which limits and determines it in the way that a pitcher shapes its recipient liquid, but essence is rather the place where existence stops.⁵⁸

In the second illustration, we are asked to imagine existence as a stream of water flowing down a mountainside. Again there is a drop in temperature, freezing the stream. If we then imagine chopping the stream into pieces, the blocks of ice which this produces would bear some resemblance to what happens when esse is intrinsically limited by essence.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

There is nothing in the blocks but frozen water or ice. But one is distinguishable from another by the place where they stop, the myriad grooves and raised surfaces left by the blade of the axe. This is what we mean when we say that essence is the intrinsic limitation of existence.⁵⁹

If this sounds as though Carlo were equating quality with quantity, he is. Creatures are, in his view, contractions of the infinite perfection of esse. The degree of contraction determines the level of perfection enjoyed by the creature. The greater the contraction, the lower the level of perfection. As Carlo puts it, a creature "is constituted as a certain level of perfection, a particular magnitude of esse, an existential quantum, a degree of being."⁶⁰

While there is much in what Carlo says to suggest that he has misconstrued the Thomist real distinction as a distinction of things rather than of principles, in point of fact, his starting point forbids him to consider even the possibility of a distinction of principles. Since God is both the fullness of perfection, on the one hand, and absolute simplicity, on the other, Carlo rejects any distinction between esse and essence which would suggest that, at the created level, that perfection which is both absolutely infinite and totally simple in God can be distinguished into an existential principle (esse) and a specific principle (essence).

. . . what positive effect could the creature have which is not, somehow or other, a diminution or limitation of the Divine Perfection, some characteristic which exists in its superabundance in God? Obviously for Aquinas there is none!⁶¹

Many Thomists would, at this point, wish to fall back on the Divine

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 104.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 113.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 139.

Ideas. This, however, Carlo will not permit.

The traditional method of explaining the origin of plurality is through the doctrine of the Divine Ideas. But the doctrine of the Divine Ideas takes one just so far in explaining the origin of plurality and then it fails. How is a multiplicity of Divine Ideas rooted in the Divine Essence? To push the origin of plurality back to the rationes, the respectus, or intelligible aspects of the Divine Essence which the Divine Intellect perceives as imitable in a variety of modes by creatures is, it would seem, merely to relocate the point of confrontation between a unitary Divine Essence and the Divine Intellect which perceives it as imitable. The basic rationes which seem to underlie the plurality of the Divine Ideas and a Simple Divine Essence is still a traditional Greek formulation of the One and the Many! Using the model of the human intellect as a foundation for the doctrine of the Divine Ideas, as Thomas Aquinas explains the historical origin of the doctrine in the De Veritate, would seem to introduce plurality into being through a lesser being, an esse intentionale of sorts. Although this might be effective with a created intellect, can it be much more than a metaphor when applied to a Being for Whom to Know is to Be?⁶²

Since esse is the source of all intelligibility, it makes no sense, in Carlo's judgment, to posit a real distinction between essence as limited intelligibility and esse as limitless intelligibility. The only possible distinction here is that between the finite and the infinite. Therefore, to understand essence as anything more than a negative limiting principle is to misconstrue Being Itself.

Once essence has been reduced to esse, the way is clear to reducing formal causality to efficient causality. "In a metaphysics of esse, essence needs only a subordinate relation of efficient causality to demarcate God from creatures."⁶³ In the same fashion, second act is no longer required to explain the dynamism of subsistence. "We have here not a multiplication or addition of acts, of esse plus subsistere, but one self-same act manifesting its dynamism in a specified, contracted

⁶²Ibid., pp. 107-108.

⁶³Ibid., p. 113.

way."⁶⁴ These are the inevitable corollaries to a notion of being which identifies the positive perfection of essence with the total perfection of esse.

Instead of waiting from all eternity like the recipient essence of Avicenna, or being produced alongside of esse in a dual creation, barring these alternatives, which I consider the only alternative possibilities, then essence must rise out of the flood of esse like Thetis from the frothy wave. Essence flows from esse. Esse gives rise to essence. Essence is the intrinsic modification of the dynamism of actual exercise of the act of being. Why not describe essence, then, as the place where esse stops, bordered by nothingness?⁶⁵

Carlo's interpretation of Thomas rests upon the answers he gives to three questions. These questions, indeed, reflect the greatest problems which a 'primacy of esse' approach to Thomas leaves unresolved. And they are all methodological problems. The first question, "Why not describe essence, then, as the place where esse stops, bordered by nothingness?", addresses the problem of whether Thomas' methodology is Aristotelian or Platonic. The second question, "How is a multiplicity of Divine Ideas rooted in the Divine Essence?", addresses the problem of whether or not Thomas correctly applied his own methodology. The third question, "Is essence indifferent to being eternal or created?", addresses the problem of how to apply properly the Thomist methodology to the esse/essence relationship. The remainder of this chapter will consider each of those questions in turn.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁵ William Carlo, "Commentary (a)," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 31 (1957):128.

Thomist Methodology: Aristotelian or Platonic?

The Textual Dilemma

The most obvious reason for not describing essence as "the place where esse stops" is a textual one. It simply doesn't square with a great many things said by the mature Thomas. In order to illustrate the point, four areas of his thought are examined below. No attempt is made to provide a complete textual analysis regarding these areas; rather, well-known and accepted views of Thomas are isolated for the sake of highlighting the problem.

Being. First, Thomas maintains repeatedly that being transcends the categories. For this reason, he is able to insist that a genuine distinction can be drawn between the quiddity of a thing and its act of existing, since only quiddities, not being, can be in a genus.⁶⁶ Furthermore, he states that, with the exception of God, no being is its own act of existing.⁶⁷ It is difficult to see how either of these positions can be reconciled with a view of essence which maintains that, to the extent that essence is regarded as positive and as the subject receiving existence, it is reducible to esse. If that is the case, then being does enter into the quiddity or definition of a thing and is, in fact, identical with that thing to the extent that it is a positive being.

Secondly, Thomas insists that a distinction must be made between divine being and universal being.⁶⁸ Divine or pure esse is the fullness

⁶⁶ De Pot., 7, 4; De Ver., 27, 1 ad 8.

⁶⁷ CG III, 65.

⁶⁸ De pot., 7, 2 ad 6; ad 9; ST I-II, 2, 5 ad 2; cf. On Being and Essence, c. 5.

of perfection, and to it nothing can be added. Universal or common being, on the other hand, is such that additions can be made to it. As Thomas says in the Summa Theologiae, universal or participated being is raised to a higher level by the addition of a perfection. For this reason, Thomas cites Dionysius' remark that living things are better than merely existing things, and intelligent beings better than living beings.⁶⁹ Of particular interest is the text of De Pot., 7, 2 ad 9, in which Thomas differentiates between God's being and that being which can be added to and determined by essence.

Being, as we understand it here, signifies the highest perfection of all: and the proof is that act is always more perfect than potentiality. Now no signate form is understood to be in act unless it be supposed to have being. Thus we may take human nature or fiery nature as existing potentially in matter, or as existing in the power of an agent, or even as in the mind: but when it has being it becomes actually existent. Wherefore it is clear that being as we understand it here is the actuality of all acts, and therefore the perfection of all perfections. Nor may we think that being, in this sense, can have anything added to it that is more formal and determines it as act determines potentiality: because being in this latter sense is essentially distinct from that to which it is added and whereby it is determined. But nothing that is outside the range of being can be added to being: for nothing is outside its range except non-being, which can be neither form nor matter. Hence being is not determined by something else as potentiality by act but rather as act by potentiality: since in defining a form we include its proper matter instead of the difference: thus we define a soul as the act of an organic physical body. Accordingly this being is distinct from that being inasmuch as it is the being of this or that nature. For this reason Dionysius says (Div. Nom. V) that though things having life excel those that merely have being, yet being excels life, since living things have not only life but also being.

This text is often cited as supporting the notion of essence as a limiting principle, for Thomas here insists that essence acts as a potency to limit esse. Yet it is important to note, first, that this text asserts two different types of esse, secondly, that it supports

⁶⁹ ST I-II, 2, 5 ad 2.

the notion of essence as that to which esse is "added," and, thirdly, that, while Thomas specifically says that only non-being lies outside being, he also notes that non-being does not include form and matter.

Non-being. In the above-cited text, Thomas seems to place form and matter on the side of being. This is consistent with his earlier statement in the same work that being is common to potentiality and act.⁷⁰ It is also consistent with his remarks in the Summa Theologiae where, in discussing creation, he speaks of form in terms of a work of art, a shaping to a meaning, and associates it with the Logos.⁷¹

To complicate the situation further, there are those places where he speaks of a lack of proportion between non-being (non-ens) and being (ens).⁷² If such is the case, then how is one to understand either potency or essence as non-being, when act and potency are said to be proportioned to one another? One possible way out of this dilemma is to argue that ens in the above texts refers to a being, not being per se. Yet that raises a further difficulty. If non-being and a being lack proportion, do not also common being (esse) and a being lack the same proportion? This would seem to be the sense of Thomas' remarks in the Summa Theologiae, where he describes esse as the "distinctive note creative action strikes," but carefully and explicitly denies that it is the subject created.⁷³

Evil. A third area in his thought where such difficulties abound is that of evil. In the Summa Theologiae, he argues that evil cannot

⁷⁰ De Pot., 3, 1 ad 12.

⁷¹ ST I, 45, 7.

⁷² ST I, 45, 5; De sub. sep., c. 10.

⁷³ ST I, 45, 4.

signify any existing thing or a real "shaping" or "positive" kind of thing.⁷⁴ Since he has previously associated shaping with form, he seems once again to be saying that form is positive. This is supported by his further statement in the same article that actions are grounded in forms. Two articles later, he describes form as a sort of "completion" and hence a sort of "good."⁷⁵ In fact, he declares that the deprivations or negations associated with evil attach directly to qualities and forms.⁷⁶ If qualities and forms are to be regarded as negations themselves, this would make no sense. All of this echoes what he had said earlier in De Potentia, that inferiority among created things does not imply imperfection on the part of those things which are inferior, for "imperfection denotes the lack of something which is natural or due to a thing."⁷⁷ In fact, in his discussions of evil and of virtue, Thomas repeatedly insists on distinct positive definable perfections in things, for it is only by knowing what a thing ought to be that we are able to make judgments about what is due it.

Participation. Although there is a great deal in his writings to suggest that participation consists primarily of a finitizing or quantifying of esse, Thomas also speaks of participation as involving two distinct elements. Hence he discusses participation as the possession of a nature which is higher than one's own⁷⁸ or as a share in a higher

⁷⁴ ST I, 48, 1.

⁷⁵ ST I, 48, 3.

⁷⁶ ST I, 48, 4.

⁷⁷ De Pot., 3, 1 ad 14.

⁷⁸ Comment. in ad Coloss., c. 1, lect. 4.

act than one's own.⁷⁹ In De Potentia, he quotes Boethius to the effect that whatever exists participates both in being and in something else, and agrees that this is true of all created beings.⁸⁰ Earlier in the same work, he had already referred to the fact that God's own act of existing is distinct from all other acts of existing because only His act of existing does not come to a nature other than itself.⁸¹ Thomas returns to the same theme in the Summa Theologiae, where he applies a similar notion of participation to creaturely causality: "A complete substance of some specific nature can reproduce its like, not indeed by producing that nature as such, but by applying it to a subject."⁸² These remarks are consistent with his view that God's esse "sit substantia vel natura Dei,"⁸³ whereas in created things esse "est actualitas substantiae vel essentiae."⁸⁴ And these statements, in turn, support his assertion that formal causality is not reducible to efficient causality, but rather that efficient causality operates through a mediating formal cause.⁸⁵

The Hermeneutical Dilemma

Clearly we have conflicting textual evidence in Thomas with regard to all of the major questions regarding the relationship of esse and essence. This hermeneutical dilemma has not gone unobserved by either

⁷⁹ Quodl. XII, q. 5, a. 5.

⁸⁰ De Pot., 7, 2 ad 8.

⁸¹ De Pot., 7, 2 ad 5.

⁸² ST I, 45, 5 ad 1.

⁸³ De Pot., 7, 2.

⁸⁴ ST I, 54, 1.

⁸⁵ De Ver., 27, 1 ad 3; cf. Quaest. Disp. de Anima, a. 6 ad 9.

Carlo or Clarke. Clarke notes that both the 'thin' and the 'thick' essence can find textual support in Thomas.⁸⁶ Carlo acknowledges the same two streams of texts, and asks, "Is there any way of explaining or reconciling these opposed positions?"⁸⁷

Carlo has his own answer to this question.

The starting point for this entire discussion seems to me to be the doctrine of the possibles. If possible being is no being and if essences considered in themselves are in potency and potential being cannot exert causality, then essence must be considered in a new light. This means simply that essence is merely a mode of being or esse.⁸⁸

Although Carlo here disagrees with 'Primacy of Esse' Thomists on the precise nature of the starting point, his answer shares in common with theirs two characteristics. First, it seeks a metaphysical, not a methodological, starting point. Secondly, and as a consequence, it imposes a methodology on the texts themselves. That is to say, the starting point presumes the point of view from which Thomas' writings are to be interpreted, and the interpretation which results then becomes the means by which the point of view itself is demonstrated as valid. Thus, Gilson presumes that an authentic Thomism is characterized by the priority of esse and the real distinction between esse and essence, and goes on from there to demonstrate the Aristotelian/Christian synthesis which Thomas achieves and the secondary importance of a participation doctrine which is not Platonic. Carlo, on the other hand, presumes the valid principle at work in Thomas to be the non-being of

⁸⁶W. N. Clarke, Preface to Carlo, Ultimate Reducibility, p. viii.

⁸⁷Carlo, "Commentary (a)," pp. 126-127.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 127.

potency, and is thereby able to demonstrate the Platonic character of Thomas from the 'thin' essence which his starting point presumes.

Beyond the fact that such answers are quite unable to bring dissenting Thomists into dialogue with one another (their starting points being mutually exclusive), a more serious difficulty attends this metaphysical approach to the problem, namely, the fact that neither side is able to provide a convincing explanation for the two streams of texts. Gilsonian Thomists tend to deny the presence of a Platonic or Neoplatonic notion of participation, while 'Esseist' Thomists tend to dismiss the Aristotelian texts as 1) the early Thomas (Little), 2) a product of the misleading and reifying nature of essentialist Greek vocabulary which Thomas was forced to use (Phelan) or 3) Thomas' decision to use a vocabulary and a set of formulas familiar to 13th century theologians (Carlo). The first answer is not borne out by the textual evidence, while the latter two either provide no answer at all or do so at the expense of suggesting that Thomas willingly employed a vocabulary for which he really had no use to say a good many things he had no desire to say or that he played to the crowd of his day.

There is general agreement among Thomists that the early Thomas is fundamentally Aristotelian. As Clarke has noted, the fusion of Aristotelian and Platonic elements does not appear explicitly in his writings until Contra Gentiles.⁸⁹ Thomists also generally agree that Thomas employs an act/potency methodology throughout his writings. Whether this methodology is Aristotelian ('Strict Observance' Thomism),

⁸⁹ Clarke, "The Limitation of Act by Potency," p. 192. Sweeney also notes that Thomas, in his early writings, seldom applied the notion of participation to the real distinction ("Early Writings," p. 120).

a synthesis of Aristotelian and Christian elements (Gilson), a synthesis of Christian and Platonic elements within a framework which is fundamentally Aristotelian (participationist Thomists) or a synthesis of Aristotelian and Christian elements within a framework which is fundamentally Platonic ('Esseist' Thomists) cannot be determined by defining a metaphysical starting point which presumes the very answer which it then proceeds to demonstrate, but rather by examining methodology itself. We must first establish the differences between the Aristotelian and Platonic uses of act and potency, and then determine which methodology Thomas actually and explicitly employs.

Act/Potency in Plato and Aristotle

In order to distinguish the act/potency framework of Plato from that of Aristotle, it is necessary to examine briefly how each understands the relationship of form to matter. Because of his insistence that being is immaterial, Plato attributes to matter only a negative relationship with form. However one interprets the Platonic doctrine of the Forms, one thing is certain--their perfection is identified with their immateriality. Materiality introduces an element of irrationality, of non-being, into the empirical world of sense experience. As Keefe notes,

. . . it is the first insight, the a priori, of Platonism, that the existential situation is irrational: It is the product of a "Fall" which is not implicit in the essential or conceptual structures of reality.⁹⁰

As the same author goes on to observe, "being and meontic nonbeing do not compose, but war with each other."⁹¹ As a result, the Platonic

⁹⁰Keefe, Thomism, p. 34.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 132.

a priori assigns to matter an extrinsic and disruptive effect on the essential integrity and intelligibility of being.

The human situation, under these conditions, is an eros, a search, for an essential unity and meaning which the existential, empirical world is unable to provide. Plato has often been either credited with or accused of (considering one's point of view) providing a purely mythical or mystical account of how the human mind is able to know being in a world in which materiality and sense knowledge are barriers rather than paths to the 'really real.' Copleston notes that the later Plato was more inclined to stress the role of dialectic in leading the human mind to such knowledge.⁹² Nevertheless, the Platonic view of existence as disrupted and estranged lends itself easily to non-rational accounts of the material world.

Aristotle, on the other hand, refuses the Platonic a priori. How, he asks, can the Forms be separate from the things of which they are the forms?⁹³ Because he refuses to accept the notion that being and existence can be separated in this fashion, he attributes to matter a positive or composing relationship with form. Agreeing with Plato that matter is unintelligible, he nevertheless refuses to understand it as that element which disrupts intelligibility. Rather, as the principle of individuation, matter makes possible the multiplication of a single formal principle in the community of a species, which is eternal by virtue of its capacity to multiply itself indefinitely through its individual members. The material species (immanent form) is, therefore,

⁹² Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, vol. 1, part 1: Greece & Rome (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., Image Books, 1962), pp. 225-226 (hereafter cited as Copleston, Greece & Rome).

⁹³ Metaphysics, I, 991b2-3.

the Aristotelian counterpart to the immaterial (extrinsic) Platonic Form.

Because Aristotle insists that substantiality resides in material being, matter and sensible experience are not barriers, but paths to knowing that being. It is not mere chance that leads him to open the Metaphysics with a paragraph which links our natural desire to know with the delight we take in our senses.⁹⁴ Consequently, Aristotelianism is a rejection of the Platonic eros which seeks reality in a realm beyond the empirically given. Instead, Aristotelianism assumes the intrinsic intelligibility of the material world, and seeks its knowledge of being through an analysis of that world.

At this point, two clear differences between Plato and Aristotle are apparent. First, act and potency are contradictory in Plato but complementary in Aristotle. Because the Platonic potency is hostile to being, it must be identified with nonbeing. Because the Aristotelian potency is intrinsic to material being, it must be associated with that being. Here then we have the genesis of 'thin' and 'thick' potencies which, when transferred to the esse/essence distinction, translate into the 'thin' and 'thick' essences of the contemporary Thomist debate.

The second difference is a necessary corollary to the first. Because Plato understands potency to be unintelligible and disruptive of essential being, the empirical world is, by definition, incapable of submitting to rational analysis. As Copleston notes,

. . . in the Platonic physics, the chaotic element, that into which order is "introduced" by Reason, is not explained: doubtless Plato thought that it was inexplicable. It can neither be deduced nor has it been created out of nothing.

⁹⁴Metaphysics I, 980a.

It is simply there (a fact of experience), and that is all that we can say about it.⁹⁵

Here lies the Platonic attraction to myth. Matter is irrational, yet it is also factual. "Incapable of being accounted for in terms of ontology and yet fundamental in the cosmos, it [matter] found its explanation in mythical accounts of a primal tragedy."⁹⁶

Aristotle, on the other hand, assumes the intrinsic intelligibility of material things. Act and potency, for him, are therefore the tools of an analytical approach which seeks in material things the intrinsic conditions of their possibility. Having rejected the Platonic Ideas, without denying the existence of formal intelligibilities in material things, he seeks to identify the immanent forms and primal causes of things. For this reason, as de Vogel points out regarding Aristotelianism, "la méthode de la métaphysique est essentiellement une méthode d'analyse logique et non pas de synthèse spéculative."⁹⁷ Because immanent forms require material conditions for their multiplication in a species, Aristotle uses act and potency as correlative principles to explain the necessary intrinsic components of material beings.

Aristotelianism does not pretend to be a psychologism; it does not result from an investigation of the phenomena of consciousness; its concern is the logical coherence of the empirical world, and it is driven necessarily to an essentialism.⁹⁸

In fact, both Plato and Aristotle are essentialist, identifying

⁹⁵ Copleston, Greece & Rome (part 1), p. 215.

⁹⁶ Keefe, Thomism, p. 12.

⁹⁷ C. J. de Vogel, "La méthode d'Aristote en métaphysique d'après Metaphysique A 1-2," in Aristote et Les Problèmes de Méthode, ed. Suzanne Mansion (Louvain: Publications Universitaires; Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1961), p. 152.

⁹⁸ Keefe, Thomism, p. 40.

being with form or intelligibility. Because Plato's forms are extrinsic and immaterial, Plato necessarily separates being from existence. Because Aristotle's forms are immanent and materialized, Aristotle necessarily identifies being and existence. Thomas, on the other hand, uses esse and essence to go beyond their essentialism. Hence the esse/essence distinction takes priority over that of form and matter in his system. It is, therefore, the relationship of esse and essence which must be examined in order to determine his methodology.

The Methodological Resolution

Is the Thomist enterprise Aristotelian or is it Platonic? Because Thomas was most explicitly Aristotelian in his early works and only later introduced a more Platonic or Neoplatonic strand into his writings, it is necessary first to isolate those explicitly Platonic elements which he undeniably and deliberately introduced into his thought, and then to see why he did so. If it can be shown that his reasons for adopting them were to introduce the principles of Platonic method, then there is good reason to suppose he deliberately veered from Aristotle toward Plato. If, on the other hand, those elements were introduced within the context or in support of the Aristotelian view with which he originally started, we shall have good reason to suppose that it was never his intention to abandon it.

There are two notions from the Platonic/Neoplatonic tradition which Thomas clearly and deliberately made use of in his own thought. The more important of these was the Platonic doctrine of the Forms which, under the authority of Augustine, entered the Thomist world in the guise of the Divine Ideas. The second was the Neoplatonic notion of God as infinite. Since reference has already been made to

the latter notion and its use by Thomas, it will be considered first.

Infinity. As will be recalled, both Plato and Aristotle were prevented from associating infinity and being because they identified perfection and determination. If the perfect is that which is determined, then only the imperfect or undetermined can be infinite (formless). For them, therefore, infinity was necessarily associated with quantity, not quality. Plotinus and the Neoplatonists were able to advance beyond this position, attributing infinity to God. Their position, however, fell short of that later adopted by Christian theologians, inasmuch as the infinity they attributed to God was an "extrinsic and relative sort of infinity" which could be applied to God as the God who is unlimited by anything prior or extrinsic to him.⁹⁹ Furthermore, God was not Being itself, but "the One beyond form and being."¹⁰⁰ In such a system, being is still linked with intelligibility, and intelligibility is still linked with the determinateness of form.

The doctrine of creation enabled Christianity to break the Greek association between determinateness and intelligibility. As long as form and matter were regarded as uncreated, it was impossible to avoid the association of being with form (determination), inasmuch as there was nothing beyond form with which to associate it. By the same token, only matter could be regarded as in potency to being (form). Once, however, the notion arose that both form and matter are created, then both form and matter came to be regarded as potencies in relation to a source of perfection which transcended both of them. Form then

⁹⁹Sweeney, "Mediaeval Opponents," p. 245n.

¹⁰⁰Idem., "Infinity," The New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), VII:506.

began to exercise a dual function as not only a determinate perfection which limited matter to the parameters of its own perfection, but as a receptive potency which exercised its determination in relation to a perfection beyond itself.

When Thomas moved from an essential to an existential notion of God, he broke not only with the determinate forms of Plato and Aristotle, but also with the notion of form as the highest perfection. It might well be argued that, had there been no notion of God as infinite for him to adopt, Thomas would have had to develop one, inasmuch as his notion of God as Pure Act was a rejection of all previous notions of God as form, and therefore of all notions of formal limitation in God.

Nevertheless, in On Being and Essence, Thomas doesn't speak of God as infinite. Rather, He is Pure Act. In fact, it is precisely His nature as pure being which distinguishes Him from all other beings, inasmuch as pure being is such that no addition can be made to it. Universal being, on the other hand, is susceptible of addition, and every other being is a composite of this universal being and one of those additions.¹⁰¹ None of this is surprising in a work which is acknowledged to be Aristotelian. Within the Aristotelian act/potency framework, God as Pure Act and other beings as a combination of act and potency (esse/essence) is the obvious way in which to distinguish Ipsum Esse from creatures. That God is infinite and the creature finite would be the obvious corollary, but in itself not important to the discussion.

If, however, Thomas had wanted later to move to a Platonic act/potency framework, the notion of God as infinite would have helped him enormously, since it would have given him immediate grounds for shifting

¹⁰¹On Being and Essence, c. 5.

to a notion of potency as a limiting principle. He could have spoken of God as the infinite act-of-existing, who creates finite acts-of-existing. Any composition in creatures he could then have attributed to the distinction between infinite being and finite being. This is, as we have seen, the manner of speaking preferred by 'Esseist' Thomists, and we might expect to find Thomas using God's infinity to introduce this type of language, if these Thomists are correct.

When we turn, however, to the two *Summas* of Thomas, we find that such a transformation does not take place. In fact, these two works, which give us the overall structure of Thomas' thought during a period when he is presumed to have moved to a Platonic participation/limitation framework, offer striking evidence that he did not incorporate the notion of God as infinite for any purpose which could be characterized as Platonic.

First, the placement of his discussion of God's infinity in both *Summas* clearly indicates how peripheral it is in his thinking. In Book I of the Contra Gentiles, his discussion of God begins with chapter 10. God's infinity isn't discussed until chapter 43. In the *Prima Pars* of the Summa Theologiae, God's infinity is put off until question 7. In both works, the proofs for God's existence are offered before His infinity is established. More importantly, in both works the notions of simplicity and composition are employed to establish the distinction between God and creatures before God's infinity is demonstrated.

Secondly, the notion of infinity employed in both *Summas* is negative, not positive. That is to say, it is knowledge of God by way of negation. ". . . in God the infinite is understood only in a negative way, because there is no terminus or limit to His perfection: He is

supremely perfect. It is thus that the infinite ought to be attributed to God."¹⁰² For Thomas, therefore, God is primarily Pure Act and only secondarily, and by way of negation, infinite act.

In order to understand the significance of infinity as a negative attribute of God, one need only compare it with Duns Scotus' positive notion of God's infinity. Scotus understood Infinite Being, when predicated of God, to be "the most perfect absolute concept we can have of him."¹⁰³ For Scotus, therefore, infinity signalled not the absence of limitation, but "a certain grade of perfection--infinity."¹⁰⁴ Therefore, Scotus was forced to a univocal concept of being, in which the disjunctive transcendentals, infinity and finitude, express the primary distinction between God and creatures. Furthermore, since Scotus identified infinity with perfection in the sense of intelligibility, Infinite Being, for him, meant infinite intelligibility. That the 'esseist' Carlo sounds more like the 'essentialist' Scotus than like the 'existentialist' Thomas is an important point to which we shall return later in this chapter.

Thirdly, the internal evidence of Contra Gentiles I, 43 ("Quod Deus est infinitus"), and the Summa Theologiae I, 7, 1 ("utrum Deus sit infinitus"), indicates that the issue is treated, for the most part, within an Aristotelian frame of reference. The first five arguments in Contra Gentiles supporting the notion of God as infinite are all

¹⁰² CG I, 43.

¹⁰³ John Duns Scotus, Philosophical Writings, trans. Allan Wolter (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1962), p. 80.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

based, in one way or another, on the act/potency composition in creatures as contrasted with the pure actuality of God. Only one argument, the sixth, is explicitly participationist.

Question 7, article 1, of the Prima Pars of the Summa Theologiae, contains an analysis of form and matter which is half Aristotelian, half Platonic. Form is described as perfecting matter (Aristotelian), but matter is described as restricting form (Platonic). Thomas employs the Platonic notion of matter here in order to get to the notion of perfect unlimited form, so that he might transfer that notion into the order of esse itself. Therefore, he concludes that "maxime formale omnium est ipsum esse," and that God's existence is infinite because "esse divinum non sit esse receptum in aliquo, sed ipse est suum esse subsistens." Hence, Thomas uses the Platonic form for Aristotelian purposes, namely, to assert that esse divinum is unlimited perfection, par excellence, and, by implication, that form itself is limited perfection (the "aliquo" which "receives" esse).¹⁰⁵ He ends the article with the statement that "The very fact that God's existence itself subsists without being acquired by anything, and as such is limitless, distinguishes it from everything else, and sets other things aside from it."

Here we see that, contrary to the view of 'esseists' such as Little, Clarke and Carlo, as well as many participationist Thomists, Thomas argues from the simplicity of God and the composition of the creature to their respective infinity and finitude. In other words, the Aristotelian notion of act/potency provides the framework within

¹⁰⁵ Thomas' use of "reception" occurs in that stream of texts in which he has a positive notion of essence in mind. This point has not been lost on Carlo, who lists it as one of the characteristics of that stream ("Commentary (a)," p. 126).

which he demonstrates the infinity of God. Furthermore, the procedure he employs is analytical, not intuitive, dialectical, phenomenological, mythical or mystical.

Nor should it go unnoticed that the same Aristotelian act/potency framework and the same analytical procedure govern his discussion of creation in both *Summas*. We have already examined in some detail chapters 52-54 in Book 2 of Contra Gentiles, where a) the composition in intellectual substances is established on the grounds of God's simplicity and subsistence before the notion of His infinity is introduced (chapter 52), b) the notions of act and potency as proportionate and complementary to one another are established before the notion of participation is introduced and integrated into that act/potency framework (chapter 53) and c) the act/potency distinction between esse and essence is said to transcend that of form and matter, including both material and non-material being in its scope (chapter 54).

The same emphasis on the composition of act and potency appears once again in the Summa Theologiae I, 45, 4, where Thomas asks whether creation is proper to composite and subsisting things. Apart from the significance of the question itself (he does not ask if creation is proper to limited acts-of-existing), he states quite clearly (sed contra) that creation is properly attributed to composite subsisting things.

Carlo, Clarke and others appeal to this article in particular, because Thomas says quite explicitly that forms and accidents are, properly speaking, not beings, but co-existents. 'Esseist' Thomists conclude from this that the Thomist essence is 'thin,' since esse (as the first effect of creation) would appear to be the only 'existent'

produced by creation. This overlooks two statements by Thomas, in this same article, which clearly indicate that esse cannot be regarded as an 'existent'.

The first statement appears in the first objection, where the question is raised as to whether or not creation is proper to composite beings, inasmuch as, according to the De causis, "Prima rerum creatarum est esse." Thomas notes that, since "esse rei creatae non est subsistens," it would seem that creation is not properly attributed to composite (i.e., subsistent) things. In answer to this objection, Thomas again states that esse is not subsistent, and goes on to resolve the difficulty by explaining that the statement, "Prima rerum creatarum est esse" means "esse non importat subjectum creatum, sed importat propriam rationem objecti creationis." Although he does not refer to esse as a co-existent, he has already said, in the body of the article, that form is co-existent because it does not subsist, and that only subsistent things are created. Hence, the implication is quite clear that esse, although enjoying a certain ontological priority over forms and accidents, is also a co-existent.

The second statement is made with reference to the second objection, which suggests that creation would not seem to refer to composite things, inasmuch as composite things come out of their components, not out of nothing. Thomas responds that there are no pre-existing principles. Therefore, creation is the simultaneous bringing into being of the composite together with its component principles. Once again, esse is ruled out as the 'existent' produced by creation.

There is no hint of a 'thin' essence in this text from the Summa Theologiae. Furthermore, and once again, the procedure employed is

analytical, proceeding from the fact of composite beings to an examination of what can, properly speaking, be said to be produced by creation.

While the notion of God as infinite originated with Neoplatonism, it is a necessary corollary to the doctrine of God as *Ipsum Esse* as Thomas develops that doctrine in his early, Aristotelian writings. Necessary, because *Ipsum Esse* removes God from the realm of all material and formal limitation. A corollary, because it can express only negatively what Pure Act says positively. Thomas could have used the notion of God's infinity to shift his thinking into a more Platonic framework. The fact that he did not do so strongly suggests that he did not intend, in theory or in practice, to abandon the Aristotelian methodology. Can the same thing be said of the Divine Ideas?

Divine Ideas. In On Being and Essence, after discussing the essential component (form/matter) in composite substances (*esse/essence*),¹⁰⁶ Thomas considers the relationship of essence to genus, species and difference. He comes very close to suggesting that the concepts the intellect forms with regard to species are purely logical, quoting Averroes to the effect that "it is the intellect that causes universality in things." He does pull back from this position in the next paragraph, however, maintaining that the universal "is not due to the being it has in the intellect but to its relation to things in their likeness."¹⁰⁷ He does not, however, offer any explanation as to how several things are able to share in the single likeness which the mind is able to abstract from them. When we turn to the two *Summas*, however, we find there the principle of explanation--namely, the Divine Ideas as the

¹⁰⁶ On Being and Essence, c. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., c. 3.

exemplars of all created things.

Thomas' discussion of the Divine Ideas is rather sketchy in Contra Gentiles. In Book I, chapter 53, he takes up again the method which Carlo finds so questionable in the De Veritate, that of inferring from the human analogue of intellection to the presence in God of Divine Ideas. In the next chapter (54), he discusses the relationship of the Divine Ideas to the Divine Essence.

The intellect of God, therefore, can comprehend in His essence that which is proper to each thing by understanding wherein the divine essence is being imitated and wherein each thing falls short of its perfection. Thus, by understanding His essence as imitable in the mode of life [modum vitae] and not of knowledge, God has the proper form of a plant; and if He knows His essence as imitable in the mode of knowledge [modum cognitionis] and not of intellect, God has the proper form of animal, and so forth.

The statement, "wherein each thing falls short of its perfection", together with Thomas' repeated use of the word 'mode' (a favorite expression among 'thin' essence Thomists) might suggest he is introducing a Neoplatonic notion of essence as limitation, were it not for the fact that priority is given to the capacity of things to "imitate" the Divine Essence. Clearly, such an imitation must be positive, since finitude or limitation per se could not be regarded as an imitation or reflection of infinite being. That Thomas has a positive notion of essence in mind here is also reinforced by his use of the word 'mode' to designate perfections.

When we turn to the Summa Theologiae, the use of the Divine Ideas to shore up a 'thick' essence becomes even more apparent. The three articles in question 15 of the Prima Pars deal respectively with the Divine Ideas as a) exemplars and principles of knowing (article 1), b) forms of the stable and unchangeable natures of things (article 2),

and c) principles of God's speculative and practical knowledge. The same insistence on a positive view of essence reappears in question 44, article 3, which deals with God as the exemplary cause of all things. Here the emphasis is on how God must be recognized as exemplar cause, in order to account for the fact that things reach out to achieve determinate forms. Thomas attributes these determinate forms to the Divine Wisdom, concluding that, "Hence we should say that divine wisdom holds the originals of all things, and these we have previously called the Ideas, that is the exemplar forms existing in the divine mind."

It should come as no surprise that Thomas incorporates the Platonic Forms into his system in order to underwrite a positive notion of essence. The Platonic Form is, after all, the thick essence personified (or, rather, reified). Paradoxically, Thomas has recourse to the very doctrine which Aristotle so vigorously rejected in order to provide a transcendental grounding for the Aristotelian notion of positive potency. And he does so for a most Aristotelian reason, namely, to furnish a priori conditions of possibility for the essential component in existing things. The Divine Ideas, far from providing the occasion for a conversion to Platonism, are employed for strictly Aristotelian purposes.

We are now in a position to answer Carlo's question, "Why not describe essence, then, as the place where esse stops, bordered by nothingness?" The reason is clear. The Thomist project is not one of description, but one of analysis. To say that essence is the place where esse stops does nothing more than state a fact of our everyday experience, i.e., that things are finite. Such a description supposes the capacity (potency) of esse to stop, but provides no analysis of

the conditions of possibility which would permit esse to stop. If being is simple and unlimited by nature, then the positing of essence as a limiting principle intrinsic to being makes no sense. Being, by definition, would have no intrinsic capacity for such a limiting principle. If, on the other hand, being does contain such a principle, then that principle must be essence (potency). But, in that case, essence cannot be understood as a negative principle, for it would lie on the side of being. To posit God as the efficient cause of limitation doesn't improve upon the situation either, since God's ability to limit esse to particular modes presupposes the capacity (potency) of esse to submit to such a limitation.

Carlo has, in fact, abandoned altogether the analytical approach employed by Thomas. He makes this clear in his characterization of act and potency as "schematic," not "ontological," principles.

As in all other sciences we find in metaphysics both ontological and schematic principles. By schematic principles I mean those whose primary purpose is to organize or unify the multifarious data of the science (like the atomic theory in physics), rather than to capture more directly some aspect of reality. To our mind potency and act are principles of this order.¹⁰⁸

Carlo has adopted, in place of the Thomist methodology, a form of Platonism which, at its best, is phenomenological or descriptive, and, at its worst, is mythic. It is Carlo, after all, who characterizes essence as rising "out of the flood of esse like Thetis from the frothy wave."¹⁰⁹

Carlo's dilemma can be traced to his desire to synthesize Aristotelian and Platonic methodology in a way which is simply impossible.

¹⁰⁸ Carlo, Ultimate Reducibility, p. 92.

¹⁰⁹ Idem., "Commentary (a)," p. 128.

He wishes to combine the Aristotelian notion of substantial reality as material reality (form/matter) with the Platonic notion of being as monist (form). This leads him to attempt to account for Aristotle's composed substances by means of Plato's single principle. When transferred into the existentialism of Thomas, this project forces a reduction of essence/esse to esse alone. Since, however, esse alone cannot account for finite being, the notion of non-being must necessarily be introduced. Once this notion is introduced, the Aristotelian substance has been abandoned in favor of the Platonic substance.

At this point, two courses are possible. One can maintain, with Little, that finite acts-of-being are "shot through and through, as it were, with non-being" (the Platonic 'fall' from the full integrity of being) or one can maintain, with Carlo, that material beings are limited acts-of-existing enjoying the same nature (esse) as God, though in a finite mode. As Henle notes, the Platonic notion of participation can issue only in a pure extrinsicism or in a pantheism.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ R. Henle, Saint Thomas and Platonism (The Hague: N. Nijhoff, 1956), p. 377. The charge of pantheism is one to which 'thin essence' Thomists are particularly sensitive, and one which they, to a man, deny.

Little tries to avoid the charge by recourse to the notion that finitude itself destroys any pantheist identity between God and creatures. "Thus creatures are not miniature replicas of God, but rather constituted of limiting essences that smother every divine property in them while yet leaving in their existences indications that what has been smothered is divine" (The Platonic Heritage of Thomism, p. 116). However plausible this might sound, it does not actually explain anything. No principle is offered to account for how a quantifying (finitizing) of esse could "smother every divine property," much less leave intact a limited, definable perfection in the esse so smothered. Nor is it easy to see how Little's notion of essence as the "no-moreness" of being is to be reconciled with the statement that finite beings are "shot through and through" with non-being. As "no more" being, non-being should lie outside the limit, not penetrate it. Actually Little's views are so ambiguous as to defy close analysis.

Phelan maintains that pantheism is avoided because esse can never be regarded as a thing. "If one must talk the language of participation,

Plato and Aristotle: Can They Be Synthesized?

Even if the above consideration of divine infinity and the Divine Ideas gives us good reason to suppose that Thomas never intended to abandon an Aristotelian notion of act/potency, the fact still remains that a great deal of what he says cannot be made to fit into that Aristotelian framework. If the doctrines of God's infinity and of the Divine Ideas offer evidence that Thomas actually employed an Aristotelian methodology, do they also offer evidence as to why Neoplatonic elements find their way into that methodology? Carlo's question, "How is a multiplicity of Divine Ideas rooted in the Divine Essence?" is very much

I would say, also, 'There is no being, esse, save the divine being, Esse; and all beings participate it.' This sounds pantheistic only to the ears of those who still think of esse as something ("The Being of Creatures," p. 125). A problem, however, then arises with regard to things. If esse is not a thing and essence is non-being, how does the composition of a non-thing with non-being produce a being or a thing? To fall back, as Phelan does, on essence as a 'mode of being' is either to import the very positivity which his original use of the word 'mode' was designed to eliminate or it is to suppose that a mere juggling of words will suffice to achieve plausibility.

Carlo tries to avoid the accusation of pantheism by recourse to efficient causality. "The real danger in explaining the relations of creatures to God is not atheism but pantheism, the ties between Ipsum Esse and finite esses are much profounder than any differences. But as long as we remember that esse is communicated through efficient causality and not formal causality there is no danger of pantheism, of making God the Form of the World as William of Auvergne was tempted to do" (Ultimate Reducibility, p. 109). Since, however, the reduction of essence to esse is simultaneously the reduction of formal causality to efficient causality, the problem has merely been shifted to the existential order, where it remains unanswered and apparently unanswerable. For, as was previously noted, God's efficient causality can produce limited esse only if esse itself has the capacity (potency) for such limitation. By denying to potency any ontological status, Carlo denies the formal principle which God's efficient causality requires in order to operate at all. Carlo leaves the impression (in no way mitigated by his illustrations) that esse "flows" until it meets a wall of non-being, at which point it simply stops. To fall back upon efficient causality alone to account for this seems tantamount to saying that God creates the non-being which stops esse, an unhappy prospect on two counts, since it saddles God with non-being at the same time that it fails to provide any principle by which non-being can be understood to stop being.

to the point. For the point at issue is Thomas' synthesis of Aristotle and Plato. Can such a synthesis be done, or is the project itself an impossible, because contradictory, one? Before answering that question, we need to examine more closely the synthesis which Thomas attempted.

What shall be argued here is that the Aristotelian methodology is incompatible with Plato's Forms. The notion of God as Pure Act stands in direct contradiction to the notion of God's Essence as containing formal distinctions. The fact that Thomas is careful to insist that God's essence does not actually contain a multiplicity of Ideas in no way mitigates the basic contradiction which this doctrine introduces into his thought.

The basic contradiction stems from the fact that Thomas seeks a transcendental grounding for both components in the esse/essence distinction. Through esse, the creature is understood to participate existentially in the pure, infinite act which is Ipsum Esse. Through essence, the creature is understood to participate essentially or formally in the Divine Essence as God understands it to be imitable. In order to account for this notion of a dual participation in God, Thomas must reintroduce into the notion of God, which he had previously purged of all formal connotations, the Divine Ideas as the forms or exemplars of His creative activity. This contradiction is what Carlo's question addresses. And the answer to it is quite obvious. The Divine Ideas cannot be rooted in the Divine Essence, if God is pure, simple, infinite act. Nor can the Ideas themselves retain their qualitative character (i.e., as forms, perfections, intelligibilities) once they are placed there. This latter point is one which seems to have escaped most Thomists. 'Esseist' Thomists alone appreciate it. Their 'thin' essence is the product of

that appreciation.

The quantification of the Divine Ideas stems from the fact that if *Ipsum Esse* is one utterly simple and infinite perfection, it cannot be conceived as split up into a multiplicity of perfections or intelligibilities which are essentially different from its own perfection. A single infinite quality cannot itself be the source of a multiplicity of qualities. It can only be quantified or 'contracted' into smaller and smaller amounts, such that what is produced is not a multiplicity of natures distinct from the divine nature qualitatively, but a multiplicity of grades in being which are distinct from the divine nature quantitatively. Thomas himself cannot escape the logic of this situation. As a result, the Divine Ideas, which Thomas imports to ground the 'thick' essences he wants in created things, are unable to retain their 'thickness' or qualitative character vis a vis the infinite qualitative perfection of *Ipsum Esse*. Created qualities thus find themselves grounded in transcendental quantifications.

The results are unfortunate. For the quantitative Idea (the 'thin' essence which can now only limit the quantity of esse in finite beings) is forced to compete with the qualitative essence (the 'thick' essence which constitutes the intelligibility or perfection in composite beings). As a result, qualitatively distinct species must try to find a place for themselves in a Porphyrian universe of quantitatively descending 'modes' of being. The two incompatible streams of texts in Thomas reflect these contradictions.

The introduction of the Divine Ideas forces a reduction of quality to quantity from which there is no turning back. But the responsibility for this reduction cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the Divine

Ideas. Three other factors played an important role in its development. First, the path which Thomas takes here was, unhappily, blazed by Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonism and Christianity before him.

Plato's identification of the Forms with Numbers was an attempt to identify the qualitative with the quantitative. As Copleston notes, "Plato's motive in identifying Forms with Numbers seems to be that of rationalising or rendering intelligible the mysterious and transcendent-al world of Forms. To render intelligible in this case means to find the principle of order."¹¹¹ Although Aristotle rejected the Number-Form doctrine, he in fact trod down the same path with his notion that the differences which constitute species in their genus could be reduced to mathematical units of one. As Copleston notes (with regard to Plato, but it is applicable to Aristotle as well), this whole procedure of "panmathematicism" is a form of rationalization, the validity of which is highly questionable.

That the real is rational is a presupposition of all dogmatic philosophy, but it does not follow that the whole of reality can be rationalised by us. The attempt to reduce all reality to mathematics is not only an attempt to rationalise all reality--which is the task of philosophy, it may be said--but presupposes that all reality can be rationalised by us, which is an assumption.¹¹²

The major factor which prevented this quantification process from coming to full term in Plato and Aristotle was the fact that neither of them managed to locate the forms within a single identifiable perfection which transcended them qualitatively. Plato kept the Forms separate from the Demiurge, whereas Aristotle denied to the world any transcendent source of its intelligibility. As a result, the forms

¹¹¹Copleston, Greece & Rome (part 1), p. 219.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 221.

remained qualitative in relationship to matter and qualitatively distinct in relationship to one another.

When Plotinus and the Neoplatonists placed the Forms within Mind or Thought, a further quantification of them was inevitable. Now Quality was identified with Mind or Thought, such that the Forms contemplated by Mind could only be understood as diverse quantifications of that single quality. The result was the so-called Porphyrian tree, by which the qualitative distinctions found in the universe were thought to be quantified degrees of the single perfection of Mind from which they originated and to which they could be reduced. When Christian theologians saw their way clear to placing the Platonic Forms in the mind of God, they also found a way to make the Porphyrian universe their own. Thomas, as heir to this long process by which form became increasingly associated with quantity, could not but be strongly influenced by it.

The second factor contributing to Thomas' quantification of form stems from the fact that Thomas seems not to have recognized the full implications of his transformation of the act/potency distinction from the essential realm of form/matter to the existential realm of esse/essence. The act/potency distinction in Aristotle is specifically designed to account for change, and change is defined as the reduction of potency to act. In a form/matter universe, this necessarily means the reduction of quantity (matter) to quality (form). Under these circumstances, to be better means to be more in act.

Once the act/potency distinction is transferred to the existential order, however, the relationship of act and potency can no longer be regarded in such reductionistic terms. For, at this level, essence itself is an act, and it makes no sense to speak of the reduction of

act (essence) to act (esse). Nevertheless, Thomas seems not to have recognized completely this transformation of the act/potency relationship at the level of esse/essence. Hence, he accounts for the angelic hierarchy, in his early as well as his later writings, by a quantified notion of form which supposes that the superior angel has "more" act and "less" potency. This reduction of formal act to esse reflects a direct transfer of the essentialist notion of potency (matter) as quantitative to the existential level, where potency (form) continues to be regarded as quantitative.

The third factor is Thomas' inconsistency with regard to the principle that being cannot be the source of its own diversification. The principle itself is Platonic. It is precisely this principle which requires Plato to appeal to meontic non-being as the source of diversity. Thomas, however, did not adhere strictly to this principle. Instead, he appealed, via the Divine Ideas, to the Divine Essence as the ground of diverse intelligibilities among creatures. This is the paradox, referred to earlier, of using one Platonic doctrine (the Forms) to deny another one (the monism of being).

With the recovery of the primacy of esse, this paradox could not go unnoticed for long. Once the notion of esse as the source of all perfection and intelligibility was rediscovered, it became all too apparent that the real distinction between a formal intelligibility and its actuation was in fact a questionable distinction between a finite and an infinite intelligibility. In fact, it could be reduced to a distinction between the unlimited and the limited. This reduction was the discovery of 'thin' essence Thomists. It is also the source of their unhappiness with the Divine Ideas. To use the Divine Essence to ground

the essential diversification of esse is tantamount to saying that being does contain within itself the principles of its own diversification. Unlike Thomas, 'thin' essence Thomists will not grant this.

In reducing the paradox of Thomas to the "exclusivity of esse," however, Carlo and his colleagues have unwittingly introduced a new paradox into the history of Thomism. For their new 'esseist' position bears remarkable resemblance to the old 'essentialist' position. This has already been commented on with regard to Duns Scotus. We do not have to look far to discover the reason. In reducing the intelligibility of essence to esse, 'thin' essence Thomists return again to a view of esse as infinite intelligibility and to essence as its finite mode. Hence all beings are "grades of perfection" of one single infinite perfection. As Lindbeck, an adherent of the position developed by Little, notes,

Simply by having esse, creatures imitate God. All their other similarities to the divine stem from this, for perfections ontologically common to God and creatures are either convertible with being or are, as in the case of intelligence, pure perfections of being.¹¹³

In a revealing footnote to this remark, Lindbeck adds,

The extraordinary way in which St. Thomas argues that to know is to contain the form of another, therefore that which contains all forms, Infinite Being, must be the supremely intelligent (v ST. I, 14, 1, resp.) has led Hans Wagner to speak of "absolute idealism" and to say "der thomistische Universalienrealismus ist in Wahrheit ein konkreter Idealismus." Existenz, Analogie und Dialektik, Munich, Reinhardt, 1953, 198-9.

For this reason, Lindbeck maintains that "St. Thomas' doctrine of existence is participationist and--to use a word that thus becomes very nearly meaningless--'essentialist!'"¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Lindbeck, "Participation," (June 1957), p. 115.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 110. There is one important distinction, nevertheless,

The error Carlo makes in his interpretation of Thomas lies in the very starting point Carlo has chosen. The principle that being cannot diversify itself is Platonic, and, in adopting that position, Carlo cannot but impose a Platonic methodology upon Thomas. Thus he fails to recognize the fact that Thomas himself does not adhere to that principle, and, in fact, explicitly employs the Divine Ideas to get around it.

Carlo is, on the other hand, correct in thinking that the Divine Ideas cannot be placed in the Divine Essence. A real distinction in creatures cannot be accounted for by positing two separate streams of participation in a single, utterly simple source. One cannot simply identify in the Creator what is distinct in creation.

Thomas' initial error lay in supposing that being does not contain the principles of its own diversification. This was both a methodological and a theological error. The Aristotelian methodology requires, as we have seen, that potency be both placed on the side of being and yet distinguished from it. Christian theology likewise, in its doctrine of the Trinity, demands acknowledgement of diversity within God.¹¹⁵

Thomas' second error was his use of the Divine Ideas to ground the qualitative diversity of created essence. Again, the mistake was both

between essentialism and esseism. The essentialist, by reducing esse to essence, emphasizes the formal or static character of existing things at the expense of their dynamism. The esseist, by reducing essence to esse, emphasizes their dynamism at the expense of their formal characteristics or natures.

¹¹⁵ Thomas was not unaware of this. In his discussion of the Divine Ideas in the Summa Theologiae, he cites the objection that if the Divine Ideas are eternal in God, "it follows that there is in God another real plurality besides that of the divine Persons: but this is contrary to the words of John Damascene that in God all is one except Ungeneration, Generation and Procession" (ST I, 15, 2).

methodological and theological. The Aristotelian methodology does not require the positing of an extrinsic source for the formal principles of things. On the contrary, because Aristotle denied Plato's doctrine of the extrinsic Forms, the methodology forbids it. Instead, the Aristotelian inquiry is an inquiry into the intrinsic conditions of possibility for formal intelligibilities. At the same time, the Christian doctrine of creation ex nihilo also forbids the positing of a priori conditions of possibility for creation. By introducing the Divine Ideas as the a priori conditions of possibility for created essence, Thomas attempts to rationalize what the doctrine maintains is beyond the reach of our reason. If this notion of the Divine Ideas is carried to its logical conclusion, it leads to a denial of creation ex nihilo. Phelan offers an excellent case in point, when he says,

In being created creatures do not pass from potency to act; no potency precedes the act of absolutely beginning to be. They pass unintelligibly mysteriously by virtue of the wisdom and power of God, from being in the Divine Mode (i.e., in the Esse of God) to being in the created mode (i.e. in the esse proper to each). Thus God is each and every creature; but no creature is God, nor all creatures together. Existing from all eternity in the Esse of God, creatures emerge by the will of the Creator into another mode of being (esse), limited, determined, restricted but nevertheless not separated, though distinct, from the divine mode.¹¹⁶

Both Thomas and Carlo make the same error. It is the methodological error of supposing that Plato and Aristotle can be synthesized. Each attempts in a different way to do so, and each fails.

From a theological viewpoint, which was of course Thomas' viewpoint, the temptation to synthesize Plato and Aristotle is enormous, inasmuch as each one seems to provide what the other lacks. Plato's being transcends the material world, and therefore lends itself more

¹¹⁶ Phelan, "The Being of Creatures," p. 125.

easily to a theological conversion than does Aristotle's material being. Of course, Plato's notion of matter is impossible to reconcile with the 'good creation,' but then Aristotle is at hand to help out there. At the metaphysical level, Plato's transcendent being and Aristotle's immanent being seem complementary and, more importantly, their synthesis would seem to provide the ideal metaphysical context for discussing the transcendent/immanent God of Christianity.

At the level of methodology, however, the situation is quite different. Platonic and Aristotelian methodology are mutually exclusive, because a) they hold opposing views of being, and, as a result, b) they are diametrically opposed with regard to the role of potency (matter) in material things.

Substance is the a priori unity of being, and therefore the understanding and the reality of substance is identified with the understanding and the reality of being itself. The notion of substance may be logical or intuitive. It has been seen that there are two mutually exclusive methods of ontology, which correspond to these two notions of substance: the logical method of Aristotelianism, and the intuitive method of Platonism. The former asserts the materiality of substance, the latter requires its immateriality.¹¹⁷

The notion of being which informs each of these methodologies cannot be separated from its corresponding notion of potency or matter. One cannot combine Plato's notion of being with Aristotle's notion of act/potency. The two simply exclude one another. Thomas' attempt to synthesize them produced a number of contradictions in his thought. Carlo's attempt to interpret Thomas' thought as synthetic has issued in a suppression of the Aristotelian methodology which Thomas made his own.

¹¹⁷Keefe, Thomism, p. 29.

Thomist Methodology: Its Correct Application

We have thus far maintained that 'Primacy of Esse' Thomists are correct in supposing that Thomas is Aristotelian, not Platonic, and that the 'thick' Aristotelian essence does not shatter in a Thomist universe. Does this mean that it enters that universe intact, as Gilson and Owens presume? Or, to repeat Carlo's question, "Is essence indifferent to being eternal or created?" Since we also maintain at this point that 'esseist' Thomists are correct in supposing that the Divine Ideas cannot be used to ground that essence, it might reasonably be expected that the Aristotelian essence is in for some severe shocks in a Thomist world, shocks which escaped the attention of Gilson and Owens.

In order to understand just what changes the Aristotelian essence does undergo, in other words, to understand how Thomist methodology properly applies to essence, we must next examine, first, the Aristotelian essence itself, and, secondly, the impact of esse on that essence in the composite beings of Thomas' world, being which, in their composition, bear above all the mark of having been created.

CHAPTER 3

ARISTOTLE'S IMMANENT FORM AND THOMIST METHODOLOGY

We have alluded to the fact that Gilsonian Thomists understand Aristotelian substances both to enter Thomas' world intact and to be radically transformed by that entry. What do they mean by this? The primary thing Gilson means is that it is possible for us to make a "sharp contrast between the point of view of existence and that of substance"¹ in existing things.

If we look at the world of creatures from the point of view of its existence, then it is true to say that it has no existence of its own. Existence is in it, just as light is in the air at noon, but the existence of the world never is its existence; so that, in so far, at least, as the world itself is concerned, it can lose existence at a moment's notice, or, rather, without previous notice. On the other hand, if we look at this existing world from the point of view of its substance, there are aspects in it that tally with such a view, but there are others that do not.²

Existentially speaking, the world is radically contingent. So much so, in fact, that "even though it were demonstratively proven that this created world is destined always to exist, it still would remain a permanently contingent world."³ From the point of view of existence, Aristotelian substances do not exist, as they do in Aristotle's world, in their own right. This difference between the two worlds "should be understood as both radical and total."⁴

¹Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 163.

²Ibid., p. 162.

³Ibid., p. 160.

⁴Ibid.

Nevertheless, what does not tally with such a view, according to Gilson, is the substantially indestructible character of things in themselves.

Nothing looks more precarious than a thus-conceived world, in which no essence can ever be its own act of existing, yet the world of Thomas Aquinas is made by God to wear as long as that of Aristotle, that is, never to wear away. Why is it so? This is, I think, one of the most difficult points to grasp in the whole metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas, because we are here invited to conceive creatures as being, at one and the same time, indestructible in themselves, yet wholly contingent in their relation to God.⁵

The Thomist world is, therefore, "a world of Aristotelian substances which are in their own right. It is both a substantially eternal and an existentially contingent world."⁶ For this reason, Gilson maintains that "the Aristotelian substance remains intact in the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas."⁷

Yves Congar agrees that things can be understood in two different ways. Noting first that the Augustinian tradition tends to view things solely from the perspective of their relationship to God, such that things are regarded "not in their pure essence, but in their reference to the last goal,"⁸ Congar points out that this is not the Thomist approach to things.

On the other hand, for St. Thomas and for Albert the Great, his master, if it was true to say that everything had a relation to the last goal, i.e., God, this, however, was under the formality of the final cause and the exemplary cause, the latter, a kind of extrinsic formal cause. It was not under the relation

⁵ Ibid., pp. 161-162.

⁶ Ibid., p. 162.

⁷ Ibid., p. 170.

⁸ Yves M.-J. Congar, A History of Theology, trans. and ed. Hunter Guthrie (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 104.

of the form itself, whereby a being is properly said to exist. Things had their own nature which did not consist in their reference or their order to God. So, concentrating merely on what things were in themselves, we could see in them the nature, the quid, by distinguishing this form from the mode or the concrete state or from the reference to an end. In this perspective, things, but particularly human nature, remained the same under the different states in which they were cloaked and, most significantly, human nature under the regimen of the Fall as in the Christian dispensation.⁹

Congar, as can be seen, draws a somewhat different distinction than does Gilson. Gilson's distinction between the existential and the substantial is, to all practical intents and purposes, the esse/essence distinction. Things can be viewed either from the point of view of esse (existentially) or from the point of view of essence or form/matter (which is the Aristotelian substance). For Congar, on the other hand, the distinction drawn is entirely on the side of essence, where a differentiation is made between the form in relation to its extrinsic formal cause and the form itself, as the proper nature of a thing.

Both Gilson and Congar accept God as the source of created essences. Gilson, however, is reluctant to conclude from this that essences establish a bond of similarity and, therefore, of relatedness between the creature and God. On the contrary, since God as Ipsum Esse "is no particular essence," essence introduces an element of otherness, "namely, the very otherness which distinguishes it from its own possible existence."¹⁰ Congar, on the other hand, sees essence, under the rubric of finality and exemplarity, as necessarily related to God as extrinsic formal and final cause and yet, at the same time,

⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 180.

as a form in its own right which can therefore be considered apart from that relationship to God. "St. Thomas, instead of looking at things more or less globally from the angle of a first cause and the final end, had a formal view from the standpoint of the things themselves."¹¹ This notion that the intelligibility (essence) of the world both relates the world to God and establishes it in its own right is well expressed by Hampus Lyttkens in his study of the Thomist analogy of being.

. . . creation can according to St. Thomas be regarded in two different ways: absolutely, or in relation to God. The likeness to God existing in creation can either be regarded absolutely, and creation is then designated in accordance with its own nature. The concept does not then imply any relation to something higher. The same property can, however, also be seen in the light of its perfect correspondence in God. It is then apparent that what exists in creation is merely an imperfect image of the divine perfection. A concept stating something of creation will consequently in this case also be imperfect. It has not its primary, perfect significance, but a lower, ¹² secondary. It becomes an analogous designation of creation.

Thomists such as Gilson and Congar are inclined to view Thomism as a synthesis of Aristotle and Christianity, rather than of Aristotle and Plato. Since the Christian doctrine of creation accounts for the world's dependence on God, we must return to the Aristotelian notion, first, of form (Congar), and then of substance (Gilson) in order to determine why it is that these Thomists argue for a formal or substantial independence in existing things.

Aristotle's Immanent Form

As noted in chapter 2, Aristotle refused the Platonic Ideal Form.

¹¹ Congar, A History of Theology, p. 105.

¹² Hampus Lyttkens, The Analogy Between God and the World, trans. Axel Poignant (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1952), p. 267.

Instead, he insisted that form be located within material reality, not apart from it. As Copleston points out, we have here the "doctrine of the immanent Form."¹³ Because Aristotle's God is neither efficient nor exemplary cause of the world, the world, formally considered, enjoys complete independence vis a vis him. The intelligibilities (forms) of the things of the world are, therefore, immanent not only in the sense of being accessible to the human mind, but also in the sense of deriving from no causes outside the world. A synthesis of Aristotle and Christianity, therefore, seemed to Christian minds to require the combining of the Aristotelian immanent form with a Christian extrinsic formal cause (God as Creator). This signals once again the appearance of the Divine Ideas, which were used to effect this synthesis.

Here, however, with regard to creation itself and our twofold view of it, Thomas adds a twist to the doctrine of the Divine Ideas. He draws a distinction between them as ratios and as exemplars. As exemplars, the Divine Ideas function as a part of God's practical knowledge whereby existing things are providentially ordered to Himself. As ratios, they function as part of His speculative knowledge whereby He knows things according to their proper natures. This distinction is set forth at some length in the Summa Theologiae,¹⁴ but the clearest brief account of it is found in De Veritate, where Thomas writes,

Two aspects of a creature can be considered: first, its species taken absolutely; second, its relation to an end. The form of each exists previously in God. The exemplary form of a thing considered absolutely in its species is an idea; but the form of a thing considered as directed to an end is called providence.¹⁵

¹³ Copleston, Greece & Rome (part II), p. 41.

¹⁴ ST I, 15, 3.

¹⁵ De Ver., 5, 1 ad 1.

Commenting on this passage, Leo Ward notes that,

Anything in our world may be studied under the aspect of two realities at once, namely, the very nature of the thing and its "orderly relation (ordo) to the end"; the form belonging to each of these, to the nature of the thing and to its order or direction, comes from God; the form of the thing as "directed to an end" is called Providence.¹⁶

This distinction between ratio and exemplar seems clearly to be what Congar has in mind when he speaks of Thomas' "strictly Aristotelian distinction between the order of exercise and that of specification."¹⁷ As God has speculative knowledge of all essences, so do we. And that knowledge which we have is compatible with the Aristotelian principle of immanent forms which are both independent of God and accessible to the human mind.

Certainly St. Thomas was not ignorant any more than St. Bonaventure that all things must be referred to God. But alongside that reference to God in the order of use or exercise, he recognized an unconditioned bounty to the speculative intellect in the nature or specification of things, which was a work of God's wisdom. There was question of speculatively reconstructing the order of forms, of rationes, put into things and into the very mysteries of salvation by the wisdom of God. Such a program could be realized only by a knowledge of forms and natures in themselves. This is why St. Thomas' Aristotelianism is not external to his theological wisdom or to the very conception he has fashioned of it.¹⁸

Once again, however, the Thomist use of the Divine Ideas provokes a battle between thick and thin essences, this time with regard not to being per se, but to creation and its Creator. The exemplar, as ordered to God, is the 'thin' essence'; the ratio, as containing no explicit reference to God, is 'thick'. We shall examine, as is proper from a theological perspective, first, the Creator and those dichotomies

¹⁶ Leo R. Ward, God and the World Order (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1961), p. 95.

¹⁷ Congar, A History of Theology, p. 106.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 108

which the thick and thin essences produce with regard to Him, and then creation, with its corresponding dichotomies.

God the Creator: The Good or Goodness?

Arthur O. Lovejoy, in The Great Chain of Being, discusses at some length the dichotomy, which originated with Plato and continues into modern thought, between an "otherworldliness" which seeks "The Good" in a realm beyond the existential and a "thisworldliness" which locates goodness in the concrete actuality of existing things. Plato originated the dualism, with his supposition that the world constitutes not only a 'fall' from essential goodness but a shadowy manifestation of that essential goodness as well.

The world as "the great chain of being," implicit in Plato's thought, came explicitly into its own at the hands of the Neoplatonists. According to this notion, the world is constituted by

. . . an infinite number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents, which barely escape non-existence, through "every possible" grade up to the ens perfectissimum--or, in a somewhat more orthodox version, to the highest possible kind of creature, between which and the Absolute Being the disparity was assumed to be infinite--every one of them differing from that immediately above and that immediately below it by the "least possible" degree of difference.¹⁹

Such a world was understood to be ordered by the "principle of plenitude." According to this principle, in producing the world God produced a kind of mirror image of Himself. 'Natures' are therefore imitations of divine perfection, and the totality of divine perfection is mirrored in a descending hierarchy of perfections which contains no gaps because it encompasses the whole of the divine perfection. As Lovejoy points out, however, this notion of the universe promoted confusion regarding

¹⁹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 59.

man's ultimate goal, because it promoted two conflicting notions of God.

The final good for man, as almost all Western philosophers for more than a millennium agreed, consisted in some mode of assimilation or approximation to the divine nature, whether that mode was defined as imitation or contemplation or absorption. The doctrine of the divine attributes was thus also, and far more significantly, a theory of the nature of ultimate value, and the conception of God was at the same time the definition of the objective of human life; the Absolute Being, utterly unlike any creature in nature, was yet the primum exemplar omnium. But the God in whom man was thus to find his own fulfillment was, as has been pointed out, not one God but two. He was the Idea of the Good, but he was also the Idea of Goodness; and though the second attribute was normally deduced dialectically from the first, no two notions could be more antithetic. The one was an apotheosis of unity, self-sufficiency, and quietude, the other of diversity, self-transcendence and fecundity. . . . The one God was the goal of the 'way up,' of that ascending process by which the finite soul, turning from all created things, took its way back to the immutable Perfection in which alone it could find rest. The other God was the source and the informing energy of that descending process by which being flows through all the levels of possibility down to the very lowest. . . . There was no way in which the flight from the Many to the One, the quest of a perfection defined wholly in terms of contrast with the created world, could be effectually harmonized with the imitation of a Goodness that delights in diversity and manifests itself in the emanation of the Many out of the One.²⁰

When Christianity adopted the Neoplatonic Scale of Being (the Porphyrian tree discussed in chapter 2), the conflict became even more apparent--and more complex. Now God's freedom as Creator had to be reconciled with a principle of plenitude which seemed to specify the kind of universe God must create in order to guarantee that the fullness of His perfection be completely mirrored there.

. . . it was impossible for a medieval writer to make any use of the principle of plenitude without verging upon heresies. For that conception, when taken over into Christianity, had to be accommodated to the very different principles, drawn from other sources, which forbade its literal interpretation; to carry it through to what seemed to be its necessary implications was to be sure of falling into one theological pitfall or another.²¹

²⁰Ibid., pp. 83-84.

²¹Ibid., p. 69.

Hence, medieval theologians found it increasingly necessary to maintain God's freedom "by denying . . . that the actual exercise of the creative potency extends of necessity through the entire range of possibility."²² This, in turn, threatened the chain of being, by supposing that 'gaps' could exist in it, thereby jeopardizing the notion that the universe constitutes a complete mirror image of the divine perfection. At the same time, it seemed to suggest that God's freedom to deny the world some manifestation of His own goodness is nothing more or less than divine whim, the exercising of free will solely for its own sake.

In Thomas' writings, the problem regarding God is most acute with regard to divine causality. Does God create according to nature or according to will? Thomas' answer to this question seems to rest on an identity of nature and will in God, such that what would be regarded as natural causality in a created being is actually voluntary causality in God. For Thomas maintains that a natural agent is by definition a determinate being and therefore able to produce only one effect. If this is what it means to act 'naturally,' then clearly God does not and cannot do so.

Now God's being is not of a determinate kind, but contains in itself the whole perfection of being, and consequently does not act by the determinism of a nature--unless perhaps it were to cause indeterminate and indefinite reality, and this we have shown to be impossible [I, 7, 2]. Therefore God does not act from necessity of nature, but defined effects proceed from his infinite perfection by the resolution of his intelligence and will.²³

Furthermore, Thomas argues that, since God's being is His intellect, all effects of His will pre-exist in Him not by nature, but by

²² Ibid., p. 70.

²³ ST I, 19, 4.

intellect.²⁴ Hence, he causes everything voluntarily, not naturally.

Thomas has actually avoided the central issue at stake here by the simple expedient of defining his way around it. The central issue is not whether God could create an undetermined being such as Himself. The central issue is whether or not He is bound to create a universe of determined beings which mirror, in their diverse perfections, the total perfection of His own nature. In other words, is God capable of creating a world genuinely 'other' than Himself (thick essence) or is He instead able to create only such worlds as imitate His own nature (thin essence). If the latter is the case, then there is excellent reason to argue that, just as a determinate being 'naturally' produces the one determinate effect appropriate to its nature, so God 'naturally' produces the one order of determinate effects (the world) appropriate to His nature.

The issue is more important than is generally recognized, for it relates directly to whether or not God is The Good or Goodness. Lovejoy misunderstands the basic dichotomy here. For him, the fundamental split occurs between The Good, which is indifferent to everything not itself, and the principle of plenitude, which Lovejoy characterizes as "the expansiveness and self-transcendence of 'the Good'".²⁵ For him, therefore, the antidote to a view of God as The Good rests on a reinvestment in the principle of plenitude, which reveals God as Goodness. What Lovejoy fails to see is that the principle of plenitude, far from offering a solution to the problem, is the problem itself. If medieval theologians were aware of the pitfalls in such a principle,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 63.

we could do worse than rediscover them for ourselves. In order to do so, we must turn to an examination of the doctrine of creation and the dichotomies which there correspond to the ones already seen in the doctrine of God.

Creation: Theocentric or Anthropocentric?

In his book, The Order of the Universe in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, John Wright notes that one can find time and again, in Thomas' writings, two different ways in which the universe is said to be ordered to God. Wright refers to one of these as a "general," the other as a "particular," ordering.

The "general" ordering is, although Wright never designates it as such, "the great chain of being."

God in His eternity contemplated the superabundant riches of His divine goodness and saw the infinite number of ways it could be shared by created imitations of Himself. He saw that it was lovable not only as His own proper good, but also as the common good of beings distinct from and dependent on Himself. . . .

God, therefore, willed to manifest His perfection and to impress His likeness upon creatures "as far as this was possible". And since no single creature was capable of receiving in itself this divine outpouring, of showing forth the full splendor of the divine goodness, He decreed to create a vast multitude of beings so that the perfection which exists simply and uniformly in Himself might exist in variety and multiplicity in creatures.²⁶

Within this ordering, the universe is the primary created effect which God intends, and all parts in it are ordered to one another for the sake of the common good which constitutes the universe as such. This type of ordering produces a theocentric world, i.e., a world which exists to mirror the divine perfection itself. The world's ordering to God as its final end is achieved through similitude to God.

²⁶ John H. Wright. The Order of the Universe in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas (Romae: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregoriana, 1957), pp. 188-189 (hereafter cited as Wright, The Order of the Universe).

The "particular" ordering is centered primarily on intellectual beings.

God contemplated His goodness and saw that it deserved to be shared with others by being known and loved by them in immediate vision. This then was the essential decision of God in creation, to share His divine life properly so called, granting others to know and love Him as He knows and loves Himself. Consequently He decided to create intellectual beings as the recipients of this divine gift, and to create other beings which might assist them to achieve this destiny. The universe which God intends is thus essentially a society of intellectual beings, served in various ways by other beings. The perfection of this society in beatitude is what He most intends in creation; this is the ultimate essential good of the order of the universe.²⁷

Within this ordering, intellectual creatures are the main effect which God intends, and all other parts of the universe are ordered to their service. Such an ordering produces a much more anthropocentric world, at least in the sense that the material world exists for the sake of human beings.²⁸ Such a world is ordered to God as final end through intellectual activity, not assimilation, i.e., through that activity which is proper to intellectual beings themselves and not through their perfect imaging (similitude) to the divine perfection.

The question remains, according to Wright, as to which ordering Thomas thought had priority.

And here we encounter what is probably the most fundamental problem in the whole theology of the universe. For if the intellectual creature transcends the order of the universe in the activity of beatitude, how can it be that the order of the universe is the supreme created perfection and the reason for God's willing everything else? Is the perfection of the intellectual creature subordinated to this order, or vice versa? This question has probably aroused more discussion than any other concerning St. Thomas's doctrine on the universe.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 191-192.

²⁸ In II Sent., d. 1, q. 2, a. 3; Comp. Theol., c. 169; CG III, 112; ST I, 65, 3.

²⁹ Wright, The Order of the Universe, pp. 118-119.

Wright supposes, as did Thomas, that these two orders are mutually compatible. In fact, Thomas often combined them, as in the following passage from the Summa Theologiae:

Each creature has its proper operation and perfection; secondly, lower creatures serve the higher, as the creatures below man provide for his welfare; thirdly, individual creatures manifest the perfection of the entire universe; and finally, the whole universe and all its parts have God as their goal, in so far as the divine goodness is reflected through them and thus his glory manifested. Over and above this, however, rational creatures have God as their goal in a special way, since they can attain him by their own operations of knowing and loving. Thus it is apparent that the divine goodness is the goal of everything corporeal.³⁰

Yet their compatibility is far from obvious. There are, in fact, several indications that they cannot be simultaneously embraced. The primary difficulty here, as the practiced reader should now suspect, can be traced back once again to thick and thin essences.

A theocentric world imitating the divine perfection and ordered to God through assimilation is a world of 'thin' essences. In such a world, pleroma or plenitude is achieved to the extent that the universe imitates in its diversity the total perfection of the divine nature. The material world exists to manifest God³¹ and knowledge of the natures of things is knowledge of the universe as a hierarchy and of one's proper place in it.³²

Diversity in such a universe, as previously noted in chapter 2, necessarily produces inequality, because diverse things can only reflect different quantifications of the divine perfection. As Wright notes, "Diversity of parts, furthermore, implies grades of goodness; for things

³⁰ ST I, 65, 3.

³¹ Comp. Theol., c. 72, c. 102; ST I, 47, 1; ST I, 65, 2.

³² Jerem. X, 2; CG II, 3.

differ by being more or less perfect."³³ Indeed, this problem manifests itself most strikingly in Thomas within the context of sexual differentiation. For Thomas maintains, "Now just as variety in the grading of things contributes to the perfection of the universe, so variety of sex makes for the perfection of human nature."³⁴ In a universe of thin essences, this can only mean that the sexes are unequal. Interestingly, Wright cites this text and notes other examples of this 'grades of goodness' approach in Thomas without, seemingly, realizing the implications of such a view.³⁵

On the other hand, an anthropocentric material world created for the sake of material rational natures and ordered to God by being ordered to human nature is a world of thick essences. In such a world, pleroma or plenitude is achieved to the extent that human beings attain union with God through those operations appropriate to human nature. The material world exists to support the human community,³⁶ and therefore knowledge of that world enables human beings to make a proper use of it. Because diversity in things does not exist to mirror either

³³Wright, The Order of the Universe, p. 89.

³⁴ST I, 99, 2.

³⁵"St. Thomas uses this example of the universe [incorruptible things are more perfect than corruptible ones] whose perfection involves many grades of goodness to explain the perfection of other things. Thus the diversity of sexes pertains to the perfection of human nature. Human society profits from having both those who marry and attend to contemplation. The perfection and beauty of the Church arises from the varied gifts of grace that God confers, manifesting the plenitude of grace to be found in Christ the Head. All these cases are presented as similar to the perfection of the universe" (Wright, The Order of the Universe, pp. 94-95).

³⁶"Creatura corporalis ordinatum ad rationalem naturam quasi ad finem" (Comp. Theol., c. 169). Cf. CG III, 22.

divine or human nature, diversity is not reducible to quantity.

Lovejoy argues that the latter world can be rescued from the former by applying the logic of the principle of plenitude.

The good for any being, according to the accepted principle also inherited from the Greek philosophy of the fifth century B.C., lies in the realization of its specific "nature"; and it was, therefore, customary to formulate the argument even for the most extreme otherworldliness nominally in terms of "conformity to nature" in this sense. But the concrete meaning given to this was derived wholly from that dialectic whereby the good was identified with self-sufficiency. Man, as rational, was declared to be capable of realizing his nature only in the possession of absolute, underivative, and infinite good, that is to say, in a complete union or assimilatio intellectus speculativi with the divine perfection and beatitudo. But this denaturalization of the notion of specifically human good would have been impossible if the logic of the principle of plenitude had been applied at this point, as in a later age it was to be applied.³⁷

However, this understanding of human good as an assimilation to the divine perfection cannot be circumvented by pursuing the logic of a principle which rests on the supposition that human "nature" is a finite quantification of an infinite perfection. To pursue the logic of such a position to its conclusion does not result, as Lovejoy would like to believe, in a "conformity to nature" view, but rather in a "conformity to divinity" (The Good) view, of human goodness. As Carlo has put it, essences or limited natures are simply "finite esse seeking to remedy its own limitation and imperfection by the appropriation of further esse in secondary causality."³⁸

Lovejoy supposes that the Divine Ideas are the key to a logic which can rescue the world as a reality (nature) which has value in its own right.

. . . through the Middle Ages there were at least kept alive, in an age of which the official doctrine was predominantly

³⁷ Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 96.

³⁸ Carlo, Ultimate Reducibility, p. 112.

otherworldly, certain roots of an essentially 'this-worldly' philosophy: the assumption that there is a true and intrinsic multiplicity in the divine nature, that is to say, in the world of Ideas; that, further, "existence is a good," i.e., that the addition of concrete actuality to universals, the translation of supersensible possibilities into sensible realities, means an increase, not a loss, of value; that, indeed, the very essence of the good consists in the maximal actualization of variety; and that the world of temporal and sensible experience is thus good, and the supreme manifestation of the divine.³⁹

However, it is precisely this doctrine of the Divine Ideas which undercuts Lovejoy's project. For the Divine Ideas as exemplars of creation are the basis for the assimilation of the universe to God. "For St. Thomas teaches that the divine ideas have the nature of an end. The universe achieves this end, then, by assimilation, by expressing what is contained in the idea of the divine mind."⁴⁰

The problem, as noted earlier, is most apparent in the area of causality. The universe imitates God not only by its existence, but also by its essence. As one writer expresses it,

. . . not only does the existence of creatures declare to us that God exists, but their nature manifests to us God's nature. If, per impossibile, they were related to him only in the order of existence, then the perfections which their natures imperfectly exemplify could only be alleged to exist virtually in God; God would cause the perfections in creatures but those perfections would not necessarily in any way resemble God. But the communication of existence to creatures is not one act and the communication of essence another. Finite essence is only the mode of finite existence, and in the order of essence, as in the order of existence, creatures are related to God by his one creative act which both makes them and makes them what they are. Creatures therefore manifest God's nature as well as declaring his existence, and we can thus assert with confidence that all the perfections that are found in creatures are also formally, though eminentiori modo, in God himself.⁴¹

³⁹ Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, pp. 97-98.

⁴⁰ Wright, The Order of the Universe, pp. 52-53. As Thomas puts it, "because an exemplary form or ideas has, in some sense, the nature of an end, and because an artist receives the form by which he acts--if it is outside of him--we cannot say that the divine ideas are outside of God. They can be only within the divine mind. . ." (De Ver., 3, 1).

⁴¹ Mascal, Existence and Analogy, p. 123.

According to this view, God is prevented from creating anything genuinely 'other' than Himself. Since created essences do not exist in God "by nature," then, so the argument runs, they must exist in God "by knowledge." For that reason, Gerard Smith maintains that "the divine ideas are the ideal conditions under which creatures may pre-exist in God, their cause."⁴² The fact that God's nature (Esse) is His knowledge (Intelligere) means, the same author goes on to say, that such a pre-existence is "extraordinarily mysterious."⁴³ Before concluding directly to mystery, however, we might first want to ask ourselves whether such an account is coherent.

What we appear to have here is a view of divine causality which subordinates voluntary causality to natural causality. This is most apparent in Thomas, as Lovejoy points out, when Thomas tries to maintain that God creates in the universe "a perfect likeness of himself" without simultaneously producing an infinity of effects.⁴⁴ Thomas faces a real dilemma here. On the one hand, the principle of plenitude requires that the totality of divine perfection be mirrored in the universe. On the other hand, Thomas feels obliged by the doctrine of creation to insist that God, in His freedom, could have created other worlds. Hence, Thomas attempts a reconciliation of the two by recourse to an account of divine causality which leaves the impression that this world, containing (as Thomas tells us it does) all divine perfection,

⁴² Gerard Smith, Natural Theology: Metaphysics II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 246 (hereafter cited as Smith, Natural Theology).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ For discussion of this, see Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 76.

has exhausted the spectrum of intelligibilities without exhausting God's freedom.⁴⁵ Thomas tries to avoid such a conclusion by supposing that an infinite perfection can be completely imitated in a finite number of effects.⁴⁶

Oddly enough, in trying to protect God's freedom to produce a variety of worlds, Thomas does not see God's ability to produce only one type of world (i.e., only such worlds as imitate His own nature) as an infringement of His freedom. There are, I think, two primary reasons for this--Thomas' analogy of being and the causal principle which underlies it. The principle that an effect must pre-exist in its cause leads inevitably to a reduction of voluntary causality to natural causality and produces necessarily a theocentric analogy of being.

Thomas' Analogy of Being: Some Fundamental Dichotomies

Nothing is more central to Thomas' work than the analogy of being.

As Phelan notes,

The importance of analogy in the philosophy of St. Thomas literally cannot be overestimated. There is not a problem either in the order of being, or in the order of knowing, or in the order of predicating, which does not depend for its ultimate solution on the principle of analogy. Not a question can be asked either in speculative or practical philosophy which does not require for its final answer an understanding of analogy.⁴⁷

Phelan later points out that Thomas' "solution to the problems explicitly raised and implicitly suggested by the apparent antinomy of

⁴⁵ An important key, perhaps, as to why Ockham follows Aquinas in the history of philosophy.

⁴⁶ CG II, 45.

⁴⁷ Gerald B. Phelan, Saint Thomas and Analogy (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1948), p. 1.

Being and Becoming, the One and the Many, is to be found in his doctrine of analogy."⁴⁸

For Thomas, the analogy of being is fundamentally causal. As Gilson notes, few expressions occur more often in Thomas than "omne agens agit sibi simile," i.e., every cause produces an effect that resembles it.⁴⁹ Klubertanz' textual study of analogy in Thomas reveals causality to be one of the main components of this doctrine. "Creatures resemble God because they are proportioned to Him as effects to their cause."⁵⁰ This confirms what Hampas Lyttkens' previous study on Thomist analogy had already established.

All St. Thomas' analogies between God and the world are ultimately based on the relation of cause to effect. The likeness of an effect to its cause is the prerequisite of our knowledge and designations of God, and likewise of our conceiving creation as in relation to God. Ontologically, the analogy between God and the world is accordingly the likeness of effect to cause.⁵¹

Thomas' notion of analogy, therefore and as Lyttkens notes,⁵² supposes a connection between God and creation that requires each one to approach the other. This twofold movement, of God toward creation and of creation toward God, allows us to pinpoint within the context of analogy those same dichotomies which it has been the purpose of this and the previous chapter to explore.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

⁴⁹ Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, p. 95.

⁵⁰ George P. Klubertanz, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), p. 48.

⁵¹ Lyttkens, The Analogy Between God and the World, p. 244.

⁵² Ibid., p. 477.

God's Approach to Creation: The Rationalization of God's Creative Activity

Thomas' notion of analogy, when considered from the side of God, has two problems. Both have been discussed earlier, but are worth reconsidering within the context of his doctrine of analogy. First, there is the problem of whether or not God's causality as Creator is natural or voluntary. Lyttkens summarizes these two types of causality as found in Thomas.

As regards causes acting by nature, Aquinas reckons with two different possibilities. An effect may be absolutely like its cause. The contents of its form are then identical with the contents of the cause. Aquinas called such causes univocal. But sometimes the effect, even of a cause acting by nature, is only imperfectly like its cause, and the form will be less perfect in the effect than in the cause. The cause is then called equivocal. A typical example of this is the sun as the cause of fire. But even then there is a natural likeness of effect to cause--a likeness in nature and essence.

In rational causes, on the other hand, the form of the effect pre-exists as an intellectual prototype. The conceived and the realized form will accordingly be intellectually identical. The form will only have another kind of existence (modum essendi) in the cause than in the effect. In the form, it exists intellectually, in the latter materially. There will accordingly be no natural likeness, but the effect may be said to exist virtually in its cause, as this must have the power to realize the effect. As regards the relation of cause to effect, it should also be noted that the effect is produced for a purpose--the acting cause tries to reproduce as far as possible its likeness in the effect. A perfect cause like God will accordingly produce an effect as like Himself as possible.⁵³

There is a difficulty here, however. If God's intellect is His nature, it is not easy to see how we can avoid understanding His causality as a type of natural equivocality. If a natural equivocal cause produces an effect like itself in some respect and yet inferior to it, how does this differ from God's creative activity, which produces effects like His nature (His nature is His Esse, and His Esse

⁵³ Ibid., p. 189.

is His Intelligere) and yet inferior to it? In fact, we seem to have here a distinction without a difference. This does not go unnoticed by Lyttkens.

The connexion between God and creation presumed by analogy implies an approach on the part of God as well as of creation. On the part of God, this means that His very nature will to some extent be like the forms in the things. . . . On this point there is a risk of stressing more the natural than the volitive aspect of God.⁵⁴

This is only part of the dilemma which the Thomist notion of causality produces. A second problem remains, namely, the hierarchy of beings which such a notion of divine causality cannot but produce. Lyttkens notes that this hierarchy of being "points in the same direction" as does the bond between God and creation, i.e., in the direction of emphasizing God as a natural cause.⁵⁵ In point of fact, the bond between God and the world, on the one hand, and the hierarchy of being, on the other, are simply two sides of the same causal coin. Just as natural equivocal causes produce effects like themselves, so does God (hence the bond). And, just as natural equivocal causes produce effects inferior to themselves, so does God (hence the hierarchy). The only sense in which God's causality can be regarded as voluntary lies in the fact that He is able to produce for a purpose and hence is able to realize a complete mirror image of His own perfection in the diverse effects which he produces. This is the point at which Thomas is most Neoplatonic.

In Aristotle, the likeness [between cause and effect] was on the one hand that the cause of an effect transfers a form of the same type as its own, and on the other that a rational cause realizes a conceived form or prototype. The idea of likeness between cause and effect is, however, not used to describe the relation

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 477-478.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 478.

between God and the world. This was done by the Neoplatonists. Three of their thoughts are adopted by St. Thomas: first that the unitary precedes the manifold. The higher up in the hierarchical scale, the greater will be the unity, while the higher at the same time comprises all that is subordinate and more divided. A higher cause can therefore comprise in its unity what is below it. In this way God can in Himself comprise all His effects, and creation will thus constitute a dwindling scale of likeness to God. Secondly, St. Thomas adopts the idea that cause is superior to effect by distinguishing between univocal and equivocal causes. In the relation between an equivocal cause and its effect, a property in the effect exists in the cause in a more perfect way. Thirdly, St. Thomas uses the thought that the effect exists in the cause in the mode of the cause, and the cause in its effect in the mode of the effect.⁵⁶

Hence, Thomas is not altogether able to avoid the notion of creation as emanation.

St. Thomas looks upon creation as having issued from God. The act of creation implies to him mainly an addition of esse, everything else pre-exists in God--all forms "flow" out of the ideas in Him. All forms have a correspondence in God's nature. If the likeness of effect to cause is--as in St. Thomas--based in this, some sort of emanation is inescapable.⁵⁷

As the same author also notes, however, "This is a conception which makes it difficult to uphold the thought of a creation from nothing."⁵⁸

What we have here in Thomas is a rationalization of the doctrine of creation. Thomist philosophers would not disagree.

The philosophy of St. Thomas purports to provide a rational explanation (complete in principle and capable of indefinite development in demonstrative detail and application) of the universe as a whole and of its relation to God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, insofar as such explanation can be afforded by the light of reason unaided by Faith.⁵⁹

Congar goes further, arguing for a "rational theology" in Thomas which rests upon our ability to use the immanent forms of created things

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 349-350.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 413-414.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 414.

⁵⁹ Phelan, St. Thomas and Analogy, pp. 2-3.

(their ratios) to arrive at analogous knowledge of the mysteries of faith.

The process, which consists in abstracting something "formal" and disengaging this from its modes and then applying this "formality" to the mysteries of faith by the use of analogy, rests entirely on the distinction between a ratio and its mode and on the conviction that a ratio does not change its essential laws when it is expressed under these different modes. In short, a rational theology rests entirely on the conviction that in the transposition of an idea to the level of transcendent realities, whose positive mode escapes us, the eminenter does not destroy the formaliter.⁶⁰

Although Congar does not seem to be aware of it, there is, unfortunately, some sleight of hand at work here. If the eminenter does not destroy the formaliter, this is not because the formaliter is a ratio or thick essence which allows creation to stand in its own right. It is because the formaliter is an exemplar or thin essence which necessarily refers a thing back to God. The analogy between God and the world is based on the Divine Ideas not as ratios, but as exemplars.

. . . we can most adequately name the analogy between God and creatures as an analogy of causal participation. Implicit in this description are further qualifications: God is the cause of the world by intellect and will, and so as an intelligent efficient cause He is both the primary exemplar and the ultimate goal of all creatures, and they exist as images, made to the likeness (in imitation) of their Creator.⁶¹

Therefore, the very rationality of theology which Congar wishes to defend, on grounds that creation has formal principles within it which permit us to gain a knowledge of it apart from God, turns out to be rational only by virtue of the assumption it makes that ratios are actually exemplars whose transparency (thinness) permits us to see beyond them to the God whom they imitate.

⁶⁰ Congar, A History of Theology, p. 110.

⁶¹ Klubertanz, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy, pp. 134-135.

Not only does such a view defeat its own purposes, by presupposing that very relatedness of the world to God which it then sets out to establish, such a process of rationalization also seems incompatible with the doctrine of creation ex nihilo sui et subjecti.

In proving that everything is created, Aquinas often adduces the Neoplatonic thesis that a property which is realized to different degrees in different things is received from the source possessing the property most perfectly. But this argument puts more stress on how a property is propagated than on creation out of nothing.⁶²

The key word here is 'how.' Thomas' attempts to explain the 'how' of creation are hard to reconcile with a doctrine of creation which would appear to rule out from the start any ability on our part to reason our way behind the scenes of God's creative activity. The doctrine rather suggests that the only source of such knowledge is revelation, not reason.

Creation's Approach to God: The Spiritualizing of the World

In chapter 2, we explored the reductionism of the thin essence position, whereby all qualitative differences are understood to be diverse quantifications of esse. This produces a rationalization of diversity whereby all specific differences are reduced to mathematical terms (species differ by units of one).⁶³ The reductionism, however, is not simply formal; it is material as well. And this material reduction creates a great problem with regard to the analogy of being, inasmuch as the causal principles which underlie that analogy make it impossible to account for the material component in existing things as an imitation of the divine perfection.

⁶²Lyttkens, The Analogy Between God and the World, p. 182.

⁶³See p. 92.

This brings us to the principal question: how can God, who is entirely immaterial, create matter? Aquinas replies that there is nothing to prevent a rational cause from creating something quite different from itself. But that answer is in direct conflict with another thesis fundamental to his analogy, viz. that God as a cause creates everything in His own likeness. . . . How can God then be conceived as creating materia prima, which is pure potentiality? As such, it lacks all likeness to God. Either must the applicability of the thesis that effect and cause are alike be restricted, in which case much of what Aquinas teaches of God becomes uncertain, or else he has been unable to explain how God could create materia prima.⁶⁴

In De Potentia, Thomas speaks of matter as that whereby created things differ from their cause. He goes on to add,

Accordingly in creatures there are certain perfections whereby they are likened to God, and which as regards the thing signified do not denote any imperfection, such as being, life, understanding and so forth: and these are ascribed to God properly, in fact they are ascribed to him first and in a more eminent way than to creatures. And there are in creatures certain perfections wherein they differ from God, and which the creature owes to its being made from nothing, such as potentiality, privation, movement and the like. These are falsely ascribed to God: and whatsoever terms imply suchlike conditions cannot be ascribed to God otherwise than metaphorically, for instance lion, stone and so on, inasmuch as matter is included in their definition. They are, however, ascribed to him metaphorically by reason of a likeness in their effects.⁶⁵

To paraphrase Congar, where matter is concerned the eminenter does destroy the materialiter. As Lyttkens says, "the causal analogy is really only applicable in the sphere of rational reality."⁶⁶

Esseist Thomists attempt to get around this situation by reducing matter itself to esse. Carlo sees matter as either "a debile esse, a weakness at the heart of being,"⁶⁷ or the "elasticity or plasticity of esse," that is to say, "the ability of a being to become something

⁶⁴ Lyttkens, The Analogy Between God and the World, pp. 181-182.

⁶⁵ De Pot., 7, 5 ad 8.

⁶⁶ Lyttkens, The Analogy Between God and the World, p. 352.

⁶⁷ Carlo, Ultimate Reducibility, p. 131.

other, by an increase or decrease of esse."⁶⁸ Rahner, a transcendental Thomist, takes the same path, maintaining that "what is material is nothing but a limited and as it were 'solidified' spirit, being act."⁶⁹ These Thomists are carrying to its logical conclusion that view of creation to be found in Thomas whereby creation mirrors God only to the extent that it imitates the divine Intelligere. As creation approaches God, therefore, "it must accordingly lose something of its massively concrete sensibility."⁷⁰ The Thomist analogy forces a de-materialization of the world.

Analogy makes us regard creation spiritualistically--if that expression is not misunderstood. The invisible spiritual reality is revealed in the visible, sensible reality by the forms and perfections in the things. There will further be a dualism between spiritual and sensible. The latter represents something potential and deficient. When the degrees of potentiality of the forms increase, the forms, to exist, must be joined to matter. Only the spiritual and intelligible can attain to real likeness to God. Analogy as the connecting link means that creation will primarily be regarded from the point of view of the rational and spiritual hidden in it. The visible things can only bear witness of God and imitate Him by properties from which all sensible imperfections can be abstracted, but as creation exists in order to imitate God in different ways--or to a lessening degree--creation cannot include anything that has no such likeness.⁷¹

Furthermore, the reduction of both matter and form to esse, even if it is able to avoid pantheism, undercuts God's transcendence. God's approach to creation and creation's approach to God produce a quantified

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

⁶⁹ Karl Rahner, Hominisation: The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem, trans. W. T. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), p. 57 (hereafter cited as Rahner, Hominisation).

⁷⁰ Lyttkens, The Analogy Between God and the World, p. 478.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 478-479.

hierarchy of being in which God is regarded

. . . as at the apex of a series of ever more perfect properties such as being, goodness, wisdom, etc. But if God is only the first in a rising series, it will be difficult to maintain His absolute transcendence, and He is in a way brought closer to creation.⁷²

As can be seen, Thomas' theocentric analogy of being, by rationalizing God's creative activity, produces several unfortunate consequences. First, it jeopardizes the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. Secondly, it subordinates God's voluntary causality to natural causality. Thirdly, it produces a world of thin essences, in which neither the 'otherness' of immanent form nor the value of materiality can ultimately be salvaged, either in the existential or the essential realm.

The Proper Thomist Analogy of Being: Creation in Christ

The Thomist analogy of being, because theocentric, is incompatible with Aristotelian methodology, a state of affairs which is most apparent in its inability to save the Aristotelian immanent form. The problem lies in causality. Thomas maintains two contradictory positions. He desires, on the one hand, to retain Aristotle's immanent form as that which enables us to understand the world apart from its ordering to God. He provides, on the other hand, no condition of possibility for such an immanent form. God is extrinsic exemplary cause, but not intrinsic formal cause, of created things.⁷³ Hence, although Thomas makes a distinction in the Divine Ideas between their function as

⁷² Ibid., p. 478.

⁷³ "God can be related to us only as a source. Since there are four causes and since He is not our material cause, He is related to us as our efficient cause, our telic cause, and our exemplar form, though not as an intrinsic formal cause" (In I Sent., d. 18, q. 1, a. 5, c [English translation from Klubertanz, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy, p. 54]).

ratios and as exemplars, in point of fact the Divine Ideas function causally only as exemplars of the Divine Essence, ordering all created things to that Divine Essence.

This contradiction introduces, in turn, a fundamental incoherence into Thomas' doctrine of participation. According to Thomas, "participare nihil aliud est quam ab alio partialiter accipere."⁷⁴ In chapter 2 of his Commentary on Boethius' 'De hebdomadibus', perhaps the single most important text to be found on participation in his writings, Thomas points out that, in all existing things, there are two orders of participation.

Everything that is participates in that which is esse, in order that it may be; but it participates in something else in order that it may be something; and through this, that which is participates in that which is esse in order that it may be, but it is in order that it may participate in something else. Everything simple has its esse and that which is one has its esse. In every composite thing the esse is one thing, and that which is, is another.

We have already noted, with regard to the real distinction, this recurrent insistence in Thomas' writings for the need to distinguish between an existential and an essential order of participation in creation.⁷⁵ Thomas goes on in De hebdomadibus to point out several different types of participation.

To participate is to receive as it were a part; and therefore when anything receives in a particular manner that which belongs to another in a universal manner, it is said to participate it; as man is said to participate animal, because he does not possess the intelligible notes (ratio) of animal according to the latter's total "community" [i.e., universality]; and for the same reason Socrates participates man; in like manner also a subject participates an accident, and matter form, because the substantial or accidental form, which of itself as such is common [or unparticularized], is determined to this or that subject; and similarly an

⁷⁴In II de Caelo et Munde, c. 12, lect. 18, n. 6.

⁷⁵See pp. 68-69.

effect is said to participate its cause, and especially when it does not equal the power of its cause, as, for example, if we say that air participates the light of the sun because it does not receive it with the same brightness that it has in the sun.

In summarizing this passage with regard to the Thomist analogy of being, Klubertanz says,

A species participates in its genus; an individual participates in its species (logical participation); substance participates in its accidents; matter participates in its form (limitation of act by potency); effects participate in the perfections of their causes (analogous participation). Since Thomistic discussions of the analogy of participation between God and creatures always involve causal participation, we are directly interested only in the last of these types of participation, that of an effect in the perfections of its cause.⁷⁶

Here Klubertanz brings us to the core of the problem. The Thomist analogy of being forces a reduction of all formal participation (i.e., generic and specific participation) to the merely logical order, because the formal components in things can find no ultimate home in a God who Himself lacks all formal elements. As Klubertanz says, "We hold . . . that outside the mind there are no formally common perfections, whether this community be one of specific unity of identity or of analogical unity."⁷⁷ And, be it noted, the mind to which he has reference is the human mind. Outside the human mind, formally common perfections are found nowhere, not even in the divine mind.

Klubertanz states here the only conclusion to be drawn from a doctrine of participation which attributes the formal perfections in things to the Divine Ideas understood not as a plurality in the mind of God, but as "a single entity, the divine essence, which knows itself as imitable in various ways."⁷⁸ This is why, as was noted in chapter 2,

⁷⁶Klubertanz, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy, p. 56.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 113.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 53n.

there is no ultimate way in which to draw a distinction between the perfections derived from esse and those derived from essence, except by means of a dubious distinction in existing things between esse and the 'thin' essence which quantifies that esse. Because Thomas' analogy of being is causal and because no account can be given of formal causality which does not conclude to God as extrinsic efficient cause, no ontological basis for intrinsic formal perfections can be found in Thomism. In other words, the Aristotelian immanent form cannot be salvaged. Even appeals to the divine wisdom, understood as the divine Word, are to no avail. For the divine Word is a Person, not a form. Any attempts, therefore, to identify the immanent forms of creation with Him must ultimately conclude to the same thin essence to which the Divine Ideas themselves conclude.⁷⁹

If the Aristotelian thick essence (the immanent form to which Congar appeals, as well as the essence which Gilson characterizes as genuinely 'other' than esse) is to be saved, it can only be done by providing a causal source for immanent forms which cannot be reduced simply to the efficient causality associated with esse. There is no question here, as many Thomists might fear, of reifying universals; rather, it is a question of locating an immanent formal causal principle which can account for immanent formal effects in created things. As Owens and Gilsonian Thomists in general insist, "Existential act

⁷⁹It should be noted, with respect to the Word, that a thin essence position is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with the doctrine of the Incarnation. According to 'thin essence' Thomism, to become incarnate can only mean to become finite. Yet the doctrine states that the Word became man. It supposes essence to be a positive perfection in its own right and not simply a diminishment (quantification) of esse, a supposition which finds support in Thomas himself. See ST III, 2, 1.

. . . can be a thing or a reality or a nature only in its primary instance, God. Outside God it cannot be a thing or reality or nature, but only the actualizing of some other nature."⁸⁰ If this be so, then some causal principle must be given which can account for the existence of natures other than God's.

Such an account must, in the first instance, provide a causal source of created formal effects which is distinct from Ipsum Esse, the Divine Ideas, the divine mind, the divine essence, the divine Wisdom or the Word of God. Any attempt to locate the source of immanent formal effects in God as extrinsic exemplary cause defeats itself from the start, as has already been noted. The Aristotelian essence is 'thick' precisely because Aristotle, contra Plato, refused to identify it with an extrinsic Form or perfection. This means that the Thomist analogy of being cannot be theocentric; "rather, the analogy is necessarily anthropocentric."⁸¹

An anthropocentric analogy of being is necessary not only in order to avoid the reduction of all created perfections to the single perfection which is God, but also in order to provide an account of the material world as existing for the sake of man (Thomas' "particular" ordering of the universe). An anthropocentric analogy of being allows us to consider the diversity of material things in terms not of quantifications of the divine perfection, but of qualitative differences which serve human purposes, making the world a suitable environment for man.

To say that the analogy of being is necessarily anthropocentric,

⁸⁰Owens, "Quiddity," p. 20.

⁸¹Keefe, Thomism, p. 82.

however, is not to go far enough. For the problem is not merely one of locating an immanent formal cause distinct from God's extrinsic efficient causality. If we were to do only that, we would not only distinguish but also separate at the level of causality that which is distinct but inseparable in existing things. What we must locate is a causal source which corresponds to the esse/essence distinction in beings. What we require is a single source which is both esse and essence, both transcendent and immanent. That source can only be Christ, the God-man, the Creator immanent within His creation.

Creation in Christ

In his book, Foundations of Christian Faith, Karl Rahner notes that "we can understand creation and Incarnation as two moments and two phases of the one process of God's self-giving and self-expression."⁸² What he means here is perhaps better understood with reference to an earlier article of his on the knowledge and self-consciousness of Christ, within which he discusses how we might understand the Incarnation.

The Hypostatic Union implies the self-communication of the absolute Being of God--such as it subsists in the Logos--to the human nature of Christ which thereby becomes a nature hypostatically supported by the Logos. The Hypostatic Union is the highest conceivable--the ontologically highest--actualization of the reality of a creature, in the sense that a higher actualization would be absolutely impossible.⁸³

He goes on to point out that,

⁸² Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, A Crossroad Book, 1978), p. 197.

⁸³ Idem., "Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ," Theological Investigations, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), V:205.

In as much as the Hypostatic Union involves an ontological 'assumptio' of the human nature by the person of the Logos, it implies a determination of the human reality by the person of the Logos and is therefore at least also the actualizing of the potentia obedientialis, i.e. of the radical capacity of being 'assumed', and hence is also something on the part of the creature, particularly since . . . the Logos is not changed through the Hypostatic Union, and anything happening (which is the case here in the most radical way) takes place on the side of the creature.⁸⁴

Without apparently realizing it, Rahner here points the way to an explicit understanding of creation as Christocentric. The one thing missing is the recognition that the human species itself comes into existence by means of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is, in fact, creation, and its most immediate formal effect is the human race itself.

With or without the Fall, Christ is the existential formal cause of humanity; He is the creator immanent in his creation. His formal effect, co-extensive with humanity, is the existence of the human race, the human substance. Since this existence is contingent, it is the equivalent of the creation of humanity; this creation, since it pertains to a temporal substance, is continual, passive spectata. The continuum of humanity and humanity's world is unified and given intelligibility by its immanent formal cause. When this cause, and the consequent effect of the cause, is understood to be contingent, it is understood to be the existential formal cause: this is the Thomist insight and starting point.⁸⁵

A Christocentric analogy of being offers solutions to all of the major problems posed by the Thomist theocentric analogy. First, it solves the causal dilemma posed by the real distinction, i.e., the problem of distinguishing without separating formal causality from efficient causality. As a result, two distinct orders of participation, one existential and the other formal, can also be distinguished without being separated.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 204-205.

⁸⁵ Keefe, Thomism, p. 125.

Christ, as human, is a created participation in human substance; as a divine Person, He is the uncreated actuality of that participation; i.e., He is the creator of His, and of all, humanity. The terminus of His creative act is the Incarnation, by which His divinity, as *Esse*, is correlated to His participated human nature. This correlation is thus the creation of all men; it is the contingent existential actuality of the human substance, in which all human persons participate, and by participating in which they are human persons. The human substance is therefore actual by the actuality of Christ; He is the formal cause of the substantial actuality of men.⁸⁶

Esse orders the world to God by virtue of the world's created participation in the *Esse* of the Incarnate Logos, while essence simultaneously orders the parts of the world to one another and to man by virtue of the essential participation of every existing thing in Christ as immanent formal cause of humanity.

Secondly, a Christocentric analogy of being allows us to avoid the quantifying of diversity and the rationalizing of creation which necessarily accompanies every view which links diversity with the Divine Ideas. Consequently, it enables us to avoid as well the inconsistencies which attach to the Divine Ideas when they are employed to cope with the problem of the One and the Many. Gerard Smith pinpoints those inconsistencies well when he writes,

Creatures pre-existing in God's knowledge are known as distinct precisely because the esse of God is variously imitable and He knows it. On the other hand, the distinctly known creatures have no esse in God which is not His intelligere; they have no esse of their own. Thus, if one says creatures in God's knowledge are either God or not-God (the first alternative swamping the distinction between God and creatures, the second destroying the pre-existence of the effect in the cause), the answer would seem to be: creatures as the divinely known principle of plurality are God; creatures as the known plurality of that same known principle of plurality are not God, because they are not known as God. Thus the known principle of plurality is at once one and, equivalently, many.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

The difficulty, as always, persists inasmuch as we do not know this divine principle of plurality.⁸⁷

Creation in Christ not only avoids such quandaries but identifies the divine principle of plurality as well. For, within a Christocentric analogy of being, "the Thomist concrete universal which has no particular name but is constituted by the contingent existence or creation of humanity in time and space by means of the Incarnation, is best understood as the human species, correlated to the Trinity in the Incarnation, in the spatio-temporal continuum proper to a material species."⁸⁸ Hence created diversity, mediated by Christ, finds its ultimate source in the plurality of divine Persons. Such a view of creation forbids a quantification or rationalization of created essences by forbidding their reduction to the divine essence.⁸⁹ Although it identifies the ultimate source of diversity as the Trinity, that source remains a mystery inaccessible to and, in fact, even unidentifiable by human reason itself.

Thirdly, a Christocentric analogy provides a positive role for materiality. Because creation is in and by the Incarnate Word, and not simply in and by the Word Himself, "creation is material, and

⁸⁷ Smith, Natural Theology, p. 247.

⁸⁸ Keefe, Thomism, p. 103.

⁸⁹ Only in the Trinity "is there assurance that the difference between qualities, which is given in humanity as male and female, is not a matter of more or less, for each of the divine Persons possesses the entirety of the Godhead, suo modo, and does so by a complete self-reference to a qualitatively different Person or Principle. . . I do not believe there is any other way of finding a qualitative analogy between man and God than by understanding the imaging as trinitarian or covenantal. 'Nature' or 'essence' or 'immanent form' won't do it; their concept is monist, and inevitably any analogy to a supreme monad is going to be a quantitative proportion" (letter from Donald J. Keefe to author, June 16, 1983).

implies, as its correlative, the material universe, which is the context of human existence."⁹⁰ Material things are positive entities, both formally and materially, because they fill human needs in a world designed explicitly for human habitation.

Finally, just as a Christocentric analogy of being (because of its provision for immanent formal causality) salvages Aristotle's notion of intrinsic substantiality, so also does it salvage theology's notion of intrinsic gratuity, by making possible a methodological means of accounting for creation as graced from within as well as without.

. . . the ontological effect of the Incarnation cannot be understood as though it were an accidental incursion into natural humanity of an extraordinary God-man bearing extraordinary information, as an adventitious remedy for the Fall. Such a view of Christ makes his coming irrelevant to the immense multitude who lived before Him, and to the possibly more immense multitude who, since His birth, have remained in ignorance of Him. The Incarnate Word described in the Johannine Prologue and in Paul's letters to the Romans, to the Colossians and to the Ephesians must be taken rather more seriously. He enlightens every man, all men are created in and through him, and the universe is recapitulated in him. In the systematic language of Thomism, Christ cannot be other than the cause of all created actuality, and he is such, not simply as the Logos but as the Logos Incarnate.⁹¹

The Aristotelian Substance

Creation in Christ forces two radical transformations in the Thomist notion of substance. First, it requires an identification of substantiality with humanity, not with individual human beings.

The Logos is not incarnate by assuming finitude, but by assuming a human nature. This assumption was the actuation of a human nature, the creation of man. But "a man" is not the object of creation, for it is substance which is actual; a man, in

⁹⁰Keefe, Thomism, p. 62.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 91-92.

isolation from the substance in which his nature participates, is only potential, and cannot so exist. Therefore the Incarnation, the creation of the man Christ, is the creation of humanity, whose contingent, existential actuality of intellectus is the actuality of the cosmos; intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu. The formal cause of this intellectus is the created actuation of Christ's human nature, His intrinsic essence-Esse correlation. In no other way can the existential contingency of man and the created universe be understood by Thomism.⁹²

Secondly, it locates grace at the substantial, as well as the accidental, level of being. As Keefe puts it, "this creation, the Incarnation of the Word in humanity, is a grace, for it need not have been so; the Incarnation is not deduced from the necessities of human nature."⁹³ In other words, a proper reading of Thomist methodology can account for creation solely in terms of the Incarnation. Without the Incarnation, there is no immanent formal cause; without Christ, there is no human race. "Creation is complete by man's participation in the event of Christ; . . . Participation in this event is possible only because the event exists, immanent in the human substance, as the formal cause of that substance."⁹⁴

To say that the proper application of Thomist methodology produces such radical changes in Thomas' notion of substance raises obvious questions as to whether or not the Aristotelian substance can be said to play any role in a world created in Christ, particularly in view of the fact that Thomas' methodology has been defined as fundamentally Aristotelian. In order to examine this issue more closely, we shall next consider Gilson's view that Thomas' world, properly understood,

⁹² Ibid., p. 88.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 62.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

is "a world of Aristotelian substances which are in their own right."⁹⁵

Since Gilson's view of the world as both autonomous and ordered to God rests on a distinction which he makes between substance and existence (essence and esse), we shall consider, first, Gilson's position, with a view to establishing that the Platonizing of Thomism by reducing it to a single order of participation cannot adequately be countered by the denial of participation itself. Secondly, we shall consider the existential order of things, examining first the principle of esse and then the relation of essence to esse in existing things, with a view to establishing that Gilson's distinction between physics (the substantial realm) and metaphysics (the existential realm) is methodologically incoherent unless it be converted into a distinction between nature (essence) and grace (esse).

⁹⁵Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 162.

CHAPTER 4

THE ARISTOTELIAN SUBSTANCE AND THOMIST METHODOLOGY

In order to see what Gilson means when he says that the Aristotelian substance remains intact in the Thomist doctrine, it is necessary first to review briefly Aristotle's notion of substance. According to Aristotle, substance can be understood in two ways, as "(A) the ultimate substratum, which is no longer predicated of anything else, and (b) that which, being a 'this', is also separable--and of this nature is the shape or form of each thing."¹ Substance is, in the first instance, the individual thing, and, in the second instance, the essential nature of that thing. As David Ross points out, "this double meaning pervades Aristotle's whole treatment of substance."²

Substance as the individual thing is the primary meaning Aristotle gives to the term, and in this sense, substance is inseparable from being.

. . . there are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting-point; some things are said to be because they are substances, others because they are affections of substance, others because they are a process towards substance, or destructions or privations or qualities of substance, or productive or generative of substance, or of things which are relative to substance, or negations of one of these things or of substance itself. It is for this reason that we say even of non-being that it is non-being.³

¹Metaphysics, V, 1017b23-25.

²W. D. Ross, Aristotle, 5th ed. rev. (London: Methuen, 1949; New York: Barnes & Noble, University Paperbacks, 1949), p. 166.

³Metaphysics, IV, 1003b6-11.

Therefore, as Aristotle notes later in the same work, while being has many meanings, "that which 'is' is the 'what', which indicates the substance of the thing."⁴ Furthermore, since unity is identified with being and the being of a thing with the thing itself, Aristotle can maintain that 'man', 'one man' and 'one existent man' all refer to the same thing or reality.⁵

Gilson's most thorough treatment of the role played by Aristotle's substance within Thomist metaphysics occurs in chapter V of Being and Some Philosophers. The chapter title itself, "Being and Existence," is significant, inasmuch as Gilson will argue that being, in Thomas, is, in the first instance, "what Aristotle had said it was, namely, substance."⁶ Hence, Gilson's distinction between being and existence is, on one level, a distinction between the concrete thing (Aristotle's substance in its primary sense) and that concrete thing's esse (act of existing). Thus Gilson is able to identify the Thomist notion of being (the existing thing) with the Aristotelian notion of substance. It is this identification which provides the substantial point of view from which, as Gilson will argue, Aristotelian substance can be understood to enter the Thomist world intact. This substantial point of view is one which identifies, as Aristotle did, essence and existence.

For those who identify what Thomas calls being with what is commonly called substance, there can be no distinction between essence and existence, since being and οὐσία are one and the same thing. Each time Thomas Aquinas himself is looking at being as at a substance, he thereby reoccupies the position of Aristotle, and it is

⁴Ibid., VII, 1028a13-14.

⁵Ibid., IV, 1003b27-33.

⁶Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 157.

no wonder that, in such cases, the distinction between essence and existence does not occur to his own mind.⁷

Nevertheless, the Thomist distinction between esse and essence does, according to Gilson, produce a genuine and far-reaching transformation of Aristotle's world, such that the Aristotelian substance which "remains intact in the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas" also "will have to undergo many inner transformations in order to become a created substance."⁸ In the first of these transformations, the Aristotelian substance, "which is one with its own necessity," will have to become "radically contingent."⁹

In order to illustrate what this means, Gilson draws upon an analogy employed by Thomas in the Summa Theologiae, in which the esse of substances is compared to the light which permeates the air without mixing with it. Thomas concludes, "sic autem se habet omnis creatura ad Deum, sicut aer ad solem illuminantem."¹⁰ Thus, as Gilson notes, "In short, whereas the substance of Aristotle exists qua substance, existence never is of the essence of any substance in the created world of Thomas Aquinas."¹¹ Hence, Gilson concludes that in addition to the substantial order, there is an existential order in which the Thomist notion of being (esse/essence) cannot be identified with the Aristotelian notion of substance (essential nature) and in which, therefore, Aristotelian substances do undergo important changes in a Thomist universe.

⁷ Ibid., p. 158.

⁸ Ibid., p. 160.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ST I, 104, 1.

¹¹ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 161.

Just as the substantial order considers Aristotelian substances in their primary sense (existing things), so the existential order considers them in their secondary sense (essential natures).

This dual order produces a seeming paradox in Thomism, according to Gilson. Although the Thomist universe is radically contingent, it is nevertheless made to endure as long as Aristotle's necessary universe. This paradox arises from the fact that creatures are "indestructible in themselves, yet wholly contingent in their relation to God."¹² According to Gilson, therefore, we see juxtaposed at the core of the Thomist universe the substantial and existential orders. Creatures understood as intact Aristotelian substances are "indestructible in themselves," yet the same creatures understood as transformed Aristotelian essential natures correlated to the Thomist principle of existence (*esse*) are "wholly contingent in their relation to God." Here we have the same dual ordering as was found in Congar, with one very important difference. Gilson avoids the Divine Ideas altogether. His rejection of a Platonic reading of Thomas is most apparent at precisely this point.

For Gilson, the notion that creatures are understandable in themselves is based on their character as Aristotelian substances, not on the Divine Ideas as ratios. And the notion that creatures are related to God is based on their existential character, not on the Divine Ideas as exemplars. Hence, Gilson avoids the Porphyrian or Neoplatonic universe, with its view of creatures as constituting a hierarchy of formal participations in the divine essence. To the extent that creatures are related to God, they are so by virtue of *esse*, not essence.

¹²Ibid., p. 162.

It is, in fact, the existential character of the creature, according to Gilson, which makes the above-mentioned paradox in Thomas so difficult to grasp. Returning to the light/air analogy, Gilson points out that just as light permeates the air without rooting itself in the air, so "existence has no root in even actually existing things."¹³ Therefore, one is forced to ask, "How is it that those very substances in which existence never takes root can nevertheless be everlasting in their own right?"¹⁴

The answer to this question, according to Gilson, is twofold. On the one hand, Aristotelian substances (essential natures), because distinct from esse, have no potency within themselves for non-being. Both being and non-being lie on the side of existence, not essence.¹⁵ On the other hand, esse itself, though a gift, is not a series of acts of existing which stands in need of constant renewal, but a gift which is whole and enduring by its very nature.

God is not eternally busy retailing existence to beings, nor are substances applying for it from moment to moment. The gift of existence is irrevocable, when it is granted to beings which, as regards themselves, are unable to lose it.¹⁶

Thus in the substantial order, Aristotelian substances remain intact and indestructible. Only in the existential order do they undergo a transformation which makes them radically contingent.

The world of Aristotle is there whole in so far as reality is substance. It is the world of science, eternal, self-subsistent and such that no problem concerning existence needs nor can be

¹³ Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁶ Ibid.

asked about it. It is one and the same thing for a man in it to be "man," to be "one" and "to be." But, while keeping whole the world of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas realizes that such a world cannot possibly be "metaphysical." Quite the reverse, it is the straight "physical" world of natural science, in which "natures" necessarily entail their own existence; and, even though such natures may happen to be gods, or even the supreme God, they still remain natures. Physics is that very order of substantial reality in which existence is taken for granted. As soon as existence no longer is taken for granted, metaphysics begins.¹⁷

What Gilson desires to establish here is the autonomy of both science and philosophy. Science is substantial in its own right, i.e., it proceeds as though reality were the uncreated Aristotelian world of necessary substances. Thomist metaphysics is existential in its own right, i.e., it proceeds as though reality were the correlation of the Aristotelian substance with its corresponding act of existence. Theology, or the realm of the supernatural, is a third order which lies beyond both the physical and the metaphysical, because

With Thomas Aquinas, the supernatural does not begin with a certain class of substances. Precisely because composite substances are natures, only that which is beyond such substances can be said to be supernatural.¹⁸

This threefold order of the world is not, however, without its problems, especially with regard to metaphysics. One can understand how science as Gilson defines it might be viewed as autonomous, inasmuch as its precision from both creation and esse is simultaneously a precision from all theological and philosophical concerns. But how is metaphysics, with its advertence to esse and existential contingency, able to declare itself autonomous vis a vis theology (this is simply another way of asking how a created and therefore existentially contingent world can be regarded as autonomous in any sense)? Such

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

autonomy can only find its justification in an existential order which is itself autonomous. In fact, the very autonomy of science also depends on establishing the existential autonomy of the world. For the Aristotelian substance can hardly be the proper object of scientific inquiry if either creation itself or the principle of *esse* introduces a relationship between God and existing things from which no precision is possible. Hence, Gilson's assertion of a substantially intact Aristotelian world in Thomas depends upon his being able to demonstrate the existentially autonomous character of that Thomist world.

In order to establish the world as autonomous, Gilson considers the relationship between *esse* and essence. Focusing on the reciprocal causality exercised by these two principles, he notes that the Thomist transformation of Aristotle resulted in both a more precise definition of efficient causality and a clear-cut distinction between the orders of efficient and formal causality.¹⁹ Gilson returns to the light/air analogy to illustrate the relationship between these two causal orders. Just as the light of the sun causes light in the air, so also does the diaphaneity of the air cause that light. Both *esse* and essence cause existence, each in its own order and in its own way. As *esse* is supreme in the order of existence, so form is supreme in the order of substance (essence). Thus, Gilson concludes that "just as essence is in potency to the act of its own existence, so also is the act of existence in potency to the formal act of its own essence."²⁰ Hence, form is the cause of existence just as the diaphaneity of the air is the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 168.

²⁰Ibid., p. 171.

cause of light.²¹ In fact, existence can be understood to arise from the principles of the thing, as Thomas himself pointed out when he said, "esse in re est, et est actus entis, resultans ex principiis rei, sicut lucere est actus lucentis."²²

What concerns Gilson most here is the sharp distinction which he understands Thomas to have drawn between formal and efficient causality. Gilson is, in particular, intent upon establishing that all formal effects in existing things arise solely from the side of form or essence (the substantial order). His purpose is twofold. First, if the Aristotelian substance is to enter the Thomist world intact, this means, minimally speaking, that all of its formal characteristics must continue to be identified in Thomas, as they were in Aristotle, with its own essential nature.

Secondly, if the existential order is to be understood as autonomous, on the one hand, and non-disruptive of the Aristotelian substance, on the other, esse must be completely detached from all notions of formal causality. For, if esse were to act in any way as a formal cause, it would necessarily introduce (through efficient causality) formal changes into the Aristotelian substance, thus destroying its intactness, while simultaneously introducing (through the same efficient causality) formal characteristics into existing things which would necessarily relate those things to Ipsum Esse, thus jeopardizing the world's existential autonomy. Hence Gilson's statement that "existence may well be said to be 'formal,' but it is not a form."²³

²¹Ibid., p. 174.

²²In III Sent., d. 6, q. 2, a. 2.

²³Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 171.

So important is this point to him, that he indulges in one of his rare criticisms of Thomas over precisely this issue. The issue itself is participation, and the question at hand is whether or not esse must be understood not only as a principle which actualizes existing things, but also as a principle which necessarily draws them into a participated relationship with the divine nature. After quoting several texts in which Thomas designates esse solely as the act or actuality of all forms, Gilson adds,

Where he is merely following his pen, Thomas Aquinas is liable to go still further and to say, as he once did: "Each and every created being shares, so to speak, in the nature of existence: quodcumque ens creatum participat, ut ita dixerim, naturam essendi," which of course does not mean that "to be" is itself a nature, and still less that it has a nature, but that, as Saint Anselm had already said, God is the very nature essendi in which each and every being, so to speak, participates.²⁴

Gilson's earlier-noted reluctance to speak of creatures in terms of formal participation in the divine nature is bound up with his desire to avoid a Platonic interpretation of Thomas. His reluctance here to speak of creatures in terms of existential participation in the divine nature is equally bound up with his desire to affirm the Aristotelian character of Thomism, an affirmation which requires him to deny the notion that esse introduces any intelligibility into the created order which is not already there by virtue of Aristotle's substance. The notion of esse as the principle of the divine nature by which we participate existentially in God as in His nature (Intelligere) is avoided by Gilson not the least because it threatens our autonomy both essentially (substantially) and existentially.

For Gilson, the problem with regard to esse is "precisely to know

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 175-176.

if existence can be nothing else than either an empty logical concept in the mind or a relation in the thing."²⁵ And this is a problem because "what is at stake is the metaphysical realization of the autonomous character of the order of existence."²⁶ For, if existence is merely an empty logical concept, then it is identical with the essence of a thing, and we are back into an essentialist metaphysics in which the relation of a thing to God (its existence) is identical with its essence, and there is thus no point of view from which it can be regarded as autonomous. Only by dissociating conceptual representation (form) from esse (act) can we avoid a metaphysical stance which is able to understand the world solely in its relationship to God. Hence, the clear-cut distinction between efficient and formal causality translates into an equally clear-cut distinction between esse as actuality and essence as intelligibility (conceptual representation, form). "For 'to be' is, in things, the very act by which they are actual beings whose essences can be conceived as universals by way of conceptual abstraction."²⁷

At this point, it would appear that Gilson has saved the Aristotelian substance in its secondary sense, i.e., as essential nature, from any formal disruption by esse, but how can the autonomy of Aristotelian substance in its primary sense, i.e., as the existing thing, be salvaged existentially, when esse itself is the very principle by which Aristotle's necessary substance is transformed into Thomas' contingent one? The answer to this question, according to Gilson, lies

²⁵ Ibid., p. 177.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

in the primacy of esse itself.

What the contingency of existence means is, that all actual beings are contingent with respect to their cause, and this is but another way of saying that they might not exist; but, if they are actually produced by their cause, they do exist, and what they are in themselves is being. The primacy of existence means precisely that the radical contingency of finite beings has been overcome, and once it has been overcome, we should no longer worry about it.²⁸

In other words, the esse component in existing things signals not a created participation in God's existence, but a created imitation of that existence. Through esse we are related to Him (because we image Him in our existence) while remaining independent of Him (we have our own principle of being).

It is here that Gilson speaks of a second transformation undergone by Aristotelian substances, in which Aristotle's "dynamism of the form" becomes, in Thomas' hands, a "dynamism of esse (to be)."²⁹ Esse is thus both the "supreme act of creatures" (first act) and the "active energy through which the corresponding essence shall progressively receive all its determinations."³⁰ Esse is the energy which underwrites all of an existing thing's operations (second act). Just as we have our own principle of being, so do we have our own ability to function causally.³¹

Once again, however, the Aristotelian substance remains intact even as it is transformed. It remains intact, for it exercises in second act the same range of formal operations and moves toward the

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 178-179.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 185.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 182.

³¹ Ibid., p. 186.

same level of formal completion and perfection in a Thomist universe as it did in Aristotle's. Furthermore, it does so by a principle of energy intrinsic to itself as a concrete being. As Gilson says, "the actual perfecting of essences is the final cause of their existences, and it takes many operations to achieve it. Existence can perform those operations."³² From the substantial point of view, therefore, Aristotelian substances as existing beings are both intact and autonomous, proceeding on the basis of an energy source which is within them and performing those natural operations which Aristotle had already defined and which constitute the proper object of science.

From the existential point of view, however, the Aristotelian substance is transformed from a concrete thing having its own intrinsic source of energy into an essence which must acquire that source of energy from a correlative principle (*esse*). "Instead of a self-achieving end, form becomes an end to be achieved by its own *esse*, which progressively makes it an actual being."³³ Thus, whereas science need consider Aristotelian substances solely as existing things, metaphysics must distinguish between those substances as existing things and as essential natures. They remain, however, just as autonomous and as complete in philosophical as in scientific hands, thanks to *esse*, which, because both irrevocable gift to and immanent principle within existing things, makes them to be in themselves and to operate in a purely Aristotelian manner.

This analysis by Gilson of the role played by Aristotelian substances in a Thomist universe is precisely the type of analysis which

³² Ibid., p. 184.

³³ Ibid., p. 186.

prompted the earlier-cited question by Carlo, "Is essence indifferent to being eternal or created?" This question of indifference is a good one, and directly challenges the notion that Aristotelian substances can enter Thomas' world with as much ease as Gilson suggests they can. For they enter that world not as things, but only as principles of things, and this fact alone should give us pause before we endorse the Gilsonian view.

Apart from the obvious incongruity of separating at the level of human knowledge (physics and metaphysics) what is not separable in things themselves (essence and esse), there are a great many difficulties with Gilson's position, difficulties which resolve into three fundamental problems. These problems correspond to the threefold order which Gilson understands ultimately to exist in the Thomist universe: 1) the problem of substance (physics), 2) the problem of esse (metaphysics) and 3) the problem of creation (the supernatural). The remainder of this chapter will concern itself with those three problems.

The Problem of Substance (Physics)

Gilson's statement with regard to Thomism that "The world of Aristotle is there whole in so far as reality is substance"³⁴ pinpoints the problem of substance with regard to the relationship between the Aristotelian and Thomist worlds. If Thomas' transformation of Aristotle is a genuine transformation, it is difficult, if not impossible, to see how this statement can be true. Since substance in Aristotle is either the concrete thing (form/matter) or that thing's essential

³⁴Ibid., p. 166.

nature (form), substance in either sense can enter Thomas' world only as a principle in existing things, never as an existing thing itself. As a principle, that substance must enter into correlation with esse in order to enter into Thomism. As de Raeymaeker points out,

. . . the act of being, esse, is distinct from the substance. That is to say, in material beings, esse is distinct from the substance composed of prime matter, the principle of individuation, and of substantial form, the principle of specific perfection; and it is to this substance, taken in its entirety, that there corresponds an esse as an act to its potency.³⁵

If this means anything at all, it means that Thomas' existential being can never be identified with Aristotle's essential substance. Gilson's view, therefore, that Aristotle's world is wholly present in Thomism "in so far as reality is substance" can only mean that Aristotle's world simply isn't wholly present in Thomism. It is present in potentiality, but not in actuality.

The fact that Gilson is able to speak of it as though it were present is a function of the fact that Gilson inadvertently falls into the very error which Thomas himself had already fallen into, the error of treating a principle as though it were a thing. In this case, it is the error of looking at beings as though they were Aristotelian substances. Actually, Gilson is not unmindful of the fact that Thomas himself did this. "Each time Thomas Aquinas himself is looking at being as at a substance, he thereby reoccupies the position of Aristotle, and it is no wonder that, in such cases, the distinction between essence and existence does not occur to his own mind."³⁶

Gilson, as Thomas before him, supposes that the real world does

³⁵ de Raeymaeker, The Philosophy of Being, p. 135.

³⁶ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 158.

offer a perspective from which things may be understood correctly without advertence to the real distinction.

It is the world of science, eternal, self-subsistent and such that no problem concerning existence needs nor can be asked about it. It is one and the same thing for a man in it to be "man," to be "one" and "to be." . . . Physics is that very order of substantial reality in which existence is taken for granted.³⁷

The analogy which he borrows from Thomas to illustrate the relationship between esse and the Aristotelian substance lends support to the notion of such a substantial order of things. For, we are told, the Aristotelian substance (as essence) is like the air which receives its light (esse) from a source outside itself. This analogy is unfortunate, however, for it suggests that the Aristotelian substance, apart from esse, is already a thing in its own right, just as air, apart from light, is a thing in its own right. It suggests, furthermore, that the Aristotelian substance is an already constituted subject which then receives esse. Hence, this analogy supports Gilson's supposition that, although existence does not take root in Aristotelian substances, nevertheless those substances can be regarded as everlasting in "their own right."³⁸

He states that "if you look at simple substances such as they actually are, it is obvious that they are made to endure."³⁹ Here we can see the source of the problem. Simple substances as they actually are can only be existing substances. They are simple substances only in an Aristotelian world in which substance and existence identify. In a Thomist world, they are composite substances (esse/

³⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 164.

essence) and that complexity rules out our capacity to identify automatically and a priori their endurance with their essential principles.

Aristotle's view that "man," "one man" and "one existent man" all refer to the same thing or reality⁴⁰ stems directly from his identification of substance and existence. To suppose, as does Gilson, that such a perspective remains possible in a universe in which such an identification is no longer possible is to suppose that an accurate knowledge of things can arise from an inaccurate presumption about their structural principles. Yet the air/light analogy, whatever its other drawbacks, demonstrates very clearly the misleading character of such a supposition. For, if one need make no distinction between air (substance) and light (esse), one will be led to assume that air, by definition, is bright or luminous. While it might be argued that the failure here is not a failure of supposition, but of the analogy itself, two facts nevertheless remain: 1) the Aristotelian substance as principle is much more difficult to isolate in a Thomist world than the Aristotelian substance as concrete thing is in Aristotle's world, and 2) an understanding of that principle is as crucial to accurate scientific knowledge in a Thomist world as is understanding the concrete thing in an Aristotelian world.

Both Thomas and Gilson fail to recognize that, while logic and ontology identify in Aristotle, they do not in Thomism, where essences and actually existing things no longer are the same.

. . . when esse is taken to be the correlative of essence, as act to potency, substance and essence are no longer the same; substance is then not constituted by essence, but by the correlation of essence, as potency, with esse, as act. The actuality of

⁴⁰Metaphysics, IV, 1003b27-33.

substance is then not included within the necessary intelligibility of essence, for essence is only the potential correlative of the act-potency correlation which constitutes substance: essence is potential, but not actual, substance. No necessary understanding of actual substance is any longer possible; such an understanding is only of potential substance and is not an actual understanding.⁴¹

As Owens points out, "Only as already having real being in the outside world, or as having cognitional being through the act of being known, can the essence function as a direct object of intellectual consideration."⁴² In a Thomist world, therefore, "man," "one man" and "one existent man" can never refer to one and the same thing. "Man," "one" and "existent" refer respectively to essence, the existing being and esse. The Aristotelian substance survives only as the essence in such a world, and therefore can never be known both "in its own right" and as actually existing simultaneously.

Instead, we have in Thomism a kind of metaphysical uncertainty principle.⁴³ Aristotelian substances can either be positively known in their own right but then only as uncreated (potential), or they can be negatively known as actually existing correlative principles of esse. To presume that their logic coincides with their ontology is to deny the real distinction, because it is to presume that esse has no discernible (intelligible) impact on reality as we know it. It is, in

⁴¹Keefe, Thomism, pp. 55-56.

⁴²Owens, St. Thomas and the Future of Metaphysics, pp. 43-44.

⁴³The analogue for such a metaphysical uncertainty principle is, of course, the scientific uncertainty principle associated with the physicist Werner Heisenberg, which states the impossibility of determining simultaneously both the speed and the location of subatomic particles. Just as the quantum physicist must choose between knowing the speed or the location of subatomic particles, so the Thomist metaphysician must make a similar choice regarding Aristotelian substances between knowing them logically (potentially) or ontologically (actually). Possible and actual knowledge do not coincide.

short, to presume that Aristotle's essentialist account of the world's intelligibility was entirely correct. But such a presumption is, in fact, an even greater problem than the problem of substance.

The Problem of Esse (Metaphysics)

According to Gilson, "As soon as existence no longer is taken for granted, metaphysics begins."⁴⁴ In other words, the principle of esse is what warrants the independence of metaphysics from science. "And this discovery of the act of existing--esse--is the moment of discovery of metaphysics."⁴⁵ Herein lies the source of Thomism's claim to be the one genuine existential philosophy, namely, in its positing of "existence in being, as a constituent element of being."⁴⁶ Heidegger's critique of Western thought for having forgotten being⁴⁷ is met by the Thomist counter-assertion that Thomas, and Thomas alone, did not forget:

. . . it would be vain for us to go farther back into the past than the time of Thomas Aquinas, because nobody that we know of has cared to posit existence in being, as a constituent element of being. And it would be no less vain to look in the more immediate past for a more modern expression of the same truth, because, paradoxically enough, what was perhaps deepest in the philosophical message of Thomas Aquinas seems to have remained practically forgotten since the very time of his death.⁴⁸

As a result, Gilson concludes that "Thomistic metaphysics is existential in its own right."⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 166.

⁴⁵ Klubertanz, Introduction to the Philosophy of Being, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 154.

⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 15-16, 20.

⁴⁸ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 154.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

We have already seen how Carlo and other Esseist Thomists presume the existentialism of Thomism to be so powerful a break with previous Greek essentialist thinking as to signal an end to the Greek essence altogether. They presume this, because, identifying the principle of esse with Ipsum Esse who is also Ipsum Intelligere, they see no way to avoid the conclusion that all of existence, including its intelligibility, must be reduced to esse. No positive role, therefore, remains for the essence to play.

Gilson, on the other hand, presumes that Aristotelian essences (substances) not only play an important role in Thomas' universe, but also reflect "in their own right" the real order to such a degree that science need look no further than them to understand the physical nature of the world. Only when one moves 'beyond' physics is it necessary to take their existential component into consideration. Clearly Gilson is working with a very different notion of esse than are Esseist Thomists.

Broadly speaking, there are two major areas of disagreement between Gilson and Carlo. First, while Carlo identifies intelligere with esse, Gilson refuses to esse any notion of formal causality whatever. A thing's formal determinations, every one of them according to Gilson, arise solely from the side of essence. Esse is an act without a form, and to the extent that Thomas ever refers to esse as formal, he is to be understood as meaning no more than that esse stands in the same relationship to essence as form does to matter. Therefore, Gilson can maintain that "existence does not monopolize the whole actuality of existing substance. Rather, just as essence is in potency to the act of its own existence, so also is the act of existence in

potency to the formal act of its own essence."⁵⁰ In other words, so important is essence to actually existing things that esse itself is dependent upon the essential structures of the thing for its own presence. As Thomas noted (and Gilson quotes him), "esse in re est, et est actus entis, resultans ex principiis rei, sicut lucere est actus lucentis."⁵¹ Gilson, in fact and as already noted (see pp. 144, 156-157) goes Thomas one step better, maintaining, as Thomas never did, that esse is in potency to its own essence. As a result, Gilson concludes that the intelligibility of the existing thing lies with essence, the act or actuation of that thing with esse.⁵² Hence the Aristotelian substance remains intact within Thomism.

The second major disagreement between Gilson and Carlo, a corollary to the first, has to do with the nature and importance of participation in Thomas. Because Carlo defines creatures as existential quanta, he is forced to a notion of creaturely participation in divinity which comes perilously close to pantheism. Gilson, on the other hand, so emphasizes the positive role of Aristotelian substances in a Thomist world that he necessarily associates esse much more with the Aristotelian substance esse actuates than with the divine source which produces that esse. Hence, he is driven to the opposite extreme from Carlo, that of ignoring participation or of reducing it to nothing more than a created imitation of the divine existence.

According to Gilson, existing things can be said to exist for two reasons--first, by virtue of an extrinsic efficient cause that produces

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 171.

⁵¹In III Sent., d. 6, q. 2, a. 2; Being and Some Philosophers, p. 174.

⁵²Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 175.

them, and, secondly, by virtue of an intrinsic principle which is constitutive of them. This immanent principle not only confers being upon things, but also makes things to be beings. Therefore, things as beings can be proper objects of the intellect apart from the extrinsic cause which makes them beings. Hence, the world can be understood as autonomous with reference to God, inasmuch as participation in God does not make things dependent on Him, but rather effects a kind of transfer of some of His attributes to the creature. Just as God exists, so does the creature. And just as God exercises efficient causality, so does the creature. Thus, Gilson can say that "'To be' is to be cause, that is, both immanent cause of its own being and transitive cause of other beings through efficient causality."⁵³ The creature therefore does not so much participate (share) in the nature of God as imitate His nature. All creatures, therefore, and not just man, may be said to image God existentially.

All beings, from the most exalted to the humblest ones, are just as really distinct and as ultimately alike as the children of the same father; for, indeed, they all have the same Father, and He has made them all in His image or resemblance. They act because they are, and they are because His name is He Who Is.⁵⁴

Just as the enormous problem with Carlo's interpretation of Thomism lies on the side of essence, in his notion that essence is reducible to esse, so Gilson's problem lies, as one might expect, on the side of esse, first, in his notion that, insofar as science is concerned, esse is reducible to essence, and, secondly, in the unmistakable impression he gives, insofar as metaphysics is concerned, that esse is an accident of Aristotelian substances. It is this latter which will be explored

⁵³ Ibid., p. 186.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 187.

in some detail, since once one has reduced esse to accident, it is but a small step to eliminating it altogether.

In examining Gilson's treatment of esse as accident, it should first be noted that such a treatment is not original with him. In his 1958 article, "The Accidental and Essential Character of Being in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas," Joseph Owens discovers in Thomas' writings a series of texts which indicate that Thomas himself understood being to be in some sense accidental, as well as substantial.

It is the same being, in a word, that is both accidental and essential to creatures. It is the act of being that results from the principles of the essence by way of formal causality, yet only when it is caused efficiently by a different and external agent. It is the act in regard to which every nature is essentially a being, and yet it is identified as a nature only with the divine essence. In all other natures it is an accident, though it is not subsequent to the essence like predicamental accidents, but prior to it. It is accordingly both accidental and essential.⁵⁵

Although Gilson carefully avoids the use of the word accident with regard to esse, his arguments depend directly upon those texts in Aquinas which treat esse as an accident, and it is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that, to the degree that Thomas understood esse as accident, so does Gilson.

According to Thomas, esse is an accident only in the larger sense of the word 'accident,' not in its proper sense. "An accident means in a wide sense everything that is not part of the essence; and such is the character of being [esse] in created things. . ."⁵⁶ Thomas drew this distinction between a proper and a wider sense of the term 'accident' because the traditional (proper) use of the term made no allowances for a substantial principle of being as accident.

⁵⁵ Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 40.

⁵⁶ Quodl. XII, 5 (English translation from Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics, p. 71n).

The proper sense of accident, in the tradition that lay behind the mediaeval metaphysical controversies, would be understood as denoting the accepted Aristotelian meaning of a predicamental accident. But the substantial being of a thing can hardly be a predicamental accident. A predicamental accident supposes its substance already complete as substance, and is added to a so completed subject. Without substantial being, however, there is simply no subject to which an accident could be added.⁵⁷

What Thomas was searching for and found in Hilary was a notion of accident which could accomodate esse as a principle in existing things and yet outside the essence of those things. As Thomas saw it, "quidquid est in aliquo praeter essentiam ejus, inest ei accidentaliter."⁵⁸ What Thomas really sought, as Owens argues, was a way of accomodating the Aristotelian notion that the essence is the source of its own existence. As Thomas expressed it in In III Sent. (a well-known text employed by Gilson and cited earlier, pp. 145, 157), "et hoc quidem esse in re est, et est actus entis resultans ex principiis rei, sicut lucere est actus lucentis."⁵⁹ The point is made more strikingly in In IV Metaph., where Thomas writes,

Esse enim rei quamvis sit aliud ab ejus essentia, non tamen est intelligendum quod sit aliquod superadditum ad modum accidentis, sed quasi constituitur per principia essentiae.⁶⁰

On the other hand, Thomas wants to insist simultaneously that esse is not a predicamental accident. For esse must be understood as somehow prior to the essence of which it is an accident. It must, in other words, be understood as a substantial principle as well.

In order to accomodate both notions, Thomas had recourse to

⁵⁷ Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 11.

⁵⁸ Comp. Theol., c. LXVI.

⁵⁹ In III Sent., d. 6, q. 2, a. 2.

⁶⁰ In IV Metaph., lect. 2.

reciporocal causality to explain them. In the order of efficient causality, esse is prior to essence and efficacious on the substantial level. In the order of formal causality, however, esse is subsequent to essence, a product of the principles the essence exercises as formal cause.

Herein lies the clear-cut distinction between efficient and formal causality which Gilson understands to be central to the Thomist transformation of Aristotelianism. Owens agrees. After noting the "radical change" which the separation of act (esse) and form (essence) produces with regard to Aristotle, who understood act and form to identify, Owens goes on to point out that the separation of efficient from formal causality allows Thomas to make a distinction between esse as essential and as accidental.

If the form is the cause of being in its own special way, that is, as formal cause, it will in its own order necessarily determine the essence to being. Formal causality is a necessary type of causality. All formal results follow necessarily from their formal causes, as may be seen in the procedures of mathematics. If its form determines every nature to be a being, then every nature is essentially a being. There is nothing in the form itself, however, that requires its submission to any efficient causality. That it is acted upon by another efficient cause does not follow with necessity from its own formal nature. If its act of being has to be given in this way by an external efficient cause, that act can only be accidental to it in this order of causality.⁶¹

When we ask the question, why is it necessary for Thomas to find a way to accomodate esse as accident, the answer seems fairly obvious. Thomas sums it up twice in the Summa Theologiae, when he says, "esse secundum se competit formae"⁶² and "esse per se consequitur forman

⁶¹Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 22.

⁶²ST I, 50, 5 ad 3.

creaturae."⁶³ As Owens notes, "This is reminiscent of the Aristotelian doctrine that form is the cause of being."⁶⁴ In other words, esse as accident is the manner in which Thomas attempts to get Aristotle's essentialist metaphysics into his own world intact. Inasmuch as Thomas himself developed both the notion of form as the realm of intelligibility and necessity and the notion of an existence which "belongs to" that form, it is little wonder that Gilson is able to interpret Thomas in such a way as to speak of science as having to inquire no further than the realm of Aristotelian substances. Esse can have no empirically discernible effect upon Aristotelian substances once they have become that 'thick.' For the same reason, one can see why Gilson insists that revelation (Ex 3.14) and not human reason is the source of our knowledge of the existential character of reality. Only a revelation could cut such essences down to size.

The question remains, nevertheless, as to whether Aristotle's world can be accommodated to that of Thomas by the use of principles so much at variance with Aristotelianism as are Thomas' notions of esse as 1) substantial and accidental and 2) a non-predicamental accident which is both prior to and creative of its subject. In the final analysis, it is a question about substance once again. For, in fact, whenever esse is spoken of as an accident, essence is treated as though it were a substance (concrete thing). Owens comments that the doctrine of esse as accident "is intended as a defence of the Aristotelian teaching that the addition of the participle 'being' does not denote

⁶³ ST I, 104, 1 ad 1.

⁶⁴ Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 19.

anything new in the thing, and that every substance is of its very nature *being*."⁶⁵ Here is the source of Gilson's view that "one," "man" and "to be" refer to the same thing. But is not the doctrine of the real distinction designed to combat just that very Aristotelian teaching? Isn't the Thomist transformation of Aristotle a transformation of just such a notion of substance?

Unfortunately, the central problem lies in Thomas himself, in his desire to have Aristotle and to transform him too. The possibility that these two projects are mutually incompatible seems never to have occurred to him. Hence, he tried to introduce into his world the very same twofold notion of substance which Aristotle had employed before him.

Like Aristotle, Aquinas uses substance in a double sense. It is in the first place the individually existing thing, i.e., that which can really be said to exist in the usual sense. Properties and definitions, which can only be said to exist through the substance, are then accidents. In that case the difference is in the manner of existence. Substance may also be identified with the essence of a thing, and is then equivalent to essentia or natura. Everything added to, but not part of, the definition of the essence of a thing are then accidents.⁶⁶

This was not, in itself, a decision which would necessarily lead to any problems. The problems arose when the primary Thomist sense of substance (esse/essence) came to be identified with the primary Aristotelian sense of substance (form/matter). For, by this identification, the Thomist existential substance was reduced to the Aristotelian essential substance.

Thomas himself opened the way to such a reduction when he drew a distinction in the notion of abstraction which Aristotle had not drawn

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

⁶⁶ Lyttkens, The Analogy Between God and the World, p. 170.

(his system had neither the need nor the capacity for accomodating such a distinction). According to Thomas, essence may be abstracted either with or without precision from being (esse). In the former case, the essence one abstracts is the principle which correlates with esse to constitute a being; in the latter case, it is the concrete existing thing itself.⁶⁷

Whatever Thomas' reasons for drawing the distinction, a point to which we shall return in the sixth chapter, the distinction itself makes it possible for Thomists such as Gilson and Owens to identify Aristotle's essential substances with Thomas' existing things. For Aristotle's substances can enter Thomas' world only on the essence side of the real distinction. The Aristotelian substance can go no further than the Thomist essence is able to take it. As long as essence remains only a principle of being, Aristotle's world of essential substances can be retained as potential principles, but not as actual realities. Once, however, the essence is capable of being identified with the existing thing itself, which is precisely what the notion of abstraction without precision makes possible, the Aristotelian world is able to gain that substantial toehold in Thomism which essentialist substances can on no grounds of their own claim in an existentialist universe. Because they get into that universe by virtue of a principle of abstraction which allows their existence (esse) to be reduced to their essential nature (essence), they can be understood as indifferent to esse at the level of physics and as only accidentally modified by esse at the level of metaphysics.

⁶⁷For discussion of this, see Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," pp. 31ff.

That this process of reduction is at work in Thomas himself is apparent when Thomas speaks of esse as "resultans ex principiis rei." There he clearly identifies the thing with its essence. And when he employs the air/light analogy to illustrate the relation of esse to essence, he only succeeds in twice compounding the error, treating essence as a thing (air) and its potency to being (diaphaneity) as an aptitudinal (predicamental) accident which requires but an extrinsic efficient cause to effect its accidental modification from potential to actual being. Gilson, in choosing these texts to argue for an intact Aristotelian substance in an existential Thomist world, gives the medieval error a modern blessing.

The problems on the side of essence, because they ultimately reduce the existential substance of Thomas to the essentialist substance of Aristotle, necessarily make themselves felt in equally severe problems on the side of esse. The first problem is that esse, far from dominating essence and its act, as Gilson maintains elsewhere,⁶⁸ becomes only an accidental component vis a vis that essence. Nowhere is this made more apparent than in the fact that esse never rises, in Gilson's account of it, above the status of a servant to essence. For, while Gilson does indeed speak of esse as "the supreme constituent of 'being'"⁶⁹ and as the "supreme act of creatures,"⁷⁰ the fact remains that its role never goes beyond the bounds of supplying "the active energy through which the corresponding essence shall progressively

⁶⁸ Gilson, Christian Philosophy of Aquinas, p. 40.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁷⁰ Idem., Being and Some Philosophers, p. 182.

receive all its determinations."⁷¹ By drawing an absolute distinction between act (esse) and form (essence), esse can be the source of all perfections only as the act which "realifies" them. It cannot be the source of any of the positive perfections which are thus realified. Those belong to Aristotle's essence which, in Thomas' world as in Aristotle's before him, commands the entire spectrum of intelligibilities. It is the job of esse simply to transform that spectrum of potential intelligibilities into real things.

. . . this transition from the merely possible to the actual is simultaneously a transition from the non-perfect to the perfect, from what is without value and worth to what is valuable and worthwhile. Because it does contribute perfection, value and worth to existents, then, actual existence is the factor which makes them real. Despite what radical essentialist may say, it does not nullify, but literally realifies them. It does not detract from, but adds to them. It does not lessen, but enhances them.⁷²

As Owens puts it, esse "is the core of all else, the axis around which all the rest revolves, even though it is not part of the thing's nature. From within, however, it is actuating everything in the nature."⁷³ According to such a view, therefore, the proper product of creation is not esse, but essence, because only essence is a nature.

Existence as a nature cannot be bestowed on anything. . . . A thing whose existence is caused, then, inevitably must be of a different nature from existence itself. The characteristic effect of subsistent existence, it is true, cannot be other than existence. But is the new existence what is produced? No. What is produced is a galaxy, a metal, a tree, an animal, a man. To issue from subsistent existence, the new existence has to be the existence of a finite thing such as these. Each new existence, accordingly, involves a potency that limits it and remains other than it. The potency is the thing that is produced.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Sweeney, Authentic Existentialism, p. 81.

⁷³ Joseph Owens, An Interpretation of Existence (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1968), p. 71.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

The dynamism, the driving force, of created things therefore lies on the side of esse; but the specific perfections which that energy underwrites lie on the side of essence. As Gilson says with regard to human beings, "the question never is for a soul to become what it is (it is such qua form) but to become that which it is. In other words, a human soul has more and more to actualize its very definition."⁷⁵ Hence esse is that principle which first actualizes the Aristotelian substance and then provides the energy for those operations which are proper to that substance, all with a view to achieving a series of perfections which are specified entirely from the side of the Aristotelian substance (essence). Esse exists for the sake of essence, not the reverse.

Gilson speaks of how Thomists betray Thomism "first, and only too often, by presenting it as a philosophy occupied principally with forms, whereas it never speaks of them save as of constituent elements of actual beings."⁷⁶ But does not his own preoccupation with formal causality to the point of treating esse as accidental to existing things (metaphysics) or identical with them (physics) constitute precisely the kind of betrayal to which he refers? On the other hand, if this be betrayal, might not Thomas himself be partially to blame for the situation, with his insistence that esse is, from the point of view of formal causality, accidental to essence?

Owens asks with regard to esse as accidental, "Is this distinction of a proper and a wide sense of accident merely an ad hoc invention?"⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 181.

⁷⁶ Idem., Christian Philosophy of Aquinas, pp. 34-35.

⁷⁷ Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 11.

The answer, it would appear, must be yes if one accepts Owens' interpretation of it. For, according to Owens, it complements Thomas' distinction between abstraction with and without precision. If the two distinctions are related to one another, as Owens supposes, then both serve the single purpose of accomodating Aristotle's world to that of Thomas. As a result, "a fundamental equivocity in the basic notion of being" enters his system, producing an ambiguity which, as Owens goes on to say, "may be expected to follow through in all subsequent metaphysical thinking."⁷⁸ This ambiguity is simply one more example of the tension between thick and thin essences, now manifesting itself as a tension between accidental and essential esse. The more accidental the esse, the thicker the essence. Gilson has chosen those texts which Carlo ignores, just as Carlo has chosen those which Gilson ignores.

The texts which Gilson ignores point to the second major problem in his interpretation of esse. And that is the almost total absence in Gilson of the notion of participation, a notion which, as one writer puts it, "occurs almost on every page"⁷⁹ of Thomas' writings. Just as Gilson's contention that Aristotelian substances enter Thomism intact depends heavily upon those texts in Thomas which treat esse as accident, so does Gilson's defense of the world's autonomy depend just as heavily on avoiding those texts which deal with participation. Gilson uses instead only those texts which treat esse as act or actuality, while suggesting, as we have seen, that Thomas is "merely following his

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

⁷⁹ Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, a Harvest/HJB Book (1965), p. 79. As John points out, the word 'participation' does not even appear in the index of Gilson's work, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Thomist Spectrum, p. 44).

pen" when he speaks of every being as participating in the nature of existence.⁸⁰

Thomas does make a distinction between esse as nature in God and as actuality in existing things. He writes, on the one hand, that "Oportet quod hoc quod est esse, sit substantia vel natura Dei,"⁸¹ and, on the other, that "Esse est actualitas substantiae vel essentiae."⁸² The difficulty with the latter statement, however, is that it seems to suggest that essence or substance is a complete entity in its own right (the intact Aristotelian substance) which receives from esse only its actualization. The essential component in things, however, is not a complete essence, it is an essential principle; it is not a complete nature, but only the principle of such a nature. By the same token, esse is not God's nature, but a created participation in His nature. Thus, Owens is correct when he says that "Existence as a nature cannot be bestowed on anything."⁸³ But is not the same thing true of the Aristotelian substance when it becomes the Thomist essence? As an Aristotelian substance in an Aristotelian world, it can be identified with the thing itself. But in a Thomist world, how can essence be bestowed on existing things as their complete nature, when it, like esse itself, is only the principle of a nature? In other words, in Thomism, don't creatures constitute the point at which an existential principle drawn from the divine nature correlates with an essential principle drawn from Aristotle's physics?

⁸⁰ See page 146.

⁸¹ De Pot., VII, 2.

⁸² ST I, 54, 1.

⁸³ Owens, An Interpretation of Existence, p. 186.

If this be the case, then Thomas' notion of participation as the possession of a nature higher than one's own⁸⁴ or a share in an act higher than one's own⁸⁵ would seem to reflect more accurately the relationship of essence to esse than does the notion of esse as no more than the simple actualization of an essential nature. For Gilsonian Thomists, the major problem in viewing the esse/essence correlation as the participation of a lower nature in a higher nature is clear. Owens states it well.

In its application to being, the doctrine of participation has to be purged of any aspect of formal causality. In no sense can you say that part of being goes to each of its recipients. There is here no form to be divided among different subjects. If being as a nature may be called a form, it is a form that is entirely indivisible and unable to be shared as a nature with anything else. As the first efficient cause it can just make other natures be. In this communication of being, on the side of the first cause, there is no trace of strictly formal causality whatsoever. Being is imparted, from that viewpoint, to creatures only through efficient causality. The finite nature is made to exist, without any addition at all in the order of nature. Nothing of formal nature is shared when being is participated.⁸⁶

If Owens and Gilson are right, however, two questions immediately arise, and they are both theological. The first is the question of grace itself. If Owens is correct in saying that "If being as a nature may be called a form, it is a form that is entirely indivisible and unable to be shared as a nature with anything else," how are we then to account for the theological doctrine that human beings are, by grace, raised by God to a share (participation) in the divine nature? Secondly, how are we to avoid the naturalizing of God's creative activity? If being, as the first efficient cause, "can just make other natures be,"

⁸⁴ Comment. in Ad Coloss., c. 1, lect. 4.

⁸⁵ Quodl., XII, q. 5, a. 5.

⁸⁶ Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics, pp. 106-107.

does this not subordinate the higher principle of esse to the lower principle of essence, reducing both God's activity as Creator and esse as the intrinsic existential component in existing things to the confines of an essentialist Aristotelian universe?

The Problem of Creation (The Supernatural)

The temptation to naturalize creation is, in metaphysics, the temptation to rationalize it. Since, in Thomist metaphysics, the introduction of an existential component at the esse/essence level constitutes the primary transformation of Aristotle's necessary world into Thomas' created world, the temptation to rationalize creation is the temptation to rationalize esse. Leo Sweeney goes about as far in that direction as one can when he says,

. . . although a theologian originated the notion of esse as the actualizing component within creatures, still that doctrine does not belong of its very nature to theology. It is not a strict mystery, transcending the grasp of human reason. That is to say, the illumination which Thomas experienced while reflecting upon Exodus 3. 14 did not superimpose any intelligible content upon the data already gained from material existents through direct experience. Rather, its function was to enable him to see what actually was already contained within that data but heretofore overlooked by previous thinkers.⁸⁷

Although Gilson is unwilling to grant that the notion of esse is available to the metaphysician qua metaphysician, he goes nearly as far in his assertion that the primacy of esse overcomes the contingency of the world. Because the world's contingency has been overcome, the created character of reality (i.e., its relationship to God) can safely be ignored by both science and metaphysics.

This error is not the property of 'thick' essence or Gilsonian Thomists alone. It is shared by Esseist Thomists, whose rationalization

⁸⁷ Sweeney, Authentic Existentialism, p. 74.

of esse, as we have already seen, consists in reducing created esse to hierarchized quantifications of the divine Intelligere. Nor is this error the property of modern Thomists alone. It goes back to Thomas himself, in his association of essences with the Divine Ideas, an association which, by replacing the ex nihilo of revelation with the divine essence as source of created intelligibilities, moved creation from the theological to the philosophical realm, where esse was reduced to serving (actualizing) the necessary structures of Aristotle's essential universe.

. . . the essentialist and necessitarian ontology of Aristotle was converted to a creationist viewpoint without ceasing to be committed to the intrinsic rationality of finite reality. The major difference is that such rationality is now seen, from the Thomist stance, to be contingent. Logic is thereby freed from necessity without ceasing to be rigorous. From being closed upon essence, it is converted to openness upon existence.

That openness was not seen in the thirteenth century to be theological; creation was then taken to be a "natural" truth, a matter of correct inference from common-sense experience.⁸⁸

This reduction of creation to the natural realm produced a corresponding relegation of grace to the accidental order.

This identification of grace as an ontological accidens is the consequence of the cosmological supposition that substantial contingency, creation, is 'natural'; the only level of gratuity then remaining is the accidental, to which all supernatural efficacy is then reduced.⁸⁹

There are indications among Thomists, however, that the situation may not be quite as straightforward as their own metaphysics suggests. Owens, for example, while denying that esse may be regarded as formal or natural, concedes that "there is one viewpoint from which the act of

⁸⁸ Donald J. Keefe, "A Methodological Critique of von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics," Communio 5 (Spring 1978):34-35.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

being may be thought of as a nature that is participated,"⁹⁰ while Gilson himself speaks of the very different view one gets of the world when one looks at it in terms of participation and analogy:

. . . to the Christian mind the physical world in which we live offers a face which is the reverse of its physicisism itself, a face where all that was read on the one side in terms of force, energy and law, is now read on the other in terms of participations and analogies of the divine Being. For whoever understands this, the Christian world takes on the character of a sacred world with a relation to God inscribed in its very being and in every law that rules its functioning.⁹¹

Many Thomists are not at all reluctant to speak of the mystery which attaches to esse and the real distinction. Kopaczynski sums up the situation very well:

Father Cornelio Fabro tells us that Thomism is difficult and paradoxical. Etienne Gilson speaks of the "mystery of actual existence," Fr. Gerald Phelan likewise notes the "mystery of the being of creatures." Father W. Norris Clarke sees Thomas' essence-existence theory as one of "extraordinary daring, paradox, and mystery" which "stretches the resources of language up to, if not beyond, their limits." Jacques Maritain defines reality in one place as "intelligible mystery" and goes on to claim that a philosophy not aware of mystery is not worthy of the title "philosophy."

Fr. Owens, while rejecting in one sense the puzzling label he terms the "mystery of being" . . . does observe that "real mystery, notwithstanding, is encountered when one reaches subsistent existence. . . . The nature of existence, in a word, is shrouded in mystery, even though the occurrence of existence in observable things is obvious." . . . and Father Copleston contends that the paradoxical character of metaphysical utterances serves the valuable purpose of shaking us up, forcing us to ask ourselves: Why do metaphysicians talk like this? Why do they say the strange things they do?⁹²

Kopaczynski himself goes on to remark that "the very existence of creatures as well as their metaphysical composition is ultimately a

⁹⁰Owens, "Accidental and Essential Character," p. 18.

⁹¹Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, p. 100.

⁹²Kopaczynski, Linguistic Ramifications, pp. 150-151.

mystery hidden in Ipsum Esse, God."⁹³

In fact, Copleston's question, "Why do metaphysicians talk like this? Why do they say the strange things they do?" becomes even more relevant, especially to the theologian, when a philosopher such as Gerard Smith, in his book on natural theology, describes creation in terms of love.

If God loves creatures, yet not as means or ends, there must be that about His love whereby it is of things which have absolutely no reason in themselves why they are loved. The name of such a love is infinite generosity. All love is generous; only God's love is generous to the point of arranging for the presence of a reception committee [essence] at the receiving end of an act [esse] which would be infinite love even without the committee. Here then, the adage, good is self-diffusive, describes that characteristic of love, in all cases generous, by which, in the divine instance, love is purely gratuitous.⁹⁴

Or when a philosopher such as W. Norris Clarke describes God's creative act as "an efficacious act of intentionality, of willing-to-share, of willed self-communication"⁹⁵ and asks,

And is it not as it should be that the truly ultimate mystery of the universe, that which illumines all else, should turn out to be the mystery of self-communicating love? There is no further explanation possible for anything, if "God is Love," as St. John says.⁹⁶

Or when a philosopher such as Louis de Raeymaeker describes every existing being as "a pure gift of the Absolute, on which it depends completely, and it cannot do otherwise but reveal, in the measure of its reality, the value of being of the absolute principle in which it participates."⁹⁷

⁹³ Ibid., p. 152.

⁹⁴ Smith, Natural Theology, p. 219.

⁹⁵ Clarke, "What Cannot Be Said," p. 31.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

⁹⁷ de Raeymaeker, The Philosophy of Being, p. 287.

Since these are the kinds of terms in which theologians today are wont to speak of God's grace, the above-noted Thomists might easily give the impression that grace is substantial by virtue of the absolute gratuity of God's creative act in which he communicates something of Himself to His creation. Until, that is, one realizes that the mystery to which they refer is, in their judgment, a "natural mystery,"⁹⁸ just as the gift is "the supreme gift in the natural order,"⁹⁹ making metaphysics, in its turn, "the highest natural gift of God to men."¹⁰⁰

E. Mersch, in describing the notion of God's self-communication in Western theology, points out that, according to that theology,

. . . l'Être infini a deux manières de se communiquer aux êtres finis: la première par laquelle il se donne a leur manière à eux, et qui les fait eux; la seconde par laquelle il se donne a sa manière à lui, et qui les fait un avec lui.¹⁰¹

The first of these, in Thomism, is the 'natural' gift of esse by which things are made themselves, the second is the 'supernatural' gift of sanctifying grace by which they are 'accidentally' elevated to union with God. The critical theological question which this dual notion of gratuity raises is whether or not the gift of God's self-communication can ever be understood as 'natural.' With regard to Thomist methodology, this means asking whether or not esse can be regarded as a 'natural' principle in existing things. In short, can esse be understood as confined to specific dimensions determined entirely from the side of essence, or must esse be understood as the principle of a 'higher' nature or

⁹⁸Clarke, "What Cannot Be Said," p. 31.

⁹⁹Henri Renard, "Essence and Existence," PACPA 21 (1946):65.

¹⁰⁰Owens, St. Thomas and the Future of Metaphysics, p. 61.

¹⁰¹E. Mersch, "Filii in Filio," Nouv. Rev. Theol. 7 (Jly-Aug 1938): 820.

a 'higher' act which itself elevates the essential principle in an existing thing to a level inaccessible to that essential principle in an Aristotelian world. On the answer to this question hinges the proper correlation of nature and grace in an Aristotelian act/potency methodology as transformed by the real distinction. In order to answer this question, we must examine more carefully the notion of participation with regard to the principles of essence and esse, with a view to establishing the proper Thomist, as opposed to Aristotelian, notion of substance.

CHAPTER 5

ESSENTIAL PARTICIPATION AND ARISTOTLE: MATERIAL SUBSTANCE

We have argued thus far that Thomas' fundamental intention was to employ an Aristotelian metaphysics in the service of Christian theology. We have argued further, however, that his attempt to use the Divine Ideas to ground the 'thick' essences of such a metaphysics introduced into his work a Platonic element which could not but clash with the methodology he had taken over from Aristotle. As a result, two conflicting streams of texts can be found in his writings, those which underwrite a 'thick' essence and those which deny such a notion of essence. Gilson has rightly understood Thomism to be a correlation of Christianity and Aristotelianism. He has also rightly understood that such a correlation requires us to understand essence as providing within things a positive notion of intelligibility distinct from esse. His zeal for establishing the genuinely Aristotelian character of Thomism, however, led him to subordinate the theological elements of the correlation to the Aristotelian ones, a subordination nowhere more apparent than in his treatment of esse as having no discernible impact upon the Aristotelian essence.

In order to avoid Platonizing Thomas, Gilson thought it necessary to avoid the notion of participation in Thomas. On the surface, this seems quite plausible, not only because the notion of participation is so clearly linked with Platonism but also because, as we have seen, those Thomists who emphasize participation are also led to emphasize

the fundamentally Platonic character of Thomism, particularly in their reduction of essence to esse. However, there are three reasons for refusing the path which Gilson took. First, such a path leads to a reading of Thomas which denies the genuinely radical character of his transformation of Aristotelianism (essence) by theology (esse). Secondly, the real surd in Thomas' thought is not the notion of participation, but, as has been repeatedly pointed out, the Platonic Forms introduced as the Divine Ideas. Finally, while it is clear that the restriction of Thomism to a single order of participation (existential) has the effect of turning Thomas into a Platonist, it is by no means clear that such a restriction is either consistent with Thomas or valid in itself.

L.-B. Geiger, as we have already seen,¹ insisted upon the need to maintain in Thomism two orders of participation, participation by composition and participation by formal hierarchy. In this way, Geiger sought to preserve the positive character of essence (participation by composition) without denying the function of limitation exercised by that essence on esse (participation by formal hierarchy). Unfortunately, Geiger's attempt to trace the intelligibilities found in created essences directly to God, while loyal to Thomas' notion of the role played by the Divine Ideas, also served to underscore the fundamental irrationality of trying to ground the esse/essence distinction found in things in the absolute unity of Ipsum Esse.

Cornelio Fabro, recognizing the impossibility of deriving from Ipsum Esse two transcendental orders of participation, withdrew to lower ground, seeking instead a single order of transcendental participation

¹See pp. 48-49.

buttressed by a second order of "predicamental" participation.

The first and most fundamental division of participation is into transcendental and predicamental. The former is concerned with esse, with the pure perfections that are directly grounded in it; the latter is concerned with univocal formalities, such as genera with respect to species and species with respect to individuals.²

With regard to this second order of participation, Fabro points out that "as far as their ontological content is concerned, genera and species are present in their respective subjects and must therefore be predicated essentially (secundum [per] essentiam) and not by participation (per participationem)."³ What Fabro is trying to salvage here, as he himself goes on to say, is "the Aristotelian doctrine of immanence,"⁴ i.e., the notion that true substance resides in the concrete singular and not in the genus or species in which that concrete singular is said to 'participate.' This differs from transcendental participation, in which the divine nature which is being participated remains itself whole and intact.

. . . whereas in the quantitative and material order participation attains directly to the object inasmuch as a certain "whole" is being divided and distributed in its parts, in the moral and in the strictly metaphysical order participation concerns properly speaking the mode of having and receiving, in the sense that the "whole" remains intact and undivided, while an aspect or form of the object is being participated.⁵

This relegation of essential participation to the logical order does not, however, work. First, it runs counter to Thomas' understanding

² Cornelio Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Metaphysics: The Notion of Participation," Review of Metaphysics 27 (1974): 471 (hereafter cited as Fabro, "Intensive Hermeneutics").

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 453.

of predication and participation and of the relationship between the two. For, as Thomas says,

Something is predicated of a subject in two ways: in one way by essence, in the other by participation; for light is predicated of an illuminated body by participation, but if there existed some separated light it would be predicated of it by essence.⁶

In other words, something exists in a subject either per essentiam or per participationem. To treat per essentiam predication as though it were "predicamental participation" is to introduce a rift between ontology and logic.

The situation is a very difficult one. For, on the one hand, Thomas points out that "That which is totally something does not participate it but is by essence identified with it."⁷ No specific perfection, therefore, can be predicated per essentiam of any created thing. That is to say, no material singular can be identified with the genus or species which is predicated of it, for it would then be the sole member in that genus or species. On the other hand, "What, however, is not totally identified with something but has something else joined with it is properly said to participate."⁸ Hence, some form of participation would seem to be required for the essence as well as the esse in created things, inasmuch as the doctrine of the real distinction prohibits our being able to identify any existing thing exclusively with either its essence or its esse. However, no essential or specific perfection can be predicated per participationem in God, for God's nature cannot be identified, per essentiam, with the perfection of any created essence (this is the

⁶ Quodl. II, 2, 3.

⁷ In I Metaph., lect. 10, n. 154.

⁸ Ibid.

ultimate reason why the Divine Ideas, whether singular or plural, do not work).

Secondly, this relegation of essential participation to the logical order does not solve anything. To place essential perfections within concrete singulars, while simultaneously denying the intactness and undividedness of the genera and species to which those intelligibilities are attributed, can ultimately result in one of only three positions: 1) nominalism, in which genera and species are understood to be merely mental categories within which we organize the data of our experience, 2) Esseism, in which the intelligibilities in things are simply reducible to the divine Esse, or 3) Exemplarism, in which the essential intelligibilities are traced to the Divine Ideas. Fabro himself takes the third way out.⁹

But this third way, as has been shown, is simply a half-way house to Esseism, a stopping-place for those who are not entirely willing to abandon the notion of essence as positive but who can find no locus other than Ipsum Esse in which to ground its intelligibility. As O'Grady points out,

. . . the object of Thomistic metaphysics tends to remain Aristotelian, somehow completely defined by the third degree of abstraction rather than by actus essendi, by modes of being that can be and be thought without matter rather than by the very act of being itself.

The question then that needs to be asked again is whether, for Thomistic metaphysics, there is any principle of perfection, any energizing, determining act in any being other than esse. Is there an act in any being other than esse that gives it the degree of perfection that it has above non-being.¹⁰

⁹ Fabro, "Intensive Hermeneutics," p. 474.

¹⁰ Donald O'Grady, "Esse and Metaphysics," The New Scholasticism 39 (1965):286.

O'Grady himself has no use for such a stopping-place. Since esse is the fullness of perfection, O'Grady maintains that "the total perfection and the esse of a creature are one and the same."¹¹ This being the case, it then becomes necessary to deny the act/potency character of the real distinction.

. . . one cannot, then, identify essence and potency in any being. Potency is not act; perfection is act, and essence is perfection. Composition in creaturely being must be affirmed, but composition of act and potency cannot be equated with the real composition of esse and essence.¹²

The only conclusion one can reach is that "forma est esse."¹³

In O'Grady, we see a man explicitly willing to accept the full implications of Esseist Thomism, in its denial of any distinct, positive, essential intelligibilities. However, this denial of positive essential intelligibilities is ultimately difficult for any Thomist, even a Gilson, to avoid entirely. In The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, Gilson writes,

Indeed, the essence of a finite act-of-being consists in only being such or such an act-of-being (esse), not the pure, absolute and unique Esse we have spoken about. The finite act-of-being, then, is specified by what it lacks so that here it is the potency which determines the act, at least in the sense that its proper degree of potentiality is inscribed in each finite act-of-being. . . . Each essence is set up by an act-of-being which it is not and which includes it as its own determination. Outside the pure act of existing, if it exists, nothing can exist save as a limited act-of-being. It is therefore the hierarchy of the essences which establishes and governs that of beings, each of which expresses only the proper area of a certain act-of-being.¹⁴

As Helen James John points out,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 290.

¹³ Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁴ Gilson, Christian Philosophy of Aquinas, p. 36.

From this text, which gives perhaps the clearest explanation of Gilson's view of the relation of essence and esse, it appears that essence is a name given to the finite act-of-being considered precisely as self-limiting. Our author nowhere gives evidence of having seen to what extent this explanation raises the question of the meaning of a real distinction; and the passages in which he stresses its reality seem to regard it simply as a metaphysical expression of the contingency of creatures.¹⁵

For those who wish to retain the Aristotelian elements in Thomism, the issue at stake is whether or not essence can be understood as contributing its own positive note of intelligibility to existing things. "The problem is to provide it with positivity without encroaching upon the positivity of being."¹⁶ The problem is simultaneously that of essential participation and that of Aristotelian methodology. As a problem of essential participation, it is a question of locating in the essential realm that "whole" intelligibility which "remains intact and undivided" even as it is participated. As a problem of Aristotelian methodology, it is the question which Aristotle himself confronted when he denied the Platonic Forms, namely, the question of substance or of the "really real," and of where it is to be found if one denies that it lies outside the material realm. In the final analysis, as this chapter will attempt to establish, these two problems are the same.

Aristotelian Methodology: The Problem of Substance

To ask "What is being?" is, Aristotle tells us, the same as to ask "What is substance [ousia]?"¹⁷ The question of substance is the question of being. Furthermore, the question of substance is also the

¹⁵ John, The Thomist Spectrum, p. 42.

¹⁶ Hawkins, Being and Becoming, p. 56.

¹⁷ Metaphysics, VII, 2, 1028b3-4.

question of form. "By form I mean the essence of each thing and its primary substance."¹⁸ This seems straightforward enough. Substance means the form within a concrete thing. Unfortunately, this is the point at which Aristotle's thought on the matter ceases to communicate itself with perfect clarity. For while he does say that substance is the form, he also identifies substance as both the 'substratum' and the 'shape' of a thing.¹⁹ But what does 'substratum' mean? Does it mean 'matter' or does it at least incorporate the notion of matter into the notion of substance? If so, then in what sense is substance identical with material reality? If not, then what sort of relationship exists between substance as the form in things and the universal as the intelligibility abstracted from things?

These are not easy questions to answer. As Geach has pointed out, "there is hardly a statement about form in the Metaphysics that is not (at least verbally) contradicted by some other statement."²⁰ As for the relationship between form and universal, Ross notes that "Aristotle is not very successful in solving the problem,"²¹ while Lacey maintains that he "never makes unequivocally clear just what is the difference between form and universal."²²

The fact that Aristotle speaks of substance in various ways is, in

¹⁸ Ibid., VII, 7, 1032b33.

¹⁹ Ibid., V, 8, 1017b23-25.

²⁰ G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach, Three Philosophers (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 75.

²¹ W. D. Ross, Aristotle's Metaphysics, A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), note at 1039a22.

²² A. R. Lacey, "οὐσία and Form in Aristotle," Phronesis 10 (1965): 61.

itself, not a problem. For it is generally recognized that he understands substance to be a pros hen equivocal. As he says in the Metaphysics,

There are many senses in which a thing may be said to 'be', but all that 'is' is related to one central point, one definite kind of thing, and is not said to 'be' by a mere ambiguity. Everything which is healthy is related to health, one thing in the sense that it preserves health, another in the sense that it produces it, another in the sense that it is a symptom of health, another because it is capable of it.²³

The problem arises when one tries to locate the one definite and central notion of substance which controls all of the others.

No general agreement exists among students of Aristotle as to where he located primary substance. Three possibilities recommend themselves. The first of these is the concrete singular thing. As Owens says, "There is not the least doubt that the singular sensible composite is truly Entity [ousia, substance] for the Stagirite."²⁴ This seems, on the surface, the most plausible answer to the question. The obvious antithesis to the Platonic Form is the concrete thing. This answer, however, is not without its problems, for it would seem to place an abyss between the real and the intelligible. For we know the universal, not the singular.

The second candidate for primary substance is the form within concrete things. Owens points out that the formal element in things is also, in Aristotle's view, correctly designated as substance.

"Within the sensible composite it [substance] has form as its primary

²³Metaphysics, IV, 2, 1003a32-1003b5.

²⁴Joseph Owens, The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1951), p. 336 (hereafter cited as Owens, Doctrine of Being).

instance. The matter and the composite itself are secondary instances."²⁵
 The matter and the composite are, in other words, pros hen equivocals.

One commentator on Aristotle, E. S. Haring, tries to include within the notion of substance both the form in the thing and the thing itself. Distinguishing between the form per se and the form expanded-in-a-milieu, she notes that "matter's role is to afford form an expansion."²⁶ In the final analysis, however, she falls back on form per se as primary substance.

Substantial form is ousia because, real though an individual be, that reality is mainly derivative from form. Form is the ousia of such derivative ousiae, and, in the doctrine presented in Z [Book VII of the Metaphysics], form is the chief meaning of the term 'ousia.'²⁷

According to this reading of Aristotle, "Essence, form, is independent of matter."²⁸ It is also independent of the universal, since form is not the common nature, but the "ground of the common nature."²⁹ As Owens puts it, "apparently, though itself neither singular nor universal, it is the cause of both individuality in the singular thing, and universality in the definition."³⁰

If the form itself is primary substance, however, this raises the difficulty of how it is to be distinguished from the universal. If no such distinction is possible, then substance would appear to be no more

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ E. S. Haring, "Substantial Form in Aristotle's Metaphysics Z," Review of Metaphysics 10 (1956-7):485 (hereafter cited as Haring, "Substantial Form").

²⁷ Ibid., p. 309.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 500.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 482.

³⁰ Owens, Doctrine of Being, p. 382.

than Plato's Form revisited. If such a distinction is possible, it is not easy to determine the relationship between form and intelligibility. In response to an article on substance in Aristotle by W. Sellars, Albritton points to the confusion in Aristotle himself.

. . . Professor Sellars seems to me to be mistaken in his confidence that "if anything is clear about an Aristotelian form it is that its primary mode of being is to be a this. . . as contrasted with a universal." The evidence is rather that just this is the point of unclarity and conflict in the Metaphysics, not fully resolved even in the special case of animate things.³¹

Lacey points to what may well be the source of that confusion, when he writes, "I find it difficult to grasp how the form can be 'not as such universal' but yet have universality as the form of all As. . ." ³² It is not impossible that Aristotle himself had the same problem.

Understating the situation, perhaps, when he speaks of the Aristotelian form as "located in a very unsatisfactory setting," Owens points out that

It is not an Idea. It is in sensible things and nowhere else. But these things are of their very nature changeable. The unchangeable form has therefore to be prior to them, yet to be within them and to be identical with them per se. It cannot be a universal, and yet it has to be the basis of the specific identity of the singular things. It cannot be singular, yet it has to cause the individual unity in the sensible thing.³³

One way out offers itself.

Under all these limitations, can the sensible form be the absolutely primary instance of Entity? Or does it not by its very nature prompt the search for a higher type of Entity than the sensible?"³⁴

³¹Rogers Albritton, "Forms of Particular Substances in Aristotle's Metaphysics," Journal of Philosophy 54 (1957):707 (hereafter cited as Albritton, "Forms").

³²Lacey, "οὐσια and Form in Aristotle," p. 61.

³³Owens, Doctrine of Being, pp. 376-377.

³⁴Ibid., p. 377.

This possibility, immaterial or separate substance, is the third contender for the designation of primary substance. Owens himself believes that this is, in fact, what Aristotle ultimately concluded. Separate entity is the prime analogate of Being, sensible things are all pros hen equivocals by reference to it.

Being - the divine - eternal duration - life - act, all these in their highest expression are synonymous with separate Entity. Being is derived to all other Entity and all other Beings according to the degree in which the actual permanence of the separate Entities is shared or imitated. All sensible things strive to attain as best they can that actual permanence. They are Being according to the degree in which they attain that perpetuity.³⁵

According to Owens, this is the means by which Aristotle is ultimately able to bring together substance and intelligibility. For pure act at this level is identified with pure thinking or knowing.

. . . form and knowledge, despite the priority of form from the viewpoint of human science, turn out in their highest instances to be absolutely identical. The Aristotelian form, when found separate from matter, is actual in the highest degree. It is a 'knowing'--for to know is to have a form without matter; and what it knows is itself--for it has and is itself without matter. It is a 'knowing' of 'knowing.' There is nothing in any way whatsoever passive in it from either the viewpoint of Being or of Knowledge. It is all act.³⁶

Anscombe also has noted how Aristotle is able to join substance and intelligibility in this notion of pure act as mind.

Why, we may ask, does Aristotle suppose that this being, which absolutely 'cannot be otherwise' than it is, is a mind? This appears to be because of his identification of form without matter with thought. Then that which has no matter or potentiality at all is an eternal mind which always thinks. Thus there is a singular connexion between Aristotle's philosophy of logic, epistemology, and theology.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 463-464.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 458.

³⁷ Anscombe, Three Philosophers, p. 59.

This notion of pure act as mind is what Woodbridge also has in view when he says that, according to Aristotle, "what nature really is, is mind or intelligence in operation."³⁸

The Problem in Aristotle: Theological or Methodological?

Christian theologians have always recognized Aristotle's notion of primary substance, whichever of the above it might be, as inadequate for their purposes. Unfortunately, they have misunderstood the fundamental character of that inadequacy. They have supposed that the primary problem lies in Aristotle's failure to provide for any notion of divine exemplarism.

Though he often considers the immaterial immanent forms in things, it cannot be said that there is a doctrine of divine exemplarism in Aristotle's philosophy. The exemplary cause is met only where he treats of human products of art. This deficiency in Aristotle's philosophy has been called by St. Bonaventure, "the error of Aristotle" and was somewhat of a scandal to the Augustinians of the Middle Ages.³⁹

It is not surprising that the Augustinian tradition should find the absence of divine exemplarism problematical. Their essentialist theologies absolutely require some means of accounting for a formal participation of creation in the divine essence. The reason why this lacuna in Aristotle should be the object of Thomist concern as well is perhaps less obvious, inasmuch as the esse/essence transformation of the Aristotelian act/potency schema gives Thomists a means of relating creation to Ipsum Esse by means of esse instead of essence.

In point of fact, the absence of divine exemplarism has made

³⁸ Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, Aristotle's Vision of Nature, ed. John Herman Randall, Jr. (New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 61.

³⁹ M. Annise, "Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation," New Scholasticism 26 (1952):54-55.

itself felt for Thomists in epistemology much more than in ontology. This, above all, explains why Thomists have, by and large, been content to treat the question of essential participation as "predicamental" or logical rather than as ontological. The Divine Ideas have been called upon primarily to ground the intelligibilities in created things rather than to account for the participation of those things in Ipsum Esse. The burden of accounting for the latter has fallen, for the most part, on esse.

What Thomist theologians (going back to Thomas himself) have failed to realize is that the fundamental inadequacy in Aristotle lies not in his failure to meet the demands of Christian theology, but in his failure to meet the demands of his own methodological project. The central problem is not his failure to provide a doctrine of divine exemplarism; quite the opposite, the central problem lies in his failure to provide a notion of substance which can account for the intelligibilities in sensible things without recourse to a Platonic-type immaterial or separate entity. It was precisely this failure which led Thomas to reintroduce the Platonic Forms in order to ground the intelligibilities in creation. It is precisely this failure which has yet to be overcome in contemporary Thomism.

Thomism does not require an Aristotelianism which, in itself, meets the theological exigencies of Christian revelation. The esse/essence transformation of Aristotle is sufficient in itself for introducing the required elements into Aristotle's system. What Thomism does require is an Aristotelian method which offers a genuine alternative to the Platonic notion of immaterial exemplarism. To introduce such an exemplarism into Aristotle, on the one hand, and then to transform Aristotle

by the real distinction itself, on the other, is to gild the lily, leaving Thomism to struggle for seven centuries with an existential participation that is epistemologically irrelevant and an essential participation that is ontologically irrelevant. In other words, Thomism has been forced back into the very situation in which Platonism found itself, unable to reconcile ontology and logic. For logically, the individual, according to Thomists, participates in a specific perfection, but ontologically that same person participates only in absolute perfection (Ipsum Esse). As a result, the world itself, like Plato's, has, existentially speaking, lost all essential integrity. Essential substance (specific perfection) has been shattered by existential (individual) substances.

The Problem in Aristotle: The Failure to Locate Material Substance

If Aristotle located primary substance either 1) in the separate entities or b) in the formal element within things, it remains to be shown why this was, methodologically speaking, a failure to carry out his own project. In order to do this, we must examine Aristotle in light of the Platonic doctrine of immaterial Forms which Aristotle opposed.

Plato's Forms served not only the epistemological purpose of accounting for how we can know immutable truth in a constantly changing world, but also the ontological purpose of providing a source for such truth. For Plato, therefore, the "really real," substance itself, could reside only in the Forms. As Keefe points out,

One may, with Plato, refuse to find any permanent, fixed intelligibility within the temporal and spatial order of historical change, growth and decay, and therefore transfer the object of the ontological quest or eros to that which transcends these limitations: the One or the Good, in whose intelligibility and

value material things participate, but by a means which imports a diminution and a failure of true reality, and a consequent necessity to recover from that degradation of materiality by striving for reunion with the One where alone is true reality and intelligibility.⁴⁰

Aristotle's rejection of the Forms was itself a refusal to go the route of Plato. As Aristotle saw it, such a decision denied the only reality in which we are truly interested. "And in general the arguments for the Forms destroy the things for whose existence we are more zealous than for the existence of the Ideas. . ."⁴¹ It was Plato's separation of substance and material reality which most disturbed him. "Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things. . ."⁴²

At the same time, Aristotle was by no means willing to reject Plato's notion of substance entirely. Substance as the source of permanent, universal intelligibility played as important a role in Aristotle's thinking as it had in Plato's. As Hawkins points out, "Aristotle remains half a Platonist"⁴³ because he takes the universal for granted. The Aristotelian project, therefore, is a search for substantial intelligibility in material reality. "The Aristotelian attitude is a reversal of the Platonic, but only in its insistence upon the substantiality of temporal and spatial being."⁴⁴ The Aristotelian methodology, therefore, is based on a different notion of the relationship between form and matter. Matter, instead of fragmenting the form,

⁴⁰Keefe, Thomism, p. 10.

⁴¹Metaphysics, I, 9, 990b18-19.

⁴²Ibid., I, 9, 991a8.

⁴³Hawkins, Being and Becoming, p. 76.

⁴⁴Keefe, Thomism, p. 10.

provides the condition of possibility for there being formal intelligibilities. Form provides the condition of possibility that material reality be itself intelligible. Form and matter compose, they do not conflict. Their composition is, in fact, the condition of possibility for the reality of the sensible realm.

Neither matter nor form have any reality in this understanding except as in union with one another, and hence their union is not understood as a temporal coming together, but rather as the condition of possibility of a fact in being.⁴⁵

Given this act/potency composition of form and matter at the heart of Aristotelian methodology, it would seem that the Aristotelian primary substance must be composite and material.

The situation takes on additional complexities, however, once Aristotle posits an Unmoved Mover as the ultimate cause of movement in the material realm. As Lacey notes, a contradiction appears to enter his thinking at this point with regard to the form/matter relationship.

On the one hand he realises that a spirit such as the Unmoved Mover cannot be the form of a body, which raises the question what it is the form of, and on the other he wants his Unmoved Mover to be supremely actual, and so free from matter, and so pure form.⁴⁶

The problem then arises as to how pure form, apart from its material counterpart, can be actual. As Lacey goes on to point out, "he should surely admit that if he gets rid of matter the notion of form, in the sense in which it was correlated with that of matter, becomes inapplicable."⁴⁷ Owens grants that the pure form to which Aristotle gets is quite different from those forms found in sensible things and, in fact,

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁶ Lacey, "ουσια and Form in Aristotle," p. 67.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

views this as one of Aristotle's genuine achievements contra Plato.

. . . the procedure of the Primary Philosophy gives to Being a nature that is utterly alien to the Platonic Dialectic. . . . What the Primary Philosophy studies is a nature different from the nature of any sensible thing. The Platonic conception provides no such nature among its Forms. The Platonic Forms are merely sensible natures plus the characteristic 'eternal.' The nature of separate Entity, which is the Being studied by the Primary Philosophy, is nowhere to be found in the Platonic world.⁴⁸

If one is a Thomist and has the Christian conception of a God altogether 'other' than His creation in mind, such a notion of Being might well look like a happy achievement on Aristotle's part. The only element then missing would be the Divine Ideas by which one could link such an entity to the sensible world. The fact that Aristotle fails to provide for any link between the intelligibility of primary substance and the intelligibilities of its pros hen equivocals could be regarded as a genuine failure. For it is precisely at this point that the Aristotelian project, if it indeed locates primary substance either in separate entities or in the forms of things considered apart from their composition with matter, does genuinely fail to answer Plato. For it fails to provide a source for the intelligibilities of the material realm. The separate entities may account for motion, and the forms within things may account for our ability to derive immutable truth from sensible things, but neither of these theories even attempts to account for the source of materialized intelligibilities.

One can say, as in fact many commentators on Aristotle have said, that the source of material intelligibilities simply did not arise as a problem for him. As Grene puts it,

⁴⁸Owens, Doctrine of Being, pp. 471-472.

Things as he saw them sorted themselves out in defiance of the philosophers. The Forms of the Platonists and the invisible atoms of Democritus were for him unnecessary. The Forms were verbiage, a superfluous addendum to the order inherent in the perceptible world.⁴⁹

Owens takes much the same position, seeing here the significance of Aristotle's notion of pros hen equivocality.

Unlike a Christian and unlike an Idealist, the Stagirite was under no obligation to posit a strict unity as the all-embracing foundation of things. He saw a plurality of forms and categories, and reduced them to a $\pi\rho\sigma\ \epsilon\nu$ unity. That unity was consequent, not prior. The derivation of plurality from unity does not appear as a problem in Aristotle. The problem is merely to reduce the plurality to a unity sufficient for a science.⁵⁰

To say that Aristotle did not see this problem would appear, however, to be tantamount to saying that he did not properly understand the notion of primary substance. For the problem is precisely that of unifying in a single notion of substance both intelligibility and reality. To suppose that he understood the "really real" to be beyond intelligibility and the material intelligibilities to be only pros hen equivocals of the "really real," would not only mean that he failed to provide, contra Plato, an alternate source for material intelligibilities, it would also seem to mean that he fell into the very error which he had attributed to Plato, namely, that of denying as "really real" the only reality which we are really interested in, the material realm. It is very difficult, therefore, to disagree with Lacey when he says that the search for the "really real" in Aristotle "does not lie in the direction of pure form."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Majorie Grene, A Portrait of Aristotle (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 79.

⁵⁰ Owens, Doctrine of Being, p. 468.

⁵¹ Lacey, "ουσια and Form in Aristotle," p. 69.

The possibility still remains, however, that Aristotle actually located primary substance in the concrete sensible singular. Since Thomism also, on grounds that it is following Aristotle in this matter, recognizes the concrete singular, at least in the material realm, as the primary analogate of substance, we must next consider why this third candidate for primary substance also fails to meet the demands of Aristotelian methodology.

The Problem of Material Substance in Aristotle and Thomas: The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness

Both Aristotle and Thomas agree that a substance is "an essence or thing to whose nature it is proper that it should not exist in a subject." Substance is a subject; it therefore cannot exist in another subject. Both Aristotle and Thomas also agree that the starting-point of metaphysical inquiry is the sensible realm itself. If substance is a subject and sensible things are the starting-point, the obvious conclusion to be drawn is that concrete singulars are the primary substances, at least in the sensible order. This conclusion both Aristotle and Thomas drew.

The world of our experience is a world of definite, concrete individual things which act and react upon one another. St. Thomas does not challenge the objective reality of this datum of spontaneous perception. Rather, with Aristotle, he accepts it and employs it as one of the corner stones of his system. Throughout his philosophy the fundamental assumption runs that whatever is actual or capable of actual existence is singular. Singularity, particularity and not universality must characterize being if it would exist other than as a mere representation of the mind.⁵²

Both Aristotle and Thomas are, however, at least as much interested

⁵² Joseph M. Marling, The Order of Nature in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1934), pp. 12-13 (hereafter cited as Marling, Order of Nature).

in universal intelligibility and our knowledge of it as they are in concrete singulars, and so a problem immediately arises, the problem of relating concrete singulars (ontology) to universal knowledge (logic). As Ross points out with regard to Aristotle, and the same holds true for Thomas,

The primacy of individual substance is one of the most fixed points of Aristotle's thought--the point at which he most clearly diverges from Plato's doctrine. But while primary substance is for him the most real thing, secondary substance, and in particular the infima species, is the central point of his logic.⁵³

As a result, the notion of species, and particularly the notion of an eternal duration of the species, assumes central importance to Aristotle. What Haring calls "the career of a form," its incarnate existence through time, is possible only because of the ongoingness, so to speak, of the species. Hence the disproportionate attention which Hart sees Aristotle giving to the species over the individual⁵⁴ is a product of Aristotle's logical concerns. For, as Grene points out, "Only the fixity of each ontogenetic pattern through the eternity of species makes Aristotelian nature and Aristotelian knowledge possible."⁵⁵

This concern for epistemology leads both Aristotle and Thomas to forge a close identity between the individual and the universal, expressed in the 'two-substance' doctrine adopted by both.

"First" substance is the singular substance which exists as such in the real order (George Washington, the Charter oak). First substance is never a predicate; it is not in a subject but is the subject itself. . . . "Second" substance is the substance

⁵³ Ross, Aristotle, p. 24.

⁵⁴ Charles A. Hart, Thomistic Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the Act of Existing (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 130 (hereafter cited as Hart, Thomistic Metaphysics).

⁵⁵ Grene, A Portrait of Aristotle, p. 137.

which is a predicate (man, oak); it does not exist as such in the real order. It is called "second" substance, because it presupposes the existence of first substances in the real order of which it can be predicated.⁵⁶

This dual notion of substance leads Grene to assert "a glaring contradiction at the head of the [Aristotelian] logic itself."⁵⁷ What is perhaps not so apparent is that such a dual notion of substance introduces a contradiction into Aristotle's metaphysics as well. As Keefe points out with regard to Thomism, and it can be said equally of Aristotelianism,

The unity of men in the human species is then a necessity of logic, of essence, which is contradicted in existence, for existing men are substantially separate entities. . .⁵⁸

Where Aristotle is concerned, this means that the essential unity of the specific form is fragmented in its individuation by matter. Where Thomas is concerned, it means that the essential unity of the specific form is fragmented by existence itself. Act and potency no longer can be understood as composing in the real order; instead, they oppose. The Aristotelian act/potency method has been exchanged for the Platonic. The Platonic elements in Thomas and in some of his most recent interpreters have, in fact, their roots back in Aristotle himself, who was never successfully able to locate that concrete primary substance which could offer a genuine alternative to Plato's Forms.

Primary Substance in Aristotelian Methodology

The problem for Aristotelian methodology is to locate substance in the concrete realm in such a way as to avoid fragmenting the essential

⁵⁶ Klubertanz, Introduction to the Philosophy of Being, p. 251.

⁵⁷ Grene, A Portrait of Aristotle, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Keefe, Thomism, p. 87.

or intelligible integrity of that realm. As Haring notes, "Living individuals are the natural world, in a way, but only if they are seen non-atomistically, as parts of a genetic continuity."⁵⁹ Owens also underscores the importance of such genetic continuity, when he points out that, for Aristotle,

It is the species that is divine and eternal. The singular thing does not matter in itself. It is only on account of the species; its every act naturally strives to perpetuate its species. That is the goal of itself and of all its activity. It is divine, as best it may be, by being perpetual in its kind.⁶⁰

As Aristotle says, perpetual coming-to-be is "the closest approximation to eternal being."⁶¹ Thus Haring speaks of the species as "supra-individual binders."

The series - matter, individual form - is a sequence in the direction of superior whatness; it is also a sequence in the direction of greater binding force. Matter is a diffusion determined within the individual; the living individual is a brief existent connected with others through form.⁶²

To regard the concrete singular or individual as primary substance in the material realm is to overlook the essentially incomplete character of such individuals.

. . . individual members of a species cannot be substantially complete; they are not indivisum in se et ab omni alio, for their actuality is achieved in common; considered as divisum ab omni alio, they are not actual, but potential. As members of a finite species or substance, they participate in existence by participating in the existential actuality of the species, and not otherwise. Otherwise stated, human or potential persons participate in existence secondarily, by means of

⁵⁹Haring, "Substantial Form," p. 331.

⁶⁰Owens, Doctrine of Being, p. 461.

⁶¹On Generation and Corruption, II, 10, 336b35; cf. Ibid., II, 11, 338b11-17, Generation of Animals, II, 1, 731b31-35; On the Soul, II, 4, 415a26-b7.

⁶²Haring, "Substantial Form," p. 331.

the primary participation of the species. Only the latter participation is properly substantial.⁶³

Only an identification of substance with the species can account for the essentially incomplete character of the individual and provide for a substantial reality which is transcendent without being separate or immaterial. As Keefe points out, "this transcendence is accounted for by attributing continual and unending duration to the collective species, in which collective the individual members come into being, persist in being for some finite period of time, and then cease their participation in the species."⁶⁴

The primary reason for refusing to identify substance with the species centers upon the question of unity. Only pure form or the concrete singular would seem to provide the necessary unity required by primary substance. Substantial form, as the specifying difference in concrete things, would appear to exemplify the purest notion of unity, even though not actual apart from matter. The concrete singular would appear to exemplify the most actual or real kind of unity possible, even though composite. However, as Haring points out, the species does enjoy a type of unity by virtue not of the form per se, but by virtue of the form expanded-in-a-milieu.

The complexity of genus-plus-difference is the necessary concomitant of form's having a formal effect in a domain. The peculiar unity of the genus-difference complex does reflect the unity of pure form.⁶⁵

In fact, as she points out, the unity in species is a unity precisely because "its generic and differential parts stand to one another as

⁶³ Keefe, Thomism, p. 85.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁵ Haring "Substantial Form," p. 701.

matter does to form."⁶⁶

Aristotle's notion that form and matter compose rather than oppose provides his methodology with the means of locating within the material realm precisely that substantial unity which Plato's methodology, with its notion that form is opposed by matter, can never find. Aristotelian substance, therefore, if it is to offer some genuine alternative to the Platonic Forms, i.e., if it is to be found in the material realm rather than in the realm of pure form, must consist of some type of form/matter unity.

To suppose, however, that such unity is found in its primary instance in the concrete singular is to fall back into a Platonic notion of matter as that which atomizes the formal unity of the species. This an Aristotelian methodology cannot permit. To isolate the individual from the species is to cut the individual off from being. As Keefe notes, with regard to the Aristotelian notion of being,

What is insisted on is that the individual participates in being, that it has intelligibility, though participate and finite, and that the immanence of its form, or its intelligible component, in potentiality, or matter, does not eliminate intelligibility, but rather provides a composite, act-potency intelligibility corresponding to the composite structure of logical understanding. This insistence is identical with Aristotelian ontology. It states the isomorphism of intelligibility and intellection--intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu--and postulates the intelligibility of material reality.⁶⁷

Contemporary participationist Thomists tend to relegate all essential participation to the logical or predicamental realm. Hart maintains that "The Thomist participation is the participation in the

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 700.

⁶⁷ Keefe, Thomism, p. 19.

perfection of existence rather than in the eternal Ideas."⁶⁸ Lindbeck agrees, suggesting that categorical participation "has a purely cognitive, almost logical, significance."⁶⁹ John, in reviewing Fabro's work in this area, notes that the only value which predicamental participation has stems solely from the order of transcendental (existential) participation, because "it is the act of being, received into the essence, which is in the finite being the source not only of its factual existence but of its value and intelligibility."⁷⁰

There are indications, here and there, however, that predicamental participation needs to be taken more seriously. First, there is Aristotle's own view, shared by Thomas and Thomists, that metaphysics and logic enjoy an isomorphic relationship with one another. As Copleston points out with regard to Aristotle's doctrine of the categories:

From the logical viewpoint the Categories comprise the ways in which we think about things--for instance, predicating qualities of substances--but at the same time they are ways in which things actually exist: things are substances and actually have accidents. The Categories demand, therefore, not only a logical but also a metaphysical treatment. Aristotle's Logic, then, must not be likened to the Transcendental Logic of Kant, since it is not concerned to isolate a priori forms of thought which are contributed by the mind alone in its active process of knowledge. Aristotle does not raise the "Critical Problem": he assumes a realist epistemology, and assumes that the categories of thought, which we express in language, are also the objective categories of extramental reality.⁷¹

Secondly, there are suggestions in Thomas himself, as we have already

⁶⁸Hart, Thomistic Metaphysics, p. 92.

⁶⁹Lindbeck, "Participation" (June 1957), p. 112.

⁷⁰Helen James John, "Participation Revisited," Modern Schoolman 39 (January 1962):155.

⁷¹Copleston, Greece & Rome (part II), p. 21.

seen,⁷² that existing things participate not only in esse, but in something else as well.

Finally, among contemporary Thomists who emphasize the importance of participation in Thomas, Louis de Raeymaeker, though denying full ontological value to the realm of essential participation, has accorded it a significance conspicuously absent in most other Thomists. De Raeymaeker points out that

No one man is identified with the whole human species, for there are other men who possess human perfections which this man has not; and by this very fact every individual is limited in the species, but the ensemble of all possible men embraces all, unlimited, unbounded human perfection.⁷³

This makes it impossible for us to understand any man apart from his membership in the species.

By reason of the particular way in which the material individual possesses its formal perfection, it is limited by reference to other individuals that resemble it specifically. This is why it is essential to it to be referred to them, that is, to form a part of the order or the specific unity which the complexus of these individuals constitutes. Hence, it is impossible to explain any of these material beings without giving the explanation of the whole species to which they belong. Thus, we cannot offer an explanation of one individual man without explaining humanity.⁷⁴

We have here in de Raeymaeker's notion of the individual as understandable only by reference to the specific complexus of individuals to which it belongs something similar to, if not identical with, Aristotle's notion of pros hen equivocity. In de Raeymaeker's case, however, it is the "complexus" which constitutes the primary referent, the individual being understood only by reference to (pros hen) that complexus.

⁷²See pp. 68-69.

⁷³de Raeymaeker, The Philosophy of Being, p. 70.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 253.

Charles Hart, in discussing those attempts periodically made by philosophers to deny the reality of substance, points out that such efforts invariably lead to a substantializing of all accidents.

. . . the intellect unconsciously assigns to the accident the role of substance. Thus instead of the one substance giving unity to the being, we end up with a multitude of substances in the being, and thus with the destruction of the being's unity.⁷⁵

Mutatis mutandis, the same sort of process has dogged the Aristotelian/Thomist tradition throughout its history. Attempts to deny the substantial reality of the species have necessitated a substantializing of the individuals within the species, with a corresponding destruction of the essential or substantial integrity of the material realm.

Substantial Cause: Aristotle and Thomas

"We say we know each thing only when we think we recognize its first cause," Aristotle tells us.⁷⁶ "Whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially," St. Thomas adds.⁷⁷ The species, as primary substance in Aristotle, is transcendent by virtue of its unlimited actuality.

This actuality, the total immanent activity of material being, pervades all of space and time and escapes all spatial and temporal limitation: it is pure act, immanent in all of matter and limited by no matter. It has nothing to overcome, thus no potentiality.⁷⁸

This pure act, causative of all participated being in Aristotle, must be identified with the agent intellect "or, in modern terminology, the

⁷⁵Hart, Thomistic Metaphysics, p. 189.

⁷⁶Metaphysics, I, 3, 983a25.

⁷⁷ST I, 44, 1.

⁷⁸Keefe, Thomism, p. 17.

absolute subject."⁷⁹ Because this cause is both transcendent and im-
 plicated in material reality, it serves as the Aristotelian substitute
 for God.

This total cause, because enclosed in the world, is not God, but
 the essentialist surrogate for God. This surrogate transcends
 the individual, but does not transcend the human species; it is
 the formal cause of the species, immanent in the species, and
 in the human community.⁸⁰

This surrogate for God is humanity itself, the primary substance by
 reference to which all other material realities are pros hen equivocals.
 For intelligibile in actu is intellectus in actu by reference to the
 agent intellect immanent in the human community.

It is precisely this ability of Aristotelian methodology to locate
 an order of essential participation in material substance itself which
 allows for its conversion by Thomas into a methodology which can serve
 the Christian theologian.

When the essentialist act-potency method of correlation is itself
 correlated, according to its own understanding of correlation,
 to the Christian revelation to form the Thomist method, Christ is
 understood as the existential actuality, the formal existential⁸¹
 cause, of a humanity otherwise confined to essential immanence.

The surrogate God of Aristotle becomes Christ, the God-man, present
 within His creation as the formal cause of all its essential perfections.

To speak of Christ as formal cause is, however, to tell only half
 of the story. For the esse/essence transformation which Thomas effects
 in Aristotelian methodology makes primary substance existential rather
 than essential, and introduces an existential order of participation
 which is distinct but inseparable from that of essential participation.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 5.

As noted in chapter 3, it is the need within Thomist methodology to locate for these two orders of participation a substantial cause that is itself single and yet genuinely composite which requires us to identify Christ as both existential (divine) and formal (human) cause of creation. Christ's substantial causality, therefore, is both existential and essential in character.

Creation in Christ, as was noted earlier,⁸² forces two transformations of the traditional Thomist notion of substance: first, that such a notion of substance be identified with humanity, not with the concrete singular, and secondly, that such a notion of substance allow for substantial as well as accidental grace. The question was raised as to whether or not the Aristotelian notion of substance could play any role in Thomism under these circumstances. A re-evaluation of the Aristotelian primary substance indicates that, far from being ruled out by the Thomist transformation, it is essential to it. For the Aristotelian primary substance, properly understood, is the human community and not the individual.

Since, however, this notion of substance serves as a surrogate God in an essentialist universe, we might expect it to fare less well as a correlative principle of esse in a Christian universe. In order to understand why the Thomist primary substance must be understood as graced and how the Aristotelian primary substance is transformed by its correlation with esse, we shall next examine existential participation in Thomism.

⁸²See pp. 135-136.

CHAPTER 6

EXISTENTIAL PARTICIPATION AND THOMAS: SUBSTANTIAL GRACE

The genuinely existential character of Thomist metaphysics lies in the real distinction, whereby the Aristotelian substance (form/matter) is transformed into an essential principle (potency) requiring a further correlation with esse (act). By means of this new act/potency correlation, the Aristotelian essential substance (form/matter) becomes the Thomist existential substance (esse/essence). As Hart points out, Thomist metaphysics is "a true metaphysics of being as existing in contrast to that of Aristotle, which is a metaphysics of being as substance with existence completely ignored."¹

Gilson insisted, as we have already seen,² that Thomism's claim to be the one authentic existentialist metaphysics rests upon the fact that Thomas alone posited "existence in being, as a constituent element of being."³ Fabro maintains that this immanence of esse within concrete things is precisely that element in Thomism which makes it a genuinely participationist metaphysics.

Thus the authentic notion of Thomistic participation calls for distinguishing esse as act not only from essence which is its potency, but also from existence which is the fact of being and hence a "result" rather than a metaphysical principle.⁴

¹Charles A. Hart, "Participation and the Thomistic Five Ways," New Scholasticism 26 (July 1952):273.

²See p. 155.

³Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 154.

⁴Fabro, "Intensive Hermeneutics," p. 470.

What, however, is the significance of esse as a metaphysical principle? Is it the principle of all intelligibility in existing things, as Esseist Thomists maintain, such that esse is form? Or does it contribute nothing to the intelligibility of things, so that as Geach maintains, "Aquinas's doctrine of esse really adds nothing over and above his doctrine of form."⁵ Translated into methodological terms, the central question is one of causality. Is esse an extrinsic or an intrinsic cause? This is a critical question with regard to how one views Thomist substances, for the notion one has of that substance will control the notion one has of the causality exercised by esse vis a vis that substance. Although both Esseist and Gilsonian Thomists have recognized the existential character of Thomist substances, neither group has recognized the methodological implications which such a view of substance requires in the realm of causality.⁶

The difficulties associated with understanding esse and its relationship to essence in existing things arise from the fact that the Aristotelian act/potency methodology is not equipped, on its own merits, to handle the notion of esse, because that methodology has no way to deal with a non-formal act. In Aristotle, form and act are inextricably linked, not only to one another, but to intelligibility as well. An act is always the act of a form, and as such its causality makes itself felt in intelligible effects. The intelligibility of a substance,

⁵Geach, Three Philosophers, p. 92.

⁶We see here further evidence of the fact that Thomism must be treated as a methodology rather than as a metaphysics. It is primarily because Thomists fail to pursue the methodological questions that they fail to come to grips with the central problems of Thomism.

therefore, is directly and entirely traceable to the formal element within that substance. As Farrer points out with regard to the Aristotelian substance, "Whatever in the history of a substance belongs to it as a substance of such a character, is referable to the influence of its form."⁷

When we move from the Aristotelian substance (form/matter) to the Thomist substance (esse/essence), however, the situation changes radically. We now have a non-formal act (esse) which lies outside of the formal act (essence) of a thing, but within the thing itself (substance). The necessary relationship which Aristotle understood to obtain between form and act has been severed. But what about the relationship between act and intelligibility? Has that been severed as well? In short, does the intelligibility of a thing in the Thomist universe continue to be identified with its formal component (as Aristotle supposed) or does that thing now derive its intelligibility from its existential component? Esseist and Gilsonian Thomists give diametrically opposed answers to this question.

Thomists such as Carlo and Clarke, by reducing essence to esse, identify form with esse. In so doing, they re-establish the Aristotelian link between act and form, as well as the relationship of both act and form to intelligibility, but they do so at the price of the real distinction between esse and essence. Essence itself becomes severed from form and intelligibility, and, as such, no longer has any positive function to play within Thomism. As a result, the Aristotelian act/potency methodology no longer has any role in Thomism either.

⁷ Austin Farrer, Finite and Infinite, 2nd ed. (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1959), p. 248.

Gilsonian Thomists (and all other Thomists as well who understand the Aristotelian notion of act/potency and the esse/essence distinction to be central in Thomas' thought) continue to identify the intelligibility in things with essence. Since all formal causality is thus identified with essence, they are left with the problem of accounting for the type of causality which esse can be understood to exercise in this situation.

Their task is not an easy one. Since esse is intrinsic to existing things, it would seem that the causality exercised by esse must be of a type compatible with intrinsic causality in general. In an Aristotelian methodology, however, all intrinsic causes are either formal or material. The notion of a non-formal act having never entered his mind, Aristotle made no provision for it. Since esse is clearly not a material cause, on the one hand, and is just as clearly not the formal principle within a thing, on the other, some third type of causality must be assigned to it. Thus, Gilsonian Thomists conclude that esse operates as an efficient cause. Here again we see the sharp distinction which Gilson draws between the orders of efficient and formal causality, a distinction which he understands to be demanded by the esse/essence distinction in things.

A problem immediately presents itself, however. Efficient causes are extrinsic causes. As Hart points out, "The efficient cause of a being is never part of its intrinsic constitution but is extrinsic to it."⁸ This being the case, how can esse as intrinsic to substance nevertheless serve as an extrinsic, efficient cause of substance?

⁸Hart, Thomistic Metaphysics, p. 95.

The answer is not long in coming. Although esse cannot be regarded as extrinsic to an existing thing, it can be regarded as extrinsic to the essential principle with which it is correlated. As Hart puts it, "existence is given to that nature or essence, that is, it is caused in it. Therefore it must be an extrinsically added perfection."⁹ What we have here in Hart is a notion of efficient causality which corresponds to the light/air analogy employed by Gilson (and by Thomas). Esse is like the light which comes to the air as an extrinsic principle exercising efficient causality. As such, esse (like the light) cannot be regarded as rooted in that to which it comes as an external perfection. The only difference between Hart's position and that of Gilson is that Hart understands this extrinsic character of esse to be the fundamental principle underlying the doctrine of participation in Thomas.

It is generally stated: A being that does not have its full intelligibility in itself (since existence, which is the supreme source of intelligibility is not intrinsic and proper to it) must have its intelligibility (and therefore its source of existence) outside itself. Such a being is called a "participated being," that is, a being possessing a degree of existence. Therefore, as we have seen, we may state the principle: Participated beings must be efficiently caused.¹⁰

Unfortunately, however, this notion of esse as extrinsic principle forces Hart, as it forced Gilson, to an essentialist notion of substance. For the statement that existence is not intrinsic and proper to "a being" (i.e., a substance or a concrete thing) can only mean that we have returned to that "substantial" point of view of which Gilson

⁹ Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 263.

speaks, from which existing things can be treated as Aristotelian substances (form/matter) to which esse is added. This is tantamount to treating the essential component in an existing thing as though it were the thing itself, a process already noted with regard to the light/air analogy, in which air (a substance in its own right) is understood to be modified by the light which comes to it ab extrinseco. Instead of understanding existing things as constituted by two correlative principles, this type of Thomism is forced to treat those things as Aristotelian substances accidentally (extrinsically) modified by esse.

At the same time, however, this 'thick essence' interpretation of Thomism (i.e., that interpretation in which all intelligibilities are attributed to essence) cannot altogether ignore the intrinsic character of esse with regard to existing things. Therefore, some role must be found for it beyond the simple actualizing of essence. For that reason, most 'thick essence' Thomists speak of esse as performing two functions from within the existing thing. First, it is the energy source (first act) which grounds all of a thing's operations (second act). We have already seen how Gilson speaks of the "dynamism of esse" in this regard.¹¹

Secondly, esse as intrinsic to things is said to establish those things as autonomous or independent vis a vis God. Even those participationist Thomists who regard esse as that principle whereby all created things participate in Ipsum Esse also attribute to created things an autonomy by virtue of the fact that, by means of esse, they are beings in their own right.

¹¹See p. 148.

To the extent that a created substance is composed of essence and esse, it is as far removed from God, the esse subsistens, as it can possibly be, and in this respect the terms "creature" and "God" admit of no measure or comparison. But since the essence of a creature has also its own participated act of being (actus essendi), its actualization is not merely a relation of extrinsic dependence; rather, it is based on the act of esse in which it participates and which it preserves within itself and is the proper terminus of divine causality.¹²

For Fabro, therefore, participated existence and autonomous existence (that being which existing things preserve within themselves) are simply two sides of the same coin.

This ability of esse to overcome, as Gilson puts it, the radical contingency of finite beings¹³ lies at the heart of the distinction which Thomist metaphysics has repeatedly drawn between the metaphysical and the supernatural realms. It is the reason why Western theology and philosophy has, as Mersch has pointed out, understood God to communicate being to His creatures in two different ways, first in a manner tailored to their natures (natural existence or esse) and secondly in a manner which communicates His own way of existing to them (supernatural existence or grace). This allows Mersch to speak of two creations of the world. "In creating it the first time, He gave existence to things; but the second time, He places His own existence in it."¹⁴

What Mersch has in mind here is a distinction between two orders, one an ad extra order, the other an ad intra order. As Mersch describes them, these two orders correspond to the exitus/reditus structure so often attributed to the Summa Theologiae. They also correspond to the

¹²Fabro, "Intensive Hermeneutics," p. 482.

¹³Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, pp. 178-179.

¹⁴Emile Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis/Lond: B. Herder Book Co., 1951), p. 418.

traditional distinctions made between nature and grace and between creation and re-creation.

In itself, creation is the production of the order ad extra. By creation God produces the creature in its own subsistence, outside of Himself, and gives existence to a being that is not Himself. The Incarnation, on the contrary, is the taking up of a creature into the Word ad intra, so that it may subsist not in itself but in Him, and that through His subsistence it may be the human nature of God. As regards the distinction between ad intra and ad extra, the direction of the two works is diametrically opposed. The first has an external terminus, the second has an internal terminus; the first causes the order ad extra, the second causes, not the order ad intra, which would be an absurd conception, but the order of that which is "interiorized," if we may use the expression; that is, the order of what, left to itself, would undoubtedly be ad extra but which God causes to subsist in His Word ad intra, and which in this sense is ad intra.¹⁵

Esse and grace, therefore, are the principles of two different types of interiority. "When God has communicated Himself to a thing by the being that is interior to the thing, He can still communicate Himself by the being that is interior to Himself."¹⁶ Esse is the principle of an autonomous interiority whereby, as Fabro puts it, things preserve within themselves their own acts of being. Grace, on the other hand, is the principle of that type of interiority which is made available to us by virtue of the Incarnation and which makes it possible for us to enter into that being which constitutes God's own interior life.

This notion of two orders of being in created things, one existential and the other graced, recommends itself highly to Thomist philosophers intent on defining a domain for themselves which lies beyond the natural (which is meta-physical, in other words) without lying simultaneously 'above' the natural (the super-natural). This

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 372-373.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 460.

is a difficult task, even at the linguistic level, since 'metaphysics' would seem to be nothing more than a Greek way of referring to what the Latin calls the 'supernatural'. Metaphysically, such a domain seemed plausible by virtue of esse, a principle which Thomas and all of his followers have understood to lie somewhere between the natural (essence) and the supernatural (grace).

Methodologically speaking, however, such a notion of esse would appear to be impossible to support, first, because it places the real distinction itself in jeopardy, and secondly, because it cannot be made coherent within an Aristotelian act/potency methodology. In order to see more clearly the methodological problems which arise, we shall consider first, the relationship of esse to creation, and secondly, the relationship of esse to intelligibility.

Esse and Creation

The problem which arises when one treats esse as efficient cause, existential cause, actualizer, energizer and autonomizer of existing things is that one has still not provided esse with any function which would require its presence as a constitutive principle of existing things. If what one is seeking is nothing more than a way to account for how God could create the universe, the positing of God as efficient cause would appear to be all that one requires. Descoqs recognized this more than fifty years ago, calling the esse/essence distinction "une vraie superfétation"¹⁷ precisely because it is not needed to account for creation.

¹⁷P. Descoqs, "Metaphysique--#5: le thomisme d'après le R. P. d'Ales et à propos de l'union hypostatique," Archives de philosophie 6 (1929--cahier #4):143.

This fact has not gone unnoticed even by such Thomists as Owens and Gilson. Owens points out that "Many Christian thinkers, who readily admit that all things in the created world receive their being from God, and regard it as contingent to their natures, do not hesitate to deny any real distinction between those things and their being,"¹⁸ while Gilson expressly denies the need for such a distinction to account for creation:

. . . in a created universe, existence must come to essences from the outside and, therefore, be superadded to them. Any metaphysics or theology that recognizes the notion of creation necessarily agrees on this point. All Christian theologies in particular expressly teach that no finite being is the cause of its own existence, but this does not imply that existence is created in the finite substance as a distinct "act of being" (esse) added by God to its essence and composing the substance with it.¹⁹

Thus, when a Thomist such as Maritain calls the real distinction "a thesis of extreme boldness" because it posits over and beyond esse "an act of another order which adds absolutely nothing to essence as essence, intelligible structure, or quiddity, yet adds everything to it in as much as it posits it extra causas or extra nihil,"²⁰ the boldness to which he refers would appear to lie in the positing of a superfluous act which adds nothing beyond what God as efficient cause can accomplish without it.

Esse and Intelligibility

To treat esse as an act which, because non-formal, has no intelligible impact upon the existing things within which it is a constitutive

¹⁸ Owens, An Elementary Christian Metaphysics, p. 77.

¹⁹ Gilson, Elements of Christian Philosophy, p. 128.

²⁰ Jacques Maritain, Existence and the Existent, trans. Lewis Galantiere and Gerald B. Phelan (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., an Image Book, 1956), p. 45.

principle presents two immediate problems within the Aristotelian act/potency methodology which Thomas adopted. The first of these arises from the fact that pure act in God is identical with infinite intelligibility. While it is true that Thomas says, "even though the rest of things were to receive a form that is absolutely the same as it is in God, yet they do not receive it according to the same mode of being;"²¹ it is by no means equally clear that the reception of esse in a different mode than that enjoyed by God requires us to suppose that such a mode deprives it of all causal ability to make an intelligible impact upon those things of which it is a constitutive principle. Furthermore, the notion that esse does no more than actualize or existentialize things tends to reduce God to Pure Being or Pure Existence devoid of intelligibility. As Geach points out,

. . . Aquinas holds that God's nature and God's esse are identical. On the view that the distinction between nature and esse is to be explained in terms of the difference in meaning between the questions 'quid est?' and 'an est?' this would commit him to saying that in God's case the two questions have the very same answer--that to know or state that God exists is the same thing as knowing or stating what God is.²²

In addition, the notion common among participationist Thomists that we can participate in Ipsum Intelligere by virtue of esse without that participated existence exercising any intelligible impact upon us only reinforces the tendency to think of that Being in which we participate as itself severed from intelligere.

The second problem with such a notion of esse arises from the fact,

²¹CG I, 32.

²²Geach, Three Philosophers, p. 89. Geach himself tries to resolve the dilemma by attributing 'intensive magnitude' to esse. This does not solve the problem, however, since intensive magnitude can be handled under the rubric of accidental change.

previously alluded to, that in Aristotle act and intelligibility go hand in hand. Furthermore, any act intrinsic to things is understood by him to exercise formal causality. Although the esse/essence distinction forces upon Aristotelian methodology the notion of an act which is no longer linked to form, there is no reason at all to suppose that this severance of act from form also forces a severance of act from intelligibility. In fact, quite the opposite. Not only the Aristotelian notion of act as that which exercises an intelligible impact upon things, but the Thomist notion of Ipsum Esse as Ipsum Intelligere, would seem to require us to identify act and intelligibility. Maritain is quite right when he says,

In the verb exists we have the act of existing, or a super-intelligible. To say that which exists is to join an intelligible to a super-intelligible; it is to have before our eyes an intelligible engaged in and perfected by a super-intelligibility.²³

Here in Maritain we have something which comes surprisingly close to Thomas' own notion of participation as the possession of a nature higher than one's own or as a share in an act higher than one's own. Maritain himself, as we have seen, refuses to suppose that esse has any intelligible impact upon essence, but he has come closer than a good many 'thick essence' Thomists to recognizing the pure intelligibility which is indissociable from esse, even in the mode in which we find it in created things.

Esseist Thomists are correct in refusing to deny to esse an intelligible impact on existing things. Thomism's transformation of Aristotle's act/potency methodology by means of the esse/essence distinction does signal a corresponding break with the notion that all

²³Maritain, Existence and the Existent, p. 44.

intelligibility is "formal" intelligibility. As Grene notes in her study on Aristotle,

In Aristotelian terms, in terms of a non-created universe, to say that a man 'is' offers no information of scientific import beyond the statement what it is to be a man. If there is creation, to say that a man exists informs us of something over and above his 'what'.²⁴

But they are wrong in supposing that no intelligible content can any longer be assigned to the essential principle in things. For such a supposition destroys both the real distinction and the act/potency methodology which Thomas employed.

'Thick essence' Thomists, on the other hand, are right to insist upon essence as a positive principle in existing things, but wrong to dissociate esse from all notion of formal causality. Helen James John is correct when she speaks of "the 'immanence' of the transcendental perfections in the finite creatures whose structure is constituted by the union of essence and participated esse."²⁵ Essence, however, cannot on its own bear the burden of explanation for transcendental perfections immanent in creatures whose ultimate participation in being is a created participation in uncreated esse.

Hawkins has pointed out that the esse/essence composition does not function like other act/potency compositions in Thomism, inasmuch as here all determinations fall on the side of potency (essence) rather than act (esse). He therefore counsels Thomists to treat the esse/essence distinction first "for its own sake and in its own terms and only later, when the ordinary meanings of potency and act can be appropriately introduced, to consider how far and in what way these

²⁴ Grene, A Portrait of Aristotle, p. 248.

²⁵ John, "Participation Revisited," p. 164.

notions can be applied to it."²⁶ It would seem more advisable, however, to reexamine the relationship between esse and essence in light of the ordinary meanings of act and potency in Aristotle. For, in so doing, Thomists would have to reconsider the connection which Aristotle makes between act and intelligibility in light of the connection which Thomism makes between esse and Ipsum Intelligere.

Reference was made in chapter 4²⁷ to the distinction which Thomas drew between abstraction with and without precision to being. Although this distinction allows Thomists such as Gilson and Owens to identify Aristotelian substance (form/matter) with Thomist substance (esse/essence), the distinction itself may signal a realization on Thomas' part that an abstractive process which prescind from being, however appropriate it might be in an Aristotelian world of essential substances, cannot ultimately be made to apply in a Thomist world of existential substances. He may well have realized that there is an intelligibility associated with esse which makes it impossible for us to prescind from it.

Certainly he recognized, as we have already noted,²⁸ that whatever is associated with esse must lie outside of (praeter) the essential principle of a thing. Therefore, whatever is associated with esse can never be reduced to essence. Further, there are several indications that he understood esse to lie above (supra) the essential principle of a thing. He speaks of esse as a good and a perfection,²⁹ as the

²⁶Hawkins, Being and Becoming, p. 105.

²⁷See pp. 163-164.

²⁸See p. 160.

²⁹ST I, 20, 2.

perfection of all perfections,³⁰ as indeed the most perfect of all things.³¹ Everything noble in a thing belongs to it in proportion to its esse.³² There are also indications that he understood esse to function formally within things. He speaks of esse as the most formal of all things³³ and as that which is "most interior to anything, and which inheres more profoundly than anything else, since it is formal in relation to all those [principles] which are in the thing."³⁴

Finally, Thomas speaks at least twice of esse as that principle whereby creatures participate in the nature of being (naturam essendi).³⁵ Elsewhere he notes that every being composed of act and potency participates in a higher act than its own, adding that things especially become actual by participating in pure act or subsistent esse by similarity.³⁶ Hence, it is impossible to dissociate esse first, from perfection, and secondly, from participation in an act which lies not only outside of (praeter) essence but also above (supra) essence. In fact, it is impossible to dissociate esse from that principle whereby we share per participationem in the divine nature which is God's per essentiam.

Since grace is understood to be that principle whereby we are raised, in the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria, supra naturam, it

³⁰ De Pot., 7, 2 ad 9.

³¹ ST I, 4, 1 ad 3.

³² CG I, 28.

³³ ST I, 7, 1.

³⁴ ST I, 8, 1.

³⁵ ST I, 3, 4; 45, 5 ad 1.

³⁶ Quodl. XII, 5, 5.

becomes increasingly difficult to know how esse can be dissociated, as it is in Thomism, from grace. Especially when one considers first, the close relationship, if not identity, which exists between essence and nature, and secondly, the fact that, for Thomas and Thomists in general, esse perfects essence and grace perfects nature. Clearly Thomism is working with a notion of nature which permits it to understand esse as a 'natural' principle in things. We must therefore examine just what notion of 'nature' is operative here and whether or not such a notion is, methodologically speaking, applicable to esse.

Esse and Nature

Since Thomism builds on the Aristotelian notion of nature, we must consider first what Aristotle understood nature to be. He examines the question of nature most thoroughly in Book IV of the Metaphysics and Book II of the Physics. In the Metaphysics, he summarizes the various uses which philosophy has made of this term, concluding, as Marling points out, that 'nature' is used in six different ways: 1) the genesis of growing things, 2) that part of a thing from which its growth proceeds, 3) the inner principle of movement in a thing, 4) the primary matter of which a thing consists, 5) the essence of a thing as that term of its process of becoming (this would include both matter and form), and 6) the essence of a thing, whether resulting from natural or artificial production.³⁷ In the Physics, he distinguishes between nature and art, and considers nature in its two primary meanings, as 1) "a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in

³⁷Marling, The Order of Nature, p. 1.

virtue of a concomitant attribute,"³⁸ and 2) the shape or form of those thing which have such a source of motion.³⁹ These meanings are, of course, very broad and encompass, in the final analysis, everything in the material realm (apart from artistic productions). Since Aristotle recognized no existential principle in things which is not identical with their essences, existence (esse) in such a world can only be 'natural'.

Texts on nature abound in Thomas' writings and reveal his debt to Aristotle in the use he makes of the word. In one text from the Summa Theologiae, for example, Thomas defines nature variously as 1) birth, 2) principle of begetting, 3) principle of generation, 4) any intrinsic principle of motion (both formal and material), 5) form, 6) matter, 7) the essence of the species and 8) the quiddity or 'whatness' of a thing.⁴⁰ Since Thomas assumes esse to be natural, we must presume that he understands it to fall under one of the above meanings, but there is nothing in the text itself to indicate which one he is associating it with.

In a later article of the same question, however, he gives two indications of how esse might be regarded as falling within the category of the 'natural'. There, in answer to the question of whether or not the grace of Christ can be understood as 'natural' to Christ, he answers,

According to the Philosopher (Metaph., V, 5), nature designates, in one way, nativity; in another, the essence of a thing. Hence natural may be taken in two ways:--first, for what is only from

³⁸Physics, II, 1, 192b22-23.

³⁹Ibid., 193b4-5.

⁴⁰ST III, 2, 12.

the essential principles of a thing, as it is natural to fire to mount; secondly, we call natural to man what he has had from birth, according to Eph. 2.3: We were by nature children of wrath; and Wisd. xii. 10: They were a wicked generation, and their malice natural. Therefore, the grace of Christ, whether of union or habitual, cannot be called natural as if caused by the principles of the human nature of Christ, although it may be called natural, as if coming to the human nature of Christ by the causality of His Divine Nature. But these two kinds of grace are said to be natural to Christ, inasmuch as he had them from His nativity, since from the beginning of His conception the human nature was united to the Divine Person, and His soul was filled with the gift of grace.⁴¹

Since anything is natural to a man which he has had from birth, and since esse is something which a man does have from birth, it is easy to see how esse can be regarded as a natural principle in things.

The second indication comes in the answer he gives to the third objection raised at the beginning of the same article, namely, that the grace of Christ cannot in any way be regarded as natural, for if it were, then it would belong to all men. To this Thomas responds, "The grace of union is not natural to Christ according to His human nature, as if it were caused by the principles of the human nature, and hence it need not belong to all men."⁴² Here an identification is made between that which is natural and that which is common. As Keefe notes, "Thomas appears to regard that which is universal in all men as 'natural'.⁴³ It would seem, therefore, that Thomas' assumption that esse is natural⁴⁴ arises from the fact that it is common to all things and present from birth.

⁴¹ST III, 2, 12.

⁴²ST III, 2, 12 ad 2.

⁴³Keefe, Thomism, p. 69.

⁴⁴The fact that this is an assumption must be stressed. Nowhere in his writings does Thomas explicitly analyze the relationship between esse and nature.

Out of this assumption arises the notion that the created order is a natural order, complete in itself, to which the supernatural must come as a second and different type of order. As Mersch puts it, "God is pure Being; to possess Him truly a man must exist otherwise than by his natural existence; he must receive and possess a new way of existing."⁴⁵ The natural order of existence comes into being by virtue of God's activity as Creator, first cause and exemplar of all things. The graced order of existence comes into being by virtue of "the mystery by which God Himself has entered into the world and into humanity."⁴⁶ The distinction between natural and supernatural corresponds to a distinction between the God of philosophy and the God of revelation. As Mersch sees it, we can only determine the supernatural by distinguishing two aspects in God.

The first of these aspects is God such as He is known in philosophy; God as the cause and exemplar of everything; God as imitated and expressed in His works; hence God as conceivable to some slight degree in function of His works, plus the simultaneous denial of any relation on His side with these works, since He is the Absolute. Envisaged in this way, God is "known as though unknown," He is God such as He appears in the mirror of creation, in something that is not He, God in His external effects. As such, God is the foundation of the natural order.

The second aspect is God as He is in Himself, within the Godhead: the inner life of God, not merely the external effects; Deus prout est in se, not merely Deus prout relucet in creaturis.⁴⁷

Since the natural order encompasses both the existential and the essential principles in things, it follows that material substances, however one defines them, are natural as well. As a result, grace can enter such an order only by way of the accidental. As Thomas says,

⁴⁵ Mersch, Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 621.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 457.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 459.

"Whatever comes to a subject after the latter is constituted in existence, can come only as an accident, unless it should be drawn into communion with the already constituted existence" (he has in mind here the human nature of Christ which is drawn into the already-constituted existence of the Word).⁴⁸

It also follows that grace comes as an essential (formal) rather than an existential principle. As one writer puts it,

Any created reality is a participation in being, the ultimate perfection of which is realized in the absolute being; but grace is more than this for it is a formal sharing in the nature of God, the Absolute. God becomes the "form" or determining principle of the being and operation of the nature that is "graced."⁴⁹

Grace is therefore "a formal participation in the divine nature"⁵⁰ which, because formal, exercises formal causality in elevating the person to higher levels of existence and activity.

These notions of esse as natural and of grace as an accidental, formal elevation of natural existence have been accepted by Thomism for seven centuries. Yet the methodological problems which they create are severe, if not insurmountable. Among these problems, three require our attention with regard to esse. The first of these has to do with the distinction made between God's creative (natural) activity and His Incarnational (graced) activity. The supposition that there is an aspect of God that can be known naturally or philosophically "in the mirror of creation" is itself based on an a priori assumption that God's creative activity is noetically available to us apart from His

⁴⁸ ST III, 2, 6 ad 2.

⁴⁹ P. Gregory Stevens, The Life of Grace (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 73.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

explicit revelation of Himself as Creator.

This would seem to violate the distinction which Thomas himself tells us exists between those things which are 'naturally' knowable and those things which require revelation. With respect to the latter, he insists that "such things as spring from God's will, and beyond the creature's due, can be made known to us only through being revealed in the Sacred Scripture, in which the Divine Will is made known to us."⁵¹ Since the decision to create springs from the Divine Will, and, since prior to the actual creation of anything, there are no entities or creatures to whom anything can be "due", the fact that the world is created would seem to require a revelation.⁵²

Methodologically, it is the problem of determining how an analytical methodology employing the notions of act and potency to account for the conditions of possibility of the reality which confronts us is able to discern, solely on the basis of that reality, the will of God. It is also the problem of determining how that same methodology is able to give an account of the world as a "mirror" of God, in light of the fact that 1) creation is ex nihilo (that is, not available to rational inquiry apart from God's revelation) and 2) we know ourselves to image God only because He has revealed this to us. To suppose that we can know either of these things apart from His revelation is to suppose that creation is necessary and that it must image God. It is, in other words, to suppose that the Divine Will can be known because God has no other choices to exercise than those which the revelation tells

⁵¹ ST III, 1, 3.

⁵² The fact that the best pagan minds were unable to arrive at the notion of a Creator God would lend support to this.

us He has in fact exercised. All of this exemplifies that rationalization of creation and of esse to which reference has already several times been made.

Where esse itself is concerned, however, the difficulties in viewing creation as naturally or philosophically available to us do not end there. For if, as Thomists such as Gilson and Owens tell us, there is no need to posit a real distinction between esse and essence in order to account for God's creative activity, then we are confronted, in the creative act itself, with a divine gratuitousness which the mere positing of creatures ad extra would not require. Under these circumstances, the significance of esse cannot be that of simply actualizing or realizing things. God as efficient cause can do that without the help of esse.⁵³ The significance of esse must lie in the fact that it is constitutive of us precisely as that principle which enables us to possess, per participationem, the divine esse which is God's per essentiam.

The second problem which confronts us, methodologically speaking, is that of grace as accidental. There are two elements to this problem. The first is the difficulty of explaining how grace, as supernatural, can be correlated to a natural act of existence. As Keefe points out,

The primal reception of the revelation cannot be conceptual; it cannot be infused into an already constituted person, for such an infused grace would either inhere in the intellect as a conceptual specification inadequate to an apprehension of the prime truth, or it would inhere in the substantial soul, which then, being elevated in the order of substance, would by supposition be transcendently correlated to a purely natural act of existence, of esse. But this is impossible: essence, as a limitation of esse, cannot transcend that which it limits.⁵⁴

⁵³Ockham's razor has its uses.

⁵⁴Keefe, Thomism, p. 106.

The second element, a corollary to the first, stems from the fact that it is "impossible to correlate a supernatural accident and a natural substance, for substance is the prius of accidents."⁵⁵ Most Thomists attempt to circumvent these problems by speaking of grace as a "unique" accident, unlike any other accident. In so doing, they seem to leave themselves open to the charge of using the term 'accident' in a nominalist way. Whether or not this be the case, the methodological problem remains. Potency and act are not real apart from their correlation. To suppose that grace as accident is somehow exempt from this methodological principle is to suppose that accidental grace is a thing in itself, requiring no correlating principle to account for its reality.

The third problem which confronts us is that of grace as formal. On the one hand, it is not surprising that Thomism understands grace to be formal. After all, grace is understood to exercise a formal impact on those who receive it. Therefore, as we have seen, grace must be associated with the essence of a thing, not with its esse. On the other hand, however, there is something surprising in the notion that the Being of Ipsum Esse, communicated via the substantial principle of esse, is unable to exercise the intelligible impact on things which that same Being, communicated via the accidental principle of grace, is able to exercise on them. Since God is Pure Act, it is difficult to understand how His communication of Himself as pure act (esse) is of a lower order (the natural order) than is His communication of Himself under the modality of formal grace (the supernatural order). Mersch attempts to get around this by supposing that grace can be viewed from two different directions.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

. . . grace, regarded as an assimilation to God, is a new act rather than a new form, for God is act, not form. However, in accord with the point of view that regards grace as something in man, we may admit that it is a form; but we should add that it actuates more than it informs, and that it imparts fuller being rather than another kind of being.⁵⁶

Since everything that Mersch says here can be made to apply as much to esse as it does to grace, it is not easy to see how these two views of grace clarify the situation at all.

Since esse is a constitutive principle immanent within things, it is difficult to avoid the notion that it exercises something akin to formal causality. Since it is, furthermore, not only a principle which lies outside of (praeter) but also above (supra) its correlative principle, it is difficult to understand how it could be regarded as 'natural'. Finally, since its placement within things is not required to account for creation ad extra, it is very difficult to dissociate it from creation ad intra and therefore from grace. For, by it, we are granted a share in the divine Esse which is God.

Esse and a New Ontology

The supernatural has been defined as a "participation in the divine good, in a good that naturally pertains to God alone."⁵⁷ Since esse subsistens, pure act, is the good which naturally, i.e., per essentiam, pertains to God alone, it would seem impossible to avoid the conclusion that the principle of esse, whereby we participate in Ipsum Esse, simultaneously constitutes our participation in that which is supernatural to us. Far from constituting us as autonomous, esse places

⁵⁶Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 621.

⁵⁷Schema constitutionis dogmaticae secundae de fide, c. 3. Cf. ST I-II, 110, 1.

contingency at the root of our being.

The fact that Thomism has not recognized this lies, in large part, in a methodological misunderstanding at the center of the Thomist enterprise. Thomists have, by and large, made the assumption that our imaging of God must be a formal imaging. When they found this imaging absent from Aristotle, they experienced a strong felt need to supply it. Hence the Divine Ideas. But the assumption that our imaging of God must be formal is a Platonic assumption, based on the view that material reality is substantial only to the degree that it participates in the primary substances, the Ideal Forms. If one makes this assumption, then one is led to suppose that the relation of the world to God and its dependence on Him are inherent in the formal structures of the world. Formally speaking, therefore, the world cannot be understood apart from God. Hence, the world can be made autonomous only if it is supplied with some further non-formal element which it can then be understood to preserve within itself.

If, however, as we have argued, the Aristotelian project is precisely that of providing an alternative to the Platonic notion of divine exemplarity, then the Aristotelian primary substance is, by definition, formally autonomous. Such a notion of substance, converted by Thomas into the essential principle in existing things, grounds not their contingency or dependence on God but their otherness or distinctiveness vis a vis God. The correlation of esse with such a notion of essence then provides the means by which creatures are understood to be contingent and related to God. Esse, therefore, far from overcoming the contingency of the creature, establishes the creature as contingent in every respect. The esse/essence distinction is the methodological

statement of this contingency. As Keefe notes,

The act-potency method of this [Aristotelian] ontology, which concludes to an understanding of being as immanent essence, permits this essentialist understanding of the world to be itself in potency to a theological understanding. This was the insight of St. Thomas.⁵⁸

If this is the case, Thomism cannot be a metaphysics in search of a middle ground between nature and grace. On the contrary, "Thomism is a supernaturalism, for it seeks to understand, not the necessity of essential nature, but the possibility of a gratuity which is not implicit in essence."⁵⁹ This gratuity is expressed by the esse/essence correlation.

Mersch has raised the question of how a man who has his own form, that form which in fact makes him a man, can nevertheless be understood as capable of undergoing a formal change which does not undermine his own nature.

. . . how can a man in any true sense put on a form that will divinize him? He already has his form, and that is what makes him man. How can he receive another form that will make him divine, without ceasing to be human? And how can he introduce into his form the modifications that are needed to make it divine and that have to be so great as to be almost infinite, without stretching it well beyond the necessarily narrow limits capable of admitting accidental changes, and without bursting it asunder?⁶⁰

He concludes that we must seek a "new ontology" in order to account for this.

Such an ontology already exists in Thomism insofar as it adheres to the principles of its own act/potency methodology. For, within such a methodology, existential grace does not threaten essential integrity by entering into the already constituted limits of a finite nature.

⁵⁸Keefe, Thomism, p. 26.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 48.

⁶⁰Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 617.

Rather, it composes with its correlative essential principle in such a way as to exercise a non-formal but intelligible impact upon the existential substance which it helps constitute.

. . . there is in each man an existential gratuity, a grace more fundamental than any other, which is his substantial being, the correlation between his essential, potential being, and his gratuitous existence. In this correlation he subsists; it is his substantial actuality, a continuum of existential actualization of essential potentiality, which is the substantial prius of all his accidental manifestations of his being. This gratuity must be denominated sufficient grace. It is supernatural, in the strict sense of non-essential, and is prior in being to all other grace.⁶¹

In such a methodology, no purely natural substances can exist. For substance is existential (graced), not essential (natural). Pure nature is therefore potential, not actual. Herein lies the significance of esse as immanent within created things. For within an act/potency methodology transformed by the esse/essence distinction, no essence can exist apart from its correlation with esse. In other words, the Aristotelian essential universe is not only uncreated in Aristotle, it is uncreatable in Thomism. This uncreatability, however, is systematic, not doctrinal. As Keefe notes with regard to Thomist methodology, the Aristotelian essence is "uncreated and uncreatable insofar as the system is concerned."⁶² That God might have created a universe incapable of

⁶¹Keefe, Thomism, p. 64.

⁶²Keefe, "A Methodological Critique," p. 36. Keefe notes, in the same article (p. 32) that "In von Balthasar's hands, and in this he is seconded by Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac, grace remains grace only if there exists alongside it concrete natural reality: e.g., concrete human nature. . . . The nerve of this argument is that the divine freedom to create man without calling him to a supernatural destiny must be systematically maintained, and that only in this simultaneity of natural and supernatural reality, which cannot be made systematically coherent, is the divine transcendence given a real theological recognition." The difficulty here of systematic incoherence can be overcome by recognizing the distinction between theological and systematic necessities.

being submitted to a Thomist act/potency analysis remains a possibility. It simply means that God is capable of creating a non-Thomist universe.

If 'pure nature' is, as Keefe says, "a counterconcept, a possibility of thought whose reification is always a falsification,"⁶³ it follows that the notion of double gratuity also has no place in a Thomist methodology. For, theologically speaking, existential grace, as a participation in the life of God, is indissociable from gratia Christi. And, methodologically speaking, existential grace is inseparable from our essential participation in the human species, whose formal cause, as we have seen, must be Christ, the God-man, in Whom alone existential and formal causality can be understood as distinct but inseparable.

There is then no basis for the notion, time-honored in Catholic theology, of a 'double gratuity,' the one of nature, the other of grace: the ex nihilo of creation in Christ is precisely the ex nihilo of gratia Christi, the Gift of the Spirit which is the purpose of the Father's sending of the Son, and which is inseparable from the Incarnation as it is from the Eucharistic worship of the Church.⁶⁴

In order to account for substantial grace within a Thomist act/potency methodology, however, some means must be provided to account for 1) a union of the divine and human which is substantial, not accidental, 2) pure nature as potential, not existential and 3) esse as not only actuating but exercising intelligible impact upon existential substance. Happily, the means to do so are already in place in Thomas himself, in his account of the Incarnation.

⁶³ Idem., Thomism, p. 84.

⁶⁴ Idem., "Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology," The Thomist 44 (July 1980):368.

Esse and the Incarnation

The esse/essence distinction, used by Thomas to account for the createdness of things, is also employed by him to account for the Incarnation. The correspondence between creation and Incarnation is, therefore, already present in Thomism. As Keefe points out,

Beginning with the contingent existence of the created universe, he [Thomas] was led to stating an act-potency correlation unknown and unnecessary to the Aristotelian essentialism, that of existence as the substantial actuation of essence. This new application of the Aristotelian act-potency correlation at once gave an ontological basis for the dogmatic fact of creation, and made it possible and necessary to place an ontological distinction between human nature and its final, personal actuation, without depriving that nature of its essential activity or operation. Thus, an ontological understanding of the Christological dogma was provided: God, the Creator, must be understood as unlimited actuality, as Ipsium Esse, and in the Person of the Logos, must be understood methodologically or ontologically as the existential actuality of the humanity of Jesus the Christ, Who is thus the existential, substantial union of God and man in one divine Person.⁶⁵

That the union is substantial is very clear in Thomas' writings. "Now divine and human nature, though infinitely diverse, are nevertheless brought together in the mystery of the Incarnation in one ontological subject; and neither of them pertains to this subject in an accidental way, but rather substantially."⁶⁶ Furthermore, their union in the Person of the Word requires that, in Christ, there be only one act of existence.

. . . a human nature is united to the Son of God hypostatically or personally, and not accidentally. Consequently, with his human nature he does not acquire a new personal existence, but simply a new relation of his already existing personal existence to the human nature. Accordingly, this person is now said

⁶⁵Keefe, Thomism, p. 45.

⁶⁶ST III, 16, 1 ad 1.

to subsist not only in divine nature but also in human nature.⁶⁷

Hence, we are able to say that "The eternal existence of the Son of God which is identified with the divine nature becomes the existence of the man inasmuch as the human nature is assumed by the Son of God into the unity of his person."⁶⁸

This substantial communication of His existence by the Person of the Logos to the human nature is precisely what Fr. de la Taille understands to be the one new element provided by the Incarnation.

So then, the communication of the Word's own being is something created, although the being of the Word is uncreated. And there is the new element introduced by the Incarnation; new, no less than created; truly positive; no mere amputation; new and positive, but also substantial: and this is what we now have to note. It is substantial forasmuch as the communication of the Word's existence to the soul and body is the actualization (supernatural, of course) of the human nature as a potency in regard of being. The actualization of such potency is something in the substantial order; not anything that could be reduced to mere accident. Indeed, it is the most substantial actuality of all: although it is no part of the nature thus actuated: but it is what we call substantial existence.⁶⁹

This communicated existence as substantial, not accidental, is important, to our purposes, in two ways. First, it makes clear that this union of divine and human does not present us with the problem of accounting for how divinity is able to squeeze itself, so to speak, into the finite limits of an already-constituted (i.e., existing) human nature. As Mascall notes with regard to modern English theological discussions about the Incarnation,

⁶⁷ ST III, 17, 2.

⁶⁸ ST III, 17, 2 ad 2.

⁶⁹ M. de la Taille, The Hypostatic Union, trans. Cyril Vollert (West Baden Springs, Ind: West Baden College, 1952), p. 21.

They take as their starting-point human nature as it is known to us, and then in effect inquire what must happen to the divine Word if he is to be compressed within its limits; they hardly ever start by considering the mode of existence of the divine Word and then ask what must happen to human nature if it is to be united to him.⁷⁰

Rather, the question which confronts us is how the human nature can be disposed to receive the divine existence. For the change which takes place here, as Thomas points out, is on the side of the human nature, not on the side of the Person of the Logos.⁷¹ The change in question must be some sort of adaptation of the human nature to the Logos, a perfecting of the human nature precisely in and through its union with the Logos.

. . . this perfection must be a transcendent actuation brought about by union with the pure Act; it can be nothing else than a pure adaptation, a pure assimilation and participation of one of the two natures with reference to the other. But only the human nature can be thus adapted.⁷²

This brings us to the second aspect of this communicated existence which is important to our purposes. This perfection or adaptation does not come ab extrinseco to an already-constituted human nature. It comes to it immanently, from the union itself of divine and human. Therefore, the causality which brings about this change in the human nature cannot be regarded as in the order of efficient or external causality.

The perfecting we wish to speak of is not and cannot be in the order of efficient causality that brings about the union, however slight the efficient causality may be; the union would in that case lose its transcendence. The perfection does not predispose to the union, does not prepare for it, does not facilitate it. The perfection comes into being through the union, not vice

⁷⁰E. L. Mascall, Christ, the Christian and the Church (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1946), p. 15.

⁷¹ST III, 2, 7.

⁷²Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 214.

versa; it is the union that explains the perfection, not the perfection that accounts for the union.

We may say that the perfecting causes the assumed human nature to be the human nature of God and that it adapts the human nature for the union. It does so, however, not in the way of an efficient cause, but in the way of a quasi-formal cause.⁷³

Although M. de la Taille refuses to designate this causality as in any way "formal," he acknowledges that we must understand a "dispositive" causality to be at work here.⁷⁴ Hence, we have in the Incarnation a situation in which the divine Esse operates substantially and existentially not as an efficient cause but as a "quasi-formal" cause exercising an intelligible impact on the human nature which it actuates, adapting and perfecting that nature from within the union which it effects between itself and that nature.

We have here also a situation in which human nature is a substantial principle, not a substance in its own right. As a result, the intelligibility which it has as an existential substance cannot be attributed entirely to those formalities arising from its essential principle. The intrinsic dispositive causality of the divine Esse contributes its own intelligibility to the existential substance which arises from the union of the Person of the Logos with the human nature. Consequently, the human nature, as existential, acquires a perfection which is extrinsic to it as essential principle (i.e., supernatural), but intrinsic to it as existential substance (i.e., substantial grace). Thus, we have in the Incarnation two immanent causal principles, one existential, the other essential, distinct when considered with regard to the divine and human natures, yet inseparable in their union in the Person of the

⁷³ Ibid., p. 208.

⁷⁴ de la Taille, The Hypostatic Union, pp. 30-31.

Word, both of which are necessary to understand the elevation of Christ's human nature to a participation in the divine Esse. As Mersch says with regard to that elevation,

Undoubtedly the transcendental aspect that makes it a divinization and the human aspect that makes it an exaltation of the human nature are strictly inseparable; only the strict unity of the person with the two natures accounts for its existence. Yet the two aspects are distinct, with a distinction derived from that of the natures which are united. . . . Accordingly what is usually presented in theology as a divinization appears to be primarily a realization of the ultimate perfections human nature is capable of and, if we may say so, a transcendent "humanization."⁷⁵

In the Incarnation, we are presented with a concrete instance, because the union is substantial not accidental, in which the esse which perfects the essence is identically the grace which perfects the nature. Therefore, the real distinction is not only, methodologically speaking, a way of stating the gratuity of creation; it is also a way of stating the gratuity of Incarnation. Might we not also expect it to be a way of stating the gratuity of our own existence? Mersch tells us that we would do well to contemplate the divinization of Christ's humanity, for it is "the divinization of all humanity."⁷⁶ If this be the case, we might well expect the esse/essence correlation to be a kind of methodological shorthand for our own creation in Christ.

⁷⁵Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 205.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 618.

PART II

ESSE/ESSENCE: CREATION IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

As Otto Muck notes in the preface to his study on transcendental method,

The question concerning methodology is an indication of a crisis. The access to reality most familiar to us appears to have been called into question with regard to its fundamental validity (or at least with regard to its ability to counteract a very pressing problem). Reflection which is focused on the way, i.e., which brings it to awareness, determines its suitability and thereby either adapts the way to the goal or suggests new ways, is a reflection on methodology.¹

Today's preoccupation with methodology is the product of a long crisis, or rather a long series of crises, in Western thought, dating back to the breakup of the great medieval syntheses. It has made itself most felt in a series of critiques, following in the wake of the Cartesian dualism, each of which has called into question that view of the universe as a participation in divinity which had been assumed by all of the great scholastic theologians. Whether it be the Kantian critique of pure reason, with its suggestion of an unknowable universe, the Nietzschean critique of Christianity with its suggestion of a godless universe, the Darwinian critique of teleology, with its suggestion of a mindless universe, the Sartrean critique of essentialism, with its suggestion of a meaningless universe, or the Marxist critique of capital, with its suggestion of a materially-necessitated universe, each one directly challenges some perspective on the universe, some

¹ Otto Muck, The Transcendental Method, trans. William D. Seidensticker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 11.

access to reality, which had previously been presupposed.

The crisis has heightened in our own century, with the rise of a new consciousness of history, curiously similar to the Heraclitean analysis of the flux, in which historical change is experienced as radically discontinuous and unstructured. As Langdon Gilkey points out,

. . . contingency rather than necessity seems to be the name of history, and far from being ruled by either transcendent or sub-personal "laws," events seem to be the product of good or bad policy on the part of actors blessed with very good luck or cursed with very bad fortune.²

This notion of history has, in turn, been reinforced by studies such as T. S. Kuhn's³ on the history of science, studies which conclude that scientific knowledge is neither permanent nor stable, but rather proceeds by virtue of discontinuous paradigm shifts which are incapable of being reduced to any intelligible ordering. To accept these notions of history and science is tantamount to denying the methodological question altogether. For, if reality is incapable of submitting to rational inquiry, it matters not at all what method one employs in pursuing that inquiry, since the inquiry itself is pointless.

Alisdair MacIntyre's book, After Virtue, is an excellent study of the stages of crisis through which our notions of morality have passed in recent centuries, producing a situation today in which, as MacIntyre characterizes it, "we have--very largely, if not entirely--lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality."⁴ Believing

²Langdon Gilkey, Reaping the Whirlwind (New York: Seabury Press, A Crossroad Book, 1976), p. 7.

³T. S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

⁴Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 2.

that we must challenge the modern doctrine of "emotivism," viz., "the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character,"⁵ MacIntyre concludes that

The specifically modern self, the self that I have called emotivist, finds no limits set to that on which it may pass judgment for such limits could only derive from rational criteria for evaluation and, as we have seen, the emotivist self lacks any such criteria. Everything may be criticised from whatever standpoint the self has adopted, including the self's choice of standpoint to adopt. It is in this capacity of the self to evade any necessary identification with any particular contingent state of affairs that some modern philosophers, both analytical and existentialist, have seen the essence of moral agency. To be a moral agent is, on this view, precisely to be able to stand back from any and every situation in which one is involved, from any and every characteristic that one may possess, and to pass judgment on it from a purely universal and abstract point of view that is totally detached from all social particularity. Anyone and everyone can thus be a moral agent, since it is in the self and not in social roles or practices that moral agency is to be located.⁶

This atomizing of humanity is the lot of those who deny continuity and structure to any reality outside the self.

Ironically, the current notions of history and science which make such a doctrine of emotivism possible have resulted in a view of human agency which is both unscientific and unhistorical. For the refusal to submit to the discipline of rational inquiry is as unscientific as the refusal to identify one's standpoint with the concrete particularities of one's own situation is unhistorical. Under these circumstances, the methodological search for a perspective, for an access to reality, has no meaning at all.

Even among those who seek such a perspective, however, no general

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

agreement can be found. One does not have to read extensively to discover this. On the one hand, for example, Hannah Arendt believes that the critical shift in human perspective took place at the beginning of the modern age, when science made possible a vision of the unity of the universe such that "nothing occurring in earthly nature was viewed as a mere earthly happening."⁷ Eric Voegelin, on the other hand, believes that the critical shift took place when Greek philosophy discovered the openness of the human soul to the transcendence of God.⁸ Only the man "who has found his true nature through finding his true relation to God"⁹ is capable of becoming a self-critical being. Austin Farrer goes even further, insisting that man must seek to share the divine view of things, because "God's view is the view of mind as such, for it corresponds to the real structure of existence."¹⁰ Jonathan Schell, however, in a recent widely-publicized series of articles on nuclear war in The New Yorker, afterwards published in book form, explicitly rejected such a divine perspective.

. . . these lofty proceedings, in which we exchange our human perspective for a purely speculative superhuman one, are an evasion, for they lift us clean out of the human predicament that it is our obligation to face. . . . Seen in religious terms, such an assumption of a godlike perspective would be an attempted usurpation by man of God's omniscience, and, as such, a form of blasphemy.¹¹

⁷Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 263.

⁸Eric Voegelin, The New Science of Politics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 70.

⁹Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁰Austin Farrer, cited in Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 160.

¹¹Jonathan Schell, The Fate of the Earth (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), p. 126.

As can be seen, the search for a perspective is continually both impeded and spurred on by the spectre of dichotomies which it is the function of a sound methodology to overcome. Whether they be the earlier philosophical dichotomies of subject/object (Descartes) and noumena/phenomena (Kant) or the more recent resurrection of the pagan dichotomies of the divine/human, the continuous/discontinuous, the necessary/contingent, they reflect a state of affairs which seems endemic to human thought. The pagans were plagued by the problem of the one and the many, just as Christian thinkers from the fifth century on were obsessed by the problem of the universal and the particular. The concern for methodology today is a sign that no entirely satisfactory perspective has yet been found for overcoming these dichotomies.

The central dichotomy occupying the attention of Catholic theologians from the sixteenth century onwards has been that of nature and grace. This problem was originally and for the most part treated as one of natural theology or philosophy, namely, the problem of locating within the categories of Aristotelian/Thomist metaphysics that obediential potency which every theologian until recently understood to be a capacity for divinization.

In this century, however, the problem has assumed a different shape. First, it has increasingly come to be seen as more of a methodological than a philosophical problem. Secondly, the assumption that grace divinizes has been called into question. The former of these changes indicates that the previous means by which nature and grace were understood to be related has been found unsatisfactory. The latter change indicates that a shift in perspective with regard to the problem itself has taken place.

In this section, we shall examine first, the shape which the nature/grace problem has assumed in this century in Roman Catholicism (chapter 7), secondly, that shift in human consciousness which has flowered in this century, requiring a re-evaluation of our perspective regarding nature and grace (chapter 8), thirdly, the rise of quantum physics and the significance of the epistemological/metaphysical impasse to which the new physics has led the scientific community (chapter 9), and, finally, a theory of human consciousness which offers the primary key to overcoming the nature/grace dichotomy, together with a methodological approach which enables us to understand how that theory might be understood as compatible with the revelation of Christ and the structures of reality (chapter 10).

CHAPTER 7

NATURE/GRACE IN 20TH CENTURY CATHOLIC THEOLOGY:

THE SEARCH FOR A METHOD

The neo-scholastic paradigm on nature and grace which was in force at the turn of this century began to take explicit shape in the sixteenth century in the immediate wake of Reformation/Tridentine confrontations within this area. The cornerstone of the paradigm lay in the 1567 papal condemnation of the notion held by Michael Baius that grace is owed by God to man. Protection of God's complete gratuity in elevating man to a state of supernatural finality became the central focus of the following centuries. The construct of 'pure nature' served as a necessary component for clearly distinguishing between God's free act of creation and His free act of elevation.

By the end of the nineteenth century, this construct had become the pillar supporting natural theology and philosophy as autonomous and independent of revealed theology. It had also become, inadvertently, the means by which neo-scholasticism created, in the words of Shepherd, "a huge chasm between nature and the supernatural."¹ In fact, the neo-scholastic paradigm on nature and grace suggested a two-storey universe in which, as Karl Rahner notes, "the relationship between nature and grace is thought of as two layers laid very carefully one on top of

¹William C. Shepherd, Man's Condition: God and the World Process (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 39 (hereafter cited as Shepherd, Man's Condition).

the other so that they interpenetrate as little as possible."²

Matthias Scheeben's book, Nature and Grace, exemplifies very well the relationship which neo-scholasticism thought to exist between the natural and the supernatural. There exists, Scheeben tells us, a "twofold order" based on a "double ontological order of man with regard to God."³ As a result, "There is a natural and a supernatural knowledge of God, a natural and a supernatural justice and love of God, a natural and a supernatural blessedness."⁴ The proper domain of Christian theology is the second of these two orders. "Christianity claims this higher order of being, knowledge, and love, or, in other words, this superior ontological, logical, and ethical order, exclusively as its own."⁵

The problems with this paradigm were twofold. First, on the side of grace, it assumed the supernatural to be extrinsic to the natural.

In fact, this modern theory of a spiritual nature--whether angelic or human--with a 'purely natural' finality, was born and developed in the intellectual context of a watered-down idea of what finality is. What it assumed at its beginnings, though not always very explicitly, was something very different from what most of those who hold it today would assume. This was that every man, in our world as it is, before having received the grace of baptism or any other enabling grace, was in that state of 'pure nature' (at least if one excludes original sin and its consequences). Finality was therefore considered as something fairly extrinsic: not a destiny inscribed in a man's very nature, directing him from within, and which he could not ontologically

²Karl Rahner, "Nature and Grace," Theological Investigations, IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), pp. 166-167.

³Matthias Joseph Scheeben, Nature and Grace, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), p. 12.

⁴Ibid., p. 43.

⁵Ibid., p. 13.

escape, but a mere destination given him from outside when he was already in existence.⁶

Secondly, on the side of nature, this paradigm seemed to suggest the existence of a natural realm, complete and independent in its own right, and having, therefore, no need for the supernatural. As Blondel, the philosopher, was in a good position to recognize, "when reason, left sole mistress of the knowable world, claimed to find immanent in herself all the truths needed for the life of man, the world of faith found itself totally excluded."⁷ The neo-scholastic paradigm lent verisimilitude to this notion of an immanently-complete natural order because, as Blondel pointed out, "One cannot see, in such an account, either what is lacking or what remains to man without the supernatural."⁸

From Modernism to Humani Generis

The Modernist Crisis

By the late 1800's, the inadequacies of neo-scholasticism had become apparent to a large number of minds. Although it protected well divine transcendence and gratuity, it no longer seemed to have much bearing on the human condition itself. The need for a new perspective began to make itself felt. The Modernist crisis was the first phase in the search for a new access to reality.

In his book, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, Ludwig Ott defines

⁶Henri de Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 88-89.

⁷Maurice Blondel, The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma, trans. Alexander Dru and Illyd Trethowan (New York/Chicago/San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 148 (hereafter cited as Blondel, Letter).

⁸Ibid., p. 144.

Modernism thus:

The cognitional theoretical basis of Modernism is agnosticism, according to which human rational cognition is limited to the world of experience. Religion, according to this theory, develops from the principle of vital immanence (immanentism) that is, from the need for God which dwells in the human soul. The truths of religion are, according to the general progress of culture, caught up in a constant substantial development (evolutionism).⁹

Gabriel Daly accepts this definition, adding that "in these words we have the gist of what the encyclical [Pascendi Dominici Gregis] regarded as the basic errors of modernism, namely, agnosticism and the doctrine of vital immanence."¹⁰ Although safeguarding the distinction between the natural and supernatural orders was a primary concern of the Papacy during the Modernist crisis, Pope Pius X was indeed most disturbed by a "doctrine of immanence" which he saw as compromising not only divine gratuity but the supernatural realm itself.

The question is no longer one of the old error which claimed for human nature a sort of right to the supernatural. It has gone far beyond that, and has reached the point where it is affirmed that our most holy religion, in the man Christ as in us, emanated from nature spontaneously and of itself. Nothing assuredly could be more utterly destructive of the whole supernatural order. For this reason the Vatican Council most justly decreed [Canon 3 on Revelation]: "If anyone says that man cannot be raised by God to a knowledge and perfection which surpasses nature, but that he can and should, by his own efforts and by a constant development, attain finally to the possession of all truth and good, let him be anathema."¹¹

Although Pascendi speaks of Modernism as though it were a coherent doctrinal program, most recent studies of the movement agree that the

⁹Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Theology, cited in Gabriel Daly, Transcendence and Immanence (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 1.

¹⁰Daly, Transcendence and Immanence, p. 1.

¹¹Pope Pius X, "On the Doctrines of the Modernists," in All Things in Christ, ed. Vincent A. Yzermans (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1954), p. 15.

doctrinal coherence Modernism was understood to enjoy was, in fact, more conferred on it by Pius X than a reality within it. Roger Aubert points out that "In effect, modernism was first and foremost an 'orientation' (P. Sabatier), a 'tendency' (Loisy) rather than a sum of cut-and-dried doctrines."¹² In the final analysis, Aubert believes that Modernism is best defined, in the words of E. Poulat, as "the real encounter and confrontation between a religious past set long ago in its mould and a present that found its sources of inspiration elsewhere."¹³

Here, then, we see at the beginning of this century the two problems of methodology and historical consciousness both playing an important role in the Modernist movement. For the 'orientation' or 'tendency' of Modernism was indicative of the fact that a new perspective or access to reality was being sought, while the new sources of inspiration indicated that a shift in the orientation of the human mind itself had occurred. The very language which dominated the discussion, particularly the transcendent/immanent dichotomy, indicates the influence exercised by Kant's turn to the subject and Bergson's élan vital, while the emphasis given by various Modernists to human experience and historical development indicates a shift from theocentric to anthropocentric concerns. While Pius X had his eyes on God and the supernatural order, the Modernists had theirs on man and his world. As Vidler notes with regard to the Modernists,

What, according to their own testimony, they had in common was not the system defined in the Pascendi or any system of the sort,

¹² Roger Aubert, The Church in a Secularised Society, vol. 5, The Christian Centuries (New York/Ramsey, NJ/Toronto: Paulist Press; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), p. 186.

¹³ Ibid., p. 187.

but a desire in one way or another to promote the adaptation of Catholicism, of the Church and its teaching, to new conditions.¹⁴

Modernist theologians failed to produce a coherent methodology or view of history which could take into account this new historical consciousness and anthropocentricity without simultaneously annulling divine transcendence and the supernatural realm. Their condemnation in 1907 brought Modernism as a movement to an end. But the problems which this movement sought to address remained. Although Rome had made it quite clear that any doctrine of immanence which sought to account for the supernatural in terms of the natural was anathema, Blondel believed that a method of immanence would not only not compromise the divine transcendence, but would in fact open up a new path to that transcendence.

Maurice Blondel: Method of Immanence

As Frederick Copleston notes, Blondel's major preoccupation was the problem of man's destiny."¹⁵ At the beginning of L'Action, Blondel raises the question which the rest of the book is designed to address: "Yes or no, has life a meaning, and has man a destiny?"¹⁶ Lacroix points out that, for Blondel, if man can be discovered to have a destiny, "it is impossible for philosophy not to be interested in it."¹⁷

¹⁴ Alec R. Vidler, A Variety of Catholic Modernists (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 15-16.

¹⁵ Copleston, A History of Philosophy, vol. 9, part 2: Bergson to Sartre (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1974), p. 22.

¹⁶ Cited in James M. Somerville, Total Commitment: Blondel's L'Action (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1968), p. 43.

¹⁷ Jean Lacroix, Maurice Blondel: An Introduction to the Man and His Philosophy, trans. John C. Guinness (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 23.

In order to investigate the question of man's destiny, Blondel employed what he called a 'method of immanence.' As much emphasis must be placed on the word 'method' as on the word 'immanence,' for he was not engaged in expounding any 'doctrines of immanence' such as were condemned in Pascendi. Instead, he sought the transcendent within the immanent. As Daly points out,

Blondel . . . accepted the methodological implications of the Kantian critique. The point of departure on the road to transcendence must be human experience. . . . Analysis of human action, the dynamic force-field of man's existence, would, Blondel claimed, show that what begins as an exploration of immanence points inexorably towards a transcendent term.¹⁸

Employing a dialectic of action, Blondel located within human experience an ultimate act of the will which surpasses anything man is capable of achieving for himself. It is this act, according to Blondel, which takes man beyond the finite, material world into the realm of the transcendent. In order to avoid a 'doctrine of immanence,' Blondel was careful to specify man's desire for God as arising not from human nature but from the gift of grace already implanted within that nature.

The primary importance of Blondel's work is twofold. First, he concerned himself with man's concrete, historical situation as opposed to any theoretical construct about human nature per se. Secondly, his analysis of man in his concrete historicity led Blondel to reject the notion that historical man is or ever has been in a state of 'pure nature,' for he has always and everywhere been the recipient of divine grace. Man's universally experienced need for God, in Blondel's judgment,

. . . leads us to recognize the need of a further gift, gives us the aptitude not to produce or to define but to recognize and

¹⁸Daly, Transcendence and Immanence, pp. 30-31.

to receive it, offers us, in a word, by a sort of prevenient grace, that baptism of desire which, presupposing God's secret touch, is always accessible and necessary apart from any explicit revelation, and which, even when revelation is known, is as it were, the human sacrament immanent in the divine operation.¹⁹

Historical man is therefore not purely natural, but 'transnatural,' because at the center of his nature, from the very beginning, the "secret touch" of God, the "prevenient grace" of the divine, has always been at work, preparing the way in orienting man towards his final destiny in God.

Blondel did not reject the basic neo-scholastic paradigm on nature and grace. As much as any neo-scholastic, he desired to retain "the absolute distinction between the natural and the supernatural."²⁰ Blondel was also at one with the neo-scholastics in wishing to safeguard divine gratuity. He had no desire to jettison 'pure nature' as a hypothetical construct for protecting the gratuity of God's action. God could, according to Blondel, have created man in a state of pure nature. By insisting that God had not so created man and by identifying man's need for God as itself a gift from God, Blondel believed he had successfully modified the neo-scholastic paradigm without endangering the essential components.

Henri de Lubac: The Nature of Spirit

Henri de Lubac's Surnaturel, published in 1946, was described by one neo-Thomist as either "a most subtly dangerous work or else . . . immortal."²¹ It opened a new chapter of debate on the nature/grace

¹⁹ Blondel, Letter, pp. 162-163.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 201.

²¹ Gerard Smith, "The Natural End of Man," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 23 (1949):47-48.

relationship. The heart of the controversy surrounding the book centered on the construct of 'pure nature,' the abandoning of which de Lubac advocated.

De Lubac had no desire to deny divine gratuity. As he stated repeatedly in a variety of ways, "No 'disposition' in creatures can ever, in any way, bind the Creator."²² Nevertheless, de Lubac did not believe it was either necessary or desirable to employ the concept of 'pure nature' in order to safeguard this gratuity. In The Mystery of the Supernatural, a reformulation and development of Surnaturel, he reiterated his objections to this concept.

Because of a lack of sufficient awareness--and also perhaps of a sufficient real knowledge of tradition--a problem which should have provided a stimulus to thought has been turned into a stumbling-block. People took hasty flight to what seemed the 'safest' position [pure nature], and felt that they thereby possessed dogmatic truth in peace. But by this oversimple method of preserving the gratuitousness of the supernatural order, they were, to put it mildly, lessening its meaning. They were making it not merely an 'accident' in the scholastic sense--which is understandable--but something completely accidental in the ordinary sense, and therefore, one must admit, something superficial. They were doom- ing themselves to see it as merely a kind of superstructure. It followed inevitably that man could not only have managed quite well without it, but that even now he could with impunity dis- regard it. It was deprived of any hold on human thinking or human existence. Christian thought was thus bounded by a narrow circle, in a quiet backwater of the intellectual universe, where it could only waste away. By the good offices of some of its own exponents, who were aiming to preserve its transcendence, it became merely an 'exile'.²³

Noting that the doctrine did not arise until the sixteenth century con- troversies with Baius and had never taken hold in the theology of the East, de Lubac wanted to return to the Irenaeus/patristic tradition of the imago dei as a model for understanding man's relationship to God.

²²de Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, p. 310.

²³Ibid., pp. 232-233.

At the heart of de Lubac's objection to the construct of 'pure nature' lay his own view of human nature. His primary concern was to move away from the Aristotelian concept of nature, with its suggestion of a self-enclosed being, towards the concept of the human being as a spirit open to endless desire. Much in his writings does suggest that he equated 'spirit' with 'desire for God.' He quotes with approval, for example, the words of Pere Michel-Ange, a commentator of Duns Scotus, that "In creating the human soul destined by nature for a supernatural life, God has given it natural aptitudes for that supernatural life."²⁴ Later de Lubac notes that when people include in their definition of a spiritual being 'an end corresponding to its powers' or 'an essence which rests content in the good that is proportionate to it.' he could not accept such statements, "For in fact such is fully the case only with the lower natures; it is not true at all of what is most profound in created spirits."²⁵ He therefore concluded that, in human nature as we experience it, the desire to see God is absolute, because it "cannot be permanently frustrated without an essential suffering."²⁶

The central problem in de Lubac's position, insofar as Thomists were concerned, lay in the fact that, on the one hand, he claimed to be working along Thomist lines, while, on the other hand, his identification of an infrustrable desire for God with man's imaging of God could not be made to conform to what Thomists understood by imago dei. Thomas had identified our imaging of God with our intellect and reason.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 149.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

²⁷ ST I, 3, 1 ad 2.

He had also distinguished three types of imaging, namely, those of creation, recreation and beatitude.²⁸ Since Thomism had always identified that imaging of God given by creation with 'nature' (based on Thomas' notion of the universally given as 'natural') and had, by the end of the nineteenth century, firmly committed itself to the notion of a 'natural' order of human knowledge and reasoning, de Lubac's linking of that imaging to an infrustrable desire for God seemed tantamount to maintaining from the side of human nature a demand for God's grace.

Humani Generis

Although Pius X never condemned Blondel's method of immanence, he exhibited no great enthusiasm for it either. In a passage in Pascendi generally thought to refer to Blondel, Pius spoke of

. . . Catholics who, while rejecting immanence as a doctrine, employ it as a method of apologetics, and who do this so imprudently that they seem to admit, not merely a capacity and a suitability for the supernatural, such as has at all times been emphasized, within due limits, by Catholic apologists, but that there is in human nature a true and rigorous need for the supernatural order.²⁹

Blondel always insisted that he was never a Modernist. Indeed, he seemed to have avoided any doctrine of immanence, first, by his insistence that our desire for God is itself a gift from Him and not something arising out of our nature, and secondly, by his willingness to employ the notion of 'pure nature' as a hypothetical construct symbolizing a different order which God could have created but did not. Blondel failed, however, to provide any ontology to account for how grace could be constitutive of the human condition without arising out

²⁸ ST I, 93, 4.

²⁹ Pius X, "On the Doctrine of the Modernists," p. 46.

of the principles of human nature.

De Lubac, heir both to Thomism and the work of Blondel, attempted to synthesize, within the framework of Thomist metaphysics, the Blondelian graced, and therefore infrustrable, desire for God with the Christian notion of man as the image of God. Unfortunately, his attempt to link a universal infrustrable desire for God with man's universal imaging of God (the imaging associated with creation) had the effect, in a Thomist metaphysics, of turning Blondel's graced desire into Thomas' natural desire. Because de Lubac accepted the Thomist account of grace as accidental, he was never able to make coherent his own notion of an infrustrable desire for God which could, within a Thomist framework, be understood as both substantial and gratuitous. And his unwillingness to employ the construct of 'pure nature' in any capacity only heightened the impression already present in a good many minds that he was denying the possibility that God could, even hypothetically, create a purely natural order.

When Humani Generis was issued in 1950, theologians recognized that de Lubac, more than anyone else, was on Pius XII's mind. Pius' particular concern was with the errors of those who "destroy the gratuitous character of the supernatural order by suggesting that it would be impossible for God to create rational beings without ordaining them for the Beatific Vision and calling them to it."³⁰ Humani Generis not only put a damper on the work of de Lubac and the French Nouvelle théologie movement, it also ended, to all practical intents and purposes, the

³⁰ Pope Pius XII, "Humani Generis," in Josef Neuner and Heinrich Roos, The Teaching of the Catholic Church, ed. Karl Rahner, trans. Geoffrey Stevens (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1967), p. 411.

search for a Thomist solution to the problem which had surfaced between Pascendi and Humani Generis, viz., how grace, within a Thomist framework, could be understood as substantial and yet not natural.

After Humani Generis: Transcendental Thomism

Although Humani Generis censurèd the work of de Lubac and others, it by no means had the effect of restoring a pre-Modernist mentality in Catholic theology. Genuine achievements had been won, particularly by the work of men such as Blondel and de Lubac, achievements which were paralleled and fueled to no small extent by Thomist philosophers who were at the same time rediscovering esse and an existential dynamism in Thomas which had been lost to sight in the nineteenth century. The neo-scholastic notion of a static human being whose 'potency' for grace consisted in nothing more than a mere 'non-repugnance' for it died somewhere between Pascendi and Humani Generis. Even neo-scholastics recognized that the notion of man as a self-enclosed being could be reconciled neither with reality nor with Thomas' own views in regard to man. And so they attempted, in one way or another, to align themselves with the position of Anton Pegis, a member of their ranks, that "Man is an open being so that he might close himself freely in the hope of divine friendship."³¹

To the extent that the neo-scholastic paradigm on nature and grace had depended upon a static view of man and a radically extrinsic view of grace, it was recognized to be no longer useful or desirable. At the same time, Humani Generis served as a continual reminder that any

³¹ Anton Pegis, "Nature and Spirit: Some Reflections on the Problem of the End of Man," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 23 (1949):79.

attempt to locate an intrinsic nexus between the human and the divine must avoid compromising the gratuity and transcendence of the supernatural. Those theologians, therefore, who wished to build upon the achievements of the pre-Humani Generis years proceeded on the basis of two assumptions which were, for the most part, unquestioned in Catholic theology. First, it was assumed that a nexus between God and man could be located only by accepting the Kantian 'turn to the subject,' by the use of methods of immanence. As Daly puts it, "all religious thinking which genuinely seeks a hearing in the post-Kantian world has to be done on the slippery slope of immanental attraction."³²

Secondly, it was assumed that the supernatural could be protected only if a concrete natural order were affirmed. As has already been noted, it was assumed that "grace remains grace only if there exists alongside it concrete natural reality: e.g., concrete human nature."³³ This assumption arose not only from Pius XII's insistence that God is able to create human beings without ordaining them to Himself, but also from Vatican I's insistence that God can be known by the natural light of human reason.

Although Humani Generis prematurely ended the attempts of French theologians to find a Thomist resolution to the nature/grace problem as it developed in the years after Pascendi, it was actually the above two assumptions, made by virtually every theologian who followed up on the methodological approach to theology after Humani Generis, which effectively guaranteed that no Thomist resolution would be found by such theologies. Before examining why these assumptions made the task

³²Daly, Transcendence and Immanence, p. 121.

³³See p. 233n.

of finding such a resolution impossible, we shall first examine those problems which did command the attention of theologians after Humani Generis.

Because transcendent Thomism is, on the one hand, the direct heir of the 'method of immanence' approach established by Blondel and, on the other, the only approach to theology in Catholicism today which both claims to be and is generally accepted as Thomist (the objection of Gilsonian Thomists notwithstanding), we shall concentrate on the work of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan and on the two problems to which they have respectively given their attention. The analyses which follow do not pretend to cover the entirety of their works, but only those aspects of their writings which have a direct bearing on the nature/grace question and the corresponding methodological problem as both of them have arisen in this century.

Karl Rahner: The Intrinsic Character of Grace

William C. Shepherd, in Man's Condition: God and the World Process, characterizes Rahner's work as a "theology of nature and grace."³⁴ Certainly one of Rahner's primary concerns over the years has been to establish the centrality of grace in the life of man. In that sense, his work is a continuation of de Lubac's. Furthermore, in the judgment of many, he has, through his notion of the 'supernatural existential,' succeeded where de Lubac failed.

Rahner knows the problem [of extrinsicism] very well and has found a solution so simple and penetrating that it is hardly disputed today. In order to overcome the extrinsicism of grace, he insists on the possibility of a pure human nature that has not been finalized supernaturally and in this way ensures that God's grace is free and gratuitous. At the same time, however, he

³⁴ Shepherd, Man's Condition, p. 98.

maintains that this possibility has never been a reality. In concrete terms this means that man, in his factual existence, is not pure nature and does not experience himself as such. In the sense of a supernatural existential factor, grace is always present for every man as a priori, transcendental consciousness and as an offer made by God that precedes every act and decision made by man and all his knowledge. As an offer made by God and as God's concrete will to save all men, this supernatural existential element is a reality in man, with the result that every man is dynamically finalized in the direction of God's grace, which is God himself, and this finalization takes place in the innermost depths of being.³⁵

There is an immediate difficulty, however, in the solution which Rahner offers. For no general agreement can be found among his commentators as to just what he means by a 'supernatural existential.' William V. Dych, translator of Foundations of Christian Faith, seems to view it as a 'natural' component, pointing out that

"Existential," as in Rahner's phrase "supernatural existential," refers to an element in man's ontological constitution precisely as human being, an element which is constitutive of his existence as man prior to his exercise of freedom. It is an aspect of concrete human nature precisely as human.³⁶

Schillebeeckx understands it to be "a kind of 'intermediary' between nature and supernature."³⁷ Weger seems to view it as a quasi-grace, noting that "this supernatural existential factor is no more than an offer of salvation. In the full sense of the word, grace itself is man's consent, freely accepted and made possible by God's grace, to this offer of grace."³⁸ Galvin, however, understands it to be grace. "The

³⁵ Karl-Heinz Weger, Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Theology (New York: The Seabury Press, a Crossroad Book, 1980), pp. 106-107.

³⁶ Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 16n.

³⁷ E. Schillebeeckx, Revelation and Theology, trans. N. D. Smith, 2 vols. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), II:59.

³⁸ Weger, Karl Rahner, p. 111.

adjective 'supernatural' is added in order to indicate that this existential, unlike others, is not given automatically with human nature, but is rather the result of a gratuitous gift of God."³⁹ McCool agrees, characterizing the supernatural existential as "the ontological 'existential' which raises man to the supernatural order."⁴⁰

Differences of opinion to this degree can't but raise the suspicion that Rahner himself has failed to clarify his views with regard to this matter. In fact, there seem to be four problems in Rahner's presentation of the supernatural existential, three of which are methodological.

The first, and the only non-methodological, problem would seem to be a certain wavering on Rahner's part with regard to whether the supernatural existential is natural or supernatural. On the one hand, he characterizes it as a supernatural component in man.

The real man as God's real partner should be able to receive this Love as what it necessarily is: as free gift. But that means that this central, abiding existential, consisting in the ordination to the threefold God of grace and eternal life, is itself to be characterized as unexacted, as 'supernatural'.⁴¹

On the other hand, he seems to insist that man, even as constituted in part by the supernatural existential, must continue to be understood as 'natural'.

The being of man itself has, in the actual order, an inevitable orientation towards God's strictly supernatural grace (a supernatural existential); but to designate it then as in itself

³⁹ John P. Galvin, "The Invitation of Grace," in Leo J. O'Donovan (ed.), A World of Grace (New York: The Seabury Press, a Crossroad Book, 1980), p. 72.

⁴⁰ Gerald A. McCool, ed., A Rahner Reader (New York: The Seabury Press, A Crossroad Book, 1975), p. xxvi.

⁴¹ Karl Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace," in Theological Investigations I, trans. Cornelius Ernst (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1974), pp. 312-313 (hereafter cited as Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship").

'supernatural' instead of 'natural' can only lead to hopeless confusion and blur beyond recognition the objective distinction between nature and grace.⁴²

A second problem would seem to be that Rahner employs the same words in different ways and combines words from different systems of thought in ways that are confusing. 'Supernatural existential' is itself an excellent example of this. 'Existential', as Dych points out, means an ontologically constitutive aspect of man's existence, an element of concrete human nature. The word 'existential' is drawn from the phenomenological vocabulary of Heidegger. In a phenomenological approach to reality, 'natural' structures are simply 'universally given' structures. Hence, the supernatural existential, because universally constitutive of concrete human beings, is 'natural'. (We have already seen how Thomas himself allows for this use of the word 'natural'.)⁴³

'Supernatural', on the other hand, designates that which, in a Thomist systematic use of the word, cannot be reduced to the essential principle of a thing. By combining the Thomist use of the word 'supernatural' with the Heideggerian use of the word 'existential', Rahner ends up with an expression which can accurately, if confusedly, be rendered as 'supernatural natural component'. If Keefe is correct when he says that "Words become meaningful within a system by reason of the relation they bear to all the other words used, and this relation is given them by the method of the system,"⁴⁴ then Rahner can fairly be

⁴² Idem., "Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification," in Theological Investigations IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), p. 216f (hereafter cited as Rahner, "Questions").

⁴³ See p. 224.

⁴⁴ Keefe, Thomism, p. 7.

criticized for an unsystematic and therefore incoherent use of language.

Rahner's confusing use of language, however, signals a third and more serious problem, that of a confusing blending of systems. Again, his notion of a supernatural existential exemplifies this very well. By employing the word 'existential,' Rahner wishes to establish the reality of an "enduring, continuing condition"⁴⁵ within every human being. On the other hand, he wants grace or the supernatural to be understood in terms which are compatible with the Thomist notion of grace as accident.

Fulfilment in grace is necessarily also fulfilment of the natural person. In this sense, therefore, the latter is an inner moment of the concreteness of grace, just as potency is the potency of act and act is the act of the potency, and both therefore mutually embody one another in the concrete so as to exist and to exist as such themselves. Grace exists by affecting a spiritual, personal substantiality, by being the divinising condition of the latter, and hence presupposes and incorporates into itself the whole reality of this person as the condition of its own possibility and makes it part of the factors of its own concrete being.⁴⁶

It is not possible, however, to identify the phenomenological notion of an 'existential' or permanent structure with the Thomist notion of a gratuitous accident. For only proper accidents, viz., those necessarily arising out of the essential principles of a being, can be understood as enduring faculties.

Rahner further confuses the situation by stating that "man's concretely experienced quiddity differentiates itself into the supernatural

⁴⁵ Karl Rahner, "Über das Verhältnis des Naturgesetzes zur übernatürlichen Gnadenordnung," Orientierung XX (1956):9, cited in Shepherd, Man's Condition, p. 87n.

⁴⁶ Idem., "Philosophy and Theology," in Theological Investigations VI, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), p. 73.

existential as such and the 'remainder'--the pure nature."⁴⁷ Here Rahner has located a 'supernatural' structure within the quiddity or 'whatness' of a being, which is to say, within its essence. This, however, also reduces to incoherence, for if the supernatural comes to a substantiality, it cannot simultaneously function as a constitutive principle of the substantiality to which it comes.

Rahner is, of course, trying to avoid the dilemma in which de Lubac found himself, that of accounting for a component in concrete human beings which is ontologically constitutive (substantial) and gratuitous. Hence, he employs phenomenological language, such as 'existential,' when he wishes to emphasize the constitutive function of this component, and he employs Thomist language, such as 'supernatural,' when he wishes to emphasize its gratuity. Unfortunately, this shifting from system to system is nothing more than a form of methodological nominalism in which not only the words but the realities themselves cease to have any systematic meaning. What is affirmed on one side of the street is simply annulled on the other. Shepherd maintains that "Rahner has developed an embracing theological system, despite its never having been written out in systematic form."⁴⁸ The situation would seem to be the opposite, that Rahner has sought to make his work compatible with both phenomenology and the analytical method of Thomism without tying himself to either approach.

When Shepherd speaks of a Rahnerian system, however, he has something else in mind, and this brings us to the fourth problem in Rahner. For Shepherd maintains that the actual system which Rahner developed

⁴⁷ Idem., "Concerning the Relationship," p. 315.

⁴⁸ Shepherd, Man's Condition, p. 97.

was based upon a shift in his own thinking with regard to the supernatural existential itself.

To solve the isolated problem of nature and grace as it was proposed by the post-Tridentine tradition, Rahner developed the concept of the supernatural existential. In that context, however, it referred to a part of man's constitution, while the other part was purportedly made up of "pure nature." But within Rahner's own framework of thought, and within his own system, the supernatural existential refers to the activity of God, not at all to man's makeup.⁴⁹

Within the latter framework, 'nature' refers simply to the concrete human situation, including both man and the world which he inhabits. 'Supernatural existential' then refers to God's presence to man.

There is much in Rahner's writings to recommend Shepherd's interpretation here. For not only does Rahner, in his later work, emphasize the supernatural existential as the self-communication of God present to every person "in the mode of an offer,"⁵⁰ he had written much earlier of the supernatural existential as constitutive of man by virtue of the graced order within which it places man.

Our actual nature is never 'pure' nature. It is a nature installed in a supernatural order which man can never leave, even as a sinner and unbeliever. It is a nature which is continually being determined (which does not mean justified) by the supernatural grace of salvation offered to it. And these 'existentials' of man's concrete, 'historical' nature are not purely states of being beyond consciousness. They make themselves felt in the experience of man.⁵¹

In these circumstances, the difference between 'pure' nature and concrete, historical nature arises not out of any element or structure which can be located within human beings, but rather depends upon whether human beings have been placed in a 'natural' or a 'supernatural'

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 171.

⁵⁰ Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 127.

⁵¹ Idem., "Nature and Grace," p. 183.

order. In other words, human nature is a constant; the order in which it is placed is the variable.

If Shepherd is correct, and the evidence would suggest that he is, then the system which Shepherd understands Rahner to have constructed is based upon this notion of grace as the order within which concrete human beings have been placed. If this be the case, then it must be said that Rahner ultimately abandoned even the attempt to resolve the problem which de Lubac had raised. For the Thomist method lives by its analysis of those intrinsic causes which are constitutive of created beings. A Thomist methodology, therefore, has nothing to say about a supernatural existential understood as the offer of God's grace, no matter how immanent or intrinsic to human beings such an offer might be, unless it also functions as an intrinsic cause constitutive of the concrete human being within whom it is understood to be immanent.

In fact, such a notion of grace really constitutes a return to the extrinsicism which it was Rahner's original intention to overcome. For grace now comes ab extrinseco to a substantially complete human being. Furthermore, it is no longer clear what sort of potency, if any, human nature can be understood to have for such an offer if, as Rahner suggests, that same human nature could just as easily be placed within a natural order within which such an offer could be withheld. To say, as Rahner does, that the offer itself induces ontological changes in human nature simply begs the question. For the question is precisely one of understanding from the side of concrete human nature how the offer of God's grace meets a responsive capacity intrinsic to the human condition itself. That nexus between the human and the divine which Blondel sought has here apparently been abandoned by Rahner.

In fact, and contra Shepherd, the evidence would seem to indicate that Rahner, far from developing a system of his own, simply abandoned even the search for a system. For his Foundations of Christian Faith is explicitly designated as a "first level of reflection," that is to say, a "pre-scientific" and "thematic" justification of Christian faith. Rahner seems to disavow the notion that any Christian theologian can today give a scientific account of the whole of Christianity. Rahner insists that anyone who would attempt to do so

. . . must be asked whether anybody today can reflect upon the totality of his existence in any way other than this "pre-scientific" way. We would have to ask him whether it is very sensible to take a "scientific" attitude in an undertaking of this kind in view of the fact that no single individual can any longer master all of today's sciences. . . . These disciplines are indeed relevant per se in such reflection. But they can no longer be made use of directly by the individual theologian and Christian if he is trying to address himself to the single whole of Christianity at a time when all of these individual disciplines must be further and intensively developed. But because of their complexity and because of the difficulty and the pluralism of their methods, they have moved beyond the realm within which an individual Christian and also an individual theologian must give an account of his faith.⁵²

Rahner's view that today's systematic theologian is to all practical intents and purposes unable to give a scientific and methodological account of the whole of Christianity constitutes not only an abandonment of the search for a systematically coherent account of the intrinsicness of grace, it also exemplifies the primary difference between his theological concerns and those of Bernard Lonergan. For while Rahner has been occupied with the nature/grace problematic, Lonergan has given his attention to the problem of methodological unity.

Bernard Lonergan: The Unity of Method

With the breakdown of the neo-scholastic paradigm on nature and

⁵² Idem., Foundations of Christian Faith, pp. xii-xiii.

grace, the danger arose that theology would be overrun by a pluralism of methodologies and metaphysics. In Rahner's judgment, as we have seen, such pluralism in theology is already an established fact and one which he believes we must accept. Lonergan does not agree. In his judgment, metaphysics has been occupied, since the Middle Ages, with the search for a unified method, and the failure to meet this need is responsible "both for the disrepute into which metaphysics has fallen and for the intellectual, moral and social consequences that in our day so evidently flow from disdain for metaphysics."⁵³

The dialectic of critique, from Kant onward, has made a wasteland of the world in which man lives.

As there is a post-Cartesian affirmation of philosophy that rules theology out of court, so there is a post-Kantian affirmation of science that tosses overboard even Kant's modest claims for philosophy, and there is a still later totalitarian violence that with equal impartiality brushes aside theology and philosophy and science. But at that empty conclusion to the sequence of ever less comprehensive syntheses, man still exists and man still is called upon to decide. . . . But the plain fact is that the world lies in pieces before him and pleads to be put together again, to be put together not as it stood before on the careless foundation of assumptions that happened to be unquestioned but on the strong ground of the possibility of questioning and with full awareness of the range of possible answers.⁵⁴

Lonergan has, therefore, sought "the rock on which one can build."⁵⁵ Thus, while Rahner's theology is a continuation of de Lubac's concern for redefining the nature/grace relationship, Lonergan's methodology is much more a continuation of the neo-scholastic concern to provide a single, comprehensive account of nature and grace and, indeed, of the

⁵³ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, Insight (San Francisco: Harper & Row paperback, 1978), p. 528.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Idem., Method in Theology (New York: The Seabury Press, A Crossroad Book, 1979), p. 19.

more general and traditional Thomist concern to provide a 'perennial' metaphysics.

Believing, however, that metaphysics cannot serve as the starting-point of inquiry, inasmuch as metaphysics is forced to proceed on the basis of assumptions which, in the post-Kantian world, can no longer go unquestioned, Lonergan accepts the Kantian 'turn to the subject' as the starting-point which today gives us access to reality. Believing that "The immanent source of transcendence in man is his detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know,"⁵⁶ Lonergan seeks a new methodological unity based on a cognitional analysis of man himself. Referring to the world's current methodological and metaphysical fragmentation, Lonergan asserts that

If its confusion is to be replaced by intelligible order and its violence by reasonable affirmation, then the nucleus from which this process can begin must include an acknowledgement of detached inquiry and disinterested reflection, a rigorous unfolding of the implications of that acknowledgement, an acceptance not only of the metaphysics that constitutes that unfolding but also of the method that guides it between the Charybdis of asserting too little and the Scylla of asserting too much.⁵⁷

Turning to the natural sciences for his basic notion of method, Lonergan defines it as "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results."⁵⁸ Applying this notion of method more generally to the processes of the human mind, Lonergan discovers there a 'transcendental' element, that is, a dynamic element in human cognition which pushes us beyond what we know to what we don't know. When we examine that process whereby we continually move

⁵⁶ Idem., Insight, p. 636.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 529.

⁵⁸ Idem., Method in Theology, p. 4.

from ignorance to knowledge, we discover there a pattern of operations which is repeated in every act of knowing. The objectification of this pattern of operations provides us with that 'rock' of methodological unity which metaphysics has so long sought.

. . . there is a sense in which the objectification of the normative pattern of our conscious and intentional operations does not admit revision. The sense in question is that the activity of revising consists in such operations in accord with such a pattern,⁵⁹ so that a revision rejecting the pattern would be rejecting itself.

Such an analysis not only provides us with a unified and universally relevant notion of methodology, it also gives rise to a unified and universally applicable cognitional theory, epistemology and metaphysics.

Very precisely, it is a heightening of consciousness that brings to light our conscious and intentional operations and thereby leads to the answers to three basic questions. What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do I know when I do it? The first answer is a cognitional theory. The second is an epistemology. The third is a metaphysics where, however, the metaphysics is transcendental, an integration of heuristic structures, and not some categorial speculation that reveals that all is water, or matter, or spirit, or process or what have you.⁶⁰

Hence Lonergan's interiority analysis of human cognition is able, in his judgment, to reunify that world which centuries of dialectical critique have shattered.

The unified world which Lonergan's method restores to us is, however, a 'natural' world. For, beyond his assumption that we must proceed by a method of immanence, he also presumes that the reality which this method enables us to objectify is a natural pattern of operations brought to light by a natural process of questioning.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 25.

The desires of human intellect are manifested in questions; and all questions reduce to the pair, an sit and quid sit. But to put these questions is natural: it supposes no acquired habit, as does playing the violin; it supposes no gift of divine grace, as do faith and charity. Hence, since the questions are natural, the desire they manifest must also be natural. There exists, then, a desire that is natural to intellect, that arises from the mere fact that we possess intellects, and that is defined by the basic questions, an sit and quid sit.⁶¹

When Lonergan says, therefore, that his own position with regard to the human desire to see God is fundamentally that of Aquinas,⁶² he indicates his agreement with Thomas' notion of grace as an accidental modification of an already complete and natural substantiality.

Whatever differences Lonergan and Rahner may have with regard to the question of method, Lonergan supposes throughout his work the same relationship between nature and grace which Rahner in his later writings seems to have adopted, namely, that grace is not constitutive of concrete human beings but is rather the order within which they are placed. Lonergan, for example, asks, "Is a state of pure nature, a world-order in which no one receives grace, a concrete possibility?"⁶³ He obviously identifies 'pure nature' simply with a world order in which grace is not offered. What, therefore, allows us to speak of the order in which we actually live as graced is not the fact that this order is intrinsically structured by grace, but the fact that

There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning; here and there it reaches a notable intensity; but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if we are able to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Idem., "The Natural Desire to See God," in Collection, ed. F. E. Crowe (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1967), p. 84.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁴ Idem., Method in Theology, p. 290.

Here again we meet the offer of God's love to us as that factor within the world and within us which enables us to speak of this world as a graced order and of grace itself as intrinsic to that order.

The only difference between Lonergan's approach to the nature/grace problem and that of Rahner is that, while Rahner abandoned the attempt to resolve the dilemma into which de Lubac had gotten himself, Lonergan seems never to have considered that dilemma at all. As far as Lonergan is concerned, the nature/grace problem would appear to lie in quite a different direction. Whereas de Lubac wrestled with the problem of accounting for a universal and concretely experienced dynamism within us, in which the desire to see God must be understood as absolute because it "cannot be permanently frustrated without an essential suffering,"⁶⁵ Lonergan has concerned himself with a more modest problem, that of establishing through cognitional analysis that human nature is, by definition, dynamic.

The primary problem which de Lubac understood to be associated with the neo-scholastic paradigm was its assumption of a natural order to which grace is added. Lonergan's primary difficulty with the neo-scholastic paradigm arises instead out of its assumption that the natural order to which grace comes is static. Hence, Lonergan's rejection of that paradigm is quite different from de Lubac's. As Lonergan characterizes his own objection,

On the objective side it involves the rejection of a static essentialism that precludes the possibility of natural aspiration to a supernatural goal. On the subjective side it involves the rejection of a closed conceptualism that precludes the possibility of philosophy being confronted with paradoxes which theology can resolve.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ de Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, p. 70.

⁶⁶ Lonergan, "The Natural Desire to See God," p. 87.

When, therefore, Lonergan says that "at the present time it seems to me that the real issue does not lie in the possibility of a world-order without grace,"⁶⁷ he does not have in mind that notion of a purely natural order which made such a possibility a real issue for de Lubac (and for Rahner as well, at least in his earlier writings). For the 'natural world order' to which Lonergan refers here is one in which human nature, as concretely experienced, would differ not at all from the way in which we experience it in this graced order. Only the offer of God's grace would be withdrawn. For de Lubac, on the other hand, since the very dynamism which we experience in this order is incapable of finding rest short of beatitude, even the postulating of an ungraced order posed for him a very difficult problem. For if one takes away that dynamism of the human spirit which makes our desire to see God absolute, would one not also remove precisely that element which makes the human spirit human?

In Lonergan's cognitional analysis, the dynamism of which de Lubac speaks emerges as the unrestricted desire to know. Posed in Lonerganian language, therefore, de Lubac's question would be, How can such a desire, which is absolute because unrestricted, be regarded as natural and therefore frustrable? Would not, under these circumstances, such a nature undergo essential suffering were it placed in a world order in which the offer of God's love were not made? These are not, however, questions which Lonergan himself poses, because his own presupposition that we live in a substantially natural order, in which grace is universally present solely in the mode of an offer, rules them out from the beginning. They therefore do not pose for him a "real issue."

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

The real issue, in Lonergan's judgment, "lies between the essentialist and conceptualist tendency and, on the other hand, the existential and intellectualist tendency."⁶⁸ The natural desire for God is something which neither a static essentialism nor a closed conceptualism can handle, for neither is able to deal with the paradoxical.

The best that natural reason can attain is the discovery of the paradox that the desire to understand arises naturally, that its object is the transcendental, ens, and that the proper fulfilment that naturally is attainable is restricted to the proportionate object of finite intellect.⁶⁹

Experientially, such a paradox is resolved by conversion, by "falling in love with God." Theologically, it is resolved by the revelation that grace, in the mode of an invitation to enter into God's love, is universally available to us. Methodologically and metaphysically, it is resolved by embracing a dynamic existentialism and an open intellectualism which recognizes that the order in which we live is not enclosed upon itself, but rather is receptive to the revelation of God's love.

Because Lonergan's notion of the relation between nature and grace is substantially the same as the one which the later Rahner seems ultimately to have accepted, the same criticism which have been made of Rahner's work must be applied to Lonergan's. For once again in Lonergan's work we encounter a grace which comes ab extrinseco as a contingent modification of a pre-existing natural entity.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

⁷⁰ Lonergan would, of course, argue that he avoids such extrinsicism by insisting upon the priority of the order in which we exist over the 'natures' or 'things' which exist within that order. Hence, since the order itself is receptive to God rather than closed in upon itself, grace is not extrinsic to it. The difficulties with such a position, or so this dissertation argues, lie in the fact that such an account of grace as intrinsic fails, because it provides no immanent composite source for the composite principles which are constitutive of this

Lonerger's work does differ from Rahner's, however, in that Lonergan seems never to have considered the problem raised by de Lubac. This is most apparent in Lonergan's statement that our desire to see God is natural, because the questioning process itself is natural.⁷¹ He supposes the questioning process to be natural because this process requires neither an acquired habit nor the gift of divine grace. It proceeds naturally, that is, spontaneously and effortlessly. However, this notion that anything which proceeds spontaneously and effortlessly is therefore 'natural' is precisely what Blondel's dialectic of action called into question. Once Blondel raised the possibility of an intrinsic, infrustrable dynamism toward God which is itself God's grace as a constitutive factor in human experience, it could no longer be supposed that any human action, simply by virtue of its spontaneous and effortless character, could be designated as 'natural.'

De Lubac understood the Blondelian 'critique', but failed to find an appropriate framework within which to embody its central insight of a substantial gratuity. Rahner also understood the critique, but ultimately abandoned the insight. Lonergan, curiously enough, seems never to have understood the critique. Hence, all of his work proceeds on the basis of an assumption about human cognition which, since Blondel, simply cannot be made. Thus, whatever the value of Lonergan's work in bringing to light the structures of human knowing, it is incapable of resolving the main dilemma which confronts theologians today when they consider the relationship between nature and grace.

order. As a result, grace as the invitation to enter into God's love is incapable of being located within the constitutive principles of this order.

⁷¹See p. 273.

Transcendental Thomism: The Failure to Find a Method

Although it is generally assumed that both Rahner and Lonergan make a decisive break with the neo-scholastic paradigm, neither in fact does. Both have revised its static elements, Rahner with his notion of a human dynamism based on our Vorgriff of absolute being, Lonergan with his notion of a human dynamism based on our restricted desire to know. This human dynamism is simply the new obediential potency.

This new obediential potency is, however, no more capable of serving as an intrinsic nexus between the human and the divine than was the older notion of a 'non-repugnance,' for the rational distance between the human and the divine is infinite. The individual's capacity to move beyond himself cannot, considered in itself, be identified as a movement toward God. To suppose that it can is to substitute imagination for analysis.

Even more importantly, however, neither can such a capacity be identified with a receptivity for grace. As we have already seen, in chapter 5, even in an Aristotelian essentialist universe, the individual is dynamically oriented toward the species and is therefore continuously engaged in an intra-specific activity which allows him to transcend the limits of his own particularity. In such a universe, the individual's capacity for self-transcendence would not be absolute, but rather oriented toward that fullness of perfection appropriate to his species.

Nothing in our own experience, nothing which is given solely at the phenomenological level, allows us to suppose that we are oriented toward anything more than this. When, therefore, Rahner and Lonergan attach to that self-transcendence some absolute feature, whether Rahner's infinite horizon or Lonergan's unrestricted desire to know, they have

gone beyond what a purely phenomenological analysis will permit.

The fact that Blondel was able to locate in concrete human experience an ordination to God was not a product of his 'method of immanence' or phenomenological approach. It was, rather, a product of his having started from a theological perspective. He started with the fact that grace is offered and with the presupposition that, unless grace were to be conceived as extrinsic, the offer of grace must correlate with some element in the human condition which is incapable of being characterized as purely human. Hence, although writing as a philosopher, he was engaged in a theological enterprise, viz., faith seeking understanding. He understood his task to be philosophical in the sense that everything which is universally given can be understood to fall within the domain of philosophy. But within the universally given, he located an element which, from the Christian perspective with which he began, could only be characterized as grace. It was his Christianity, not his method of immanence, which made that characterization possible.

Having gone that far, however, he was unable to give a methodological account of the ordination to God which he had located. For a phenomenological approach is, by its very nature, designed to yield a description of the phenomena, not an analytical account of the intrinsic causes or conditions of possibility underlying the phenomena. To go further would have required a Thomist act/potency methodology.

De Lubac had at his disposal the tools to account for the substantial (universal) gratuity which Blondel had located. For, as we have seen, the esse/essence correlation provides an intrinsic existential component (esse) in concrete human nature which is both substantial and irreducible to the natural (the essential). De Lubac was, however, reluctant to

break with the Thomist notion of natural substance. Hence, he was never able to make methodologically coherent his own notion of a substantial, infrustrable desire for God.

After Humani Generis, as we have already noted, most theologians proceeded on the basis of two assumptions: first, that of a methodological 'turn to the subject' and, secondly, that of a natural order in which grace is present solely as an offer to and an accidental modification of that order. These two assumptions guaranteed that a Thomist account of the intrinsicism of grace would not be pursued. For the positing of a natural order within which grace operates solely on the accidental level rules out from the beginning the possibility of grace operating as an intrinsic or constitutive cause of that order. Furthermore, the methodological 'turn to the subject' which is employed under these circumstances can no longer proceed on the basis of explicitly theological or doctrinal assumptions about reality. Instead, human interiority becomes the a priori of theological and doctrinal statements about reality. Doctrinal truth or the revelation is made to submit to an experiential a priori or an anthropological prolegomenon.

This, however, is an impossible task, and its impossibility is nowhere more apparent than with regard to the nature/grace problematic. For a methodological approach based on a 'turn to the subject' can give us nothing more than a description of those structures which are universally present in concrete human nature. Whether those structures are natural or gratuitous lies beyond the competence of such a method. Schillebeeckx has noted the inadequacy of Rahner's approach in just this regard.

We do not experience God's speaking to us in itself--since this is God himself--but as a reality in our life. That is why we cannot,

outside the revelation in Word, distinguish grace from nature-- that is, from human life. The spiritual subject that comes into contact with God in faith is a physical subject and, what is more, its physical nature is terrestrial. This means that grace is, in all its aspects and dimensions, entirely bound up with our life in this world. We know thematically and reflectively that nature is not grace, but this is not distinct in our living experience.⁷²

Rahner himself knows this. As he has had occasion to note,

. . . the possibility of experiencing grace and the possibility of experiencing grace as grace are not the same thing. If this is not assumed beforehand or taken for granted, is it so easy to say what belongs to human 'nature', and what is more not merely to the contingently factual nature of this concrete economy but to 'pure' nature, in such a way that if it were lacking man would cease to be man? How could one give this question a precise answer philosophically, without recourse to revelation.⁷³

Both Rahner and Lonergan seem to avoid the methodological dead end here not by a 'turn to the revelation' but by an a priori assumption that the concrete human nature to which they have turned is 'natural,' i.e., substantially complete apart from and prior to the reception of grace. As Rahner puts it,

The personal self-communication of God . . . , if justice is to be done to its nature, must not appear as something inevitably instituted with the creation of man of itself. It must appear as the free gift of incalculable grace, even to man in so far as he has been constituted.⁷⁴

Such an assumption allows both of them to proceed as though they were able to sort out the natural and the gratuitous. But the sorting out process is no longer something which arises from their analysis of concrete human nature; it is rather something which proceeds from the assumptions which they make regarding that human nature apart from and prior to their analysis.

⁷² Schillebeeckx, Revelation and Theology, II:67.

⁷³ Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," pp. 300-301.

⁷⁴ Idem., "Questions," p. 213.

The two assumptions which transcendental Thomism makes, namely, that theology today must 1) posit a natural order to which grace is added as an accidental modification and 2) proceed by a method of immanence (a 'turn to the subject') are not only unworkable, they are also unnecessary.

First, the positing of a natural order is not required by Church teaching, Scripture or Thomism. The view that Church teaching requires the positing of such an order is based primarily on interpretations of Vatican I and Humani Generis which read more into those documents than is actually there. Pius XII's statement in Humani Generis condemning the errors of those who "destroy the gratuitous character of the supernatural order by suggesting that it would be impossible for God to create rational beings without ordaining them for the Beatific Vision and calling them to it" does not require us to suppose that the concrete human nature which we experience in this order might not have been ordained for beatitude. As Shepherd points out,

Most thinkers have assumed that gratuity of grace implies that God must have a choice among various kinds of world orders. That is quite true, and it is, incidentally, all that Humani Generis demands. Unfortunately, however, it appeared that if God really has alternatives among world orders, that meant he could have withheld grace from this one.⁷⁵

Even those who have recognized that Humani Generis requires nothing more than the hypothetical positing of another world order have supposed that the teaching of Vatican I with regard to natural knowledge requires us to suppose that human beings in this order are substantially natural. But such a reading of Vatican I also goes beyond what that Council actually said. As Vatican I put it,

⁷⁵ Shepherd, Man's Condition, p. 254.

The same Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, may be certainly known by the natural light of human reason, by means of created things, 'for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Rom 1:20).⁷⁶

What is so often assumed is that a Thomist reading of 'natural' and of creation as 'natural' must be attributed to this text. Yet such an assumption is belied by the text itself, which specifically places this 'natural light of human reason' in a Pauline, not a Thomist, context. As Keefe notes with regard to the passage cited from Romans,

Inasmuch as St. Paul is speaking in that passage of the innate ability of the pagan of his day to know God, it is reasonable to conclude that the natural light of human reason of which the canon and the chapter speak is natural in the sense of being found universally in all men who have the use of reason; natural then means inborn or native.⁷⁷

And, as Keefe goes on to point out, nativa is employed as a synonym for naturalis in the very next paragraph of this Constitution. Although such a use of 'natural' is alien to a Thomist method, we have already seen how Thomas himself acknowledges this phenomenological use of the word in Scripture.⁷⁸ Hence, when Vatican I anathematizes those who say "that the One true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be certainly known by the natural light of human reason through created things,"⁷⁹ this anathema cannot be understood as underwriting a Thomist view of creation and human reason as 'natural'.

Furthermore, as William Vandermark notes in his study of patristic

⁷⁶Neuner and Roos, The Teaching of the Catholic Church, pp. 31-32.

⁷⁷Keefe, Thomism, p. 73.

⁷⁸ST III, 2, 12; see pp. 223-224.

⁷⁹Neuner and Roos, The Teaching of the Catholic Church, p. 38.

and medieval interpretations of this natural knowledge of God in Romans, the passage cited by Vatican I was consistently given a Christological interpretation.⁸⁰ In this exegetical tradition, it is Christ (not the immanent Logos) in whom things have been created. Therefore, this tradition understands not only Christian knowledge of God but pagan knowledge of Him as well to be Christological, because "the God who reveals Himself in the universe is called Jesus Christ."⁸¹ And, as Vandermark also points out, exegetes in this tradition had no hesitancy in citing "many other places in the New Testament where Christ is described as the one through whom everything has been created, in whom it exists, etc."⁸² In other words, they understood there to be a broad Scriptural warrant for such an interpretation. Hence, there is no obvious reason for supposing, and much evidence against supposing, that either Vatican I or Scripture itself requires us to view creation and human reason as 'natural' in the Thomist sense of the word.

Nor does Thomist methodology itself, as has been repeatedly pointed out, require us to regard the universally given as 'natural.' In an Aristotelian universe, such an identification is unavoidable, because all substantial structures proceed from a single substantial principle (form). In such a universe, the intelligible, the necessary, the natural and the universal are identical, because all ultimately reduce to the essence of a thing. The Thomist real distinction, by introducing a second substantial principle (esse), no longer requires us to identify the universal and the intelligible with the necessary and the natural.

⁸⁰ William Vandermark, "Natural Knowledge of God in Romans: Patristic and Medieval Interpretation," Theological Studies 34 (March 1973):36-52.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁸² Ibid., p. 47.

In such a universe, therefore, structures can be 'natural' in the phenomenological sense of universally given, without being 'natural' in the Aristotelian/Thomist sense of essential or formal. Hence, there is no systematic necessity within Thomism for regarding either creation or human reason as simply 'natural,' and, in fact, as it has been the purpose of this dissertation to establish, there are good reasons for supposing a methodological necessity within Thomism for regarding both creation and human reason as substantially graced.

Transcendental Thomism's turn to the subject is also unwarranted and mistaken. First, such a turn to the subject, as we have already noted, can reveal to us only that which is universally given. It provides no criteria by virtue of which we may distinguish the natural and the gratuitous.

Secondly, such a turn to the subject, as we have also already noted, cannot, the claims of Rahner and Lonergan to the contrary, tell us whether the dynamism which we experience is absolute in some sense (Rahner's *Vorgriff* of infinite being or Lonergan's unrestricted desire to know) or relative in the Aristotelian sense of a movement toward that perfection of being and knowledge which is proper to the human species as a whole and therefore always beyond the limits of any particular individual.⁸³

Thirdly, such a turn to the subject attempts to apply a phenomenological (Platonic) solution to an analytical (Thomist) problem. The phenomenological approach not only fails to resolve the problem, it also

⁸³This, incidentally, is also the reason why neither Rahner nor Lonergan answer the atheist/humanist critique of religion as formulated by men such as Feuerbach and Bloch. For the absolute character of human dynamism is precisely what such a critique denies.

seems to have lost sight of the problem. The problem is that of providing a methodologically coherent account of how grace can be regarded as intrinsic to the concrete human being. Even if one posits without methodological warrant, as do Rahner and Lonergan, a human dynamism characterized by some absolute feature, one has still not given an intrinsic account of that dynamism. To conclude, as both Rahner and Lonergan do, that the condition of possibility for such a dynamism is God Himself, while true enough, signals a Platonic resolution to a Thomist question, that is to say, it does not answer the question at all. For the Thomist question asks about intrinsic conditions of possibility, not about an extrinsic agent.

To suppose that the structured dynamism of human experience is intelligible solely by virtue of its reference to God is to locate the world's intelligibility outside the world itself. It is a Christian version of Platonic extrinsicism. It has nothing to do with the Aristotelian/Thomist project of locating within the world itself those intrinsic conditions of the world's intelligibility. For that reason, transcendental Thomism, as a method, is incapable of providing any account of the intrinsic character of grace.

Furthermore, to appeal to God as the condition of possibility for such a desire indicates a clear realization on the part of both Rahner and Lonergan that the desire to which they refer is no longer the 'natural' desire of which Aristotle spoke. For that desire required only the essence itself as its condition of possibility. Once some absolute quality is added to it, the essence no longer suffices to account for it. Hence the appeal to God. But in what sense can the desire now be called 'natural'? This is precisely the problem which

Blondel raised. De Lubac recognized the graced character of such a desire, but failed to account for it. Transcendental Thomists deny its graced character.

In fact, grace would appear to be the major casualty of transcendental Thomism. First, the accidental character of grace which was called into question between Pascendi and Humani Generis has been rehabilitated in so convincing a fashion by transcendental Thomism that the very problem of intrinsic grace raised by Blondel and de Lubac has very nearly been lost to sight. Secondly, and more importantly, the 'naturalizing' of human transcendence has had the effect of enlarging enormously the bounds of the natural realm. Divine transcendence is no longer simply a matter of doctrinal necessity, it has become a practical necessity as well. The notion of divine immanence, in the sense of a world structured from within by grace, has vanished altogether from the minds of a great many contemporary theologians. Today the 'natural' encroaches everywhere on territory which was until recently regarded as the prerogative of grace. As Keefe points out,

The pre-Vatican II emphasis upon the natural (as in natural law, the natural knowledge of God, the natural virtues) has recoiled upon its scholastic advocates, for its cosmological and quasi-sacramental meaning, taken for granted by St. Thomas, is now displaced by an entirely secular calculus of value.⁸⁴

The contemporary interest in the natural or human realm, coupled with a rehabilitated notion of grace as accident, could easily produce today a more radical sterilization of grace than neo-scholasticism at its worst produced. In fact, the old neo-scholasticism may well have helped pave the way to the new secularism. As de Lubac has observed,

⁸⁴Keefe, "Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology," p. 358.

While wishing to protect the supernatural from any contamination, people had in fact exiled it altogether--both from intellectual and from social life--leaving the field free to be taken over by secularism. Today that secularism, following its course, is beginning to enter the minds even of Christians. They too seek to find a harmony with all things based upon an idea of nature which might be acceptable to a deist or an atheist: everything that comes from Christ, everything that should lead to him, is pushed so far into the background as to look like disappearing for good. The last word in Christian progress and the entry into adulthood would then appear to consist in a total secularization which would expel God not merely from the life of society, but from culture and even from personal relationships.⁸⁵

The greatest danger theology faces today is that the two-storey universe of neo-scholasticism will be replaced by a notion of reality as a single storey which is wholly natural. In fact, many theologians already judge such a shift to have taken place. In the view of Langdon Gilkey, for example, science has made it clear to us that the universe is a wholly natural realm. The notion that the meaning and value of our lives is recognized by reference to a supernatural order of being no longer makes any sense. "There is no separate realm more significant than this natural realm."⁸⁶ Under these circumstances, the view that God desires our divinization must be recognized as an inappropriate, because outmoded, expression of Christian belief.

To live a fully human life, in thinking human thoughts, doing human things, creating human works, and loving other human beings, and in working in society for a more human life for all, is all that could be of value in life and therefore all that the God who sent us here could possibly ask of us.⁸⁷

Grace must, therefore, be harnessed to the human realm.

To be real for us and to be able to be experienced by us, the divine must be creative of life here, the dynamic source and ground

⁸⁵ de Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, pp. xi-xii.

⁸⁶ Langdon Gilkey, Catholicism Confronts Modernity (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 64.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

of what we are, whose purpose it is that we be what we are; and thus a God immanent in all creative things, related to all human and cultural concerns, and intent not on heaven but on a better world.⁸⁸

This concern for the integrity of the natural order as natural signals that shift in human consciousness to which reference was made earlier. The impact which this shift has had on the Church made itself keenly felt in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council and in the changes which have taken place in the Church in the wake of that Council.

By starting to unblock a number of channels, by signalling the official abandonment of certain elements of immobilism, of triumphalism, of exclusivism, Vatican II opened up the possibility of a new surge of expansion, sustained from beneath by the profundities of the Gospel message and swept along by the combined efforts of all available Christian forces. But by calling into question so much that many people regarded as a settled part of the tradition, the council also precipitated a crisis which we see unfolding before our eyes, a crisis whose seriousness is deepened by the concomitant crisis in Western civilisation and the advent, after two centuries in gestation, of the 'secular city'. Is this crisis, as many hope is the case, simply a crisis of growth, similar to the upheavals which rocked the Church so violently at the end of the Middle Ages or again in the late eighteenth century? It will be a generation or two before historians can hope to begin to provide any meaningful answer.⁸⁹

Although historians can provide no answers until a good deal more evidence is provided, much of the evidence which they will someday evaluate will be the systematic theology which is done in the interim. We must, therefore, examine this shift in historical consciousness more closely, with a view to determining whether it sheds any light on the search for a new perspective in systematic theology, particularly with regard to the nature/grace problematic and its resolution.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

⁸⁹ Aubert, The Church in a Secularized Society, p. 638.

CHAPTER 8

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN 20TH CENTURY CATHOLICISM:

THE SEARCH FOR A PERSPECTIVE

In 1968, Johannes B. Metz, in a book entitled Zur Theologie der Welt (published in English translation the following year), addressed himself explicitly to what he understood to be the predominant experience of the world today. He characterized that experience as "the transition from a divinized to a hominized world."¹ This experience, in Metz' judgment, involves a shift from 'nature' to 'history' as the primary category by means of which contemporary man understands the world.

To see the world not as a cosmos, not as nature interpreting itself, but as history, to see it in its relation to man, as mediated by him, means to interpret the world in its formal anthropocentricity.²

This "anthropocentric apex"³ which dominates modern thinking marks, in Metz' view, a radical departure from earlier theocentric/cosmocentric approaches to reality.

Metz himself exemplifies well the changed perspective which many Christian theologians have today adopted with regard to the world. One need only compare him with Bonaventure to see how radical this change

¹Johannes B. Metz, Theology of the World, trans. William Glen-Doepel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 57.

²Ibid., p. 53.

³Ibid.

in perspective is. For St. Bonaventure, in his spiritual classic, the Itinerarium, written in 1259 and describing the stages of the soul's journey to God, tells us how, in the first two stages of that journey, the world itself leads us to God.

From the first two stages
in which we are led to behold God
in vestiges,
like the two wings covering the Seraph's feet,
we can gather that all the creatures of the sense world
lead the mind
of the contemplative and wise man
to the eternal God.
For these creatures are
shadows, echoes and pictures
of that first, most powerful, most wise and most perfect
Principle,
of that eternal Source, Light and Fulness,
of that efficient, exemplary and ordering Art.
They are
vestiges, representations, spectacles
proposed to us
and signs divinely given
so that we can see God.⁴

Metz, on the other hand, tells us in 1968 that

What shines out of the world today, primarily and directly, are not the vestigia Dei but the vestigia hominis. The "creation" of God, in the process of hominization, seems mediated everywhere by the "work" of man. In everything with which we are concerned in our secular life we encounter, more or less, not really nature as created by God, but the world that is projected and transformed by man, and in this we encounter ourselves.⁵

Even a theologian such as Mersch, who is concerned to retain many of the elements of our traditional theocentric view of reality, agrees with Metz' understanding of the relationship between man and the world. As Mersch puts it, "man does not deal with the universe as with a stranger, but as with himself, with an aspect of himself. He seeks

⁴ Itinerarium, II, 11.

⁵ Metz, Theology of the World, p. 61.

himself there, and there he finds himself."⁶

This shift from a theocentric to an anthropocentric experience of the world signals more than just a change in how man views that reality which is external to himself. It also signals a change in human consciousness itself, something of which Metz is well aware.

This transition is connected in intellectual history with another event, with a development within the history of mind itself, namely, that formal re-orientation of thought away from the world towards man, away from nature towards history, away from substance to the subject and its free subjectivity, in short, away from a more "cosmocentric" towards an "anthropocentric" way of thinking, the historical beginning of which we commonly connect with the beginning of the modern period (without going into the question of when this "modern period" began in terms of intellectual history). Here man grasps himself in his free historical subjectivity. He experiences and fulfills himself no longer as an existent beside other existents in the world, but as the world's subjectivity, to whom the modes of the world's being, nature, culture, society, are ever more available and who now draws this world ever more profoundly into the history of his own free subjectivity.⁷

Although a close analysis of this transition in the history of human consciousness was not a part of the project Metz set for himself, it is the explicit subject of Owen Barfield's book, Saving the Appearances, published three years earlier than Zur Theologie der Welt. While Metz approaches this shift from the perspective of history, Barfield examines it more closely in terms of the rise of science.

Barfield agrees with Metz that a shift in the orientation of the human mind has taken place in the modern era. Barfield characterizes that shift as one from a notion of the universe (including man) as a participation in divinity to a notion of the universe as 'dis-godded' or de-divinized. The transition, in Barfield's judgment, began with

⁶Mersch, Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 100.

⁷Metz, Theology of the World, pp. 57-58.

astronomers such as Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo, and culminated at the close of the nineteenth century.⁸ In the period prior to this transition, extending from early Greek philosophy through the Middle Ages, man understood both himself and his world to be representative of divinity. As Barfield notes with regard to the Middle Ages, "For medieval man, then, the universe was a kind of theophany, in which he participated at different levels, in being, in thinking, in speaking or naming, and in knowing. And then--the evolutionary change began."⁹

This evolutionary change was, epistemologically speaking, a differentiation in human consciousness which allowed man to experience the phenomena of the world not only as representations of a reality within or beyond the phenomena themselves (a reality which was also thought to be within man as well), but also as realities complete in their own order of being apart from the human mind.

The earlier awareness involved experiencing the phenomena as representations; the latter preoccupation involves experiencing them, non-representationally, as objects in their own right, existing independently of human consciousness. This latter experience, in its extreme form, I have called idolatry.¹⁰

This evolutionary change was, ontologically speaking, the replacement of exemplary by mechanical causality. Buttressed by the discovery in physics of 'impetus' or the theory that a moving body moves indefinitely on its own (thus eliminating the need to posit an immanent mover), astronomy began to view the universe as a machine.

The whole point of a machine is, that, for as long as it goes on moving, it 'goes on by itself' without man's participation. To

⁸ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 43, 50.

⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

the extent therefore that the phenomena are experienced as machine, they are believed to exist independently of man, not to be participated and therefore not to be in the nature of representations.¹¹

Although science began to rely increasingly on a view of reality as objectively given, de-divinized and mechanized, nature was not to be robbed of life quite that easily. Men, as Barfield points out, found in nature things beyond what the microscope and telescope are capable of revealing. Those who sought to avoid scientific idolatry, which is idolatrous precisely because it locates reality solely in the appearances or phenomena themselves, were sometimes tempted to seek refuge in a return to pantheism, or what Barfield calls 'original participation'.

If nature is indeed 'dis-godded', and yet we again begin to experience her, as Wordsworth did--and as millions have done since his time--no longer as dead but as alive; if there is no 'represented' on the far side of the appearances, and yet we begin to experience them once more as appearances, as representations--the question arises, of what are they representations? It was no doubt the difficulty of answering this question which led Wordsworth to relapse occasionally into that nostalgic hankering after original participation, which is called pantheism--and from which Coleridge was rendered immune by his acquaintance with Kantian philosophy.¹²

The temptation to suppose that we must choose between idolatry and pantheism is, as we have already had occasion to see, reminiscent of the distinction between thick and thin essence Thomism. For the former presupposes the existence of a de-divinized and non-representational reality available to scientific inquiry, while the latter so emphasizes the principle of esse as the single constituent of reality as to come perilously near, if not actually embrace, pantheism.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 51.

¹² Ibid., p. 130.

Metz and Barfield would agree that neither pantheism nor idolatry offers a valid perspective on reality. Neither the divinized world which prevailed in the Middle Ages and before nor the idolatrous world which prevails today offers reliable access to reality. The key to a new perspective lies, in the judgment of both, in recognizing that the universe is neither theocentric nor cosmocentric, but anthropocentric. As Barfield notes, the difficult question facing Wordsworth has only one answer. "Henceforth, if nature is to be experienced as representation, she will be experienced as representation of--Man."¹³ Here we return to the "anthropocentric apex" of which Metz speaks.

Beyond this point, however, Metz and Barfield differ enormously with regard to why such an anthropocentric perspective and consciousness have arisen and where their significance for us and the future lies. In this chapter, we shall examine first, the history of human consciousness and secondly, Metz' theological views with regard to contemporary secularity, before considering 20th century science (chapter 9) and the alternative which Barfield offers to the perspective Metz proposes (chapter 10).

The History of Human Consciousness

The question of human consciousness is, at its most fundamental level, the question of what the human mind perceives to be the "really real." To say that human consciousness itself has a history is to say that the human mind has undergone changes in what it perceives reality to be.

As Ratzinger has pointed out (following the insight first formulated

¹³Ibid., p. 131.

by Auguste Comte), the human mind has adopted, in turn, a magical, a metaphysical and a scientific view of reality. Today we are witnessing the flowering of a fourth view, the historical.¹⁴ The first is pantheist in orientation, the last anthropocentric. The middle two can be characterized as theocentric and cosmocentric respectively.

Pantheism

The first stage of human consciousness, what Barfield calls pantheism or 'original participation', was one in which the human mind made no distinction between the phenomenological and the noumenal. In this view, all phenomena were understood to be, as Barfield puts it, "the stopping-places for mana [the spirit world]."¹⁵ No explicit distinction was drawn between the stopping-place and the spirit. The 'treeness' of a tree, for example, was identified with the 'spirit' which the tree represented. It was the spirit that was perceived, not the tree.

Theocentrism

A more sophisticated form of original participation arose when human consciousness began to make a distinction between the phenomena and the underlying reality in which the phenomena were understood to participate. This differentiation in human consciousness, the achievement of Greek philosophy, is best exemplified by Plato's notion of reality. For Plato, as for the pantheist mentality, the really real remained the world of spirit, or, as Plato now characterized it, the world of 'pure form'. The phenomenal, because constituted by a mixture of form and matter, could not be regarded as reality itself, but only

¹⁴ See Joseph Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, trans. J. R. Foster (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 30-39.

¹⁵ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 42.

as a participation in reality. A distinction was now drawn between the imperfect 'treeness' of any given sensible tree and Treeness Itself. His notion of form and matter as contradictory, not complementary, was the methodological statement of the phenomenal character of the cosmos as contrasted with the ultimate reality that is pure form.

The theocentric possibilities latent in such a view of reality were missed neither by Plotinus and the neo-Platonists nor by Christian theologians. We have already observed how the Platonic notion of reality became, in Neo-Platonism and Christianity, the Porphyrian hierarchized universe of graded participations in the One (neo-Platonism) or God (Christianity). Thomas himself was the heir to this neo-Platonic view of the world and, despite his Aristotelianism, attempted to retain it within his own theology. Here, in fact, we have the origin of the 'thin' essence. For if the really real is Ipsum Esse and the universe is a manifold imitation of Ipsum Esse, then essences must be regarded as little more than the finite 'modes' in which Ipsum Esse is able to manifest itself.

Already present in this Platonic differentiation between the phenomenal and the noumenal, however, lay the seeds of a new problem. The problem itself could be stated in two different ways, and therefore seemed to admit of two different resolutions. The first way of stating the problem was epistemological. If the mind is capable of making a distinction between the noumenal (Being) and the phenomenal (cosmos), then is not the mind an active participant in the knowing process? Must not a new distinction be drawn between the known and the knower?

The second way of stating the problem was empirical. If a distinction can be drawn between the phenomenal and the noumenal, perhaps

this is because there is no noumenal at all. Or, more precisely, perhaps the phenomenal is the noumenal. The epistemological question, by casting doubt on the notion of the mind as simply a tabula rasa, opened up the possibility that 'treeness' arises, in part at least, because the mind organizes sense data in ways which are determined from the side of mind and not from the side of the tree. The empirical question, by casting doubt on the existence of any reality beyond the phenomenological, raised the possibility that the material tree is, in fact, the only reality with which we need deal. In the final analysis, the Kantian critique had the effect of underwriting the Humean scepticism. For, although Kant did not deny the existence of a reality beyond the phenomena, his view that we cannot get to it meant, scientifically speaking, that we need no longer consider it.

Cosmocentrism

If by science we mean idolatry in the sense in which Barfield employs the word, i.e., the notion that the phenomenological is the real, we must go back to Aristotle to discover the origin of this view of reality. Although Aristotle would no more than Plato have reduced reality to the phenomenological, he did take the first step in this direction by his attempts to locate the really real in the material world rather than in a realm of pure forms. Unlike Plato, however, he was unwilling to reduce the material 'many' to an immaterial unity. Instead, he sought to account for material reality in terms of intrinsic causality, not by means of an extrinsic immaterial substance. In his judgment, neither 'treeness' nor any particular material individuation of treeness could exist apart from its correlation with the other. His notion, therefore, of form and matter as complementary, not contradictory,

was a methodological statement of his view that this world is far more real than Plato's realm of pure forms. As we have had occasion to see, however, Aristotle was never able to develop a notion of immanent substance which could simultaneously account for material multiplicity and formal unity. The closest he came was in his notion of the material singular as substantial.

When Thomas took up Aristotle's work, he did so for purposes not unlike those of Aristotle himself. He wished to find some methodological principles by means of which he could account for the integrity of the created order. Here, then, we have the origin of the 'thick' essence. For if the material order is to be understood as really real, then essence must be regarded as a positive principle of intelligibility within things which has its own integrity apart from its power to mediate *Ipsum Intelligere*. It must, in short, be incapable of reduction to *esse*.

Unfortunately, Thomas was also heir to the notion that the material singular is substantial. Consequently, he too was unable to provide any intrinsic account of the conditions of possibility for both a material multiplicity and a formal unity. He was forced back to a Platonic notion of extrinsic causes (God and the Divine Ideas) to account for both the specific multiplicity and the universal unity.

While Thomas ultimately went back into a Platonic grounding of material reality, the overall character of his work reflects the balance which he tried to strike, as a Christian theologian, between the reality of God (the Platonic immaterial reality) and the reality of creation as distinct from God (the Aristotelian material reality). His *esse/essence* correlation is the methodological statement of his insistence, as a

Christian theologian, upon both a divine and a creaturely intelligibility which are distinct but concretely inseparable from one another.

Because Thomas was unable to find a means for reconciling the 'thick' and 'thin' essences of his Platonic and Aristotelian methodologies, the overall balance which we find in his work is largely a product of his having moved back and forth between the Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives which he had adopted. Consequently, not only did his work constitute within Christian theology a definite step in an Aristotelian direction, his work also seemed to warrant, at those times when he adopted an Aristotelian rather than a Platonic view, the notion that material reality can be regarded as autonomous in its own right.

This notion was continued, as we have had occasion to observe, in the work of Gilsonian Thomists, who suppose that science can and even should study the phenomena without reference to their existential component. Hence, to the extent that Thomas and subsequent Thomists suggested that the Aristotelian intelligibility (essence) is not only distinct but separable from that intelligibility which constitutes our participation in God (esse), they hastened the advent and reinforced the plausibility of that scientific idolatry which would first disregard and ultimately reject any link between the phenomena and Being.

Scientific idolatry is, as Lonergan points out, the notion that knowledge is attained solely "by taking a good look at the 'real' that is 'already out there now'."¹⁶ Just when this notion of reality became decisive in human consciousness is impossible to pin down with certainty. In Barfield's judgment, the turning point in the scientific community itself came when Copernicus and Galileo began to regard

¹⁶ Lonergan, Insight, p. 412.

heliocentrism not only as a hypothetical account of astronomical phenomena, but as the ultimate truth with regard to that phenomena.

It was this, this novel idea that the Copernican (and therefore any other) hypothesis might not be a hypothesis at all but the ultimate truth, that was almost enough in itself to constitute the 'scientific revolution'.¹⁷

The methodological statement of this view of reality is the principle of verifiability, which reduces reality to that which can be submitted to empirical analysis.

This shift to a scientific view of reality had enormous implications. First, it destroyed every notion of original participation which had heretofore obtained. Reality had finally been de-divinized or 'dis-godded'. Secondly, it not only eliminated all notions of an intrinsic relation between the phenomena and God (Being), it also eliminated all notions of an intrinsic relationship between the phenomena themselves. For as soon as reality was reduced to that which is empirically verifiable, knowledge was restricted to the external behavior of the phenomena. According to this view, to know a thing is not to know what it is, but how it functions. And to know the relationship between things is to know nothing more than their external impact upon one another. Therefore, human knowledge itself is perceived as arising out of the external (sensible) impact which the phenomena have on human beings. As Hans Reichenbach puts it, "In contrast to the transcendental conception of knowledge, the philosophy of the new empiricism may be called a functional conception of knowledge."¹⁸

¹⁷ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 50.

¹⁸ Hans Reichenbach, The Rise of Scientific Philosophy (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), p. 255.

Furthermore, words no longer refer to any 'inner' reality within things, but solely to that external behavior which is empirically available to us. Hence, language itself must submit to the same principle of verification to which reality itself is submitted. By submitting all statements which purport to be about reality to a linguistic analysis based on the principle of verification, we discover that "the question of the existence of the external world and of the human mind . . . is found to be a question of correct use of language rather than a question of a 'transcendental reality.'"¹⁹ For all extra-sensory use of language is found to have no functional, ergo no real, term of reference. The functional notion of reality thus finds its counterpart in a strictly nominalist use of language, in which words no longer refer to the inner nature or essence of a thing, but solely to the ways in which it is observed to function.

Thirdly, this scientific notion of reality eliminated the previously-held notion of science as theoretical or hypothetical. Scientific accounts of reality were now understood to be literal statements about reality. Such a notion of the really real put science in opposition not only to theology but also to metaphysics. For the new science claimed to replace both. As Reichenbach says in the preface to his book on 'scientific philosophy,' the purpose of the book is to show that "philosophy has proceeded from speculation to science."²⁰

Fourthly, and more importantly for our purposes here, science, in reducing reality to the phenomenal and functional, simultaneously reduced causality to the extrinsic impact of object upon object. This

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 307.

²⁰ Ibid., p. vii.

process reached its apogee in the theory of evolution, which could find a place for man in this new scheme of things only by treating him as simply one object among others and by treating all objects as products of a chain of extrinsic causes which could, at least to some extent, be empirically verified. Because original participation had vanished from the minds of most men, as Barfield points out,

. . . the only link with the phenomena was through the senses; and [men] could no longer conceive of any manner in which either growth itself or the metamorphoses of individual and special growth, could be determined from within. The appearances were idols. They had no 'within'. Therefore the evolution which had produced them could only be conceived mechanomorphically as a series of impacts of idols on other idols.²¹

This impact of object on object, however, signalled the abandonment of any coherent notion of causality. In its place we are left with the random play of force upon force. Carl Sagan is an excellent example of a contemporary scientist who continues to find this notion of causality plausible.

Were the Earth to be started over again with all its physical features identical, it is extremely unlikely that anything closely resembling a human being would ever again emerge. There is a powerful random character to the evolutionary process. A cosmic ray striking a different gene, producing a different mutation, can have small consequences early but profound consequences later. Happenstance may play a powerful role in biology, as it does in history.²²

Causality is, under these circumstances, replaced by 'laws' of statistical probability.

The issue is whether causality is an ultimate principle or merely a substitute for statistical regularity, applicable to the macroscopic domain but inadmissible for the realm of atoms. . . . From the investigations of modern quantum mechanics we know that the individual atomic occurrences do not lend themselves to a causal

²¹ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 63.

²² Carl Sagan, Cosmos (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 282.

interpretation and are merely controlled by probability laws. This result, formulated in Heisenberg's famous principle of indeterminacy, constitutes the proof that the second conception is the correct one, that the idea of a strict causality is to be abandoned, and that the laws of probability take over the place once occupied by the law of causality.²³

The abandonment of the notion of an inner dimension to reality required abandoning the notion of strict (intrinsic) causality as well.

Anthropocentricity

Long before the theory of evolution arose, however, it had become apparent to at least one man that, once reality is no longer understood as a participation in being, we can no longer rely, as earlier ages had, on our human participation in that same being to provide us with an inside track on understanding that reality. The man was the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), and his point was very simple. If the Aristotelian notion that we can know a thing only by knowing its causes is correct, then we can no longer claim a familiarity with the inner workings of the universe. The only reality with which we can claim any such familiarity is ourselves, and therefore the only things which we can know are those things which we ourselves have caused. As Ratzinger notes with regard to Vico, "Against the scholastic equation 'Verum est ens' ('Being is truth') he advances his own formula, 'Verum quia factum'."²⁴

This notion of reality as the facticity of man's past retained some important elements of the scientific mentality. First, the reality of history was understood to be objectively available in the same sense in which science understood the reality of the cosmos to be objectively

²³ Reichenbach, The Rise of Scientific Philosophy, p. 163.

²⁴ Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, p. 31.

available. The really real shifted from the 'already out there now' to the 'already back there then', to paraphrase Lonergan. History became, as Ranke among many other historians thought it ought to be, the study of what really happened. The principle of verifiability was applied to the documents of human history. Historical reality was therefore reduced, as the cosmic reality before it had been, to the phenomenal and the empirically verifiable.

At the same time, however, this notion of reality as that which has been made by man signalled an enormous shift in human perspective, greater in fact than the scientific shift to cosmic phenomena. It was, as Ratzinger notes, the shift that produced "that revaluation of all values which makes subsequent history really a 'new' age as compared with the old one."²⁵ From this new perspective, nothing is regarded as real which cannot also be regarded as historical.

Through Hegel, and in a different way through Comte, philosophy became a historical question, in which being itself is to be understood as a historical process. With F. C. Baur, theology turned into history and its path became that of rigorous historical research, which asks what happened in the past and thereby hopes to reach the bottom of the matter. With Marx, economics was given an historical slant. Indeed, even the natural sciences were affected by this general tendency towards history: with Darwin, the classification of living beings was understood as a history of life; the constancy of what stays as it was created was replaced by a line of descent in which all things came from one another and could be traced back to one another.²⁶

The shift to an anthropocentric view of reality was not, however, fully effected solely by the notion of reality as factuality. For such a view of reality still retained one element from the earlier metaphysical and scientific viewpoints which mitigated against a thoroughgoing anthro-

²⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

pocentrism, namely, the notion of reality as something already given, whether by God, cosmic processes or past human activity. This notion of an external source of reality sufficed as long as the really real itself was understood to be located outside the strictly human realm. Once, however, reality was located within that realm, it became impossible to suppose that man was simply the recipient of reality. He now had to be understood as the agent of reality. Karl Marx' formulation of this new principle is today well-known: "So far philosophers have contemplated the world; now they must set about changing it."

Translated into the language of the philosophical tradition this maxim meant that "verum quia factum"--what is knowable, tending towards truth, is what man has made and what he can now contemplate--was replaced by the new programme "verum quia faciendum"--the truth with which we are now concerned is feasibility. To put it again in another way: the truth with which man is concerned is neither the truth of being, nor even in the last resort that of his accomplished deeds, but the truth of changing the world, moulding the world--a truth centered on future and action.²⁷

Here we have a complete rejection not only of theocentrism but of cosmocentrism as well. Not only are the phenomena to be understood as de-divinized, they are also to be understood as having no reality apart from their capacity to be molded and shaped by the human mind. The phenomena which were once understood to be real by virtue of divine actuation are now to be understood as real only to the extent that they are capable of a human actuation.

As Ratzinger points out, Christian theology attempted to answer the factum notion of reality by shifting to a notion of Christianity as salvation history and by an historico-critical reanalysis of Scripture designed to demonstrate the historical (factual) character of Christian belief. Unfortunately, the shift from factum to faciendum

²⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

had the effect, in a great many minds, of relegating the 'already back there then' facticity of Christianity to the limbo of irrelevance.

Therefore, Christian theology shifted a second time.

Instead another idea is now in the air--people feel tempted to shift belief away from the plane of the fact on to that of the faciendum and to expound it by means of a 'political theology' as a medium for changing the world.²⁸

This 'turn to political theology' manifests the most serious effort in Catholicism today to respond to the contemporary anthropocentric/historical notion of reality. We must, therefore, examine more carefully the general character of this response. To that end, we shall consider the work of Johannes Metz, particularly Theology of the World. Metz has been chosen, first, because of the importance of his work within Catholic political theology as a whole, and secondly, because, as a former student of Rahner, Metz offers a good example of those theologians who, though trained in transcendental Thomism, believe that the perspective it offers is inadequate to the demands placed upon theology in the 'post-metaphysical' age into which these theologians believe we are moving. What follows is not intended to be a complete analysis of the entirety of Metz' works, but rather an exploration of the implications of those aspects of his thought which have a direct bearing on the new perspective that he believes contemporary historical consciousness requires Catholic theology to adopt.

Christian Praxis: Hominization of the World

Metz opens Theology of the World with two statements which define the scope of the book. He first observes that the world today is

²⁸Ibid., p. 38.

secular. He then notes that such a world challenges faith to state its position with regard to that secularity. In a footnote to the first remark, he characterizes Theology of the World as "a first attempt to give a positive interpretation of this permanent and growing secularity of the world in the light of Catholic theology."²⁹ We shall first examine what Metz believes to be the distinctive features of today's secular world and then consider the attitude which he thinks Christianity ought to take with regard to each of them.

The Secular World

Although Metz nowhere gives a single comprehensive description of secularity, six of its features strike him as particularly important where Christianity is concerned. The first of these we have already had an opportunity to observe, namely, the transition from a divinized to a hominized world.³⁰ Today's secularity sees the world in relationship to man, not God. In other words, the contemporary worldview is explicitly anthropocentric, not only in its notions of reality but in its desires. Humanity today wishes to be worldly (hominized), not divinized.

A second important feature of today's secularity is the fact that it views the world in historical, not metaphysical, terms. Modern man is interested primarily in the future not the past, in change not permanence, in possibility not actuality, in the genuinely new not the already established, in process not structure. This shift to an historical consciousness signals a corresponding shift in the notion of reality. Metz cites, in this regard, an observation by Gerhard Ebeling which is

²⁹ Metz, Theology of the World, p. 1.

³⁰ See p. 290.

well worth repeating:

This fascination with the future transforms the existing and subsisting reality into a changing and a challenging reality, so that the real of this reality emerges as its possibilities for the future.³¹

The really real today lies in exploiting the possible, not in contemplating the actual. The world is a quarry to be mined, not a reality to be studied.³² This shift in the notion of reality is enormously important, for it governs the remaining features which Metz finds in today's secularity.

The third of these is the primacy of praxis over theory, of operation over contemplation. If the really real has not been given, but remains to be achieved, then theory divorced from praxis no longer offers us access to reality.

Mankind in this new age seems to be fascinated by only one thing: the future as something that has not yet existed. The future is essentially reality that does not yet exist, that has never existed, that is truly "new." Our relation to this kind of future cannot therefore be purely contemplative or purely imaginative, since pure contemplation and pure imagination refer only to reality that already exists. Our relation to this future is markedly operative in character, and any theory of this relationship is therefore a theory that is related to action: it is characterized by a new relationship between theory and practice.³³

This notion of a future which must be achieved in praxis rather than revealed in metaphysical theorizing (à la Hegel) gives rise to the

³¹ Gerhard Ebeling, Wort und Glaube (Tubingen: 1962), p. 387; cited in Metz, Theology of the World, p. 83.

³² Metz, Theology of the World, p. 84. This concern for the primacy of the future over structure or metaphysics is operative in his earlier study of Thomas, Christliche Anthropozentrik (München: Kösel-Verlag KG, 1962), in which, as Roger Dick Johns points out, "He [Metz] stresses . . . the teleological, rather than the epistemological or ontological implications of the history of revelation" (Man in the World: The Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz, American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series [Missoula, Mt: Scholars Press, 1976], p. 71 (hereafter cited as Johns, Man in the World).

³³ Metz, Theology of the World, pp. 147-148.

fourth important feature of today's secularity, viz., the primacy it gives to freedom over nature. This primacy of freedom over nature is actually another way of stating the primacy of history over metaphysics. For what Metz has in mind here is the primacy of possibility over actuality. The key to this primacy lies in what Metz calls the "essential hiddenness of the future." What this notion of history rejects is the Aristotelian conception of 'nature' as that which contains within itself the term of its own movement. Natures are, in such a view, predetermined, not free. To construe reality as 'natural' (metaphysical) is therefore to deprive it of any genuine historicity (freedom).

An historical consciousness, on the contrary, supposes the future to be essentially hidden not only because it does not yet exist, but more importantly because it has not yet been chosen.

The essential hiddenness of the future in metaphysics is . . . at the same time the essential hiddenness of history altogether. For the future is the constitutive element of history as history. So long as history is conceived in terms of the primacy of origin and present, it can be conceived as a reality that has come about, that already exists, and hence again seen as nature and thus ontologized. Only in relation to the future can history also be distinguished from all "becoming," which does not really have a future but a goal (conceived and hence already existing) and which belongs again within the ontology of nature. Only in relation to the future can the soul of all history, namely, freedom be finally grasped. Insofar as the problem of the future remains hidden from metaphysics, so too does the problem of history remain hidden from it. All attempts to bring history and the metaphysics of being together show again indirectly that metaphysics is meta-physics: a contemplative laying hold on reality as a whole within the framework of what exists, that is, of nature.³⁴

Recognizing the essentially hidden character of the future is therefore the means by which we are able to recognize not only our own freedom to choose what the future will be, but also the fundamental inadequacy of a rationalist metaphysics which would falsely ontologize the future by

³⁴ Ibid., p. 99.

reducing history (freedom) to nature.

This notion of reality as fundamentally historical and therefore free brings us to the fifth important feature of today's secularity, namely, its public rather than private character. The public or political character of contemporary society is indissociable from a kind of paradox inherent in our manner of viewing reality. Previous notions of reality as something objectively given and therefore publicly available, have lent themselves to a privatized or individualized appropriation of that reality. For when reality is perceived as the 'already out there now,' and understanding it consists solely in taking a good look at it, the burden for becoming acquainted with that reality lies entirely with the individual, who can only know reality by looking at it himself. Furthermore, since reality is completely unaffected by his contemplation of it, his decision to know or not to know is a private matter affecting only himself and not reality per se.

As soon, however, as reality is understood not as given but as achieved, then its objective and publicly available character must also be achieved. This requires a public (political) praxis. For the only reality which we can now share in common is the reality which we achieve in common. We can no longer simply plug into reality; we now have to participate in it. Therefore, the relationship of the individual to reality is no longer private but public, his responsibilities no longer solely to himself but to others as well, his failures damaging not only to himself but to the community as a whole. For his failure to participate in reality diminishes reality itself.

The sixth and final feature which Metz underscores with regard to contemporary secularity is its permanence and its irreversibility.³⁵

³⁵Ibid., pp. 1, 17, 18.

A worldly world--this is not a metaphysical definition of the world, which would ultimately prove to be an empty pleonasm. It is, rather, an historical definition of the world in its present nature. And if it is described further as a world that remains and grows in its worldliness, then this means that worldliness does not have merely a transitional character, but that of an epoch, which helps to determine the world situation for the foreseeable future.³⁶

It is this permanent character of secularity which makes it incumbent upon theology to state its attitude with regard to it.

Christian Theology in a Secular World

The attitude which Christian theology ought to take toward modern secularity is, in Metz' judgment, one which should proceed from the realization that "the historically irreversible process of secularization does not mean that Christianity is disappearing, but that it has become truly historically effective."³⁷ With regard to the first feature of secularity, this means that the transition from a divinized to a hominized world is a shift for which Christ is largely responsible.

"God took on flesh" is the central proposition of our faith. Verbum caro factum est. In order to bring out the important thing of this Gospel for our faith, let us say: Verbum homo factum est. For in the incarnation of the eternal Word it was not the world itself that was immediately divinized. The final turning of God towards the world took place, rather, in man. He and only he is the place where God has for ever accepted the world and its history. God's relation to the world and to history is mediated and perfected in man. Its divinization takes place via its hominization. . . . Again we see the radical "anthropocentricity" of the Gospel of scripture. Precisely in the light of the Gospel of the incarnation of God the world loses its numinously shimmering divinity and is given into the hands and responsibility of man and hence liberated to find its own worldliness.³⁸

The Incarnation is therefore God's irrevocable acceptance of the world as world. It is also the revelation that, from God's perspective, the

³⁶ Ibid., p. 142.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

world is explicitly a human world, man's world, and not just a cosmos.³⁹

In the second place, Christianity need not be intimidated by the primacy which contemporary consciousness gives to history over metaphysics. For the very realization of the world's historical character is made apparent because of God's actions within it. His actions reveal the world to be not a fixed framework (metaphysics) but an event (history).⁴⁰ The Biblical promises of God, which are responsible for that 'turn to the future' which characterizes modern secularity, also require that Christian theology be eschatology.⁴¹ Christianity must recover the historicity of its own language. God's transcendence is better translated as "I will be who I will be" (absolute future) than as "I am who I am" (absolute being). The former translation conveys the fact that

God revealed himself to Moses more as the power of the future than as a being dwelling beyond all history and experience. God is not "above us" but "before us." His transcendence reveals itself as our "absolute future." This future is grounded in itself and is self-possessed. It is a future that is not erected out of the potentialities of our human freedom and human action. Rather, this future calls forth our potentialities to unfold themselves in history. Only such a future--one that is more than just the projection of our abilities--can call us to realize truly new possibilities, to become that which has never existed.⁴²

The fact that God Himself is calling us to act in the world means, in the third place, that we are called upon to participate in the creation of the world's reality as world. A true Christian praxis is one which seeks not to divinize the world, but to secularize it.⁴³ In

³⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 88-89.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 49.

order to do so, it must recognize that a true Christian mysticism is neither a contemplation of the world as an already-given reality nor a flight from the world to a divine reality conceived as 'above' the world, but a consent to be drawn into "the descensus of God, into the descent of his love to the least of his brothers," a descent which constitutes "not a flight out of the world, but a flight with the world 'forward'."⁴⁴ This means that "being a Christian is to accept special responsibility for the world, to be ready to be exposed and given over to it."⁴⁵

This special responsibility which Christians have to participate in the creation of the world's reality means, in the fourth place, that Christians more than anyone else must give primacy to freedom over nature. Christianity is fundamentally eschatological, seeking God as the absolute future in front of us, not as the absolute being above us. Not surprisingly, this historical notion of transcendence makes the distinction between the natural and the supernatural less relevant to contemporary theology.⁴⁶ Grace is no longer to be conceived as the power by which we are elevated or divinized, but as the freedom by which the world, through us, achieves the perfection of its worldliness.

. . . grace is freedom, it bestows upon things the scarcely measured depths of their own being. It calls things out of all their sinful alienation into their own. It calls the world into its perfect worldliness. Gratia perficit naturam--this is true also of the "consecration of the world" by grace. It seals the world within its deepest worldliness, it gives, in a supreme way, the world to itself, bestowing on it an unexpectedly rich

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 104, 92.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

existence of its own. Grace perfects the true worldliness of the world.⁴⁷

Therefore, just as the world exists for the sake of man (the primacy of history over metaphysics), so does the world also exist for the sake of human freedom (the primacy of that freedom over nature). Hence the reality of the world is something to be achieved in freedom, not contemplated in nature (the primacy of praxis over theory).

Although this grace (which is freedom) empowers us to perfect the world in its worldliness and non-divinity, it is also, according to Metz, the one place in which the world retains its link with the numinous.

Because the world itself, as a result of its hominization, loses its numinous character, it does not follow that its connection with the numinous completely disappears. There simply appears a new, as it were "anthropocentric" place in which the numinous is experienced: no longer the comprehensive openness of the pre-given world, but the freedom that acts on this world; no longer all-embracing nature, but the history of this hominized nature, taken in hand by men, in its free futurity.⁴⁸

Hence, the anthropocentric is also the transcendental. For the human experience of freedom, in its capacity to go beyond the limits of nature, reveals "not simply the future of unbelief, but the greater future of belief, in which what has already happened for man's experience of the world reaches us through the event of Christianity."⁴⁹

Because Christianity is eschatological and therefore places its faith in a truth which must yet be realized in the grace of human freedom, this means, in the fifth place, that Christian praxis must be public, not private, for it must concern itself not with an already-given cosmic

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 49.

reality but with an emerging political and social reality.⁵⁰ The primary negative task of the Church today is therefore the deprivatization of theology. Noting the New Testament emphasis upon the individual in his relationship to God, Metz insists that deprivatizing theology is important today precisely in order that the individual not be overlooked.

. . . it is our contention that theology, precisely because of its privatizing tendency, is apt to miss the individual in his real existence. Today this existence is to a very great extent entangled in societal vicissitudes; so any existential and personal theology that does not understand existence as a political problem in the widest sense of the word, must inevitably restrict its considerations to an abstraction.⁵¹

The primary positive task of the Church today is to assess the relationship between the Church and contemporary society. A critical part of this task is determining the relationship between faith and social practice (theory and praxis).

Political theology seeks to make contemporary theologians aware that a trial is pending between the eschatological message of Jesus and the socio-political reality. It insists on the permanent relation to the world inherent in the salvation merited by Jesus, a relation not to be understood in a natural-cosmological but in a socio-political sense; that is, as a critical, liberating force in regard to the social world and its historical process.⁵²

In the sixth, and final, place, the permanent secularity of the world ought not to disturb the Christian theologian, because it is the product, not the opponent, of Christian faith. "Faith itself . . . produces a fundamental secularity of the world."⁵³ It is precisely this concrete experience of secularity in the world today which testifies to the effectiveness of God's actions in history, particularly His acceptance

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 110-111.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 113-114.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 64.

in Christ of the world in its otherness or non-divinity.

Political Theology: The Failure to Find a Perspective

Metz' shift of theology from ontological to historical categories represents both an improvement upon and a diminution of the theology of transcendental Thomism. It is an improvement inasmuch as it takes seriously the 'post-metaphysical' world which is constituted by shifts in human consciousness from the theocentric through the cosmocentric to the anthropocentric. Recognizing the irreversibility of that process, Metz accepts the de-divinization of the cosmos effected by the scientific mentality. He therefore understands, as the transcendental Thomists apparently do not, that the cosmos is a human world, not a mirror of God. That in turn enables him to recognize the centrality of praxis and the communal character of reality.

In methodological terms, the transcendental Thomists trace the major crisis today back to the Greek metaphysical differentiation in consciousness and the seeming dichotomy which that introduced between theocentrism and cosmocentrism. The esse/essence correlation is, as a result understood by transcendental Thomists to be a metaphysical statement about the God/world relationship. They use the correlation, therefore, to account for created beings as finite participations in Ipsum Esse (the really real) and for the world as an image of divinity. The dynamism in things is, according to this view, a product of their participation in that infinite being which transcends every limit. The participation is privatized (individualized) and present at the level of being (ontological) apart from doing (praxis). Transcendental method is the means by which we are able to recognize that the dichotomy between

the world and God is a false problem.

Metz, on the other hand, sees the theological task today from quite a different perspective. Because the world has been de-divinized by scientific cosmocentrism, the world can no longer be seen as existing in a direct relationship with God. Rather, the world exists in a direct relationship with man. The primary problem today, therefore, is that of understanding the relationship between God and the human community. In Metz' terms, therefore, esse/essence is not a statement about the God/world relationship, but about the God/humanity relationship. Because the world, as a human world, is not simply given, but must be achieved, the problem involves both the human community as a whole and its praxis.

The God/world resolution of the problem is a false resolution, from Metz' point of view, because it attempts to reimpose the theocentric type of consciousness on an anthropocentric ('post-metaphysical') reality. Praxis is not only the method which enables us to recognize the true contours of the contemporary situation, but also the means by which we are able to overcome the dichotomies inherent in that situation.

Metz is correct that history, to be significant, must be irreversible. A history that reverses itself is a history that cancels itself out. If Christ is to be understood as truly effective within the historical process, then that process itself must be linear, not cyclical or reversible. Therefore, the de-divinization of the cosmos and the anthropocentric character of contemporary consciousness must be recognized as irreversible. It is no longer possible for us to return to the theocentric consciousness of medieval metaphysics. The failure of

transcendental Thomism to recognize this is its most serious error.

Metz' theology, however, operates under a handicap which does not burden the transcendental Thomists, the handicap of proceeding from a perspective which, from the outset, contradicts the fundamental purposes of his theology. His project, on the one hand, is that of establishing the value of the historical realm. His perspective, on the other hand, is Platonic. A Platonic perspective, by definition, locates the really real outside the material (historical) realm. To adopt such a perspective in the service of history is to undercut history at the outset.

The Platonic character of his perspective is most apparent in the primacy which he gives to freedom over nature. Because nature is that which proceeds to an immanently pre-determined end, Metz rejects it as an inappropriate category for any theology which seeks to come to terms with the genuinely historical character of the world. For possibility and novelty in the future require that finality be essentially hidden and not simply given. Furthermore, human freedom consists of that transcendental ability to overreach any limits which would be imposed by nature. The primacy of history over metaphysics and of praxis over theory are extensions of this fundamental primacy which freedom enjoys over nature.

The Platonic character of this approach becomes immediately apparent once the terms which Metz employs here are shifted into a form/matter framework. Within such a methodology, freedom/nature represents the historical counterpart to Plato's form/matter dichotomy. Just as matter, for Plato, is that which impedes form, so nature, for Metz, is that which impedes freedom. And just as Plato's form/matter dichotomy serves

as the basis for his account of the relatively illusory reality of the material realm as compared to the absolute reality of the formal realm, so does Metz' freedom/nature dichotomy serve as the basis for his account of the relatively illusory reality of the historical realm as compared to the absolute reality of the eschaton. The really real, for Metz as much as for Plato, lies outside the material/historical realm.

The problems which such an approach creates manifest themselves both at the level of the nature/grace problematic and at the level of human consciousness and its implications. First, at the level of the nature/grace problematic, this approach reintroduces Rahner's supernatural existential in the guise of a 'worldliness' which is to be understood as not divine, not natural and not achievable in history. No a priori conditions of possibility for this worldliness are offered, not even God, for God is to be understood as He who acts eschatologically, not protologically. No intrinsic conditions of possibility whatever are offered.

Secondly, at the level of human consciousness, we are confronted with the problem of accounting for Christ's effectiveness in an historical process within which the really real cannot be found. Metz maintains that "the formal reorientation of thinking from a 'cosmocentric' to an 'anthropocentric' approach, bound up with the beginning of the modern world, has ultimately emerged not against, but through the impulse of the Christian spirit."⁵⁴ But how is the Christian spirit able to actualize such a reorientation of human thinking?

The problem only deepens when we consider what Metz regards to be

⁵⁴ Ibid.

the fundamental hermeneutical problem facing theology today.

Properly speaking, the so-called fundamental hermeneutic problem of theology is not the problem of how systematic theology stands in relation to historical theology, how dogma stands in relation to history, but what is the relation between theory and practice, between understanding the faith and social practice.⁵⁵

The implication here that faith and social practice are separate entities, the relating of which must be a fundamental concern to today's theology, together with the explicit statement that this is a hermeneutical problem, belies the assertion that Christ has been or could be effective within history. For, according to Metz, praxis is the means by which reality is achieved. Therefore, a praxis dissociated from faith is incapable of mediating a "Christian spirit," whereas a faith dissociated from praxis is incapable of mediating anything. If Christ is actually effective throughout history, the only condition of possibility for that effectiveness is a concrete public faith praxis already effectively pervading the material/historical realm. No social praxis is conceivable apart from that faith praxis. The problem, therefore, is one of relating faith praxis and social praxis, not faith and social praxis.

To say, however, that a faith praxis is the condition of possibility for a social praxis is to say that this faith praxis is a permanent structure within history which is incapable of being transcended by human freedom because it is itself the condition of possibility for that freedom. But to say that is to violate the a priori of Metz' theology, that structure and freedom are dichotomous, not correlative. For, in Metz' judgment, history is an ongoing praxis which seeks to transcend the limits or structures of any given situation. The achievement of

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

reality is always a transcending of what has already been achieved at any given stage in the process. Historically unconditioned freedom is the only constant Metz acknowledges.

Although Metz seems genuinely to desire that his theology be an affirmation of the goodness of history as anthropocentric, worldly and non-divine, his application of Platonic methodology to contemporary secularity and historical consciousness has the unfortunate effect of producing the historical counterpart to transcendental Thomism's ontological 'thin' essence. For the esse/essence distinction, in Metz' historical frame of reference, translates into freedom/nature. Instead of correlating them, however, Metz gives primacy to freedom over nature. By reducing nature to freedom, he in effect reduces essence to esse.

The result is the Porphyrian universe laid out on the horizontal instead of the vertical line. The flight of the mystic is now a flight not from the many to the One, but from history to the eschaton. The fallenness and alienation of the Platonic material realm has simply been transferred into the historical realm. And so flight into Absolute Being becomes flight into Absolute Future. The flight is now horizontal, not vertical, but it is flight all the same, from the relativities of history to the security of the eschaton.

The source for Metz' failure to affirm the value (reality) of history seems to be threefold. In the first place, he had adopted a perspective with regard to modern consciousness which is Marxist, not Christian, a perspective which could be characterized, in Metz' words, as "the categorial pre-eminence of the future in modern man's attitude to life."⁵⁶ As Metz goes on to observe,

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 148.

. . . the whole of the modern critique of religion, especially Marxist, could be summed up by saying that Christianity, like religion in general, is helpless against this primacy of the future in our understanding of the world.⁵⁷

It is, therefore, this categorial pre-eminence of the future which, in Metz' judgment, requires us to give primacy to history over ontology, freedom over nature, eschatology over protology, praxis over theory.

But this Marxist perspective is, by definition, a Platonic perspective. For it supposes that polarities cannot be correlated or complementary; rather, unity is achieved by reducing one to the other. Such a perspective automatically makes it impossible to locate the really real in the world and history, for that realm is complex, not simple.

The Thomist act/potency methodology, on the other hand, supposes that unity is achieved by the correlation of principles, not by the reduction of one to the other. Attempts to locate real value in the world or in history must therefore proceed by means of a Thomist, not a Platonic, methodology, for only a Thomist methodology seeks in the correlation of complexity that intrinsic unity which is the world's goodness and reality.

In the second place, Metz seems to suppose, as do many Thomists, that all structure and intelligibility in the world must be identified with essence (nature). Esse, in such an understanding, translates into an unstructured dynamism or freedom capable of transcending the limits of an essentially-structured and therefore pre-determined (self-enclosed) universe. This identification of nature and structure/intelligibility is, of course, Aristotelian in origin. It is not, however, Thomist. As

⁵⁷ Ibid.

was pointed out in chapter 6, the esse/essence distinction by which Thomas adapted Aristotle to Christian purposes provided the means by which one could account for intelligibility as contingent rather than as necessitated by essential principles (nature). As Keefe points out,

The resultant Thomist ontology, whether taken as theological or philosophical, is no longer Aristotelian, for it has rejected a priori the necessitarian universe which Aristotle presupposed as the price of its rational consistency, and for it has substituted the created universe in which the Word has become flesh. And yet, by retaining the act-potency methodology, this Thomist ontology is quite as intent upon the intrinsic rationality of being as was Aristotelian metaphysics, for that ontology proceeds by the analysis of the intrinsic conditions of possibility, the intrinsic "causes," of substantial reality, whether nature or grace. The difference is that for Thomism this reality, whether as nature or as grace, is contingent, without any intrinsic necessity, although intrinsically rational.⁵⁸

In other words, one need not, in a Thomist methodology, sacrifice either structure (intelligibility) or freedom (non-essential or supernatural dynamism). They are complementary, not contradictory.

Metz' unwillingness, therefore, to ground human freedom in an a priori principle or structure constitutive of concrete human beings, for fear of having that dynamism confined to the natural limits of an Aristotelian essence, is unwarranted by a proper understanding of Thomist methodology. Metz' refusal to ground that freedom anywhere within the material realm, furthermore, leads to a fundamental incoherence at the center of his theology. For God's activity as final cause, while accounting for the goal of human dynamism, cannot account for that dynamism itself. The Aristotelian supposition that real immanent movement requires an underlying intrinsic principle to account for that movement does not lose its validity in this situation. The principle need not be essential, as Aristotle supposed, but it must be intrinsic. Otherwise

⁵⁸Keefe, "A Methodological Critique," p. 31.

the movement can only be attributed to an extrinsic agent. In Metz' theology, that would mean having to say that the reality of human dynamism is not intrinsic (historical) but extrinsic (eschatological). That, in fact, is what Metz' method does require him to say. What it does not do is permit him to save the value of the historical realm.

The incoherence which invades Metz' theology at the level of nature/grace reappears at the level of historical praxis, where Christ's effectiveness in history is given no intrinsic grounding. Only a faith praxis (that is, an intelligible or structured praxis) as a permanent element within the historical process can account for such effectiveness within history. Yet his view of an 'emergent' Church, that is to say, a Church which distances itself from notions of a 'realized' eschatology, can hardly serve as the underlying principle whereby such an effectiveness is given an accounting.⁵⁹ Once again the impetus

⁵⁹ Metz seems to want to distance the Church from notions of 'realized' eschatology for four reasons. First, such notions are indissociable, in his view, from a kind of 'triumphalism' in Christianity which has victimized people in the past. "Does there not break through within Christianity, again and again, a dangerous triumphalism connected with saving history, something the Jews above all have had to suffer from in a special way? But is this the unavoidable consequence of Christian faith in the salvation definitively achieved in Christ?" (The Emergent Church, trans. Peter Mann [New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981], p. 24). Secondly, such notions are not meaningful in the contemporary world, which is prone to accepting evolutionary rather than eschatological [realized or otherwise] accounts of reality. "It is not primarily a question of the relationship between eschatology in the present and eschatology in the future (or a question of a balanced mixture of both), but rather of the relationship between an eschatological and an evolutionary consciousness of time, in which the idea of evolution is still misunderstood by many theologians, who think of it as pointing to a meaningful teleology" (Faith in History and Society, trans. David Smith [New York: The Seabury Press, A Crossroad Book, 1980], p. 177). Thirdly, any emphasis on a definitively achieved salvation in history blunts the critical acumen of Christianity. "It is not only necessary to be careful about the overworked specifically Christian element, the Christian identity that, at every opportunity, insists on the salvation that has already been given in Christ. There may also be a special kind

for this achievement would appear to be solely eschatological, which is to say extrinsic. Under these circumstances, the real Church is eschatological, not historical. Therefore, the same dynamism by which the human community is able to transcend all societal and political structures can be understood as operative in the Church as well, enabling the faith community to transcend the structures of the historical Church in its flight toward the real (eschatological) Church.⁶⁰

of weariness with regard to this identity, with the result that the dictatorship of what has already been experienced is preferred to the way of hope and expectation" (*Ibid.*, p. 179). Finally, locating a realized eschatology in the Church erroneously suggests that the Church is an 'end in itself'. "What is specifically Christian about the behavior of the institution? Is it really evident in the image the church manifests of itself that it is not an end in itself; that its purpose is to 'unmake' itself, in the literal and dialectical sense of the term, on behalf of the reign of God? And that by this very fact the church would have to differ from all other institutions with their laws of self-preservation and survival?" (*The Emergent Church*, p. 113).

As a result, Metz refuses to Church structure any permanence in history. This is reflected most clearly in his reduction of the Church's insistence upon the sacramental indissolubility of marriage and the celibacy of the priesthood to "legal rigorism" (*Ibid.*, p. 6) or to "church ordinances" which have no permanent value (*Ibid.*, p. 64), in his characterization of monogamy as "ideal" (*Ibid.*, p. 6) and in his insistence that 'basic communities' ought to "assimilate into their eucharistic table fellowship the fundamental social conflicts and sufferings surrounding them" (*Ibid.*, p. 63).

Metz' refusal of a 'realized' eschatology, realized explicitly in the Church, is the basis for his insistence upon hermeneutics over history. For nothing given historically, even in the Church, lies beyond the theologian's hermeneutical critique. This insistence upon the priority of hermeneutics, even with regard to the Church itself, places Metz and others who 'eschatologize' the Church in a difficult position vis a vis the Church. As Johns points out, "The church has remained . . . the most conservative aspect of present-day Catholicism. This results in a kind of schizoid relation to the church by many contemporary theologians. The available alternative is not satisfactory. It forces theologians to choose between developing a theoretical, theological construct, not related to the church as it actually is, or abandoning the existing church" (*Man in the World*, p. 182).

⁶⁰As Johns puts it, in his study of Metz' theology, "The suggestion that present monarchical forms of administration are sacred is belied by the fact that they were modeled on secular systems. These secular forms of government have been overcome for the most part in the modern,

This notion of the Church, however, has the effect of cutting faith off from intelligible structure, since faith is the only constant in the process. Once again, therefore, the problem emerges of how a faith cut off from such intelligibility is capable of mediating an explicitly Christian spirit. Such a question cannot be answered solely by reference to an eschatological reality. For if the reality is not already concretely present somewhere within history, it cannot be historically effective.

To eschatologize the really real is to dehistoricize it. Our only access to it then is either an overleaping of history into the 'eternal now' which is the eschaton (Bultmann et al) or a praxis which allows us to transcend, step by step, every structural blockade which, as the stuff of history, impedes our movement (freedom). But there is no reason to suppose that the praxis itself has any explicitly Christian effect upon history, any more than the overleaping does, since the praxis is without any intelligible Christian structure. It is, in fact, the whole point of praxis as praxis to transcend every structure.

The separation, therefore, which Metz supposes to exist between faith and praxis is overcome, in his theology, by reducing faith (theory) to praxis. But this is incoherent. For faith is knowledge (intelligibility). Faith as a praxis which transcends structure is no longer faith in any intelligible sense of the word. It has become Kierkegaard's leap into darkness or blind trust in that which can not only not be seen

revolutionary, Western history of freedom. It is well known what the feudal and paternalistic model of priestly office is. What the priestly function of a witnessing and emancipating priesthood would be needs to be developed in a new model of the church" (Man in the World, p. 145). We see operative here the notion that all structures achieved in history, including ecclesiastical ones, are capable of being "overcome" by freedom in history. No ecclesiastical structure can therefore be accepted as permanent this side of the eschaton.

but cannot be known in any serious sense either. Faith reduces to a contentless hope projected into the future.⁶¹ Once faith loses its intelligibility, it can no longer inform the praxis to which it has been reduced. Therefore, such a praxis is incapable of making Christianity effective in history.

Methodologically speaking, one can suppose that faith and praxis enjoy, in the historical realm, either an a priori unity (Thomism) or an a priori separation (Platonism). If one supposes the former, then one supposes that their unity is already concretely given in history. The theological task, under these circumstances, is an historical task, that of identifying the concrete locus of their unity in history. If, on the other hand, one supposes their separation in history, then the

⁶¹As Metz expresses it in Faith in History and Society (p. 73), "This theological approach is strongly characterized by the primacy of eschatology, and faith is primarily expressed in it as hope in solidarity." At this point, Metz' political theology joins hands with Moltmann's 'theology of hope'. For we see the same reductionism in Moltmann. Moltmann first rules out any metaphysical relationship, whether immanent or transcendent, between God and man, maintaining that the 'God of hope' is "the God whom we . . . cannot really have in us or over us but always only before us, who encounters us in his promises for the future, and whom we therefore cannot 'have' either, but can only await in active hope (Theology of Hope, trans. James W. Leitch [New York/Evanston/San Francisco/London: Harper & Row, 1967], p. 16). Having completely removed God from history, he takes up the relationship between faith and hope: "Hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God. Thus, faith believes God to be true, hope awaits the time when this truth shall be manifested; faith believes that he is our Father, hope anticipates that he will ever show himself to be a Father toward us; faith believes that eternal life has been given to us, hope anticipates that it will some time be revealed; faith is the foundation upon which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith" (Ibid., p. 20). In other words, faith is really indistinguishable from hope, for its object is not only invisible, as Paul tells us, but also as yet unrealized in history. Its object is therefore indistinguishable from hope's object. And their common object is, most significantly, unhistorical, unmetaphysical, disincarnate, not only not yet realized in history but incapable of being realized there.

theological task is one of working out the relationship between them. The theological task becomes an hermeneutical, not an historical, one. Metz, as we have already seen, supposes that the theological task today is an hermeneutical one.⁶² The de-historicizing of reality turns history into hermeneutics.

The notion that faith and praxis are separate entities brings us to the third problem in Metz' theology. Although Metz rightly supposes that pure theory (knowledge divorced from praxis) is incapable of achieving anything, he has not worked out the full implications of that position. Were he to do so, he would recognize that pure theory has never been an historical reality, even in those ages in which human consciousness has perceived it to be. For, if human knowledge had ever been purely theoretical, it would have been incapable of achieving anything and history would have ceased to be genuinely historical, i.e., capable of realizing novelty.

In other words, history did not begin when Vico called our attention to it, anymore than praxis began when Marx decreed that it should. Yet much in Metz' theology seems to suppose a kind of imaginative picture of history, in which pure theory and human praxis are viewed as separate from one another in history because human consciousness supposed them to be so. Human consciousness today is therefore thought to be confronted with the task of putting together those elements which human consciousness had heretofore kept separate, not only within its own consciousness but within history itself.

But this makes no sense. For if the unity of knowledge and praxis has yet to be achieved, then the achievement itself is impossible. For

⁶²See p. 321.

the a priori condition of possibility for its achievement is precisely that underlying unity of theory and praxis which permits our actions to be informed and our knowledge to be operative. Without that a priori unity, history is meaningless and shifts in human consciousness are incapable of being explained. Nor can Christ's effectiveness in history be accounted for, since faith is a form of knowledge and therefore requires a praxis to make itself historically effective. The recognition of the importance of praxis may be a recent realization, but the praxis itself must have been previously given to us and not something which we today bring into existence by our own conscious efforts.

The major reason why Metz seems not to have thought through the implications of his own position would appear to lie in the fact that he confines himself to the social and political realms of human life. In those realms, the relationship between praxis and reality is not difficult to establish. Social and political goals are participated realities, i.e., they are not given but have to be achieved. Such a frame of reference, however, leaves untouched the question of human knowledge with regard to that which human praxis has not created. Metz recognizes the existence of a 'given' when he speaks of the world as a "quarry."⁶³ But he does not consider the implications of that givenness with regard to human praxis. After all, how a quarry is mined depends, to some extent at least, on what kind of quarry it is. It conditions or controls what we are able to do with it.

The scientific quest for knowledge raises directly the question of the relationship between the human mind and the external 'given' which it investigates. Is the cosmos also real only to the extent to

⁶³See p. 309.

which we participate in it, or does it enjoy an existence independently of us? The question has important theological implications. For faith is a form of knowledge. And both faith and scientific knowledge refer to a reality which is not of man's making. Or so, at least, have scientists and theologians heretofore presumed. To understand better, therefore, the character of faith, we would be well advised to examine, not the social and political realms, but contemporary science, specifically those developments in quantum physics which have forced the scientific community to reexamine its own notions of the really real and our knowledge of it.

Such an examination has a second advantage, for, as was previously noted,⁶⁴ Owen Barfield agrees with Metz as regards the anthropocentric character of contemporary consciousness, but does not agree with him with respect to its implications. Since Barfield raises the question from within the framework of contemporary science and its significance with regard to the relationship between knowledge and reality, a brief consideration of that science is indispensable for understanding both Barfield's theory of the history of human consciousness and the methodological implications of such a theory.

⁶⁴ See p. 295.

CHAPTER 9

INDETERMINISM IN 20TH CENTURY QUANTUM PHYSICS:

THE SEARCH FOR REALITY

At that time when Marx was advising philosophers to change reality, the scientific community entertained few doubts as to its own ability to explain reality. Classical or Newtonian physics was enjoying unprecedented success in virtually every direction. It even developed its own variation of the faciendum, when William Thomson, Lord Kelvin, declared that Vico's certum quod factum must be replaced by certum quod facibile. English scientists, at least, concurred, providing mechanical models designed to exemplify the intelligibility of the mechanical universe which science understood to be the really real. When that universe collapsed, therefore, not only scientific knowledge, but also the assumption that science bore any relationship to reality, was called into question.

Out of Galileo's discoveries and those of Newton in the next generation there evolved a mechanical universe of forces, pressures, tensions, oscillations, and waves. There seemed to be no process of nature which could not be described in terms of ordinary experience, illustrated by a concrete model or predicted by Newton's amazingly accurate laws of mechanics. But before the turn of the past century certain deviations from these laws became apparent; and though these deviations were slight, they were of such a fundamental nature that the whole edifice of Newton's machine-like universe began to topple. The certainty that science can explain how things happen began to dim about twenty years ago. And right now it is a question whether scientific man is in touch with "reality" at all--or can ever hope to be.¹

¹Lincoln Barnett, The Universe and Dr. Einstein (New York: Time Incorporated, 1948), pp. 5-6.

In order to understand why the scientific road to reality has been called into question today, we must examine some of the changes contemporary science has gone through in understanding itself, particularly in light of the original Greek notion of science.

Saving the Appearances: Greek Philosophy

Plato divided knowledge into three categories: pure sense knowledge as the lowest type, pure intelligence as the highest, and a middle ground which he assigned to geometry or mathematics. Given Plato's notion of the negative character of matter, on the one hand, and the pure intelligibility of the formal realm, on the other, this middle knowledge was essential for bridging the gap between the misleading data provided by our senses and the true knowledge provided by our participation in the purely formal realm. Because the really real (pure form) manifested itself in material appearances (phenomena) which were imperfect imitations of the really real, it became the task of science (astronomy primarily) to reconcile the two from a position midway between them.

It was for the science of astronomy . . . to 'save' the 'appearances', that is, the apparent movements of the heavenly bodies, and particularly of sun, moon and planets, which were the most difficult to account for, by devising hypothetical patterns of movement, which would account for the appearances without infringing the fundamental principles.²

Whether or not the hypotheses were true was a matter of indifference, since truth had a bearing only with regard to the realm of pure forms and could be attained only by participating directly in that realm.

Such a notion of astronomy, and, indeed, the notion of science itself, could only have arisen once a distinction was made between

²Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 47.

extrasensory reality (form) and its material embodiment (phenomena). For only then could a gap between the two be recognized and the need to give some account for it felt.

From the Platonic presumption of an extrinsic formal reality, in which we directly participate, several important consequences followed. First, the phenomena were understood to be 'appearances', not 'things'. Secondly, any theory which could successfully account for the appearances without jeopardizing the pure forms was hypothetical, not true, knowledge.³ Plato's own use of the dichotomy between form and matter to account for the disparity between the really real and the appearances, therefore, has this same hypothetical character. Thirdly, true intelligibility was reduced to the immanent necessity of form. That which could not be reduced to intelligibility was therefore associated with the extrinsic and chaotic impact of matter. Fourthly, and as a consequence, Plato's notion of reality itself was reductionistic and extrinsic, residing in 'pure' intelligibility found only outside the material realm. Finally, Plato's notion of reality required an intuitive a priori participation in and knowledge of reality, not an analytic, discursive, a posteriori elaboration of that participation in reality and intelligibility.

Although, as we have seen, Aristotle's act/potency correlation of form and matter provided an important alternative view with regard to reality, that view was never fully exploited, either by Aristotle or by his followers. Instead, the primary notion of reality continued to be Platonic, whether Aristotle's Prime Movers, neo-Platonism's notion of the One or Christianity's notion of the one God. Through the Middle Ages, therefore Platonic notions of reality and of our

³See Phaedo 100a3; 101c9.

participation in it continued to define the character of scientific theories.⁴ The clash between the Catholic Church and Galileo was, as Barfield has pointed out, the first public indication that the traditional notion of science no longer commanded the allegiance of all scientists.

As Whitehead has noted, "The Greeks were over-theoretical. For them science was an offshoot of philosophy."⁵ This is certainly true, nor could it have been otherwise. For both Plato and Aristotle understood true knowledge to be participated, not scientific, knowledge. In fact, participated knowledge of reality provided the only basis upon which any other knowledge could be pursued. Furthermore, the Greeks placed much more emphasis upon the love of knowledge (philo-sophia) than upon knowledge alone (gnosis). Truth was to be contemplated, not controlled. Participation and contemplation were two sides of the same epistemological coin. After Galileo, the epistemological coinage of science changed radically.

Realifying the Appearances: Scientific Idolatry

Galileo's reluctance to have scientific theories relegated to the status of hypotheses became, in Newton's science, an outright refusal. Newton's "hypotheses non fingo" became the trademark of Newtonian science and classical physics. It was the epistemological counterpart of the newly discovered principle of impetus, which freed the phenomena from any need for immanent movers and therefore from any need for participation

⁴ See ST I, 32, 1 ad 2, and In 2 De cael., I, 17, for a Thomist re-statement of the hypothetical character of scientific theory.

⁵ A. N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: The New American Library, A Mentor Book, 1925), p. 16.

in a reality which went beyond the phenomena themselves. The notion of a mechanistic universe which this absence of participation produced lent itself well to the Cartesian separation of mind from extension. The Greek quest for hypothetical accounts of the relationship between form and matter was, for the new science, a non-problem.

Since the new methodical principles of natural science, especially of mechanics, excluded all tracing of corporeal phenomena back to spiritual forces, matter could be considered as a reality of its own independent of the mind and of any supernatural powers. The "matter" of this period is "formed matter," the process of formation being interpreted as a causal chain of mechanical interactions; it has lost its connection with the vegetative soul of Aristotelian philosophy, and therefore the dualism between matter and form is no longer relevant.⁶

For classical science, reality is composed of objects and forces, the external impact of idol upon idol, as Barfield has called it.

The break with Greek thought was enormous. Because the phenomena no longer participated a reality beyond themselves, they were now regarded as reality itself. And because hypothetical statements bridging the gap between sense knowledge and real knowledge were no longer required, scientific theory became truth, not hypothesis. It replaced the participated knowledge which from the Greeks through the Middle Ages had been regarded as the only true knowledge. It was also a gnosis, for having eliminated from reality the notion of mind, it supposed that the human mind can eventually know everything there is to know about material reality. It was therefore singularly well-disposed toward the Marxist directive to change reality. For, having once mastered reality, it believed it would be in an excellent position to control and manipulate that reality.

⁶Werner Heisenberg, Physics and Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 148.

The new science attempted to be a kind of Platonism without participation. This forced it into a notion of the relationship between mind and matter unenvisaged by Plato. For, while Plato supposed the separation of form and matter in order that there might be a realm of pure forms and a material reality into which formal intelligibilities had somehow 'fallen', he never supposed that the material world as we know it is constituted by a strict separation of the two. The scientific separation of mind and matter produced enormous problems, two of which are particularly relevant to our purposes.

The first of these lay in the fact that, while the new scientific idolatry drew the same connection between intelligibility and necessity which had been drawn by Plato and Greek philosophy in general, that intelligibility was now the mechanical intelligibility of matter and not the conscious intelligibility of mind. As Whitehead notes,

Tennyson goes to the heart of the difficulty. It is the problem of mechanism which appalls him.

"The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run.'"

This line states starkly the whole philosophic problem implicit in the poem. Each molecule blindly runs.⁷

Tennyson and the whole Romantic movement set themselves resolutely against such a dehumanized notion of reality. Wordsworth's pantheism was an attempt to escape scientific idolatry by a return to that 'original participation' of which Barfield speaks. But that escape hatch was, in fact, no longer available. For the Kantian critique of Descartes had, if nothing else, revealed the naivete involved in any notion of reality which left out the workings of the human mind.

The second problem lay in the scientific notion of reality as objectively given and mechanical. Newtonian physics supposed that the

⁷ Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, p. 78.

phenomena are 'things' or objects located spatially in a 'thing' called ether. Every phenomenon from the atom to the universe was a 'thing'. But nobody could verify the existence of the ether. Newtonian physics also supposed that all motion could be reduced to mechanical principles. But no one could reduce gravitation to such principles. The problem was masked somewhat by continuing to call gravitation 'action at a distance,' as though a description of the phenomenon could be regarded as an account of the force. But the problem would not go away, and scientists knew that 'action at a distance' explained nothing.

The true contours of the Newtonian notion of reality, however, did not really become apparent until Max Planck introduced his quantum theory in 1900. His theory that radiant energy is propagated not continuously but in discrete quanta, together with Einstein's later suggestion that all forms of radiant energy (light, xrays, etc.) travel in space as discrete quanta, called into question the notion that atoms were the undifferentiated chunks of matter (things) which Newtonian science had supposed them to be. The building block of the universe was beginning to fray around the edges, if not actually dissolve, under the impact of these new theories. When Einstein went on to suggest that the results of the Michelson-Morley experiment be taken at face value (the ether can't be discerned, therefore there is no ether) and that gravitation is not a force but a function of acceleration, the Newtonian 'reality' simply gave way. Its sudden collapse, as Jaki points out,

. . . left a whole generation wondering about a long array of "final conclusions," "demonstrated principles," "self-evident truths," and "absolute certainties" that were only imperfect reflections of nature in her true reality.⁸

⁸ Stanley L. Jaki, The Relevance of Physics (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 94.

Gary Zukav notes that "The theory of the ether was the last attempt to explain the universe by explaining something."⁹ While he is somewhat overly optimistic in his judgment that the 'thing' mentality disappeared from science with the ether, he is correct with regard to the scientific community as a whole. That community is no longer committed to the Newtonian notion of reality. In fact, one of the major problems within that community today centers precisely around the question of an objectively-given reality and to what degree, if any, scientific knowledge bears upon that reality.

Saving Reality: Scientific Metaphysics

One lesson which the collapse of Newtonian physics drove home to the scientific community was the fact that the theories of Newtonian physics, because they were treated as truth itself, had become a creed. As a result, scientific empiricism had become, in practice, a form of Platonic apriorism. "For the classical physicist understanding a phenomenon meant simply reducing it to the Newtonian laws."¹⁰ Reality was forced to submit to the 'truth' of science. Experiments were conducted not to determine whether or not the ether exists, but solely to confirm the existence of the ether which Newtonian principles required in order that their own validity might be confirmed. Newtonian physics was, in that sense, a state of mind in which the ether existed in scientists's minds because the worldview they had constructed within their minds required its presence. It took not only some courage, but

⁹ Gary Zukav, The Dancing Wu Li Masters (New York: Bantam New Age Book, 1979), p. 129.

¹⁰ Jaki, The Relevance of Physics, p. 73.

an enormous mental conversion from such a worldview, to be able to suggest, as Einstein did, that there is no ether in the universe, the state of the scientific mind to the contrary.

With Einstein and Planck, therefore, science returned to a notion of itself more in line with the original Greek view of science as hypothesis rather than as truth. The phenomena also returned to the realm of appearances rather than of things. The return was only partial, however, for now the hypotheses were explicitly understood to be, in the words of Einstein, "free creations" of the human mind. Furthermore, these hypotheses were thought, by Einstein and Planck, among others, to carry us beyond the sensory data to a type of scientific knowledge which was not just physical but metaphysical. These men were Kantian enough to suppose that we have no direct access to the thing-in-itself, but they did believe that scientific theories were capable of providing an account of reality which did not simply mirror our sense perceptions or the structures of our minds. As Einstein noted in a letter to a friend, written in 1952,

You find it surprising that I think of the comprehensibility of the world (insofar as we are entitled to speak of such a world) as a miracle or an eternal mystery. But surely, a priori, one should expect the world to be chaotic, not to be grasped by thought in any way. One might (indeed one should) expect that the world evidenced itself as lawful only so far as we grasp it in an orderly fashion. This would be a sort of order like the alphabetical order of words. On the other hand, the kind of order created, for example, by Newton's gravitational theory is of a very different character. Even if the axioms of the theory are posited by man, the success of such a procedure supposes in the objective world a high degree of order, which we are in no way entitled to expect a priori. Therein lies the 'miracle' which becomes more and more evident as our knowledge develops.¹¹

In one very important sense, however, Planck and Einstein remained wedded to a classist science. For they both supposed that scientific

¹¹ Cited in Jaki, The Relevance of Physics, pp. 192-193.

theory and the phenomena ought to enjoy a one-on-one relationship. Only by supposing this could one ever envisage science being able to construct a complete theory of reality, and Einstein and Planck were both committed to the construction of such a theory.

Whatever the meaning assigned to the term complete, the following requirement for a complete theory seems to be a necessary one: every element of the physical reality must have a counterpart in the physical theory.¹²

In other words, the hypothetical character of scientific theories is provisional, not permanent. Science is hypothetical not in relation to a true knowledge which is acquired elsewhere, but only in relation to the incompleteness of its own theories. As Planck puts it,

A constant, unified world-picture is, as I have tried to show, the fixed goal which true natural science, in all its forms, is perpetually approaching; and in physics we may justly claim that our present world-picture, although it shimmers with the most varied colors imparted by the individuality of the researcher, nevertheless contains certain features which can never be effaced by any revolution, either in nature or in the human mind. This constant element, independent of every human (and indeed of every intellectual) individuality, is what we call "the real."¹³

There is, therefore, already an element of "reality" in scientific theories. And the closer science gets to a complete theory of reality (one which contains within the theory an explanatory principle for every phenomenon), the more complete will be the truth of the theory as well.

This is precisely the notion with which Newtonian physics began. It was, in fact, the very success of Newton's principles in accounting

¹²A. Einstein, B. Podolsky and N. Rosen, "Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?," in Stephen Toulmin (ed.), Physical Reality (New York/Evanston/London: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 124.

¹³Max Planck, "The Unity of the Physical World-Picture," in Toulmin, Physical Reality, p. 25.

for virtually everything that turned that enterprise from a scientific (empirical) quest into a state of mind or creed. Although Einstein and Planck, more than any other modern physicists, were responsible for overturning that creed, they were never able to detach themselves from the notion that science, given enough time, will someday be able to provide a complete account of the phenomena.

This confidence that a complete account of the phenomena will someday be possible rests upon a combination of Platonic and Aristotelian assumptions about reality. It is Platonic in that it looks to a single theory (Einstein's search for a Unified Field Theory is an example of this) and a single undifferentiated principle to which all of the phenomena can be reduced. In an Einsteinian universe, this single principle would appear to be energy. According to this view of things, matter is "frozen energy," and it is this "frozen energy" which "creates space and time."¹⁴ Einstein's approach is, however, also Aristotelian to the extent that it locates this single principle (energy) within the material universe and not outside it.

At the same time, however, there is a tendency in both Einstein and Planck to seek something beyond mere energy to account for the intelligibility of things. Although both are reluctant to speak of a personal God, neither is unwilling to speak of God in the sense of Mind and to attribute to that Mind the fundamental intelligibility which both believe the universe to exemplify. Hence, although Einstein and Planck retain the notion of an intelligibility that is irrevocably linked with necessity, they avoid the notion of a "blind necessity" dissociated from Mind.

¹⁴Nigel Calder, Einstein's Universe (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 211.

They also avoid the notion of an intelligibility which is in any way anthropocentric.

What really matters is that we recognize such a fixed goal, even if it can never be quite attained: this goal is not the complete adaptation of our ideas to our impressions, but the complete liberation of the physical world-picture from the individuality of the creative mind. There is a paraphrase, in rather more precise terms, of what I previously called the emancipation from anthropomorphous elements; we should not be misunderstood as implying that the world-picture ought to be completely detached from the creative intellect itself, which would be an absurd conclusion.¹⁵

It would appear that what Planck has in mind here is the need for human intelligence to become as detached from the sensory as is that intelligence which underlies the material phenomena. Therefore, while Planck would never deny that scientific knowledge always begins with the sensory, he would most emphatically insist that it is capable of rising above the sensory to a pure intelligibility not immediately given in the sensory data. Hence, there is in Planck, and Einstein as well, a strong Platonic streak which seeks in scientific theory that pure intelligibility which Plato reserved for our participation in the realm of pure forms.

In quantum physics, that 'pure' intelligibility has taken the form of mathematics. The move from classical physics to quantum physics was a move from the use of mechanical models to the use of mathematical abstraction. The very name, quantum physics, is itself an indication of that quantifying of all qualities which constitutes panmathematicization. The enthusiasm for such a procedure is today almost unbounded. As Whitehead points out,

In a sense, Plato and Pythagoras stand nearer to modern physical science than does Aristotle. The two former were mathematicians,

¹⁵ Planck, "The Unity of the Physical World-Picture," p. 26.

whereas Aristotle was the son of a doctor, though of course he was not thereby ignorant of mathematics. The practical counsel to be derived from Pythagoras, is to measure, and thus to express quality in terms of numerically determined quantity. But the biological sciences, then and till our own time, have been overwhelmingly classificatory. Accordingly, Aristotle by his Logic throws the emphasis on classification. The popularity of Aristotelian Logic retarded the advance of physical science throughout the Middle Ages. If only the schoolmen had measured instead of classifying, how much they might have learnt!¹⁶

The Einstein/Planck notion of science, therefore, is a gnosis which looks to science to provide that access to the phenomena which will one day produce a complete theory capable of accounting for all of the phenomena. In such a theory, the necessary intelligibility of the world will find its pure expression in mathematical formulas.

Unfortunately for Planck and Einstein, they had hardly begun to topple Newton's world-picture before they were confronted by other scientists claiming to topple their own. The major assault on their position took the form of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, put forth in 1925. According to this principle, we cannot measure simultaneously the position and velocity of a sub-atomic particle. We must make a choice between the two. Whichever of the two is not chosen in a particular experiment remains uncertain or undetermined by the experiment. This limit is not, according to Heisenberg, a temporary setback to science which can someday be overcome by brighter scientists and/or better instruments. It is a permanent feature on the scientific landscape.

At once that latent apriorism which had almost made shipwreck of physics in its Newtonian phase began to make itself felt in the views of Einstein and Planck. Gnosticism invariably requires, as Voegelin

¹⁶Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, p. 30.

has pointed out, that "In the clash between system and reality, reality must give way." The thought that reality itself makes it impossible for us to submit the phenomena to a complete scientific analysis (and therefore to a complete scientific theory as well) was anathema to both Einstein and Planck. Einstein began speaking of 'hidden variables' underlying the phenomena, while Planck began speaking of scientific error and the need to return to the drawingboard.

Clearly in these circumstances the differential equations of classical physics lose their fundamental importance; and for the time being the task of discovering in all their details the laws underlying the real physical processes must be regarded as insoluble. But of course it would be incorrect to infer that no such laws exist: the failure to discover a law will, on the contrary, have to be attributed to an inadequate formulation of the problem and a consequently incorrect posing of the question. The question now is wherein the mistake consists and how it can be removed.¹⁷

All of this is uncomfortably reminiscent of the earlier failure to discover the ether and of the repeated attempts to reformulate the problem and repose the question, in search of an error and an ether which no one could find. Despite the protests of Einstein and Planck, however, "the fuzziness of indeterminacy enveloped everything."¹⁸

Handling the Appearances: Scientific Positivism

Newtonian physics had developed over three centuries a very large set of concepts which were thought to relate to the 'things' of reality on an either/or basis. Things were either waves or particles, either space or time, either objects or forces. What quantum physics discovered, to its discomfiture, was that these characteristics are not

¹⁷Max Planck, The Philosophy of Physics (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1936), p. 19.

¹⁸Jaki, The Relevance of Physics, p. 93.

found in separation from, but in correlation with, one another. Reality is a space-time continuum. Light waves are particles; subatomic particles are waves. Objects are forces. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle is a statement of the limits which this dual character of the phenomena places on scientists. For, in order to determine the velocity (a function of the wave length) of a sub-atomic phenomenon, one must suppress its particle characteristics. Conversely, in order to discover the precise location of the phenomenon (a function of its particle characteristics), one must suppress the spatial spread of the wave length.

The problems did not stop here, however. They extended to the very language which physics uses to express its theories. It soon became apparent that words like 'wave' and 'particle,' 'space' and 'time,' no longer enjoyed a one-on-one relationship with the phenomena. To many scientists, in fact, it became unclear as to whether such language referred to reality at all, for its terms seemed to bear rather on the ways in which scientists described their own perceptions of the phenomena than on the phenomena themselves.

A new notion of science and its relationship to the phenomena began to take shape. Known as the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Physics, it was anticipated by Ernst Mach and formulated by Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr. According to this interpretation of quantum theory, the phenomena are solely appearances and scientific theories are solely hypothetical. Against Einstein and Planck, however, the new interpretation supposes that the hypotheses never go beyond the sensory data. As Mach puts it, "Such a concept is no more than the ability, designated and stimulated by the word, to recall the single experiences

from which the concept was gradually formed."¹⁹

Fundamental to this notion of concepts which do not go beyond the sensory has been Bohr's theory of complementarity. According to this theory, all of the phenomena available to science are characterized by the unavoidable duality which has been found in the subatomic realm. Bohr concludes from this that the duality is not a function of the phenomena themselves, but of the scientific investigator. For, by the very way in which he constructs his experiments, he pre-determines that aspect of the phenomena which his experiment shall investigate. 'Waves' and 'particles' are therefore a product of the interaction between the scientist and the phenomena, and not independent characteristics of the phenomena themselves. As Heisenberg puts it, "we have to remember that what we observe is not nature in itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning."²⁰

The nub of the problem, according to Heisenberg and Bohr, is that we are forced to use the concepts of classical physics to deal with the phenomena of quantum physics, even though the phenomena no longer match the concepts. The development of a new set of concepts is ruled out, simply because the concepts of classical physics reflect the way in which the human mind thinks. We are therefore in the unhappy position of having to impose upon the phenomena the a priori conceptual framework we bring to them.

This, of course, is pure Kantianism. It supposes that the a priori

¹⁹Ernst Mach, "The Guiding Principles of My Scientific Theory of Knowledge and Its Reception by My Contemporaries," in Toulmin, Physical Reality, p. 43 (hereafter cited as Mach, "The Guiding Principles").

²⁰Heisenberg, Physics and Philosophy, p. 58.

categories which Kant described, at a time when Newtonian physics was in full stride, are absolute structures which shall forever be valid, just as Kant described them, despite the fact that the worldview within which they were formulated has long since collapsed. It also introduces into physics a subjective element which can never be overcome.

Objectivity has become the first criterion for the value of any scientific result. Does the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum theory still comply with this ideal? One may perhaps say that quantum theory corresponds to this ideal as far as possible. Certainly quantum theory does not contain genuine subjective features, it does not introduce the mind of the physicist as a part of the atomic event. But it starts from the division of the world into the "object" and the rest of the world, and from the fact that at least for the rest of the world we use the classical concepts in our description. This division is arbitrary and historically a direct consequence of our scientific method; the use of the classical concepts is finally a consequence of the general human way of thinking. But this is already a reference to ourselves and in so far our description is not completely objective.²¹

According to the Copenhagen Interpretation, therefore, science is not in the business of accounting for but rather of handling the phenomena.

Expressed very briefly, the task of scientific knowledge now appears as: the adaptation of ideas to facts and the adaptation of ideas to one another.²²

Scientific positivism has nothing to do with the really real; its primary concern is not what is but what works.

In this new interpretation of quantum physics, two things manifestly do not work. The first of these is the notion of substance. Because our knowledge is incapable of going beyond the sensory data, it is no longer relevant to speak of any reality underlying the phenomena.

We imagine an extrasensory group of elements, a carrier of qualities, a substance of the objects, in the philosophical sense.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

²² Mach, "The Guiding Principles," p. 31.

This idea has no foundation in the elements which we have called ABCDE . . . ; it is purely a product of creative fantasy.²³

Furthermore, every attempt to locate some fundamental, irreducible material particle which could be regarded as a building block of the universe, as atoms once were, has failed. Although there are still scientists to be found who assure us that "physicists are about to take the important leap toward a complete understanding of matter" based on "the concept of quarks as the fundamental constituents of matter,"²⁴ Jaki's assessment of the situation seems more reasonable.

Little over half a century ago the atoms were still pictured as the ultimate, absolutely hard, indivisible building stones of matter. Later the electrons, protons, and neutrons inherited these majestic attributes. Today, however, many a physicist prefers to compare the structure of matter to a succession of layers that, like the layers of an onion, reveal themselves only one at a time. What is more, today's physicist is beset with the premonition that the number of those layers for all practical purposes might turn out to be infinite.²⁵

The inability to find any purely material substrate underlying the phenomena, together with a Kantian epistemology which turns the scientist back upon himself, has led some members of the scientific community to suppose that quantum physics is a modern rediscovery of the insights of Buddhist mysticism. Mach himself was led from quantum physics to Buddhism. And Zukav's book, The Dancing Wu Li Masters, makes repeated attempts to link the Copenhagen Interpretation to the Buddhist mythos. In this scientific turn to pantheism (original participation), all phenomena (including the human mind) are regarded as participations in a single, undifferentiated flux or chaos which is immediately available

²³ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁴ Harald Fritzsch, Quarks (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), pp. 10, 11.

²⁵ Jaki, The Relevance of Physics, p. 141.

to human sensory experience (mythos) but incapable of being reduced in any way to human thought (logos).

According to Finkelstein, a language of mythos, a language which alludes to experience but does not attempt to replace it or to mold our perceptions of it is the true language of physics. This is because not only the language that we use to communicate our daily experience, but also mathematics, follows a certain set of rules (classical logic). Experience itself is not bound by these rules. Experience follows a much more permissive set of rules (quantum logic). Quantum logic is not only more exciting than classical logic, it is more real. It is based not upon the way that we think of things, but upon the way that we experience them.²⁶

The phenomena are, accordingly, incapable of being integrated by any theory which would render them intelligible. The appearances cannot be saved.

According to Buddhist theory, reality is "virtual" in nature. What appears to be "real" objects in it, like trees and people, actually are transient illusions which result from a limited mode of awareness. The illusion is that parts of an overall virtual process are "real" (permanent) "things." "Enlightenment" is the experience that "things," including "I," are transient, virtual states devoid of separate existences, momentary links between illusions of the past and illusions of the future unfolding in the illusion of time.²⁷

As The Heart Sutra of Mahayana Buddhism puts it, "form is emptiness, emptiness is form."²⁸

Although not all scientific positivists would care to travel down such a Buddhist road, the fact remains that their interpretation of quantum physics does, to all practical intents and purposes, empty the phenomena of all intelligibility (form). As Bohr remarked to Einstein, "through a singularly fruitful cooperation of a whole generation of physicists we are nearing the goal where logical order to a large extent

²⁶Zukav, The Dancing Wu Li Masters, p. 141.

²⁷Ibid., p. 236.

²⁸Ibid., p. 240.

allows us to avoid deep truth."²⁹

The second thing which does not work is the notion of causality. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle indicates that no laws of causality can be formulated for predicting the activity of individual subatomic phenomena. Laws of statistical probability replace laws of causality. This replacement is enormously significant, for it signals a shift, as Zukav points out, in one of our most fundamental assumptions about the universe, namely, that of the relationship between chaos and order. The laws of causality gave us a picture of order beneath chaos. Statistical probability, on the other hand, "is a picture of chaos beneath order."³⁰

What works, therefore, are laws of statistical probability. Such laws suppose the universe to be governed by both necessity and chance. Quantum physics was not the first scientific discipline to reach this conclusion. Many biologists, starting with Darwin, have supposed the evolutionary process to be comprised of just the same combination. Nor is the idea a recent one. It goes back to Democritus and his notion that "Everything existing in the universe is the fruit of chance and of necessity."³¹ It is this notion of pure chance that Einstein found so obnoxious about the Copenhagen Interpretation, provoking his remark that "God does not play dice."

It is also this notion of chance, as Barfield points out, which

²⁹ Cited in Stanley L. Jaki, The Road of Science and the Ways to God (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 205 (hereafter cited as Jaki, The Road of Science).

³⁰ Zukav, The Dancing Wu Li Masters, p. 194.

³¹ See Jacques Monod, Chance and Necessity (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), who specifically acknowledges Democritus as inspiring the title of his book.

signals the breakdown of the scientific enterprise. As he notes with regard to the Darwinian theory of evolution formulated during that period of a Newtonian (idolatrous) worldview,

. . . astronomy and physics had taught men that the business of science is to find hypotheses to save the appearances. By a hypothesis, then, these earthly appearances must be saved; and saved they were by the hypothesis of--chance variation. Now the concept of chance is precisely what a hypothesis is devised to save us from. Chance, in fact, = no hypothesis. Yet so hypnotic, at this moment in history, was the influence of the idols and of the special mode of thought which had begotten them, that only a few--and their voices soon died away--were troubled by the fact that the impressive vocabulary of technological investigation was actually being used to denote its breakdown; as though, because it is something we can do with ourselves in the water, drowning should be included as one of the different ways of swimming.³²

The central problem in the Copenhagen Interpretation seems to revolve around the fact that it, like Newtonian physics, attempts to be Platonic in a way unenvisaged by Plato. Whereas Newtonian physics attempts to reduce all of reality to a single theory, it does so without Plato's notion of participation, and hence concludes that truth resides in its theory and not in an extrasensory reality. The Copenhagen approach, on the other hand, attempts to retain the Platonic notion of participation, but it does so without Plato's notion of reality as form. Because "form is emptiness," reality is chaotic and the phenomena are illusions. Hence, although the Copenhagen Interpretation continues to draw the same connection between intelligibility and necessity as had previous scientific thinkers (aggregates of subatomic phenomena behave in necessary and intelligible patterns), it introduces an element of contingency (individual phenomena do not behave in predictable fashions) which can only be regarded as irrationality

³² Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 64.

or pure chance. No complete theory of the phenomena is possible under these circumstances, since the phenomena themselves are not completely rational. Such a view of science, therefore, is either a pragmatic gnosis (one can manipulate the phenomena) or an Eastern mysticism (one can surrender oneself to the irrationality).

Einstein and Planck saw the breakdown implicit in the Copenhagen Interpretation, but they were unable to formulate any alternatives to it. They have not been without their successors, however. We have already seen how Fritzsche looks to the quark to provide the cornerstone of a complete scientific account of reality. Another much more promising alternative has been offered by Louis de Broglie and his followers.

Louis de Broglie, whose work in the 1920's marked the beginning of wave mechanics, had originally hoped to find some means to account for particles as synthetic entities with definite velocity and position. He therefore opposed Bohr and Heisenberg at the Solvay Conference of 1927. It was only in 1952, however, that he seriously set about the task of developing an alternative theory with regard to subatomic particles. His work convinced him that the indeterminism which Heisenberg attributed to subatomic particles actually reflects the uncertainties of scientific measurements, not a fundamental indeterminism in the particles themselves.

Although de Broglie agreed with Bohr and Heisenberg that the classical models of waves and particles were inadequate, he did not think that it would be impossible to give a complete description of a particle; instead, he proposed a new model. His conception of a particle was that of a wave with a hump--that is, a wave whose amplitude is not regular over its whole extent, but comes to a marked peak in one particular region.³³

³³J. Andrade e Silva and G. Lochak, Quanta (New York/Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, World University Library, 1969), p. 200. The authors worked for several years as research fellows with de Broglie.

Hence de Broglie made a distinction between the particle itself and its dual characteristics, which he called 'wave' and 'corpuscle' respectively. In this way, he was able to speak of waves and corpuscles as a complementarity within the particle rather than as a product of the interaction between the scientist and the particles.

As against Bohr's image of the complementary properties of wave and corpuscle, the theory shows that it is possible to consider the particle as a complex entity which is always well defined. It follows that the duality has become a synthesis--both localised³⁴ and extended, and both a corpuscle of matter and a field of energy.

That scientific measurements of such particles can never be wholly accurate indicates, in de Broglie's judgment, not that the universe is ungoverned by laws (Heisenberg, Bohr), but that it is governed by an infinite number of laws which can never be reduced to a single formalization. Quantum particles act as though some new force were added to those postulated by Newton. De Broglie attributed this force to what he called the "subquantum medium," which in turn manifests the same statistical probabilities as does the subatomic realm. The statistical probabilities with which quantum physics deals are, therefore, to be found throughout the universe. They do not, however, manifest a fundamental lawlessness or chaos in reality. "The statistical character of quantum laws provides us with an example of the endless complexity of natural phenomena, rather than a fundamental indeterminism."³⁵

Thus de Broglie reintroduced into scientific theory first, a notion of substance (the particle which underlies and unifies wave and corpuscle), secondly, an Aristotelian notion of the synthetic character of material substance (particles are complex, not simple), and thirdly,

³⁴ Ibid., p. 206.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 207.

a notion of causality (indeterminism is caused by the subquantum realm). He also reintroduced the 'ether' (the subquantum medium) as the 'hidden' variable which accounts for indeterminism, not, however, in order to overturn Heisenberg's uncertainty principle but in order to make it intelligible. The uncertainty principle, according to this view, "expresses the uncertainty of our knowledge of an objective phenomenon which is vitally significant--the subquantum medium."³⁶

Scientific Theories and Reality: The Problems

There are two primary problems with regard to the status of scientific theories today, one of which we have already seen in Thomism, the other of which appears in Metz. The first of these problems is that of the thick vs the thin essence, or, in scientific terms, the thick vs the thin hypothesis.

The Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum physics parallels, in a way, the position of Carlo and Clarke, in that both suppose the material realm to be, to some extent at least, unreal. In Carlo and Clarke, this relative unreality expresses itself in the reduction of essence to esse. In the Copenhagen Interpretation, it expresses itself in the reduction of the phenomena to illusion or to the subjective experiences of the scientist. For Carlo and Clarke, reality is meta-physical (Ipsum Esse); for the Copenhagen physicists, reality is physical or experiential, which is to say, fundamentally irrational.

Both positions are reductionistic, though in different directions. Carlo and Clarke reduce a plurality of intelligibilities to a single undifferentiated intelligibility (form is esse). The Copenhagen School

³⁶ Ibid., p. 217.

reduces a plurality of unintelligibilities (all singularities) to a single undifferentiated chaos (form is emptiness). Thin essence Thomism is doubly Platonic, because it not only reduces material plurality to extrinsic unity but also reduces the relatively intelligible to the absolutely intelligible. The Copenhagen School is Platonic only in that it reduces a multiplicity of irrationalities to a single irrational flux. The irrationality, however, to which things are reduced is, as many scientists themselves have recognized, much more Buddhist than Platonic. For it is a rejection of metaphysics altogether.

The Einsteinian position resembles, in its own way, that of Gilsonian Thomists. Einstein seeks, on the one hand, a 'thick' hypothesis, that is, an hypothesis which contains theoretical counterparts for every intelligibility science discovers. This is precisely that substantialist, or essentialist point of view which Gilson himself advocated for science, a point of view which prescind from the existential character of reality. According to Gilson,

The true reason why the universe appears to some scientists as mysterious is that, mistaking existential, that is, metaphysical, questions for scientific ones, they ask science to answer them. Then they are puzzled, and they say that the universe is mysterious.³⁷

Gilson's perturbation here is a mirror of that perturbation experienced by Einstein and Planck in the face of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. A "substantialist" perspective, which seeks a one-on-one correspondence between essences and intelligibilities, must necessarily run into trouble, if the universe is existential and not essential, a point as unappreciated by Gilson as it has been by Einstein and Planck.

³⁷ Etienne Gilson, God and Philosophy (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 123.

Furthermore, both the Einsteinian and the Gilsonian positions run up against a second problem, the problem of maintaining a 'thick' essence or hypothesis in the absence of any theory of participation which could account for the existence of specific perfections. We have already seen how those perfections, even in Gilson, tend to be reduced to esse.³⁸ We have also seen how the theoretical components of an Einsteinian hypothesis tend to be reduced to energy.³⁹ Both Einstein and Gilson try to preserve the absolute objectivity of the phenomenal realm. In the final analysis, both fail and for the same reason. For neither has a theory of participation which can save the universal.

We can continue to apprehend phenomena as participating one another, in a way which renders logical predication meaningful, only as long as we continue to apprehend them as participated by ourselves. When that ceases, they become idols, and idols do not participate one another. Nor are they connected in any necessary way with their names. They are simply 'there'. . . . Thus, early in the twentieth century, formal logic begins to boggle much more heavily at the notion of predication, and really to feel the difficulty of distinguishing it from an assertion of numerical identity. Sooner or later a Wittgenstein or an Ayer inevitably arises, convinced that all predication must be either false or tautologous-- a state of mind which was playfully foreshadowed by Plato more than two thousand years ago in his dialogue, The Sophist. To this point of view, the belief that in the act of predication the mind is operating, not only on words but on things themselves, can only appear as a kind of survival of totemism. And that is indeed what it is, if for 'totemism' we substitute 'participation'.⁴⁰

Hence, in Einstein we find the same kind of Platonic reductionism as in the Copenhagen Interpretation, only this time in the direction of essential intelligibility. Form is energy. However, since energy per se cannot be immediately identified with intelligibility, Mind must somehow be associated with the energy. Einstein's rather vague pantheism

³⁸See pp. 182-183.

³⁹See p. 342.

⁴⁰Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 98-99.

was a product of the reductionism latent in his notion of scientific theory.

The Platonism both in Einstein's perspective and in that of the Copenhagen School manifests itself identically with regard to intelligibility. Both seek a non-anthropomorphic account of intelligibility; hence both reduce it to mathematics (Plato's middle knowledge). In quantum physics, we have therefore witnessed a radical movement away from mechanical models and visual representations of the phenomena to mathematical abstractions designed to reflect more adequately the 'pure' as opposed to human (materialized) intelligibility which scientists suppose their knowledge to be. This has introduced a rift between scientific knowledge and general or common sense knowledge, and has in fact raised enormous problems in the minds of both the public and the scientific community as to what constitute the actual phenomena of the world. To employ the example used previously, is the actual phenomenon the tree or is it the quark (and other subatomic particles) which constitute the tree or is it the 'wave' or 'corpuscle' which constitutes the particle?

The second problem in quantum physics today (which it shares with Metz' theology) is a gnosticism which seems necessarily to accompany all 'dis-godded' or de-participated perspectives on reality. Once the phenomena are no longer regarded as participations in divinity, the notion of knowledge as contemplation (*sophia*) ceases to have any meaning. Knowledge is then sought 1) for the sake of devising a complete theory which can explain all of reality (Einstein), 2) for the sake of being able to predict probabilities (Copenhagen Interpretation) or 3) for the sake of changing the world or reality itself (Marx, Metz, liberation theology, technology).

Gnosticism, therefore, always links knowledge with some form of salvation from the apparent irrationality of the particular individual contingent event. If the world is thought to be intelligible (ordered), then knowledge is the key to our eventual control of all events. Such is basically the Einsteinian point of view, which supposes that science will eventually be able to explain and control everything. If the world is thought to be irrational (unordered), knowledge is the key which enables us to manipulate at least part of it. Such is basically the Copenhagen point of view, which supposes that quantum physics can predict and therefore control mass phenomena, since it is only the individual phenomenon that is irrational.⁴¹ If the world is thought to be sinful and evil, knowledge (as praxis) is the key to transcending the world's alienating conditions. Such is basically Metz' point of view,

⁴¹The Copenhagen approach has evidenced recently, among those scientists who have adopted it, a much more clearly defined proclivity for Eastern types of gnosis. Thomas Molnar, in a recent article on the Cordoba Colloquium of 1979 ("Science and the New Gnosticism," Modern Age 27 [Spring 1983]:132-138), dubs this scientific outlook as the New Gnosticism. Pointing out that the Cordoba Colloquium was attended by representatives of Iranian, Japanese and Hindu thought, but by no representatives of Christian religion, he asks, "Why this over-representation of Buddhism, Tao, yoga and Zen, why no Christian philosopher?" (p. 134). Noting the "epistemological impasse" into which the quantum physicists at the conference had been led by their inability or unwillingness "to distinguish between matter and spirit, between the subject who observes and the observed object" (p. 134), he concludes that the participants were philosophically naive. "Following the Zeitgeist, they reject Western metaphysics, but rush to adopt oriental monism, with the excuse that it postulates the flux as the essence of the universe, and that things appear then as arbitrary stopping places in the endless cosmic process. This may still be called a metaphysics, but a better name for it may be gnosis: it allows being to fuse with a substanceless universe" (p. 135). This "new gnosticism," according to Molnar, is characterized by five theses: 1) the universe is uncreated, 2) spirit arises out of the potentialities of matter, 3) the Elect of the new gnosticism are scientists, 4) the new gnostic salvation "consists of the absolutization of the superior man, superior among all the other intelligent consciousnesses because he understands the working of the cosmos" (p. 138), and 5) the new gnosticism is not anti-religion, but a superior kind of religion (without God).

which supposes that human freedom is not bound to any structure and therefore can overcome all alienation.

The only significant difference between Einsteinian gnosticism and its theological counterpart is the fact that Einstein's scientific gnosticism rests upon an explicitly unhistorical view of reality, whereas political theology rests upon an explicitly unmetaphysical view of reality. (The Copenhagen Interpretation distinguishes itself by explicitly rejecting both metaphysics and history.) In the final analysis, however, Metz has nowhere to ground contingency just as Einstein has nowhere to ground intelligibility. Both slide into a Platonic notion of the really real as lying beyond both the structure of the world and its historical development. Both are therefore forced into calling upon 'hidden' factors (in Einstein, the hidden variables or the God who does not play dice; in Metz, the 'hidden' God of the absolute future), just as the Copenhagen people are forced to rely upon an undifferentiated chaos hidden behind the illusory phenomena, to save the situation.⁴²

Knowledge and Reality: Toward a Solution

Eric Voegelin has pointed out that gnosticism always involves the suppression of some aspect of reality.

In order--not, to be sure, to make the undertaking possible--but to make it appear possible, every gnostic intellectual who drafts a program to change the world must first construct a world picture from which those essential features of the constitution of being that would make the program appear hopeless and foolish have been eliminated.⁴³

⁴² As Voegelin points out (Science, Politics & Gnosticism [Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, A Gateway Edition, 1968], pp. 10-11), the ancient gnosticisms always appealed to a 'hidden' God to lead man out of the world and its alienating conditions.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 100.

It would seem that where both contemporary science and political theology are concerned, several crucial elements have been suppressed or overlooked.

Aristotelian Methodology

The first element which seems to have been overlooked is the fundamentally Aristotelian character of both the scientific enterprise and political theology. Because both accept the 'dis-goddedness' of the world, both seek (or should seek) the really real within the world. Science seeks a cosmic reality, political theology a historical reality. Both then require a method which is capable of analyzing the value of the world as world.

Both science and political theology have had to confront the antinomies apparent within the phenomena. Whether these be the wave/particle, space/time dichotomies of science or the nature/freedom, metaphysics/history dichotomies of political theology, they cannot be avoided. The inability to deal with them spelled the end of Newtonian physics. "To entertain the idea that nature might express itself through the paradoxical unity of irreducible aspects was for classical physics almost impossible to believe."⁴⁴

Unhappily, subsequent attempts to deal with them have sought their resolution in a Platonic reductionism, not an Aristotelian correlation. The Einstein/Planck refusal to accept the Heisenberg uncertainty principle is an extension of the Newtonian mentality which demands a one-on-one correspondence between theory and reality. The Copenhagen School attempts to circumvent the dilemma by appeal to a theory of complementarity which reduces its paradox to correlations between the scientist and the phenomena rather than to genuine correlations

⁴⁴ Jaki, The Relevance of Physics, p. 92.

within the phenomena themselves. Metz' starting point, the Marxist critique which gives primacy to the future over the past, avoids the paradox by denying it at the outset. The really real, therefore, is reduced to some single aspect of the phenomena which we encounter, whether that aspect be called Mind, energy, chaos or freedom.

The methodological escape from this type of reductionism lies in an Aristotelian methodology, precisely because it is Aristotle's notion of the complementarity of act and potency, form and matter, which allows us to take the synthetic character of the phenomena seriously. Given the difficulties which 'wavicles' posed for physics, Feyerabend is correct when he says of Bohr,

It was Bohr's great merit that in this situation he developed an intuitive idea, the idea of complementarity, which, although incompatible with a straightforward realism, nevertheless gave the physicists a much needed intuitive aid for the handling of concrete problems.⁴⁵

While the idea itself is extremely good, the Copenhagen Interpretation which would reduce the complementarity to Kantian a priori categories which impose themselves upon scientific investigation has undercut the major value of the idea.

As we have already seen, Heisenberg accepts the Cartesian isolation of mind and matter. Therefore, the Aristotelian and Platonic attempts to deal with the dualities in reality are no longer, in his judgment, relevant.⁴⁶ This enables him to trace the roots of quantum theory solely to those Greek philosophers who sought to account for matter without reference to form."⁴⁷ Heisenberg is therefore able to

⁴⁵Paul K. Feyerabend, "Professor Bohm's Philosophy of Nature," in Toulmin, Physical Reality, p. 177.

⁴⁶See p. 336.

⁴⁷Heisenberg, Physics and Philosophy, chapter IV.

conclude that "modern physics is in some way extremely near to the doctrines of Heraclitus." In other words, "change itself is the fundamental principle."⁴⁸ This can be regarded as the pure chance of Heisenberg, the energy of Einstein or the chaos (the dance of the Lord Shiva) of Buddhism. The result of avoiding both Plato and Aristotle results in a curious combination of the two. The fundamental material principle is intrinsic (Aristotelian) and yet undifferentiated (Platonic).

Yet such a combination doesn't work. For if one seeks an undifferentiated principle of intelligibility (as does Einstein), then one has no way of dealing with the Heisenberg uncertainty principle and the Bohr theory of complementarity. And if one seeks an undifferentiated principle of chaos or pure chance (as does Heisenberg), then one has no choice but to locate intelligibility solely within the human mind, cutting scientific knowledge off from the phenomena. Here the work of de Broglie and his followers is enormously important, since it accepts the fundamentally Aristotelian character of reality.

Evidently the uncertainty principle, the statistical character of the laws of quantum mechanics and the duality of waves and corpuscles, are nothing more than different facets of a single complex reality which we must do our best to interpret.⁴⁹

Only an Aristotelian methodology allows one to account for the dual characteristics of the phenomena within a framework which sacrifices neither the unity nor the intelligibility of the phenomena. To accept either the Cartesian split of matter and mind or the Marxist primacy of the future over the past requires that one overlook the Aristotelian form/matter correlation, a position which leads in all cases to a Platonic

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁹ Silva and Lochak, Quanta, p. 160.

reduction of reality to a single undifferentiated principle.

Christian Doctrine of Creation

A second element which generally gets overlooked is the importance of the Christian teaching on creation with regard to the rise of science, the value of the world and the reality of history. Metz and political theologians in general, with their enormous emphasis on the future and the eschaton, tend to ignore creation and the beginning of things, especially any aspect of the doctrine which would insist upon the intrinsic goodness and value of the created order per se.⁵⁰

The scientific community tends to overlook its own indebtedness to the Christian doctrine of creation. As Jaki points out,

The deeds if not always the words of scientists show that they have always held a fairly steady set of propositions as verities, of which two are of fundamental importance for the scientific enterprise. One is the existence of a world intrinsically ordered in all its parts and consistent in all its interactions. The other is the existence of a human mind capable of understanding such a world in an ever more comprehensive manner.⁵¹

The Christian doctrine of creation, by insisting that the world owes its existence to a personal, rational God and that man is made in the image of that God, produced in the Middle Ages an entire culture which accepted without serious question the notion of an intelligible world and an intelligent human agent capable of understanding that world. As Jaki points out, science was stillborn in every society outside of

⁵⁰ Liberation theology has similar difficulties with creation. For one example of this, see Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), especially chapter 9, "Liberation and Salvation," where the doctrine of creation ex nihilo is replaced by a notion of creation as a struggle between God and chaos, and where the history of salvation, beginning with creation, is viewed as a continual war against a fundamental disorder from which liberation is a flight (exodus).

⁵¹ Jaki, The Road of Science, p. 247.

Western Europe, including ancient Greece. And it never was, properly speaking, even conceived in those oriental societies informed by the Buddhist notion of reality. For such a notion of reality gives no encouragement to the scientific enterprise.

Whitehead also notes the indebtedness of modern science to medieval scholasticism.

I do not think, however, that I have even yet brought out the greatest contribution of medievalism to the formation of the scientific movement. I mean the inexpugnable belief that every detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a perfectly definite manner, exemplifying general principles. Without this belief the incredible labours of scientists would be without hope. It is this instinctive conviction, vividly poised before the imagination, which is the motive power of research:--that there is a secret, a secret which can be unveiled. How has this conviction been so vividly implanted on the European mind?⁵²

He concludes that "the possibility of science, generated antecedently to the development of modern scientific theory, is an unconscious derivative from medieval theology."⁵³

Newtonian physics, although it reduced the universe to a machine, still retained some sense of this medieval heritage in its faith in God as the great mechanic who had constructed such a rationally-ordered machine. Einstein's statement that we should, a priori, expect the universe to be chaotic,⁵⁴ signals the modern break with that heritage. Copenhagen physicists have abandoned it altogether. Logical positivism and the rediscovery of Buddhism alike are the result of that abandonment.

. . . historically the belief in creation and the Creator was the moment of truth for science. This belief formed the bedrock on which science rose. It is a telling reflection on the tragic

⁵² Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, p. 13.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁴ See p. 340.

instability of human thought that, a century or two after the rise of science, its true origins could be ignored or fiercely attacked by so many gifted minds. The tragedy was their yielding to the illusion of idealism in which only the mind--not the stubborn, finite, contingent facts of nature and history--had true existence. That the most articulate spokesman [Ernst Mach] of the nineteenth-century positivism, the very opposite of idealism, was to drift into Buddhism, shows that extremes have the same logic and much the same consequences, boding ill for science no less than for theism.⁵⁵

As the same author goes on to note, "Once monotheism was no longer considered rational, molecules became mystical."⁵⁶

The Contingency of Intelligibility

The one assumption which the scientific community as a whole seems to make, whether it be voiced by a Newton, an Einstein or an Heisenberg, is that intelligibility and necessity go hand in hand. The same assumption prevails in Metz as well, in his identification of structure with nature and of nature with the Aristotelian essence which is predetermined in its activity and its end. This assumption goes back to Greek philosophy, where we find it deeply rooted in the thought of both Plato and Aristotle. Intelligibilities are, for both of them, firmly grounded in forms or formal principles, and those forms or formal principles are not free. They proceed by their own inner logic. It is precisely this notion of formal intelligibility as necessary intelligibility which Thomas had to overcome if Aristotle was to serve a Christian purpose.

The esse/essence distinction is the Thomist methodological transformation of Aristotle's necessary intelligibility into that contingent intelligibility which the Christian doctrine of creation requires. Unfortunately, however, Thomas himself had a tendency to emphasize the

⁵⁵ Jaki, The Road of Science, pp. 143-144.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 158.

intelligibility at the expense of the contingency, and for that reason never effected the full transformation of Aristotle which his esse/ essence distinction made possible. Instead, he tried to find within that transformation a place for Aristotle's substance (essence) and therefore for Aristotle's notion of necessary intelligibility.

This suppression of contingent intelligibility is continued by both science and political theology. Physics embraces the link between necessity and intelligibility as a fundamental scientific principle. Metz accepts the general principle, but opposes the tyranny of such a necessitated intelligibility with the notion of an unstructured freedom or grace which is capable of overcoming it. The error in both cases consists in identifying intelligibility and essence (nature). If, as has been pointed out, the method which both science and political theology require in order to affirm the value of the world and of history is Aristotelian, then it must be added that both science and political theology require the Thomist transformation of necessary intelligibility into contingent intelligibility if such a method is to have any bearing on a world and a history which is freely created.

Contingent Intelligibility and the Phenomena. Three important indications of contingent intelligibility have arisen in quantum physics. We have already referred to two of them. The first of these is the apparent inability of science to locate a purely material building block for the universe. There seems little reason to suppose, as was noted earlier,⁵⁷ that the quark will prove to be any more solid and indivisible than the atom. As Barnett points out,

⁵⁷ See p. 349.

. . . the fundamental mystery remains. The whole march of science toward the unification of concepts--the reduction of all matter to elements and then to a few types of particles, the reduction of "forces" to the single concept "energy," and then the reduction of matter and energy to a single basic quantity--leads still to the unknown. The many questions merge into one, to which there may never be an answer: what is the essence of this mass-energy substance, what is the underlying stratum of physical reality which science seeks to explore.⁵⁸

The second indication of contingent intelligibility is the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, which reflects both our inability to reduce the phenomena to a single principle of explanation and our inability to reduce individual phenomena to mathematical necessities. If one supposes that intelligibility is necessitated and not contingent, the Heisenberg principle can mean only one of two things: either science has overlooked something (the Einstein/Planck position) or the phenomena are fundamentally chaotic (the Copenhagen Interpretation). Yet, as Jaki points out, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle would seem to indicate something else entirely:

. . . modern physics in general, and the indeterminacy principle in particular, made it abundantly clear that the mechanical intelligibility does not exhaust the whole range of intelligibility. Therefore one should not conclude on the basis of the indeterminacy principle that "the world is not a world of reason, understandable by the intellect of man." Those modern physicists who do so fall back unawares on the definition of intelligibility as formulated by classical mechanism.⁵⁹

In other words, the uncertainty principle would seem to signal an existential intelligibility in the phenomena which cannot be submitted to any essentialist (necessary) framework or theory.

As Heisenberg notes, "Probability in mathematics or in statistical mechanics means a statement about our degree of knowledge of the actual

⁵⁸ Barnett, The Universe and Dr. Einstein, p. 55.

⁵⁹ Jaki, The Relevance of Physics, p. 55.

situation."⁶⁰ What probability does not force us to conclude, as Heisenberg among others seems to, is that what we do not know is therefore unintelligible. Contingent intelligibility would, by definition, escape every essentialist attempt to confine it within a single, all-comprehensive explanation.

Contingent Intelligence and the Mind. Both the Heisenberg uncertainty principle and the irreducibility of matter to a single indivisible particle indicate the presence of both contingency and intelligibility on the side of the phenomena. The third indication of contingent intelligibility, Godel's proof, suggests that the mind itself also enjoys these dual characteristics. For Kurt Godel demonstrated, in a paper put out in 1931, that no complete non-trivial mathematical system contains within itself the proof of its own consistency. Appeal must always be made to principles extrinsic to the system. This means, in effect, that mathematics itself can never be reduced to a single, all-comprehensive system of logical truth.

As Godel's own arguments show, no antecedent limits can be placed on the inventiveness of mathematicians in devising new rules of proof. Consequently, no final account can be given of the precise logical form of valid mathematical demonstrations.⁶¹

Once again, however, this does not mean that the human mind itself is fundamentally irrational. It means rather that human rationality is incapable of being programmed, computer style.

Godel's proof should not be construed as an invitation to despair or as an excuse for mystery-mongering. The discovery that there are arithmetical truths which cannot be demonstrated formally does not mean that there are truths which are forever

⁶⁰ Heisenberg, Physics and Philosophy, p. 40.

⁶¹ Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman, Godel's Proof (New York: New York University Press, 1958), p. 99.

incapable of becoming known, or that a "mystic" intuition (radically different in kind and authority from what is generally operative in intellectual advances) must replace cogent proof. It does not mean, as a recent writer claims, that there are "ineluctable limits to human reason." It does mean that the resources of the human intellect have not been, and cannot be, fully formalized, and that new principles of demonstration forever await invention and discovery.⁶²

Whitehead tells us that "the pursuit of mathematics is a divine madness of the human spirit, a refuge from the goading urgency of contingent happenings."⁶³ Prior to the Middle Ages, it was primarily a Platonic refuge from the irrational contingencies of matter; it was that second degree of knowledge which constituted a kind of halfway house between sense knowledge and pure intelligibility.

Newtonian physics, with its mechanical models of the phenomena, assumed, despite its own Cartesianism, an Aristotelian notion of human intelligence as material. Human knowledge, in this view, has an irrevocably material component. In Thomist terms, human knowing always requires a turn to the phantasm.

The shift by quantum physics to mathematical abstractions signalled a movement back toward intelligibility as de-materialized, Platonic. For those physicists who follow the Copenhagen Interpretation, the shift is explicitly Platonic, i.e., away from the irrational contingencies which the Heisenberg view of things supposes to be inherent in the subatomic phenomena. Because, however, such an interpretation refuses the Platonic notion of a purely formal realm in which intelligibility participates, irrationality per se takes the place of Plato's forms, becoming for both scientific positivists and scientific Buddhists

⁶² Ibid., p. 101.

⁶³ Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, p. 22.

the only realm which exists. Mathematics is, for these scientists, the de-materialized and therefore purely intelligible refuge which they seek from such irrationality. As Silva and Lochak point out, no imaginative representations of the world are possible under these circumstances.

According to the Copenhagen School, then, there must be an essential indeterminism, and Heisenberg's relations will become relations of indeterminism as well as of practical uncertainty. It is not enough to say that it is impossible to know the exact position and velocity of a particle simultaneously. It must be maintained that, in general, there is no such thing as a well-determined position or velocity. Matter and light become fugitive indeed, and any hope of representing the world in terms of pictures and motions becomes nothing more than an empty dream.⁶⁴

Since the Middle Ages, however, it has been possible to seek an Aristotelian refuge from the existential contingency of creation which is central to the Thomist view of the world. Mathematical abstraction in this context becomes a means of reducing the esse/essence distinction to essence alone. Mathematics is here a refuge not from irrationality or chaos, but from that existential intelligibility which is incapable of being reduced to a single mathematical scheme or scientific theory. We have already seen how Einstein and Planck sought such a refuge. (It is the same refuge which Gilson approves when he exempts science from having to deal with the existential character of the phenomena.) The fact that the Heisenberg uncertainty principle cut them off from just such a refuge was, in their eyes, its primary fault.

Einstein and Planck have, however, also sought a Platonic refuge from material contingency. As we have seen,⁶⁵ Planck sought the liberation of knowledge from its anthropomorphous elements. Mathematics

⁶⁴ Silva and Lochak, Quanta, p. 164.

⁶⁵ See p. 343.

is therefore a refuge from both the contingency of matter and the contingency of esse, i.e., from contingency qua irrational and qua incapable of submitting to formal structure.

Both the Heisenberg uncertainty principle and the inability of science to reduce matter to a single indivisible particle or building block indicate a contingent intelligibility on the side of the phenomena which can never be reduced to formal or material schemes and principles. Likewise, Godel's proof indicates a contingent intelligence on the side of the human mind which can never be reduced, a la Kant, to any a priori conceptual or logical framework. Furthermore, the notion of contingent intelligibility allows one to avoid both the chaos of the Copenhagen Interpretation and that essentialist apriorism of Einstein and Planck which could not accept the formal limitations implicit in quantum theory. Contingent intelligibility would not, in short, require science to abandon the quest for intelligibility, it would only require that it abandon the notion that scientific theory ever can give a total account of that intelligibility. For scientific theory is hypothetical intelligibility, always in potency to further actualization.

The persistent failure of a priori syntheses of physics, the evidence of the fundamentally experimental roots of geometry, the basic subordination of the heuristic values of mathematics to the experimental observation, and the relative uncertainty in which mathematics is ultimately enveloped all seem to indicate that the replacement of theories in physics will continue as before. This means, however, that only the kernel of scientific truth will become better defined as time goes on. The great aim of physical science, the overall synthesis of the scientific understanding of the universe will remain for all practical purposes what it has always been, the ever-remote objective of an intellectual faith.⁶⁶

Contingent intelligibility would also not require science to abandon

⁶⁶ Jaki, The Relevance of Physics, p. 136.

the notion of a relationship between necessity and intelligibility. Toulmin points out that, within the parameters of a given experiment, "it is the very business of the theory to tell him [the scientist] what must happen, i.e., what he must expect to happen, in such circumstances."⁶⁷ To say that "what must happen" means "what the scientist must expect to happen" is enormously important. For it means that necessity determines not what will happen, but only what the scientist thinks will happen. Scientific necessity is, in other words, a hypothetical necessity which stands in potency to the actual experiment. Without such hypothetical necessities, scientists could never judge the value of their theories. But such necessity is not actual, for it does not determine, a priori, the results of scientific experimentation.

When hypothetical necessities are not confirmed by actual experiments, new theories are formulated. Through the replacement of one theory by another, the horizon of physics expands. Some questions are answered, new questions arise. New theories are, in fact, the necessary condition of possibility for raising new questions. Newtonian physics thought it had forever defined both the horizon and the questions, not to mention the answers. This was not only its greatest error, it was also its greatest poverty. For, as Toulmin points out, "what was repugnant was not just the fact that the theories advanced were so bare and mechanical but, quite as much, the fact that their idea of what it would be to have explained everything was so much smaller than life."⁶⁸

Contingent Intelligibility and History/Metaphysics. What is most

⁶⁷ Stephen Toulmin, The Philosophy of Science (New York/Evanston: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1953), p. 93.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 117.

damaging about the suppression of contingent intelligibility is the fact that it undermines both metaphysics and history. Its undermining of metaphysics is perhaps more apparent in the theology of Metz, where nature and metaphysics are explicitly reduced to freedom and history. But the damage done to metaphysics by quantum physics is just as great. For it produces either the absence of metaphysics altogether (the Copenhagen Interpretation) or the affirmation of a metaphysics which can no longer be reconciled with scientific knowledge (Einstein, Planck). The former option reduces reality to an interplay of necessity (intelligibility) and chance (contingency), the latter reduces reality to necessity (intelligibility) alone. One is finally forced to choose between cosmic chaos and cosmic necessity.

The damage done to history is equally great, although here it is perhaps more apparent in quantum physics than in political theology, since quantum physics simply suppresses history altogether. Quantum physicists accept either that notion of nature which Metz abhors, namely, that of an intelligently necessitated universe (Einstein/Planck) in which nothing genuinely novel can ever occur because all intelligibility is pre-determined by its essential structures, or that notion of chaos or chance which the Copenhagen Interpretation offers, in which nothing genuinely novel can occur because all occurrences are random. The 'event' character (the singular or individual) of reality is reduced to a process (statistics) and thereby lost. Intelligibility resides solely in process, not in events.

Whether one adopts Einsteinian necessities or Copenhagen probabilities, the fundamental relationship between experiment and theory is lost to sight. For scientific theory (which deals with universals or processes)

must always submit to experimentation (which deals with events or singulars). The statistical probabilities of quantum physics reveal not the irrationality of events (singulars), but the irrepeatability and contingent intelligibility of such events, i.e., the genuinely historical character of even the subatomic realm.

The damage which Metz' theology inflicts on history is less apparent, perhaps, but equally great. First, as we have already seen, the reduction of metaphysics to history requires that the really real be located outside history. For, as long as we are in history, nature will war with freedom, just as ontology will war with history. The historical realm is therefore one which offers no genuine goodness or value, only struggle and flight toward the absolute future (eschaton). Like the Copenhagen reduction of event to process, political theology reduces events to praxis. Qualitatively different freedoms (individual freedoms) are reduced to a single communal praxis in which one must participate, since not to participate, as noted earlier,⁶⁹ is to damage the community and diminish reality itself.

Secondly, the reduction of metaphysics to history has the effect of depriving history of any foundation. As Whitehead has observed, "You cannot have a rational justification for your appeal to history till your metaphysics has assured you that there is a history to appeal to; and likewise your conjectures as to the future presuppose some basis of knowledge that there is a future already subjected to some determinations."⁷⁰ To put the matter another way, the Christian doctrine of

⁶⁹See p. 311. This type of thinking is perhaps best exemplified by a popular poster which states, "If you are not a part of the solution, you are a part of the problem."

⁷⁰Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, p. 45.

the good creation cannot be divorced from history, inasmuch as genuine novelty and freedom cannot be recognized apart from an intelligible structure. Even in science, as Toulmin has pointed out, necessary intelligibility is essential in order that the scientist may know what to expect. For only by knowing what to expect can he recognize a genuine departure from necessity (though not from intelligibility).

The Copenhagen School offers us a striking lesson in the need for a metaphysical grounding of history. Chaos does not produce novelty, it only produces random change. Because the Copenhagen physicists cannot appeal to God, they are left with chaos. Metz can and does appeal to God to bring liberation from nature (alienating structure), but in so doing he de-historicizes reality by locating goodness and intelligibility outside history. History is fundamentally restrictive and alienating. Only God's intervention to suppress its sinful structures makes possible our flight from nature and toward the eschaton.

The Particles, Praxis and Knowledge

A fourth element which today's scientific and theological gnosticisms tend to suppress is the relationship between the objectively given base of knowledge (the particles⁷¹), the human contribution to the process of knowing (praxis) and knowledge itself (theory). Metz avoids the problem of stating this relation by refusing to consider the question of an objectively given base of knowledge. He concentrates entirely on the relationship between theory and praxis. Scientists, on the whole, tend to suppress one or another aspect of the relationship whenever

⁷¹The word 'particle' will be used, in keeping with Barfield and de Broglie's use of language, to designate the objectively given base of knowledge apart from any activity on the part of the human mind. 'Phenomena' will refer to the mind's figuration of the particles.

they step out of their scientific roles to take on philosophic ones. It is very important, therefore, to follow the advice of Einstein when he said,

If you want to find out anything from the theoretical physicists about the methods they use, I advise you to stick closely to one principle: don't listen to their words, fix your attention on their deeds.⁷²

Physicists, as Toulmin points out, "seek the form of given regularities."⁷³ Here, in a nutshell, we have a statement of the relationship between the particles and the contribution which the mind makes to them. The particles present "regularities". These regularities define the starting point of scientific investigation. The observations of physicists are therefore not subjectively defined, but objectively controlled. The Copenhagen Interpretation, which reduces all sensory data to the subjective observations of the physicist, suppresses this controlling role which the particles play. "As one cannot start doing physics just anywhere, so also there are very definite limits to what will count in physics as an observation."⁷⁴

The human mind seeks the "form". What we have here is an Aristotelian approach to the particles, in which the human investigator seeks the formal conditions of possibility which can account for the observed regularities. In other words, the physicist seeks an intelligibility which is immanent in the sensory data but with implications which transcend what is directly and immediately given by that data. Scientific

⁷² Albert Einstein, The World As I See It (New York: Covici-Friede, 1934), p. 30.

⁷³ Toulmin, The Philosophy of Science, p. 53.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

method is therefore both empirical and analytical, always controlled by the particles and yet intending an intelligibility which goes beyond them. The Copenhagen Interpretation also suppresses this dual aspect of scientific method, reducing the analytical to the empirical in its insistence that scientific method is never capable of carrying the physicist beyond the empirical data and his own interaction with or experience of it.

Furthermore, neither the regularities immanent in recurrent material events (particles) nor those of human reason, as we have had occasion to observe with regard to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Godel's Proof, are capable of being reduced to any logical, essential or self-enclosed formalities, be they qualitative or mathematical. Both the Copenhagen and the Einstein/Planck interpretations suppress the historical, existentially contingent intelligibility of the particles and the free intelligence of the human mind. Nevertheless, the virtual infinity of regularities which successive layers of "matter" reveal guarantees a virtually infinite quest in pursuit of the forms which can account for those regularities.

By now it should be apparent that scientific knowledge (theory) is a product of the interplay between the objectively given data (particles) and historical and free human analysis (praxis). If either one is missing, human knowledge is impossible. There is, as Metz maintains, no true knowledge apart from free and responsible existence in history. But there is also, as Metz overlooks, no valid theory or praxis apart from the objectively given regularities with which the world confronts us.

According to Voegelin, the central refusal of any gnosticism is

the denial of intrinsic and ordered structures in the material realm.

The world is no longer the well-ordered, the cosmos, in which Hellenic man felt at home; nor is it the Judaeo-Christian world that God created and found good. Gnostic man no longer wishes to perceive in admiration the intrinsic order of the cosmos. For ⁷⁵ him the world has become a prison from which he wants to escape;

In both quantum physics and political theology, we can see this central refusal at work with regard to the regularities or structures with which the world confronts us. In each case, the refusal would seem to rest upon some a priori assumption about the relationship between the human mind and the structured realm within which it finds itself.

Einstein/Planck (and classical physics) suppose an essentialist isomorphism between the mind and the particles, such that, for them, the proper goal of science is the development of a complete theory of reality which enjoys a strict correspondence with the particles themselves. Newtonian physics therefore denied the altogether hypothetical character of scientific knowledge. Einstein and Planck acknowledged scientific theories to be provisionally hypothetical, i.e., hypothetical with regard to that complete theory which had not yet been developed, but not hypothetical per se. They continued to seek that complete theory which Newtonian physics mistakenly thought itself to have found.

As a result, Einstein and Planck were forced, by the logic of their own assumptions with regard to knowledge, to deny the implications of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, since a one-on-one theory cannot be accommodated to particle regularities which manifest dual characteristics. Since the theory cannot be accommodated to the particles, the particles must therefore be accommodated to the theory. Hence, both Einstein and Planck in effect counseled physicists to go back to the particles and discover something else (Einstein's hidden variables, for

⁷⁵ Voegelin, Science, Politics & Gnosticism, p. 9.

example). Theory, in other words, became their refuge from the epistemological implications of the world's structure.

The Copenhagen School, on the other hand, supposes a Kantian dichotomy between the structures of the mind and the regularities of the particles, such that, for members of this school, the goal of quantum physics is to develop a complex of concepts which can be used to handle (predict) the phenomena. The Copenhagen Interpretation, therefore, accepts the permanently hypothetical character of scientific theory, for the simple reason that scientific theory (which is determined by the structures of the mind) can never enjoy any correspondence with the objectively given chaos.

As a result, the Copenhagen physicists have been forced, by the logic of their assumptions, to deny any metaphysical import to scientific theory. Since the theory, and therefore the human mind, can never be accommodated to the actual structures of the particles, one must relegate the particles to the hinterlands of chaos and irrationality and the mental concepts (forms) to the hinterlands of emptiness and illusion. Hence, physicists such as Mach, Heisenberg and Bohr have counselled scientists to abandon the notion that scientific knowledge goes beyond the sensory or the experiential. Logical positivism and/or Eastern mysticism have become their refuge from the metaphysical implications of a structured particle realm.

Metz supposes a kind of reverse Kantian dichotomy between the human mind and the phenomena. Nature or structure as alienation is attributed to the phenomena, freedom or the ability to transcend alienating structure is attributed to the human spirit. Unlike Kant, who understood the human mind to impose a structure on the particles, Metz understands the objectively given realm to be that which seeks to impose its regularities on the

human spirit, thereby imprisoning humanity in its own essentialist, self-enclosed (alienating) fatality. The human task lies therefore in recognizing both the true character of the objectively given and the human power (freedom) to transcend the structures of that givenness. Any pure knowledge (theory) which arises from an analysis or contemplation of those structures is therefore not only unable to help us but even likely to harm us, by suggesting that the human mind must submit to rather than overcome those structures.

As a result, Metz is drawn by the logic of his own assumptions into the same blind alley in which the Copenhagen School finds itself. For Metz, no less than the Copenhagen School, is forced into denying the value of metaphysics. The only difference between the two positions arises from the fact that the Copenhagen Interpretation supposes the human mind can never be accommodated to the regularities of the subatomic realm (since there are none), whereas Metz supposes the human mind ought never to allow itself to be accommodated to the objectively given structures of the political and ecclesiological realms. To accept the primacy of the objectively given over human freedom is, in his judgment, to involve oneself in pure theory or pure knowledge which is gained at the price of reducing freedom to necessity. One must therefore assert the primacy of such freedom over necessary structure. One must, that is to say, assert the primacy of praxis over theory. Praxis therefore becomes Metz' refuge from the alienation of the objectively given realm.

In each of the above cases, we have seen again a failure to recognize the correlation between intelligibility and contingency, both on the side of the human mind and on the side of the objectively given. Einstein/Planck and classical physics simply deny contingency. The

Copenhagen School and Metz oppose intelligible structure (theory) and contingency. The Copenhagen Interpretation places contingency (chaos) on the side of the objectively given and intelligibility (structure) on the side of the human mind. Metz reverses the two, placing contingency (freedom) on the side of the human mind and intelligibility (nature) on the side of the objectively given. (Pure theory occurs on the side of human intelligence only when the mind submits itself to nature rather than exercising its freedom to overcome nature.)

Whether one suppresses contingency or places it in opposition to intelligence, the result is the same. There can be no genuine interplay between the mind and the particles. One must always be subordinated to the other. The really real is then identified with either an absolute contingency (whether it be chaos or freedom) or an absolute intelligibility (whether it be mind or nature) intrinsic to the material realm or with an extrinsic being who is both intelligence and freedom. In either case, the solution is Platonic, for either it reduces contingent intelligibility to one of its component elements or it locates contingent intelligibility outside the world and history. Flight from the actual givenness of the world, whether into theory, linguistic analysis, mysticism or praxis, is unavoidable.

Metz' problems are much more complex than those of the quantum physicists, for Metz has to concern himself not only with the general relationship between human activity (praxis) and knowledge (theory) but with the particular relationship between a notion of social praxis which has arisen within the context of and been explicitly informed by a secularized (dis-godded or de-divinized) view of reality and the existence of a Christian faith which arose within the context of and has

been explicitly informed by a theological (theocentric or divinized) view of the world's reality. Hence, his problems are considerably more difficult even than those of Marx. In fact, the Marxist critique is unable to address the theological dilemma which confronts Metz.

The Marxist admonition to philosophers to stop contemplating and to start changing reality was itself based on the assumption of an isomorphism between the mind and that which is objectively given--not an isomorphism of intelligence and contingency, but an isomorphism of malleability. Marx supposed that we are confronted with a choice: either we subordinate ourselves to the objectively given or we subordinate the objectively given to ourselves. If one supposes this, the philosophic task, though perhaps painful, is not impossible. It consists in reassessing the priorities between theory and praxis. Such a reassessment may produce a fundamental dichotomy between the old theoretical philosophy and the new practical philosophy, it may overturn the entire philosophical enterprise as it had up to that point been understood, but it does not introduce into what one is doing any glaring contradictions. One has simply switched from the wrong to the right track.

Such an admonition, when addressed by Metz to Christianity, however, produces problems which Marx never encountered. For Metz must find a way to accept the Marxist revaluation of all values without simultaneously denying the value of Christian faith. Although scarcely a practical goal, Metz attempts to achieve such an end by affirming the contemporary secular and praxis-oriented consciousness as precisely that consciousness which Christ intended and has successfully effected in history.

This view of things immediately involves Metz in two acute problems from which he is unable to extricate himself. The first of these

problems is that of accounting for Christ's effectiveness in history. One cannot fall back on Marx' simple dichotomy between a theoretical past which merely contemplated reality and a practical future which must change reality. For what Metz is asserting is a Christian faith which has been historically effective in the past and in the absence of modern historical consciousness and its praxis orientation. One must either abandon the Marxist dichotomy or one must abandon the view that Christ has been effective. Metz does neither, and that refusal introduces a fundamental incoherence at the heart of his theology.

The resolution to Metz' dilemma, as mentioned earlier,⁷⁶ lies in recognizing the relationship between praxis and knowledge (faith). Einstein's advice to look at physicists' deeds rather than their words is enormously important, for it enables us to recognize that knowledge (faith) arises together with praxis (human activity) and cannot exist in isolation from it. If Christ has already been effective in changing history, the only condition of possibility for that is the existence of a concrete historical Christian praxis which Marx, eyes on the future alone, overlooked. To say this, however, requires one to abandon the notion that praxis can be opposed to structure, for it is itself a part of the givenness of history, not something which contemporary consciousness has created.

The theological task with regard to this praxis is, therefore, an historical task, that of identifying Christian praxis in history (a point to which we shall return in the next chapter). It is not the hermeneutical task which Metz defines, that of relating faith and social praxis. To suppose the latter is to reduce history (contingency) to

⁷⁶ See pp. 329-330.

hermeneutics (intelligibility). It is simply another variation on that flight from an historical order thought to be chaotic or alienating. It is the reduction of material reality to a de-materialized formulation which can then only be imposed upon the future, not found in the past.

The second problem which Metz runs into is that of grounding praxis itself. We have already, at least indirectly, seen this problem arise in the thinking of Einstein and Planck with regard to their quite vague references to God. If one supposes or discovers, as they do, that the universe is fundamentally intelligible, then one must fall back on some notion of intelligence to account for that fact. The obvious answer lies in pantheism or an immanent Mind somehow at work in the processes of the universe. The fact that neither Einstein nor Planck advances to the affirmation of a transcendent God should not be surprising. The immanent intelligibility which they have discovered requires an immanent, not a transcendent, source of intelligibility. (This is why, as has previously been pointed out, scientific methodology is Aristotelian, not Platonic.)

Metz' position is the reverse of Einstein's. As a Christian theologian, Metz must affirm the transcendent God. His problems begin at that point when he also tries to affirm an historically effective mediation of Christ (which is the historical problem of locating the concrete praxis which makes possible Christ's effectiveness) and when he affirms that shift in human consciousness from theocentrism to anthropocentrism which liberates the human mind to the task (praxis) of changing the world. The very possibility of such a praxis requires us to suppose that some degree of intelligible process can operate in the world. What is the condition of possibility for such a process?

The problem is made particularly acute by Metz' insistence upon the de-divinized or secular character of the world. If the world itself has been emptied of divinity, then it must be regarded either as the source of its own intelligibility (Aristotle's uncreated world) or as a realm fundamentally devoid of intelligibility (Heisenberg's universe of chaos or pure chance). An extrinsic God is of no help at all, unless one can affirm that such a God is capable of communicating some measure of His own intelligence to the world. In other words, some notion of participation is indispensable.

Reference was made earlier to the fact that, while Barfield agrees with Metz as to the irrevocable character of that shift in human consciousness which has today produced an anthropocentric rather than a theocentric notion of reality, he does not agree with Metz' interpretation of that shift. The source of the disagreement lies precisely in this question of participation. The secular or humanized world which Metz understands to be a permanent feature in both human consciousness and human perceptions of reality is, in Barfield's judgment, simply another one of the stages through which human consciousness is passing on its way from 'original' to 'final' participation. To understand what he means by 'final' participation and to examine the ontological implications of such a notion is the purpose of the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 10

ESSE/ESSENCE: CREATION IN CHRIST

Plato's form/matter dichotomy supposes that the world is constituted by necessary intelligibilities (forms) fragmented by contingent chaos (matter). Form does not, properly speaking, belong in this realm. It has fallen into matter. Its materialization, therefore, is not a necessity of form per se, but the contingent and unintelligible condition in which it finds itself.

Aristotle accepted Plato's notion of necessary intelligibility. What he rejected was the notion that the materialization of such intelligibility is either contingent or irrational (fallen). While matter does not contribute to the intelligibility of things, it does, in his judgment, make possible that essential multiplicity which the world requires in order to be world. Aristotle, therefore, reduces the Platonic contingency to formal necessity--the a priori cause of multiplicity.

When Thomas decided to make Aristotle's method his own, he recognized that the absence of contingency in Aristotle could not be reconciled with the Christian doctrine of creation. Nor could the chaotic contingency in Plato be reconciled with the notion that creation is good. Thomas therefore required some methodological principle whereby the unity and intelligibility of the Aristotelian world could be correlated with the freedom and goodness of the Christian creation. Esse/essence is the methodological statement of that correlation by which he transformed Aristotle. It was an extraordinary achievement, for it made

available to the theologian what had never been available before--a methodological tool for justifying literal statements about the intelligibility and freedom of the world as world. For the esse/essence correlation breaks once and for all the Greek link between intelligibility and necessity. It states that all created intelligibility is contingent, not necessitated.

Unfortunately, Thomas was as much a son of Greek philosophy as he was of the Catholic Church, a fact which makes itself most felt in his repeated attempts to maintain the Aristotelian link between intelligibility and necessity and the Platonic link between intelligibility and de-materialization. Hence, when Thomas speaks as an Aristotelian ('thick' essence texts), he speaks of essences as though they were somehow detachable from esse and therefore capable of being considered in their own right as necessary intelligibilities. And when he speaks as a Platonist ('thin' essence texts), he speaks of created things as though they were, in the metaphor of Carlo, chunks of esse and therefore imperfect manifestations of perfect (immaterial) intelligibility.

Einstein and Planck are the legitimate offspring of Thomist Aristotelianism, the Copenhagen School the illegitimate offspring of Thomist Platonism. For while the former simply follow Thomas in suppressing the contingent character of the world, the latter not only follow Thomas in denying any ultimate intelligibility to the world, they deny any ultimate intelligibility whatever, something which Thomas himself (not to mention Plato) never contemplated doing.

All scientists to date agree about the necessary character of intelligibility. And in that sense, all of them are heirs not only of Greek thought but also of the rationalizing character of medieval

theology, particularly with regard to the doctrine of creation. As Butterworth points out, one of the major problems with the doctrine of creation as traditionally presented within the Church is the fact that it has been to such an enormous degree rationalized.

. . . there is nothing in the official doctrine which links creation with the Christian revelation. In other words, creation is not presented as a specifically Christian mystery, but rather as if it were a truth which Christians held in common with non-Christians--apart, perhaps, from some minor adjustments.¹

A great share of the responsibility for this situation must be borne by medieval theologians, Thomas in particular, because they insisted so much upon the rationality of creation as to lose sight of its contingency. Science is indebted to medieval scholasticism for its insistence upon a rational world, but science has not been helped by the corresponding and needless suppression of the contingent character of the intelligibility of that world.

Contemporary theology is indebted to Metz, and to political theology in general, for restoring the centrality of freedom. The fact that Metz and political theologians as a whole are primarily concerned with the political, not the scientific, realm enables them to recognize the fundamental importance of the contingent, of that which is not necessitated. And by recognizing the fundamentally human character of contingency (i.e., freedom), they are trying to do what Thomas did when he introduced the principle of esse, namely, to introduce a contingency which avoids being Platonic (chaotic or destructive). Contingency is therefore not a negative factor, but the very condition of possibility for there being a genuine history of the world. History and freedom

¹Robert Butterworth, The Theology of Creation, Theology Today Series #5 (Butler, WI: Clergy Book Service, 1969), p. 22.

are two sides of the same coin. There can be no novelty without freedom. There can be only stasis or process (the unfolding of a predetermined or necessary intelligibility).

The problem which political theology cannot overcome, however, is its own Platonic starting point. Unlike Thomas, who could introduce *esse* as the principle of a new correlation, political theologians are forced to introduce freedom as the principle of a new dichotomy. Since the Platonic notion of form and matter is itself already a dichotomy, a new dichotomy can be set up only by suppressing one of the elements of the original dichotomy. Hence, political theologians have two choices. They can, like Gutierrez (a liberation theologian), suppress the Platonic form and oppose freedom and chaos (matter). Or they can, like Metz, suppress the Platonic matter and oppose freedom and nature (form). In either case, the good or intelligible creation is sacrificed to a contingent creation. God does not create ex nihilo; rather His creative activity consists in rescuing the world from either chaos (Gutierrez) or from the restrictive and self-enclosed structures of a necessitated nature (Metz).

The primary problem confronting Greek philosophy was that of reconciling the one and the many. For medieval theologians, it was reconciling the universal and the particular. Today, it is reconciling the intelligible and the contingent (free). These are all statements of the same problem, but today we see this problem most clearly in the contrast between the scientific concern for intelligibility and the political concern for freedom. Without intelligibility, there is no science, only mystification. Without freedom, there is no genuinely political realm, only tyranny. In order to secure the permanent value

of intelligibility, science tries to suppress contingency (Einstein/Planck) or reduce it to chaos (Copenhagen School). In order to secure the permanent value of freedom, politics tries to reduce historical structures to determinism (Metz) or to chaos (Gutierrez).

The doctrine of the good creation does not permit either of these alternatives, while the esse/essence correlation offers a methodological way to avoid them. Both the doctrine and the method have assumed a new importance in contemporary society and theology. Before examining the relationship of esse/essence to creation, we shall first consider why contemporary society so much stands in need of a doctrine and a method which insist upon the contingent intelligibilities of the world and the free intelligence of the human community.

Human Consciousness and Final Participation

We have noted the quandary in which Thomism finds itself, caught between thick and thin essences. We have also found the same quandary to reappear in contemporary science. Owen Barfield is concerned with that science, or, rather, with the contemporary relationship between science and religion. His book, Saving the Appearances, is explicitly designed to open up a new perspective or a "different 'slant'"² on that relationship.

He begins with the fact that the world which contemporary physics studies is radically different from the everyday world in which all of us live. He points out that if any sense is to be made of the subatomic realm that physicists study, we must re-assess the character of those 'things' which constitute the normal world of our experience. Drawing

²Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 11.

a distinction between the 'phenomena' (the everyday objects of our world, viz., trees) and the 'particles' (the subatomic realm which physics investigates, viz., the quarks which compose the tree), he concludes that the objects of our everyday world are "collective representations," that is to say, objects which we perceive to be there and which are accepted as being there because we as a community share a common perception that they are there. What distinguishes pink elephants from green trees is that the whole community agrees on the presence of the green trees, whereas we have only the testimony of a single individual, whose perceptions are more often than not informed by distilled spirits, as to the presence of the pink elephants. The 'particles' which physicists study are the 'unrepresented'; that is to say, they are the invisible substratum of those phenomena which we do perceive.

The critical problem, of course, is what Barfield means by 'perception' and 'representation'. What does it mean to 'perceive' something and what does it mean to say that something is a 'representation'? In order to answer these questions, Barfield examines the history of human consciousness (perception) and its relationship to the phenomena (representations). He discovers, in the process, that new perspective which he believes we need today.

Human Consciousness and the Phenomena

Barfield points out that the phenomena are related to the mind in three different ways. The first of these ways, which he calls figuration, is that experience of the phenomena in which the representation seems to be given to us whole and complete. The experience itself is misleading, for the 'representation' is not simply given; it requires a human activity of some kind.

Ought it to be called a 'mental' activity? Whatever it ought to be called, it really is the percipient's own contribution to the representation. It is all that in the representation which is not sensation. For, as the organs of sense are required to convert the unrepresented ('particles') into sensations for us, so something is required in us to convert sensations into 'things'.³

That 'something' which is required to convert sensations into things is what Barfield means by figuration. We perceive that which we figure.

Once the mind has figured sensations into things, it is capable of thinking about those things as 'things'.

For now our very attitude is, to treat them as independent of ourselves; to accept their 'outness' as self-evidently given; and to speculate about or to investigate their relations with each other.⁴

Such thinking can be called 'theoretical'. Since, however, it is not confined to science and need not be systematic, Barfield prefers to designate it by a more general expression which does not convey such a priori restrictions. He therefore calls this second relationship between the mind and the phenomena alpha thinking.

Finally, the mind can regard the phenomena in relation to itself. We can think about thinking. Such thinking can be called 'reflective' or 'critical', but again Barfield prefers a more general expression. He calls this third relationship beta thinking.

Thus far Barfield has done nothing more than point out relationships between the mind and the phenomena which have long been known to exist. Often ignored, however, is the correspondence between these three types of mental activity and the four stages through which human consciousness has thus far passed, and, more importantly, the correlation of human consciousness with the phenomena in each of those stages.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid.

The first stage of human consciousness was spontaneously pantheist, relying upon what Barfield calls 'original' participation. In this first stage, the figurating character of the mind was not yet recognized. Representations (the phenomena) were thought to be given whole and complete in experience. No distinction was made between the sensory data which are experienced and the mental activity which figures that data into representations. In other words, no distinction was drawn between the sensory experience and the extra-sensory figuration which the mind employs vis a vis that experience. A corresponding lack of differentiation was presumed with regard to the sensory and extra-sensory character of the phenomena themselves. The phenomena were not understood to be 'representations' of mana or spirit. They were identified with spirit. The sensory (the tree) and the extra-sensory (the spirit) were one.

The second stage, the metaphysical, arose when a distinction between the sensory and the extra-sensory was recognized. That process of differentiation took place in two steps. The first step, reflected in Plato's form/matter dichotomy, drew a distinction between the extra-sensory form (pure form) and the sensory form (form/matter). The phenomena were explicitly recognized as 'representations' of an invisible reality outside them. Although Plato recognized the synthetic character of the phenomena, he nevertheless continued to regard the mind as enjoying an unmediated participation in the realm of pure form. As a result, the mind was, in his judgment, able to discern intelligibility in the material world by virtue of its a priori contemplation of pure intelligibility. The movements in the phenomenal realm had their counterparts in the mind by virtue of the mind's participation in pure movement. Both

the phenomenal and the mental movements participated in that pure movement.

The second step, reflected in Aristotle's form/matter correlation, restored reality to the world without undercutting the differentiation which Plato had drawn between the sensory and the extra-sensory. It did, however, require a further statement of that differentiation, since form/matter itself was now understood to be the immanent and indivisible substructure which manifested itself in the phenomena. Therefore, Aristotle developed the notion of a substance/accident differentiation to account for the distinction between the underlying extra-sensory reality (substance) and its sensory or phenomenal manifestations (accidents). The phenomena were, in his account, the 'representations' of that underlying substance.

Aristotle's relocation of reality in the world also required a radical reassessment of the mind. For the elimination of Plato's formal realm eliminated the possibility of the mind enjoying an a priori participation in pure intelligibility. If phenomenal movements are to be understood by the mind, then the mind must in some sense reproduce or 'figure' those movements by its own immanent activity. This, in turn, means that the activity of the mind must differ fundamentally from the activities of the phenomena. "The proper movement of a circle is revolution; but the proper movement of the mind, he [Aristotle] insists, is--thinking."⁵ As Barfield goes on to note, we have in Aristotle the detachment of thought from movement in space and, indeed, from movement at all.

⁵ Ibid., p- 103.

Hence, the correlation between sensory/extra-sensory which Aristotle placed in the world he also extended to the mind. The mind has a potency (passive intellect) corresponding to the material principle in substances and to their accidental manifestations. But it also has an act (active intellect) corresponding to the formal principles in substances and to their extra-sensory reality. The passive intellect provides the link between sensible substances and mind, but the active intellect is required to move the mind beyond the sensory to the substantial. The isomorphism between the mind and reality is, therefore, no longer a one-on-one identity between intelligence and intelligibility. It is rather a correspondence between two activities which, though quite different in themselves, are grounded in the same act/potency structure. In Aristotle, therefore, the figurating (synthetic) character of the human mind arises in human consciousness at the same time that the phenomena are recognized to be the 'representations' of a reality which is intrinsically synthetic in character (form and matter) and yet unified (correlated).

Aristotle's break with Plato, however, created an enormous number of problems which Aristotle could not solve. Although in Aristotle the mind continued to participate in knowledge through an immanent activity which allowed it to reproduce and therefore unite itself with the movements of the phenomena, it was no longer clear whether the mind and the phenomena were themselves participating in any deeper reality. Indeed, having distinguished the activity of the mind from the movements of the phenomena, it was no longer clear whether the mind and the world participated in the same reality. The mind might be regarded as some faint reflection of Thinking Thought and the movements of the world

might be traced to 49 or 55 Prime Movers, but Aristotle no longer had any way of bringing them all together into a single unity. Nor would doing so have helped, since he sought to establish the reality of the world, not its participation in a de-materialized reality, whether it be Thinking Thought or Prime Mover.

The agent intellect might seem to offer a solution to the dilemma, were it not for the fact that Aristotle was unable to find an appropriate place for it. When he placed it inside the concrete individual, he merely underwrote that noetic individualism which the agent intellect was designed to resolve. When he placed it somewhere in the spheres, he undermined the immanent unity which his intelligible world required, qua intelligible. In the end, he was never able to overcome the problem.

The medieval world was heir both to the Platonic and to the Aristotelian differentiations. The Platonic differentiation, since it placed a space between the really real and the world, seemed to Christian theologians the perfect vehicle for distinguishing between God and creation while maintaining the participation of creation in God. And Plato's notion of the mind knowing truth by virtue of its participation in the realm of pure form seemed the perfect vehicle for a doctrine of divine illumination.

The only apparent difficulty was that of accounting for how participation in a single divinity could produce a variety of intelligibilities. But even here Plato's Forms seemed to fit comfortably into the Divine Mind, so comfortably, in fact, that the problematic character of such a solution was quickly lost to sight. In the neo-Platonic Christianity of Augustine and his successors, the human mind was interposed between God and the world, and the world itself was thought to be

illuminated by that divine illumination which suffused the human mind. The intelligibilities of the world were not the condition of possibility for knowing God. Rather, God's illumination of the human mind was the condition of possibility for knowing the world.

Thomas and his successors accepted the Platonic differentiation between God and the world, but they also added to that the Aristotelian notion of 1) the world as really intelligible in its own right and 2) the human mind as a correlation of active and passive intellects. The shift to Aristotelianism produced a corresponding shift in the relations among God, the human mind and the world. Instead of the human mind being interposed between God and the world, the world was now understood to be interposed between the human mind and God. The world was no longer thought to be intelligible to man by virtue of his participation in God (at least not in the Platonic/Augustinian sense). Rather, the existence of God was thought to be recognizable by reference to the world's intelligibility, and the world's intelligibility was no longer simply given; it had to be reproduced or figured in the human mind. Knowledge therefore continued to be a participated knowledge, a union between knower and known. Intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu. And knower and known alike continued to be regarded as participations in God.

This more Aristotelian approach had the same problem which confronted the Augustinians, namely, the problem of accounting for a multiplicity of intelligibilities from a single divine agent; it also accepted the same solution, the Divine Ideas. The Divine Ideas, however, created a much more difficult problem than the one it was presumed to have solved, a problem which the Augustinians did not face, viz., the problem

of accounting for how the same Divine Ideas which grounded the world's participation in God could simultaneously be called upon to ground the world's intelligibility apart from God. Plato had maintained that the phenomena were 'representations' of an extrinsic realm of intelligibility. Aristotle had maintained with equal steadfastness that the phenomena were 'representations' of an intelligibility intrinsic to the world. Augustinians were content to go along with Plato. Thomists wanted to have it both ways. They therefore posited a world which is simultaneously opaque (thick) and transparent (thin). The opaque world can be understood apart from its participation in God, the transparent world cannot. The phenomena, in other words, are to be understood as 'representations' of both God and an immanent reality.

In the final analysis, Thomas was more Platonic than Aristotelian, for, like Aristotle before him, he failed to locate within the world an immanent source of its intelligible unity. Placing the agent intellect in the individual was Thomas' acknowledgement of defeat. For, having thereby underwritten the notion of substantially complete individuals, he was forced back onto an extrinsic source (God) to explain the world's unity. But, in accepting the notion of the world as understandable apart from its existential actuation or participation in God, he not only freed philosophy from theology, but also hastened the advent of that day when science would proclaim its autonomy from metaphysics.

The third stage of human consciousness, the scientific or cosmo-centric, arose when man discovered that he could treat the phenomena as independent entities, as realities in their own right. It was simultaneously that stage in human consciousness when alpha thinking took over. Man discovered that he could treat the phenomena not only as

independent of God but as independent of his own mind as well. Alpha thinking, the thinking about the phenomena as though they were 'things' outside the mind, the 'already out there now' of which Lonergan speaks, requires that those 'things' participate neither in a divine reality nor in the human mind.

. . . alpha-thinking involves pro tanto absence of participation. It is in fact the very nature and aim of pure alpha-thinking to exclude participation. When, therefore, it is directed, as it has to be to start with, on phenomena determined by original participation, then, at first simply by being alpha-thinking, and at a later stage deliberately, it seeks to destroy that participation.⁶

Alpha thinking is reflected most clearly, in metaphysics, by the Cartesian split between mind and matter and, in science, by the Newtonian 'turn to the object' which constituted classical physics. In the latter case, it produced those 'things' or idols of which Barfield speaks.

. . . a representation, which is collectively mistaken for an ultimate--ought not to be called a representation. It is an idol. Thus the phenomena themselves are idols, when they are imagined as enjoying that independence of human perception which can in fact only pertain to the unrepresented.⁷

Classical physics began with two simple and, as it turned out, quite erroneous assumptions. The first of these, that the phenomena can be regarded as intelligible in themselves, without reference to any other reality, broke down in the Newtonian universe where, although a machine once in existence can be plausibly presented as running virtually forever without any extrinsic impetus, the existence of the machine itself cannot be so understood. Newton was forced to call upon the deus ex machina to account for the machine. This first assumption also broke down in the biological sciences, where, as we have already seen, Darwin

⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

was forced to call upon pure chance to account for evolutionary change. This 'hypothesis' of pure chance was simply another acknowledgement that the phenomena, when considered solely in their own right, are ultimately unintelligible.

Classical physics also assumed a congruence between the human mind and the cosmos. So much so, in fact, that to all practical intents and purposes, it returned to the pantheist notion of reality whereby the phenomena are "out there", simply given to us. We need only take a good look. Figuration was once again lost to sight. This naive assumption shipwrecked on the 'wavicles' of quantum physics. The synthetic character of reality, which had led Aristotle to recognize the synthetic character of human knowing, forced the scientific community to re-examine its own naive assumptions about simply looking at things. Alpha thinking and the non-participated phenomena to which it irrevocably committed itself began simultaneously to disintegrate.

Having detached the phenomena from any extrinsic (to the world) reality in which they might be regarded as participating and yet feeling keenly the need to locate somewhere the ultimate principle of their intelligibility, the human mind turned back upon itself. This fourth stage of human consciousness, the anthropocentric, therefore necessarily involved the rise of beta thinking, that thinking about the phenomena in relation to man. Vico's turn to history, Kant's turn to the subject, Marx' turn to human praxis, all manifest the breakdown of alpha thinking and of scientific idolatry.

Henceforth the phenomena are to have restored to them their status as 'representations'. In Kant they represent the structures of the human mind, in Vico and Marx the products of human praxis, in science

the structures of scientific investigation or the experiences of the scientific investigator. And the mind is no longer to be regarded as a tabula rasa upon which the phenomena impress themselves as whole and complete intelligibilities. Instead, the mind becomes the imposing structure (Kant) or at least the imposing agent (Marx, Metz). The phenomena of alpha thinking are therefore regarded by beta thinking as products of the human spirit (praxis). They are representations of man. Man is the creator of the representation.

As long as nature herself continued to be apprehended as image, it sufficed for the artist to imitate Nature. Inevitably, the life or spirit in the object lived on in his imitation, if it was a faithful one. For at the same time it could not help being more than an imitation, inasmuch as the artist himself participated the being of the object. But the imitation of an idol is a purely technical process; which (as was quickly discovered) is better done by photography. To-day an artist cannot rely on the life inherent in the object he imitates, any more than a poet can rely on the life inherent in the words he uses. He has to draw the life forth from within himself.⁸

Characteristics of the Development of Human Consciousness

The first characteristic which Barfield discusses with regard to the development of human consciousness is the correlative character of the relationship between human consciousness and the phenomena. The two are not identical, neither are they antagonistic. Instead, every stage in the history of human consciousness has been marked by corresponding changes in how the phenomena were regarded. The undifferentiated consciousness of pantheism corresponds to an undifferentiated notion of reality. The figuration of Aristotle (synthetic thinking) corresponds to the substance/accident correlation he attributed to the phenomena as representations of an immanent reality (form/matter). Alpha thinking corresponds to the scientific idols of Newtonian science. Beta thinking

⁸ Ibid., pp. 128-129.

corresponds to the contemporary notion of the phenomena as 'representations' of man himself.

At each stage in the process, the phenomena reveal themselves to be 'representations' of human consciousness at that stage. The relationship between consciousness and phenomena is therefore an Aristotelian correlation, not a Platonic dichotomy. Furthermore, it is an anthropocentric (Aristotelian), not a theocentric (Platonic) relationship. The phenomena are intelligible by reference to an immanent (human), not a transcendent (divine), intelligence.

The second characteristic which Barfield notes is the genuine historicity of human consciousness, inasmuch as it is both a liberating and an irreversible development. The Platonic differentiation between pure form and material form liberated the world from its earlier identity with God. The Aristotelian differentiation between the activity of the mind and the movements of the phenomena liberated the mind from its previous identity with God (pantheism) or pure form (Platonism). Scientific idolatry liberated the phenomena from any intelligibility extrinsic to the world (something which Aristotle attempted and failed to achieve). The contemporary 'turn to the subject' or beta thinking has liberated the mind from the notion that it must submit itself to the dehumanized, cosmic intelligibilities of scientific idolatry.

The irreversibility of human consciousness stems from the fact that human consciousness and the phenomena change together. We are therefore always living in a world which corresponds to our consciousness. To try to return to any previous stage of consciousness would require us, therefore, to detach ourselves from the conscious world in which we live. That, in turn, would require us to consciously suppress some

part of our own consciousness. Original participation or pantheism is, quite literally, unconscious of its own character. It depends upon an unconscious identification of the sensory and the extra-sensory. To consciously return to such a stage of unconsciousness would be a contradiction in terms. The attempts of Wordsworth to reinstate pantheism and of Mach to revalidate Buddhism are individual aberrations which fail to gain a consensus precisely because they require a withdrawal from reality as it is generally perceived.

By the same token, any return to the Greek and medieval notion of the universe as a participation in divinity is also impossible. Alpha thinking 'dis-godded' the phenomena. We live in a world of 'things', not of divine manifestations. Nothing, perhaps, demonstrates this more clearly than the contemporary theological confusion which surrounds the complaint that we have 'reduced' God to a thing among things. The history of human consciousness would indicate the opposite. In pantheism, God (or the divine) was the only 'thing' (substance or reality). In neo-Platonism and medieval Christianity, God continued to be regarded, for the most part, as the only 'thing'. The phenomena were His analogues or manifestations (representations). Thomas' notion of the individual as substantial was an important step on the road to that scientific idolatry which would one day elevate all of the phenomena to the status of things. Then and only then did God become a thing among things. But He was not 'reduced' to the level of the phenomena; rather the phenomena were 'elevated' to the level of the really real. Because we today so much take for granted the 'thing' character of the phenomena, we have lost sight of the fact that they have not always been 'things'.

Beta thinking can force us to re-examine the relationship between

the phenomena and the mind, but the only phenomena which beta thinking has to work with are the 'things' or idols which have been produced by alpha thinking. There is no road back to the divinized phenomena of previous times.

By the same token, neither the Hegelian dialectic nor the Kantian 'turn to the subject' is able to offer an exit. The Aristotelian character of the relationship between mind and phenomena, as well as the genuinely historical (free) development of human consciousness itself, rule out any account of reality which would restate some form of the Platonic dichotomies or require a return to the notion of reality as pure idea. They also rule out the Kantian presumption that the mind and the phenomena enjoy some kind of permanent relationship with one another. As Barfield points out, "it is invariably assumed that, whatever the truth may be about the psychological nexus between man and nature, it is an unchanging one and is the same now as it was when men first appeared on earth."⁹ Such an assumption is not borne out by the actual history of human consciousness itself.

Barfield therefore agrees with Metz that the world's de-divinization is an irreversible process. He also concurs with Metz that human knowledge is public, not private. The phenomenal world in which we daily move is a world of 'collective', not individual, representations. Beta thinking is correct when it relates the phenomena to the human mind as their immediate source. The only other choice at this point is to suppose that we live in a wholly irrational universe. But it must be the collective human community to which the phenomena are related. Otherwise, reality fragments into as many pieces as there are human individuals. The

⁹Ibid., p. 12.

phenomena are 'real' by virtue of their shared or collective character.

Barfield and Metz therefore also agree that the world in which we live, whether it be the political realm (Metz) or simply the everyday realm of phenomena (Barfield), arises out of human praxis. We 'produce' our phenomenal world just as much as we produce our political world.

Barfield does not agree with Metz, however, that the current anthropocentric and secular consciousness is permanent. His reasons for disagreeing are threefold. In the first place, the fact that the mind and the phenomena enjoy a correlative rather than dichotomous relationship rules out Metz' Platonic starting point. Such a starting point is further ruled out by the fact that the human mind reveals itself as having undergone a genuine historical development. Intelligence (mind) and contingency (history) are inseparable. Neither enjoys primacy over the other. They also are correlative.

In the second place, the position in which we find ourselves today is an untenable one. For, although beta thinking itself seems indispensable in order to restore intelligibility to 'things', it must nevertheless accept the 'thing' character of the phenomena which alpha thinking has produced. Hence, beta thinking can refer such 'things' to man, but what about man himself? In a 'dis-godded' world, nothing prevents man from becoming just one more 'thing' among things. Beta thinking alone cannot help, for it is the function of beta thinking to establish relationships between 'things' and the mind, not to determine the character of the mind. Alpha thinking determines the character of the phenomena, including the mind, and alpha thinking has already turned into a 'thing' every phenomenon, including the mind. Beta thinking, therefore, cannot by its own power escape the 'idols' of alpha thinking.

Nor is there any way to retreat from alpha and beta thinking. Under such circumstances, "The best way of escape from deep-rooted error has often proved to be, to pursue it to its logical conclusion, that is, to go on taking it seriously and see what follows."¹⁰

Barfield's third reason for disagreeing with Metz has to do with the participated character of historical consciousness. If historical consciousness is a genuine development, then there must be some force at work from within human consciousness itself which is effecting the changes through which it has gone. We cannot identify that force with human consciousness per se, or we would be back into an Hegelian dialectic. But we also cannot suppose that it has been the purpose of such an agent to eliminate its own presence, since its own presence is the sole foundation upon which human consciousness can be understood as intelligible and historical. The phenomena can be safely de-divinized without emptying the world of intelligibility. But empty the human mind itself of divinity, and the world is at once emptied of meaning.

We have seen how Metz continues to speak of a 'numinous link' between God and man.¹¹ Metz does not pursue it. For Barfield, however, this numinous link is the key to understanding the history of human consciousness. It reveals that 'original' participation was the first step on the road to 'final' participation. First, we shall examine what Barfield understands to be the noetic significance of final participation. Then we shall examine its theological significance.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

¹¹ See p. 315.

Final Participation: Human Actuation of the World

Scientific idolatry or cosmocentrism, by turning the universe into a great machine, de-divinized without humanizing the phenomena. We have already seen why their re-divinization is today out of the question. The task before us is, therefore, to humanize or hominize them.

. . . the mind in apprehending also experiences sensations which, properly speaking, are qualities of the mind alone. These sensations are projected by the mind so as to clothe appropriate bodies in eternal nature. Thus the bodies are perceived as with qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind. Thus nature gets credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves; the rose for its scent: the nightingale for his song: and the sun for his radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind.¹²

This capacity of the human mind to invest nature with beauty and meaning is the central noetic element of final participation.

. . . the future of the phenomenal world can no longer be regarded as entirely independent of man's volition. This is the difference between original and final participation.¹³

Man therefore stands in what Barfield calls a 'directionally creator' relationship with nature.¹⁴

Zukav raises the question, "Who is looking at the universe? Put another way, How is the universe being actualized?"¹⁵ Zukav's answer is man. Barfield would agree. The history of human consciousness is eo ipso the history of the world's actualization. It is not just that, in the absence of man, there would be no sound when the tree falls in

¹²Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, pp. 55-56.

¹³Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 160.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁵Zukav, The Dancing Wu Li Masters, p. 79.

the forest; there would be no tree and no forest. There would be only particles or the 'unrepresented'. "Is God's creation less awe-inspiring because I know that the light, for instance, out of which its visual substance is woven, streams forth from my own eyes?"¹⁶

Creation is therefore not the production of a world in which man is then placed. Creation is rather the making of man, through whom the polarization of consciousness and phenomena takes place and finite reality is actual.

Just as, when a word is formed or spoken, the original unity of the 'inner' word is polarized into a duality of outer and inner, that is, of sound and meaning; so, when man himself was 'uttered', that is, created, the cosmic wisdom became polarized, in and through him, into the duality of appearance and intelligence, representation and consciousness. But when creation has become polarized into consciousness on the one side and phenomena, or appearances, on the other, memory is made possible, and begins to play an all-important part in the process of evolution. For by means of his memory man makes the outward appearances an inward experience. He acquires his self-consciousness from them. When I experience the phenomena in memory, I make them 'mine', not now by virtue of any original participation, but by my own inner activity. It is from this activity in memory, it will be recalled, that the human word, according to Aquinas, 'proceeds'. For, once the phenomena are 'mine', I can reproduce them in the form of words.¹⁷

Once we are able to reproduce the phenomena in words, we can 'recycle' the words, i.e., we can redeploy the words as metaphors. Words which are given to us by the phenomena of the world in which we live can then be used to retranslate the phenomena themselves or to enlarge upon them by 'phenomenalizing' or actualizing some part of the 'unrepresented' which had heretofore remained outside the realm of our consciousness. The polarization of human consciousness and the phenomena is therefore the condition of possibility for the transition from an unconscious and

¹⁶ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 159.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 154-155.

unreflective to a conscious and deliberate human actualization of the world.

Quantum physics is constantly engaged in such a process. Each new layer of 'matter' manifests regularities which, once they are discovered, provoke the search for a form. The form is expressed in a word or a name which is provided not by the regularity itself but by the scientist who analyzes the regularity. The words or names which scientists today give to new forms express the increasingly anthropocentric consciousness underlying the process. "Quark" is a good example. What does it mean to say that something is a "quark"? No one believes that a quark is a quark because it participates quarkity or Quarkness Itself. Not only is such a suggestion obviously absurd, its very absurdity immediately evidences the enormous distance which separates us from Thomas, not to mention Plato. Quarks are quarks because they participate a human consciousness familiar with the writings of James Joyce.¹⁸

Another recently-discovered subatomic entity, the 'anomalon,' offers a second example. Described by one scientist as "a nucleus that interacts before its time,"¹⁹ the anomalon behaves in ways which at the moment puzzle physicists. Its name clearly derives from the current state of the scientific mind, not from the eternal state of God's mind.

¹⁸For those human consciousnesses not already informed by Joyce, the word "quark" appears in Finnegan's Wake, where the children of Mr. Finn are referred to as "three quarks". They are sometimes employed by Joyce to 'represent' Mr. Finn himself. Since protons are thought to consist of three particles or at least often behave as though they were so composed, a proton and its three particles (quarks) are interchangeable in the same way in which Mr. Finn and his three children are.

¹⁹Wm. C. McHarris and John O. Rasmussen, "High-Energy Collisions Between Atomic Nuclei," Scientific American 250 (January 1984):61

It is by no means fanciful, therefore, to say with Mersch that man, "by advancing toward [the phenomena], advances toward the reconquest of himself."²⁰ For, in naming the phenomena, man invests them with a human significance. But this makes sense only if we recognize that the phenomenal realm is itself a realm of potential phenomena awaiting a human actuation.

Scientific labor consists in translating phenomena into terms which man derives from himself, as though they had no separate existence in themselves. So true is this that we see them readily embodied in a category of thought or an equation as in their proper domain. They exist as though they were potential thought and nourishment of thought, as though they had something human in them and were waiting to be taken up by man.²¹

The correlation between human consciousness and the phenomena is therefore an act/potency relationship. In figuration, we unconsciously participate the phenomena. The phenomena are collective representations of the collective human unconscious which figurates them.

Original participation failed altogether to recognize that the world of human consciousness (the phenomenal world) stems from the mind's own unconscious act of figuration. It therefore identified that world, as well as the human mind, with the intelligibility or divinity it perceived in the phenomena. All phenomena, the human mind included, were thought to be participations in a single intelligibility or spirit.

Scientific idolatry emptied the phenomenal world of any participated reality whatsoever. The phenomenal world became a reality in its own right, set over against the human mind. It created the idols which constitute the world of human consciousness today. But in emptying the world of all vestiges of original participation, it enabled us to realize

²⁰ Mersch, Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 101.

²¹ Ibid.

for the first time that our conscious world, our phenomenal world, is actually a 'representation' of our own unconscious mental activity. It has therefore enabled us to become self-conscious and, in so doing, has opened the road to final participation. "For beta-thinking leads to final, by way of the inexorable elimination of all original, participation."²² What remains is that "final participation must itself be raised from potentiality to act."²³ We can do that only by raising to the level of consciousness that figurating activity by which the phenomena themselves are raised from potency to act.

Barfield notes that there are already signs of an incipient final participation, negatively, in the attempts of the Romantic movement to destroy the scientific idols, positively in the work of Jung, Freud, Goethe and Steiner, and in the Impressionistic artists. With regard to Impressionism, Barfield notes,

They really painted nature in the light of the eye, as no other painters had done before them. They were striving to realize in consciousness the normally unconscious activity of 'figuration' itself. They did not imitate; they expressed 'themselves'--inasmuch as they painted nature as the representation of Man.²⁴

Barfield goes on to say that, in them, we have a reminder that "the rejection of original participation may mean, not the destruction but the liberation of images."²⁵

This liberation of images consists in our being able to recognize, as previous ages have not, that we, not nature or the phenomena, control the images. They arise from within us, they are not imposed upon

²² Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 139.

²³ Ibid., p. 137.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁵ Ibid.

us, whether by God or by nature. Man is the Messiah of nature.²⁶ But where does man stand vis a vis God? That is the crucial question which demands an answer, particularly within the context of political theology.

Once the relationship between human consciousness and the phenomena is recognized, we can no longer suppose ourselves to be in conflict with either nature (Metz) or chaos (Gutierrez). For all that is given outside us is the 'unrepresented' or the 'particles'. But the unrepresented is not chaotic, for it continually manifests itself in regularities. Nor is it 'nature' per se, for its structure is potential, not actual. The phenomenal world in which we live exists by virtue of its human actualization. Whatever chaos or alienation we find there has arisen from within ourselves. We therefore cannot undertake either our liberation or the liberation of our world without understanding our own unconscious.

Nor can we suppose that the current anthropocentricity or secularity is the final word. For if we can now say that man is the messiah of nature, we have yet to say who is the messiah of man. If nature is actual by virtue of its participation in man, how is man himself actual? If, as Barfield points out, "the phenomenal world arises from the relation between a conscious and an unconscious,"²⁷ and the human unconscious figurates or actualizes the phenomena, how does human unconsciousness become actualized? What is that consciousness which actualizes it?

Beta thinking (reflective or critical thinking) cannot help us here. It can enable us to understand the relationship of the world to the human mind, but it cannot tell us how that mind is actualized. Nor

²⁶ Ibid., p. 160.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 136.

is alpha thinking of any help. For while it does allow us to think directly about man, it does so at the price of turning man into just one more 'thing' or idol. It presupposes the answer (actualization) before the question can even be asked.

The only place in which an answer can be found is history itself. For if the development of human consciousness is genuinely historical, the only condition of possibility for such a history is the presence of an actual agent not identical with human potential consciousness (unconsciousness) and yet in which that potential consciousness participates. The only alternative would seem to be either an extrinsic agent whose effectiveness would not be genuinely historical because extrinsic or an agency which is identical with human consciousness, in which case human consciousness could not develop in an historical but only in an Hegelian fashion. Barfield finds in history two critical moments at which such a conscious agency is at work, first to eliminate original participation and then to implant the seeds of final participation.

Final Participation: Incarnational Actuation of Man

We are well accustomed to understanding the Old Testament as a rejection of that idolatry associated with original participation or pantheism, though by now we have lost sight of just how novel that rejection was.

The children of Israel became a nation and began their history in the moment when Moses, in the very heart of the ancient Egyptian civilization, delivered to them those ten commandments, which include the unheard-of injunction: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.' This is perhaps the unlikeliest thing that ever happened. As far as we know, in every other nation at that time there prevailed unquestioned the participating consciousness which

apprehends the phenomena as representations and naturally expresses itself in making images. For the Jews, henceforward, any dealings with those nations were strictly forbidden. Everywhere throughout the world original participation was in full swing. For the Jews, from that moment on, original participation, and anything smacking of it, became a deadly sin. And what is the Old Testament but the tale of their long struggle against that very sin, their repeated relapses and their final victory.²⁸

We have also lost sight, after centuries of neo-Platonic theologizing, of the fact that the Old Testament rejects neo-Platonic notions of participation as well.

. . . here is not only no hint of mythology, but no real suggestion of manifestation. Everything proclaims the glory of God, but nothing represents Him. Nothing could be more beautiful, and nothing could be less Platonic.²⁹

The Old Testament concerns itself exclusively with the relationship between God and man. Knowledge for the Jews was always legal or moral, not philosophical or cosmic. Barfield concludes that this extraordinary experience of a people rejecting the phenomenal world in which all of its neighbors lived could only have been deliberate.

We have seen that, before the days of 'hypotheses to save the appearances', knowledge was inconceivable except as a form of participation, and we cannot resist the conclusion that this detachment from knowledge arose, in the case of the Jews, not so much from any want of mental alertness as from a positive objection to participation as such. We cannot resist this conclusion because the whole history of the race, from Exodus onwards, is the story of that chronic objection.³⁰

What happened in Israel, therefore, has direct bearing on our situation today. For Israel accomplished with deliberation in the ancient world what alpha thinking has accomplished with deliberation in the modern world.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁰ Ibid.

We have seen how that polarization into man:nature, which was the means to man's self-consciousness, was exaggerated by the scientific revolution into an exclusive disjunction. It was still a polarity, so long as some image-consciousness, some participation survived. We have seen also . . . how the disjunction was deliberately purposed by the Jewish nation. I believe it will some day be realized that their mission was at the same time to prepare humanity against the day when it should be complete--that is, our own time.³¹

The rejection of original participation by the Jews was not, however, a rejection of God's presence in the world. It was rather a rejection of His presence or manifestation anywhere except in man. Man was, for them, the nexus between divinity and cosmos.

They pinpointed participation in the Divine Name, the I AM spoken only from within, and it was the logic of their whole development that the cosmos of wisdom should henceforth have its perennial source, not without, and behind the appearances, but within the consciousness of man; not in front of his senses and his figuration, but behind them.³²

Unfortunately, the ineffability of the divine vis a vis the phenomena was eventually applied to Yahweh's relationship with man as well. His transcendence was absolutized such that He ceased to be understood as having any immediate relationship even with humanity.

By the time Jesus was born the Divine Name had ceased to be spoken by man in the Temple or elsewhere. The pharisees had made it the name of a Being exclusively objective, remote, inaccessible, infinitely superior to, yet imagined as existentially parallel with man. Thus, the Jews had barely glimpsed before they again lost sight of, that which is the opposite pole to man's otherness from the I AM, namely his supreme identity with it.³³

Christ was the revelation of man's otherness and identity with God. In Him the inwardness or immanence of divinity within humanity became manifest. This immanence was not, however, a revelation which

³¹ Ibid., p. 124.

³² Ibid., p. 155.

³³ Ibid., p. 157.

Israel was then able to accept. It was quite literally blasphemy to a nation which had grown accustomed to thinking of God as beyond all human utterance. Unable to accept the 'final' participation which He offered, they could only crucify a man whom they regarded as blasphemous. They quite literally did not know what they were doing. Having driven God so far from the world, they could no longer recognize His presence within them, much less among them. But neither His message nor His presence was lost. His message was retained in the words He spoke, His presence in the Eucharist He instituted.

With regard to the former, Barfield examines the parable of the sower at some length, concluding that

The parable, then, was about the sowing of the word, the Logos, in earthly soil. It was an attempt to awaken his hearers to the realization that this seed was within their own hearts and minds, and no longer in nature or anywhere without.³⁴

Here we have, in Barfield's judgment, a conscious and deliberate liberation of the images, not unlike that of beta thinking, but with one quite crucial difference. Beta thinking liberates the images from the phenomena by locating them in man. Christ liberates the images in the same way, but goes one step further. He liberates them not only from cosmic but from human idolatry as well. The human mind actualizes the world, but Christ actualizes the human mind.

Original participation fires the heart from a source outside itself; the images enliven the heart. But in final participation--since the death and resurrection--the heart is fired from within by the Christ; and it is for the heart to enliven the images.³⁵

Austin Farrer's analysis of the imagery of the Apocalypse of John leads him to the same conclusion. The Old Testament rejection of idolatry

³⁴ Ibid., p. 179.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 172.

was not the death of images. Quite the contrary.

The rejection of idolatry meant not the destruction but the liberation of the images. Nowhere are the images in more vigour than in the Old Testament, where they speak of God, but are not he.³⁶

The Old Testament produced an enormous range of images - images of suffering, sacrifice, atonement, Messiah, Kingdom of God, divine sonship. All of these images were, as Farrer points out, fused and reborn in Christ.³⁷ If the Old Testament liberated the images from the phenomena so that they might be redeployed in the service of God, Christ was the focus of that redeployment. In Him, the liberated images were indeed 'reborn', not within the phenomena but within us. For His death did not end final participation. It became rather the foundation of the new covenant, the covenant of final participation.

Therefore, as Barfield points out, Christ has been effective in history by His continued Eucharistic presence among and within us.

. . . the tender shoot of final participation has from the first been acknowledged and protected by the Church in the institution of the Eucharist. For all who partake of the Eucharist first acknowledge that the man who was born in Bethlehem was 'of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made'; and then they take that substance into themselves, together with its representations named bread and wine. This is after all the heart of the matter.³⁸

It is through the Eucharist that Christ becomes effective within us, not at the conscious (phenomenal) level, but at the unconscious (figuring) level. ". . . by the physical act of communion as such, men can only take the Divine substance, the 'Name apart' directly into the

³⁶ Austin Farrer, A Rebirth of Images (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 14.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁸ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 170.

unconscious part of themselves; by way of their blood."³⁹ It is by means of His ability to work from within the human unconscious that Christ is able to 'enliven the images' (that is, enliven the figurating process) as well as raise the process of figuration itself from the unconscious to the conscious level, i.e., raise final participation from potency to act.

His ability, however, to work from within human unconsciousness or figuration presupposes His presence in actuating that human unconsciousness in the first place. The historical Incarnation makes final participation itself an historical reality, but Christ's presence in history cannot be identified solely with the historical Incarnation, for the very possibility of final participation requires Christ's previous effectiveness in ousting original participation. This is, in Barfield's judgment, most apparent when we examine how the history of human consciousness has effected the use of the word or image in human history.

If we rapidly review the whole historical development of 'the word', we must say that, as soon as unconscious or subconscious organic processes have been sufficiently polarized to give rise to phenomena on the one side and consciousness on the other, memory is made possible. As consciousness develops into self-consciousness, the remembered phenomena become detached or liberated from their originals and so, as images, are in some measure at man's disposal. The more thoroughly participation has been eliminated, the more they are at the disposal of his imagination to employ as it chooses. If it chooses to impart its own meaning, it is doing, pro tanto, with the remembered phenomena what their Creator once did with the phenomena themselves. Thus there is a real analogy between metaphorical usage and original participation; . . . if, but only if, we admit that, in the course of the earth's history, something like a Divine Word has been gradually clothing itself with the humanity it first gradually created--so that what was first spoken by God may eventually be respoken by man.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

Barfield concludes, therefore, that "Christ is the cosmic wisdom on its way from original to final participation."⁴¹

This understanding of Christ involves, at least for our purposes, three important corollaries. The first of these has to do with creation and speaks to the problems we have seen in Thomist metaphysics and transcendental Thomism. Creation must in some sense be regarded as Incarnational. Creation is not Logocentric but Christocentric.⁴²

As Barfield points out, attempts to universalize the historical Incarnation by reading its effects backward in time "involves a sudden

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 185.

⁴² A Logocentric notion of creation is invariably Platonic. As an example of this, see Seely Beggiani's article, "A Case for Logocentric Theology" (Theological Studies 32 [Sept 1971]:371-406). His primary thesis is stated early in the article: "We theorize that the two ideas, hypostatic union and indwelling, are two stages of the same reality. The conclusion is that all men have the same potential for total union with the divine Logos. The indwelling of the Trinity represents various stages along the way. Hypostatic union represents the culmination and climax" (p. 374). This thesis is Platonic, first, because it is explicitly theocentric, not anthropocentric, seeking an extrinsic source for the world's unity and meaning (creation is a "manifestation of God"--p. 378). This extrinsicism, secondly, leads to a fragmentation of the human community, inasmuch as each individual is understood to participate immediately and directly in the Logos, not in humanity or the Christ ("The divine Logos is to the human nature of Christ as the divine Logos is to each individual human"--pp. 374-375). Thirdly, and as a result, the difference between Christ and all other human beings is quantitative, not qualitative (he differs from us only by degree--p. 392; he received a greater abundance of grace than the rest of us--p. 405). Therefore, fourthly, Christ acts more as an exemplary (Platonic) than as an efficient (Aristotelian) cause (p. 405). Finally, our relationship with God and our salvation are dehistoricized, i.e., they are made to depend on our direct participation in the disincarnate Logos, not on our historical participation in the Incarnate Christ, whose activity, in any event, is not efficacious but exemplary (Christ is "exemplar, model and ultimate ideal for the rest of men"--p. 392).

It is not mere coincidence that Beggiani relies heavily on Rahner's theology, particularly the supernatural existential, to make his case. For Rahner's failure to provide intrinsic causes for human nature and the supernatural existential can issue in nothing but the extrinsicism and idealism we see operative in Beggiani's Logocentrism.

and uneasy jump in thought from time to eternity."⁴³ Such attempts also cut us off from any understanding of not only the phenomenal world prior to the birth of Christ, but also its historical development during those centuries which did not know Him. Nor do they help us much to understand the significance of Christ for those who even today do not explicitly know Him.

Thomism has traditionally tried to circumvent these problems by attributing to the Logos what could not be attributed to the historical Incarnation.

. . . if Christ's humanity, the instrument of the Word, is to act upon the entire human race, it must have contact with the entire human race, and that contact must be as real as its operation is real. But, since it is not the divinity, how can its presence be said to extend to all times and all places? Therefore, they say, inasmuch as, and only inasmuch as the human nature is one with the Word, it is not distant from anything.⁴⁴

But this jump from the finite to the infinite is simply a variation on the jump from time to eternity. Both undermine any possibility of our finding in the created order itself that intrinsic principle of unity without which the created and historical order cannot be understood as real and good. The jump from time to eternity, from finite to infinite, is the Platonic escape hatch to which Thomism, in all its forms, has always been driven. (Even Barfield, as we shall see shortly, failed to recognize the one alternative to this Platonizing of reality.)

The second corollary has to do with the cosmos in which we live and speaks to those problems we have seen in contemporary physics. Neither scientific development nor the cosmos itself are intelligible

⁴³ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 169.

⁴⁴ Mersch, The Whole Christ, trans. John R. Kelly (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1938), p. 479.

except by reference to the Incarnation. As Barfield points out, "the scientific revolution marked a crucial stage in that evolution from original to final participation, which is the progressive incarnation of the Word."⁴⁵ For it was the de-divinizing of the cosmos by science which has, in modern human consciousness, opened the way to final participation. It cannot bring about that participation, but it has placed the cosmos at our disposal. We must choose whether we shall continue to construct a cosmos of idols or whether we shall participate with Christ in the building of the Kingdom of God. If we choose the latter, then science itself cannot avoid Christ. "There will be a revival of Christianity when it becomes impossible to write a popular manual of science without referring to the incarnation of the Word."⁴⁶

The third corollary has to do with Christ's effectiveness in history and human consciousness and speaks to those problems we have seen in political theology. Praxis is fundamentally neither secular nor political. It is Eucharistic. The Eucharist is the concrete historical event by which Christ is effecting that final participation which the historical Incarnation made manifest to a nation swept clean of original participation. That it has thus far liberated much greater areas of the earth from original participation is, as Metz points out, a sign of Christ's effectiveness in history. But it is not a sign that the anthropocentricity and secularity which we experience today are the final effect which Christ seeks.

If we accept at all the claims made by Christ Jesus concerning his own mission, we must accept that he came to make possible in

⁴⁵ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 165.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 164.

the course of time the transition of all men from original to final participation; and we shall regard the institution of the Eucharist as a preparation--a preparation (we shall not forget) which has so far only been operant for the sidereally paltry period of nineteen hundred years or so.⁴⁷

It also does not mean, as many traditional theologians might want to argue, that the Eucharist and, therefore, Christ Himself, have only a sacral meaning and effectiveness. Barfield sees in the medieval upsurge of legends concerning the Holy Grail a growing consciousness of the extra-sacerdotal significance of the Eucharist.⁴⁸ Today's secularity and anthropocentricity, as products of the de-divinization of the world brought about through Christ's presence within it, should make us very much more conscious of the extra-liturgical significance of the Eucharist.

Esse/Essence: Creation in Christ

Barfield's entire book is a discussion of human consciousness in terms of an Aristotelian correlative or act/potency structure. It is therefore enormously surprising to find Barfield maintaining toward the end of the book that the Aristotelian notion of participation looks backward to original participation, whereas the "hierarchical participation per similitudinem, derived in part from Dionysius, looks rather forward to the 'final' variety."⁴⁹ Having discussed at length the Aristotelian character of the history of human consciousness and the phenomena and the distinctly un-Platonic character of that process in Israel by which the images were liberated from original participation, he offers a Platonic account of final participation. For the Pseudo-Dionysian per

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 170-171.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

similitudinem notion of participation is precisely that neo-Platonic Porphyrian universe of graded participations in an extrinsic and undifferentiated unity which we have already seen to be insufficient.

The fact that everyone whom we have examined thus far has fallen back upon some Platonic notion of the really real suggests that some major stumbling block stands in our path here. I would suggest that there are, in fact, three stumbling blocks. The first of these exists in human consciousness itself. The only form of participation which that consciousness has heretofore recognized is Platonic. The temptation, therefore, is to return to that with which we are already familiar. Wordsworth's attempt to revive pantheism was just such an attempt. Its Christian counterpart is the Porphyrian universe which early Christian theology found so readily adaptable to the Christian notion of a transcendent Creator God.

This brings us to our second stumbling block, an explicitly Christian one. And that is the problem of supposing, as Christian theology always has, that the really real must be associated exclusively with the one God. To suppose this is to suppose a priori a Platonic resolution to all difficulties which arise in trying to understand the relationship between God and the world. The compositeness of the world will always, under these circumstances, be reduced to the simplicity of undifferentiated divinity.⁵⁰

The third stumbling block is a methodological one. It is that problem which has, as we have seen, plagued both Aristotelianism and

⁵⁰ Although this dissertation does not bear directly upon Christian Trinitarian doctrine, the point should be borne in mind that the arguments put forth here require our participation in a qualitatively differentiated divinity (i.e., the Trinity). See pp. 440-441.

Thomism, that of locating an immanent composite source of unity for the composite world in which we live. In the absence of such an immanent source of unity, the dichotomies or polarities of our world can be resolved only by reference to an extrinsic source of unity. The continual return to Platonic resolutions not only evidences a continuing failure within Aristotelianism/Thomism, but has also become so commonplace as to suggest to the unwary that no such failure exists.

Both Aristotle and Thomas, however, recognized, at least up to a point, that the unity of polarities must be given within the world itself or Plato was right. Aristotle recognized that if the unity of form and matter is not given a priori, it cannot be achieved a posteriori. If the world in itself is not constituted by such a unity, then the really real is either pure form or chaos. Thomas recognized that if the unity of contingency and intelligibility is not given in creation, it cannot be achieved in history. If the world in itself is not constituted by such a unity, then the really real is either pure intelligibility or pure contingency (another way of saying it is either pure form or chaos). What Thomas did not recognize, unfortunately, was the fact that what holds true for the polarities of form/matter and esse/essence also holds true for the polarities of God/man and grace/nature. If their union is not somehow given in creation, it cannot be achieved in history.

Thomas' attempts to relate nature and grace are an excellent example of the quandary in which he finds himself. If grace is an accidental modification of an already substantially complete nature, then grace must come ab extrinseco.⁵¹ Furthermore, having nothing with which

⁵¹See, for example, ST I-II, 9, 4 and 6 (on God as extrinsic mover); 63, 1 (on extrinsic character of gifts); 68, 1 (on divine principle of movement as extrinsic); 109, 7 ad 3 (on exterior character of grace).

to correlate at the substantial level, it must be regarded as an autonomous agent capable of raising the entire substance to a new level of being. This has the effect of turning an accident (grace) into a 'thing'. Within an Aristotelian act/potency framework, none of this makes any sense.

The neo-scholastic paradigm on nature and grace, with its extrinsic notion of grace and its two-storey notion of the universe, did not misunderstand Thomas nor did it misunderstand Aristotelian methodology. It simply recognized that grace, if one is to accept Thomas' account of it, must be regarded, first, as ab extrinseco, and, secondly, as introducing a second storey to the universe. For it recognized that grace as an extrinsic accident simply cannot operate as Thomas supposes it to. Rather than correct his notions of grace, they preferred to correct his notions of accident. By keeping Aristotle coherent, they made theology incoherent. They need not have done either, had they addressed themselves to the primary problem in both Aristotle and Thomas, that of locating the immanent composite substance which both require.

The following text by Thomas on the meaning of participation provides us with the keys to both the problem itself and the reason why Thomas did not solve it.

For what is such by participation, and what is mobile and what is imperfect always requires the pre-existence of something essentially such, immovable and perfect.⁵²

There can be no participated existence apart from the "pre-existence" of that which is participated. This is the key to solving the Aristotelian problem of immanent substance. If the unity of the world is a composite unity, then the world must participate some "pre-existent" composite substance. Thomas never resolved this problem, because, as

⁵² ST I, 79, 4.

the above text also indicates, he assumed a Platonic notion of participation, namely, that the world, although composite, participates a pure or simple substance. Perfection was, for Thomas as for Plato before him, identified with simplicity.

The Pre-Existent Christ

Christianity does offer an alternative to the Platonic notion of participation. In fact, the entire theology for such an alternative is already in place. Christ, the God-man, is Emmanuel, God-with-us. Through Him, we are united with or participate in that humanity and divinity which are His per essentiam. He is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the new Adam. In Him, humanity and divinity are distinct but inseparable. By becoming man, He united heaven and earth. By His continuing Eucharistic presence, He is immanently effective within history and humanity. In Him are united all of the polarities of our world and all of the polarities between our world and God.

Only one problem remains. It is the one mentioned earlier, that what is not united in creation cannot be united in history. The historical Christ can be understood as overcoming the polarities which arise from sin or the fallenness of creation, but He cannot be understood as overcoming dichotomies which are structured into creation from the beginning. If the created world is genuinely composite, i.e., a participation in both divinity and non-divinity, then that participation depends directly upon a 'pre-existent' composite substance. In short, the historical Incarnation must be placed within the context of a "pre-existent" Christ or Incarnation.

This notion of a "pre-existent Christ" is very difficult for theology to accept, in large part because it is so very difficult to grasp. Jumps

between time and eternity may be methodologically incoherent, but they can in some sense be imagined. A "pre-existent" Incarnation cannot be imagined at all. And our language continually conspires against all attempts to talk about it.

Barfield is a good example of this. Although explicitly conscious of the uneasiness of jumps between time and eternity, he himself makes them. Thus, we have already seen him speak of the Logos as "first" creating humanity and "then" clothing itself with humanity,⁵³ as though the Logos who creates humanity could be separated from the Christ who takes on humanity. But such a separation cannot be made. For the actualization of human unconsciousness and union with that unconsciousness are identically the same act. We are actualized by the union, not before it. Our actualization is the union. Creation and Incarnation coincide. Where Barfield is concerned, in any event, only such an identification makes sense of what he says.

We have seen how Barfield seeks in the Incarnation a means of accounting for the whole of material reality. We have also seen how theological exegetes through the Middle Ages understood creation in terms of Christ. Their exegesis requires us to ask the question, "Does the emphasis on the Jesus of history replace or exclude the Incarnation (not eternal but) since the creation of the world (Rom 1:20)?"⁵⁴ Vandermark provides a hermeneutical principle (drawn from Thomas) by which such a synthetic notion of Incarnation might be understood to be compatible with the Scriptural testimony.

⁵³ See p. 419.

⁵⁴ Vandermark, "Natural Knowledge of God in Romans," p. 51.

If we can agree that the statement "God has become" indicates a change in man and not in God (even though we do not and cannot see how the type of reality envisioned comes into being without change in God), then we may be closer to an understanding. If we can agree that it is the custom of Scripture to describe something as happening, i.e., as historical fact, when it becomes known, then we may be able to affirm the truth of historical and non-historical statements at the same time, without considering the latter as threatening or denying the former; for both proclaim the same mystery of God's incarnation.⁵⁵

The Scriptural basis for a link between Christ and creation is considerable. That link is one of the reasons why, as Bonnefoy points out, "The absolute primacy of Jesus Christ has received more attention in the past sixty years than it had received in the preceding six centuries."⁵⁶ Butterworth believes that the Scriptural assertion of a relationship between Christ and creation requires us to employ some notion of a pre-existent Christ.

Only God himself can have a full grasp of his own being and his doing. Men must await his revelation, and that revelation can be embodied only in human terms. There must be, therefore, a shortfall between what man can either discover or even be told by God about God's self and his actions on the one hand, and God's self and actions in themselves on the other. Theology must try to bridge the gap and promote such understanding as is possible, with such means of conceptualization as are available. Where the refinements of human philosophy with its man-made clarity fail to promote that understanding, then the believing mind has to make do with the humanly more unrefined notions which are to be found in Scripture. The pre-existent Christ is just such a notion: philosophically impossible but theologically necessary.⁵⁷

Although such a notion may be philosophically impossible, philosophers have, on occasion, seen the difficulties of accounting for God's immanent

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Jean-Francois Bonnefoy, Christ and the Cosmos, trans. and ed. Michael D. Meilach (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), p. 3.

⁵⁷ Butterworth, Theology of Creation, p. 87. This book, though quite short, offers an excellent summary of Scriptural texts which link Christ with creation.

activity in the absence of such a notion. Rousselot, in an article entitled "Idealisme et Thomisme," recognized the need to account for the created universe in terms of Christ rather than of God. Although the article itself was never published, McDermott has summarized its major conclusion with regard to a pre-existent Christ.

One understanding saw totality as the infinite Esse of God in which all created beings participated, the other considered the totality of esse to be equivalent to the finite, material universe. Rousselot's easy gliding from one conception to another, from transcendental unity to a cumulative unity or vice versa, was justified only in view of the Primordial Adam. De facto the Jesuit identified this philosophical hypothesis with Jesus Christ, who in His person united the two meanings of totality and esse: As God He provided the beatifying goal toward which all strive and as man He comprehended the finite universe and supplied the normative intuition for conceptual imitations. This union of the infinite and the finite which allows man to attain the infinite through and in the finite constituted the sacramental meaning of reality.⁵⁸

Blondel also moved in the direction of a "panchristisme," a position which would understand Christ as He "who includes all men, the explicit [expression] of all that others possess only implicitly."⁵⁹ Blondel expressed the hope that someday the Church might express dogmatically the link between Christ and creation.

For if it is true that the least of sensible phenomena and the most elementary of corporeal existences cannot be conceived as real unless we see an element implied in it which cannot be accounted for by the merely creative decree of the First Cause; if it is true that we cannot bring our action to completion or remedy our faults or even have a real and living idea of God himself without appealing to this mediator; if it is true, as St Theresa teaches, that it is an illusion to think that we can detach ourselves better from material things and have a purer knowledge of God if we leave aside the humanity of Christ, whereas in fact this sacred humanity, 'which ought not to be put in that class', remains the only Way as well as the Supreme Truth, so that without

⁵⁸ John M. McDermott, Love and Understanding (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1983), pp. 293-294.

⁵⁹ Daly, Transcendence and Immanence, p. 72.

it nothing in heaven or earth is intimately known, then it seems that philosophy, by demanding an element distinct both from nature and also from the Author of nature himself in order to conceive the effective realization of the whole order of things, would clarify and justify, from its own point of view, what is perhaps an implicit dogma, Emmanuel as the final cause of the creative plan.⁶⁰

Among recent Catholic theologians, Rahner more than most has recognized the importance and centrality of Christ to creation as well as to redemption. The following characterization of Rahner's theology is correct as far as it goes.

It starts not with nature but grace, not creation but redemption, not reason and natural theology but revelation and revealed theology, not God and man understood initially apart from Christ but Christ as crucial from the very beginning for the understanding of both creation and Creator.⁶¹

Rahner's theology ultimately fails, however, to produce the transformation it promised, because Rahner was never able to get to the notion of Christ's pre-existence. As a result, he stranded his supernatural existential midway between nature and grace.

Esse/Essence: Creation in Christ

Any separation such as the one Barfield makes between the creation of the world or humanity by the Logos and the union of the Logos with that humanity automatically leads to a Platonic notion of how the world or humanity images God. For, by separating the Logos from the world which is caused, one is left with only an extrinsic exemplary cause, whether it be called the Logos or God. Esse must then be separated from any notion of divine immanence (formal causality) or all essential forms must be reduced to esse. The latter 'thin' essence position tends to blur the distinction between God and the world. The former 'thick'

⁶⁰ Blondel, Letter, pp. 202-203.

⁶¹ Lindbeck, forward to Shepherd, Man's Condition, p. 13.

essence position has to fall back on the Aristotelian accident to unite God and the world. The Incarnation is reduced to an accidental modification of history, just as grace is reduced to an accidental modification of substance. This not only undercuts the use of an Aristotelian methodology to speak about the created order, it also undercuts the universal significance of Christianity by supposing that the structures of the material world, as well as its history, are substantially natural, not Incarnational.

G. K. Chesterton once graphically expressed the universal significance of Christianity.

Now if Christianity be . . . a fragment of metaphysical nonsense invented by a few people, then, of course, defending it will simply mean talking that metaphysical nonsense over and over again. But if Christianity should happen to be true--that is to say, if its God is the real God of the universe--then defending it may mean talking about anything or everything. Things can be irrelevant to the proposition that Christianity is false, but nothing can be irrelevant to the proposition that Christianity is true. Zulus, gardening, butchers' shops, lunatic asylums, housemaids and the French Revolution--all these things not only may have something to do with the Christian God, but must have something to do with Him if He really lives and reigns.⁶²

Thomas himself would never have questioned the truth of such a statement. But today, while connections between Christianity and the French Revolution may come readily to hand, it is by no means easy to see what specifically Christian insights could be brought to bear on gardening and butchers' shops. They seem to us to be 'natural' and therefore outside the orbit of Christianity.

The natural realm today is not restricted to things or activities, but is even extended to the human community. And such a notion of the natural realm is expressed not just by ordinary Catholics but has on at

⁶²G. K. Chesterton, The Man Who Was Orthodox, arranged and introduced by A. L. Maycock (London: Dennis Dobson, 1963), pp. 89-90.

least one occasion slipped into Papal documents. Simone Weil, herself not a Catholic, nevertheless recognized the undermining of Christianity which such double-think has provoked.

In a document promulgated by the Pope, one may read, "not only from the Christian point of view, but, more generally from the human point of view. . ." as though the Christian point of view-- which either has no meaning at all, or else it claims to encompass everything in this world and the next--possessed a minor degree of generality than the human point of view. It is impossible to conceive a more terrible admission of religious bankruptcy.⁶³

Behind such an attitude lies the notion that the universal (substantial) is natural and that only the particular (accidental) is Christian or graced. The broader reality is therefore natural; it is the a priori of a graced or Christian presence within it.

The only way to avoid reducing the universe to a de-Christianized image of divinity is to locate within the universe an immanent substantial exemplar. The answer cannot be the Logos apart from the Incarnation. As Butterworth points out,

The pattern is the incarnate, fully human Word and Son who is the Christ. It is towards him, and not towards some disembodied ideal, that God's activity looks from eternity. Created reality, and man especially, is eternally patterned on Christ. This is the basic truth that underlies the mentally frustrating conception of an eternal or pre-existent Christ.⁶⁴

The conception of a pre-existent Christ must underlie any genuine Christian ontology of creation. Mersch, for example, points out that "the role of Christ with respect to mankind is ontological before it is operative."⁶⁵ And Bonnefoy notes that "The primacy which faith recognizes

⁶³ Simone Weil, The Need for Roots, trans. Arthur Wills (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1952), p. 127.

⁶⁴ Butterworth, Theology of Creation, p. 86.

⁶⁵ Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 241.

in Christ is one of excellence: more precisely, an absolute and universal primacy in the ontological order."⁶⁶ No sense can be made out of either of these statements as long as the Incarnation is regarded as an historical accident or as long as grace is regarded as an ontological accident. For each places the Incarnation in a position in which it must operate accidentally in order to become ontological (substantial). But substance is the prius of accidents, not the reverse.

Furthermore, the notion of a pre-existent Christ is necessary in order to ground the unity of the human community. Thomas recognizes the unity,⁶⁷ but has no pre-existent substance within which to ground it. Mascall raises the question as to how "the impersonal manhood of Christ can be the medium of the redemption of all men."⁶⁸ The answer lies in the notion of a pre-existent Christ.

Keefe's book, Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich, examines at some length the relationship between Christ and the human community, concluding that,

Once the transcendent act of man's creation is understood to be identical to the Incarnation, and not to the appearance of some primal human pair, the dogma of the unity of the human species, the human community, is not imperilled by a multiplicity of aboriginal couples, for even in such a hypothesis, each human being would refer, with regard to his human credentials, to his creation in Christ, and not to his descent from a unique progenitor.⁶⁹

Furthermore, such a perspective reveals that our participation in Christ constitutes a mediated participation in God through the incarnate Logos. Christ's humanity, therefore, constitutes, as Thomas says, "a certain

⁶⁶ Bonnefoy, Christ and the Cosmos, p. 7.

⁶⁷ See In 2 Cael., 1.16; In Rom., c. 5, lect. 3.

⁶⁸ Mascall, Christ, the Christian and the Church, p. 74.

⁶⁹ Keefe, Thomism, p. 104.

universal principle of grace in human nature."⁷⁰ We need no longer account for such universality by appealing to the disincarnate God. For our imaging of God, as Keefe points out, is Christocentric, not Logocentric. "In Thomism, man's participation in Christ is the result of man's creation in the image of God who is the Christ."⁷¹

Finally, the notion of a pre-existent Christ is necessary if we are to salvage the Aristotelian notion of the form/matter composition of the world. A material universe requires an incarnate exemplar. Otherwise we are forced into Einstein's reduction of matter to 'frozen' energy or Rahner's reduction of the same to 'frozen' spirit. In either case, matter is accommodated only to the extent that it can be identified with form, i.e., only to the extent that it can be regarded as mirroring God. In short, the pre-existent Christ answers the methodological needs of both Aristotle and Thomas, while doing justice to the Christian revelation itself.

Gratia Christi: Quasi-Formal Causality

Another problem with Barfield's use of the image of the Divine Word clothing itself with humanity is that it supposes that the causality which is exercised here proceeds from the Logos as disincarnate and operates upon humanity in such a way as to conform humanity to that disincarnate Logos. In other words, it supposes that same separation between the Logos and humanity to which reference was earlier made. Under these circumstances, the causality of the Logos is extrinsic to humanity, and therefore operates to create its own image in humanity. We are back into the Platonic universe which images a disincarnate reality.

⁷⁰ ST III, 7, 9 ad 11.

⁷¹ Keefe, Thomism, p. 275.

Rahner has the same difficulties when he attempts to set forth his own notion of quasi-formal causality. What he seeks is an intelligible account of "why and how the divine causality belongs to the constitution of the finite causality itself, without becoming an essential component of the nature of the finite being itself."⁷² Esse, as intrinsic to finite beings and yet extrinsic to their essential nature, would appear to solve his difficulty. Yet, in the final analysis, Rahner avoids that solution.

. . . the infinite cause, which as actus purus pre-contains all reality in itself, belongs to the constitution of the finite cause as such (in actu), but without forming an intrinsic constituent of the finite being as such.⁷³

If quasi-formal causality cannot be an "intrinsic constituent of the finite being as such," then it can be neither essence nor esse. How, then, can it be immanent? Rahner's quasi-formal causality shares the same fate as does his supernatural existential, in that he wants both to be immanent within beings without being constitutive of those beings. But there is no means within Thomism to account for this notion of causality. Immanent principles/causes are constitutive principles/causes. Rahner, therefore, falls back on the same expedient which Thomas himself employed, that of relegating immanent divine activity to the accidental level.

The only way out of this impasse is to associate God's immanent activity with esse. Once this is done, it becomes clear that God's immanent activity within the world cannot be divorced from His union with that world. In fact, His union with it is the prius of His being

⁷² Rahner, Hominisation, p. 77.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 80.

able to act from within it. We are back to the pre-existent Christ as the prius of our world. As Keefe puts it, "the formal effect of the Incarnation is communicated throughout all that time and space."⁷⁴

The esse/essence correlation is therefore a statement of Christ's activity as "intrinsic formal and existential cause"⁷⁵ of the world. It is also a statement of the contingent intelligibility of the world which Christ's causality effects. The world is not simply the actualization of Aristotelian necessary intelligibilities, any more than Christ Himself is simply the actualization of an Aristotelian human nature.

Thomas recognized the quasi-formal causality which the Logos effected upon the human nature it assumed. He, in fact, employed an analogy similar to Barfield's garment analogy.

. . . the human nature of Christ is likened to a habit, i.e., a garment, not indeed in regard to accidental union, but inasmuch as the Word is seen by the human nature, as a man by his garment, and also inasmuch as the garment is changed, for it is shaped according to the figure of him who puts it on, and yet he is not changed from his form on account of the garment.⁷⁶

Both he and Barfield recognize the quasi-formal causality which Esse (the Logos) exercises in the Incarnation. What neither seems fully to appreciate is that this effect takes place from within the union, not apart from it. Thomas recognizes the substantial contingency which is constitutive of creation and the substantial grace which is constitutive of Christ, but he never recognizes the link between the two. Barfield recognizes that human unconsciousness cannot exist apart from its actuation by the Logos, but he fails to recognize that that actuation is

⁷⁴Keefe, Thomism, p. 101.

⁷⁵Idem., "Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology," p. 369.

⁷⁶ST III, 2, 6 ad 1.

Incarnation, since apart from it there is no humanity. Only if we keep in mind the link between Christ and creation, between Incarnation and human actuation, does the following statement by Mersch have a methodological basis in Thomism.

The manner of being, therefore, that God willed for man was an esse in Christo, an existence in Christ. Human ontology, viewed in its origins, was in reality a supernatural ontology, an ontology of members destined to be joined together in a body: we have existence in order that we may become members in the Saviour.⁷⁷

The Analogy of Being: Covenant with Christ

A third problem with the Barfield garment analogy, one which it shares with Thomas' analogy, is that such an analogy tends to leave Christ out of the analogy itself (it is the Logos who creates and conforms man to His own disincarnate imaging of the Father). It is a variation on the Thomist analogy of being which tries to assert both the identity and the otherness of the world vis a vis God, but in the final analysis reduces the world to an image of God.

To identify creation and Incarnation avoids this problem, but creates a new one. Just as the God/world reading of esse/essence ultimately reduces the world to God, so the Christ/world reading runs the danger that the world shall be reduced to Christ. It can result in a Christomonism in which Christ is regarded as the sole effective agent in the world and in history. By this reading, His grace saves us but does not empower us to cooperate with Him in His work of salvation and sanctification. There is no genuine reciprocity between Christ and the humanity He actualizes.

The only way to avoid such a reductionism is to recognize the

⁷⁷Mersch, The Whole Christ, p. 22.

essentially synthetic or composite character of the Incarnation as event. It is to recognize that Incarnation is also Covenant.

. . . if, as is a commonplace today, it must be maintained that all such theology must be Christocentric, it must be insisted that this "center" is not a static hypostatic union, to be plumbed as an abstract intelligible structure, but rather is an event, a dynamic event, historical and free, the Augustinian Christus integer, the sovereignly free Trinitarian Mission of the Son by the Father to give the Spirit and, inseparably, the created freedom, Marian and ecclesial, in which the Mission and the Gift are received and actual. The center of Catholic theology is then the New Covenant, the center at once of being and of history in which the faith terminates and upon which Catholic theology must bear. It is this unit, at once Trinitarian, Christological, Marian and ecclesial, historical and ontological, which is the prius, the subject matter, of theology: there is no other.⁷⁸

Christ is not the only agent. His agency is correlative to that of the humanity which He actualizes.

To this immanence of God in man, the Logos sarx egeneto Who is the Christ, and the "firstborn of all creation," there is a necessary correlative: the free consent of creation, of humanity, to that immanence. It is never to be forgotten that this Covenant of God with man is a gift, not an imposition of the divine will upon a passive incontinent material.⁷⁹

We must always, therefore, keep in mind that Christ Himself is "constituted by a divine freedom which creates the free human response by which God is humanly present among us."⁸⁰

Creation itself is constituted by a polarity between the pre-existent Christ and the humanity which is actualized by Him. Eschatologically, this bi-polarity is expressed in the relationship between

⁷⁸ Donald J. Keefe, "Mary as Created Wisdom, the Splendor of the New Creation," The Thomist 47 (July 1983):397.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 405.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 403. Here the Marian doctrines of the Church reveal their importance. For the free human response by which God is present is Mary's fiat. Her fiat, however, cannot be understood apart from the pre-existent Christ. For her perfect freedom (unfallenness), which is the necessary prius of her free response, has its source in Christ, not in Mary herself.

Christ and Mary. Historically, it is given in the relationship between Christ and the Church. The relationship is correlative, not reductionistic. That is to say, the union of Christ and the Church is not an organic unity (one body) but a marital unity (one flesh). ". . . the union between Christ and his Church is not organic, so as to constitute a single subject, but marital as a relationship between two subjects."⁸¹ It is, in short, a single substance constituted by two subjects and their union with one another. It is trinitarian. The marital relationship of husband and wife is itself an image of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

The Trinitarian structure of the marital symbol is evident enough: the total self-donation of two persons to each other is constitutive of each, as husband, as wife, and is productive of a third reality, the marriage bond itself, the marital society, the substantive love of each for each which cannot be undone, and whose self-subsistent character is evidenced by its irrevocability. This love, or covenant, cannot be identified with either of the covenanting parties; this, and its radical permanence as a relation, makes the marital covenant of husband and wife the Trinitarian image and sacrament par excellence. It is only within this context that the Trinity is in fact "imaged" even by the Incarnate Son, for He is Image as sent, as obedient to the Father in a sacrifice which has no other finality than that sancta societas which is fallen humanity's sole means of union with God.⁸²

Earlier, it was noted that Aristotle distinguished the activity of human reason from the movements of the phenomena, but grounded each in the same act/potency structure.⁸³ The notion of Covenant allows us to do something very similar with regard to the relationship between God and creation. Creation is a fundamentally different reality from God. It is not simply a manifestation of Him, any more than the mind's

⁸¹ Idem., "The Sacrament of the Good Creation," Faith & Reason IX (Summer 1983):135.

⁸² Idem., "Mary as Created Wisdom, the Splendour of the New Creation," p. 410.

⁸³ See pp. 395-396.

activity is simply a reduplication of the phenomenal movements. At the same time, however, creation is like God in that it shares in God's Trinitarian structure. For creation is the Covenantal union constituted by the reciprocity of two subjects: Christ and humanity (Church). As Keefe points out, "The New Covenant, the Good Creation, . . . submits to one norm only, the Triune God in whose image it is made."⁸⁴

The analogy of being is, therefore, a Trinitarian analogy. Our participation in God is a mediated participation in the Trinity, and the term of that mediation is our covenantal creation in Christ.

This relationship of ourselves to God is fundamentally our creation in Christ, a creation which is radically complete in the presence of Christ in our world: that is, in his life, his passion, his death, and in the Eucharistic worship of the Church, by which he is present, in his risen humanity to the end of the world, for he has not left us orphans. He is risen, and still with us.⁸⁵

The act/potency methodology of Aristotle, therefore, has a threefold application when we are speaking of creation. Esse/essence is, first, a statement about the Incarnate Logos (God/man). It is, secondly, a statement about the humanity which the Incarnate Logos actualizes, a humanity constituted by its participation in the humanity of Christ as actualized by the Logos. It is, therefore, in the words of Florovsky, a "double-natured" humanity (divine/human or natural/graced).⁸⁶ Finally, esse/essence is a statement about the relationship between Christ and humanity (covenantal union of two distinct subjects).

⁸⁴Keefe, "Mary as Created Wisdom, the Splendour of the New Creation, p. 406.

⁸⁵Idem., "Death as Worship," Theology Digest (Winter 1973):338-339.

⁸⁶Georges Florovsky, Creation and Redemption (Belmont, MS: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), p. 77.

Hence creation is neither the reduction of the world to God (divinization) nor the reduction of God to the world (secularization). It is not a reductionism at all. It is the correlation (covenantal union) of two subjects (Christ and the human community). As Keefe notes, "The fact of the Fall did not prevent Christ from being the creator, the giver of life, but it changed the manner in which the gift could be made."⁸⁷ Because of the Fall, this covenantal union is given sacramentally in history, in Christ's Eucharistic presence. The Eucharist is constitutive of the Church just as the pre-existent Christ is constitutive of humanity. The good creation is hence sacramentally present in this fallen world.

The grace of Christ as constitutive of humanity, however, means that His grace is at the same time constitutive of every member of the human community by that existential actuation of humanity which is both creation and Incarnation. This substantial (sufficient) grace which is an intrinsic cause of every individual has its psychological counterpart, as Keefe points out, in an existential lumen.⁸⁸ This substantial grace is not sanctifying grace, but the substantial prius or condition of sanctifying grace. Because of the Fall, not only man's operations but his substantial integrity as well have been effected.

Consequently, sin is a way of existing, a substantial and therefore created dynamic orientation, before it can be understood to be an activity, an operatio, however simultaneous and correlative substance and accident may be.⁸⁹

As a result, Christ's Incarnation is a work of redemption (restoring

⁸⁷ Keefe, Thomism, p. 125.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 93.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

man's substantial integrity) as well as the work which was His primary task, namely, the giving of the Spirit.

In Barfield's terms, we might say that redemption is the liberation of human consciousness (the phenomenal world) from unreflective identifications with spirit (pantheism), from Porphyry's universe (theocentrism), from scientific idolatry (cosmocentrism) and from secularity (anthropocentrism). The work is threefold. It consists, first, in the rejection of original participation (Israel), secondly, in the raising of human consciousness to the reality of final participation (Eucharist) and, thirdly, in the sanctification of the world through that final participation. The historical Incarnation signals the shift from the first to the second and third phases. The essential incompleteness of the Old Testament rejection of idolatry finds its significance in the New Testament "rebirth of images".

The dilemmas posed by the Old Testament faith in the Lord of history find no sufficient resolution in the Old Testament; they await the concrete union of God and man, Christus integer, the New Covenant, for there alone is the dichotomy resolved which haunts our fallen reason--that dichotomy which has found, perennially, the immanence of God to be in contradiction with His transcendence.⁹⁰

Christ's overcoming of the world is not, therefore, an overcoming of its dichotomies by their reduction to one set of polarities or another. It is rather the restoration of that covenantal unity-in-diversity which the human mind finds so difficult to accept. The temptation is always to identify the world with an extrinsic reality (God, pure form, eschaton) or with an intrinsic necessity (laws of nature, statistical probabilities, an immanent divinity). The Thomist analogy of being understands the world's unity only by reference to its collective imaging of God and the individual's

⁹⁰ Idem., "The Sacrament of the Good Creation," p. 130.

intelligibility only by reference to its participation in God. Such a reductionism not only undercuts the unity of the human community, but in so doing also undercuts that revelation which is the Christ.

The cause of the participate human actuality of men is not found in Christ, but in the God beyond the revelation. This makes the truth of the revelation fundamentally unnecessary to men. The consequence is that while Christ, who is at once revealer and redeemer, is absolutely necessary as redeemer, he is only morally necessary as revealer. The very notion of what revelation is has then become obscure; it is no longer the God-man, Jesus Christ, but a series of propositions.⁹¹

The Thomist analogy of being arose out of a theocentric consciousness of the world which, because fundamentally Platonic, could not but issue in a form of Platonic reductionism (the Porphyrian universe). We know today that such an historical consciousness was not a permanent reflection of reality, but simply one stage in an historical process. That it still exercises a powerful influence today is apparent in Barfield's ultimate acceptance of it, despite his having argued so persuasively against it. The very power which it exerts should warn us that, in dissociating ourselves from it, we must avoid falling into its contemporary counterpart, namely, accepting modern secular consciousness as the last word with regard to reality.⁹² In either case, we are simply

⁹¹ Idem., Thomism, p. 86.

⁹² Such an uncritical acceptance of contemporary historical consciousness is a fundamental problem in contemporary Catholic theology. A good example of this is John W. O'Malley's article, "Reform, Historical Consciousness, and Vatican II's Aggiornamento" (Theological Studies 32 [Dec 1971]:573-601). Characterized by the editors of Theological Studies as "a break-through article, one of the most significant we have ever published in ecclesiology" (p. 571), the article itself does little more than submit Catholicism to a secular critique. Believing that men must change religion and not the reverse (p. 575), O'Malley contends that the Church today must accept the contemporary historical consciousness which understands history to be radically human and contingent (p. 596). History therefore must be freed from a classicist mentality, i.e., it must be desacralized and deprovidentialized (p. 596), relativized and neutralized (p. 597). We must recognize its fundamentally

confining Christ to the a priori structures of our consciousness, rather than permitting him to liberate us from them. For, only by attending to Christ the Revealer can we understand Christ the Redeemer.

Final Participation: The Whole Christ

We have seen how we cannot simply reduce creation to the making of the world and/or man and how we cannot simply reduce Incarnation to the historical Christ. The reality of our existence, because covenantal, is much more complex than either of those notions would suggest. That complexity is also not taken into account by the Logos/garment analogies employed by Thomas and Barfield. Mersch employs a similar analogy, but in such a way as to indicate the complexity with which we are dealing.

. . . God gives Himself in Christ, and . . . Christ, the divine life and light enveloping mankind, is the whole Christ: God who gives Himself to men in the God-man.⁹³

discontinuous character ("for man is capable of reversing himself, of changing direction, and thus of being discontinuous with himself"--p. 596). Hence not only the future but the past itself is subject to change ("Thus we can with truth speak of a 'changing' or even a 'new' past"--p. 598). Since history is determined by man, whose freedom submits to no structure (the past "is to be understood in terms of man, who is free and contingent and who has not masterminded a coherent pattern for the history of his race"--pp. 596-597), we must recognize the radical contingency and reversibility of history ("If some given historical reality could have developed otherwise, we are free to change and even to reverse the direction of that reality if we so choose"--p. 599).

O'Malley is, of course, assuming the same dichotomies between past and future, freedom and intelligibility, history and metaphysics that we have seen in Metz' theology. Such an approach undermines not only the sacramental character of the Church, but, in so doing, deprives history of any meaning (reality). History is change without direction, movement without structure, freedom without intelligibility. Although O'Malley appears to depart from Metz' insistence that history is irreversible, that departure is actually compatible with and indeed a corollary to Metz' own position, inasmuch as Metz offers no principle of intelligibility by which history may be understood to have an intelligible direction. Christ's effectiveness in history, according to Metz, seems to lie precisely in his having freed us to that view of history which now makes it possible for us to manipulate history as we choose, not as God wills.

⁹³Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 71.

The Whole Christ is not simply the incarnate Christ, but the incarnate Christ in union with the humanity He creates. As Butterworth points out,

God's action in man's regard can be seen as having three major 'moments': creation, reconciliation and the final redemption and fulfilment of all things. Each of these three 'moments' takes place in and through Christ. The total action of man's God is Christoform. It starts with Christ, proceeds through Christ, and is completed in Christ.⁹⁴

Because this is the case, we can say that in the historical Incarnation, "Christ comes to save and fulfil what is basically already his."⁹⁵

Christ's union with the world takes place in man, but with man as a community, not as an aggregate of individuals. As Mersch points out,

There is something more than the union of subjects to any king, more than the insecure incorporation of members in an organism, more than the closest possible moral union. There is a "physical" union, we should say, if the very term itself did not appear to place this bond in the category of mere natural unions. At all events, it is a real ontological union, or, since the traditional names are still the best, it is a mystical, transcendent, supernatural union whose unity and reality exceed our powers of expression; it is a union that God alone can make us understand, as He alone was able to bring it into being.⁹⁶

For this reason, Florovsky maintains that the world "was made to be and to become the Church, the Body of Christ."⁹⁷

This notion of Christ's relationship to the world as centered on man requires us to return to the Platonic view of the human mind as interposed between God (pure form) and the phenomenal world in which we live. It also requires us to return to the Augustinian notion of divine illumination, now recognized to be not a direct participation in

⁹⁴ Butterworth, Theology of Creation, p. 78.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

⁹⁶ Mersch, The Whole Christ, p. 584.

⁹⁷ Florovsky, Creation and Redemption, p. 77.

God but a mediated participation in Christ. As Mersch points out, "Human nature was made to be united to God in Christ, because the humanity of Christ was made that it might penetrate all things, ut imperet omnia (Eph. 4:10)."⁹⁸

The phenomenal world, as Barfield notes, is actualized by man's unconscious figuration. Man, therefore, stands in a 'directionally creator' relationship with the 'particles' or unrepresented which constitute the correlative objective data upon which his figuration works. As Keefe points out, "the material cosmos is actual in and by the actuality of man."⁹⁹ This actualizing of the world has been called by Einstein a product of the "free creations" of the human mind. As Toulmin points out, however, these creations may be free in the sense of arising out of no necessity of human thought, but they are not free in the sense of being arbitrary.

This is not work for the untutored imagination. It may be art, but it is one whose exercise requires a stiff training. Though there is nothing to tell just what new types of model and mode of representation scientists may not in time find it profitable to adopt, nor any formal rules which can be demanded for discovering profitable new theories, theoretical physicists have to be taught their trade and cannot afford to proceed by genius alone. One cannot teach a man to be imaginative; but there are certain kinds of imagination which only a man with a particular training can exercise.¹⁰⁰

Barfield goes further, pointing out that this imagination cannot be inculcated or self-created; it can only be self-willed.¹⁰¹ It cannot be self-created, for its creation depends upon the actuation of the human

⁹⁸ Mersch, The Whole Christ, p. 559.

⁹⁹ Keefe, Thomism, p. 92.

¹⁰⁰ Toulmin, The Philosophy of Science, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰¹ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 179.

unconscious by Christ and upon His power to 'enliven' the images which it uses. But it can be self-willed, because His actuation of our unconscious is simultaneously the gift of grace by which we are able to respond to that actuation. By becoming aware of our own figuration and of its participation in that enlightenment of our minds which is the Christ, we can will that Christ penetrate all things, through our systematic use of an imagination (which is figuration raised to the level of consciousness) enlightened by Christ.

The covenantal structure of creation is a result of the Father sending the Son to give the Spirit. We miss the full significance of the Whole Christ if we neglect the gift of the Spirit. Herbert Richardson points out that man's creation on the sixth day is followed by the Sabbath holiness of the seventh day. He concludes that "man is made for Sabbath holiness."¹⁰² Therefore, we cannot, in his judgment, overlook that sanctification which it was the primary mission of Christ to make possible in the world.

. . . unless we undergird redemption with sanctification, i.e., unless we insist that the sanctification of the world by His mere Sabbath presence is the primary reason Jesus Christ is here, we lack the presupposition that makes His redemptive work worthwhile.¹⁰³

His presence makes possible a process of sanctification which works in man and, through him, in the phenomenal world he inhabits. It is a process by which the world is made neither divine nor secular, but holy. This holy world, united to Christ through His union with humanity and

¹⁰² Herbert Richardson, Toward an American Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 116. It should be noted, however, that Richardson understands both Christ and Sabbath holiness within a theocentric, not a Christocentric, framework.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 132.

made holy by Christ's penetration of the entire phenomenal realm through humanity, is the Pleroma, the totus et integer Christus. As the covenantal imaging of the Trinity in which Christ participates, it manifests the holiness or glory of God.

PART III

CONCLUSION

Post-Tridentine theologians in the Roman Catholic Church have all too often made the serious error of confusing the historical issue of interpreting Aquinas with the systematic problem of nature and grace, particularly insofar as the latter asks the question whether man evinces a natural desire for the vision of God. One meets again and again the assumption that if Aquinas's doctrine of a natural desire to see God as he is in himself can be clarified once and for all, then the systematic problem is ipso facto solved as well.¹

This remark by Shepherd underscores two difficulties which the theologian confronts when attempting to apply Thomist methodology to the contemporary nature/grace problem. The first difficulty is that of clarifying what in fact Thomas had to say about the relationship between nature and grace, keeping in mind that he did not ask the explicit questions which we ask today. The second difficulty is distinguishing between what Thomas had to say on the matter and the systematic problem itself.

With regard to the first difficulty, this dissertation has argued that Thomas' doctrine on nature and grace does not admit a final clarification, because he himself was inconsistent with regard to it, seeking a synthesis between Plato and Aristotle which ultimately could not be made to work. If they are to derive coherence from his works, therefore, his interpreters must suppress one or another aspect of his thought. The wide-ranging disagreements among Thomists are a result of the fact that no consensus has been achieved with regard to what should be suppressed.

¹Shepherd, Man's Condition, p. 31.

Internequine disagreement within the Thomist tradition has been exacerbated, not resolved, by textual analysis; these disputes range across the whole of the Thomist system, to the extent that its inner coherence can no longer be shown by recourse to the text of St. Thomas.²

Not only does the theological problem here not admit a hermeneutical resolution, given the inconsistencies of Thomas himself, it points up the fact that the theological problem is not hermeneutical to begin with. As Keefe goes on to note, "In fact, the attempt to do so [i.e., resolve the problem by textual analysis] is an instance of the confusion of theology with another kind of scholarship; a systematic theology cannot be identified with the exegesis of St. Thomas. . ."³

The second difficulty, therefore, of distinguishing between what Thomas said and the systematic problem itself is of fundamental importance to any exploration of the nature/grace relationship today. The importance of Thomas' work to today's theological task lies not in re-examining what he said but in re-evaluating what he did. It is not, in other words, a question of uncovering Thomas' doctrine of nature and grace (theologians do not, after all, produce doctrines), but of uncovering his method. When we do that, we are doing what Thomas himself did. For, as Pegis points out with regard to Thomas' use of Aristotle, "To make Aristotle a sound philosophical vehicle of Christian thought was for him much more important than the correct historical interpretation of Aristotle's text."⁴ To recover Thomism as a sound vehicle for Christian systematic theology, therefore, requires us to recognize, first,

²Keefe, Thomism, p. 2.

³Ibid.

⁴Anton C. Pegis, At the Origins of the Thomistic Notion of Man (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 30.

that it is a method, not a philosophy or doctrine, and, secondly, that it is hypothetical (theory) and not actual (truth).

With regard to the first point, Pegis points out that Thomas' use of Aristotle was guided by his Christian vision of reality.

Within the religious vision of Christianity, St. Thomas saw man not only in the history of his life but also in the nature that was itself the first moment and origin of that history. In short, St. Thomas saw the metaphysical meaning of human nature in the history that embodied its religious search for spiritual unity and repose.

Such an approach to St. Thomas Aquinas supposes that the Aristotelianism of St. Thomas Aquinas was not his "philosophy," but the technical language and instrument through which he expressed his personal philosophical ideas which he then went on to use in his theology.⁵

In short, Aristotelianism was in the hands of Thomas a tool or method for doing systematic theology, i.e., for using language in technical or systematic ways. The method itself, as Keefe points out, is "the act-potency schema which is St. Thomas' transformation of the Aristotelian ontological method."⁶

With regard to the second point, the hypothetical character of Thomist method, we have already had occasion to observe that Thomas recognized the hypothetical character of science.⁷ Rousselot, in commenting on one of these texts (In 2 De cael., I, 17), points out that this notion of hypothesis is something which extends to Thomas' own thought. "It is important to notice that this judgment affects the very system he himself accepts and in terms of which he writes in his own works."⁸

⁵ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

⁶ Keefe, Thomism, p. 2.

⁷ See p. 335n.

⁸ Rousselot, The Intellectualism of St. Thomas, trans. James E. O'Mahony (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), pp. 150-151.

As Keefe points out, "any application of an ontological method, of a method of correlation, to theology rests upon the assumption that the Christian revelation and a given notion of substance are compatible."⁹ Any given notion of substance, therefore, which undergoes such a transformation can only be understood as potentially theological apart from this transformation. That is to say, the Aristotelian act/potency correlation is not compatible with the Christian faith until it is opened to creation by the Thomist essence/esse analysis of substantial contingency. "Truth is expressed by the correlation of method with the revelation, not by method in isolation from the faith."¹⁰

This, of course, requires us to recognize that the esse/essence correlation is a theological, not a philosophical, addition to Aristotle. Such a recognition is implicit in every statement that Thomas transformed, converted or baptized Aristotle into a Christian philosopher.

It is a little ironical that it was the irreligious Aristotle who became for Christians the Philosopher par excellence rather than the much more devoutly minded Plato, to whom the majority of the Fathers had leaned. The answer is really very simple. It is that Aristotle had no religion to speak of, and therefore could be given one, while Plato had one, and it was largely false.¹¹

This remark of Mascall's is very much to the point, if we remember that Thomas gave Aristotle a religion by giving him esse. Esse converted Aristotle not from an essentialist into an existentialist philosopher nor from an atheist into a theist, but from a pagan into a Christian.

⁹Keefe, Thomism, p. 41.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹E. L. Mascall, He Who Is (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1943), p. 7.

Esse/Essence: Substantial Grace

As Grene points out, the Aristotelian necessitated universe of finite intelligibilities is far removed from the universe in which we live today.

No gulf here [in Aristotle] divides the infinite source of order and unity from the sheer existence of the creature; nor conversely does an indefinite ongoing of nature have to look beyond itself for the resolution of its own absurdity. Neither faith nor despair is needed in this universe.

Yet it is not our universe. We may admire its beauty and order, yearn for its security; it is not ours. If we are religious, it is not a finite God we worship; if we are scientists (not that these are contradictories), we have no hope, no desire, for completed systems, whose unique premises could be stated once for all with certainty. Both the infinite and the indeterminate are before us and around us; we live by our very natures on the edge of the abyss. The finite perfection of the Aristotelian world we cannot hope to restore.¹²

Whether we are talking about human intelligence in terms of an horizon of infinite being or an unrestricted desire to know (transcendental Thomism) or of the material universe as 'finite but unbounded' (contemporary astrophysics) or of human freedom as that which transcends all essentialist structures or natures (Metz), the Aristotelian universe is lost to sight.

What is also lost to sight, unfortunately, is the fact that infinity as positive and intelligent/intelligible was an explicitly Christian notion which, in medieval scholasticism, irrevocably severed the link which Greek philosophy had forged between finitude and necessary intelligibility. Or, rather, between God and necessary intelligence. God could no longer be understood as confined to any finite account of intelligence. Duns Scotus, in particular, understood God's infinity to be that which marks Him off from all created beings. To be creaturely

¹²Grene, A Portrait of Aristotle, p. 251.

is to be finite. Scotus therefore retained, where creation is concerned, the Greek link between finitude and essential intelligibility. To avoid the Greek notion of necessitated finite intelligibility, he fell back upon the Divine Will to account for the contingent character of that intelligibility.

Thomas employed a more negative notion of infinity with regard to God (the absence of limitation) and therefore was not forced to rely on infinity as that which sets God apart from creatures. Thomas therefore left the door open to the possibility that creatures might, in some sense, be regarded as relatively infinite without infringing on God's prerogatives. As a result, 20th century Thomism, both philosophical and theological, has increasingly centered on the significance of esse as unbounded dynamism and on the 'natural' desire for God as exemplifying that unbounded dynamism. Hence, 20th century Thomism has severed the link between created intelligence and finitude. What it has not done is recognize that such a severing process also liberates that intelligence from necessity and therefore from anything which, in an Aristotelian universe, could be called 'natural'.

Owens comes as close as any Thomist philosopher to recognizing the fundamentally theological (i.e., graced) character of esse, when he writes with regard to man's desire for God,

Nothing will ultimately satisfy him except existence without limits, the direct union in cognitional existence with infinite being. In existence only can this union be achieved, for in essence man inevitably remains finite.¹³

He concludes that "from the viewpoint of philosophy existence does appear to hold in its meaning the spiritual destiny of mankind."¹⁴ In

¹³ Owens, An Interpretation of Existence, p. 138.

¹⁴ Ibid.

other words, existence (esse) is precisely that element in Thomism which has irrevocably removed Aristotelian essences from the self-enclosed Aristotelian universe of finite, necessary intelligibility.

Mersch asks the question, "Is not God infinite, and can anyone be divinized without being raised to the order of infinity?"¹⁵ Mersch, unhappily, understands our being raised to infinity as the accidental work of grace.

In raising up a being from nothing, creation raises that being to the level of a creature; the Incarnation raises a being above that being's level up to the heights of the infinite.¹⁶

Such a separation of creation and Incarnation is unjustified, however, once we recognize that the 'unbounded' character of both the human mind (spirit) and the material universe is given with creation itself. Being raised to the heights of the infinite a second time may well mean that we are twice blessed, but it is not altogether easy to see what purpose such a second elevation would serve. Nor does it, from the viewpoint of Thomist methodology, make any sense, once the contingency of esse is recognized as that which is responsible for 'elevating' the Aristotelian universe from necessitated intelligibility to the "heights of the infinite."

Metz is right to identify freedom with grace. As Pegis has noted with regard to the relationship between esse and freedom,

Here lies the great moment of accomplishment for existentialism. Here is a world of existence--existence revealed within the life of the human person--in which the use of the verb to be is a personal act of free projection into the future, an act of risk and commitment, suspended in a world that is never given because we always meet it as unfinished and to come within ourselves.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 226.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁷ Pegis, At the Origin of the Thomistic Notion of Man, p. 54.

In an Aristotelian world, there is no place for such a notion of freedom. It has nothing whatever to do with the Aristotelian essence. It is pure gift. Not to recognize this is to naturalize the supernatural. It is also to duplicate the error of transcendental Thomism.

This gift, however, is not, as Metz suggests, opposed to intelligible structure. Barfield points out that the Greeks discovered 'form in space', that is to say, form as complete and static intelligibility. These forms are the self-enclosed natures which Metz dislikes so much, and rightly so. But what Barfield goes on to note is that the Jews discovered 'form in time'.

. . . just as by looking back through the Greek mind, we bring to life the apprehension of form in space as an image or representation, so, by looking back through the Jewish mind, we bring to life the apprehension of form in time--that is, of events themselves, as images, whether of the past or future, or of a state of mind.¹⁸

If the four-dimensional space/time world in which today's science tells us we live has any bearing on these ancient discoveries, it is that we can no more dissociate 'form in space' (metaphysics) from 'form in time' (history) than we can split our universe in half.

These ancient discoveries also tell us that we can no longer split our history in half, by postulating only the historical Incarnation sensu negante as the source of our contingent world and our graced freedom. The experience of Israel alone offers clear evidence of a divine immanence at work in the world prior to that event. As Mersch points out with regard to grace,

The gift that descends from heaven does not fall on the race to crush mankind; it rises up within the race and elevates mankind; it comes from God who gives it by appearing among us as one of

¹⁸ Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 150-151.

us. Accordingly, while it springs forth entirely from God, it also springs forth from our race.¹⁹

But this makes sense only if we can speak of grace as present from the beginning, from creation. For nothing could spring forth from our race which was not in some sense already present in it. And the experience of Israel admits of no explanation unless we admit its presence.

Plato and Aristotle confront us with a choice. We can either place the really real within the world and history (Aristotle) or beyond the world and history (Plato). Christian theology has heretofore chosen the latter path. This dissertation has argued that we ought today to re-examine that choice. The synthetic character of the particles, of the phenomena, of the human mind and of the history of human consciousness itself all argue for the need to employ a methodology which treats the ineluctable polarities of our existence as complementary, not contradictory. And the anthropocentric character of contemporary human consciousness bids us look within our world and its history, not outside it, for an account of its value and significance. In short, we require Aristotle's form/matter correlation.

Moreover, the contingent character of created intelligence/intelligibility, whether we are speaking of the particles, of the phenomena, of the human mind or of the history of human consciousness, argues for the need to employ a methodology which treats this world and its history as contingently, not necessarily intelligible. In short, we require Thomas' esse/essence transformation of Aristotle.

But we must recognize the genuinely transformational character of the real distinction. Esse is pure gift. It is given with creation

¹⁹Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, pp. 602-603.

and it produces that "double-natured" humanity of which Florovsky speaks. It 'elevates' human nature to the level of the infinite without destroying that nature in the process. It does, however, mean that human nature and human being are not, in the universe God has chosen to create, identical. Human nature is potential not actual; it exists by virtue of a graced actuation which 'elevates' it from Aristotelian finitude and necessity to Christian 'infinity' and freedom. And, because this grace is given from the beginning, we need no longer regard God's activity in our lives as one which undercuts or deprives us of a 'natural' humanity by changing us into divinized beings. We need no longer fear that God seeks, by way of grace, to make us 'other' than what we have been from the beginning. For we have been 'divinized' or graced from the beginning. To suppose otherwise is to introduce a rift between creation and Incarnation which today's anthropocentric consciousness cannot accept and which theology finds itself increasingly unable to defend. As Keefe points out,

. . . if the causality of the mission of the Son is less in us than our creation, and is merely a modification of "natural" humanity created on some other basis, the recognition that his splendor is also his omnipotence is the recognition that the transformation he works in us must be the nullification of our antecedent "nature." The resulting piety must distrust all existential spontaneity.²⁰

To continue to treat the Incarnation as an accidental modification of the structures of creation and grace as an accidental modification of the structures of human nature only ensures that a resolution to the nature/grace problem as it presents itself to us in theology today cannot be found.

²⁰Keefe, "A Methodological Critique," p. 42.

There is, as we have seen,²¹ no Church doctrine or teaching which would require us to deny that "God can, in one act, create a structured being, composed of both a natural and a supernatural element."²² There is, in short, no a priori reason for denying substantial grace and a plethora of good reasons for affirming it. But to affirm it requires us to locate that immanent substance which escaped both Aristotle and Thomas.

Esse/Essence: Creation in Christ

Almost all attempts heretofore to account for divine immanence and human transcendence have succeeded only in reducing divine immanence to the accidental and in reducing human transcendence to an extrinsic cause (the transcendent God, the Divine Ideas, the Logos, the God of the absolute future) or to a 'natural' cause (esse as 'natural' dynamism). The failure to seek, much less find, an alternative to this Platonic reductionism is due, in large part, to the reluctance anyone must feel in contravening the traditional wisdom of Aristotle and Thomas in this matter. We have already seen how both of them ultimately relied upon extrinsic sources to account for the reality and value of the material order. Although Thomas himself did not place great weight on human authority in those areas which lie open to human scrutiny,²³ in the intervening centuries great weight has been placed on both his and Aristotle's authority.

A second reason for the failure to find an alternative to Platonic

²¹See pp. 282ff.

²²Shepherd, Man's Condition, p. 91.

²³ST I, 8 ad 2.

reductionism is a more explicitly theological or even doctrinal one. It is that rationalization of creation which has separated creation from any explicit link with Christ. Because Scripture insists so much upon just such a link, Butterworth believes that one of the most important tasks lying before today's theologian is that of providing an account of the Christocentric character of creation itself.

There is urgent need for a new theological appreciation of creation in Christian theology. Creation must be seen as an essential element in the total mystery of Christ. And that mystery can never be properly appreciated without taking creation into account.²⁴

Unless we can identify Christ with creation, we can give no methodologically coherent account of His immanent activity in the world and in history.

The failure of Christian theologians to recognize the complete and universal centrality of Christ's presence and activity in the world and in history is itself the central failure of systematic theology.

Over the centuries systematizing theologians have been ignoring that Christocentrism which should have been their chief concern. They have failed to convert the conventional wisdom of their age to the truth, the goodness, the reality of the Revelation who is the Christ. For the first millennium and a half of the Christian era, this wisdom was cosmological, a basically religious understanding of the world as sacral. Since the Enlightenment it has been for the most part anthropological, turned rather to the autonomy of man than to the sacrality of the cosmic order. In both periods, the conventional wisdom has been too easily baptized, too easily judged assimilated to the Christian Revelation. The scholastics, and in fact most Catholic theologians up to and including Teilhard, were in the main wedded to a cosmological viewpoint, in which the Christ tends to be seen as the implication of the immanent order or the rationality of the world: theology had difficulty distinguishing itself from the "natural" truths of philosophy.²⁵

A theologian such as Mersch recognizes not only the importance of Christ,

²⁴ Butterworth, Theology of Creation, p. 89.

²⁵ Keefe, "A Methodological Critique," p. 25.

but the fact that Christ Himself is the revelation.

. . . the relations of the Word are possessed by the humanity of Christ in the Word, through the possession of them by the Word who is the person of the humanity. To subsist and to possess these relations is one and the same thing for Christ's human nature. In this human nature, no separation between what is most secret in God and what is most secret in man is possible. For what is more secret in God than the mystery of the eternal processions, and what is more secret in man than the personality that makes him man?

In Jesus Christ, these two secrets coincide: the secret of God becomes the secret of man, because this man is God. The veil of the temple that kept the holy of holies hidden is rent. The light is given, the light is united to men, and this union is not a philosophical system or an inspired book, but is Someone living, the man Jesus Christ. The unity of His person is the abolishment and annihilation of every screen and every veil between the human mind and the splendor of the Trinity. Therefore Christ is revelation. And the revelation in Him is not the less universal because of the fact that He is but one Man; is not this one Man the life of all mankind?²⁶

Regrettably, Mersch has no means of accounting for how this one man could be the life of all men. Mersch is forced in the final analysis, as we have seen,²⁷ to rely upon the Logos to account for the mediation. But how was Christ present prior to the historical Incarnation, if the Logos is the sole principle of mediation?

The problem becomes particularly acute when we examine, as we have seen Barfield do, the significance of Israel in human history. In the absence of Christ, it would seem that we must posit either an extrinsic divine activity which simply guided Israel from on high or an immanent divine activity which can be accounted for only by supposing the unmediated participation of the individual directly in God or the Logos. The latter is not only a form of Platonic reductionism, it removes all possibility of accounting for Christ's centrality to us and our world.

²⁶ Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 380.

²⁷ See p. 421.

For if our participation in God occurs without Christ, it certainly does not require Him, as the central insight of Beggiani's article on a Logocentric approach to theology makes very clear. Christ can indeed continue to be regarded as an ideal, a model, but not as Emmanuel, God-with-us, and certainly not as a mediator of the divine.

Nor can any account be given of the unity of the human community itself, if in fact each of us participates directly in God. Past attempts to trace our unity back to a single primordial couple have had recently to contend with the very serious possibility that no single couple can claim credit for the entire race. We can, of course, adopt the posture of Einstein and Planck, and simply ask the biologists to go back to the drawingboard, but there is no likelihood of their taking seriously such a request and little more likelihood that, were they to do so, any immediate change in their position could be anticipated. They are not bound by theological a priori, nor should they be, particularly when the a priori is as dubious as the one in question here.

We could take refuge in the Divine Ideas, but this once again involves us in an extrinsic and ideal, not an intrinsic and real, unity. If we participate, as Thomas insists we do, in both divinity and non-divinity, the only condition of possibility for such a synthetic notion of participation, within Thomist methodology, lies in a pre-existent synthetic substance. The substance, in short, cannot be God, the Divine Ideas or the disincarnate Logos.

Simply to identify Christ or the Incarnation with creation is not, however, sufficient, as we have seen. For it fails to take into account the full character of the revelation itself. As Schoonenberg points out, "In the Old Testament . . . the strongest emphasis is on the connection

between creation and covenant."²⁸ Creation is not simply the bringing into existence of our world or our race, as theology all too often presumes, nor is it simply the Incarnate Christ. It is, rather, the bringing into existence of a covenantal community, a partnership, a relationship between two subjects within a single unity or substance. It is the covenantal unity of Christ and humanity, given historically in the covenantal unity of Christ and His Church. It is the composite unity (Christ/humanity) of two composite subjects, Christ (God/man) and humanity (grace/nature). The individual does not enjoy (or suffer, as the case may be) an isolated participation in God, but rather participates in God by and through his substantial participation in the human nature of Christ as actuated by the Logos.

In the fallen order in which we live, that participation is given completely only in the Church, which is actualized by Christ's Eucharistically covenantal presence. When Maritain says that, "in the community of saints, the person no longer tends to emerge above the community and pass into a better society, for it is in the Church herself that its participation in the divine life is accomplished,"²⁹ he is entirely correct. But such a notion of participation makes sense if, and only if, we keep before us the covenantal nature of our union with Christ.

Once we recognize the covenantal character of our relationship with Christ and of the created order itself, it becomes apparent that our imaging of God lies, first, in our composite imaging of the Christ who is God (our 'double-naturedness' corresponds to His two natures)

²⁸ Piet Schoonenberg, Covenant and Creation (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 77.

²⁹ Jacques Maritain, The Person and the Common Good, trans J. Fitzgerald (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), pp. 74-75.

and, secondly, in our covenantal or marital imaging of the Trinity itself which our relationship with Christ constitutes. The two imagings are inseparable, for the Whole Christ as Covenant (creation) is the revelation of the Triune God. "The dogma of Christology is the dogma of the Trinity as made known to men; it is a truth revealed to men in a giving of life to men."³⁰ For the giving of life to men is their incorporation into that truth (i.e., the Whole Christ). Our existence (esse) is our participation in Christ's existence (Esse).

Thomism: A Theological Method

Mersch remarks that "it is almost a general rule that theological aberrations begin with metaphysics, even when at first sight their roots do not appear to penetrate so far."³¹ In the case of Thomist theology, the aberration lies precisely in treating Thomism as primarily a metaphysics, and only secondarily as a theological method. This treatment, of course, stems directly from accepting the notion that esse, and therefore creation, is natural. For once this notion is accepted, it necessarily follows that the world is a 'natural' (i.e., metaphysical), not a 'graced' (i.e., Christian) realm. Thomist theology is then reduced, like grace itself, to an accidental role subordinate to Thomist metaphysics. But, as Keefe points out, this relationship between Thomist metaphysics and Thomist theology hurts both enterprises.

. . . the philosophy which results from this separation is entirely foreign to the act-potency correlation which is the method of the Thomist ontology. It cannot serve theology, for it dominates it, deciding what theology can be on grounds which are untenable

³⁰ Mersch, The Theology of the Mystical Body, p. 326.

³¹ Idem., The Whole Christ, p. 501.

theologically and philosophically: theologically, because prior limits are placed upon what the revelation must be; philosophically, because it ignores the gratuity of existence, and reduces the existential human person to the positive intelligibility of essential necessity.³²

The essentialism which such a separation of philosophy and theology introduces into Thomist philosophy itself is nowhere more operative than in the Thomist proofs for the existence of God. For the proofs suppose that the contingency of creation can be deduced from the necessities of finite intelligibility.

This deduction is essentialist; it places a necessary correlation between the creation and the creator. By this deduction, the creator is never separable from his effects.³³

The process proceeds to a creator, but he is no longer free. He is the necessary correlative to finite necessities.

If, however, *esse* is in no way owed to Aristotelian essences, there is no way to proceed by way of deduction from essential intelligibilities to their existential actuation. There is, that is to say, no way to proceed from an Aristotelian universe of necessary intelligibility to the free Creator of Christianity. One must start with existential contingency (that is, one must start with the doctrine of creation itself) in order to get to the Christian God. Finite necessities (i.e., philosophy alone) can never get us to Him.

St. Thomas broke this chain of necessity, but in doing so he created a theology, not a philosophy, for the hypothesis upon which his ontology is founded is theological, not philosophical. It assumes the ontological truth of the faith, and then proceeds to form an ontological structure consistent with that assumption. The truth of the faith is the prius of this ontology, and it is therefore theological at the outset.³⁴

³² Keefe, Thomism, p. 58.

³³ Ibid., p. 57.

³⁴ Ibid.

The God of philosophy and the God of Christianity are not only not identical, they are even incompatible. As Schoonenberg points out,

The God of the covenant, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . . is not the God of philosophy, and it would even be impossible for him to be so, because this covenant is free gift, is supernatural.³⁵

Creation is either covenantal (substantially graced) or rational (substantially natural). It images either a monist God (Ipsum Esse) or a qualitatively-differentiated God (the Trinity). Human beings participate in either the disincarnate Logos or the incarnate Christ. The a priori of theology is either revelation (Christ) or natural theology (metaphysics). These are either/or choices; they do not admit of a higher synthesis.

This dissertation has argued that creation is a covenantal imaging of the Trinitarian God as constituted by our participation in the incarnate Christ. The a priori of theology, including Thomist theology, is therefore the revelation itself, not Thomism or any other metaphysics. This requires the subordination of metaphysics to theology, not the reverse.

The new correlation implied by the new a priori [creation in Christ] would necessarily replace the former purely philosophical correlations, and the terms would acquire a new, theological meaning which would at once be intrinsically consistent and logically capable of rendering the dogma literally understandable. Philosophy was thus useful to theology only in subordination to the theological a priori--as a handmaid, in the classical expression. The evident implication of this point of view was that philosophical understanding alone was literally, because existentially, false, although logically correct; in subordination to the theological a priori it retained the act-potency correlation which supported its logic, but became literally true as well, in supporting the literal, existential truth of the dogma.³⁶

It also requires the subordination of every human discipline to the

³⁵ Schoonenberg, Covenant and Creation, p. 29.

³⁶ Keefe, Thomism, p. 46.

revelation. There will be a revival of Christianity not just, as Barfield points out, when popular scientific writings can no longer proceed without reference to the Incarnation, but when every discipline must proceed by way of it. Our creation in Christ is, as Keefe points out,

. . . the a priori of our humanity; our reality, our truth, our history are unified in Him in whom we exist, from whom we have fallen, in whom we are redeemed, the Creator immanent in His creation. Whether we theologize with insights drawn from anthropology, psychology, sociology, historical and literary criticism, law, ontology, or whatever other heuristic device, it is with this creation, specified and qualified as in Christo, that we are concerned, for there is no other. Its humanity, its historicity, its freedom, as its unity, truth and goodness, are not other than its relation to Him whom the Father sent to give the Spirit. This relation is that of total, absolute ontological dependence.³⁷

To recognize our creation in Christ is, therefore, to recognize the fundamentally hypothetical character of all systematic thinking, including that of theology.

The rational constructs of the theological enterprise guard their value only as hypotheses, as possessing no true of their own save that of the relation they bear to the revelation.³⁸

What is true of systematic theology in general is, of course, true of this dissertation in particular. The Thomist methodology proposed here is an hypothesis, not a doctrine, a creed or a standing truth. It offers a perspective from which the revelation might be explored and a method for conducting that exploration. It offers no final account of that revelation.

This dissertation also presumes that Thomas' own work was just such an exploration of the truth of our existence and not in any sense

³⁷ Idem., "Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology," p. 369.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 359.

a final account of it. To turn Thomism into a truth in its own right not only does an injustice to the enormous achievements of Thomas, it also impedes our own attempts to conduct the same kind of exploration which Thomas himself pursued. It is time that theology revive the slogan of the Louvain philosophers:

"St Thomas must be for us a beacon not a barrier."

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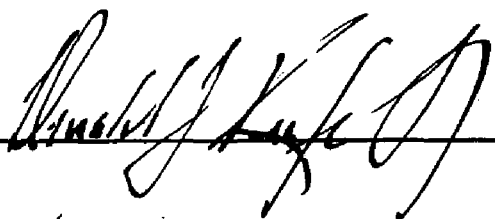
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