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# **Scripta Philosophica**

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Michał Chaberek

## Creation Is Not Generation: A Response to Brian Carl

Brian T. Carl<sup>1</sup> published a paper, “Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species,”<sup>2</sup> in which he argues that modern evolutionary theory does not contradict the principle of proportionate causality when it is applied to the origin of species.

To give some background to this claim, let us notice that currently most Thomists (unlike their predecessors a few decades ago) believe that Aquinas’s teaching, or Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, can be reconciled with modern evolutionary theory as presented by Darwin and his followers. In my book *Aquinas and Evolution*<sup>3</sup> I argue that it is not possible to simultaneously hold on to classical metaphysics (as taught by Aquinas) and the theory of biological macroevolution. What do I mean by the term “biological macroevolution”? Firstly, by “biological” I mean that I do not include evolution in culture (such as the evolution of languages, laws or customs), or cosmic evolution (e.g., the production of stars and cosmic systems). The theory of biological macroevolution is then applicable to the realm of living beings, i.e., plants

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<sup>2</sup> In *Scientia et Fides* 8, no. 2 (2020): 223–248.

<sup>3</sup> Michał Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution: Why St. Thomas Teaching on the Origins Is Incompatible with Evolutionary Theory?* (Chartwell Press, 2019).

and animals, including the human being. Secondly, by “macroevolution” I mean changes going beyond the level of taxonomical family, not the origin of new varieties, strains, races or biological species.

So the question is, whether classical metaphysics can be reconciled with the idea that new biological families, or the so-called “natural species,” can emerge thanks to the workings of natural secondary causes, such as generation, variation and natural selection. In my book<sup>4</sup> I presented five arguments why such a reconciliation is not possible and I argued that Aquinas’s metaphysics flatly contradicts the idea of macroevolution. Dr. Carl’s paper is aimed at answering my first argument. In what follows I will explain why his answer does not really resolve the problem indicated in my argument.

At the beginning Dr. Carl sketches his goal: “I will show that Thomas’s understanding of . . . instrumental causality . . . should undercut any use of the principle of proportionate causality to argue that biological evolution is irreconcilable with Thomas’s metaphysical principles.”<sup>5</sup> However, what he actually demonstrates is that the concept of spontaneous generation, as understood by the medieval scholars, does not contradict the principle of proportionate causality. To show what was intended, Dr. Carl would need to make another step and demonstrate, how medieval spontaneous generation can pose as biological macroevolution in the modern context. He does not make this step, leaving the reader with an impression that—once spontaneous generation is metaphysically justified—the same applies to biological macroevolution. But this is not so.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 51–56.

<sup>5</sup> Carl, “Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species,” 226.

## Spontaneous Generation

According to pre-modern science some animals can be spontaneously generated from putrefaction (rotting materials such as meat, plants or slimy mud).<sup>6</sup> This was considered a “mode” of generating some of the so-called “lower” or imperfect animals, among them flies, bugs and worms. The concept of spontaneous generation in its basic form persisted from antiquity to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when (thanks to the experiments of Louis Pasteur) we learned that “life comes from life only.” The entire concept was therefore based on the lack of pretty basic (according to our standards) knowledge about microbes. There is nothing spectacular in the fact that Aquinas, along with any learned (or not) person of his times, accepts this way of producing insects. The idea was so apparent to the senses that, without access to the advanced microscope, one could hardly resist it. Hence, it is not surprising that the pre-modern scholars did not realize that spontaneous generation caused by the heavens posed a problem to proportionate causality—one “black box”<sup>7</sup> (the generation of bugs) was simply explained away by another “black box” (the “influence of the heavens”). Pre-modern scholars did not know how non-living matter can bring about life so they called for

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<sup>6</sup> When it comes to spontaneous generation, Aristotle lets his imagination run wild: “Others do not originate in animals of the same species, but their production is spontaneous, for some of them spring from the dew which falls upon plants. The origin of these is naturally in the spring, though they often appear in the winter, if fine weather and south winds occur for any length of time. Some originate in rotten mud and dung; and others in the fresh wood of plants or in dry wood; others among the hair of animals, or in their flesh, or excrements, whether ejected, or still existing in the body” (*The History of Animals*, IV, 17, trans. D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson; available online—see the section *References* for details). Obviously, Aristotle relies on merely phenomenal data about nature, so he sees spontaneous generation whenever a bug is born from an invisibly small embryo.

<sup>7</sup> I am using here the term “black box” in the way M. Behe does it in his books. A “black box” is a system whose input and output data is known, but what happens inside is a conundrum.

help to the “heavens”—an entity sufficiently vast and mysterious to fill any gaps in natural knowledge. There is no reason to refer to Aquinas as if his position on spontaneous generation contained some unusual, groundbreaking metaphysics. Not surprisingly, Aquinas does not see that in spontaneous generation a sufficient cause is missing, because neither does he know the complexity of “lower animals” nor the “simplicity” of the heavens.

The starting point for any metaphysics is the observation of nature. For Aristotle facts of nature formed the basis for metaphysical principles. For Aquinas spontaneous generation was a “fact,” so we should not expect him to believe that a “fact” contradicts his own metaphysics. Even so, we can detect some uneasiness in Aquinas when he writes about life popping up from putrefaction, even if it happens with the help of the heavens. The Angelic Doctor brings up the problem of causation in a somewhat unexpected moment, when he speaks about creation and the formation of the universe.<sup>8</sup> There is no reason for St. Thomas to mention it right there, in a completely different context, had he not wanted to somehow prop up this idea and, in a way, explain himself.

Spontaneous generation could philosophically justify biological macroevolution only if it actually referred to the origin of entirely new forms of life by natural transformation of previous life forms. But this is not the case. What does the theory of spontaneous generation tell us? Only that some animals may be born from non-living matter. It does not entail any of the essential elements of biological macroevolution: no transformation of species via natural generation, no emergence of entirely new species after creation was completed. Surely, if we limit the discussion to causality, leaving aside all other metaphysical problems in the evolutionary narrative, the occurrence of spontaneous generation would suggest there is sufficient cause in rotting material. The reason

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<sup>8</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 73, a. 1, ad 3.

for that is that the heavens supplement what is missing to bring about an individual of a species already created in the work of the six days. However, it does not follow that there is a sufficient cause in the combination of “matter and heavens” to produce an entirely new species, a new form of life, a new substantial form, or a new divine idea, from rotting matter.

Dr. Carl explains: “The general principle employed [in spontaneous generation] is not a version of the principle of proportionate causality, but is instead a principle about the need for mediating instrumental causes in order for a created remote cause to produce a more powerful effect.”<sup>9</sup> The issue, however, is whether there is a proportionate cause in spontaneous generation. Dr. Carl’s answer is that this principle does not matter because it is all about mediating causes. But what difference does it make? If a set of mediating causes resolves the problem of proportionate cause, this only means that those mediating causes together make up for the proportionate cause. Or, does Dr. Carl want to tell us that the principle of proportionate causality does not apply if you have a chain (long enough) of mediating causes? This would be denying logic, so I do not think that this is what he means, however, it is not clear based on his paper alone. Nevertheless, whether mediating causes stand for proportionate cause or not is irrelevant for the debate, because it does not explain how proportionate cause could be found in biological macroevolution.

Therefore spontaneous generation, if it has any bearing whatsoever on the problem of evolution and metaphysics, could only be considered if it could bring about new natural species. Then, by a very long shot, Dr. Carl could probably make an extrapolation of this kind: Since spontaneous generation can bring about entirely new species just by the action of the heavens upon matter (with some mediating causes), then

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<sup>9</sup> Carl, “Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species,” 239.

perhaps the heavens influencing living beings of given species could transform them on the way of natural generation into entirely novel forms of life. This would be quite an extrapolation, because the more determined the substance, the more power is needed to transform it into something else. Rotting matter does not have any (highly) specified form, therefore it is a better candidate for generating new species. But in regular generation the highly specified form of a parental individual would exclude the posterity to be transformed into something else, even if many mediating causes were present.

For Aquinas every being strives to keep its essence rather than lose it, which is captured by the principle “like generates alike.” In spontaneous generation the influence of the heavens may be sufficient because the rotting matter is somehow disposed to receive the form of a bug, but in a regular generation matter is not disposed to receive any other form but the form of the parents. So, the mere fact of Aquinas’s belief that there is sufficient cause in spontaneous generation does not imply that the same causation would suffice to transform one species into something completely new in a non-spontaneous generation.

This unfounded application of one type of causation to another effect makes irrelevant the question of whether new species can emerge after creation was completed. In other words, even if Aquinas allowed the production of new species in spontaneous generation, it would not *per se* justify the recourse to “heavens” as sufficient cause in biological macroevolution.

But it is not quite certain that Aquinas actually allows for new species (again, natural species or new families) to emerge as an effect of spontaneous generation. I can find only one place that could potentially be used to support this claim and, surely, Dr. Carl does not fail to quote it, and interpret it beyond what Thomas says. In the *Summa* (I, q. 73, a. 1, ad 3) Thomas states that nothing entirely new can come to existence that was not created in the work of the six days. So even the

individuals born through spontaneous generation belong to the defined species as they were created in the work of adornment (*opus ornatus*). No room for the novelty required by macroevolution. At this point, however, Thomas seems to make an exception:

Species, also, that are new, if any such appear, existed beforehand in various active powers; so that animals, and perhaps even new species of animals, are produced by putrefaction by the power which the stars [i.e., the heavenly bodies] and elements received at the beginning. Again, animals of new kinds arise occasionally from the connection of individuals belonging to different species, as the mule is the offspring of an ass and a mare; but even these existed previously in their causes, in the works of the six days.<sup>10</sup>

In this fragment Aquinas mentions three times the possibility of new species emerging after the completion of creation out of which the first two are conditional (*si quae apparent, si novae species producantur*) and only the last one is unconditional. So, Aquinas does not take for granted the third objection stating that many new things were produced after creation was completed “even of certain new species that are frequently appearing, especially in the case of animals generated from putrefaction.”<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas is somewhat suspicious of this idea (let alone allowing it to “frequently appear”), because this would deny his major statement that creation was completed within the work of the six days. Indeed, the entire Article 1 of Question 73 is designed to say the opposite, namely, that creation was completed, and therefore no new things, especially no new species of living beings, can be anyhow produced afterward. If Aquinas allows it (provisionally) it is only under the pressure of the “bad science” of spontaneous generation. This is where Dr. Carl significantly strays from Aquinas: According to the theory of evolution, species should emerge normally and regularly by

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<sup>10</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 73, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>11</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 73, a. 1, obj. 3.

evolution (in fact, all species should be the product of evolution) but Aquinas makes only a provisional exception for spontaneous generation to produce new species. Thus on Dr. Carl's account the entire thrust of Aquinas's argument would need to be reversed—whereas Aquinas says that creation was completed once for all within the six days, and maybe sometimes some new lower animal can emerge afterward, Dr. Carl proposes that all species are produced after creation was completed by means of generation. What is merely a doubtful exception for Aquinas becomes a rule for Carl; what Aquinas adopts as a rule, Carl entirely ignores.

The third time, the only one when Thomas speaks of such possibility unconditionally, he immediately gives an example of the kind of “species” he means. It is the mule, which is not a new species according to the definitions adopted in biological macroevolution. Mule belongs to *Equidae* family which includes both parents (horse and donkey). As such it is not the type of novelty that is required by biological macroevolution. Thomas could easily give an example of a true, fully distinct species, as he does in other places when speaking about the origin of species (he mentions human, lion). Most probably, by giving the example of a mule, Aquinas means here that if new species emerge after the completion of creation they are nothing but variants or combinations of previously created species, which remains within the limits of microevolution. We see therefore that Aquinas does not allow creation to be incomplete in the sense required by macroevolutionary theories.

Now, if one dismisses my argument because I resort to the type of taxonomy that Aquinas does not apply or even know, by the same token one should reject the very possibility of comparing the medieval “science of spontaneous generation” with modern “science of evolution,” because Aquinas does not know it either. In other words, there is nothing wrong with showing that the mule is not a new taxonomical family while discussing the problem of compatibility between Aquinas

nas's doctrine and evolution. The fact that Aquinas does not resort to modern taxonomy is as irrelevant for the discussion as the fact that he never mentions the modern theory of evolution.

All of the above undercuts Dr. Carl's approach to the issue of evolution and Aquinas. But a bigger problem arises only now, when we realize that the entire theory of spontaneous generation applies to only a handful among tens of thousands of species.<sup>12</sup> If spontaneous generation allows for the emergence of only lower animals (and not even all of them but just those few possible exceptions) then what would the evolutionary account of life look like? It would mean that very few species originated by evolution and the rest still had to be specially created. This leaves us with quite an odd, "half-evolutionary" vision that is anything but a harmonization of Aquinas and evolution. Who of the current evolutionists would embrace it? Apparently, even if we allow Dr. Carl to squeeze from Aquinas all what he wants, he is still less than half-way to the goal he claims to have achieved. Interestingly enough, my opponent frankly admits it at the beginning of his paper:

Like Aristotle, Thomas does in fact hold that there are *some* animal species whose members can only be generated through reproduction by already existing members of the same species: if this is so, then the emergence of such animals through any natural evolutionary process is impossible.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Carl's indication that "some" animal species require a parent of the same species for reproduction is not quite accurate, because for Aquinas virtually *all* species follow this rule (with a few possible exceptions in spontaneous generation). But even taking this statement as it is, it

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<sup>12</sup> The number of genera in biology is estimated at over 70 thousand whereas the number of families at over 20 thousand. Somewhere between these numbers is the number of natural species. See data from the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (available online—see the section *References* for details) and the National Center for Biotechnology Information, USA (available online—see the section *References* for details).

<sup>13</sup> Carl, "Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species," 224, emphasis added.

means that Dr. Carl dismisses his own conclusions right at the outset of his argument. If I was to look for consistency, I would say that his search for proportionate cause in evolution is only theoretical. He acknowledges that for Aristotle and Aquinas the evolutionary origin of species “is impossible” perhaps for reasons other than the lack of proportionate cause.

### **The Status of the Mule**

It seems that for some theistic evolutionists the entire question of whether evolution is compatible with Aquinas hinges upon the taxonomical status of the mule.<sup>14</sup> They seem to believe that if the mule is a distinct species then evolution is possible, because Aquinas allows for at least one new species to arise after creation was completed. But is it really the case?

In order to see why the mule, even if it was a new distinct species, does not help to reconcile Aquinas and evolution we need to look closer at the evolutionary scenario. We are used to thinking that evolution is a biological process that makes one species change into another. Hence, evolution proponents typically focus on demonstrating how species “A” (it can be a species, a particular protein, a gene, an organ or anything of this kind) could have transformed into species “B.” On the other hand, evolution deniers provide reasons for why the transition from “A” to “B” is not possible. But in any realistic evolutionary scenario we do not move from “A” to “B,” because we do not have the “B.” There is an evolving species “A,” but evolution does not know whether it should be transformed into “B” or maybe “C” or anything else. It does not even know what “B” is. Therefore the *transformation*

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. N. P. G. Austriaco, “In Defense of Thomistic Evolution: A Response to Chaberek,” *Public Discourse. The Journal of the Witherspoon Institute* (available online—see the section *References* for details).

of species is not the same as the evolutionary *origin* of species. We can say that the possibility of species transformism is a *necessary* but not a *satisfactory* condition for biological macroevolution.

And this is where the mule turns out to be another dead end for evolutionary reasoning: In the generation of the mule we see species “A” mating with species “B” producing offspring “C.” But the generation of the mule is as repetitive and constrained to the limits of natural generation as any other generation. It does not create anything new in every instant or even occasionally. Donkey mating with mare will always produce a mule, sometimes a lame mule or a dead mule, but nothing more, nothing less and nothing else. The mule being infertile proves not to be a good candidate to begin any new evolutionary branch. But this is not different from any other generation—if the offspring is fertile then it produces the posterity of the same species. If the posterity is infertile then it does not produce any posterity. Either way, evolution does not make any progress toward an entirely new, so far unknown species “X.”

Let us now turn to an even more restrictive issue<sup>15</sup> of whether the mule is actually considered by Aristotle a new species. Dr. Carl is quite committed to proving so, because he believes that the issue of Aquinas and evolution is at stake. I have just shown this is not the case. The mule does not help either way. We can therefore relax and carefully re-read what Aristotle and Aquinas say and perhaps retrieve what Dr. Carl has missed. I will analyze Dr. Carl’s entire argument statement after statement.

Dr. Carl first refers to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, where the Philosopher includes the mule in the common genus with its parents (horse

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<sup>15</sup> It is a “more restrictive issue,” because if the mule does not help Thomistic evolutionists when considered a genuine species, it helps even less if it is not a genuine species.

and donkey) as a beast of burden.<sup>16</sup> To be precise, Aristotle states that “the genus next above them [horse and ass], has not received a name, but it would doubtless be both [horse and ass] in fact something like a mule.”<sup>17</sup> Only Aquinas in his commentary adds: “in reference to that genus it can be said that like generates like; for example, if we might say that that proximate genus is beast of burden, we could say that, even though a horse does not generate a horse but a mule, still a beast of burden generates a beast of burden.”<sup>18</sup> So the name “the beast of burden” as designating the closest genus for horse, donkey and mule is actually given by Aquinas.

Dr. Carl tells us that there are “some authors” who, based on the quote from Aristotle, “deny that the mule is a genuine species, by suggesting that the mule is somehow an imperfect member of a genus but not a member of a genuine species.”<sup>19</sup> However, “it would seem impossible to square with Aristotle’s understanding of genera and species to suppose that some individual could exist which was merely of a genus without belonging to a species.”<sup>20</sup> This statement introduces a twofold confusion. Firstly, the issue is not about whether mule belongs to a species or just to a genus. Rather the question is if the species it belongs to is distinctive enough to call it a separate genus, which would be required to justify macroevolution. Secondly, this is precisely what Aristotle and Thomas teach (as we will see below)—mule is not a species of its own, but a species in between horse and donkey.

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<sup>16</sup> Carl, “Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species,” 229.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk. VII, part 8, trans. W. D. Ross (available online—see the section *References* for details).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. II (Books VI–XII), trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961), bk. 7, lesson 7, set 1433. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>19</sup> Carl, “Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species,” 229.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, Dr. Carl does not provide any reference to “some authors,” so it is hard to check exactly what they say. If we go, however, to the place in *De anima* (bk. 2, part 3), to which Dr. Carl refers the reader (in the footnote), there is nothing that would support his thesis.<sup>21</sup> Aristotle discusses there the relation between the soul and the sensory functions, and states that the faculties of different animal souls should determine their assignation to different kinds. But the mule does not differ in its sensory functions from either of its parents, so this Aristotle’s teaching is hardly applicable to assign a distinct species to the mule, which contradicts what Dr. Carl implies.

My adversary refers to “some authors,” who deny that the mule belongs to a species, and he dismisses their thesis (by offering a misleading reference), but he completely overlooks the real challenge to his thesis that comes from the quoted Aristotle’s passage. In *Metaphysics* (bk. VII, part 8), the Philosopher strives to explain how things “come to be” and his main thesis is that in the generation of animals neither the form is produced nor matter but the substance is passed on. This, according to the Philosopher, applies primarily to “natural” generation, but the generation of the mule is “contrary to nature.” Even so, Aristotle believes that the mule is not an exemption to the general principle

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<sup>21</sup> Dr. Carl probably refers to the following fragment: “It is now evident that a single definition can be given of soul only in the same sense as one can be given of figure. For, as in that case there is no figure distinguishable and apart from triangle, etc., so here there is no soul apart from the forms of soul just enumerated. It is true that a highly general definition can be given for figure which will fit all figures without expressing the peculiar nature of any figure. So here in the case of soul and its specific forms. Hence it is absurd in this and similar cases to demand an absolutely general definition which will fail to express the peculiar nature of anything that is, or again, omitting this, to look for separate definitions corresponding to each infima species” (*On the Soul*, bk. 2, part 3, trans. J. A. Smith. Available online—see the section *References* for details). Here, we can interpret Aristotle as proposing that the distinction between the genus and the species is only intellectual, but in reality every living being is determined in such a way as to belong to a genus and to a species (excluding the possibility of belonging to a genus alone). It does not follow that the mule must be a genuine, distinct or novel species.

of how animals “come to be.” He recognizes the exceptionality of the mule’s generation, yet his entire goal is to say that regardless of this exceptionality, mule follows the general principle of the natural coming to be. In my opinion, the fragment is not decisive, but—especially in the light of Aquinas—it definitely speaks in favor of including the mule in one, very narrowly defined genus (*genus proximum*), together with horse and donkey. And this undermines Dr. Carl’s claim.

Then my adversary refers to *De potentia* (q. 3, a. 8, ad 16) where Aquinas explicitly speaks of the mule’s status: “Although a mule is unlike a horse or ass in species, it is like them in the proximate genus: by reason of which likeness one species, a mean species as it were, is engendered from different species.”<sup>22</sup> So, contrary to what Dr. Carl promotes, Aquinas does not consider the mule a distinct or perfect species on its own terms. The mule is actually a species in between two other—horse and donkey, all three belonging to the same proximate genus. This solution lends some support to Dr. Carl’s thesis, but it takes him only half way through, because we can interpret Aquinas either way—the mule is a species, or it is not a species, like with a glass of water: It is half empty or half full.

Does it mean we cannot resolve the issue? I think not, because the context clarifies Aquinas’s message. In that particular Article 8, Thomas defends the thesis that creation was completed within the six days, therefore it is not mingled with the works of nature. The objections quoted by Aquinas propose that there are many new things that appear after creation was completed and they should be attributed to the work of creation (which would mean that creation is mingled with the

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<sup>22</sup> “Licet mulus non sit similis equo vel asino in specie, est tamen similis in genere proximo: ratione cuius similitudinis ex diversis speciebus sua species, quasi media generatur.” Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei. On the Power of God*, q. 3, a. 8, ad 16, trans. the English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1952).

works of nature). Now, Thomistic evolutionists believe that species emerge by evolution, i.e., by the work of nature. Thomas, on the contrary, attributes the origin of species to the work of creation (see below). The point of contention is whether species are on the side of creation or on the side of the works of nature. The entire goal of Aquinas's response to the objection 16 is to say that the mule is not an example of the type of novelty that would require creative divine causality, so it is not a species in the same sense as those other species that had to be created. Hence (regardless of whether Aristotle and Thomas consider the mule a distinct species, or just a species in-between two other species), in the context of evolution, this is not the type of species that would be a point of contention. Both creationists (such as Aquinas) and evolutionists (such as Carl) agree that the mule emerges naturally. Since true species need to be created and the mule does not, the mule is not a true species, at least not in the sense that is employed in the debate over evolution and its compatibility with Aquinas. Therefore, Aquinas's mule from *De potentia* does not lend any support to Carl's ultimate conclusion that "novel species might arise from the active powers of already existent natural agents."<sup>23</sup>

Next, my adversary refers to "some interpreters" (unfortunately, a reference is missing again) who "assume that Aristotle thinks that the mule is sterile simply because it is generated through hybridization and that its sterility is a consequence and sign of its imperfection or its failure to be of a genuine species."<sup>24</sup> Then he brings up Aristotle's deductive explanation<sup>25</sup> for why mule is sterile. But Aristotle does not think that the deductive explanation regarding nature merits any attention and

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<sup>23</sup> Carl, "Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species," 230.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (London: William Heinemann LTD, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943), 253–255. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

dismisses it as “empty.” Carl recognizes this fact and moves on to present next argument. Here one could rightly ask, what was the aim of even bringing up the question of sterility of the mule hybrid? Without providing any reference nor any argument from Aristotle this entire paragraph is nothing but attacking a straw man.

Then Dr. Carl continues: “Aristotle has in fact listed numerous fertile hybrids of which he is aware earlier in the *De generatione*, and he has claimed that, as far as he knows, the mule alone is sterile among hybrid animals.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Aristotle mentions many other examples of hybrids, but he never suggests that they are of any other, genuine or entirely distinct species. On the contrary, when discussing crossbreeds such as among dogs, foxes, wolves and jackals, or among some birds, Aristotle confirms that these animals “are closely allied in their nature [syneggys ten physin], and are not very different in species [eidei].”<sup>27</sup> Aristotle also mentions a story about Libya, where apparently animals of different species meet at very limited spaces (due to the scarcity of water) and then the unrelated [me homophyla, me homogene] animals mate. But clearly here the Philosopher does not make any argument for the production of new species; his goal is to only say that perhaps there are some more distant animals that can mate in very specific conditions. Aristotle does not take the “stories about Libya” for granted, neither does he provide any actual example. We see therefore Dr. Carl informing us about Aristotle’s recognition of fertility among hybrids other than the mule, but failing to add that the Philosopher considers the mating parents not very different from each other. On Aristotle’s account they are

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<sup>26</sup> Carl, “Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species,” 230.

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 243. Translation by A. Platt conveys the same message: “[those animals] whose nature is near akin and whose form is not very different, if their size is much the same and if the periods of gestation are equal.” *On the Generation of Animals* by Aristotle, Available online—see the section *References* for details.

far from being distinct species, they do not produce new species, so there is no support here for Dr. Carl's argument.

Perhaps I have spent too much time on explaining the mule. This, however, detailed clarification of just two pages of Dr. Carl's paper provides a sample of how his entire article is woven from minute, manipulative misrepresentations of both Aristotle and Aquinas which accumulate throughout to produce entirely wrong conclusions by the end.

### **Clarification on Instrumental Causality**

Dr. Carl, similar to other Thomistic evolutionists, abuses the concept of instrumental causality implying that if there is a divine prime cause then the instrumental cause can produce any effect whatsoever. Specifically, my opponent applies instrumental causality to the origin of new species by claiming that for Thomas an instrumental cause can act beyond its species.<sup>28</sup> It is hard to find consistency in Carl's argument, because on the one hand he confirms that "the generation of perfect animals requires the instrumental contribution made by the animal reproducing within its species,"<sup>29</sup> on the other hand he believes that the principle of mediating instrumental causes "hardly seems irreconcilable with a theory of biological evolution."<sup>30</sup> One wonders, how could evolutionary generation produce a new kind of a higher animal when it requires a parent of the same kind for that animal?

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<sup>28</sup> Carl quotes Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences* (*Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 12, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 2): "[P]ropriam virtute nihil agit ultra suam speciem: sed virtute alterius, cujus est instrumentum, potest agere ultra speciem suam, sicut serra agit ad formam scamni" ("Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species," 228, note 8). And later on he states: "It is essential to the notion of instrumental causality that an instrumental cause produces an effect that exceeds its own independent power, by virtue of its being moved by a principal agent . . ." (*ibid.*, 237).

<sup>29</sup> Carl, "Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species," 237.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

The problem with the evolutionists' appeal to the instrumental cause is that they do not see the limits to instrumental causality when God is involved as the prime cause. According to Aristotelian-Thomistic approach, things have their natural operations that can be exceeded when they act as instrumental causes. Let's refer to an example: A teacher exits a classroom leaving a piece of chalk on the table. A window is left ajar and the wind blows strongly enough to move the chalk across the table. The chalk leaves chaotic marks on the table before it falls on the floor. In this case, the marks are the effects of the natural operation of the chalk. However, when the teacher returns and starts writing mathematical equations on the blackboard the meaningful patterns left by the chalk vastly exceed its natural agency. Then the chalk becomes an instrumental cause in the hands of the teacher who produces effects unattainable to the chalk on its own power. Aquinas refers to exactly the same principle when speaking of a saw making a bench or chisel making a statue. Their natural capacity of cutting wood or stone is exceeded by the power of the chief agent, such as a carpenter. We need to notice, however, that in each of these examples the effect produced by the instrumental cause does not exceed its capacity in an absolute or completely arbitrary way. Still a chalk, a chisel, a saw, a brush, or anything of this kind is used according to its nature, because it belongs to the nature of a chalk to write, or a saw to cut, etc.

Now, let's translate the Thomistic understanding of instrumental causality into evolutionary terms. According to Dr. Carl, an instrumental cause in the form of a univocal generator is needed to produce offspring of the same species. So, the seed itself cannot generate posterity, but when it acts as an instrumental cause for the "heavens" then it can generate posterity. And this is analogous to the saw making a bench owing to the power of the carpenter. However, if a carpenter wanted to make an ice-cream using the saw or a teacher cut stone with a piece of chalk they would fail in each case, because these effects are completely

disproportional to the nature of the instruments. Similarly, in evolution, the “heavens,” that is, the influence of any heavenly or earthly factors (be it sunlight, water, gravitational energies, environmental pressures, or anything of this kind) will not suffice to produce a new species, because none of these factors is proportionate to produce new types of life. To produce a new species a designer is absolutely necessary, because each new form of life entails a solution to a number of “technical” (physical, chemical, biochemical) problems that need to be resolved to make a functional organism. The solution to the problems can be found only by an intellect which has foresight, not by blind or random, or repetitive (necessary) workings of the “heavens.” Dr. Carl completely misses this obvious point, but this is precisely the point when we realize that a proportionate cause is missing in biological macroevolution.

Theistic evolutionists typically say that even though the “heavens” do not have the capacity to produce species, but when they act as the instrumental cause they bring about all kinds of novelties. As I mentioned before, in Aquinas the instrumental cause can act beyond its natural capacity, but not against its nature. Surely, God can overcome the limits of the “heavens” in producing new species as easily as He can cut rocks with peanut butter. But then evolution would not be an instrumental cause anymore, rather God would work beyond secondary causes creating the effects regardless of the instruments. In this case evolution would not be a natural process, indeed, it would not be a process at all, but rather a form of creation, i.e., the supernatural work of God in the universe constantly surpassing the limits of nature. And this takes evolutionists back to the original Thomistic idea of second creation (*secunda creatio*), which is contrary to theistic evolution.

One specific reason why Dr. Carl seems unable to notice this obvious limitation of instrumental causality may stem from the fact that

he conflates the problem of *proportionate cause* with the problem of *sufficient cause*. For instance, he concludes:

[T]he only general metaphysical principle that St. Thomas invokes in order to argue for the need for the instrumental contribution of a univocal generator is not the principle of proportionate causality, but instead the principle that a remote created universal cause needs the instrumental contribution of mediating instruments to produce more powerful effects. This principle seems reconcilable with evolution.<sup>31</sup>

The very juxtaposition of “the need for proportionate cause” and “the need for mediating instrumental causes” is doubtful, because the first principle is quite general and sometimes the lack of the mediating cause may mean the lack of proportionate cause. Nevertheless, I formulated the metaphysical problem for biological macroevolution as the production of “higher effects” by “lower causes,”<sup>32</sup> which translates into the lack of sufficient rather than proportionate cause. Surprisingly, this otherwise insignificant difference turns out important in the case of animal generation—the lack of mediating cause is the lack of sufficient cause.

### **The Origin of Species in Aquinas**

So far I have shown that even if there were sufficient causation in spontaneous generation and even if spontaneous generation would be capable of producing new species after creation was completed it does not follow that there would be sufficient cause in biological macroevolution.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 244–245. Carl proposes this conclusion twice. In the first place, he writes: “The general principle employed is not a version of the principle of proportionate causality, but is instead a principle about the need for mediating instrumental causes in order for a created remote cause to produce a more powerful effect. This principle hardly seems irreconcilable with a theory of biological evolution” (*ibid.*, 239).

<sup>32</sup> Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution*, 51.

Now I will turn to the more fundamental problems with Dr. Carl's paper and his entire approach to the issue. My adversary believes that for Aristotle and Aquinas the question of the origin of species finds its solution not so much in metaphysical principles but in "some details of their biology and cosmology."<sup>33</sup> He thinks that "consideration of such topics as spontaneous generation and hybridization" is "directly relevant to thinking about the reconcilability of biological evolution with Thomistic metaphysics."<sup>34</sup> There are two problems with this approach: The first is confusion, and the second is a complete misrepresentation of Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition regarding the origin of species.

### *The First Problem: A Confusion*

Let's begin with clarifying the confusion. Dr. Carl applies the principles of generation to explaining the causes of the origin of species. But when Aquinas teaches about generation he explains the origin of *individuals* belonging to the same species (ontogenesis). This does not explain or even apply to the origin of *species* (phylogenesis). This permanent confusion between the former and the latter kind of origination is evident pretty much in all Thomistic writers who distort Aquinas to make him compatible with evolution. Aquinas clearly teaches that a different type of causality is needed to originate an individual from the one needed to create a species:

A perfect thing [such as a fully distinct animal species—M.Ch.] participating in any nature, makes a likeness to itself, not by absolutely producing that nature, but by applying it to something else. For an individual man cannot be the cause of human nature absolutely, because he would then be the cause of himself; but he is the cause of human nature being in the man begotten . . .<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Carl, "Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species," 245.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>35</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 45, a. 5, ad 1.

This distinction between the generation of an individual and the creation of a species is taught by Aquinas in several other places. But two particular instances thoroughly expose the entire confusion of Dr. Carl's paper. Interestingly, the first of the quotes below comes from Aquinas's teaching on creation, the second from his teaching on divine preservation of beings in existence (*conservatio rerum*). This means that whether he explains the work of creation or the work of preservation (and providence) he consistently applies the same distinction:

Whatever is caused as regards some particular nature cannot be the first cause of that nature, but only a second and instrumental cause; for example, since the human nature of Socrates has a cause, he cannot be the first cause of human nature; if so, since his human nature is caused by someone, it would follow that he was the cause of himself, since he is what he is by virtue of human nature. Thus, a univocal generator must have the status of an instrumental agent in respect to that which is the primary cause of the whole species. Accordingly, all lower efficient causes must be referred to higher ones, as instrumental to principal agents. The existence of every substance other than God is caused, as we proved above. No such substance, then, could possibly be the cause of existence otherwise than as instrumental and as acting by virtue of another agent. *But it is only in order to cause something by way of motion that an instrument is ever employed; for to be a moved mover is the very essence of an instrument. We have already shown, however, that creation is not a motion. Hence, no substance besides God can create anything.*<sup>36</sup>

And the other quote:

*No particular univocal agent can be the univocal cause of a species; for instance, this [individual] man cannot be the cause of the human species, for he would then be the cause of every man, and, consequently, of himself—which is impossible. This man, properly speaking, is the cause of that individual man. Now, this man exists because human nature is present in this matter, which is the principle of individuation. So, this man is not the cause of a man, except in the sense that he is the cause of a human form*

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<sup>36</sup> *S.c.G.*, II, ch. 21 [5], emphasis added.

coming to be in this matter. This is to be the principle of the generation of an individual man. Clearly therefore, neither this man, nor any other univocal agent in nature, is the cause of anything else but generation of this or that individual thing. Now, there must be some proper agent cause of the human species itself; its composition shows this, and also the ordering of its parts, which is uniform in all individuals unless it be accidentally impeded. And the same reasoning applies to all the other species of natural things. This cause is God, either mediately or immediately. For we have shown that He is the first cause of all things. So, He must stand in regard to the species of things as the individual generating agent in nature does to generation, of which he is the direct cause (*per se causa*).<sup>37</sup>

We see that Aquinas attributes a different type of causality to the production of an individual from the one producing a species. In the first case it is enough to have a univocal generator acting as an instrumental cause, but in the latter only God by his direct power is capable of producing new species. Aquinas makes an analogy—as parents are immediate causes of individuals so God is the immediate cause of species. Thomas does not mention any “cooperation of heavens” in the production of species, even if they participate in the generation of individuals. Moreover, no secondary causes whatsoever can take part in the production of species, because this would entail a contribution of chance factors. For Aquinas (unlike for Carl and other evolutionists) chance is

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<sup>37</sup> *S.c.G.*, III, ch. 65 [4]. See the same rule applied to the generation of the horse: “When a horse is generated, the generating horse is indeed the reason why the nature of horse begins to exist in this being, but it is not the essential cause of equinity. For that which is essentially the cause of a certain specific nature, must be the cause of that nature of all the beings that have that species. Since, then, the generating horse has the same nature, it would have to be its own cause, which is impossible. It remains, therefore, that above all those participating in equinity, there must be some universal cause of the whole species. . . . [I]t must be reduced to that which is essentially the cause of that nature, but not to something which participates in that nature in a particular way.” Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Separate Substances*, chap. 10, no. 58, trans. F. J. Lescoe (West Hartford, Conn.: Saint Joseph College, 1959). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

entirely excluded from the origin of species. In reply to Avicenna's claim that the distinction of things into different species is due to secondary causes, Thomas writes:

This cannot stand . . . because, according to this opinion, the universality of things would not proceed from the intention of the first agent, but from the concurrence of many active causes; and such an effect we can describe only as being produced by chance. Therefore, the perfection of the universe, which consists of the diversity of things, would thus be a thing of chance, which is impossible.<sup>38</sup>

In another place Aquinas applies this general rule of creation specifically to the origin of species:

Those things whose distinction from one another is derived from their forms [and these are different animal species—M.Ch.] are not distinct by chance, although this is perhaps the case with things whose distinction stems from matter. Now, the distinction of species is derived from the form, and the distinction of singulars of the same species is from matter. Therefore, the distinction of things in terms of species cannot be the result of chance; but perhaps the distinction of certain individuals can be the result of chance.<sup>39</sup>

According to Thomas, the differences between, let's say, puppies from one litter may be due to accidental changes (like an accidental mutation could cause one to alter hair color and another to have slightly different nose shape or anything of this kind) but the distinction between dogs and cats cannot be accidental. This clearly contradicts the evolutionary thinking postulating that the accumulation of accidental changes in subsequent generations would ultimately produce an individual of a different species. In Aquinas's terms not only would it make the individual to be a cause of itself, but even worse, it would make an individual being a creator of forms in matter—the action attributable

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<sup>38</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 47, a. 1, co.

<sup>39</sup> *S.c.G.*, II, ch. 39 [3].

exclusively to God. This obviously contradicts Aquinas's teaching on sufficient causality.

### *The Second Problem: A Misrepresentation*

Having clarified the confusion between ontogenesis and phylogenesis, on which the entire argument of Dr. Carl is founded, now I will show how he misrepresents Aquinas's teaching regarding the origin of species.

Since evolution is a natural process operating constantly in nature, Thomistic evolutionists attribute the origin of species to the ordinary works of nature. Hence they look for a justification of their position in those places where Aquinas teaches on divine providence and conservation of things (as these describe the causation in the universe already formed). But this approach misrepresents Aquinas, who clearly and consistently attributes the origin of species to the unique divine causality that he calls second creation or the formation of the universe.

According to Aquinas, in the first creation God produced the universe out of nothing. In the second creation God formed the universe by producing specific forms in the previously created matter. The formation of the universe is further divided by Thomas into the work of distinction and the work of adornment. The latter refers to the production of animal species. All of these are unique, supernatural and mostly direct actions of God, finished once for all with the creation of man. It is no less than staggering that Thomistic evolutionists (including Carl) quote Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* (I, q. 65–74) and completely ignore the fact that these parts refer to the supernatural formation of the world by God which, by itself, excludes the possibility of species being formed by natural secondary causes. The structure of Aquinas's *Summa* alone refutes the postulates of Thomistic evolutionists. In particular, Aquinas's teaching contradicts Dr. Carl's belief that chance factors with the "help of the heavens" can produce a new species by the gen-

eration of individuals. According to Aquinas, this would contradict the principle of sufficient cause, because a new species is like a new idea that first has to be educed from matter by the immediate act of God in order to make the propagation of individuals possible:

In the first production of corporeal creatures no transmutation from potentiality to act can have taken place, and accordingly, the corporeal forms that bodies had when first produced came *immediately from God*, whose bidding alone matter obeys, as its own proper cause. To signify this, Moses prefaces each work with the words, “God said, Let this thing be,” or “that,” to denote the formation of all things by the Word of God, from Whom, according to Augustine, is “all form and fitness and concord of parts.”<sup>40</sup>

The material principle in the generation of either kind of animals [those born from seed and those born from putrefaction], is either some element, or something compounded of the elements. But at the first beginning of the world the active principle was the Word of God, which produced animals from material elements.<sup>41</sup>

We see that Thomas finds the answer to the problem of origins in the Book of Genesis. Now, my opponent could say that the revealed sources do not belong to Aquinas’s metaphysics but rather his theology, therefore they are not relevant to the question of whether evolution contradicts Aquinas’s metaphysics. But this charge is invalid, because there is no answer to the question of origins outside of historical theology, i.e., neither in metaphysics nor natural philosophy, and even less so in physics (like teachings on generation and corruption). The reason is that all these latter disciplines are confined to causes operating in the universe already formed. But the question of the origin of species concerns the issue of where the universe with its basic forms came from in the first place. And these questions exceed the capacity of natural knowledge (physics, metaphysics) as much as the origin of species itself ex-

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<sup>40</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 65, a. 4, co.

<sup>41</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 71, a. 1, ad 1.

ceeds the capacity of nature. In order to know how things started to exist we need special divine revelation, which for Christians has been set forth in the Book of Genesis. Aquinas is entirely aware of this fact and this is why, when he discusses origins, he repetitively returns to the authority of the Bible (the “sed contras” entail just a brief statement: “Suffices the authority of Scripture”). Aristotle, who did not have access to the supernaturally revealed knowledge, did not know how species could have originated nor how the universe came to being. This is why he believed in eternity of species existing along with an eternal universe.

Thomas indeed incorporates the biblical revelation to his entire metaphysical system. This is why he emphasizes that the formation of the universe had to be caused by the immediate power of God (as it is clear from the citations above). But there is an even more interesting statement in which Aquinas derives the argument for the need of direct divine power in the creation of species from metaphysics alone (without reference to Genesis). We can deem it a transitory concept by which he connects his metaphysics with his (or rather Christian) theology:

[I]t cannot be posited that something after God is the cause of another, except by way of motion and generation. And thus we must assert that God is the immediate cause of all things that did not begin through generation, such as angels, souls, the substances of the heavens, the matter of the elements, and the first hypostases in all species.<sup>42</sup>

For this reason the first hypostases were immediately created by God, such as the first man, the first lion, and so forth.<sup>43</sup>

Aquinas divides the entire spectrum of possible types of causes into just three categories: generation, movement and direct divine activ-

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<sup>42</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 18, q. 2, a. 2, co.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, co.

ity.<sup>44</sup> Then he states that there are some things that cannot start to exist by generation nor by movement. Among them there are the first hypotheses in every species. We see therefore that for Aquinas the belief in the direct creation of species is not just a matter of Genesis (which is easily dismissed by theistic evolutionists who say that Genesis was wrongly understood by entire Christianity before Darwin “clarified” its meaning). On the contrary, Thomas makes his argument deductively, based on metaphysical principles.

All of this is relevant to the problem of causality. Aquinas believes that species could have been produced only by direct divine act, which means that there is no sufficient cause in the generative power to produce new species regardless of how many mediating or heavenly causes are involved. In fact, no secondary causes can take any part in the act of creation.<sup>45</sup> If evolution was to produce new species, then: Firstly, an individual would be the cause of itself and, secondly, it would be the cause of a new nature, which contradicts the principle of sufficient cause. In evolution a “lower cause would need to produce a higher effect.” Thus the argument from the lack of sufficient cause against biological macroevolution as I formulated it in *Aquinas and Evolution* withstands Dr. Carl’s response.

## Two Paradigms

When we focus too much on particulars we may lose sight of the whole. Polish kids read a short and funny poem about Mr. Hilary, who looks for his glasses in panic, turns upside down his entire household only to discover, by accidentally peeking in the mirror, that they had

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<sup>44</sup> In this context Angelic causation would be considered a movement, such as Angels moving celestial spheres, or Angels moving human hearts.

<sup>45</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 45, a. 5, co; *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 4, co; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 14, q. 1, a. 3, co; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 3, co.

been sitting on his nose the entire time. This story reminds me of Thomists who dig into the tiniest details of Aquinas's teaching on generation to reconcile it with evolution just missing the fact that for Aquinas the origin of species is not due to generation but creation. The trick in Dr. Carl's article consists not so much of tinkering with Aquinas doctrine, but rather taking the reader into a wrong alley right at the outset of his paper. If one does not immediately realize it, one may think is guided around all the corners in the correct direction. Only the point of arrival may be somewhat disappointing: Who would actually believe that the entire biodiversity, according to Aquinas, was created by the "power of generation" under the influence of "heavens"?

Aquinas, as any other Christian before Darwin, was a creationist. Surely, his creationism stemmed from the Biblical faith, so it was his "theology," but it would be somewhat incoherent to say that Aquinas integrated all other parts of his theology with the metaphysical principles derived from Aristotle, with the one exception of the theology of creation. In fact it is the opposite: the Biblical theology of creation, as confessed by Aquinas, finds very thorough and convincing underpinnings in his philosophical system. Dr. Carl, together with other Thomistic evolutionists, may not like Aquinas's creationism. But it is one thing to honestly reject Aquinas's teaching, because it contradicts the modern theory of evolution, and another thing to distort it in order to claim its compatibility with modern ideas that otherwise remain in a head-on opposition. I am not claiming that Aquinas is right (although I believe he is, for the most part); what I am saying is that his teachings flatly contradict, on the philosophical and theological grounds, what the modern theory of biological macroevolution holds. One cannot simultaneously hold on to both.

A vast majority of Thomists fifty and even a hundred years after Darwin still believed that Aquinas's philosophy, classical metaphysics, excludes the metaphysics adopted in the theory of biological macroevo-

lution.<sup>46</sup> Since then neither Thomas's teachings nor Darwin's theory have changed. So, how is it possible that today's Thomists present interpretations directly opposite to the ones offered by their counterparts from a few decades ago? The reason is that these two groups grew up intellectually in two different paradigms. We can call the older paradigm creationist, or biblical, and the newer one evolutionary, or naturalistic. A paradigm is like a lens that determines the entire perception of an individual. In order to understand and properly juxtapose the Thomistic system with the Darwinian system one needs to adopt the paradigm shared by the author of the system. Otherwise one falls into anachronism. Of course we could also ask whether the evolutionary paradigm should be accepted by contemporary Christians, and if so, on what grounds, and is it better than the creationist paradigm. But these are questions for another paper.

Dr. Carl believes that evolutionary theory does not create difficulties in the light of Aquinas's metaphysics. But he comes to this conclusion by distorting Aquinas's view on the origin of species. For Aquinas the cause of species needs to be found in the divine intellect and His creative action. For Dr. Carl it is found in the combined power of heavens and natural generation. Interestingly, this kind of shift in search for causes is not an original invention of Dr. Carl or any of Thomistic evolutionists. Erasmus Darwin (the grandfather of Charles) authored a book *Zoonomia* (1796) in which he presented a primitive version of theistic evolution. Erasmus believed that it was the power of generation and "external influences" rather than the power of an intellect that created living beings. He also believed that this idea went back to David Hume, who

concludes that the world itself might have been generated, rather than created; that is, it might have been gradually produced from

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution*, 11–16.

very small beginnings, increasing by the activity of its inherent principles, rather than by a sudden evolution of the whole by the Almighty fiat.<sup>47</sup>

Erasmus Darwin was enchanted by the idea of God not acting directly in the material universe, but through “laws of nature,” i.e., natural secondary causes. He also believed that this mode of divine operation revealed more of His greatness and potency. But this entirely non-biblical concept contradicted Catholic theology and healthy philosophy and for this reason the book was condemned in 1817, which can be considered the first ecclesiastical condemnation of theistic evolution. It is important to realize that the inspirations for Dr. Carl actually do not come from Aquinas or Aristotle but rather D. Hume, E. Darwin, Ch. Darwin, deists of the Enlightenment and 19<sup>th</sup> century positivists. Thomistic evolution contradicts St. Thomas’s teachings because it draws on a different paradigm, one born from modern materialism.



### **Creation Is Not Generation: A Response to Brian Carl**

#### SUMMARY

Dr. Brian T. Carl published a paper, “Thomas Aquinas on the Proportionate Causes of Living Species,” in which he defends a thesis that the principle of proportionate cause, as understood by Aquinas, cannot be used to contradict the modern theory of biological evolution. This rejoinder explores thoroughly Carl’s argument, specifically his idea that spontaneous generation serves as a model to explain causality in biological evolution. It is shown that Aquinas indeed accepts proportionate causes in spontaneous generation, but this fact cannot be extrapolated to modern evolutionary theories. The origin of new species after creation was completed is not a straightforward thesis in Aquinas; rather Thomas sees it as a possible exception, which contradicts the evolutionary origin of the vast majority of species. Additionally, Carl misses the major point that in Aquinas the

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<sup>47</sup> Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia or the Laws of Organic Life*, vol. 1 (London: Printed for J. Johnson, in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1794), 509.

origin of new species belongs to the work of creation rather than the natural operation of secondary causes.

#### KEYWORDS

Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, evolution, creation, causality, metaphysics, species, generation.

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**Michał Chaberek**

## **Metaphysics and Evolution: A Response to Dennis F. Polis**

First I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Dennis F. Polis for reading my paper on metaphysics and evolution<sup>1</sup> and taking his time to respond to it. His response is detailed and tackles many different issues, however many of them irrelevant to my argument. Hence I will limit my response to those charges of Dr. Polis that I find important in the context of my argument, or those that—in my view—rest on the greatest confusion around my paper. I will reduce my response to three major problems: 1) the definition of evolution, 2) the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of substance, and 3) the clarification of why Dr. Polis’s responses to my five arguments fail.

### **Definition of Evolution**

In his critique of my take on biological evolution, Dr. Polis concludes: “To properly evaluate Chaberek’s thesis, we need to understand evolution as the majority of biologists do—which is not as he describes. It is unfair to criticize those responding to a theory in terms of an alter-

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<sup>1</sup> Michał Chaberek, “Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution: Why Are They Incompatible?,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 8, no. 1 (January–March 2019): 47–81.

nate theory.”<sup>2</sup> Then Polis mentions three authors, but he does not show how any of them would deny my definition of evolution. My definition skips the particulars of these theories (and many other, including modern ones) and keeps what is essential for them in the context of evolution-creation debate. I explain in my paper that what is relevant in the debate is not so much the particular mechanism of evolution, because different mechanisms are proposed by different authors, but rather the “effects” of the supposed evolutionary process which is the diversity of species emerging from non-diversity. In other words, the crucial problem is whether the idea that natural secondary causes can produce the entire variety of species beginning with just one or a few living organisms. And this—contrary to what Dr. Polis says—is not different from what the vast majority of biologists believe. I defined evolution as “biological macroevolution.” This includes two restrictions. One is that we are talking just about biology, without entering other domains, such as evolution in culture, morality or physics (e.g., cosmic, prebiotic or social evolution). The second restriction is created by the word “macroevolution,” which clarifies that we do not debate the emergence of new varieties, races or even biological species. These are not controversial issues even for young earth creationists. Dr. Polis believes that there is no distinction between micro- and macroevolution in Darwin, therefore my definition is inadequate. However, as I explained, my discussion is not limited to just the Darwinian type of evolution, because “Darwinian” in this context signifies the mechanism, but does not have any bearing on the alleged effects of the process in the form of emerging biodiversity. It’s also not true that we cannot find macroevolution in Darwin. Surely, he does not use the word, or the distinction explicitly. This does not mean, however, that he is not a supporter of biological

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis F. Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 9, no. 4 (October–December 2020): 551.

macroevolution. On the contrary, his belief that all living beings descended from one or a few ancestors boils down to believing in biological macroevolution. Dr. Polis implies that Darwin was not a supporter of universal common ancestry (UCA), but he gives into the illusive rhetoric of Darwin who very carefully proposed his most radical ideas in order to smuggle them into the scientific community without causing much opposition. Surely, both Darwin and his contemporary supporters (E. Haeckel, Th. H. Huxley) believed not just in UCA but also that life itself emerged spontaneously, without any supernatural or intelligent guidance.

Dr. Polis also brings up the crucial difference between Alfred R. Wallace and Charles Darwin by claiming that the first opted for “intelligently guided” evolution and the latter favored chance as the driving force of the evolutionary process. My Adversary believes that missing this distinction is a grave distortion to the definition of evolution. But I explained that in the evolution-creation debate it does not matter whether evolution is guided or blind. What matters is whether totally new natural species (new families or genera) can emerge by a process or must be created, that is, whether they emerged naturally or supernaturally. And this is the key issue at stake which makes irrelevant even such (otherwise significant) differences as the one between Darwin and Wallace. I agree that so far most critics of evolution have been focusing on the problem of randomness in the evolutionary process. But the entire first part of my paper explains why this has not been a correct formulation of the problem. Even so, Dr. Polis cannot get over the old attitude and adopt my perspective. For this reason, his claims such as “no relevant definition of evolutionary ‘randomness’ poses a metaphysical threat either to teleology or to theism”<sup>3</sup> are irrelevant for my entire thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 560.

It's a pity that on the one hand Dr. Polis cannot see the common points of the various evolutionary theories and on the other he does not provide his own definition of evolution that, according to him, would be compatible with classical metaphysics. Yet, the entire issue hinges upon definitions. It's also just a matter of wording whether we say that universal common ancestry is a "postulate" or a "hypothesis"—Polis does not explain how he understands the difference between the two, even though neither of the terms is specified by a universally accepted strict definition, whether in regular language or in the methodology of science. Similarly, it is just a matter of wording whether biological theory "have philosophical and theological implications" or "biological, philosophical and theological layers." As I explained in my paper, these are not the "implications" that pose the threat for theology but the very essence of the biological macroevolutionary theory. It is especially clear in Darwin who, on many occasions, challenges the classic Christian explanation to the origin of species. In his times, the explanation was "creationism," that is, the belief that species were created separately and directly by God. It is precisely this idea that Darwin combats with the entire force of his polemical thrust. Let me quote just one distinctive passage:

He who believes in separate and innumerable acts of creation will say, that in these cases it has pleased the Creator to cause a being of one type to take the place of one of another type; but this seems to me only restating the fact in dignified language. He who believes in the struggle for existence and in the principle of natural selection, will acknowledge that every organic being is constantly endeavouring to increase in numbers; [etc.].<sup>4</sup>

Is this an extension of Darwin's theory beyond biology, or rather the core of his idea? The problem is that when one proposes a natural explanation to the origin of species one excludes its supernatural expla-

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), 186–187.

nation. And this is the very core of Darwin's message: species were not created but evolved naturally. He clearly places "special creation" against "the struggle for existence and natural selection." But it does not matter whether the natural explanation consists of random variation and natural selection or anything else. As I said, neither the mechanism of evolution nor the problem of its randomness plays any significant role in the evolution-creation debate. All evolutionists agree that species are connected by biological generation, i.e., there is physical continuity between different forms of life. And this is already contradictory to the Bible as interpreted by classic Christianity. Therefore, it is not the "philosophical and theological implications" but the very core of biological theory that poses a challenge both to the Bible and classical metaphysics. And this is how I defined the problem in my paper. Surely, my Adversary may define the problem differently, but then he does not argue against my arguments. Moreover, he does not prove that my posing of the problem is incorrect. Instead, he reduces my position to some pre-conceived ideas that miss the point of the debate.

Dr. Polis spends a lot of time on explaining different meanings of randomness and contrasting them with laws of nature. This discussion may be interesting on its own terms, but irrelevant in the context of my argument. Theistic evolution is the idea that God guides the evolutionary process, therefore it adopts some kind of finality. And I argue that it is the theistic form of evolution that challenges both the traditional Christian interpretation of Genesis as well as classical metaphysics. I do not argue against the "blind," "entirely random" variant of evolution as promoted by atheists. This variant is excluded by my argument *a fortiori*.

Regarding the "methodological differences," my Adversary believes that:

[S]cientific theses ought to be judged by the canons of the relevant science. If those cannons are inadequate, philosophical anal-

ysis should be directed to them. Fr. Chaberek uses metaphysics to attack a scientific thesis directly, asking “Is evolution (biological macroevolution) possible in light of classical metaphysics?”<sup>5</sup>

Well, there is a lot of confusion in this approach. First, if we are talking about the origins of the universe as such, or its essential elements, such as different kinds of living beings (plants, animals), these questions go beyond science. It is vain and even illogical to ask physics to explain the origin of physical reality, to ask chemistry to explain the origin of chemistry, or to ask biology to explain the origin of biology. The laws studied in any given science operate only when the physical reality described by the science is already there. This is why questions of origins, by their very nature, go beyond any given discipline as well as science as such. To know the answer we need theology and philosophy.

However, we can still ask whether the biological explanation of the origin of biology is correct on its own terms. This is where the scientific critique of evolutionary theories enters. Scientists who are proponents of intelligent design (and not only they) delivered devastating critiques of the basic claims of current evolutionary explanation of the origin of biological information and irreducibly complex systems. It seems that my Adversary knows next to nothing about this broad and growing literature or simply ignores it. So, the question is, what does science actually tell us? Is it true that science supports biological macroevolution in the Darwinian form, or perhaps it actually strays from the (neo-)Darwinian mechanism offering nothing compelling in its place? If we adopt incorrect premises from science, we may come to wrong conclusions in philosophy—I agree with this principle. However, true science, free from ideological bias, testifies to the inability of nature to produce biodiversity as we know it. The fossil record is in-

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<sup>5</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 550.

compatible with Darwinian theory and the Darwinian mechanism of random mutation and natural selection (even in its modern form and different variants) is incapable of explaining the origin of any significant biological novelties.<sup>6</sup> I can fully subscribe to Dr. Polis's creed: "As Thomists, we take God's existence as a proven fact, and rightly hold that no sound interpretation of sound science can conflict with theism."<sup>7</sup> It's simply that "sound science" denies macroevolution as much as "sound philosophy."

Dr. Polis writes: "[S]upporters of 'Intelligent Design' . . . typically [posit] evolutionary gaps where 'irreducible complexity' must be bridged by divine intervention."<sup>8</sup> It would be desirable to see any reference or quote to support this claim.<sup>9</sup> But we do not find it in Mr. Polis's article perhaps because none of the ID supporters says anything like this (at least I am not aware of any). Generally speaking it is the critics of Intelligent Design who bring up God whenever they cannot deliver an answer to strictly scientific arguments presented by ID proponents. On my end, since I am not a scientist, I explained several times, why creation, whether the first creation (*prima creatio*) or the second creation (*secunda creatio*) cannot be called an intervention.<sup>10</sup> Even so, my Adversary copies this common mistake without any reflection.

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<sup>6</sup> A good example of how contemporary leading biologists are confused about the mechanism of evolution was a high-profile conference "New Trends in Evolutionary Biology" organized by The Royal Society in London in 2016. Most of the participants presented their skepticism about the ability of the neo-Darwinian mechanism to produce any significant biological novelty. A good commentary on that event can be found in the article "Why the Royal Society Meeting Mattered, in a Nutshell," *Evolution News* (December 5, 2016); available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>7</sup> Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," 564.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 561.

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Dr. Polis refers one time to a single work by an ID proponent, Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*. However, nowhere in that book one finds Polis's thesis that Behe proposes "divine intervention" to bridge the problem of irreducible complexity.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Michał Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution* (Chartwell Press, 2019, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 205.

According to my Adversary, it is incorrect to combat science with metaphysics. But my starting point is somewhat different: Biology itself denies the macroevolutionary explanations and shows the inability of evolutionary mechanisms to produce new species (understood according to the definition provided in my paper). Hence, it is not that I challenge science with philosophy. Rather the scientific critique of the neo-Darwinian mechanism gains additional support from a metaphysical critique of biological macroevolution. After all, “truth cannot contradict truth,” so we see a perfect harmony between the scientific theory of Intelligent Design and classical metaphysics as taught by Aristotle and Aquinas.

### **Substance in Aristotle and Aquinas**

Dr. Polis’s critique refers to the core premise of one of my metaphysical arguments. I am grateful to my Adversary that he brought up this question for two reasons. One is that it allows me to add more precision to this important issue. Second, because he tries to invalidate my argument by actually employing Aquinas and Aristotle’s teachings, which is not always the case among the critics.

Let me briefly reiterate my argument. According to classical metaphysics, material things consist of substance and accidents. This is especially true of living beings (such as plants and animals) because their immaterial principle (the soul or form) is highly specified. (It is not so much true about compounds and elements, because they are just conglomerates of particles, they do not have highly specified forms and, in a way, they are no-substances). The “iron law” of metaphysics is that accidental changes impact the accidents while substance is changed by the substantial change. This is an exhaustive and exclusive division—either the change is accidental or substantial, *tertium non datur*.

Now, in any given evolutionary process the changes applied to living beings (merely) have an accidental character, whether it is a genetic mutation or alteration of an organ, or a protein, or anything of that kind. Yet, it is postulated that with a gradual accumulation of accidental changes a new substance would be generated, such as the mammalian or bird substance resulting from an evolution of reptiles. According to classical metaphysics, the macroevolutionary scenario is impossible, because it does not matter how long the accidental changes would be accumulated in subsequent generations of a given species. They will always produce just accidental variants remaining within the nature of a thing, not entirely new natures such as cow from dinosaur or horse from crocodile.

Not surprisingly, this is what we actually observe in nature. If we try to modify a species, we can obtain different variations remaining within the limits of its nature, but if we attempt to trespass these limits (for example, by genetic modification), the result is either a lame or dead individual. Neither gives any hope for further evolution. This is how the “iron law” of classical metaphysics gets confirmed by natural investigations. Truth cannot contradict truth. Also nature itself generates a multitude of variants within given species according to the accidental factors that determine better adaptations in these or other conditions. The exact limits of the plasticity found in nature could probably be established by biological investigations, but they are not relevant to my argument. The point is that on the level of a distinct nature/substance the change may go only this far. Hence, biological macroevolution/universal common ancestry is metaphysically impossible.

To be as fair as possible, I will quote Dr. Polis’s response *in extenso*:

Let us turn to a philosophical discussion of species. Classical metaphysics follows Aristotle’s definitions of substance and species in the *Categories*.

A substance—that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all—is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse. The species in which the things primarily called substances are, are called secondary substances, as also are the genera of these species. For example, the individual man belongs in a species [*eidōs*], man, and animal is a genus of the species; so these—both man and animal—are called secondary substances.

So substances are primarily ostensible unities (*tode ti* = this something) like Socrates or Bucephalus, and, secondarily, species and genera, not because they are ostensible unities, but because of the grammatical fact that they also serve as subjects of predication. Aquinas is equally clear that species are not primary substances:

[I]t cannot be said that the notion of genus or species applies to human nature insofar as it exists in individuals; for in the individuals human nature does not have the sort of unity according to which it is some single thing pertaining to all, which the notion of universals requires.

It remains, therefore, that the notion of species applies to human nature insofar as it exists in the intellect.

A species, then, is not an *ens reale*, but an *ens rationis*.

Consequently, species cannot change in the proper sense, because they lack a material principle to serve as a principle of continuity; nonetheless, biological species can evolve. This is possible because the evolution of species does not mean that an *ens rationis* changes, but that a biological population instantiating to one species concept is succeeded by a population no longer instantiating that concept. Rather, the new population is the *fundamentum in re* for a new concept—the evolved species.<sup>11</sup>

The core of the mistake in Dr. Polis's argument consists of this statement: "So substances are primarily ostensible unities (*tode ti* = this something) like Socrates or Bucephalus, and, secondarily, species and genera, not because they are ostensible unities, but because of the grammatical fact that they also serve as subjects of predication." The

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<sup>11</sup> Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," 569–571.

“so” does not follow from the quoted *Categories* nor from Aquinas. What Aristotle and Aquinas say is that universals, once they are derived from individuals, do not exist in the individuals but independently, as ideas in the intellect. This is a no-brainer for anyone who knows classical Aristotelian epistemology. But the question is not whether a notion of species exists in reality (because it doesn’t, as no notion does), but whether there is a correspondence between the notion and the reality that the notion signifies and whether the notion is formed by the reality or *vice versa*. According to both Aristotle and Aquinas, the notion of species derives from the reality that it signifies. Aquinas nicely summarizes it in *De Ente et Essentia*:

[T]he notion of species applies to human nature insofar as it exists in the intellect. For human nature itself exists in the intellect abstracted from all individuating conditions, *whence it is uniformly related to all individuals [of this nature] which are outside the soul*, being equally a similitude of all, and thus leading to the cognition of all, insofar as they are humans. And since it has *this sort of relation to all individuals [of this nature]*, the intellect forms the notion of species and attributes to it.<sup>12</sup>

Species/genera, those that serve as part of a definition, do not exist in individuals because these are merely ideas. It does not follow, however, that those common natures are not somehow realized in individuals as their individual forms. Dr. Polis wrongly interprets Aristotle and Aquinas as nominalists— notions exist only in the intellect, in reality only accidents exist. (This, ironically, confirms my statement, challenged by Polis, that in order to accept biological macroevolution one

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<sup>12</sup> “Ratio speciei accidat naturae humanae secundum illud esse quod habet in intellectu. Ipsa enim natura humana in intellectu habet esse abstractum ab omnibus individuantibus, et ideo habet rationem uniformem ad omnia individua, quae sunt extra animam, prout aequaliter est similitudo omnium et ducens in omnium cognitionem in quantum sunthomines. Et ex hoc quod talem relationem habet ad omnia individual intellectus adinvenit rationem speciei et attribuit sibi.” Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 2; available online—see the section *References* for details. The emphases added.

must be a nominalist, even if a subtle one). Aquinas says that genus /species cannot apply to individuals because in an individual there is a lack of universality. But he does not say that individuals of the same genus/species do not share the same substantial form or nature.

My Adversary ignores the more fundamental division into substance (substantial form and matter) and accidents that come together to constitute every individual. He confuses the idea of species with the substantial form. Substantial form is what exists in each individual of the same species, realized as individual form, but species is more like a definition of it. So in one sense species indeed is *ens rationis*, but this does not exhaust the problem of substance. Indeed, we get to know the substance of a thing thanks to its attributes (accidents) perceived by the senses, but it does not mean that an individual is reducible to its accidents. On the contrary, our mind (at least in the Aristotelian-Thomistic approach) can derive the general idea of a thing because the thing is not merely an ensemble of properties but there is a substance (substantial form) that the properties specify. If Polis was right, there would be nothing that the attributes could hang on and therefore there could be no individuals of highly specified essences, such as living beings. Dr. Polis trims metaphysics too narrow and makes an argument based on a statement cut out of its context and, in fact, with little relevance to my argument. Aquinas says that:

[W]hen a horse is generated, the generating horse is indeed the reason why the nature of horse begins to exist in this being, but it is not the essential cause of equinity. *For that which is essentially the cause of a certain specific nature, must be the cause of that nature of all the beings that have that species.* Since, then, the generating horse has the same nature, it would have to be its own cause, which is impossible. It remains, therefore, that above all those participating in equinity, there must be some universal cause of the whole species. . . . [I]t must be reduced to that which

is essentially the cause of that nature, but not to something which participates in that nature in a particular way.<sup>13</sup>

And:

“[E]ssence” has to signify something that is common to all natures on account of which various beings fall under the diverse genera and species, as for example humanity is the essence of man, and so on for the rest.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, there is something like “horse nature” that is passed on in generation of an individual that is the cause of this horse to be horse, i.e., of its “horseness.” It is therefore irrelevant that the idea of species remains unaltered in the intellect, even if the biological reality changes. In fact, the reality cannot change, because it is determined in generation by the nature/essence or substance that maintains and causes the species in those individuals. My argument relies on this part of classical metaphysics (ontology) rather than Aristotelian epistemology, a distinction that my Adversary seems to have missed.

### **The Five Arguments Stand**

In this last part of my response I will show that Dr. Polis did not invalidate any one of my five metaphysical arguments against biological macroevolution.

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Substantiis Separatis*, c. 10, 58; available online—see the section *References* for details. The emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> “[O]portet quod essentia significet aliquid commune omnibus naturis, per quas diversa entia in diversis generibus et speciebus collocantur, sicut humanitas est essentia hominis, et sic de aliis.” *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 1.

### *The First Argument*

My first argument is based on the principle that “no effect exceeds its cause(s).”<sup>15</sup> Dr. Polis’s response boils down to three counter-arguments:

1. “The power of causes is revealed in their effects, as we cannot know potencies directly, but only via their actualization. Thus, we must look at actual effects rather than *a priori* estimates to determine the power God has imbued causes with.”<sup>16</sup>

I agree with every word in this statement. And because we do not see species evolving into different species (like apes turning into humans or reptiles into birds) via natural generation, we cannot conclude that “God has imbued causes” with such powers. Since these things do not happen (and biologists such as Michael Behe and Stephen Meyer explain the biological reasons for why they cannot happen), the obvious conclusion is that God did not embed such powers in nature.

2. In his second counterargument my Adversary appeals to many causes rather than one. (“Clearly, insensate parents cannot form designs, novel or otherwise . . . Rather, offspring are the joint effect the parents and their environment,”<sup>17</sup> etc.). I had responded to it at length in my book *Aquinas and Evolution*,<sup>18</sup> so I refer my Adversary to it. A short answer is that it does not matter how many causes are involved, but whether the causes are proportionate to the effect. An uneducated man will not build a computer, even if he has a help of a thousand akin to him. From the premise that laws of nature are designed does not follow that they can design. In fact neither chance events nor laws of nature can produce new designs of life, no matter how many of them

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<sup>15</sup> See Chaberek, “Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution,” 56–57.

<sup>16</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 576.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See Chaberek, *Aquinas and Evolution*, 40 and 65–70.

would come together, simply because they lack foresight which is necessary to put together different parts in order to work toward one goal. Bringing God into the equation (as Dr. Polis and other theistic evolutionists do) begs the question, because if God was to overcome the limits of nature in evolution, then it would not be evolution anymore but some kind of creation. I do not argue against “some form of creation,” but against natural evolution as producing new species.

3. Dr. Polis, as some other of my adversaries, calls upon Aquinas’s long-abandoned and vague concept of new species emerging via spontaneous generation for help. Again, I had responded to this in *Aquinas and Evolution*.<sup>19</sup> Still, I will make a brief comment on the margin of my previous answer.

First, we can clearly see that when discussing spontaneous generation Aquinas has a problem precisely with the principle of sufficient cause. This is why at the end of the day he calls for the help of “the influence of the heavens,” which for the medieval people were always a good reservoir of explanations because the heavens themselves remained a complete conundrum. (Like Darwin, who knew that there were no linking forms in the fossils, claimed that they were hidden under the beds of the oceans where in his times we couldn’t access). Today we know that there is nothing like spontaneous generation let alone new species coming to existence thanks to putrefaction. So why would contemporary theistic evolutionists quote the outdated science of the middle ages to allegedly defend “modern science”? They do not quote modern science, because they intuitively know that after the idea of spontaneous generation was excluded (by modern science) the principle of sufficient cause made biological macroevolution “from amoeba to human” less plausible than ever. There is simply no cause for such movement in nature while we know that everything works in the oppo-

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<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*, 49 and 89–92.

site direction: from order to disorder, from complexity to simplicity. The total energy of the system is dispersed, the universe as a whole is entropic not emergent (as theistic evolutionists imagine). There is no reason that the biological realm would be exempted from these universal laws of nature. Species do not pop up but die out.

Another problem is that even bringing up spontaneous generation does not help much to defend biological macroevolution. First, these are only lower animals (bugs and worms) that can be born this way. So what about the vast majority of life? On Aquinas's account, they still must be created directly by God. So, if there is an incoherency in Aquinas (namely that on the one hand he admits that species cannot emerge otherwise than by creation and on the other he allows some exceptions in spontaneous generation), then it is the idea of spontaneous generation that sits in a weaker position. It represents "poor science" of the day that Aquinas had no tools to challenge. But his own principles testify in the opposite direction, therefore in the case of incoherency we need to abandon a couple of passages on spontaneous generation rather than the metaphysical principles that constitute the backbone of his entire work.

Secondly, spontaneous generation does not say anything about one species being generated from another in the process of natural generation. There is no idea of universal common ancestry, no idea of the transformation of species. Dr. Polis claims: "Of course, the mechanism of evolution is not putrefaction, but the metaphysics is the same."<sup>20</sup> Is it? If spontaneous generation can produce only lower animals, perhaps those lower animals do not require any higher causes than putrefaction combined with the "influence of the heavens." But it does not follow that the same causes could generate a higher animal species, like horse or human. And what about other metaphysical principles? In spontaneous generation there is no transformation of species as it happens in

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<sup>20</sup> Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," 577.

biological macroevolution. So, even if “the metaphysics is the same,” it is the same only in a very limited sense, too limited to justify biological macroevolution and universal common ancestry.

### *The Second Argument*

In response to my second argument—“no accidental change brings about new substance”<sup>21</sup>—Dr. Polis says two things. One is that:

Substantial changes occur when an organism is generated or dies. Everything that happens to it between generation and death is an accidental change, for its substance persists.<sup>22</sup>

I must admit that I am somewhat surprised that my Adversary brings about this misunderstanding of my argument since I anticipated it in the very formulation of my argument.<sup>23</sup> In short, my Adversary confuses substantial form and individual form, the nature of a thing with its accidents. I agree, the individual substance persists in the individual throughout its life, but the nature of a species persists in its offspring and all individuals as long as they belong to the same species (as is clear from Aquinas’s statements quoted above).

The second thing Dr. Polis says is:

[N]o changes can happen to species or natures, which are immaterial *entia rationis* and so immutable. Secondary substances (genera and species), as concepts, do not change. Only primary substances (individual material beings) can change. The differences between offspring and parents, which cumulatively lead to new species, are neither substantial nor accidental changes, for they are not differences in the same being.

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<sup>21</sup> See Chaberek, “Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution,” 57–59.

<sup>22</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 578.

<sup>23</sup> See Chaberek’s “Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution,” 57–58, and *Aquinas and Evolution*, 52–53.

In sum, since the evolution of species is not the change of a being, the distinction between accidental and substantial changes is irrelevant.<sup>24</sup>

As I explained above, the concepts do not change, but they describe the reality present in the things. This reality in the things is not reducible to the ensemble of accidents. The reality of species (natures) somehow exists in the individuals who share the same nature. This is what differentiates Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics from Plato (who postulated that species exist only in ideal world). Therefore, it is not possible for the accidents to change in an unlimited way until they create a new species. They may change only as long as matter remains proportional to the form. When matter loses proper disposition to the form the form departs and the being ceases to exist. On Polis's account natures are only *entia rationis* that are ideas in the mind. This is a formulation of nominalism that strays from classical metaphysics.

### *The Third Argument*

My third argument<sup>25</sup> is based on Aquinas's statement:

A perfect thing participating in any nature, makes a likeness to itself, not by absolutely producing that nature, but by applying it to something else. For an individual man cannot be the cause of human nature absolutely, because he would then be the cause of himself; but he is the cause of what human nature is in this man begotten.<sup>26</sup>

It follows that no individual of a given species produces that species. Moreover there is some higher power (the "power of species") that makes this thing belong to this species and another to another. If biological evolution were true, it would follow that an individual (or a

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<sup>24</sup> Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," 578–579.

<sup>25</sup> See Chaberek, "Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution," 60.

<sup>26</sup> *S.Th.*, I, 45, 5, ad 1. Cf. *S.c.G.*, II, 21 and *ibid.*, III, 65, 4. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

group) of one species at some point of its development begets an individual of another species. By this the individual would be the cause of the new species. Since, however, an individual is not the cause of its own species the more it cannot be a cause of another, new species. Thus biological macroevolution is impossible. This argument is a variant of the first argument. It boils down to saying that nothing can be the cause of itself, which would be the case if biological macroevolution were true.

In his response, Dr. Polis reaches for the well-known solution of many other evolutionists. He simply reduces macroevolution understood as the emergence of entirely new forms of life to microevolution understood as simply “change over time.” He says: “Evolution does not suggest that any being causes its own nature, only that descendants may differ from their forebears.”<sup>27</sup> This is not quite exact. If evolution was just about the fact that posterity differs from parents, there would be no debate whatsoever. Everyone knows (and it does not require a genius in biology to see) that posterity differs from parents and even between themselves. No, the problem is that the ancestors of one animal, let’s say a dinosaur, on evolutionary account are supposed to beget another animal, let’s say a horse or a cow. This has never been observed or proven and this is what creates metaphysical problems and the entire controversy. But this is also an example of how Dr. Polis follows the lines of evolutionists who cleverly or blatantly manipulate the definition of evolution whenever it does not fit their arguments.

#### *The Fourth Argument*

In my fourth argument I claimed that biological macroevolution is contrary to classical metaphysics because it denies two out of four

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<sup>27</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 579.

Aristotelian causes.<sup>28</sup> On evolutionary accounts, every being is turning into something different from what it is thanks to the processes embedded in nature by the Creator. Think about it. If this was the case, the efficient cause, the one that “makes things” would be reduced to changes in matter, such as genetic mutations, environmental influences, natural selection and so forth. In any case the direct divine causation—which is, according to Aquinas, the only possible cause of new species<sup>29</sup>—would be reduced to “underlying conditions” in matter. Matter is the material cause so, in a way, the efficient cause on evolutionary account is reduced to the material cause. These are “dispositions of matter” that lead to new species, as some theistic evolutionists explicitly claim.<sup>30</sup> Dr. Polis does not seem to fully understand what the formal cause is. The formal cause makes the thing what it is, it is the cause of the being to be itself. It is the form that makes the thing what it is. This is why typically the formal cause is identified with the form. In metaphysics every being strives to be what it is whereas on evolutionary accounts, everything is supposed to change into something else. Thus, let say, a flying reptile, instead of striving to remain what it is, is supposed to become a bird. So, the form that makes the thing what it is is supposed to be constantly replaced (over the generations) with a new form. In fact, if we fully adopt the premises of biological macroevolution, there are no species but only the connecting links and thus the formal cause is annihilated. Instead there is that tendency in nature (as imagined by theistic evolutionists) for everything to grow into higher levels of being. This is the overwhelming teleology supposedly imbedded or implanted

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<sup>28</sup> See Chaberek, “Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution,” 60–61.

<sup>29</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, co.; *ibid.*, lib. 2, d. 18, q. 2, a. 2, co. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>30</sup> Charles De Koninck, “The Cosmos. The Philosophical Point of View,” in *The Writings of Charles De Koninck*, vol. 1, ed. & trans. R. McInerny (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 278–283.

in nature by God. On the classic metaphysical account, the final cause is the idea in divine intellect according to which the Creator produces given species. For example, a horse is created as a horse according to the idea of horse that God realized in nature in the form of the first horse. This idea is a final cause of creation that results in educing the form of a horse from matter (the formal cause). In contrast, according to the evolutionary account, the formal cause is replaced with the final cause, because every being is supposed to become something else, something higher, something new in the process of constant evolution. Thus we can say that the efficient cause is “reduced down” to material cause and the formal cause is “reduced up” to the final cause.

In his response Dr. Polis seems to take a short cut. He does not really provide any argument. He simply says that he disagrees and repeats the evolutionary account. The only fragment that bears some trace of an argument is this:

Evolution posits no unnatural activity. Instead, the activity of each being is the second actualization of its own form. The tendency to evolve new species does not occur in individuals, but in the response of populations to environmental challenges.<sup>31</sup>

The first two sentences are just, say so, unsupported statements. How does a being that changes into something else not tend to be anything other than it is? This claim makes little sense to me. (Mind that in the discussion about the origin of species we do not talk about the changes of individuals but species, so if evolution means that a reptile transforms into a bird, we do not mean a particular individual or a population but the species or secondary substance). But the last sentence again reveals some of the rhetoric well-known from evolutionary literature: If something does not work the way evolutionist want, the entire ensemble of causes is called upon for help. If an individual does not change,

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<sup>31</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 580.

then (the evolutionists say) it is not the individual but the population that changes. If sufficient cause is missing, then (the evolutionists say) it is not evolution but “God working through evolution.” This way one can dismiss any argument by bringing up vague or unproven or “gap-filler” explanations. Clearly something does not work, but there is that other something that explains it. But it is never explained to us what are exactly “those other things” and how they are supposed to resolve the problem. There is no answer whatsoever to my argument in Dr. Polis’s rejoinder.

### *The Fifth Argument*

My fifth argument rests on the premise laid down by Aquinas:

We must say that the distinction and multitude of things come from the intention of the first agent, who is God. For He brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures.<sup>32</sup>

And in another place:

It is part of the best agent to produce an effect which is best in its entirety; but this does not mean that He makes every part of the whole the best absolutely, but in proportion to the whole; in the case of an animal, for instance, its goodness would be taken away if every part of it had the dignity of an eye. Thus, therefore, God also made the universe to be best as a whole, according to the mode of a creature; whereas He did not make each single creature best, but one better than another.<sup>33</sup>

It follows that God created different degrees of being (which includes different species) and this diverse and gradual reality is intended, wanted and loved by Him. Additionally, a similar kind of gradation is

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<sup>32</sup> *S.Th.*, I, 47, 1, co.

<sup>33</sup> *S.Th.*, I, 47, 2, co and ad 1. Cf. *S.Th.*, I, 65, 2, co.

found in individual creatures—their organs should differ in dignity, complexity, relevance to the basic life functions, etc. The problem is that the theistic evolutionary account of nature denies this principle of creation and proposes something directly opposite. On the evolutionary account, different species compete and struggle to adapt, they must become something else in order to survive, and finally the entire world of biology is supposed to reach ever higher levels of life and complexity. This vision of nature flatly contradicts the principle of gradation laid down by Aquinas. Species are not supposed to evolve, because they represent divine power and wisdom by their complementary existence at different levels of “perfection.”

In his response, my Adversary resorts to the same rhetorical strategy he did in the third argument. He says that evolution “does not suggest that an amphibian ever becomes a reptile. Rather some descendants of amphibians may be slightly more reptilian in form and some less.”<sup>34</sup> Who would believe that the entire controversy is about whether some species resemble some other species or not? This is not how I defined “the theory of evolution” in my paper and this is not how most biologists understand it. The entire point of the theory is to explain the origin of all species in natural terms. Therefore it is not just the “differences in posterity” that create the controversy. The theory of evolution that I discuss assumes much more than that, it postulates that one species, such as hippopotamus (or some ancient artiodactyl), changed into another species, such as whale (yes, this is what they believe). And this is the type of evolution that is metaphysically impossible for all of the reasons laid down in my paper. Again, there is no response whatsoever to my fifth argument in Dr. Polis’s rejoinder. He just restates some of the evolutionary claims without showing how they could be reconciled with the principles of classical metaphysics as presented by Aquinas.

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<sup>34</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 580.

Dr. Polis has not debunk any of my arguments. Unfortunately, many of his otherwise interesting remarks miss the point, they do not invalidate my arguments simply because they tackle other issues. Still I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Polis for approaching my paper with attention and providing a response that is serious enough to write this rejoinder.



### Metaphysics and Evolution: A Response to Dr. Dennis Polis

#### SUMMARY

This paper is a response to Dennis F. Polis's article "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics" (2020), which offered a critique of the author's article "Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution: Why Are They Incompatible?" (2019). In order to justify and maintain his objections to the compatibility of classical metaphysics and theistic evolution, the author concentrates on three problems: 1) the definition of evolution, 2) the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of substance, and 3) the clarification of why Dr. Polis's responses to his arguments fail.

#### KEYWORDS

Thomism, metaphysics, evolution, evolutionism, God, creation, form, matter, accident, substance, change.

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Robert A. Delfino

## The Compatibility of Evolution and Thomistic Metaphysics: A Reply to Dennis F. Polis

Recently, in response to an article by Fr. Michael Chaberek, O.P., Dennis F. Polis argued for the compatibility of biological evolution and Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> Although I agree with Polis that there are problems with Intelligent Design Theory, and, like him, I am sympathetic to at least some kind of Theistic evolution, I think Polis' particular defense is unfaithful to the Thomistic tradition of metaphysics. Therefore, in this essay, I will examine some of Polis' methodological and metaphysical arguments and explain why they are mistaken. In addition to being corrective, this essay will help point the way to a better defense of the compatibility of biological evolution and Thomistic metaphysics.

### Prolegomena

Great care must be taken when arguing for the compatibility of Thomistic metaphysics and scientific theories that came centuries after

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis F. Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," *Studia Gilsoniana* 9, no. 4 (October–December 2020): 549–585. Polis is responding to Michal Chaberek, "Classical Metaphysics and Theistic Evolution: Why Are They Incompatible?," *Studia Gilsoniana* 8, no. 1 (January–March 2019): 47–81.

St. Thomas. We should try to avoid misrepresenting both the science and Thomistic metaphysics. With respect to the Thomistic tradition, we should also distinguish between two important but different questions. On the one hand, there is the historical question of what St. Thomas Aquinas himself believed and based on that what we think he would have said were he presented with the scientific evidence of biological evolution. On the other hand, it is well known that Thomists over the centuries have been refining Aquinas' thought and taking it in new directions, as part of a living and evolving philosophical tradition. Thomism, as a living tradition, is more malleable and varied than the views of Aquinas himself, and, as such, it provides more latitude for a defense of the compatibility of evolution and metaphysics.

However, even here we need to be careful, for I would argue that not every school of philosophy or theology that calls itself a "Thomism" is truly a kind of Thomism. For example, it has been argued that Transcendental Thomism is an impossible marriage of Immanuel Kant and Aquinas—of which there can be no true compatibility.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, if one changes or rejects essential elements of Thomistic metaphysics then it no longer should be called Thomistic metaphysics. This raises the difficult question of which elements are essential and which are not. Brian Shanley, O.P., once raised this question in the context of Analytic Thomism, and his comments are relevant for us as well:

There is cause for optimism then about the stimulus to Thomism that could come from Analytical Thomism. . . . [H]owever, the major cause for concern is metaphysical. At the heart of Aquinas's philosophy is his understanding of being as ultimately rooted in *esse* as *actus essendi*. This does not fit with analytical metaphysical dogmas. Here then is where the ultimate test of allegiance lies. It is possible, of course, to be an analytic philosopher

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Christopher M. Cullen, S.J., "Transcendental Thomism: Realism Rejected," in *The Failure of Modernism: The Cartesian Legacy and Contemporary Pluralism* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 72–86.

who offers interesting readings of Aquinas without any commitment to his doctrine of being. But I would not call such a one a Thomist, nor, I presume, would he call himself one. What I am arguing is that to be a Thomist of any stripe requires some primary commitment to Thomas's metaphysics; without that commitment, one may be an interpreter or even a specialist, but one is not a Thomist. It is a matter of debate, of course, what other doctrines of St. Thomas one must adhere to in order to be a Thomist and surely the items are broader than the metaphysics of *esse*. But however one draws the Thomistic circle, the core must be *esse* in St. Thomas's sense, not Frege's.<sup>3</sup>

I agree with Shanley that Aquinas' teaching on the act of existence (*esse*) is one of the central features of Thomistic metaphysics; and, as we shall see, one of the things that leads Polis astray is a lack of appreciation for this existential dimension of Aquinas' metaphysics.

### **Methodological Problems**

The first serious problem with Polis' defense has to do with his conception of the methodologies of the sciences, and the relationship of the sciences to one another. In the following excerpt, he gives two arguments as to why scientific work in evolutionary biology cannot be overturned by philosophy:

Aquinas teaches that each science must follow its own canons. If those canons are defective, philosophy may show why they are inadequate, but is not the role of, nor is it within the power of, philosophy to directly criticize scientific findings conforming to the relevant canons. . . . In his *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, Aquinas considers the division of the speculative sciences. . . . Aquinas' innovation was to focus on the intellectual acts required by these sciences, each of which moves further from what is more intelligible to us (matter and motion) to what is more intelligible in itself. "Physics" requires us to consider being *qua* mutable, and hence material, while metaphysics demands

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<sup>3</sup> Brian J. Shanley, O.P., "Analytical Thomism," *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 136–137.

that we focus on being *qua* being, separate from matter. . . . Since abstraction fixes on certain notes of intelligibility to the exclusion of others, it prescind[s] from data outside of a science's sphere of study. Natural science does not treat essence and existence *per se*. Similarly, metaphysics does not study the dynamics of natural processes, because it abstracts from matter and motion. The objects of "physics" "depend on matter both for their being, and for their being understood," while those of metaphysics/theology "do not depend on matter for their being." In *In Metaphysica*, Aquinas states that "it belongs to the same science to investigate the proper causes of any genus and the genus itself, as for example natural philosophy investigates the principles of natural bodies," while metaphysics is concerned solely with being in general (*ens commune*). Investigating the proper causes of species and genera is precisely what the theory of evolution attempts to do. Thus, metaphysics lacks any evidentiary basis for judging evolution, which addresses a certain kind of change.<sup>4</sup>

As the above excerpt makes clear, Polis' first argument is that each science must follow its own canons, and, unless those canons are inadequate, it is improper for metaphysics to critique evolutionary biology. While it is true that each science has its own sphere of competency, and thus some degree of autonomy, there is a hierarchical structure to the sciences in Aquinas that is important and which Polis seems to ignore. Putting revealed theology (*sacra doctrina*) aside, the science of metaphysics is the highest of the sciences and, as such, it has a special relationship to all of the sciences below it, as we shall see.

In saying that "Aquinas teaches that each science must follow its own canons," Polis cites Aquinas' *Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, q. VI, a. 1, c.<sup>5</sup> There Aquinas says that a particular science "will fall into error unless it proceeds from its own proper principles."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," 564–566.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 564, note 49.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Librum Boethii de Trinitate*, trans. Armand A. Maurer, in *The Division and Methods of the Sciences* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986), 64.

However, in the same article, a few pages later, Aquinas also says “divine science [metaphysics] gives principles to all the other sciences.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, to the extent that evolutionary biology is making use of metaphysical principles (e.g., causality, the metaphysical law of non-contradiction and its corollaries, such as the effect cannot be greater than the cause, etc.), metaphysicians can comment on the misuse of such principles in evolutionary biology.

Polis indirectly affirms this when he says that nothing in his article “should be taken to support the view that the human intellect evolved in a purely physical manner, for I hold that the intentional order is irreducible to the material order.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, this is a metaphysical argument because it concerns the being, essence, and ontological status of the rational soul, and how (because of its immateriality, which is necessary for intentional, abstractive consciousness) it cannot be produced by changes in matter.<sup>9</sup> However, many, if not most, contemporary biologists would disagree with this metaphysical critique of evolution and would, instead, hold that humans are purely material beings that evolved from changes in material life forms over time. Nevertheless, whether he realizes it or not, Polis, by his own metaphysical counterargument, is legitimizing the general kind of metaphysical critique that Fr. Chaberek and others have made.

The second argument that Polis gives to limit metaphysical critique of evolution, in the excerpt above, has to do with the proper object of a science. In this regard, he notes that the proper object of natural science is to investigate change and physical processes such as biological evolution, whereas the proper object of metaphysics excludes

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>8</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 551.

<sup>9</sup> Dennis F. Polis, *God, Science and Mind: The Irrationality of Naturalism* (Fontana, Calif.: Xianphil Press, 2012), 255. Aquinas makes similar metaphysical arguments in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 75, a. 2, reply and q. 90, a. 2, reply.

change, and instead focuses on being *qua* being, as separate from matter and motion. Unfortunately, the way Polis discusses these topics is misleading. That is, from Polis' discussion one gets the following impressions: 1) that metaphysics only studies what is separate from matter and motion and 2) that metaphysics does not study change at all. But the second point is clearly false, and the first point can be easily misunderstood in a way that is false.

With respect to the second point, Aquinas explicitly says that metaphysics studies change (motion). For example, in his *Commentary on Boethius' De Trinitate*, he says the following. "The metaphysician deals with individual beings too, not with regard to their special natures, . . . but insofar as they share the common character of being (*rationem entis*). And in this way *matter and motion also fall under his [the metaphysician's] consideration.*"<sup>10</sup> Additionally, in *De Veritate*, Aquinas clarifies that a being (*ens*) is called a being *precisely* because of its act of existence: "the name of being (*ens*) is taken from the act of existence (*actus essendi*), not from that whose act it is."<sup>11</sup> Aquinas' point, therefore, is that metaphysics does study matter and motion but only insofar as they have existence.<sup>12</sup>

As to the first point, about metaphysics studying what is separate from matter and motion, this can be misunderstood to mean that metaphysics does not study material beings. But that is also not true. In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Aquinas corrects Aristotle on this very point. In section 1165 of the commentary, Aquinas says: "However, we must remember that even though things which are separate

<sup>10</sup> Aquinas, *Expositio super Librum Boethii de Trinitate*, 56; my emphasis.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. I, a. 1, ad contra 3, in *Truth*, vol. 1: *Questions I–IX*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1994), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Aquinas's teaching on existence (*esse*) as the actuality of essence, and as a perfection that has priority over substance is one of Aquinas' novel contributions in the history of metaphysics. For more on this, see Joseph Owens, "Aquinas on Knowing Existence," *The Review of Metaphysics* 29, no. 4 (June 1976): 670–690.

from matter and motion in being and in their intelligible structure belong to the study of first philosophy, still the philosopher *not only investigates these but also sensible things inasmuch as they are beings.*"<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, this is consistent with what Aquinas says in the *Summa Theologiae*: "[T]he first object of our [human] intellect, in this state of life, is not every being and everything true, but 'being' (*ens*) and 'true' (*verum*) as considered in material things, . . . from which it acquires knowledge of all other things."<sup>14</sup> For Aquinas, the metaphysician begins by studying material beings *qua* being and only after demonstrating the existence of God, who is non-material, does he or she realize that being *qua* being extends beyond the material order to immaterial beings.<sup>15</sup> As John F. X. Knasas has argued, this is not a new or different formal object for the science of metaphysics, but instead an understanding that being *qua* being had a greater extension than initially realized.<sup>16</sup>

At this point, it should be clear that a metaphysical critique of biological evolution is possible because other sciences borrow principles

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum expositio*, in *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan (Notre Dame, Ind.: Dumb Ox, 1995), 402; my emphasis.

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotelian-Thomists often argue that physics must demonstrate the existence of God before the science of metaphysics is possible. But this is mistaken. In the Prologue to his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Aquinas states that metaphysics, not physics, treats of immaterial, separable substances such as "God and the intelligences [Angels]" (Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum expositio*, xxx). Also, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, we learn that Physics cannot even demonstrate the existence of the immaterial human rational soul: "[H]ow forms are totally separated from matter, and what they are, or even how this form, *i.e.*, the rational soul, exists insofar as it is separable and capable of existence without a body, and what it is according to its separable essence, are questions which pertain to first philosophy [metaphysics]" (Thomas Aquinas, *In octo libros Physicorum expositio*, in *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirkel (Notre Dame, Ind.: Dumb Ox, 1999), 92). For more on this topic, see John F. X. Knasas, *The Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics* (New York: Lang, 1990), 121–126.

<sup>16</sup> John F. X. Knasas, *Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 69.

from metaphysics, and because metaphysics does study material beings and change from the perspective of being. If biologists propose a kind of biological change that is impossible, metaphysically speaking, then metaphysicians can criticize evolutionary biologists. Therefore, to the extent that Fr. Chaberek's critique is focusing on aspects of the theory of evolution as they relate to metaphysics, he can legitimately make such a critique. However, I am not going to weigh in on the particulars of Fr. Chaberek's critique, as it lies with him to make his own reply to Polis.

Polis also gives a third argument aimed at limiting the kind of critique that metaphysicians can levy against evolutionary biology. This argument has to do with the difference between the notion of species in evolutionary biology and the notion of species in Thomistic metaphysics. Polis charges that Fr. Chaberek is illegitimately using a metaphysical notion of species to attack a biological notion of species: "[Charles] Darwin's theory of evolution, which Chaberek claims to oppose, deals with biological species. If Chaberek's species are not biological, he is not discussing Darwin's theory."<sup>17</sup>

Upon closer inspection, there are two aspects to this objection. One aspect is methodological, and it is related to objections that we have already discussed above. Given that every science has its own sphere of competency, biologists should be the ones who determine the biological notion of species based on the evidence gathered in biological science. This is true, of course, and I have defended a neutral metaphysical framework for science and other disciplines aimed at protecting their autonomy, preventing them from overstepping their bounds, and facilitating interdisciplinary work among them.<sup>18</sup> However, as mentioned

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<sup>17</sup> Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," 551, note 8.

<sup>18</sup> Robert A. Delfino, "Scientific Naturalism and the Need for a Neutral Metaphysical Framework," in *Science and Faith within Reason: Reality, Creation, Life and Design*, ed. Jaime Navarro (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011), 43–59.

above, this does not preclude metaphysicians from critiquing a biological notion of species if it misuses metaphysical principles, or if is based on a kind of change that is metaphysically impossible, or if it conflicts with truths proven in metaphysics. Indeed, on this last point, Polis himself says “As Thomists, we take God’s existence as a proven fact, and rightly hold that no sound interpretation of sound science can conflict with theism.”<sup>19</sup>

A second aspect of the objection is metaphysical in the sense that it raises questions about the relationship of biological species to the notion of species in philosophy and to related metaphysical topics, such as essence and Divine ideas in God. If it could be argued that the notion of species in biological science has no relationship to essences in metaphysics and no relationship to Divine ideas in God, then Polis would have a strong argument. But, as we shall see, this is not the case.

### **Metaphysical Problems**

As Polis notes, biologists and philosophers have struggled with the “species problem”—the problem of formulating a proper definition of biological species—for many years.<sup>20</sup> It is a big problem, with many aspects, and I will not attempt to solve it here. Instead, I will focus on Polis’ understanding of biological species and how he tries to harmonize it with the metaphysics of Aquinas.

Polis begins by noting the frequent lack of sharp species demarcations among populations.<sup>21</sup> For example, he mentions how squirrels on the East and West coasts of the United States of America look very similar, morphologically, and yet they are incapable of interbreeding.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 564.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 568.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

Then he offers a working definition of species, saying “For our purposes, it is sufficient to think of species as classifying populations of similar organisms in light of observable characteristics.”<sup>23</sup>

Based on this definition of species, we can conclude that it is related to the notions of nature and essence in Thomistic philosophy for several reasons. First, classifying a population as a kind of species based on similarities and observable characteristics is related to the act of abstraction without precision according to Aquinas.<sup>24</sup> For example, when discussing the abstraction of human nature in *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas says the following.

Human nature has being in the intellect abstracted from all individuating factors, and thus it has a uniform character with regard to all individual men outside the soul, being equally the likeness

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> In abstracting “human” *without precision*, we do not focus on the accidents or individual properties that Socrates, for example, has as an individual. Instead, we focus on *rational animal*, which is shared by all individual humans, such as Socrates and Plato. However, while we ignore (or abstract from) those accidental and individual properties we do not cut them out or exclude them. That is, we understand that such accidental and individual properties can be added to the human essence when it exists in the real world. In fact, it is impossible for the human essence to exist in the real world without any accidents and without individual properties. This is because matter is part of the human essence and matter in the real world is always particular, never abstract. Therefore this kind of abstraction expresses the *essence as a whole* for as Aquinas says it “contains implicitly and indistinctly everything that is in the individual” (Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, in *On Being and Essence*, trans. Armand Maurer [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968], 46). And that is why we can predicate the essence abstracted without precision of an individual. In contrast, abstracting “human” *with precision* from Socrates and Plato, does not merely ignore the individual properties of Socrates and Plato, but instead cuts them out irrevocably from the conceptual content. As a result, we have a purely abstract notion of “human,” which Aquinas usually designates by using the word *humanitas* (“humanity”). The positive focused on content of “humanity” is also rational animal, but designated or individual matter has been cut out completely and irrevocably, leaving only undesignated matter in the conceptual content. The result is something that can only exist in a mind, and therefore we cannot predicate it of an individual such as Socrates. This is because if were to predicate “humanity” of Socrates we would be claiming that Socrates is not an individual being, but an abstract being, which is absurd and false.

of all and leading to a knowledge of all insofar as they are men. Because it has this relation to all individual men, the intellect discovers the notion of species and attributes it to the nature.<sup>25</sup>

It is important that we not interpret this passage to mean that after one act of abstraction a person acquires a perfect knowledge of the nature or essence. Instead, a person first acquires a general grasp of the nature, which gets refined over time through additional experience and argument.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, as Aquinas says, “the proper object of the human intellect is the quiddity [or nature] of a material thing, which comes under the action of the senses and the imagination.”<sup>27</sup> Because of our reliance on the senses and imagination, we cannot know the nature or essence directly. Instead, we must rely on proper accidents, which are observable characteristics, in order to know the essence to some degree. Concerning proper accidents, Aquinas says that such accidents “indicate or afford knowledge of the essence, as the proper effects afford knowledge of a cause.”<sup>28</sup>

Second, as the above excerpt makes clear, the notion of species is dependent on the abstracted nature for Aquinas. This is because species is merely an accident we attach to the abstracted nature in our mind when it is understood in relation to individuals in the world as their likeness. In this example, the abstracted nature is *human* and its content is *rational animal*. When a person relates the content *rational animal* to individuals in the world, such as John and Mary, the intellect forms the notion of species. As Aquinas says, “the notion of species is one of the

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<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> For more on this topic, see Benjamin M. Block, “Thomas Aquinas on How We Know Essences: The Formation and Perfection of Concepts in the Human Intellect” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 85, a. 5, ad 3, trans. Shapcote, 357.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. X, a. 1, ad 6, in *Truth*, vol. 2: *Questions X–XX*, trans. James V. McGlynn, S.J. (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1994), 8.

accidents that follow upon the nature because of the being it has in the intellect.”<sup>29</sup>

Third, although to speak of “nature” and “essence” is to use different terminology, an abstracted nature or essence has the same core content, which, in the case of abstracting *human*, is *rational animal*. The basis for the different terminology concerns how we relate that core content. For instance, Aquinas notes that word “nature” is used to talk about “the essence of a thing as directed to its specific operation.”<sup>30</sup> In this way, the philosophy of nature, or physics, studies changing material things in the extra-mental world through abstracted natures.<sup>31</sup> However, we can also consider human nature in relation to its potentiality to exist. Here we would use the word “essence” because through the essence and in it, that which is has being.<sup>32</sup> In this way, essence is related to the science of metaphysics, which studies things insofar as they exist.

Next, Polis lays out his way of harmonizing the biological notion of species with Aquinas’ notion of species. Although he wants to avoid nominalism and defend the moderate realism of Aquinas, Polis begins by arguing that “[a] species . . . is not an *ens reale* [an extra-mental being], but an *ens rationis* [a being of reason].”<sup>33</sup> He defends this position

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<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 58.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>31</sup> “Natures of this sort, thus abstracted, can be considered in two ways. First, in themselves; and then they are thought of without motion and determinate matter. This happens to them only by reason of the being they have in the intellect. Second, they can be viewed in relation to the things of which they are the natures; and these things exist with matter and motion. Thus they are principles by which we know these things, for everything is known through its form. Consequently, in natural science we know mutable and material things existing outside the soul through natures of this kind; that is to say, natures that are immobile and considered without particular matter.” Aquinas, *Expositio super Librum Boethii de Trinitate*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 570.

by employing the passage directly prior to the previously cited passage in *On Being and Essence*:

[I]t cannot be said that the notion of genus or species applies to human nature insofar as it exists in individuals; for in the individuals human nature does not have the sort of unity according to which it is some single thing pertaining to all, which the notion of universals requires.

It remains, therefore, that the notion of species applies to human nature insofar as it exists in the intellect.<sup>34</sup>

Because Polis believes that species only exist in a human intellect as concepts, he argues that, properly speaking, species cannot change “because they lack a material principle to serve as a principle of continuity.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, he holds that species can evolve because the evolution of species “does not mean that an *ens rationis* changes, but that a biological population instantiating to one species concept is succeeded by a population no longer instantiating that concept. . . . [T]he new population is the *fundamentum in re* for a new concept—the evolved species.”<sup>36</sup>

Having noted earlier in his article that for Darwin “new species emerge as the cumulative result of small variations,” Polis proposes to use accidents in Thomistic metaphysics to account for how a population instantiates a new species concept.<sup>37</sup> He says that a “sufficient difference in accidents will engender a different species concept.”<sup>38</sup> And because “there are no actual concepts in material beings,” Polis argues that humans, as intelligent agents, can choose which properties of the

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, trans. Gyula Klima, in *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, ed. Gyula Klima, Fritz Allhoff and Anand Jayprakash (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 237. Aside from this passage, all other quotations from *De Ente et Essentia* are taken from Maurer’s translation.

<sup>35</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 570.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 570–571.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 553.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 571.

population they want to focus on when producing a concept of a species:

Nothing . . . prohibits alternative classification schemes apportioning individuals among species in different ways. In an alternative scheme, some notes essential in the original scheme are accidental and vice versa. For example, one might use a morphological perspective to say that all gray squirrels are one species, or the fruitful inter breeding criterion to say that west coast squirrels and east coast squirrels are different species. Again, as long as each taxonomic scheme is adequately founded in reality, this is a moderate realist, not a nominalist, position.<sup>39</sup>

However, in holding that humans can produce different concepts of a species such that in one scheme a property that is essential to a given population is viewed as accidental to the same population in a different scheme, Polis' position seems to succumb to a kind of relativism. Let us examine this next.

### **The Problem of Relativism**

Hair color is an accident possessed by human beings. But both Aristotle and Aquinas would agree it is a mistake to divide my students, for example, into different species based on brunette, blond, and red hair color. Indeed, their refusal to do so is based on their commitment to the real distinction between substance and accident in existing things.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, I would argue that Thomistic metaphysics loses

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 572.

<sup>40</sup> In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that we should not deny the existence of substantial forms. Commenting on ancient materialists, Aquinas says the following in section 150 of his commentary: "This position [materialism] is in part true and in part false. With reference to the point that matter is the substance and the nature of natural things, it is true. For matter enters into the constitution of the substance of each natural thing. *But insofar as they said that all forms are accidents, this position is false*" (Aquinas, *In octo libros Physicorum expositio*, 81; my emphasis). Obviously, if the only kinds of forms in matter are accidental forms, then the substance-accident distinction collapses.

its Thomistic character if this important distinction is denied. Therefore, in order to be faithful to Thomistic metaphysics, Polis must find a way to defend this distinction.

Unfortunately, I do not see how this is possible. By allowing humans to choose which properties count as essential or accidental when producing a concept of a given species, he seems to be implicitly rejecting the reality of the substance-accident distinction in existing things. In order to maintain the distinction, Polis would have to affirm the reality of substance and substantial forms. But, instead, he criticizes Fr. Chaberek for holding that individuals of same species have the same substantial form, invoking the previously cited passage from *De Ente et Essentia*:

There is one more point, *i.e.*, Fr. Chaberek's claim that individuals of the same species have "the same substantial form." What is the meaning of this? How can we know when one substantial form is the same as another, given ubiquitous accidental variations? Finally, how does this accord with Aquinas' position, quoted above, that "in the individuals human nature does not have the sort of unity according to which it is some single thing pertaining to all"?<sup>41</sup>

It seems that Polis is interpreting that last sentence from *On Being and Essence* to mean that individual human beings do not have the same substantial form or the same nature.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, I think Polis is confusing having the same *individual* substantial form, with having the same *kind* of substantial form. Indeed, Aquinas is clear that everything in Socrates is individual and therefore Socrates and Plato do not share

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<sup>41</sup> Polis, "The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics," 572.

<sup>42</sup> For Aquinas, when talking about composite substances, nature is not identical to substantial form alone. This is because the essence of a composite substance includes both substantial form and matter. See Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 35. But, clearly, since matter is potentiality, substantial form is the primary and dominant part of the nature of a composite substance.

the same *individual* substantial form or nature.<sup>43</sup> But Aquinas is also clear that Socrates and Plato, and every other human being, have the same kind of nature and so we can truly predicate *human* of Socrates and Plato. Aquinas is able to make sense of all of this because of his existential revolution in metaphysics, which helped him to solve the problem of universals.

The first part of his existential revolution in metaphysics, concerns his insight that being (existence) applies to natures and essences only accidentally. The same is true of unity, which Aquinas holds is convertible with being.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, in *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas argues that human nature in itself, which he calls the nature “considered absolutely,” has no being or unity proper to it. Instead, it is neutral with respect to all kinds of being:

[A] nature or essence can be considered in two ways. First, absolutely, according to its proper meaning. In this sense nothing is true of it except what belongs to it as such; whatever else may be attributed to it, the attribution is false. . . . In a second way a nature or essence can be considered according to the being it has in this or that individual. In this way something is attributed to it accidentally, because of the subject in which it exists, as we say that man is white because Socrates is white, though this does not belong to man insofar as he is man. This nature has a twofold being: one in individual things and the other in the soul, and accidents follow upon the nature because of both beings. In individuals, moreover, the nature has a multiple being corresponding to the diversity of individuals; but none of these beings belongs to the nature from the first point of view, that is to say, when it is considered absolutely. It is false to say that the essence of man . . . [considered absolutely] has being in this individual: [for] if it belonged to man as man to be in this individual it would never exist outside the individual. On the other hand, if it belonged to man as man not to exist in this individual, human nature would never exist in it. It is true to say, however, that it does not belong

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 47.

<sup>44</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 11, a. 1; *De Veritate*, q. XXI, a. 1.

to man as man to exist in this or that individual, or in the soul. So it is clear that the nature of man, considered absolutely, abstracts from every being (*esse*), but in such a way that it prescind[s] from [*i.e.*, excludes] no one of them; and it is the nature considered in this way that we attribute (*praedicatur*) to all individuals.<sup>45</sup>

This passage is important for several reasons. First, it shows the importance of the substance-accident distinction. Human nature considered in itself, or absolutely, abstracts from accidents such as color. Second, as the last line indicates, it is human nature considered absolutely that we predicate of each and every human individual. That is, strictly speaking, we do not predicate “species” of individual human beings. Indeed, a few paragraphs later in *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas says the following.

Because it is human nature absolutely considered that is predicated of Socrates, this nature does not have the character of a species when considered absolutely; this is one of the accidents that accompany it because of the being it has in the intellect. That is why the term “species” is not predicated of Socrates, as though we were to say “Socrates is a species.” This would necessarily happen, however, if the notion of species belonged to man in his individual being in Socrates, or according to his absolute consideration, namely insofar as he is man; for we predicate of Socrates everything that belongs to man as man.<sup>46</sup>

Third, by arguing that existence applies to natures only accidentally, Aquinas was able to unmask as illegitimate the question of whether universals exist in reality or thought alone.<sup>47</sup> As Jorge J. E. Gracia notes, Aquinas’ masterstroke was to reject the metaphysical assumption that existence applies to universals, which was implicit in Porphyry’s framing of the problem in his influential introduction to Aristotle’s *Catego-*

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<sup>45</sup> Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 46–47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>47</sup> For a good discussion of the problem of universals in medieval philosophy, along with a translation of the most important texts, see Paul Vincent Spade, ed. and trans., *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals: Porphyry, Boethius, Abelard, Duns Scotus, Ockham* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1994).

ries.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, by holding that natures, such as *human*, are existentially neutral—in other words, that existence is accidental to them—Aquinas is able to predicate *human* identically of each and every individual human that exists. As Joseph Owens has argued, only a nature that is “completely devoid of being can be predicated of many individuals in thoroughgoing identity with each.”<sup>49</sup>

The other part of Aquinas’ existential revolution in metaphysics concerns his demonstration that existence and essence are really distinct in creatures.<sup>50</sup> This also helps to explain how the human essence or nature can be the same in Socrates and Plato and also the same in the human intellect when a person understands human nature. The point is that, in these cases, the nature is the same—the same in kind, not in individuality—however the act of existence (*esse*) is different. Human nature has a physical act of existence in Socrates and a mental act of existence when a person thinks about human nature.

If Polis is indeed rejecting the view that individuals of the same species have the same substantial form, then I cannot see how Polis can maintain the substance-accident distinction in an objective sense. Substantial form and nature, which are different but related, both concern

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<sup>48</sup> Jorge J. E. Gracia, “Cutting the Gordian Knot of Ontology: Thomas’s Solution to the Problem of Universals,” in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy*, ed. David M. Gallagher (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 35–36.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Houston, Tex.: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 134.

<sup>50</sup> Aquinas discusses his route to the real distinction as follows: “Now it has been shown above (q. 3, a. 4) when treating of the divine simplicity that God is the essentially self-subsisting Being; and also it was shown (q. 11, aa. 3, 4) that subsisting being must be one . . . Therefore all beings apart from God are not their own being [that is, existence and essence are non-identical, or really distinct, in creatures], but are beings by participation” (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 1, reply, trans. Shapcote, 452). For a good discussion of the relationship between the real distinction and the doctrine of participation, see Joseph Owens, “Quiddity and Real Distinction,” *Mediaeval Studies* 27, no. 1 (1965): 16–17.

the properties a being possesses necessarily.<sup>51</sup> For example, the substantial form of living beings accounts for them being alive. In contrast, accidental properties, such as color, are not possessed necessarily. One does not have to have red hair to be human. Without substantial forms or natures in individuals, then, whether a property is viewed as accidental or not is solely left up to the human forming his or her concept of a given species. And this seems to be what Polis argues. He says that different human concepts of a given species can be “equally objective” and that we should try to include as many different perspectives as possible:

Psychological studies have shown that we can only maintain 5–9 “chunks” of information in our working memories. This means that our phantasms cannot represent perceived objects, or even our sensations, exhaustively. So, in abstraction, we fix on some notes of intelligibility to the exclusion of others. In other words, we have universal concepts, such as species and genera, to scale the complexity of nature down to our limited representational capacity. . . . To the extent that individuals choose to fix upon different aspects of being, they will have different, equally objective, conceptual spaces. Wilkins’ twenty-six proposed species definitions is an example. While alternative conceptual spaces may be equally objective, none are exhaustive, because each leaves innumerable notes of intelligibility unactualized. This suggests that we broaden our thinking by including as many perspectives as possible.<sup>52</sup>

Unfortunately, this is a kind of relativism that is incompatible with Aquinas’ epistemology and metaphysics. On the epistemological side, Aquinas agrees that humans struggle to understand the specific differences that divide genera into species. For example, in the *Summa Theologiae* he says, “Substantial differences being unknown to us, or at least unnamed by us, it is sometimes necessary to use accidental differ-

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<sup>51</sup> See note 42 above.

<sup>52</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 575.

ences in the place of substantial; as, for example, we may say that fire is a simple, hot, and dry body: for proper accidents are the effects of substantial forms, and make them known.”<sup>53</sup>

But just because humans, for epistemological reasons, struggle to understand a given species does not mean that the individual members of a given species do not share the same kind of substantial form, or the same nature, as Polis argues. Indeed, Aquinas affirms the existence of substantial forms above. Additionally, Aquinas is clear that only *proper* accidents make substantial forms known. As such, humans cannot use just any kind of accident when trying to understand a given species. However, Polis never seems to distinguish *proper* and *improper* accidents when he says “a sufficient difference in accidents will engender a different species concept.”

On the metaphysical side, Polis’ view is alienated from objective truth insofar as humans are now the measure of species and their demarcations. That is, humans can carve up species in dozens of ways based on any kinds of accidents observable in the world—and such views are held to be “equally objective.” If Polis argued that God is the ultimate ground of natures and species, he could try to avoid this relativism, but he explicitly rejects this position. This leads to the problem of nominalism, which we will examine next.

### **The Problem of Nominalism**

As we have seen, Polis has an epistemological notion of species as *beings of reason* that only exist in the human mind. Based on this, he argues that species “cannot be ‘permanent elements of the universe’.”<sup>54</sup> In making this point, he says that as human populations migrated and

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<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 29, a. 1, ad 3, trans. Shapcote, 309.

<sup>54</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 573.

encountered “new flora and fauna . . . new species concepts formed.”<sup>55</sup> But, then he adds that “Not long after the last woolly mammoth died, humans forgot their species until its fossil remains were discovered. So species concepts come to be and pass away. Any permanence they have is potential rather than actual.”<sup>56</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Polis wants to avoid nominalism, and he wants to base species on the properties of populations in reality. However, by reducing species to human concepts, and by denying that natures and species are ultimately grounded in God, his position results in a kind of nominalism. He tries to avoid this conclusion by arguing that “Nominalism maintains that universals are mere names, reflecting no underlying reality.”<sup>57</sup> But this argument is unsuccessful for two reasons.

First, by denying that individual members of a given species have the same kind of substantial form, and by allowing humans to focus on different properties that lead to different conceptions of a given species that are “equally objective,” Polis has gutted most of the “underlying reality.”

Second, apart from a few thinkers, such as Roscelin, nominalists in the Middle Ages did not hold that universals were mere names or words. It was far more common for nominalists to hold that universals were concepts in the mind and that they were referred to by words. For example, William of Ockham says that the subject of a scientific proposition “is a mental content (*intentio*) or a word.”<sup>58</sup> In order to clarify his position, he discusses the following objection: “Since philosophy . . . is a real science, it must be about real things [*i.e.*, things existing outside

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

<sup>58</sup> William of Ockham, *Prologus in Expositionem super vii libros Physicorum*, in *Ockham: Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., revised by Stephen F. Brown (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1990), 12.

of the mind]. Consequently, it is not about mental contents.”<sup>59</sup> To this objection he replies: “A real science is not about things, but about mental contents standing for things.”<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, Polis’ view of a species as an *ens rationis* is similar to Ockham’s view of mental contents.<sup>61</sup> And by denying that individuals of the same species have the same kind of substantial form, the only thing that is common to individual members of a species, for Polis, is the concept of that species in the human intellect. This is very similar to Ockham who says “Properly speaking, the science of nature is about mental contents which are common to such things, and which stand precisely for such things in many propositions.”<sup>62</sup>

Unlike Polis, Aquinas can avoid nominalism and defend moderate realism for two reasons—first, because of his existential insights, discussed earlier, and, second, because God, as exemplar cause, is the ultimate ground of the natures of things.<sup>63</sup> With respect to the first reason, the abstracted nature, upon which the notion of species is dependent, can be considered as existentially neutral, which allows it to be predicated of all the individual members of the species. This is further strengthened by Aquinas’ demonstration of the real distinction between

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Polis’ view of a species as an *ens rationis* is also similar to John Locke’s nominal essences: “I would not here be thought to forget, much less to deny, that Nature in the Production of Things, makes several of them alike: there is nothing more obvious, especially in the Races of Animals, and all Things propagated by Seed. But yet, I think, we may say, the *sorting* of them under Names, is the *Workmanship of the Understanding*, taking occasion from the *similitude* it observes amongst them, to make abstract general *Ideas*, and set them up in the mind, with Names annexed to them, as Patterns, or Forms, (for in that sence the word Form has a very proper signification,) to which, as particular Things existing are found to agree, so they come to be of that Species, have that Denomination, or are put into that *Classis*.” John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 415.

<sup>62</sup> Ockham, *Prologus in Expositionem super vii libros Physicorum*, 11.

<sup>63</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 15, a. 3, reply; I, q. 44, a. 3, reply.

being and essence in creatures, which helps explain how the same kind of essence or nature can exist in multiple instances and how it can acquire different kinds of existence (mental and physical). Taken together, these insights allow individual members of a given species to be the proximate ground from which we abstract our notion of the nature in question and add to it the accident of species. Thus, for Aquinas, it is the *nature* that is common, not merely the *concept of the nature*, as for Polis.

With respect to the second reason, God provides an eternal and unchanging ground for all natures and species. The woolly mammoth might pass away, and human concepts of the woolly mammoth might pass away, but God eternally knows the nature of the woolly mammoth. As Aquinas says in *De Veritate*, “Even if there were no human intellects, things could be said to be true because of their relation to the divine intellect.”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, because God is the ultimate ground of the natures of things, which bypasses the need for any concepts in a human mind, Aquinas’ position is a kind of realism, not nominalism.

However, Polis thinks that God cannot be the ultimate ground of species for two reasons. First, because he thinks that univocal predication is not possible of divine ideas and human conceptions of species, and second, because God is absolutely simple and thus no multiplicity of ideas can exist in God:

A possible ground for permanence might be neoplatonic exemplar ideas, *e.g.*, Augustine’s eternal types encountered earlier. This seems to be what Fr. Chaberek has in mind, for he says, “even if all chickens in the world were destroyed, there still exists the idea of a chicken in the divine intellect . . .” Of course, this is not a moderate realist position, but some version of neoplatonic extreme realism. While St. Thomas affirms divine types, his position does not support a univocal “idea of a chicken in the divine intellect.” Univocal predication is critical here. Primarily,

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<sup>64</sup> Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. I, a. 2, reply, trans. Mulligan, 11.

“species” refers to an *ens rationis* in the human mind. If that is not univocally what is in God’s mind, we can not unqualifiedly say that there “exists the idea of a chicken in the divine intellect.” Since we can only speak of God analogically, His exemplar “ideas” are only analogous to human ideas . . . While it may seem from this that there are distinct ideas for each species in God’s mind, that is impossible, for there are no distinctions in God. Rather, “God is the similitude of all things according to His essence; therefore an idea in God is identical with His essence.” Of course, God’s essence is His existence and absolutely simple. Whether God were to create ensembles of identical creatures, or make each organism *sui generis*, He would fully intend each creation and so have exemplar ideas in Aquinas’ sense. Thus, the Angelic Doctor’s position on types or exemplar ideas provides neither support for universal ideas in God, nor an objection to the evolution of species.<sup>65</sup>

However, Polis is simply wrong, in several ways, about Aquinas’ metaphysics in the above excerpt. First, there is no reason to talk about “extreme realism” here. Extreme realism is usually associated with Plato and Subsistent Ideas, and this is a view that Aquinas rejects.<sup>66</sup> Second, Polis misconceives of the Divine ideas in the mind of God. With respect to God’s simplicity, talking about Divine ideas in God that correspond to the natures of creatures should not be taken literally as a multiplicity, but analogously. Perhaps no one has expressed this more eloquently than Fr. John F. Wippel, who wrote the following.

A divine idea is not something which is really distinct from the divine essence. It is simply a way in which God views himself, that is, his essence, as capable of being imitated by a creature.

<sup>65</sup> Polis, “The Compatibility of Evolution and Classical Metaphysics,” 573–574.

<sup>66</sup> “It was the difficulty of this problem that drove Plato to posit Ideas. Believing that all sensible things were always in flux, as Cratylus and Heraclitus taught, he thought there can be no science concerning them, as the Philosopher says in the *Metaphysics*. So he claimed that there were substances separated from the sense world, which might serve as the objects of science and of definitions. *He [Plato] made this mistake* because he failed to distinguish what is essential from what is accidental.” Aquinas, *Expositio super Librum Boethii de Trinitate*, 27; my emphasis.

And when conjoined with a decision on the part of the divine will, a divine idea becomes productive, resulting in the creation of an actually existing creature at some point in time. But if a divine idea is really identical with the divine essence, so is a divine “intention” (decision) to produce a given creature. Neither introduces real multiplicity or composition into God.<sup>67</sup>

With respect to the issue of univocal predication, Polis believes a species “primarily” refers “to an *ens rationis* in the human mind,” and therefore he thinks that concepts univocal to human concepts must exist in God’s mind for God to be the ultimate ground of species. And, as we have seen above, Polis tries to invoke Aquinas’ teaching on analogy to argue against this possibility, saying: “‘species’ refers to an *ens rationis* in the human mind. If that is not univocally what is in God’s mind, we can not unqualifiedly say that there ‘exists the idea of a chicken in the divine intellect’.”

However, Polis’ use of analogy is inappropriate here. It is true that nothing can be predicated of creatures and God univocally.<sup>68</sup> But, nevertheless, God is the metaphysical ground of all species because God is the ultimate cause of them and because these species are just different ways of (imperfectly) imitating God. In addition, God does not have to know species in the same way humans do for God to be the ultimate ground of biological species. As Aquinas explains, God can know the different species of things in a way that does not destroy God’s simplicity:

[I]t must needs be that in the divine mind there are the proper ideas of all things . . . Now it can easily be seen how this is not repugnant to the simplicity of God, if we consider that the idea of a work is in the mind of the operator as that which is understood, and not as the image whereby he understands, which is a form that makes the intellect in act. For the form of the house in the

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<sup>67</sup> John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>68</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 13, a. 5, reply.

mind of the builder, is something understood by him, to the likeness of which he forms the house in matter. Now, it is not repugnant to the simplicity of the divine mind that it understand many things; though it would be repugnant to its simplicity were His understanding to be formed by a plurality of images. Hence many ideas exist in the divine mind, as things understood by it; as can be proved thus. Inasmuch as He knows His own essence perfectly, He knows it according to every mode in which it can be known. Now it can be known not only as it is in itself, but as it can be participated in by creatures according to some degree of likeness. But every creature has its own proper species, according to which it participates in some degree in likeness to the divine essence. So far, therefore, as God knows His essence as capable of such imitation by any creature, He knows it as the particular type and idea of that creature; and in like manner as regards other creatures. So it is clear that God understands many particular types of things and these are many ideas.<sup>69</sup>

So, contrary to Polis, God is the eternal metaphysical ground or foundation of the natures of creatures, and therefore also of biological species. Humans, as finite beings, and relying on the senses and abstraction, can come to know the species of things to some degree, but God's perfect and eternal understanding of the species of things is the measure of truth with respect to human understanding of the species of things. For this reason, it is a mistake, as Polis does, to identify the ultimate ground of the species of creatures with the imperfect conception of these species that exist in the human intellect.

In addition, and more seriously, by denying that God has universal ideas of the natures and species of creatures, Polis' view is incompatible with God's perfection. As Aquinas explains, "God could not be said to know Himself perfectly unless He knew all the ways in which His own perfection can be shared by others. Neither could He know the very nature of being perfectly, unless He knew all modes of being. Hence it is manifest that God knows all things with proper knowledge,

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, I, q. 15, a. 2, reply, trans. Shapcote, 175.

in their distinction from each other.”<sup>70</sup> As such, Polis’ inability to account for God’s perfection, by itself, is enough to disqualify his view as being compatible with Thomistic metaphysics.

But why does Polis have such a problem with Divine ideas? It seems he holds that Divine ideas in God are incompatible with the evolution of biological species over time. One clue to this was when he said above that “the Angelic Doctor’s position on types or exemplar ideas provides neither support for universal ideas in God, nor an objection to the evolution of species.” Another clue comes from a passage in his book, *God, Science, and Mind: The Irrationality of Naturalism*:

Contrary to Aquinas, universal ideas, including exemplars, have no place in the Divine Mind. God knows creation by knowing His act of maintaining it in being, not mediately via ideas incompatible with Divine Simplicity. Consequently, God has no generic “design plans” like those of human designers. God knows and creates singulars, not universals . . . By eliminating exemplar ideas or fixed “species designs,” we eliminate the philosophical rationale for fixed species. Since God knows and creates each being in its unique singularity, there is no theological difficulty in members of a species varying at any epoch or evolving over time.<sup>71</sup>

However, Polis is mistaken to think that Divine ideas and the biological evolution of species are incompatible. God’s understanding is eternal.<sup>72</sup> That is, God knows all the species that have existed in the world and all that will ever exist. God knows, perfectly, for a given species which properties are accidental and which are essential—even if we, as humans, do not. And God knows perfectly the historical evolutionary relationships among species. None of this is incompatible with God using secondary causes to bring about new species. And none of this is incompatible with scientific discoveries in evolutionary biology.

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 14, 6, reply, trans. Shapcote, 155.

<sup>71</sup> Polis, *God, Science and Mind*, viii.

<sup>72</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 10.

In addition, nothing discovered by evolutionary biologists precludes evolution having a goal, such as the production of human beings. Indeed, Polis affirms that the human rational soul cannot evolve through changes in matter, and yet God saw fit to unite such a soul to living physical bodies. This is compatible with God having a goal for evolution—a view that biologists cannot rule out *a priori*, as noted by the International Theological Commission, who based their argument on Aquinas’s metaphysics:

[T]rue contingency in the created order is not incompatible with a purposeful divine providence. Divine causality and created causality radically differ in kind and not only in degree. Thus, even the outcome of a truly contingent natural process can nonetheless fall within God’s providential plan for creation. According to St. Thomas Aquinas: “The effect of divine providence is not only that things should happen somehow, but that they should happen either by necessity or by contingency. Therefore, whatsoever divine providence ordains to happen infallibly and of necessity happens infallibly and of necessity; and that happens from contingency, which the divine providence conceives to happen from contingency” (*Summa Theologiae*, I, 22, 4 ad 1). In the Catholic perspective, neo-Darwinians who adduce random genetic variation and natural selection as evidence that the process of evolution is absolutely unguided are straying beyond what can be demonstrated by science. Divine causality can be active in a process that is both contingent and guided. Any evolutionary mechanism that is contingent can only be contingent because God made it so. An unguided evolutionary process—one that falls outside the bounds of divine providence—simply cannot exist because “the causality of God, Who is the first agent, extends to all being, not only as to constituent principles of species, but also as to the individualizing principles. . . . It necessarily follows that all things, inasmuch as they participate in existence [*esse*], must likewise be subject to divine providence” (*Summa Theologiae* I, 22, 2).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> International Theological Commission, “Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God,” 2004, chapter 3, 1, 69; available online—see the section *References* for details.

## Conclusion

In the end, Polis' defense of the compatibility of biological evolution and Aquinas' metaphysics, while well-intended, is unfaithful to the Thomistic tradition of metaphysics. He misunderstands Aquinas' division of the sciences and the special role that metaphysics has in the hierarchical structure of the sciences. His concept of a species as an *ens rationis* constructed by human choice, and his rejection of substantial forms, is incompatible with the substance-accident distinction and leads to a kind of relativism. Polis fails to grasp the dependence of the notion of species on the abstracted nature and its relation to Aquinas' existential insights about the nature considered absolutely and the real distinction between being and essence in creatures. By denying that God is the ultimate ground of biological species, and by making the human intellect the ultimate ground of them, Polis puts forth a kind of nominalism that is incompatible with the moderate realism of Aquinas. More seriously, Polis' rejection of Aquinas' teaching on Divine ideas, implies that God lacks universal ideas of the natures and species of creatures, which entails that God's knowledge, and therefore God Himself, is imperfect. This, by itself, is enough to disqualify his defense as Thomistic.

Certainly, the relationship between biological evolution and Thomistic metaphysics is a difficult and complex one. It is the kind of topic that requires interdisciplinary dialogue between scientists and metaphysicians. Although I have barely scratched the surface, I hope this essay has been helpful in pointing the way to a better defense of the compatibility of biological evolution and Thomistic metaphysics. I certainly agree with Polis that such a defense is needed. But while we agree on the destination, we disagree on how to get there.

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### The Compatibility of Evolution and Thomistic Metaphysics: A Reply to Dennis F. Polis

#### SUMMARY

In this article the author discusses Dennis F. Polis' defense of the compatibility of biological evolution and Thomistic metaphysics. Some of Polis' methodological and metaphysical arguments are examined and it is explained why they are unfaithful to the Thomistic tradition of metaphysics. There is a discussion of why metaphysics can, within certain parameters, critique the science of evolutionary biology, as well as a discussion of the role of metaphysics in the hierarchy of the sciences. The relationship between biological species to the notion of species in philosophy, including related metaphysical topics, such as essences and Divine ideas in God, is discussed. It is determined that Polis' view suffers from a kind of relativism and nominalism that is incompatible with the moderate realism of Aquinas. Some of Aquinas' key existential insights in metaphysics are discussed in this context as well. In addition to being corrective, this essay helps point the way to a better defense of the compatibility of biological evolution and Thomistic metaphysics.

#### KEYWORDS

God, Thomism, Thomas Aquinas, Thomistic metaphysics, natural philosophy, biological evolution, theistic evolution, science, scientific methodology, relationship of the sciences, abstraction, species, nature, essence, Divine idea, exemplar cause, *ens rationis*, substance, accident, substantial form, nature considered absolutely, real distinction between being and essence, relativism, realism, nominalism.

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## The Perennial Wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Great Books Tradition

It is sometimes said that Aquinas’s contribution to the philosophy of education was his development of a notion of intellectual discipline through his powerful philosophical and theological enterprise,<sup>1</sup> while he doesn’t develop systematic methods or forms of pedagogy, nor does he define a liberal education with the rigor and scope of a John Henry Newman.<sup>2</sup> Aquinas’s thoughts on teaching and learning, including the necessary virtues and how grace informs the process, in some ways anticipate Newman’s ideal of a general or liberal education and the philosophic habit of mind that results from it. Both knew that any activity is to be pursued in a way appropriate to its end or purpose,<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> “Education: Thomist Philosophy,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Idea of a University* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1959), John Henry Cardinal Newman describes liberal education in terms of its contrast to servile education and in terms of the cultivation of a “philosophical habit of mind” involving “freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom” (Disc. 5.1).

<sup>3</sup> In discussing the teaching tools of the medieval *quaestio* and *disputatio*, Aquinas notes that “any activity is to be pursued in a way appropriate to its purpose” (*Quaestiones Quodlibetales* IV, q. 9, a. 3: “quilibet actus exequendus est secundum quod convenit ad suum finem” [ed. P. Fr. Raymundi Spiazzi (Marietti: Romae, 1949), 83]). Cf. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Disc. 5.2: “[Liberal education] has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward. And if this is true of

both claimed a transcendent end of man, which practically speaking, puts education under the aegis of Mary, whom Aquinas calls “the mother of true wisdom,” and “the scholar or disciple of the Child.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Aquinas’s views on teaching and learning are developed in the theological context of creation and redemption, and against the background of Jesus the teacher at various stages of His earthly life, and in his various Prologues, which give overviews of works’ structures and purposes.<sup>5</sup> And as Aquinas says in *Puer Iesus*, his Sermon on the *Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple*, where our Lord is presented as a model for teenagers, we wonder at eternity advancing in age, at truth advancing in wisdom, and are amazed in finding that we are to advance in grace with Grace Himself.<sup>6</sup>

My aim is to show how Thomas’s thoughts on education, permeated as they are with his metaphysics and theology, indicate the fittingness of matching the perennial wisdom with the Great Books tradition used in classical liberal arts education. Both are characterized by a communal inquiry, the object of which is the attainment of truth, under the guidance of the imagination, the heart, and reason, and both are complementary instruments of the special Providence by which we direct

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all knowledge, it is true also of that special Philosophy, which I have made to consist in a comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearings, and their respective values . . .”

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected out of the Works of the Fathers*, vol. III, part I: *St. Luke* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1843), 103. Cf. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Disc. 5.10: “We attain to heaven by using this world well, though it is to pass away; we perfect our nature, not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own.”

<sup>5</sup> For an indication of some of the contexts and discussions of education in terms of teaching in Aquinas, see Vivian Boland, “St. Thomas’s sermon *Puer Iesus*: a neglected source for his understanding of teaching and learning,” *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1016 (July 2007): 457–470.

<sup>6</sup> Vivian Boland, *Puer Iesus*, part 2 (Sermon), in *Thomas Aquinas: The Academic Sermons*, trans. Mark-Robin Hoogland (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 88.

one another to our proper end. The “fitting order of learning,” for him consists in logic, mathematics, natural science, moral science, and metaphysics, in that order, aiming at the study of first causes or divine science, which is the end of man.<sup>7</sup> But where do the points of contact lie, and how should the perennial wisdom both govern yet be informed by the search for truth through the variety of narratives comprising the Great Books?

It’s a basic metaphysical fact that without a thing’s essential principles, it cannot be.<sup>8</sup> What are the essential principles of a Christian liberal education? While answers to this are neither novel, nor simplistic, they need revisiting in the wake of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s lament over the de-Hellenization of the West,<sup>9</sup> and, by implication of the Church and its organs of teaching. Combining key elements of Aquinas’s thought with the interdisciplinary scope that a program of Great Books of the West provides, I will show, the directed impulsion and the fruitful exchange or “swing” needed in liberal education such as Cardinal Newman, for example, envisioned it, in his *Idea of a University* 166 years ago.

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super librum De causis expositio*, Prooemium, no. 5–6: “It must be, therefore, that the ultimate happiness of man which can be had in this life, consists in the consideration of the first causes—since that least which can be known of them, is more lovable and noble than all those things which are able to be known of lower things, as is evident from the words of the Philosopher in *De Partibus Animalium* I (644b32–34). Now accordingly as this knowledge is perfected in us after this life, a man is made perfectly happy, according to the words of the Gospel: *This is eternal life, that they should know thee, the true, living God.*” Available online—see the section *References* for details. Cf. *S.Th.*, I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 1; I–II, q. 66, a. 5, ad 3; II–II, q. 180, a. 7, ad 3.

<sup>8</sup> *S.C.G.*, II, cap. 30, on the principles as necessary components in things.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Faith, Reason, and the University: Memories and Reflections,” Regensburg Address (Sept. 12, 2006): “The thesis that the critically purified Greek heritage forms an integral part of Christian faith has been countered by the call for a de-Hellenization of Christianity—a call which has more and more dominated theological discussions since the beginning of the modern age . . .” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

The Great Books are the best expressions of the foundations of Western culture, and according to Adler, they have perennial significance, inexhaustible content, and broad relevance to the ideas that have formed Western civilization.<sup>10</sup> Understanding the nature of an exchange between Aquinas and the Great Books involves discerning ways in which Aquinas's thoughts on teaching and learning can inform the Great Books' "dialectical" method. It also involves understanding how Thomas's allegiance to truth, while it might be taught in a doctrinal way, under what Adler calls the "doctrinal" method, is in fact fitted well to the Great Books tradition's "dialectical method."<sup>11</sup> As Adler puts it, "finding contradictions in a book" (and between books) "puts one on the highroad to the pursuit of truth."<sup>12</sup> In this he follows Aristotle, who noted that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, and while we do not collectively fail, everyone says something true about the nature of things.<sup>13</sup> From Chenu's landmark<sup>14</sup> to Jordan's work on

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<sup>10</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, "Selecting Works for the 1990 Edition of the Great Books of the Western World." Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>11</sup> Mortimer Adler contrasts the "doctrinal" and "dialectical" approaches to the Great Books in his "Great Books, Democracy, and Truth," in his *Reforming Education* (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1989), xxvii–xxviii: "The doctrinal method is an attempt to read as much truth as possible (and no errors) into the work of a particular author, usually devising a special interpretation, or by discovering the special secret of an author's intention . . . it is the opposite of the right method to be used in conducting great books seminars in schools and colleges where the aim is learning to think and the pursuit of truth . . . The doctrinal teaching of disciples enables them to learn what the master thinks. The dialectical teaching of students enables them to think for themselves . . . the doctrinal method is most appropriate in reading a sacred book . . . But it is totally inappropriate in liberal education . . ." Here, Adler cites Leo Strauss as an exemplar of the doctrinal method.

<sup>12</sup> Adler, "Great Books, Democracy and Truth," in *Reforming Education*, xxvi.

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk. II, 993a30–b4. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>14</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1950), translated by Albert M. Landry and Dominic Hughes as *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas* (Chicago: Regnery, 1964).

the plurality of discourses,<sup>15</sup> and much of *Ressourcement* Thomism, we are reminded of the wide berth Aquinas gives to the pedagogy of error in his *quaestio* and *disputatio* method.<sup>16</sup>

Adler's teaching of the Great Books uses a method of discursive rationality that is familiar to Thomists. We are rational, in opposition to purely intuitive, Aquinas says, due to the weakness of our "intellectual light." The way of reason is from what is known to what is unknown as from effect to cause, and this process stems from our being incarnate minds, dependent on lowly sense experience.<sup>17</sup>

In this regard, discussions on the broad insights about human nature expressed in the Great Books can bridge the distance set up by enthusiasts of "criticism" and the objects of their inquiry. In the academy, texts are often selected according to their perceived ideological use. Relativistic, often anti-theoretical criticism perpetuates the view that the task of an academic discipline is not to find out about reality, but rather to measure how we *speak* about reality.<sup>18</sup> Opposed to this is

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<sup>15</sup> Mark D. Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Adler, "Great Books, Democracy, and Truth," in *Reforming Education*, xxiii: "I think it necessary to examine truth and error in the great books, and their bearing on the proper way to conduct discussions of them, which is the dialectical method, not the doctrinal style employed by Allan Bloom and his teacher, Leo Strauss."

<sup>17</sup> Aquinas, *In 2 Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 6; *S.Th.*, I, q. 58, a. 3, for example. Cf. Jan Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 194.

<sup>18</sup> The turn to subjectivity in academic disciplines affects the sciences as much as it does the humanities. With the rise of quantum physics, the distance between the observer and the observed and the claim to objectivity that this implies, is replaced by the "uncertainty principle" of Heisenberg. In this spirit, academics often pride themselves in their presumed aversion to tradition, theory, and the speculative intellect. Yet even before Alasdair MacIntyre's insights concerning the inescapability of tradition in the discipline of philosophy (especially ethics), Étienne Gilson argued against the absurdity of a traditionless and thus "impartial" perspective, built on the sands of subjectivism. In the medieval West, for example, there was no *ex nihilo* truth invented by any one person or nationality. Rather, the plurality of intellectual cultures unified through receiving a preceding tradition and intellectual context. See Étienne Gilson, "Medieval Universal-

the discipline of the Great Books, which bypasses what Adler calls the more “sophistic” and scholarly approach which aims exclusively at understanding and critiquing the author. In contrast, Great Books practitioners cast their net much deeper and wider, adopting what Adler calls the “philosophical” approach, which aims at sifting the truth from the errors found in a text, as it is informed (or not) by the universal experiences that define human nature.<sup>19</sup> In this, they affirm what Gilson calls the “sound rationalism” of the Greeks, who affirmed that the human mind is right only when it conforms to reality.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to reckoning with the roles of realism and the sound rationalism based on our common human nature, a description of the alliance between the Great Books and Aquinas must also account for the groundswell of objections and misunderstandings about an education by way of Great Books. Reversing what Robert Hutchins once referred to as the education of “rudderless rabbits” who roam freely through the enclosed field of the modern university, nibbling idly on poisonous weeds, or who sail on a sea of inexperience “without chart, compass, or even rudder,”<sup>21</sup> entails clearing the ground of objections.

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ism and Its Present Value,” in *The Wisdom of Catholicism*, ed. Anton Pegis (New York: Random House, 1949), 899.

<sup>19</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, “Two Approaches to the Authors of the Great Books,” in *The Great Ideas Today: 1986*, ed. Mortimer Adler (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1986), 181–182. Yet, Adler is aware of the benefits of a scholarly approach to the Great Books, as well. He notes that a focus on the intentions and expressions of a particular author will require studying not just one, but his entire corpus, and that acquiring a scholarly knowledge of a work (its history, reception, interpretations) serves as a beneficial prelude to wrestling with the philosophical content and implications of it (*ibid.*, 181). The danger, however, in emphasizing the scholarly over the philosophical approach is the easy substitution of coherence and consistency for the deeper and more difficult truths (or falsehoods) in a text.

<sup>20</sup> Gilson, “Medieval Universalism and Its Present Value,” 905.

<sup>21</sup> Robert M. Hutchins, *Education for Freedom* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 90.

Forging the Great Books/Aquinas alliance also involves an adept handling of the tools of learning, namely, knowing the place of the intellect, the will, and the passions, and the key principles of the education of free minds. Interweaving insights about man and his end with the Western treasury of literature, history, philosophy and science provided in the Great Books tradition, we will see, furthers Newman's ideal of the "philosophic habit" cultivated by a good liberal education—something distinct from knowing a particular area of study or discipline, and closer to what he calls a "view" of the world grounded in the reality of things.<sup>22</sup>

In the beginning of his widely known *De remediis utriusque fortunae* ("On Remedies for Good and Bad Fortune"), Petrarch says that nothing helps one relieve the burden of the human condition more than conversations with wise men, and "the continual reading of the records of noble writers which are a living fountain of sane counsel on the earth."<sup>23</sup> The ancient writers are spoken of as guides in a storm:

In the midst of souls' perpetual billows, like so many bright stars affixed to the firmament of truth, like so many pleasant and happy breezes, so many industrious and skillful sailors, they show us the port of peace, move there the slow sails of our will, and guide the rudder of the wavering soul until, tossed about by such storms, it at last steadies and tempers its deliberations.<sup>24</sup>

To use another analogy from the active life, the Aquinas/Great Books alliance has its parallel in the balanced achievement of harmony and direction that a horseman experiences through the classical art of dressage. A robust liberal arts education, arguably, consists in a delicate harmony between sound philosophical principles and the spiritual free

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<sup>22</sup> See note 3 above.

<sup>23</sup> Petrarch, quoted in Robert E. Proctor, *Education's Great Amnesia: Reconsidering the Humanities from Petrarch to Freud* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988), 151. Petrarch died in 1374.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

play unleashed by contemplation of, and conversations on the literature, philosophy, history, religion and science found in the Great Books. Newman would agree with the analogy which lends motion and play to the tranquil study of ideas emerging from the dialectic between the Great Books and philosophical rigor.<sup>25</sup> The contact and sympathy between teacher and student, and between the two traditions, mirrors the silent exchange between horse and rider in what Germans call *Schwung*—the relaxed, supple and free swinging momentum of energy which is the goal of riding, the way the horse should go along by the gentle direction of the rider’s aids.<sup>26</sup>

How this unspoken dialogue resembles the student’s own internal conversation and his spoken dialogue with others, those reflections and exchanges of mind and heart that form a liberal education in Newman’s sense, lies partly in the meaning we can assign to “motion” as educators. One mark of a mind formed by a liberal education is its entering into the mobility or interconnection and direction of ideas, which, if they are the fruit of union with reality and not phantoms, turn the hu-

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Disc. 7.7: “In the cultivation of literature is found that common link, which, among the higher and middling departments of life, unites the jarring sects and subdivisions into one interest, which supplies common topics, and kindles common feelings, unmixed with those narrow prejudices with which all professions are more or less infected. The knowledge, too, which is thus acquired, expands and enlarges the mind, excites its faculties, and calls those limbs and muscles into freer exercise which, by too constant use in one direction, not only acquire an illiberal air, but are apt also to lose somewhat of their native play and energy. And thus, without directly qualifying a man for any of the employments of life, it enriches and ennobles all. Without teaching him the peculiar business of any one office or calling, it enables him to act his part in each of them with better grace and more elevated carriage . . .”

<sup>26</sup> Walter Zettl, *Dressage in Harmony: From Basic to Grand Prix* (Boonsboro, Md.: Half Halt Press, 1998), 11, 13: “In German, we use the word *Schwung* to describe the proper forward movement of the horse. It is like a swing arcing forward. The concept includes swinging through the back and a powerful elasticity of the steps . . . It requires a soft, giving hand that keeps connection with the mouth . . . Only when the horse has *Schwung* can one ride in a relaxed rhythm, with contact, supple, straight and collected.”

man person to his proper end. Just as the horse's energy, if unblocked, relaxed, and free, moves from his powerful hindquarters towards the reins and back into the rider's hands, there to be gently channeled, so the rich and energizing content of the Great Books naturally propels a young person's reasoning by furnishing his imagination with examples and ideals.

Through conversation among friends, ideas are, as Newman said, pushed up to their principles, but only after being ruminated on by the heart, which is then lightly directed by a kind of collaborative reason. Eventually, the student gains a worldview—not a set of facts or information, and not Newman's vice of "viewiness," a kind of parroting of theories without experience or love, but a "view" of things, a philosophical habit.<sup>27</sup> And back to riding for a moment—without the relaxed momentum of *Schwung*, harmony, impulsion, and grace are lost,<sup>28</sup> and riding becomes the job of completing school figures, or circles, corners, and turns, on a map. So, without the balance and engagement of sound principles with the breath of exempla breathed in the literary word, the historical situation, or the struggle of imagination, liberal education becomes merely a series of propositions and theories that gorge the memory without moving the will or touching the heart, in the end, a malle-

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<sup>27</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Preface: "When the intellect has once been properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things, it will display its powers with more or less effect according to its particular quality and capacity in the individual. In the case of most men it makes itself felt in the good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour, self-command, and steadiness of view, which characterize it . . . Someone, however, will perhaps object that I am but advocating that spurious philosophism, which shows itself in what, for want of a word, I may call 'viewiness', when I speak so much of the formation, and consequent grasp, of the intellect. It may be said that the theory of University Education, which I have been delineating, if acted upon, would teach youths nothing soundly or thoroughly, and would dismiss them with nothing better than brilliant general views about all things whatever . . ."

<sup>28</sup> Zettl, *Dressage in Harmony*, 5: "The goal of all dressage riding should be to bring the horse and rider together in harmony. By harmony, I mean a oneness of balance, purpose and athletic expression . . . harmony . . . requires sensitive communication . . ."

able tool in the hands of clever agendas that conceal both ignorance and the truth.

Further, the exchange of teaching and learning in Aquinas is one dominated by a form of friendship, since it is grounded in trust and a common love. Forming a person by a communal inquiry into the great ideas not only grounds him in the virtues of study, but by reversing the fragmentation of the modern self, builds an alternative to the false and narcissistic intellectual community of anti-civilization. A community of participation, then, is formed by the classical therapies of commitment which know the disorienting therapy of the modern self for what it is, namely one which MacIntyre tells us “knows no other morality than the expression of its own desires and principles.”<sup>29</sup> Authentic community is built on *universal* experiences, which defy the Humean vision of the mind as a kind of theatre in which an infinite variety of perceptions make their appearance, then pass into nothingness, without identity, order, or lasting effect.<sup>30</sup>

### **Education and the Order of Providence**

Aquinas develops his thoughts on teaching and learning, interestingly, within a theological context of the divine and angelic minds, while considering the order of the universe. At the beginning of *Contra Gentiles*,<sup>31</sup> the pursuit and teaching of wisdom is linked to the order of Providence by an argument that the end of creation itself is truth, because its origin is mind. The ultimate end of the universe, he argues, must be “the good of an intellect—or truth” since the end of a thing is

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<sup>29</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 68.

<sup>30</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), bk. I, part IV, section 6: “Of Personal Identity,” 252–253.

<sup>31</sup> *S.C.G.*, I, cap. 1.

intended by its author, and the first mover is an intellect. Creation itself is God's first form of teaching, then and created minds participate in the contemplation and speech about that truth in teaching.

The order of providence is not that of a deist watchmaker but one in which God governs and guides things in specific ways,<sup>32</sup> conserving them in being and giving them powers by which they affect other creatures. Angels can enlighten humans,<sup>33</sup> interfere with our senses and imagination,<sup>34</sup> but cannot change our will.<sup>35</sup> Man, a participant in providence,<sup>36</sup> cooperates with God's plan in understanding and freedom, and men can teach another by providing the help of propositions and examples, and by pointing out to each other the order of principles to conclusions, which is a kind of strengthening of our power to know.<sup>37</sup> In another way, he can reveal to others, including angels, the secrets of his heart, while in their preaching, the apostle taught the angels some divine mysteries.<sup>38</sup>

God also providentially gives forms their powers to reach their ends, and permits some creatures a share in conducting other creatures to their ends. The power of knowing is not given to an agent beyond us, as Averroists would have it in the one world intellect, nor is it merely the power of remembering, as Plato had it in his view that our souls are really sleeping angels,<sup>39</sup> for these approaches deny the gratuitous quality of providence either by misconceiving our place in things, or by emp-

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<sup>32</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 103–104.

<sup>33</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 111, a. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 111, a. 3–4.

<sup>35</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 111, a. 2.

<sup>36</sup> *S.Th.*, I–II, q. 91, a. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 117, a. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 117, a. 2.

<sup>39</sup> On this description of Plato's view, see Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1943), 30.

tying out empirical experience of its value.<sup>40</sup> Thomas's idea of teaching as a tool of providence stems from his idea of just what "acquiring knowledge" means. All knowledge, he tells us in *De Veritate*,<sup>41</sup> is derived from general pre-existing principles in us (*primae conceptiones intellectus*), namely, our understanding of being and unity. These principles exist in us in the active sense, which allows us to acquire knowledge independently, through discovery. Learning by instruction occurs when an external agent assists nature, in a way analogous to medicine, which effects a cure by strengthening nature. So also, the student is led to his proper end by the teacher, who causes knowledge in him by assisting his own natural reason. This occurs through "setting before the pupil signs of intelligible things" by which he comes to know,<sup>42</sup> where the teacher is a ministerial agent in the art cooperating with nature.<sup>43</sup>

The theological dimension of the act of teaching and learning goes beyond the recognition that the end of the universe is truth. Because the natural principles of knowing are implanted in us by God as a reflection of the uncreated truth, God alone teaches interiorly and principally, just as nature alone heals interiorly and principally.<sup>44</sup> The human teacher is an artist, showing in others the process by which he himself acquired knowledge of the unknown, and he is one who waits

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<sup>40</sup> On this, see, e.g., Vivian Boland, "The Healing Work of Teaching: Thomas Aquinas and Education," in *Towards the Intelligent Use of Liberty: Dominican Approaches to Education*, ed. Gabrielle Kelly and Kevin Saunders (Adelaide, Australia: ATF Press, 2014), 33f., and Vivian Boland, "Truth, Knowledge and Communication: Thomas Aquinas on the Mystery of Teaching," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 3 (2006): 292–293.

<sup>41</sup> *De Ver.*, q. 11, a. 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 11, a. 1, ad 11.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 30.

<sup>44</sup> *De Ver.*, q. 11, a. 1.

on an unquantifiable mystery intrinsic to the awakening of insight in those sparked by love.<sup>45</sup>

The intimacy of teacher and student may be an instance of instrumental causality, but also has the mark of friendship, which, according to Aquinas, involves the sharing of one's secrets. The teacher's words, he says, are "more proximately disposed to cause knowledge [even] than things outside the soul."<sup>46</sup> As teachers of this kind, the Great Books are apt examples of Thomist pedagogy. When a teenager in our classes encounters Tolstoy's Prince André lying mortally wounded on the battlefield at Austerlitz in *War and Peace* looking at the lofty, infinite sky, and recognizing for the first time his true place in things, if he listens intently, he comes to know how he too can "ascend to the heavens of experience, and love, and err, and repent, and glimpse for a second the meaning of his own life."<sup>47</sup> When he watches Shakespeare's Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* confessing to Antonio that what he owes is lost, and realizes with him that love involves risking all against a world deceived with ornament, he feeds the early seeds of conscience within, taking up the task of morality by joining it to the hazards of love. He recognizes that not only his own freedom, but that of the other must be confirmed in the truth to be good. By comparing the mercy of Achilles with that of Portia, he gives his own moral judgments the weight of the real and makes the otherwise sterile bear fruit through his own passive receptivity. So, what happens through the symbolic mode where the teacher and learner meet is not mere transference of informa-

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<sup>45</sup> In "Aquinas's Views on Teaching" (*New Blackfriars* 82, no. 961 [2001]: 111), Patrick Quinn likens Aquinas's views on teaching as a kind of awakening, to Gadamer's notion that teaching elicits a quality of mystery found in therapeutic relationships, and to Marcel's view that interpersonal presence generates an element of mystery that is elusive and enigmatic.

<sup>46</sup> *De Ver.*, q. 11, a. 1, ad 11.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Alexander Nemser, "The World Writing," *The New Republic* (December 31, 2007). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

tion, because it is the learner's affectivity and will, not just his intellect, which is raised from potency to act, or awakened.<sup>48</sup>

### Theology and Dispositions

As an Aristotelian, Thomas knew that virtues are what make a thing perform its function well, and so are necessary to the act of learning. Not only moral virtues such as docility, which is a part of prudence, and patience and perseverance, as forms of courage, as well as honesty, a form of justice, but also the special virtue of *studiositas*, a form of temperance, regulate, direct, and balance our desire to know the good and the true.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the moral virtues, there are at least four dispositions Thomas would add as conditions of success in education, which the Great Books communal inquiry approach provides. These dispositions have a theological pedigree found in his Biblical commentaries that elevates the vocation of teaching to a level of community and the heart, in addition to its intellectual dimension. The first is willingness to be part of a discipline within a community which is "on the way" to a destination. This is analogous to the religious state, which is, says Thomas, a "school and exercise for tending to perfection"<sup>50</sup> involving obedience, where those on an intellectual "way" are invited to undertake a common apprenticeship to truth. When lit by the fire of charity, these disciples of reason can even help their teachers grow towards

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. *De Ver.*, q. 11, a. 1, ad 6: "We do not say that a teacher communicates knowledge to the pupil, as though the knowledge which is in the teacher is numerically the same as that which arises in the pupil. It is rather that the knowledge which arises in the pupil through teaching is similar to that which is in the teacher, and this was raised from potency to act . . ."

<sup>49</sup> E.g., *S.Th.*, II-II, q. 166-167; cf. Boland, "Truth, Knowledge and Communication," 303-304.

<sup>50</sup> *S.Th.*, II-II, q. 186, a. 5.

happiness, in the same way as the seed of a great tree is virtually greater than an actual small tree, as Thomas says in comparing some men to angels.<sup>51</sup>

The second disposition a student needs is trust. Aristotle said that the disciple must believe,<sup>52</sup> and the student must trust in the reliability and knowledge of his teacher. “How,” Thomas asks, “would anyone be able to live unless he believed someone?,”<sup>53</sup> and in his *Commentary on John*, learning involves accepting the words of the teacher, and love’s learning, in addition to the intellect’s hearing. Mary’s question to the angel shows the student’s zeal to learn follows on accepting the Word—love leads to knowledge of the truth, as the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth about the Son. This second disposition of trust overturns Aristotle’s notion that the inequality of teacher and student bars friendship. On the basis of trust, and the sharing of secrets that marks friendship, students, like the disciples of Christ who know all that has been revealed to Him, go out to become teachers of the world.<sup>54</sup> On the side of the teacher, this means listening a great deal, allowing and not crushing what Maritain calls the “timid sproutings” of his soul.<sup>55</sup>

The third disposition concerns the teacher, and is modeled on Christ, whose every act and gesture, whose life, teaches us by example. Jesus teaches while washing the disciples’ feet, but teaches also like a

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<sup>51</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 117, a. 2, ad 3.

<sup>52</sup> Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 2.165b3, quoted in *S.Th.*, II–II, q. 2, a. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In Symbolum Apostolorum, scilicet “Credo in Deum” expositio*, Prologus, #866. Cf. *The Sermon-Conferences of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Apostles’ Creed*, trans. and ed. Nicholas Ayo (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 23: “If everyone were willing to believe only those things that they might know with certitude, they would not be able to live in this world.”

<sup>54</sup> John 6:12, and Thomas Aquinas, *Super 6 Ioannem*, lectio 1, #864. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>55</sup> Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 43.

master, while sitting.<sup>56</sup> So our souls know and understand when our minds reach a state of rest—that is why he repeatedly places first philosophy or divine science almost last in the order of pedagogy.<sup>57</sup> While learning is a laborious movement from potency to act, it flows from love, and through inner tranquility and peace.

The fourth disposition marks the teacher, and then by extension, the student, and seems to be in tension with the third. Augustine's image of Jesus on the Cross as a *magister* on his chair teaches us what it means to abide in suffering in the service of truth. We are encouraged to ask this most excellent doctor and teacher questions about the place of love in serving truth and to recognize that this form of teaching is the highest, and imprinted directly on the hearts of his hearers.<sup>58</sup> Whether in the poetic mode of parables, or in questions to Peter and the disciples which are designed to provoke the silence where spiritual hearing is possible, Jesus places us in a kind of watchful waiting and active readiness—what von Balthasar calls “the moist loam” in which He imprints Himself.<sup>59</sup>

One question is how these theologically inspired dispositions, which paradoxically serve as both conditions and ends of education,

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<sup>56</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, bk. 7, part 3; Aquinas, *In De anima*, bk. 1, lectio 1, #125 (cf. Bolland, “Truth, Knowledge and Communication,” 301).

<sup>57</sup> On the order of pedagogy in Aquinas, see, for example, Pierre H. Conway and Benedict M. Ashley, *The Liberal Arts in St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Dominican Fathers, Province of St. Joseph, 1959), 46, quoting the “fivefold order of learning” found in *In de Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 4. This pedagogical pathway starts with the care of the body, moves to the moral virtues, followed by the intellectual virtues, and the art of thinking or logic, mathematics, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy; last in line is divine science or metaphysics, subordinated only to the theology of Sacred Scripture, ordered to our final end.

<sup>58</sup> See Thomas's question on whether the teaching of Christ ought to have been in writing, or in action: *S.Th.*, III, q. 42, a. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord: Theological Aesthetic*, vol. 1, cited in Raymond Gawronski, *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 115.

relate to the aims of education as envisaged by Maritain.<sup>60</sup> While Aquinas's thoughts on teaching are developed in a theological context, Maritain views formal education as only *indirectly* affecting the will, and as tilling the soil for moral development, by concentrating the intellect and practical reason, so there seems to be a tension.<sup>61</sup> Wisdom is gained, Maritain implies, less through method than by spiritual experience, and intuition and love are gift and freedom, not the result of training or even education.<sup>62</sup> In this he concurs with Aquinas that in a sense, God is our only teacher, because He moves us interiorly—examples give way to being led “by Another,” and often to where you do not want to go—calling us to be a true original, and not a copy.<sup>63</sup> He also admits that the knowledge, strength of judgment and moral virtues by which we attain the conquest of our spiritual freedom, are found in addressing the person as an image of God, which transcends his individuality.<sup>64</sup> So, communal inquiry into the Great Ideas derails both pragmatism's and intellectualism's “progressive animalization” of consciousness by enlarging our spiritual energies and leading them towards a contemplative end.

Maritain also lists several natural dispositions in the learner that are needed, and which are fostered by the Great Books approach. These are first, the love of truth, good and justice, and a simplicity and openness with regard to existence. To learn truly is to be a being “who exists gladly, is unashamed of existing, stands upright in existence, and for whom to be and to accept the natural limitations of existence are mat-

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<sup>60</sup> Outlined in his *Education at the Crossroads*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–28, where he says that the teacher only indirectly teaches morality, by focusing on avoiding a deformation of the will by the imagination and passions.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

ters of equally simple assent.”<sup>65</sup> This basic priority of nature to grace reflects his view that “a child of man must be first a good animal in exhibiting the features of . . . gentleness proper to humanity.”<sup>66</sup> These existential conditions ground his fidelity to work, to the uprooting of evils, and to developing his interiority. They are mirrored by the teacher’s generosity, in affirming the mysterious identity of the child’s soul, which is unknown to himself and which, Maritain says, no techniques can reach or formulas express.<sup>67</sup> A child’s intuitive power, he says, is liberated by encountering figures in the Great Books, where he struggles with the inner life of a given person, and works of the imagination must precede rational inquiry into their logic—we must first hear the Mozart sonata, and be delighted in it, before we understand the score.<sup>68</sup> “Beauty,” he reminds us, “makes intelligibility pass unawares through sense-awareness.”<sup>69</sup> In discussing Adler, Maritain likens the young’s experience of the Great Books to a puppy gnawing on the marrow of a large bone—being quickened and delighted by their truth and beauty despite being unable yet to perfectly sharpen their mind’s distinction of the true and false they convey.<sup>70</sup>

### **The Role of Human Conversation**

Not only is the teacher an instrument awakening our natural principles towards their human end; conversation itself under the guidance of the Great Books, nurtures a way of seeing the world differently than from the lens of amusement or distraction, or even from rigorous phi-

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, note 52.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 70, note 71, on Adler’s address “The Order of Learning” (1941).

losophical proof. Conversation, says Aquinas, in commenting on Aristotle, “builds the city” (*communicatio facit civitatem*),<sup>71</sup> though not in the confusion of Babel. It is, as one writer puts it, a search for a partner, a lover, for a teacher, for God, and the most important events of our lives are the meetings of such individuals. Conversations lose their depth to the extent that we despair of the transcendent.<sup>72</sup> Even the atheist betrays longing in his expressed desire to kneel down in churches, as we see with André Comte-Sponville and Alain de Botton.<sup>73</sup> For Aquinas, human speech is geared towards more than the expression of sadness and delight, expressed through “simple voice,” for it reaches towards justice by setting up the home and the state.<sup>74</sup>

There is also a theological relationship between Aquinas’s Trinitarian theology and the conversation style of the Great Books. By seeking a rightly ordered life together, our conversation echoes the Wisdom that orders all things well.<sup>75</sup> But echoing first involves hearing and receiving. Listening teaches the art of silence, which precedes the word, while our speech is, in a way, the gift of love proceeding from our silence and our word. As Aquinas put it, The Logos is not just any word,

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<sup>71</sup> *In Eth.*, bk. I, lec. 1 (see Vivian Boland, “Boring God: Theology and Preaching,” in Michael Monsheau, *The Grace and Task of Preaching* [Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2006], 56–58).

<sup>72</sup> Boland (“Boring God,” 59–60) details this point, as expressed by George Steiner (*Real Presences: Is There Anything in What we Say?* [London: Faber & Faber, 1989]).

<sup>73</sup> André Comte-Sponville, *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues: The Uses of Philosophy in Everyday Life*, trans. Catherine Temerson (New York: Metropolitan Books / Henry Holt and Company, 2001), 148: “Humility . . . may well be the most religious of virtues. How one yearns to kneel down in churches! Why deny oneself? . . . I would say it is because I would have to believe that God created me—and that pretension, at least, is one of which I have freed myself. What little things we are, how weak and how wretched! Humanity makes for such a pathetic creation: how can we believe a God could have wanted *this*?” Cf. Alain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer’s Guide to the Uses of Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> *In Eth.*, bk. I, lec. 1.

<sup>75</sup> Wis. 8:1.

but *Verbum spirans amorem*, the “Word breathing forth love.”<sup>76</sup> The Great Books nurture in us what is specifically human, by obliging us to think “really,” as Maritain describes the humanities, and by leading us to the level of universality, they convey us into the transcendentals. But, they not only free us in mind and judgment in an internal self-mastery; they have as their frontier the weight of the Christian Word. An openness and receptivity, the seeds of a loving contemplation in us, make both our echo of wisdom possible, and give voice to our reply to it as well. This kind of response within an echo<sup>77</sup> as Boland puts it, is the mysterious dimension opened through conversation as a form of teaching. It is by echo and response, flowing from silence and into a kind of spiritual music, that the liberal arts awaken in us the aesthetic and religious principles stressed by Maritain as the fruit of education: truth, freedom, integrity, beauty, courage, justice, love, and humility.<sup>78</sup>

### **Objections & Replies to the Great Books Tradition**

We can easily imagine objections to partnership between Aquinas and the Great Books, beyond the somewhat trivial objections against the Great Books approach lodged against Hutchins and Adler. But rehearsing a bit of the “Chicago Fight,” helps prepare us for the more philosophical objections that might be lodged by Thomists as well.

The Hutchins-Adler Great Books Seminar at the University of Chicago began shortly after the pair teamed up in the late 1920’s to reform liberal education by means of introducing the greatest works of

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<sup>76</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2.

<sup>77</sup> See Boland, “Boring God,” 64–65.

<sup>78</sup> As listed by Maritain in *The Education of Man*, ed. Donald and Idella Gallagher (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1962), 84. Boland (“Boring God”) discusses the movement from silence, to speech, to music, in relation to prayer, theology, and preaching.

Western civilization in a dialogue setting.<sup>79</sup> They encountered several objections that provided Hutchins the opportunity to list the misconceptions of a liberal education in his *Education for Freedom*, of 1942.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly enough, much of the complaint lies in what was seen as a too close affinity between the Great Books and Aristotelian Thomism, and the latter's inability to meet the demands of a scientific, democratic, and utility-based society.

The objections to the Great Books approach can be grouped in several ways; all of them either assume rather than argue for the nature of the "good life," and some suppress the question. The first group contrasts the material plenty of pragmatic and technical skills to the poverty generated by liberal studies—they are the approaches of skepticism, presentism, scientism, and anti-intellectualism.<sup>81</sup> These approaches echo Callicles' ridicule of Socrates, the clericalist skeptics of Newman's innovative classical program of study, and the Deweyites dominating the mid-century University of Chicago. In short, everything is viewed as a matter of opinion and the appeal to reason is vain, or through the cult of immediacy with its denial of tradition and the past, or as a celebration of scientific progress in the name of social improvement, or as reducible to emotive sentimentalism.<sup>82</sup>

A second group either opposes or deepens the first group's attacks. The historical method, if taken as the dominant path of inquiry, frees the student from inquiring into the truth of the work itself, while the ecstatic approach (so named by Hutchins<sup>83</sup>) measures a work's ex-

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<sup>79</sup> See, for example, Mortimer J. Adler, "The Chicago Fight," *The Center: Kentucky Center for the Arts Magazine* 10, no. 5 (1977): 50–60.

<sup>80</sup> On the Chicago critics, see, for example, Adler, "The Chicago Fight," and Anna-Dorothea Schneider, *Humanities at the Crossroads: The Chicago Neo-Aristotelian Critics and the University of Chicago 1930-1950* (Nomos, 2019).

<sup>81</sup> Hutchins, *Education for Freedom*, 30–34.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–44.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

cellence by the emotive response it evokes. Both critiques sacrifice the pursuit of wisdom and virtue by suppressing questions of human nature and moral goodness. But “how,” asks Hutchins, “can we consider man’s destiny unless we ask what he is? How can we talk about preparing men for life unless we ask what the end of life may be?” The objections against the principle-seeking wisdom of the Great Books are, at base, a rejection of metaphysics itself.<sup>84</sup>

The Great Books, in concert with the study of St. Thomas, were said to reverse the modern role of philosophy set by Dewey, as a handmaid of science, and substituted for it an arcane metaphysics of substance that promoted a changeless, ahistorical human nature. For Hutchins, the rejection of Thomism and the Great Books is basically a revolt against metaphysics, the speculative intellect, and unity. The “dogmatic deification” of Aristotle and Aquinas was said to make Hutchins incapable of heading a university, which requires a commitment to pluralism, a democratic curriculum, and a therapeutic role for philosophy.

For Hutchins, the objections strip education of its hierarchy, order, and ends, leaving in its wake a Neopositivist scientism, relativism, and skepticism. If forming human minds and characters in terms of an ideal of civilization is the proper end of education, where the ideals are material and subjectivist, education shrinks to vocationalist, professional, and specialized aims, and moral values give way to the motive of shrewd self-interest.

But Adler was wrong if he thought his substitution of secular metaphysics for medieval theology as a tool of unity, would survive the invective against scholasticism and the soul itself.<sup>85</sup> The metaphysician,

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, Étienne Gilson also pointed to the power of reason and the universality of human nature as important (if partial) causes of the unity found in medieval scholasticism: “Humanly and naturally speaking, there is no unifying force above reason. It could even be said that, absolutely speaking, it really is the only unifying force. What is rationally true is universally true, for the only thing that lies behind truth is reality itself,

no less than the sage and medieval doctor, was derided as an escape artist, hinging his hopes on eternal things which only increase our wandering—reminiscent of Petrarch’s view of us as “travellers, who for a brief and hostile time, as during a rainy day in winter, make a long and difficult journey.”<sup>86</sup> Moderns believe that therapies of unconscious desire and of power might begin to heal our longing to transcend the self into something greater and beyond. Adler and Aquinas knew that dialectic and science are insufficient to strengthen the mind and bind the self to the common good; the understanding of ideas and values involves first a cultivation of the affections, and involves mysteries imperceptible to experimental science and barren logic.<sup>87</sup>

There are other objections more familiar to Aquinas himself. One is the fact that although he drew on the sequence of the trivium and quadrivium in several places as preludes to moral philosophy and *sacra doctrina*, he would also have drawn a sharp distinction between philosophical reasoning and the symbolic, poetic mode. He may have picked up the poetic use of language, we’re told,<sup>88</sup> as a philosopher on holi-

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which is the same for all . . . Medieval realism . . . always stood firm on the Greek platform that the human mind is right when it conforms to reality . . .” (Gilson, “Medieval Universalism and Its Present Value,” 905). He viewed the modern prejudice against medieval scholastic philosophy as a form of “mental slavery” borne of a denial of “sound rationalism,” realism and personalism (*ibid.*, 908).

<sup>86</sup> Petrarch, *De familiari*, I, 7, 13–14, quoted in Proctor, *Education’s Great Amnesia*, 102.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Francis Bethel, *John Senior and the Restoration of Realism* (Merrimack, N.H.: Thomas More College Press, 2016), 183, in his description of Senior’s defense of the poetic mode of knowing: “Philosophy deals more directly with mysteries such as love and beauty than experimental science is capable of . . . it must accept some sort of intuition, an obvious although obscure knowledge, before it operates on its level to resolve problems. One must first recognize that the rainbow is beautiful before being in a position to ask how and why it is so, and what beauty is . . . St. Thomas’s definition of beauty as ‘what, when seen, pleases’ means nothing to us unless we have had the experience of a rainbow, of a mountain, or of a river.”

<sup>88</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: ‘The Dumb Ox’* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1956), 21.

day, but never confused it with the dialectical method by which a *quaestio* or its extreme version, the *quodlibet*, a “disputation on anything,” was conducted. He knew the contrast between an intellectual joust, in which, after examining arguments based on reason and authority, the master arrives at a doctrinal solution by an act of determination that confirms his magisterial function, and an enduring melody or *cantus firmus* embellished with florid polyphony, that was beginning to develop in his day, in the work of Perotin, for instance.

In addition to this objection from the incommensurable modes of knowing, there is the suspicion that the texts and pedagogy of the Great Books interferes with the specialization of sapiential *habitus*. If the Great Books in many cases stress imagination and feeling over intellect and rational debate, then they distract students from the intellectual work of dutifully straining towards its prize, a kind of mental squandering or dissoluteness of disciplines from their proper objects. The Great Books’ literary and historical narratives represent no unified system of thought, and weaken the rigor of developing a philosophical habitus, which requires sustained and focused dialectic. They might even cite Aquinas, who said that “a man gets far more pleasure from knowing something by understanding it than by feeling it . . . for intellectual knowledge is more highly prized: a man would rather lose his sight than his sanity.”<sup>89</sup>

Finally, there is the objection Maritain notes, that the liberal arts<sup>90</sup> is for us a “separated world,” in isolation from our daily concerns, and exist in a kind of “illusory eternity.” In response to this, Maritain reminds us that these arts take us to the very roots of our culture and civilization. On its own, philosophy is incapable of restoring the “integrity of natural reason,” for we are a spiritual unity in search of a supe-

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<sup>89</sup> *S.Th.*, I-II, q. 31, a. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Maritain (*The Education of Man*, 85–86) is speaking of the Greek and Latin authors.

rior balance supplied by theological and religious formation. Just as philosophy is best practiced within a theological regime, so the success of the formation it provides depends on a complexity of causes, which as Maritain reminds us, cause one another.<sup>91</sup> Newman also examined the charge of separateness, and the view that Great Books promote inutility, and are often produced in atmospheres like religious hothouses.<sup>92</sup> Battling utilitarians of his day, he knew that a liberal education carries its own end *within* its practice, as opposed to being driven to ends dictated by artificially created desires. The modern university, or rather Baconian polytechnicum, offers training to generate material commodities, and is in many cases merely a factory for the servile arts, as Hütter has argued,<sup>93</sup> careening between scientific determinism and postmodernism, on the one hand, and trans-humanist autonomy, on the other, lurching towards a Promethean liberation from our own nature and our dystopian future that comes with it.

Yet a pairing of Aquinas's realism and the Great Books can equally be argued as complementary, not opposed. Works of art are valuable because their beauty is shaped by intelligence, and we respond to them in delight because they match our nature.<sup>94</sup> In *De Veritate*, Aquinas likens the process of thinking and speaking with that of art, for "an artist first intends his work of art, next shapes it in his mind and fancy,

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<sup>91</sup> Maritain (*ibid.*, 81–82) is citing Aristotle, "Causae ad invicem sunt causae."

<sup>92</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Disc. 1.1, where he discusses the objections of a Great Books education in terms of its supposed "inutility" and "religious exclusiveness."

<sup>93</sup> Reinhard Hütter, "Polytechnic University," *First Things*, no. 237 (Nov. 2013).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J. F. Scanlan. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 23: "Beauty is essentially the object of *intelligence*, for what *knows* in the full meaning of the word is the mind, which alone is open to the infinity of being. The natural site of beauty is the intelligible world: thence it descends . . ." For Aquinas, beauty has four primary standards: actuality, proportion, radiance, and integrity (*S.Th.*, I, q. 39, a. 8c). A thing's beauty flows from its existence and form. Everything is what it is because of its form; therefore, a thing has more goodness [and beauty] when it achieves a higher level of perfection in its form (cf. *S.Th.*, I, q. 5, a. 5).

and then in his material. Similarly, a speaker first conceives the meaning he intends to convey, afterwards finds a sign for it [language], and finally pronounces it.”<sup>95</sup>

To answer the objection concerning habitus, we can distinguish the natural intelligence from the intelligence of the intellectual virtues, as Maritain himself does.<sup>96</sup> Universal knowledge is possible only at the level of natural intelligence, where students gain an integrated though imperfect understanding about the nature of man and reality, falling short of scientific knowledge. This mode is steeped in the imagination, which provides a kind of intuitive unity that mirrors human nature’s existential condition, as it is immersed in the natural world, and whose supreme perfection consists in love. Thomas’s psychosomatic unity of the human person affords the philosophical key for interpreting the treasury of Western culture, as something which makes us more human, and more able to discern what is worthy of our attention and love.

## Conclusion

St. Augustine lamented our tendency to go abroad and wonder at the marvels of nature while passing by ourselves without wondering.<sup>97</sup> The Great Books’ rich content and the dialectical method to which this tradition lends itself highlight the ministerial function of the imagination and will to the intellect. In the resulting exchange, the mind’s philosophical labors become at once more mysterious, merrier, and yet

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<sup>95</sup> *De Ver.*, q. 4, a. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Maritain, *The Education of Man*, 49–50. On pages 51–52, he speaks of liberal education in relation to the existential conditions of man, straining towards the freedom of grace.

<sup>97</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, XI, chap. 8: “[M]en go abroad to admire the heights of mountains, the mighty billows of the sea, the broad tides of rivers, the compass of the ocean, and the circuits of the stars, and pass themselves by . . .” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

more solemn,<sup>98</sup> while the will hastens towards its end by reason directing it on the right road.<sup>99</sup> If the perennial wisdom is as welcome to the Great Books student as the sight of land is to men that swim,<sup>100</sup> these texts are also the tributaries that flow into a river, only to enrich philosophy by laying at her feet the universality of the human condition. One is reminded of Divine Wisdom in the text of Proverbs, setting up her mixing bowl, dispensing Her goodness which takes care of every being.<sup>101</sup> We are inspired to express truth in ever-new ways.<sup>102</sup> Old meanings shimmer with rich images and narratives to produce new meanings, to the delight of her followers, who grow and progress in wisdom and grace.



### **The Perennial Wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Great Books Tradition**

#### SUMMARY

In this article I argue for the pedagogical complementarity of the perennial wisdom of St. Thomas and Mortimer Adler's dialectical method of the Great Books, where the

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. *S.Th.*, I-II, q. 27, a. 1: “[L]ove implies a certain connaturalness or complacency of the lover for the thing beloved, and to everything, that thing is a good, which is akin and proportionate to it. It follows, therefore, that good is the proper cause of love.”

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *S.Th.*, I-II, q. 27, a. 2: “[G]ood is not the object of the appetite, except as apprehended. And therefore love demands some apprehension of the good that is loved . . . knowledge is the cause of love for the same reason as good is, which can be loved only if known.”

<sup>100</sup> In the tearful reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, in Homer, *The Odyssey*, bk. 23, line 230f: “[W]elcome as is the sight of land to men that swim, whose well-built ship Poseidon has smitten on the sea as it was driven on by the wind and the swollen wave . . . even so welcome to her was her husband, as she gazed upon him, and from his neck she could in no wise let her white arms go.”

<sup>101</sup> Wis. 9:2–12.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 146.

Great Books highlight the ministerial function of the imagination to the will and intellect in the order of learning. Characterized by communal inquiry, the thought of St. Thomas and the Great Books are shown to be well matched instruments of the special Providence by which we direct one another to our proper end. A review of key Thomistic dispositions of teaching and learning, the nature of authentic conversation, and various objections and replies to the Great Books method of education and its alliance with the thought of St. Thomas focus the analysis. Several points of contact enrich the task of liberal learning. The Great Books are seen to supply students of St. Thomas with the spontaneous play of associations, rapprochements and comparisons as they strive to apply texts to the practices of virtue and truth seeking, while the perennial wisdom directs the students' personal exegesis through the rigor of philosophical principles, logic, and distinctions.

#### KEYWORDS

Thomas Aquinas, Mortimer J. Adler, *philosophia perennis*, perennial wisdom, Thomism, The Great Books, teaching, learning, conversation, liberal education.

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**Piotr Jaroszyński**

## **Karol Wojtyła: A Thomist or a Phenomenologist?**

Although the figure of St. John Paul II is known worldwide, he still remains so rich that not everything about him has been discovered or said, at least in their proper proportions. He is known above all as the Pope who led the Catholic Church for almost 27 years, as one who worked diligently for peace in the world, and as the author of many important ecclesiastical documents. But he was also the author of many books and poetical works and a superb speaker who could reach millions of hearts and minds the world over. He is less well known as an intellectual, as a thinker, and as a philosopher. But it was in this last field, still as Karol Wojtyła, that he dealt with some very important issues, addressing them in lectures, discussions, and articles. The recovery of his strictly philosophical contributions is worth undertaking, because they enrich not only philosophy itself but—to the degree that Wojtyła’s philosophy is a universal philosophy—they enrich both Christian and general culture.

Wojtyła’s philosophical writings are not among the easiest to read. This is not something unusual: philosophy is a difficult discipline. Some authors, however, are nevertheless particularly difficult. In Wojtyła’s case, it is a matter of a kind of intellectual concentration that a given text demands from a reader. It is a kind of concentration acquired

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after many years of philosophical study, which means that those texts may simply be too difficult for philosophical novices. But the theoretical and practical eloquence contained in those texts makes it a worthwhile effort to extract and render it accessible to a broader audience, because it can play an important role in both the lives of individuals and society.

One of the most important questions that can be posed to someone examining the philosophical works of Karol Wojtyła is the one found in the title: is he a Thomist or a phenomenologist?<sup>1</sup> The question is justified because we can find in Wojtyła's works both threads pointing to phenomenology and threads pointing to Thomism. This raises the further question: which are the most important?

One can also ask: how did Wojtyła see the question? How was it seen by those who knew his views and expressed their opinions in their discussions, articles, and books? How was it seen by those who edited Wojtyła's works?

Was Wojtyła a Thomist or a phenomenologist? These are the possible answers: 1) he was a Thomist; 2) he was a phenomenologist; 3) he was both a Thomist and a phenomenologist, meaning one with an inclination toward both Thomism and phenomenology; 4) he was none of them, meaning one who sought to go beyond both Thomism and phenomenology.

In order to determine which of these responses is most adequate, we have to take account not just of Wojtyła's most important works but also their publishers and dates of publication because—as we shall see—these factors were not without influence as to which tendency was seen as dominant.

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<sup>1</sup> See Douglas Flippen, "Was John Paul II a Thomist or a Phenomenologist?," *Faith & Reason* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 65–106.

It is also important to note at this juncture that philosophy differs from many other disciplines in that it is marked not just by the pluralism of philosophical systems but by rivalry between them. While there are generally recognized principles and laws in mathematics, this same phenomenon does not exist in philosophy. The multiplication table stands for all mathematicians:  $2 \times 2$  is always 4. In philosophy, however, different philosophical schools can have different views about many questions, even those concerning the most basic principles and laws, such as the laws of identity and contradiction. For example, the supreme law for Parmenides was that of identity, while for Hegel it was that of contradiction. One cannot reconcile one with the other, although that does not bother some philosophers.

One cannot, in turn, underestimate the role that ideology, which forms the background of many political systems, can play in the acceptance of a philosophy. Thomism was a far greater threat for Marxism than was phenomenology. Marxists, who controlled the education system in Poland after the Second World War, would promote phenomenology over Thomism in schools. Likewise, in liberal circles emerging from Protestantism and tinged with atheism, Thomism would have been seen in less friendly terms than phenomenology. Lastly, even though philosophy arises at its sources from a fascination with wisdom, individual predilections play a large role in the case of concrete philosophers. Someone likes Plato and Platonism more, while another prefers Aristotle and Aristotelianism. A philosophy and philosophical system can be liked or disliked, even if this is not stated up front. The moment of subjective choice has to play an important role, given that not just dozens but hundreds of schools have appeared in the history of philosophy.

The philosophical work of Karol Wojtyła can also be subjected to these three criteria. Having his philosophy on one's side could be worthwhile when he became Pope. Alternatively, one might do every-

thing one could do so that his philosophy was not widely known. Lastly, one could perform a certain amount of “retouching” of his philosophy, by changing this and that on the level of presentation or interpretation and even—sometimes—on the level of publication.

Let us begin with the title of this article. “Phenomenology” is an ideologically neutral term. As a neologism, it refers to a more closely undefined knowledge (-logy) about phenomena. “Thomism,” on the other hand, refers to a concrete figure, St. Thomas Aquinas, a figure criticized for centuries by opponents of Catholicism, be they Protestants or atheists. So, being a “Thomist”—a proponent of St. Thomas’s philosophy—one can take upon himself, willingly or unwillingly, a certain odium with which Aquinas himself has been encumbered. One might thus be treated as the advocate of a closed philosophical system that has an answer—albeit a schematic, uninteresting, and outdated one—for everything. (After all, it’s been around for over seven centuries!) One must reckon with all these things when one encounters a negative attitude toward Thomism. That is why, at first, one who is unaware of the context behind the controversy over Wojtyła, will prefer seeing him amidst phenomenologists rather than Thomists. Since we are interested in establishing the authentic position of Karol Wojtyła, it is worthwhile disenchanting such prejudices at the start.

The basic context of the question as to whether Wojtyła is a Thomist or a phenomenologist is not that of an overall philosophical system but that of philosophical anthropology, of his theory of man as a person. Wojtyła was dissatisfied with all the theories of man in each of the major schools of philosophy up to that time. The construction of a personalistic philosophical anthropology was, above all, the purpose underlying his work, *Osoba i czyn* (*The Person and the Act*, 1969).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Wojtyła’s *Osoba i czyn*, in English translation by Andrzej Potocki “as revised by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka,” is entitled *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979). That translation is erroneous. The Polish word “czyn” is a Slavic word

Preparation for such a philosophical anthropology could, however, already be found in his lectures at the Catholic University of Lublin during the period 1954–1957.<sup>3</sup> Although, at that time, the question was one of ethical theory, an anthropological theory also surfaced in the background.

The publication of *Osoba i czyn* triggered a discussion about the book that assumed its final, written form published in 1974, “Dyskusja nad dziełem Kardynała Karola Wojtyły *Osoba i czyn* (The Discussion about Cardinal Karol Wojtyła’s Work *The Person and the Act*).”<sup>4</sup> Thanks to that text, we can see Wojtyła’s concrete responses to the questions and doubts posed about the book.

There are, therefore, three publications connected with the question of whether Wojtyła is a Thomist or a phenomenologist: *Wykłady lubelskie* (*The Lublin Lectures*), *Osoba i czyn* (*The Person and the Act*), and “Dyskusja nad dziełem Kardynała Karola Wojtyły *Osoba i czyn* (The Discussion about Cardinal Karol Wojtyła’s Work *The Person and the Act*).” Undoubtedly, *Osoba i czyn* is the main axis of the controversy. But there is a problem here: we have three different editions of this book at our disposal, in which the perspective of the answer to our question changes.<sup>5</sup>

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that means something that has happened or been done. The English word “act” is taken from the Latin “actio” and, in the grammatical gerund form used in the title, means an activity that has not ended but is still ongoing. In Linde’s *Słownik języka polskiego* [*Dictionary of the Polish Language*] (Lwów: Zakład Ossolińskich, 1854), the German word “Akt” is translated into Polish as “czyn” and “uczynek” (deed), and the word “czyn” is defined as “what is done” (*ibid.*, 393), i.e., a past perfective, not a continuous present form. The proper title of *Osoba i czyn* in English should read: *The Person and the Act*. For more, see Małgorzata Jalocho-Palicka, “Thomas Aquinas’ Philosophy of Being as the Basis for Wojtyła’s Concept and Cognition of Human Person,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 3 (2014): 127–129.

<sup>3</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie* [*The Lublin Lectures*] (Lublin: TN KUL, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> *Analecta Cracoviensia*, no. 5–6 (1973–1974): 49–272.

<sup>5</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1969); 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1985); 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Lublin: TN KUL, 1994).

In *Wykłady lubelskie* (*The Lublin Lectures*), ethical problems are subordinated to historical considerations: the act and ethical experience (Scheler, Kant, Thomas Aquinas, and the Aristotelian-Thomist theory); good and value (Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, and Scheler); the question of norms and happiness (Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Hume, Bentham, Kant, and Scheler).<sup>6</sup>

Wojtyła in those lectures unequivocally cuts himself off from the positions of Kant and Scheler with regard to that important element of their ethical systems that obligation represents. Kant places obligation up front in his ethics, putting the category of good to the side. Subsequent authors whom we associate with the phenomenological school, with Scheler in the lead, followed in Kant's footsteps. Wojtyła advances various criticisms with regard to obligation. The experience of obligation is not, according to Wojtyła, the "proper ethical experience." In undertaking his critique of human knowing, Kant cuts it off from the knowledge of reality, which includes the knowledge of the real experience of morality.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, obligation takes on, in the field of law, the appearance of respect, but that respect does not constitute the internal but only the eternal aspect of moral experience. Obligation is not, therefore, the essence of morality, which we experience from the inside.<sup>8</sup>

Thirdly, shifting the accent from the act to obligation results in putting the act and its influence on whether a person becomes good or

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<sup>6</sup> Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie* [*The Lublin Lectures*].

<sup>7</sup> "Thus the consequence of a critical Kantian gaze on reality is that morality escapes from concrete human life, from that life which constitutes the object of sensory knowledge. In that case it is understandable that the experience of obligation is not a proper ethical experience." *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>8</sup> "A feeling of respect for the law is nothing other than an experience of obligation. That experience does not belong to the internal structure of the human act itself. If it thereby confers an ethical character on it, it is only from the outside, through that fact that it occurs concurrently in him." *Ibid.*, 54.

evil in secondary place. Self-consciousness of one's status as man-as-a-thing-in-itself remains in first place for Kant. But such self-consciousness cannot, according to Wojtyła, decide about the essence of morality.<sup>9</sup>

This means that Kantian ethics neither explain nor can solve the problem of human morality. It is not the proper path by which to reveal man as a person, including as a subject of morality.

Wojtyła also looks critically at Scheler's views. He criticizes him for not taking into account causality—behind which stands the concrete person—when he analyzes human moral behavior in the context of “realizing objective values.” This leads to the erasure of the person as a subject of morality because, without causality, he has no responsibility. One can at most speak of some kind of content of experiences, but that content is not yet constitutive of the moral act and of man as a subject of morality.<sup>10</sup> Scheler offers, in effect, less an ethics than a “study of the psychology of values.”<sup>11</sup>

Summarizing the positions of both Kant and Scheler, Wojtyła says that “in Kant, the ethical act has been most foundationally deconstructed” while, in Scheler, “it still has not been built.”<sup>12</sup>

On the basis of these examples, we can say that Wojtyła sought support neither in Kantianism nor phenomenology for his concept of ethics. This is confirmed when, dealing with the views of St. Thomas Aquinas, he concludes: “We must recognize the solutions, which Kant

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<sup>9</sup> “A person does not become good or evil through his acts . . . Through the experience of pure obligation one only becomes aware of one's supra-sensory being, that *homo noumenon*, which is found beyond the boundaries of all experience.” *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>10</sup> “[I]n the realization of objective values, the person does not act as an efficient cause, which means he is not the efficient cause of good or evil, and in consequence those same values do not appear as certain properties of the person, as his characteristics, but only as the content of experience.” *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

and Scheler provide, to be inadequate scholarly objectifications of the ethical experience. We must, on the other hand, accept St. Thomas Aquinas's solution as the only one commensurate with an interpretation of the ethical experience of the person."<sup>13</sup>

In the work that is key for our subject, *Osoba i czyn*, Wojtyła deals with ethical problem from the viewpoint of the possibility of building a philosophical anthropology. It is therefore from the anthropological viewpoint that he refers to various philosophers and philosophical schools.

He regarded his position not as a confrontation between Thomism and phenomenology or between a Thomist and a phenomenologist but as one between a philosophy of being and a philosophy of consciousness. That would be the deepest and most logical approach to the problem from the viewpoint of the history of philosophy and its object (including metaphysics). Wojtyła understood that the undertaking was difficult:

The task is even harder as we find ourselves in the current of a philosophical tradition which has shown over the centuries a significant division. One can speak even of two philosophies or at least of two basic methods of philosophizing. We can call one "the philosophy of being," the other "the philosophy of consciousness." In this work, however, we will attempt to overcome this division . . . in the very concept of the person. We owe a deeper knowledge of man from the point of view of consciousness to the philosophy of consciousness, and that will certainly lead to a richer vision of the person and the act.<sup>14</sup>

It was, therefore, a matter of using the achievements of the philosophy of consciousness, whose object is, after all, human conscious-

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>14</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn [The Person and the Act]*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1969), 22.

ness, in order to build a theory of man, but not at the price of rejecting or forgetting the philosophy of being. Wojtyła explains:

While remaining on the foundation of the theory of being, we want to make use of that enrichment. The attempt at a legitimate unification, in the concept of the person and the act, of these understandings [provided by the philosophy of being and of consciousness], which emerge from the experience of the person in both these aspects, must in some way become an effort at unifying two philosophical orientations or, in some sense, two philosophies.<sup>15</sup>

This meant that certain criticisms of both philosophies (the philosophy of being and of consciousness) would be put forth by Wojtyła, and then, after the finding of solutions, would it be possible for him to unify them constructively, perhaps in an original way.

In the case of the philosophy of being, it was the issue of a certain schematization in its approach to the person, i.e., the lack of a philosophical anthropology as an anthropology. It was also an issue of the dominance of metaphysics which, with regard to the person, did not sufficiently take into account what is proper to him and differentiates him from other beings. Having that in mind, Wojtyła directs his criticisms both against the Aristotelian (*animal rationale*) and Boethian (*rationalis naturae individua substantia*) definitions of man. The content of those definitions was too impoverished when it came into contact with the richness of man that the philosophy of consciousness revealed. Furthermore, the classical definitions lacked a sufficient emphasis on the uniqueness of each person.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> “The person is a concrete man . . . *individua substantia*, as Boethius says in the first part of his famous definition. Concreteness is in some way at the same time unity and unrepeatability, which is individuated in every case. But something more than the idea of individuality is contained in the concept of person; the person is something more than an individuated nature . . . That fullness is not just concreteness but rather unity and unrepeatability.” *Ibid.*, 76.

But the philosophy of consciousness, primarily of Kant and Scheler, was also criticized, as were positivism and phenomenism. The criticisms were of their views on the person and the theory of morality that affected philosophical anthropology.

Through his analysis of moral experience, Wojtyła sought to reveal man as a person.<sup>17</sup> But that was something that could not be adequately achieved in the Kantian system, in Scheler's philosophy, or in positivism. That moral experience was more adequately developed in classical philosophy, particularly in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and in St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. Modern and contemporary philosophies had divorced themselves from anthropology, its place was taken by psychology and the sociology of morals.<sup>18</sup>

Wojtyła decidedly stresses that one cannot separate anthropology from ethics, particularly in an integral system which aims at a full explanation of what it is that makes human morality precisely human and what is an act—especially a moral act—that reveals the person and allows him to be understood in full.<sup>19</sup>

Wojtyła does not deny our gratitude to the philosophy of consciousness for a more basic understanding of man from the viewpoint of consciousness,<sup>20</sup> but that does not mean that he is rejecting a philosophy of being. On the contrary, it is on that basis that he undertakes an analysis of what derives from experience, which at the same time reveals the content that the philosophy of consciousness has uncovered. This is the place where Wojtyła performs his division, which does not, however, lead to a dualistic vision of the person, because we experience ourselves as one who is one being. It is also on that basis that Wojtyła declares his aspiration to try to overcome the division which is a hos-

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<sup>17</sup> “[T]he study of the act, in which the person is revealed.” *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 29–30.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

tage of different philosophical traditions.<sup>21</sup> But it is also here that he clearly declares—in the effort to reconcile the philosophies of being and consciousness—that that which will serve as the foundation for the solution is the philosophy of being: “While remaining on the foundation of the theory of being, we want to make use of that enrichment”<sup>22</sup> that the philosophy of consciousness offers us. That methodological and philosophical declaration, which appears in the introduction of *Osoba i czyn*, seems to leave no doubt that philosophy of being is the philosophy that plays the most important role.

Wojtyła maintained that position in the discussions that took place after the publication of *Osoba i czyn*, when participants straightaway put the question of philosophical priority: philosophy of being or of consciousness? Wojtyła made it clearer that his project of unifying both schools (the Thomistic and phenomenological orientations, the philosophies of being and consciousness) was a minimalist, not a maximalist project. It was not maximalist in terms of addressing the whole philosophical system, but rather minimalist, dealing only with the philosophy of man.<sup>23</sup> But what is important is that Wojtyła did not intend to reduce the philosophy of being to a philosophy of consciousness, which is what recognition of the priority of phenomenology over the philosophy of being would entail. Wojtyła distances himself from such an approach:

In any case, there is nothing in *Osoba i czyn* about unifying those two philosophies, especially of unifying the philosophies of being and of consciousness as a reduction of the whole of reality to the subject’s consciousness and its content.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn [The Person and the Act]*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Lublin: TN KUL, 1994), 355.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 355–356.

What, then, is the problem? The problem is the second edition of *Osoba i czyn*, in which there is an effort to strengthen phenomenology and weaken the philosophy of being. That edition appeared in 1985, i.e., about seven years after Wojtyła's election as Pope. We learn from the editor's note that it was not personally prepared by the Pope but only accepted by him. We read that the second edition was corrected and supplemented in terms of footnotes and subtitles by Andrzej Półtawski in agreement with the author.

Every work can be corrected and supplemented. But, considering the nature and scale of changes made in the second edition of the book, it is clear that the effort to provide the corrections and supplements could not be undertaken by the author himself who, as Pope, simply lacked the time for such time-consuming academic activities. It is also clear that the changes are significant, as they involve basic questions, including those with which this paper deals.

For the average reader who knew only the second edition of *Osoba i czyn*, the changes were practically unnoticed. Happily, a third edition appeared in which the number and types of changes are scrupulously noted. 76 notes, subtitles, and about 900 editorial changes were added to the second edition. They included stylistic changes and changes in form and structure, including restructuring of paragraphs, limits on differentiations, terminological changes, and editing of certain fragments in terms of reduction or expansion. All those changes are noted in the third edition, thanks to which the reader can now compare the first and second editions. He can make these comparisons only if he has patience, because the total number of changes makes the second edition into a new book. Consequently, a comparison of the two editions is a particularly tiring activity, because there are too many changes. The third edition, in turn, although valuable to the researcher for having identified the differences between the first and second editions, also introduces new traps because, as we read, "stylistic and technical"

changes have been introduced into it, including a stylistic unification of titles and subtitles.<sup>25</sup>

In summary, the third edition is its own compilation of the two previous editions, of which only the first edition had Wojtyła as its immediate author. The two subsequent editions are the effects of editorial changes. That is why, in reading the second or third editions, we must constantly keep in mind the question: is this Wojtyła's text, or the editors'?

In what direction do those various changes, "improvements," and expansions go? Some certainly had a technical and stylistic character, but there were also those that had a substantive character. We will attempt to extract the latter for their influence upon the problem we are addressing.

Subtitles usually facilitate the reading of a long text and afford the possibility of a quick grasp of a certain whole unit. On the other hand, subtitles can incline a reader to a certain kind of interpretation, leading even to manipulating the text by suggesting a meaning that is not found in that text.

We encounter the latter situation in the third edition. In it there appears, for example, the subtitle: "The Non-Identity of the Empirical and Phenomenological Approaches."<sup>26</sup> The snag in this, however, is that the fragment enclosed by that subtitle speaks neither of phenomenology nor the phenomenological approach. Wojtyła does not, in the case of man's knowledge, agree with either the phenomenological or empirical approach, but he does not say that the proper method is the phenomenological method. The subtitle, however, suggests this and, therefore, strengthens the case for a stronger influence of phenomenology on Wojtyła's views than was the case.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>26</sup> Noted in Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [*The Person and the Act*], 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 57.

But there are even more important changes. They involve the omission of certain fragments and the addition of new ones, particularly in the discussion of the relationship between the philosophies of being and consciousness.

The most significant change affects the text that is a very important explanation of the difficult situation in which the author of *Osoba i czyn* found himself because of the confrontation of two such different philosophical traditions whose influences result in the division of the philosophical image of man. Wojtyła's ambition was to build an image of man as a unity, but that task was difficult. He explains:

The task is even harder as we find ourselves in the current of a philosophical tradition which has shown over the centuries a significant division. One can speak even of two philosophies or at least of two basic methods of philosophizing. We can call one "the philosophy of being," the other "the philosophy of consciousness."<sup>27</sup>

Wojtyła then indicates that those two aspects should not be absolutized and opposed to each other, but the division should be "overcome"—not by a theory of knowledge, where that division is most apparent, but by the concept of man. He further stresses that we owe much to a philosophy of consciousness that lets us see the richness of "the vision of the person and the act," but he "remains on the basis of a philosophy of being."<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, it is precisely this important fragment that was simply left out of the second edition. Why? The editor of that edition does not explain.

When we take this fragment into account, we see clearly that the philosophy of being, not the philosophy of consciousness, lies at the basis of Wojtyła's concept of man. This statement is unequivocal and most understandable. Wojtyła is not studying consciousness for con-

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<sup>27</sup> Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [*The Person and the Act*], 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

consciousness's sake, nor building an epistemology that would assume the role of metaphysics. He is dealing with philosophical anthropology which affords an image of man that appeals to metaphysical categories. Without metaphysics, there is neither philosophical anthropology nor man as a being. The philosophy of consciousness might reveal a whole series of data about man's consciousness, but the philosophy of consciousness does not deal with what Wojtyła calls the "metaphysical reduction," the reaching of the reasons for what is given in experience. That is precisely what metaphysics deals with.<sup>29</sup> One cannot build a concept of man on the basis of phenomenological experience alone, because the phenomenological method does not lead to the discovery of ontic reasons. It does not lead to the discovery of the individual as individual, one and unrepeatable.

But this does not mean that metaphysics as philosophical anthropology cannot make use of the achievements of phenomenology, because it is also a matter of "demonstrating how phenomenology and metaphysics explore the same object, and that phenomenological and metaphysical reductions do not cancel each other out."<sup>30</sup>

Phenomenology aims to isolate nature in the person, whereas metaphysical reduction "aims at the full integration of nature in the person."<sup>31</sup> This means that only metaphysics leads to the unification of those two elements in the human being. Phenomenology reveals those elements as two different elements, but it is unable to lead to the demonstration of their unity.

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<sup>29</sup> In this context Fr. Krąpiec, O.P., used the term "decontradiction" (*uniesprzecznianie*). For finding the ultimate cause of being of a thing makes the thing free from the contradiction (absurdity) of its being. See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Metafizyka. Zarys teorii bytu* [*Metaphysics: A Sketch of a Theory of Being*] (Lublin: RW KUL, 1995), 42.

<sup>30</sup> Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 128; 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 83.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 85.

Since the intention of the author of *Osoba i czyn* was to build a philosophical anthropology, the dominant element lies on the side of a philosophy of being, not of consciousness. The latter plays a very important auxiliary role by manifesting a whole series of data essential to the personal life of man. But those data in themselves do not explain what their deeper source is. The nature of that source is metaphysical.

It should be underscored that Wojtyła reckoned with how many dangers might be introduced at the anthropological level by applying phenomenology in the metaphysical field. Scheler deprived the person of his objectivity and unity by introducing a fluid concept of the center, which would have encompassed the whole of consciousness not differentiated among individual people. That would have led to some form of pantheism. Wojtyła did not want to attempt the “absolutizing of consciousness.”<sup>32</sup> Husserl, in turn, recommended that phenomenological research start from *epoché*, i.e., suspension of existential judgment.<sup>33</sup> That approach was unacceptable to Wojtyła. Man as a personal being has to be one being and an existing being, because his experience indicates that. Blurring subjectivity and detaching it from existence shows itself therefore to be an essential inadequacy of the phenomenological method in revealing the attitude of being man as a person. That was, after all, the purpose of the research as well as the reason for using the phenomenological method in it—but as a starting point, not an end point.

Wojtyła was a philosopher of being, who was able to make use of the philosophy of Aristotle and of St. Thomas Aquinas along with phenomenological method. His philosophy contributed an original ap-

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. The paragraph is rewritten in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

<sup>33</sup> “I am exercising the ‘phenomenological’ *epoché* which also *completely shuts me off from any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being.*” Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, I, trans. Fred Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1982), 61.

proach that bore fruit in a deeper concept of man as a person. It is a metaphysico-anthropological concept that is supplemented by the data that the philosophy of consciousness provides. But it is not the philosophy of consciousness that allows for the presentation of an integral concept of man. It is the philosophy of being.

*Translated by John M. Grondelski*



### **Karol Wojtyła: A Thomist or a Phenomenologist?**

#### **SUMMARY**

The author seeks to answer the question of whether Karol Wojtyła was a Thomist or a phenomenologist. He lists four possible answers: 1) Wojtyła was a Thomist; 2) Wojtyła was a phenomenologist; 3) Wojtyła was both a Thomist and a phenomenologist, meaning one with an inclination toward both Thomism and phenomenology; and 4) Wojtyła was none of them, meaning one who sought to go beyond both Thomism and phenomenology. In order to determine which of these responses is most adequate, the author not only analyzes Wojtyła's most important works, but also takes into account their publishers and dates of publication. He concludes that 1) Wojtyła was a philosopher of being, who was able to make use of the philosophy of Aristotle and of St. Thomas Aquinas along with phenomenological method, and 2) his philosophy contributed an original approach that bore fruit in a deeper understanding of man as a person.

#### **KEYWORDS**

Karol Wojtyła, Thomism, phenomenology, anthropology, person, Lublin school of philosophy, personalism, philosophy of consciousness, philosophy of being.

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Tomasz Orzel

## Człowiek i społeczność obywatelska według Antonia Rosminiego

W szerokiej palecie zainteresowań naukowych bł. ks. Antonia Rosminiego (1797–1855)<sup>1</sup> znajdowały się, obok zagadnień teologicznych, również problemy życia społecznego. I chociaż polityką, socjologią i pedagogiką zajmował się on nie tylko na sposób teoretyczny,<sup>2</sup> to jednak jego zaangażowanie w sprawy społeczno-polityczne miało swoją podbudowę w teorii życia społecznego, jaką opracował. Jej rdzeń stanowiło wyróżnienie trzech głównych typów społeczności: wspólnoty rodzinnej (*società domestica*), wspólnoty teokratycznej (*società teocra-*

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Rosmini—włoski intelektualista, teolog, filozof, teoretyk prawa, politolog, poeta, duszpasterz, zakonodawca, pedagog. Powyższa lista zawiera tylko najważniejsze obszary działalności intelektualnej włoskiego kapłana, o którym jeden z najważniejszych przedstawicieli włoskiego romantyzmu, pisarz Alessandro Manzoni, miał powiedzieć, że Rosmini “jest jednym z sześciu lub siedmiu największych umysłów, jakimi może się poszczycić rodzaj ludzki.” Niestety, w Polsce zarówno osoba, jak i myśl Roveretańczyka, zwanego również filozofem ze Stresy (w tej miejscowości położonej nad Lago Maggiore głównie działał i pracował) jest prawie zupełnie nieznana. Dość powiedzieć, że bibliografia filozofa z Rovereto obejmująca około 100 pozycji, przeważnie bardzo obszernych, składających się z kilku tomów, z których każdy liczy kilkaset stron, doczekała się niespełna 50 opracowań w języku polskim. Z tego też powodu wszystkie cytaty z dzieł Rosminiego pojawiające się w artykule są tłumaczeniami własnymi autora. Zob. P. Borkowski, “Bibliografia polska Antonia Rosminiego,” *Człowiek w Kulturze* 18 (2006): 197–202.

<sup>2</sup> Por. A. Rosmini, *Della missione a Roma di Antonio Rosmini-Serbati negli anni 1848–49: Commentario* (Stresa: Edizioni Rosminiane, 1998).



tica—uosabianej przez Kościół) oraz wspólnoty obywatelskiej (*società civile*).<sup>3</sup>

Rozważania niniejszego artykułu koncentrują się na społeczności obywatelskiej. Ich celem jest próba odpowiedzi na pytanie o społeczny status człowieka w myśli Antonia Rosminiego: czy i na ile osoba ludzka jest podmiotem życia wspólnoty obywatelskiej? Powyższy zamiar zostanie zrealizowany przez: 1) korelację społeczności obywatelskiej z innymi społecznościami, 2) omówienie typów relacji stanowiących fundament wspólnoty cywilnej, 3) ukazanie jej cech konstytutywnych, oraz 4) opisanie poszczególnych elementów jej struktury.

### Wspólnota obywatelska a teoria społeczna

Rosminiańska koncepcja społeczności obywatelskiej nie funkcjonuje w pojęciowej i naukowej próżni. Stanowi ona logiczną konsekwencję krytycznej refleksji podjętej nad społecznością w ogólności. Rosmini twierdzi, że każdy człowiek przynależy do naturalnej społeczności rodzaju ludzkiego i tej przynależności nikomu nie można odmówić, nawet jeśli nie jest jej świadomy.<sup>4</sup> Społeczność naturalna rodzaju ludzkiego, czasem określana też jako rodzina ludzka, stanowi formę wspólnoty fundamentalnej i źródłowej w stosunku do wszystkich innych typów społeczności. Posiada ona walor nadrzędności wobec każdego innego rodzaju wspólnoty, ponieważ jej źródłem jest prawo naturalno-społeczne. Każda próba zdominowania społeczności naturalnej przez jakąkolwiek inną wspólnotę stanowi wykroczenie wobec natury ludzkiej.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Por. K. Wroczyński, „Rosmini (Rosmini Serbati) Antonio,” w *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, t. 8, red. A. Maryniarczyk (Lublin: PTTA, 2007), 823.

<sup>4</sup> A. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28 (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2015), 171, nr 638.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 178, nr 658.

Na fundamencie wspólnoty naturalnej rodzaju ludzkiego można budować kolejne wspólnoty. Rosmini w swoich pismach wymienia trzy społeczności, których zaistnienie uznaje za konieczne dla doskonałej organizacji naturalnej wspólnoty rodzaju ludzkiego. Wspólnotę dla człowieka fundamentalną stanowi wspomniana już społeczność domowa, składająca się ze wspólnoty małżeńskiej i wspólnoty rodzicielskiej. Mimo jednak dowartościowania roli małżeństwa i rodziny, włoski filozof uważa te społeczności jedynie za etap przejściowy w procesie socjalizacji. Uznając wartości i funkcje wspólnoty małżeńskiej i społeczności domowej, Rosmini dostrzega ich różne niedoskonałości i formułuje wobec nich wysokie wymagania. Twierdzi, że kolejny, konieczny etap rozwoju społeczności rodzinnej stanowi właśnie społeczność obywatelska, inaczej zwana cywilną. Przejście od społeczności domowej do wspólnoty cywilnej nie może być interpretowane jako oznaka słabości i upadku rodziny, ale jako kolejny rozdział w historii jej cywilizacyjnego rozwoju. Rodzina, będąc społecznością "ciasną" (*angusta*), potrzebuje znaleźć swój punkt odniesienia w szerszej wspólnotcie, w przeciwnym razie grozi jej inwolucja.<sup>6</sup>

Kolejne miejsce w rosminiańskiej koncepcji społecznej zajmuje wspólnota teokratyczna, czyli "Kościół Jezusa Chrystusa, którym jest wspólnota naturalna rodzaju ludzkiego wyniesiona do porządku nadprzyrodzonego i zmierzająca do ostatecznego spełnienia i pełnej realizacji."<sup>7</sup> Natomiast trzecim elementem tej koncepcji jest społeczność obywatelska (cywilna).

Jaka relacja zachodzi między wspólnotą teokratyczną (Kościołem) a wspólnotą cywilną (państwem)? W myśli włoskiego filozofa ta problematyka zajmuje miejsce relewantne i wydaje się posiadać wy-

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<sup>6</sup> A. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2015), 365, nr 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28, 170, nr 633.

miar ponadczasowy.<sup>8</sup> Jego poglądy w tej sprawie są naturalną konsekwencją tezy o pierwszeństwie społeczności religijnej wobec wspólnoty obywatelskiej. Prymat ten posiada podwójny wymiar: chronologiczny i genetyczny, czyli odnoszący się do źródła pochodzenia. Społeczność religijna została stworzona przez Boga, ma zatem pochodzenie nadprzyrodzone i góruje nad społecznością cywilną będącą dziełem człowieka, jego rozumu i wolnej woli, co czyni z niej wspólnotę sztuczną. Analogicznie do ontologicznej hierarchii bytów, społeczność wywodząca się od Absolutu zajmuje wyższą pozycję wobec wspólnot pochodzenia ludzkiego w ontycznej hierarchii społeczności.

Z pism Rosminiego wyłania się następująca kolejność powstawania wspólnot: społeczność teokratyczna, społeczności rodzinne, społeczności obywatelskie. Dlatego też społeczność obywatelska nie posiada prerogatywy modyfikowania już istniejących, ani też uchwalania “nowych” naturalnych uprawnień przysługujących osobie, a jedynie uznanie ich za wiążące, ponieważ każda jednostka ludzka—jako istniejąca wcześniej niż społeczność polityczna—wnosi w jej krąg oddziaływania swoje własne, uprzednio już posiadane i niezbywalne prawa. Prawa jednostek i społeczności naturalnych znajdują się ze swej istoty poza społecznością polityczną i dlatego nie mogą być przez nią ani zaabsorbowane, ani unicestwione. Pogląd Roveretańczyka, dotyczący czasowego i genetycznego prymatu społeczności teokratycznej i rodzinnej wobec społeczności cywilnej, ma swoje zakorzenienie w stanowiskach Arystotelesa i Cyncera, a także w teoriach filozoficznych bardziej współczes-

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<sup>8</sup> Badacz myśli Rosminiego, Danilo Zolo, pisze, że “rozdział poświęcony tematowi stosunków między Kościołem a rzeczywistością doczesną przedstawia się jako jeden z najpiękniejszych, najżywszych i najbardziej aktualnych z całego dorobku Rosminiego.” Zob. D. Zolo, *Il personalismo rosminiano. Studi sul pensiero politico di Rosmini* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1963), 267.

nych Rosminiemu, szczególnie w kręgu francuskiego tradycjonalizmu.<sup>9</sup> Jednocześnie warto zwrócić uwagę, że echo poglądów włoskiego filozofa wybrzmiało z czasem w nauczaniu społecznym Kościoła.<sup>10</sup> Poglądy naszego autora są pierwszymi poważnymi załączkami jednej z podstawowych zasad społecznej doktryny Kościoła—zasady pomocniczości.<sup>11</sup>

Według Rosminiego, polityka nie ma prawa ingerencji w istotę życia religijnego, lecz powinna otaczać opieką wspólną teokratyczną i zabezpieczać jej autonomię w zakresie istotnych funkcji i przejawów życia religijnego. Przekroczenie tej subtelnej granicy kompetencji może skutkować zwrotem w kierunku despotyzmu, opartego na błędnym przekonaniu o prymacie wspólnoty obywatelskiej nad innymi społecznościami.<sup>12</sup>

Zdaniem włoskiego filozofa, każda społeczność posiada własny cel szczegółowy, inaczej zwany bliższym, a także identyczny cel dalszy, który utożsamia się z najwyższym celem jednostek, które wchodzi w skład wspólnoty.<sup>13</sup> Na tej podstawie Rosmini wprowadza rozróżnienie na wspólnoty konieczne i akcydentalne. Za niezbędne dla życia i rozwoju rodzaju ludzkiego jako całości, a także poszczególnych jednostek, uznaje Rosmini istnienie społeczności rodzinnej, religijnej (zwanej teokratyczną) i cywilnej. Społecznościom, których brak nie powoduje reperkusji w rozwoju człowieka, włoski filozof przypisuje rolę akcyden-

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<sup>9</sup> P. Borkowski, „Państwo wobec rodziny, Kościoła i stowarzyszeń. Wzajemne stosunki społeczności ludzkich według Antonia Rosminiego,” *Człowiek w Kulturze* 18 (2006): 166.

<sup>10</sup> Zob. Leon XIII, *Encyklika Rerum novarum (o kwestii robotniczej)* (Wrocław: TUM Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 1996); Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno (o chrześcijańskim ustroju społecznym)* (Warszawa: Te Deum, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Por. Borkowski, „Państwo wobec rodziny, Kościoła i stowarzyszeń,” 168.

<sup>12</sup> Więcej na temat prymatu polityki nad religią, zob. P. Tarasiewicz, „Between Politics and Religion—In Search of the *Golden Mean*,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 1 (2012): 122–126.

<sup>13</sup> G. Lorzio, *Antonio Rosmini Serbati 1797–1855. Un profilo storico-teologico* (Roma: Lateran University Press, 2005), 271.

talną. Tego typu wspólnoty nie wpływają w sposób znaczący na progres poszczególnych ludzi. Spełniają one raczej rolę pomocniczą w procesie kształtowania dojrzałego człowieka i doskonalenia wspólnot.<sup>14</sup>

Do wspólnot niekoniecznych włoski myśliciel zalicza: 1) wszelkiego rodzaju wspólnoty komercyjne, 2) wspólnoty militarne, służące powszechnemu bezpieczeństwu, 3) wspólnoty literackie, mające za cel podnoszenie poziomu intelektualnego jej członków, 4) wspólnoty polityczne, dążące do wzrostu powszechnej zamożności i znaczenia.<sup>15</sup>

Tym ostatnim Rosmini poświęca szczególną uwagę, stojąc na stanowisku, że partie polityczne są organizacjami hamującymi wzrost sprawiedliwości i moralny rozwój społeczności. Włoski filozof określa je mianem “robaka toczącego społeczność, złem, które zniekształca filozoficzne wizje i niszczy najlepsze nawet teorie.”<sup>16</sup> Do partii politycznych wstępują ludzie, którzy w swoim postępowaniu nie kierują się ani zasadą sprawiedliwości, ani kryterium uczciwości i doskonalenia cnót. Gdyby było inaczej, nie tworzyliby partii, ale poświęcaliby się sprawie rozwoju całej wspólnoty. Zło partii politycznych znajduje się już w samej etiologii ich powstania. Rodzą się one albo na gruncie partykularnych interesów ekonomicznych, albo z potrzeby zmanifestowania przez jakąś grupę ludzi określonych, często błędnych, przekonań, albo na skutek działania demagogów wśród mas ludowych. Jakakolwiek byłaby geneza powstania konkretnej partii, jej “źródło jest jednakowo podłe i mroczne.”<sup>17</sup> Według Rosminiego, przymiotnik “partyjny” jest synonimem stronnictwa i partykularyzmu, oraz antonimem uniwersalizmu

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<sup>14</sup> Borkowski, “Państwo wobec rodziny, Kościoła i stowarzyszeń,” 162. Niniejsze rozważania znajdują swoje dopełnienie w kontekście dyskusji wokół personalistycznej koncepcji dobra wspólnego; zob. np. P. Tarasiewicz, “Dobro wspólne z perspektywy personalizmu filozoficznego,” w *Polityka: od Niccolo Machiavellego do Jana Pawła II*, red. S. Kowolik (Tamowskie Góry: Fundacja Kolpinga, 2017), 77–87.

<sup>15</sup> Borkowski, “Państwo wobec rodziny, Kościoła i stowarzyszeń,” 162.

<sup>16</sup> A. Rosmini, *Filosofia della politica* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1997), 231.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

i sprawiedliwości. W konsekwencji swojego sposobu postrzegania partii politycznych i ich roli w społeczeństwie, Roveretańczyk postuluje zapobieganie ich tworzeniu lub przynajmniej obstrukcję ich działalności. W zamian promuje on troskę o rozwój cnót moralnych w poszczególnych członkach społeczności obywatelskiej. Im dojrzałsza będzie dana osobowość, tym bardziej będzie stronić od partii politycznych, oddając się na służbę całej społeczności.<sup>18</sup>

Poglądy Rosminiego na temat partii politycznych są konsekwencją jego myśli etycznej o wyższości dobra obiektywnego nad dobrem subiektywnym. Czy jednak nie są to poglądy utopijne? Wydaje się, że nie. Jego postulaty cechuje bardziej idealizm niż utopijność.<sup>19</sup>

## Relacje społeczne

Rosmini, mówiąc o związkach zachodzących między człowiekiem i innymi bytami, odróżnia te na płaszczyźnie idealnej od tych, które występują w akcie. Odnośnie do pierwszego rodzaju używa pojęcia "relacji" (*rapporto*). Nie podaje wprost ich definicji, skupiając się głównie na opisie ich przymiotów. Według Roveretańczyka, charakteryzują się one przede wszystkim koniecznością i niezmiennością. Ponadto spełniają funkcję normatywną. Wskazują formę, jaką powinny przyjmować związki człowieka z innymi ludźmi oraz z bytami nieoso-

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<sup>18</sup> Por. Wroczyński, "Rosmini (Rosmini Serbati) Antonio," 824: "Polityka winna opierać się bardziej na cnocie obywateli (element platoński) niż na partiach politycznych, podobnie jak na wolnej twórczości i różnorodności. Unifikacja ideologiczna niszczy życie społeczne."

<sup>19</sup> Na temat różnicy między idealizmem a utopijnością, zob. G. Reale, *Historia filozofii starożytnej*, t. 5: *Słownik, indeksy i bibliografia* (Lublin: RW KUL, 2002), 243: "Trzeba odróżnić utopijne od idealnego. To, co utopijne, jest niemożliwe do zrealizowania, ponieważ natura ludzka ze względów strukturalnych nie jest zdolna do jego urzeczywistnienia. . . . Tymczasem to, co idealne, jest paradygmatem traktowanym jako model czy norma do zrealizowania, nawet jeśli może on być urzeczywistniony tylko w pewnym stopniu."

bowymi.<sup>20</sup> Relacje w akcie, czyli takie, które zostały już ustanowione i trwają realnie, włoski filozof określa mianem “więzi” (*vincolo*)<sup>21</sup> i definiuje wskazując na cele, czy też zadania, którym służą. W tym kluczu wyodrębnia trzy specyficzne rodzaje więzi: więź posiadania (*vincolo di proprietà*), więź panowania (*vincolo di dominio*)—inaczej zwana więzią zwierzchnictwa (*vincolo di signoria*), oraz więź społeczną (*vincolo sociale*).<sup>22</sup>

Zupełnie nieprzydatna, zdaniem włoskiego filozofa, do konstruowania wspólnot ludzkich jest więź panowania, czy też podległości. Kiedy nasz autor mówi o najmniejszej ze wspólnot, czyli małżeństwie (*società coniugale*) lub rodzinie (*società domestica*), wyraźnie odrzuca możliwość zbudowania ich na fundamencie więzi podległości. Tym samym, krytykuje i odrzuca myśl Georga Hegla, twierdząc, że nie można do małżeństwa stosować używanej przez niemieckiego idealistę kategorii “wspólnota służebna” (*società erile*).<sup>23</sup> Wspólnota służebna, zdaniem Rosminiego, jest takim rodzajem relacji, w której dominują stosunki o charakterze podległości. Z tego powodu stwierdza, że relacja typu “pan–sługa” nie może być rozpatrywana jako relacja wspólnotowa. I chociaż tego rodzaju stosunki są określane jako społeczność, jednak w istocie społecznością nie są.<sup>24</sup> Tak więc więzi panowania, czy podległości, mogą być użyteczne w budowaniu tyranii czy monarchii

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<sup>20</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia della politica*, 129.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Por. *ibid.*, 129–150.

<sup>23</sup> Por. H. Cieśla, E. Jamrozik, R. Kłós, *Wielki słownik polsko–włoski*, t. I: A–E (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 2001), 859. Wyraz pochodzący z łac. *erūs*—pan, właściciel, gospodarz, tłumaczony przymiotnikowo jako *pański*, *należący do pana*, podkreślający stosunek podległości, wręcz własności. W języku polskim nie istnieje termin ekwiwalentny. Wahając się pomiędzy tłumaczeniem *społeczność poddańcza* lub *społeczność służebna*, na potrzeby niniejszego opracowania przyjmuje się drugą wersję: *społeczność służebna*.

<sup>24</sup> Por. N. Muzzin, *Amore e istituzione famiglia e matrimonio in Antonio Rosmini* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2003), 53–60.

despotycznej, jednak nie stanowią żadnej wartości w budowaniu prawdziwej wspólnoty. Z racji pełnego dowartościowania w jej obrębie osobowej godności człowieka, nie ma w niej miejsca na więzi panowania, co automatycznie eliminuje istnienie niewolnictwa czy też innych form poddaństwa. Włoski filozof stwierdza jednoznacznie i kategorycznie: "Osoby, będąc członkami społeczności, są wolne."<sup>25</sup>

Dopuszczalną formę więzi w relacjach międzyludzkich stanowi więź posiadania. Może ona zaistnieć między człowiekiem i rzeczą, jeśli z perspektywy człowieka posiada ona walor użyteczności. Według włoskiego myśliciela, "wszystkie byty są rzeczami, niektóre zaś z tych rzeczy są również osobami. Wszystkie więc osoby są rzeczami, ale nie wszystkie rzeczy są osobami."<sup>26</sup> Stoi on na stanowisku, że "człowieka wolno traktować jak rzecz, ponieważ w pewnym zakresie faktycznie jest on rzeczą."<sup>27</sup> Rubikon w stosunkach międzyludzkich stanowi godność bytu osobowego.

Człowiek może z powodzeniem używać swojego bliźniego dla własnej korzyści i do tego momentu bliźni służy mu podobnie jak rzecz; ale nie może go używać bez ograniczeń: "w tym używaniu musi narzucić sobie granicę, a narzucając ją sobie, traktuje swojego bliźniego jak osobę."<sup>28</sup>

W takim rozumowaniu traktowanie człowieka jako środka do celu, jeśli tylko nie sprzeciwia się szacunkowi wobec godności osobowej, można uznać za moralnie dopuszczalne. Przykładem takiej relacji mogą być, na przykład, wzajemne odniesienia pomiędzy pracownikiem a pracodawcą. Kiedy jednak w stosunku pracy odrzucony zostanie pierwia-

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<sup>25</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia della politica*, 154.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>27</sup> P. Borkowski, *Podstawowe normy społeczno-polityczne w systemie filozoficznym Antonia Rosminiego* (Warszawa: Semper, 2009), 99.

<sup>28</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia della politica*, 139.

stek moralny i poszanowanie godności osobowej drugiego człowieka, więc posiadania przechodzi w różnorodne formy opresji i wyzysku.

Więź społeczna nie wyczerpuje, według Roveretańczyka, znamion moralnie idealnej formy koegzystencji społecznej. Za jej doskonalsze formy uznaje on życzliwość społeczną i przyjaźń: “Czymś czystszy, świętszym, wznioślejszym od zwyczajnej życzliwości społecznej jest postawa przyjaźni.”<sup>29</sup>

Życzliwość społeczna to w koncepcji włoskiego filozofa postawa, w której pojedynczy człowiek, pragnąc dla siebie jakiegoś dobra, jednocześnie pragnie go dla innych członków społeczności. Naturalnym dążeniem każdego człowieka jest osiągnięcie dobra przez wszystkich obywateli—dobro takie można zdefiniować jako dobro powszechne. Jeżeli więc dobro, które stanowi cel społeczności, przeznaczone jest dla wszystkich jej członków, a poszczególny członek społeczności pragnie osiągnięcia tego dobra dla siebie samego, to tym samym pragnie go również dla innych. To pragnienie emanuje z samej natury bytu społecznego i posiada charakter moralnej konieczności, a nie moralnej zasługi opartej na bezinteresownej miłości bliźniego.<sup>30</sup> W teorii Rosminiego dobro wspólne, czyli również dobro innych osób, jawi się w pewnym sensie jako produkt uboczny dążenia do zdobycia dobra osobistego.<sup>31</sup> Tak o tym pisze włoski myśliciel:

Kiedy człowiek gromadzi wokół siebie innych, podobnych sobie, tworzą oni osobę moralną, której przekazuje dobro, jakiego pragnie dla samego siebie, bo odnajduje w niej siebie samego i w taki właśnie sposób człowiek uczestniczy w dobru tworzonym na rzecz osoby moralnej. Szczęście społeczne istnieje zatem w tych ludziach, którzy łącząc się z innymi, dzielą się z nimi dobrem, które już posiadają lub starają się osiąść. Szczęście społeczne polega na wzroście szczęścia indywidualnego, którego człowiek

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

doświadcza, kiedy może cieszyć się nim we wspólnocie z innymi, podobnymi sobie.<sup>32</sup>

Jeszcze wyższym stopniem rozwoju więzi społecznej jest przyjaźń. W tego rodzaju relacji człowiek zabiega o dobro osoby kochanej ze względu na nią samą, pomijając kompletnie siebie samego i koncentrując swoje pragnienia i wysiłki w służbie przyjacielowi.<sup>33</sup> “Tak pojmowana przyjaźń stanowi najwyższą normę określającą prawidłowy kształt stosunków, które powinny panować między ludźmi żyjącymi w społeczności obywatelskiej.”<sup>34</sup> Najdoskonalszą formę przyjmuje przyjaźń wtedy, gdy motywem jej nawiązania i pielęgnowania są wartości moralne obecne w drugiej osobie.

Reasumując, można stwierdzić, że najniższym stopniem funkcjonowania grupy ludzi na poziomie relacji jest traktowanie drugiego człowieka w sposób nie w pełni osobowy. Na tym etapie nie można mówić o istnieniu właściwej wspólnoty. Wyższym poziomem relacji jest odnośnienie się do drugiego człowieka jak do bytu osobowego, chociaż motywem takiego postępowania są profity, jakie można osiągnąć w takiej współzależności. Dopiero trzeci (najwyższy) stopień koegzystencji, polegający na budowaniu stosunków z innymi z racji na to, że są oni osobami posiadającymi zdolność nabywania i urzeczywistniania cnoty, należy uznać—zdaniem włoskiego filozofa—za najwłaściwszy.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A. Rosmini, *Opere inedite di politica*, w *Frammenti della filosofia della politica*, 32, cyt. za: F. Traniello, *Società religiosa e società civile in Rosmini* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1997), 94–95.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Borkowski, *Podstawowe normy społeczno-polityczne w systemie filozoficznym Antonia Rosminiego*, 108.

<sup>35</sup> Por. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 233, nr 1595.

## Definicja i cechy społeczności obywatelskiej

Uwzględniając powyższe rozróżnienia, Rosmini podaje w swoich pismach następującą definicję społeczności cywilnej:

Jest [ona] zjednoczeniem pewnej liczby ojców [rodzin], którzy zgadzają się na to, żeby sposoby realizowania uprawnień, którymi oni zarządzają, były stale regulowane przez jeden rozum i jedną siłę społeczną w celu lepszej ochrony tychże uprawnień i zapewnienia najbardziej zadowalającego korzystania z nich.<sup>36</sup>

Z podanej definicji wynika, że zasadą powstania oraz istnienia społeczności jest wolność, wyrażająca się w konsensusie rodzin przystępujących do wspólnoty.<sup>37</sup> Do konstytutywnych cech wspólnoty obywatelskiej należy konsens każdego z jej członków na bycie w jedności z innymi. W tym przypadku członkami społeczności są rodziny reprezentowane przez ojców. Wynika to z koncepcji małżeństwa, poprzez które, zdaniem włoskiego filozofa, mąż i żona tworzą osobę zbiorową, której reprezentowanie na zewnątrz powierzone jest mężczyźnie.<sup>38</sup> Gdyby mąż i żona posiadali odmienne sympatie i poglądy polityczne, miałyby to zgubne skutki dla pogłębiania i doskonalenia jedności małżeńskiej. Ścisłość węzła małżeńskiego wymaga, aby małżeństwo, jako osoba kolektywna, przemawiało na zewnątrz jednym głosem.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 239–240, nr 1612.

<sup>37</sup> W świetle myśli Rosminiego człowiek istnieje niezależnie od tego, czy przynależy do jakiejś wspólnoty obywatelskiej, czy też nie. Stąd konkluzja Roveretańczyka, że prędzej “wyginą” (czyli zostaną rozwiązane) wspólnoty, niż poszczególni ludzie. Zob. A. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 27/A (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2014), 446, nr 1660.

<sup>38</sup> Kobieta to zadanie może spełniać tylko w trzech przypadkach. Po pierwsze, kiedy reprezentuje rodzinę wspólnie z mężem. Drugi przypadek ma miejsce, kiedy nieobecny mąż prosi żonę o takie reprezentowanie. I wreszcie w przypadku śmierci małżonka żona w sposób naturalny staje się głową rodziny. Zob. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 177, nr 1424.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 178, nr 1430.

Ważny przymiot wspólnoty cywilnej stanowi równość. W koncepcji społecznej Rosminiego równość często łączy się z różnorodnością, która nie suponuje istnienia nierówności, przeciwnie—poszczególne członkowie społeczności, traktowani jako cele same w sobie, są sobie równi i są w identycznym zakresie celem działań społeczności.<sup>40</sup> Zdaniem filozofa z Rovereto, “osoby tworzące społeczność, ponieważ wszystkie są celem, a żadna z nich nie jest środkiem, nie różnią się istotnie jako takie—wszystkie są zasadniczo równe. Na tym więc i tylko na tym polega równość społeczna.”<sup>41</sup>

Do cech społeczności obywatelskiej zalicza się również istnienie wspólnoty zasobów, czyli rezerwuaru pieniędzy, pracy oraz innych środków przeznaczonych do wspólnego użytku.<sup>42</sup> Bez wspólnoty dóbr powstanie społeczności nie byłoby w ogóle możliwe, gdyż ten etap determinuje aktualizację pozostałych. “Jeżeli coś zostało przez ludzi przeznaczone do wspólnego używania z myślą o osiągnięciu jakiegoś celu, to znaczy, że wcześniej pojawiła się świadomość i wola umożliwiająca dokonanie tego aktu.”<sup>43</sup>

Inne ważne cechy społeczności obywatelskiej, jakie kolejno wymienia i analizuje Rosmini, to powszechność, nadrzędność, wieczne trwanie oraz efektywność.<sup>44</sup> Różne stowarzyszenia działające w ramach wspólnoty posiadają prawa partykularne, które regulują ich funkcjonowanie. W odróżnieniu od nich, prawa stanowione i wykonywane w ramach wspólnoty obywatelskiej dotyczą wszystkich jej członków, czyli

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<sup>40</sup> Por. Borkowski, *Podstawowe normy społeczno-polityczne w systemie filozoficznym Antonia Rosminiego*, 104–105.

<sup>41</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia della politica*, 156.

<sup>42</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 224, nr 1565.

<sup>43</sup> Borkowski, *Podstawowe normy społeczno-polityczne w systemie filozoficznym Antonia Rosminiego*, 70.

<sup>44</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 242–248, nr 1621–1648.

posiadają walor powszechności, tak jak sama społeczność, która się nimi rządzi.<sup>45</sup>

Kolejną cechą społeczności cywilnej jest jej nadrzędność wobec innych stowarzyszeń związanych przez członków wspólnoty obywatelskiej.<sup>46</sup> Mówiąc o tym przymiocie wspólnoty cywilnej, włoski myśliciel krytykuje wprost poglądy Thomasa Hobbesa. Zdaniem Rosminiego, podstawowy błąd angielskiego filozofa polega na braku dystynkcji między prawem (*diritto*) a sposobem stosowania prawa (*modalità dei diritti*), co skutkuje absolutną supremacją wspólnoty obywatelskiej, reprezentowanej przez państwo, nad jednostkami i społecznościami. W koncepcji włoskiego myśliciela państwo nie może ingerować w prawa, jakie przynależą osobie, rodzinie czy Kościołowi z natury—zadanie wspólnoty cywilnej polega wyłącznie na dbaniu o respektowanie tych praw. Angielski myśliciel daje państwu uprawnienia absolutne, pozwalające zmieniać i ograniczać prawa wynikające z natury osoby ludzkiej, rodziny i Kościoła.<sup>47</sup>

Inny przymiot wspólnoty cywilnej stanowi jej wieczne trwanie na poziomie intencji członków, którzy ją tworzą. Wieczność społeczności nie przejawia się w jej bezterminowym trwaniu. Wieczność nie oznacza, że dana społeczność cywilna nie może zakończyć swojego istnienia. Historia pokazuje, jak wiele państw i cywilizacji przestało funkcjonować. Nie oznacza również, że poszczególni członkowie nie mają prawa opuścić szeregów wspólnoty i przenieść się do innej. Wstępując do społeczności, jej członkowie nie zakładają jej opuszczenia, chociaż mają zawsze do tego prawo.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 242–243, nr 1621–1624.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 243, nr 1625.

<sup>47</sup> Por. T. Hobbes, *Lewiatan, czyli materia, forma i władza państwa kościelnego i świeckiego* (Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia, 2005), 9–14.

<sup>48</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 245–247, nr 1630–1639.

Supremacja siły, którą dysponuje władza społeczności obywatelskiej, nad siłami posiadanymi przez poszczególne partie czy stronnictwa działające w jej łonie, to kolejna cecha społeczności cywilnej. Siła nie jest synonimem potencjału militarnego czy też aparatu represji. Siła społeczności w koncepcji Rosminiego może mieć wymiar moralny, intelektualny i materialny.<sup>49</sup>

Inna właściwość wspólnoty obywatelskiej to istnienie w niej hierarchiczności dóbr i proporcjonalności udziałów. Według Roveretańczyka, należy odróżnić dobro wspólne od dobra publicznego.<sup>50</sup> To drugie przynależy do grupy aktualnie sprawującej władzę. Kiedy rządy są sprawowane demokratycznie, należy do większości, w przypadku monarchii—do rodziny królewskiej i powiązanych z nią rodów lub grup interesów. Filozof ze Stresy dobro poszczególnych jednostek lub też rodzin tworzących społeczność określa mianem dobra prywatnego. W dobru publicznym uznaje tylko kategorię środka, który ma prowadzić do celu, jakim jest dobro wspólne.<sup>51</sup> Jedynie w sytuacji, kiedy dobro publiczne pozostaje w stosunku subordynacji do dobra wspólnego, wspólnota może zachować swoją tożsamość.<sup>52</sup> Jako przykład społeczności, która podporządkowała dobro wspólne dobru publicznemu, nasz Autor podaje Spartę i eliminowanie ze społeczeństwa najsłabszych jednostek zaraz po ich urodzeniu. Taki stan rzeczy określa jako tyranję dobra publicznego wobec dobra wspólnego.<sup>53</sup>

Jeśli idzie o dystrybucję dobra wspólnego, nasz autor proponuje stosowanie zasady współmierności rozdziału, polegającej na równoważeniu stosunku między wkładem wnoszonym do wspólnoty a udziałem

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 248, nr 1640.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 248, nr 1644.

<sup>51</sup> Borkowski, *Podstawowe normy społeczno-polityczne w systemie filozoficznym Antonia Rosminiego*, 89–90.

<sup>52</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 251–253, nr 1657–1661.

<sup>53</sup> Dzisiaj istnienie tych okrutnych praktyk jest poddawane w wątpliwość. Por. K. Kęciek, “Mit okrutnej Sparty;” tekst dostępny online—zob. *References*.

w dostarczanych przez nią korzyściach. Ci obywatele, którzy włączają pod ochronę wspólnoty więcej dóbr, powinni czerpać z niej większe korzyści.<sup>54</sup> Dominującą zasadą powinna być nie zasada równości ekonomicznej, lansowana w systemach socjalistycznych (także demokratycznych), lecz zasada proporcjonalności.

Wstępując w szeregi członków spółki, stowarzyszenia czy też innej grupy, jej udziałowcy wnoszą do niej udziały różnej natury (materiałnej, intelektualnej, moralnej) i o różnej wielkości, proporcjonalnie do swoich możliwości. Na zasadzie proporcjonalności opiera się także dysponowanie różnym zakresem uprawnień i partycypacja w dobru wspólnym. Można stąd wyprowadzić wniosek, że wielorakość udziałów (wieloudziałowość) to kolejna cecha charakterystyczna społeczności obywatelskiej. Nie stoi ona w sprzeczności z równością wobec prawa poszczególnych członków wspólnoty. Choć rzeczywiste udziały w dobrach wspólnotowych są różne, to jednak źródło tego zróżnicowania tkwi w nierówności wnoszonych do wspólnoty wkładów. Wspólna i jedna dla wszystkich jest natomiast zasada odnosząca się zarówno do wkładów, jak i do udziałów—jest nią zasada proporcjonalności.<sup>55</sup>

Bezinteresowność, czy też działalność *non profit*, stanowi kolejną cechę społeczności cywilnej. Wynika to z faktu, że społeczność obywatelska ma formę dobrowolnego stowarzyszenia, które powinno służyć interesowi wszystkich swoich członków i jako takie nie powinno być ukierunkowane na zysk.<sup>56</sup> Jedną z podstawowych funkcji wspólnoty obywatelskiej polega na regulowaniu uprawnień osób do niej należących. Zadaniem społeczności polega na dbaniu o pokojowe współistnienie rodzin w ramach tej samej społeczności i trosce o stały wzrost oraz rozwój każdego rodzaju dobra.<sup>57</sup> W tym znaczeniu społeczność w sto-

<sup>54</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 250–251, nr 1650–1656.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 263–264, nr 1696–1698.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 263, nr 1694–1695.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 263, nr 1695.

sunku do jej członków działa jak organizacja dobroczynna, bez nastawienia na pomnażanie dochodów.

Posiadanie wyżej wymienionych cech przez społeczność obywatelską zapewnia i sprzyja realizacji głównego jej zadania, które polega na normowaniu relacji między poszczególnymi wspólnotami domowymi, tak aby istnienie wspólnoty przynosiło jak największą korzyść każdej z rodzin.<sup>58</sup> “Celem [społeczności] obywatelskiej jest usuwanie przeszkód i mądre tworzenie warunków sprzyjających korzystaniu, wzrostowi i tworzeniu dóbr oraz praw przysługujących wspólnocie domowej.”<sup>59</sup>

Ponadto warto zauważyć rozróżnienie, jakiego dokonuje włoski myśliciel, pomiędzy społecznością cywilną a społecznością polityczną, czyli państwem. Wspólnota cywilna, wołą swoich przedstawicieli, czyli ojców rodzin, podejmuje decyzję o cesji niektórych uprawnień przysługujących poszczególnym rodzinom na rzecz wspólnoty politycznej, która realizuje te uprawnienia przy pomocy państwa.<sup>60</sup>

W koncepcji Rosminiego społeczność obywatelska posiada prymat wobec państwa, chociaż jednocześnie uznaje jego istnienie za konieczność. Konsekwentnie nasz autor rozróżnia pomiędzy społecznością cywilną, państwem i władzą. Państwa nie reprezentują dla niego “społeczności w czystej postaci.” Do ich podstawowych zadań należy jedynie stanowienie prawa i dbałość o jego przestrzeganie przez poszczególnych obywateli. Tym samym w państwie musi pojawić się pier-

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<sup>58</sup> L. Turiello, *Persona e società civile nel pensiero di Rosmini* (Roma: Citta Nuova Editrice, 1982), 69.

<sup>59</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 231, nr 1588.

<sup>60</sup> “Società” w języku włoskim oznacza “społeczność,” “wspólnotę,” a także “stowarzyszenie” lub “spółkę.” Natomiast ekwiwalentem włoskiego terminu “civile” w języku polskim jest przymiotnik “obywatelski” lub “cywilny.” Dlatego też w tekście pojawiać się będą zamiennie określenia: *wspólnota cywilna*, *społeczność cywilna*, *wspólnota obywatelska* lub *społeczność obywatelska*, odnosząc się do tej samej rzeczywistości określanej przez Rosminiego jako *società civile*.

wiastek panowania, co wyklucza je z kategorii społeczności. Społeczność cywilna jest miejscem rezydowania władzy wywodzącej się z krytycznej refleksji, czyli—mówiąc potocznie—mądrości. Władza wspólnoty opiera się na autorytecie i jest wolna od elementu siły. Taki rodzaj władzy, który możemy opisać łacińskim terminem “*auctoritas*,” stanowi źródłosłów dla pojęcia “autorytetu.” W społeczności politycznej, znajdującej swój wyraz w państwie, odnajdziemy przede wszystkim władzę opartą na przymusie i panowaniu, określaną łacińskim terminem “*potestas*.” Idealna społeczność cywilna dla Rosminiego to taka, w której element podległości (*potestas*) zostaje zredukowany do niezbędnego minimum.<sup>61</sup>

### Struktura wspólnoty politycznej

Rosmini wyróżnia kilka rodzajów przynależności do wspólnoty, opisując odpowiadające im modele: obywatele-wyborcy, administratorzy polityczni lub jeden władca, członkowie parlamentu i sędziowie Najwyższego Sądu Sprawiedliwości oraz imigranci ubiegający się o azyl.<sup>62</sup>

Pod pojęciem “narodu” Rosmini rozumie wszystkich obywateli, zarówno tych, którzy sprawują funkcje publiczne, jak i tych, którzy ich do pełnienia tychże funkcji wybrali.<sup>63</sup> Wszyscy wyborcy są obywatelami, jednak nie wszyscy obywatele są wyborcami.

Czynne prawo wyborcze przysługuje wszystkim, którzy posiadają choćby najmniejszą własność, płacą podatki do skarbu państwa oraz

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<sup>61</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 233–234, nr 1597–1598.

<sup>62</sup> L. Bissoli, “Quale cittadinanza? La proposta di Antonio Rosmini,” tekst dostępny online—zob. *References*.

<sup>63</sup> Warto zauważyć, że “w systemie konstytucyjnym naród nie jest suwerenem, które to pojęcie samo w sobie jest absurdalne, choć jednak posiada częściowo jego uprawnienia, polegające wyłącznie na prawie do wyboru reprezentantów swoich interesów. Po ich wyborze naród nie sprawuje inaczej swojej władzy, jak tylko przez wybranych przez siebie przedstawicieli.” A. Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, w A. Rosmini, *Scritti Politici* (Stresa: Edizioni Rosminiane Sodalitas, 2010), 227.

są pełnoletnimi mężczyznami.<sup>64</sup> Tak więc wszystkie kobiety oraz ci mężczyźni, którzy nie mają własności i nie płacą podatków, są wykluczeni z grona wyborców. Co więcej, w koncepcji Rosminiego, siła głosu poszczególnych wyborców powinna być proporcjonalna do wkładu, jaki każdy z nich wnosi na rzecz wspólnoty.<sup>65</sup>

Płacący podatki obywatel wnosi niejako samego siebie jako wkład do dobra wspólnego.<sup>66</sup> System podatkowy służy nie tylko gromadzeniu środków w kasie państwowej. Jest on również pewnego rodzaju inwestycją podatnika, który chce osiągnąć możliwie najwyższy zysk z wniesionego wkładu. Ten zatem, kto płaci więcej zobowiązań, przejawia większe zainteresowanie rozwojem społeczności i, w związku z tym, powinien mieć na ten rozwój odpowiednio większy wpływ.<sup>67</sup>

Zdaniem Rosminiego, takie rozwiązanie zapobiega nadmiernemu podnoszeniu podatków przez władze administracyjne, a także przeciwdziała powstawaniu podziałów między zwykłymi obywatelami a urzędnikami—zwłaszcza tymi, którzy są odpowiedzialni za ustalanie wysokości obciążeń podatkowych.<sup>68</sup> Symbioza między poszczególnymi obywatelami i państwem powinna doprowadzić do bardziej odpowiedzialnego gospodarowania dobrem wspólnym, do praktycznej likwidacji problemu zagrożenia korupcją, do rozkwitu życia społecznego i zniesienia racji istnienia partii politycznych.<sup>69</sup>

Wprowadzenie tzw. cenzusu wyborczego działa, według włoskiego myśliciela, na rzecz ochrony zróżnicowanej własności obywateli. Wyjątek miałyby stanowić reprezentacja w trybunale politycznym

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<sup>64</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia della politica*, 155.

<sup>65</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> A. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 27 (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2014), 234.

<sup>67</sup> A. Tarantino, *Natura delle cose e società civile. Rosmini e Romagnosi* (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 1983), 220–223.

<sup>68</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 116–117.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

stojącym na straży ochrony praw wszystkich członków społeczności cywilnej.<sup>70</sup> System głosowania powinien więc być różny od systemu opartego na zasadzie równości materialnej, w myśl której każdemu wyborcy przysługuje jeden głos o takiej samej sile, co innym głosującym. Silniejszy głos przysługiwałby zarówno najzamożniejszemu materialnie, jak i tym, którzy posiadają więcej dzieci—ci, ponieważ powołują do życia i wychowują nowych obywateli, mogliby wypowiadać się i głosować niejako w ich imieniu.<sup>71</sup>

Czy jednak zależność siły głosu wyborczego od wkładu podatkowego nie przeciwstawia się idei równości obywateli wobec prawa? Wydaje się, że nie. W koncepcji Roveretańczyka bowiem każdy człowiek ma w sensie ontologicznym tę samą wartość bez względu na stan posiadania, stąd też może być pociągnięty do odpowiedzialności przed sądem. Każdy więc członek społeczności cieszy się równością wobec prawa, polegającą na nienaruszalności i niezbywalności jego praw oraz na równości konstytucyjnej, czyli na takiej samej jakości i ilości przysługujących mu uprawnień.<sup>72</sup> Z drugiej strony, poszczególni członkowie społeczności różnią się od siebie ze względu na pełnione funkcje społeczne, poziom wykształcenia i kompetencje.<sup>73</sup>

Równość faktyczna, zwana konstytutywną, powoduje, według włoskiego myśliciela, nadmierne ujednolicenie społeczności i pozbawienie poszczególnych osób ich wyjątkowości, a co za tym idzie depryzację ich specyficznych uprawnień. Zauważa, że każdy przywilej jednego członka społeczności implikuje zobowiązanie dla innego członka wspólnoty, co prowadzi do realnego zróżnicowania w jej łonie.<sup>74</sup> Kto zatem domaga się równości konstytutywnej, paradoksalnie domaga się

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–112.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>74</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28/A, 463–464, nr 2183.

nierówności, zdając się nie dostrzegać specyfiki poszczególnych osób, grup zawodowych czy społecznych. Dlatego też koncepcja Rosminiego jawi się jako polemiczny głos wobec socjalizmu, komunizmu i wszelkich ideologii równościowych, nieuwzględniających indywidualnych cech i predyspozycji poszczególnych jednostek.<sup>75</sup> Uważał on, że “ludzie są równi w tym, co dotyczy prawa naturalnego, to jednak nie oznacza, że muszą być równi w społeczności, którą sami zakładają.”<sup>76</sup>

Obawą Roveretańczyka było również to, że za poglądami domagającymi się faktycznej równości wszystkich obywateli kryją się postulaty walki klasowej, która w rezultacie będzie prowadzić do zastąpienia jednego despotyzmu innym.<sup>77</sup>

Kiedy koncepcja wszechwładzy ludu napełniła strachem świat zbroczony krwią ludzi, izby ustawodawcze uroczyście zajęły miejsce tyranów, absolutyzm zmienił swoją postać, ale ciągle był żywy, ubrany jedynie w szaty praworządności: nie był tak okrutny jak wcześniej, ale ciągle despotyczny: przemoc cofnęła się zaledwie o krok.<sup>78</sup>

Dlaczego jednak Rosmini odmawia czynnego prawa wyborczego osobom nieposiadającym niczego na własność (*nullatenenti*)? Jego zdaniem, brak prawa wyborczego wynika z faktu niepłacenia podatków. Nie znaczy to jednak, że osoby, które nie płacą podatków, są całkowicie wykluczone ze wspólnoty. Są one członkami społeczności i jako obywatele podlegają ochronie prawnej.<sup>79</sup>

Wspólnota cywilna, zapewniając osobom nieposiadającym majątku równość prawną, czyli równe traktowanie przed sądami, czyni załość zasadzie sprawiedliwości, na której jest ufundowana. Nie należy jednak do obowiązków społeczności obywatelskiej branie na siebie cięż-

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<sup>75</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 91.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>77</sup> Por. *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>79</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 197–198.

żaru utrzymania osób bezmających. Dobroczynności bowiem w sensie aktu moralnego nie da się pogodzić z jakąkolwiek formą zewnętrznego przymusu. W sensie właściwym stanowi ona całkowicie wolny akt konkretnej osoby. Z kolei opieka socjalna jest już swego rodzaju wymuszonym obowiązkiem, który—choć z pozoru może mieć znamiona działania wolnej woli człowieka—jawi się, dla Rosminiego, jako ewidentny przejaw autorytaryzmu. Przede wszystkim wobec tej części społeczności, która posiadała konkretne dobro, zmuszając ją do zrzeczenia się jakiejś jego części. Paradoksalnie jednak także wobec osób niczego nie posiadających, redukując ich potrzeby wyłącznie do poziomu materialnego, a pomijając ich potrzeby psychiczne i duchowe.<sup>80</sup> Opieka społeczna, polegająca na zaspokajaniu tylko potrzeb materialnych, to przejaw redukcji człowieka do jednej tylko sfery i jego degradacja ontologiczna.

Nie znaczy to, że Rosmini jest przeciwnikiem pomocy społecznej. Nie zgadza się on jedynie na jej zupełne upaństwowienie. Państwowa opieka społeczna, zdaniem włoskiego myśliciela, wpływa negatywnie zarówno na jej beneficjentów, jak i na jej prokurentów. Beneficjentom nie pomaga w uzyskaniu samodzielności, ani też nie spełnia wszystkich oczekiwań. Natomiast na wyższą i średnią klasę społeczną nakłada przymusowe zobowiązania.

Rosmini nie ogranicza się do krytyki, podaje też konkretne rozwiązania. W przypadku, gdy społeczność cywilna bierze na siebie obowiązek utrzymania biednych, ci w zamian zaciągają na siebie prawny obowiązek wykonywania pracy na rzecz społeczności. W przeciwnym razie nie byłoby możliwe zweryfikowanie, kto wśród ubogich potrzebuje pomocy naprawdę, a kto jest zwykłym próżniakiem żyjącym na cudzy koszt, czy wręcz złodziejem.<sup>81</sup> Praca wykonywana przez osoby

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<sup>80</sup> A. Rosmini, *Costituzioni dell'Istituto della Carità* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1996), 169, nr 593–596.

<sup>81</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 27/A, 523, nr 1896.

subsydiowane przez państwo byłyby formą restytucji otrzymanej pomocy.<sup>82</sup>

Należy zauważyć, że filozof z Rovereto nie odmawia osobom nieposiadającym niczego biernego prawa wyborczego. Według jego założeń, mogą oni być wybierani do parlamentu, bądź też mogą być im powierzane funkcje ministrów lub urzędników, jeśli tylko posiadają odpowiednie kompetencje do pełnienia tych zadań.<sup>83</sup>

Dla zapewnienia sprawiedliwych ustaw, stojących na straży praw każdego obywatela, potrzebne jest—zdaniem Rosminiego—zaistnienie dwuizbowego parlamentu, wybieranego w drodze głosowania opartego na zasadzie cenzusu majątkowego.<sup>84</sup> W wyższej izbie powinni zasiadać reprezentanci najbogatszej części społeczeństwa, w izbie niższej—przedstawiciele klasy średniej i robotników. Sejm nie powinien pełnić roli ośrodka władzy wykonawczej, lecz być miejscem, gdzie są prezentowane i brane pod uwagę opinie wszystkich grup interesów.<sup>85</sup>

Władza rządzenia, zdaniem włoskiego myśliciela, nie realizuje się w zwykłym panowaniu, ale w nieustannym zabieganiu o dobro zarządzanej społeczności. Jeśli ten cel przestaje być realizowany, wspólnota ulega unicestwieniu.<sup>86</sup>

Kolejnym ważnym elementem organizacji społeczności obywatelskiej jest organ zwany Najwyższym Trybunałem Sprawiedliwości (*La Suprema Corte di Giustizia*), określane również Trybunałem Politycz-

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<sup>82</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 147–148.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>84</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 190–191.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–105.

<sup>86</sup> Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 28, 92, nr 311. Rosmini podkreśla, że nie powinno się tłumaczyć racją stanu (czyli troską o dobro zarządzanej społeczności) zabijania niewinnych, czy też poświęcać choćby jednego istnienia ludzkiego celem ocalenia całego narodu. Zob. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*, vol. 27/A, 457, nr 1681.

nym (*Tribunale politico*) albo Senatem (*Senato*).<sup>87</sup> Jego zadanie miałyby polegać na rozstrzyganiu sporów między obywatelem a aparatem administracyjnym. Miałyby on być instytucją, do której mogliby się zwracać poszczególni członkowie społeczności obywatelskiej w przypadku naruszenia przez władzę ich naturalnych uprawnień.<sup>88</sup> Za szczególnie ważne dla porządku prawnego, Roveretańczyk uważał to, aby Trybunał stał na straży przestrzegania konstytucji, kompetencji i obowiązków administracji publicznej oraz naturalnych praw wszystkich obywateli. Szczególną funkcję tego organu widział w ochronie mniejszości przed ewentualnym uciskiem ze strony większości.<sup>89</sup> Trybunał Sprawiedliwości miałyby również kontrolować postanowienia sądów powszechnych, aby te nie uzurpowały sobie statusu nowych ustaw. Takie praktyki Rosmini określa mianem “oszukiwania narodu.”<sup>90</sup>

## Podsumowanie

W świetle przeprowadzonych analiz osoba ludzka jawi się wyraźnie jako podmiot życia wspólnoty obywatelskiej. Według Antonia Rosminiego, podstawową racją istnienia społeczności obywatelskich, reprezentowanych przez społeczności polityczne, czyli państwa, jest służba pojedynczym obywatelom. Wspólnota cywilna ponosi odpowie-

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<sup>87</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 61. W Trybunale Sprawiedliwości mogliby zasiadać co najmniej czterdziestoletni obywatele, wybierani na ten urząd w głosowaniu powszechnym co dziesięć lat. Zob. Traniello, *Società religiosa e società civile in Rosmini*, 122.

<sup>88</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 198.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 143. Strukturę społeczności cywilnej w koncepcji Rosminiego uzupełnia osoba obcokrajowca (cudzoziemca). W jego wizji termin “obcokrajowiec” (*straniero*) ma potrójne znaczenie. Może to być osoba prosząca o azyl w nowym państwie, człowiek chcący tylko skorzystać z dróg na terenie obcego państwa na zasadzie tranzytu, ale również wróg, który napada inne państwo. Jego zdaniem, podmiotami równości prawnej są tylko obcokrajowcy w dwóch pierwszych znaczeniach.

działność za sprawiedliwe zaspokajanie potrzeb jej poszczególnych członków—potrzeb, które nie mogą być zredukowane do wymiaru tylko materialnego.

Włoski filozof zwraca szczególną uwagę na transcendencję osoby ludzkiej wobec społeczności. To właśnie osoba i jej godność ma stanowić centrum wszelkiej aktywności społecznej, sposobu sprawowania rządów, wyboru ustroju, stanowienia prawa, itp.

Rosmini jest zwolennikiem koncepcji jednolitości formalnej prawa (*uniformità formale*), uznającej rzeczywistą różnorodność obywateli i ich różne uprawnienia. Prawo państwowe ma zatem chronić wszystkich obywateli, respektując ich oryginalność i różnorodność.<sup>91</sup>

Podczas gdy koncepcja formalnej jednolitości prawa patrzy na jednostkę jako na osobę, koncepcja materialnej jednolitości prawa widzi w członku społeczności tylko obywatela. Rosmini krytykuje tę ostatnią, porównując ją z ideologią stojącą u podstaw Rewolucji Francuskiej, która—oczyszczając pojęcie “obywatela” ze wszystkich naleciałości związanych ze stanem, zawodem i wyznaniem—pozbawiła go jednocześnie kwalifikacji człowieka. Niestety, w myśl jedności materialnej stanowiono również prawa postrewolucyjne. Tworzono je dla obywateli, pomijając ich człowieczeństwo.<sup>92</sup> W praktyce powodowało to “rozprzestrzenianie się zachowań i idei niemoralnych, areligijnych, które wywołują rozłamy i spory w społeczności, oddzielają duchowieństwo od ludzi i rozbudzają wszelkiego rodzaju namiętności.”<sup>93</sup>

Mimo, iż postulaty Rosminiego dotyczące społeczności zdają się być oparte na idealistycznym, czy wręcz naiwnym, przekonaniu o możliwości wprowadzenia ich w życie, to jednak są one odległe od perfekcjonizmu, leżącego u podstaw utopii. Za koncepcje utopijne uznawał on rodzący się socjalizm i komunizm. Profetycznie dostrzegał w tych sys-

<sup>91</sup> Zob. A. Rosmini, *Del matrimonio* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1977), 50.

<sup>92</sup> Por. *ibid.*, 53.

<sup>93</sup> Rosmini, *La Costituzione secondo la giustizia sociale*, 11–12.

temach załężki despotyzmu i absolutyzmu. Natomiast, nawiązując do myśli Platona, włoski filozof wskazuje, że funkcjonowanie społeczności cywilnej powinno opierać się na cnotcie obywateli, a nie na istnieniu partii politycznych. Jedynym bowiem, prawdziwym i trwałym gwarantem istnienia i funkcjonowania wspólnot obywatelskich, zgodnie z ich przeznaczeniem, jest prawość i szlachetność jej poszczególnych członków—stanowiących ostateczny podmiot życia społeczności obywatelskiej.<sup>94</sup>



### Man and Civil Society According to Antonio Rosmini

#### SUMMARY

This article is an attempt to answer the question about the social status of man in the thought of Antonio Rosmini, namely: Is, and if so then to what extent, the human person a subject of the civil society? To find the answer, it discusses the following themes: 1) the correlation between the civil society and other societies, 2) relationships that constitute the civil society, 3) the constitutive features of the civil society, and 4) particular elements in the structure of the civil society. It concludes that, according to Rosmini, it is the human person that is the proper center of all social activity: exercising the political power, choosing the political system, making the law, etc.

#### KEYWORDS

Antonio Rosmini, human person, man, society, civil society, family, Church, politics, political power, political system, political party, law.

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<sup>94</sup> Są one dostępne dla każdego człowieka, o ile będzie współpracował z łaską nadprzyrodzoną. BOWIEM TYLKO Stwórca rodzaju ludzkiego jest w stanie umieścić w sercu człowieka cnotę, która jest pierwszym i podstawowym elementem w budowaniu dojrzałej społeczności obywatelskiej. Zob. Rosmini, *Filosofia della politica*, 236–237. Droga do rekonstrukcji istniejących społeczności, zasadą budowania relacji międzyludzkich oraz podstawą tworzenia nowych wspólnot wydaje się być realizacja rosminiańskiego postulat: “salvata la persona, è salvato l’uomo, perita la persona, è perito l’uomo,” czyli “gdy ocalimy osobę, ocalimy człowieka, jeśli osoba zginie, zginie również człowiek.” A. Rosmini, *L’introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni commentata* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2009), 243.

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Katarzyna Stępień

## Freedom and Religion: A Realistic Correlation

The lovers of liberty thought they were leaving it unlimited,  
when they were only leaving it undefined.  
They thought they were only leaving it undefined,  
when they were really leaving it undefended.

G. K. Chesterton\*

Nowadays, a very unusual interest indeed has been observed in, using Mortimer J. Adler’s language, the great ideas of freedom and religion.<sup>1</sup> Freedom has been given a central position in the doctrine of liberalism, a movement based on the individualistic concept of person, with the aim to provide an individual with unlimited liberty of activity in social and political life. Liberty—along with equality and fraternity, adopted as the slogan of the French Revolution (in the full version: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité ou la mort*)—forms the foundation of modern and contemporary civilization and culture. The idea of religion, in turn, has now been dismissed from its previously primary position as the focal point of the whole culture; it has been repressed from public life (by postulates or principles of secularity), from social life and practices, and from cultural life, to the intimate sphere.

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\* Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* (London, New York, Toronto & Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1922), 148.

<sup>1</sup> See Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom. A Dialectical Examination of the Conception of Freedom* (Garden City, N.Y.: DoubleDay, 1958), 127–149.

The article points to voluntarism as a philosophical tendency consisting in the theoretical justification for the phenomenon of the absolutization of freedom. This phenomenon also occurs in practical life where freedom is no longer understood as freedom to truth and goodness enjoyed within the limits of natural law, but as negative freedom, i.e., a space of free choices made without any determination, limitation and coercion (sometimes understood as any external influence on the individual, even cultural or educational), as privacy, or ultimately as complete independence from one's own nature, from the world and other persons. The absence of natural limitations to human freedom leads to its absolutization and permissiveness, and consequently to attempts by the state and the law to limit it, which causes its negation.

However, the conflict between freedom and nature, nature and culture, freedom and law is illusive. This article points out: 1) the essence of human freedom, 2) the synthesis of the great ideas of freedom and religion in the form of the right to religious freedom, and 3) the threats to freedom and religion from voluntaristic atheism, fideism, sentimentalism and individualism. What defends against the reductionist understanding of freedom and religion is a realistic philosophy that reveals the rational and objective character of freedom and religion.

### **From Absolutization to Negation of Freedom**

The analysis of the modern concept of freedom indicates that it is understood in an absolutistic way.<sup>2</sup> It is, according to Vittorio Possenti, “an expression of radical anthropocentrism, acknowledging the myth of a person who is a pure subject—autonomous and unconditionally free,

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<sup>2</sup> See Servais T. Pinckaers, *Źródła moralności chrześcijańskiej* [*The Sources of Christian Ethics*], trans. A. Kuryś (Poznań: Wydawnictwo W drodze, 1994), 227–238.

a person understood as pure freedom.”<sup>3</sup> The above means that it is perceived as the absence of any restrictions,<sup>4</sup> as a complete freedom in shaping human nature (understood empirically, not metaphysically), or even as a source of value. Understood in this way, freedom is not oriented at or dependent on anything, it is distinguished by the autonomy of free choice in relation to other cognitive and appetitive faculties. This voluntarism has its theoretical sources in the history of philosophy: starting with Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, through Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, and ending with its extreme variety in William of Ockham and Francisco Suárez.<sup>5</sup> It seems that modern tendencies that absolutize freedom have their basis in the concepts of the two latter thinkers.

In Ockham’s view, freedom is a fundamental quality of person as a rational being.<sup>6</sup> It is a power, thanks to which one can neutrally and incidentally bring about an effect in such a way that they can cause this effect or not cause it, which makes no difference in this power.<sup>7</sup> Freedom lies entirely in the power of the will, in the power of defining oneself between opposites, between wanting and not-wanting, acting and not-acting.<sup>8</sup> Ockham claims that free choice is ahead of intellectual judgment, is a primary capacity, prior to both the intellect (especially if we consider that no *potentiae*-powers of the soul actually exist as really

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<sup>3</sup> Vittorio Possenti, “Ku integralnej filozofii wolności [On the Integral Philosophy of Freedom],” trans. A. M. Popko, *Człowiek w Kulturze* 9 (1997): 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*: “A free entity is the abyss of pure indeterminacy.”

<sup>5</sup> See Battista Mondin, “Wolność jako czynnik konstytutywny osoby ludzkiej [Freedom as a Constitutive Factor of the Human Person],” trans. P. Kawalec, *Człowiek w Kulturze* 9 (1997): 81.

<sup>6</sup> See Katarzyna Stępień, *W poszukiwaniu podstaw racjonalności prawa [In the Search of the Foundation of the Rationality of Law]* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu & Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2015), 145–164.

<sup>7</sup> See Frederick Copleston, *Historia filozofii [History of Philosophy]*, vol. 3, trans. H. Bednarek, S. Zalewski (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 2001), 115.

<sup>8</sup> See Pinckears, *Źródła moralności chrześcijańskiej*, 250–252.

separate from the soul itself) and its acts; “the will does not necessarily adapt to the judgment of reason”—this statement results in recognition of the independence of choice from the data of reason; although will “can conform to it, regardless of whether the judgment is true or false.”<sup>9</sup> It is the pure will, not directed at all, being a self-imposed drive. At the same time, as by its very nature free, the will is able to resist skills and sensual inclinations, as well as the intellect.

Based on these statements, Ockham claims that free choice controls natural inclinations (due to a radical non-determination of the will) and desire for happiness as a human goal, because the will does not necessarily and absolutely craves happiness (natural inclinations fall below freedom, they become a subordinate biological sphere). The will has the freedom to want or not to want happiness, as the ultimate goal. Hence, if the will is free to want or not to want happiness, then it is impossible or difficult to link human actions with their goal, or to assess them from the point of view of good as the purpose. The purposefulness in the understanding of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas (whatever acts, acts for a purpose) falls: what is left instead of real good as the motivation for action is the principle of good. Duty is born out of a union of created free will with an external obligation.<sup>10</sup> This understanding of will, together with the concept of God’s omnipotence and freedom, seems to condition the order of created things and unchanging natural law entirely on God’s creative and omnipotent will.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Copleston, *Historia filozofii*, 115–116.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, 115–116, 118–119. The relationship between natural law and human nature has been broken. God’s free choice replaces unchanging natural laws and moral laws as the basis for positive law.

<sup>11</sup> Among the consequences of nominalism, J. Hervada mentions the negation of the essence and nature of beings, including human nature, which leads to voluntarism (the orders of natural reason are no longer considered reflections of the nature’s inclination but as reflections of the Divine Will) or subjectivism (a subjective conscience as a point of reference). Javier Hervada, *Historia prawa naturalnego [History of Natural Law]*, trans. A. Dorabialska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Petrus, 2013).

The influential thinker F. Suárez also points out the will as having absolute power and law understood as an act of will.<sup>12</sup> He defines law as a universal, just and lasting order that has been promulgated accordingly.<sup>13</sup> Law, as it exists in the legislator, is an act of just and righteous will with the power to oblige the subject to perform a specific act.<sup>14</sup> Suárez attributes an order or *imperium* to the will, unlike Aquinas, whose *imperium* or command is an act of intellect (*ordinatio* and *intimatio*, respectively).<sup>15</sup> According to Suárez, this act of choosing and commanding will constitute the essence of law. Consequently, Suárez defines law in its strict sense as an act of just and due (righteous) will in the legislator's mind through which the higher wishes to oblige the lower to do this or that.<sup>16</sup> In Suárez, the commitment imposed by the will is true essence of law as such. The choice of the will containing a command or *imperium* is truly law *per se*. This reasoning opens the way to legal voluntarism.

The next stages of the absolutization of freedom in modernity are as follows: idealistic detachment of freedom from being and nature (as only empirical and phenomenal) in Kant,<sup>17</sup> its understanding as identical to the existence of the individual, as the power to create the nature of being, to produce oneself (Nietzsche, Hegel, Sartre, Heidegger),

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<sup>12</sup> See Vernon J. Bourke, *Historia etyki [History of Ethics]*, trans. A. Białek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krupski i S-ka, 1994), 125.

<sup>13</sup> Francisco Suárez, "De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore," in *De Legibus*, ed. L. Pereña, vol. 1 (Madrid: Instituto Francisco de Vitoria, 1971), ch. XII, 5: "[L]ex est commune praeceptum, iustum ac stabile, sufficienter promulgatum."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, ch. V, 24: "[I]n ipso legislatore esse actum voluntatis iustae et rectae, quo superior vult inferiorem obligare ad hoc vel illud faciendum."

<sup>15</sup> See *S.Th.*, I–II, q. 14, a 1. See the scheme of cooperation between reason and will in: Jacek Woroniecki, *Katolicka Etyka Wychowawcza [Catholic Educational Ethics]*, vol. 1 (Lublin: Fundacja Servire Veritati, 2013), 162–166.

<sup>16</sup> See Suárez, "De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore," in *De Legibus*, vol. 1, ch. XII, 5.

<sup>17</sup> See Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (New York: Collier Books, 1987), 122.

where it is impossible to indicate any restrictions other than freedom itself, because its subjectivity is not bound by any external objective value (present today in the postmodernism project).

In the practical context, freedom is the key point in various forms of individualistic liberalism, and is understood as a negative freedom: a space of free choices, as the widest range of liberty in its external dimension, as a lack of any determination, limitation or coercion whatsoever (sometimes understood as every external, even didactic, influence on the individual), as privacy, and ultimately as independence from the world and other people.

Such freedom is at times confronted by law, which is perceived as restriction and external coercion, thus being its violation. Law, under the influence of legal positivism, has gained a kind of independence and is detached from the nature of being and understood only in a formal way as a systemic obligation: prohibitive or imperative. At the same time, if human freedom has no internal natural limitation, whether in the system of the metaphysically understood objective nature of things, or in the system of natural law and eternal law, then only positive law and coercion by the state are able to limit freedom so understood, which ultimately leads to absorption of morality by law, to the *elephantiasis* of legislation and to the expansion of the state's powers to interfere in individual and social life of a human, leading to an actual denial of personal freedom (from the totalitarian German and Soviet socialisms to the total democracy implemented today by social-demoliberalism). On the other hand, if freedom is boundless, then everything is allowed (as in the ideology of permissiveness), hence law becomes a tool to effect such a degenerated form of freedom (i.e., freedom to wrongdoing, to inflict death on others or oneself, to harm others). Naturalism and scientism as well lead to the negation of freedom, though in different ways.

However, the conflict between freedom and nature, nature and culture, freedom and law is illusory, and is a result of numerous errors of modern philosophies. According to Mortimer J. Adler:

Modern philosophy has never recovered from its false starts. Like men floundering in quicksand who compound their difficulties by struggling to extricate themselves, Kant and his successors have multiplied the difficulties and perplexities of modern philosophy by the very strenuousness—and even ingenuity—of their efforts to extricate themselves from the muddle left in their path by Descartes, Locke, and Hume.

To make a fresh start, it is only necessary to open the great philosophical books of the past (especially those written by Aristotle and contained in his tradition) and to read them with the effort of understanding that they deserve. The recovery of basic truths, long hidden from view, would eradicate errors that have had such disastrous consequences in modern times.<sup>18</sup>

It is therefore necessary, following Adler's advice, to analyze the relationship between freedom and human nature according to the classical tradition. What is human freedom?

### **Toward the Real Freedom of Person: Ontic Foundations of Human Freedom**

Freedom in the tradition of classical philosophy is understood with reference to the nature of a person-substantial subject (hence Mortimer J. Adler calls it natural freedom) as a capacity of a rational individual to control their deeds in view of their goodness, to author once deeds. What does it mean?

The classical definition portrays human being as *dzoön logikon*, *animal rationale*—a rational living being. In this definition, the qualities essential for understanding free action of a human are: living being and rationality. Human being is understood here as a *compositum* of

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

two dimensions. The fact of psychophysical unity must be philosophically described and adequately explained. Failure to do that results in disregard for any of the two dimensions reducing the perception of person to either purely spiritual sphere or material aspect where a human being is only a collection of atoms, organs, genes, parts and functions. While recognizing human unity of being against the background of complexity and framing it within the realistic philosophy, one must make a point that while one of the factors constituting human nature is the body-organism component, the other is the immaterial soul as a necessary ontic subject of personal life (but also, and what is more important and primary—a subject of personal existence-life, as well as a substantial form as compared to a matter organized into an individual human body). On the outside, the substantial soul (*essentia*) does not act alone *per se* but through the powers (*potentiae*) of the spiritual intellect and the will and through the sensual powers of cognition (senses) and action (feelings). Intellect and senses perform cognitive functions, and the will, called *appetitus rationalis* (rational desire), is in its structure directed toward good as such. We also find universal purposefulness and amiability in the activity of other living entities. Therefore, it is claimed that in every being there is a natural tendency for good that is corresponding to their structure. This inclination results from imperfection and contingency of being and of human nature (as being created or derived). Human person is a potential being, which means that when born they are not ready, shaped and able to live. Human existence is fragile, biological powers insufficient, and talents disputable. The fact of deficiencies in human being is a driving force for their eradication. Person as an subject-agent (*agens*) strives to develop and improve through their own actions. Person's goal is the fullness of being, which is a complete perfection achieved by acting in accordance with their objective natural inclinations. As Aristotle claimed, only this could give human being complete happiness as a state of optimal fulfillment (ac-

tualization of potentials). How is the “mechanism” of freedom explained?

The proper object of reason is being-truth. In order that action takes place, the intellect provides the will with judgments on objects of desire.<sup>19</sup> The intellect acting for the will discovers and determines the measure of goodness in individual objects, by which it shapes its disposition toward the proper good. The will remains potent toward various goods, and after receiving information, that is, based on judgements of reason, it performs an act of choice. Choice of judgment leads to determination of the will to act toward the good presented by the intellect as appropriate. In action, that is the act of decision or choice of specific good, the intellect and will integrate with each other, which is why a human act, as human, is always performed consciously and voluntarily. Freedom is therefore an actual potency of choosing good and fulfilling one’s nature. At the moment of decision-making, person leans to a certain mode of behavior, decides of themselves (self-determination) and masters themselves (overruling lower faculties). Does the will itself not come before the acts of reason, as suggested in voluntarist theories? Cooperation between the two faculties takes place according to different causal ordering: reason is for the will a formal and exemplary cause, and the will performs for reason a function of efficient causality.

Various determinisms lurk from the above described mode of action of spiritual faculties as specific ways of behavior and decision-making; material conditions, feelings, and finally imperfections of the faculties themselves (erroneous judgment or wrongdoing) may result in deformations. For example, when person does not reveal the truth of being, the intellect presents to the will a false image of reality as attractive. The action thus undertaken will be focused on a good that is only

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<sup>19</sup> See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Ludzka wolność i jej granice* [*Human Freedom and Its Limits*] (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2004), 11–76.

apparent because it is inappropriate for an individual. Such deformations in action, resulting from the failure in learning the truth or from the reluctance caused by lower emotional faculties to follow the truth already learned, have always caused anxiety to moralists and educators. Countless treatises and theories of upbringing have been devoted to this very problem, especially philosophical theories of virtues (aretologies) as person's supportive improvements toward better realization of good and shaping moral character (characterology). Law also served this purpose as an inclining or restraining rule-measure of rational and free action.<sup>20</sup>

### **Great Ideas of Freedom and Religion and the Human Right to God**

The basic human rights (right to life, personal freedom, property, etc.), listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (basic document for the development of contemporary concept of human rights), include also the right to religious freedom. In fact, it is the closest merger of two great ideas: freedom and religion. Let us focus for a while on what elements it contains, which will provide us with information for a general characteristics of this extraordinary synthesis of freedom and religion.

The Universal Declaration includes the right to religious freedom in Article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and

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<sup>20</sup> See also Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*," *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 652–660.

in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.<sup>21</sup>

This provision places religious freedom first in the context of freedom of thinking (theoretical cognition), and then freedom of conscience (practical cognition, morality), and finally lists the basic rights with their content specified. The first is the right to change religion or belief, and the second is the right to preach one's faith or religion.

Analyzing Article 18 of the Universal Declaration, Zofia J. Zdybicka points out this non-accidental relationship, because freedom of religion is constructed on the freedom of thought and conscience.<sup>22</sup> This link of thinking (cognition), whose proper object is being-truth, to conscience that provides assessment of action in the context of good (ethical norm) and determines the moral condition of a person, points to the anthropological, or personal dimension of religion, freedom and law. The fact that person has the faculty of intellectual cognition translates into their capacity to seek the truth about themselves and their ultimate source, model and goal, which is God. Founding one's life on the known and accepted truth allows one to recognize the true good as the goal of any action, which person freely decides to pursue in accordance with their conscience. Conscience (practical reason) is expressed through acts of judgement reflecting the truth about the good that is the motive for undertaking and completing an action.<sup>23</sup> Freedom of conscience consists in recognizing the truth about good and distinguishing it from wrong, and in the duty to act in accordance with this truth. The Universal Declaration, embedding freedom of religion in the freedom of

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<sup>21</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 18, United Nations General Assembly (Paris, 10 December 1948). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>22</sup> See Zofia J. Zdybicka, "Wolność religijna fundamentem ludzkiej wolności [Religious Freedom as a Foundation of Human Freedom]," *Człowiek w Kulturze* 11 (1998): 129.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

thought and of conscience, shows not only anthropological foundations of freedom and religion, but also their truthful and moral framework.

Details on the right to religious freedom can be found in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which deals with the freedom of teaching and upbringing, especially in paragraph 3, in which parents' rights to raise their children and choose their religious and moral education are emphasized: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, freedom of religion is expressed in an internal and external aspect. Freedom of religion in the internal aspect enables person to undertake an act of religious choice and it manifests itself in their conscience, in which they discover the truth about good. Freedom of religion in the external aspect comprises freedom to manifest religious beliefs and freedom from external coercion in this sphere. This freedom is enjoyed by an individual in their private and public life, individually or in communion with other people. In turn, freedom in the individual aspect is realized in two dimensions: positive and negative. In the positive one, religious freedom means the right to worship God, in the negative, religious freedom protects human person against any pressure from the state or other people. This right, however, does not arise from positive law, but has its source in natural law (in the personal nature of a human being). Protection of religious freedom involves a possibility to change religion or beliefs, to persuade others to one's faith by teaching a specific doctrine (if one could not teach one's faith it would be dead letter), to manifest one's religious affiliation individually or collectively, in a community of followers or privately by worship, teaching, practicing and observance.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 26, #3.

<sup>25</sup> See Zofia J. Zdybicka, *Człowiek i religia [Man and Religion]* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2006), 360.

An essential part in the content of religious freedom is propagation of one's faith by teaching fellow believers or *ad extra* persons of different faith. It bears relation to the right to convince others to one's views and undertake the duty to gain new followers.

The state, acknowledging human rights, should first of all create conditions for shaping (promoting) rational freedom, that is, lead a political community toward the common good that respects the freedom and religion of every citizen. A rational and fair legal system should serve this purpose.<sup>26</sup> The vast content of the right to religious freedom prompts one to ask a question about whether freedom in the field of religion has no limits.

### **Between Secularism (Public Atheism) and Individual Atheism**

The approach to religious freedom as one of the fundamental human rights of a person in the universal paradigm of human rights reveals that freedom is universal, natural, inalienable, equal and resulting from human dignity. Distinctive features of this right are consistent with the conclusions of anthropological personalism (Krapiec, Wojtyła, Zdybicka), a concept which recognizes religiosity as an attribute of human personal nature. Religiosity (as an attribute) of a person is grounded in their contingent existence which is not of or by themselves, and in their aspiration to pursue the infinite in their personal acts of cognition and love. This fact, as Zofia J. Zdybicka emphasizes,

transcends all historical forms of religion. The relationship between religion and the mode of existence of human being is decisive of making religion imperishable by the fact that it is a per-

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<sup>26</sup> See Zofia J. Zdybicka, "Religia [Religion]," in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii [Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy]*, vol. 8, ed. A. Maryniarczyk (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2007), 731.

sonal form of life and a socio-cultural phenomenon that has diverse forms (forms of religion) but does not perish.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the great ideas of freedom and religion regain their roots in culture by way of the idea of protection of human dignity and rights. The relationship of religiosity with personal nature of human being (natural fact) together with its manifestation in most human cultures, whether ancient or contemporary (a historical and cultural fact), shows the utopianism of ideologies awaiting the advent of an era without religion. Failure to protect freedom of religion by the state means a serious violation of the natural right of a human person to God. Similarly, an attempt to eliminate religion from the social and public spheres (i.e., neutrality or secularity), or even hostility to religious motivations, leads to alienation of the institutionalized state itself and the lack of legitimacy of positive law.

In totalitarian states of the twentieth century, this right was denied, relativized or restricted, and the people of the Church were subject to systemic persecution. In communist countries promoting atheization of social life, it was believed that the essence of religious freedom was to keep silent about one's religious beliefs (it was a reduction of freedom of religion to a private sphere). Currently, Europe still functions in a post-revolutionary model of the state as neutral toward worldviews, even if the internal contradiction of such a formula has been pointed out (the state as laying down law that protects or forbids something cannot be neutral toward the standpoint supporting the protected value or refusing to protect it—so the purpose of this formula of self-excluding contradiction is the negation of Christian views still present in societies of Western civilization). Threats from supranational global organizations that use states and state laws to promote voluntarist atheism are being raised nowadays. It is observed that threats to freedom and reli-

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 721.

gion are associated with the abuse of human rights protection standards, for example, clauses imposing limitations to realization of freedom. These limitations do not apply to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, or the right to change religion or beliefs in their internal aspect, whose nature is absolute. Religious freedom is considered one of the non-derogable rights, that is, belonging to the inviolable core of human rights.<sup>28</sup> By this, the essence of religious freedom remains intact.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the right to religious freedom may be limited by the state within the area of freedom to manifest individually or jointly, publicly or privately, one's religion or belief by worship, teaching, practicing and ritual activities. The condition for the application of restrictions is that they must be provided for by law and necessary in a democratic society in view of the protection of public safety and order, health, morality and the rights and freedoms of third parties (for example, limitation of the right to religious gatherings due to the threat of an epidemic).

As in the case with other rights, one might observe attempts to abuse protection that stand in opposition to the fundamentals of human rights as being linked to good. For instance, in the Italian Crucifix Case *Lautsi vs. Italy*, the claimant complained that the presence of the image of the cross in the classrooms of Italian public schools attended by her children was contrary to the principle of secularism in line with which she wanted to raise her children, and therefore was a violation of her right to upbringing and teaching in accordance with her religious and

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<sup>28</sup> See Marek Piechowiak, "Wolność religijna i dyskryminacja religijna—uwagi w kontekście rezolucji Parlamentu Europejskiego z 20 stycznia 2011 r. [The Freedom of Religion and Religious Discrimination—Remarks on the European Parliament Resolution of 20 January 2011]," in *Urzeczywistnianie wolności przekonań religijnych i praw z niej wynikających [The Implementation of Freedom of Religious Belief and the Rights Derived from It]* (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2012), 116.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, 129.

philosophical (moral) beliefs, and thus a violation of religious freedom. However, the European Court of Human Rights pointed out that she did not provide a justification solid enough to recognize the radically understood negative religious freedom and an attempt to protect secularist beliefs as a subjective right, and it could even be considered as promoting religious intolerance, prejudicial to the freedom of public manifestation of religious and philosophical beliefs.<sup>30</sup> Yet the Court recognized the views that there is no place for religious symbols in the public space as deserving protection for the fact that they are in line with the postulates arising from human dignity.

According to Marek Piechowiak, analyzing trends in European law regarding religion, one might observe an increasing acceptance for religion as a valuable element of social life; however, in view of the latest case law of the European Court of Human Rights (in particular the above-mentioned *Lautsi vs. Italy* case), it is hard to take this tendency for granted. At the same time religion is not particularly distinguished from other values, such as culture in general.<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately, the natural boundaries for freedom and religion are the truth about the objective personal nature of human being and its connection to objective good, while conventional bounds are constituted by various state and international legal regulations.

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<sup>30</sup> See Marek Piechowiak, "Negative Freedom of Religion and Secular View in the Light of the Case of *Lautsi vs. Italy*," in *Law in the Face of Religious Persecution and Discrimination* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2011), 35–78.

<sup>31</sup> Piechowiak, "Wolność religijna i dyskryminacja religijna," 138. See also Marek Piechowiak, "Negative Freedom of Objective Good: A Recurring Dilemma in the Foundations of Politics," in *Dokąd zmierza Europa: przywództwo–idee–wartości* [*Where Europe is Going: Leadership–Ideas–Values*] (Pułtusk: Akademia Humanistyczna, 2007), 537–544.

## Between Fideism, Sentimentalism and Individualism

Other threats to the ideas of religion and freedom emanate from the condition of religiosity in contemporary societies. There are often present such phenomena as fideism, sentimentalism and individualism.

Fideism (from Latin *fides*—faith) is an current born in the nineteenth century after the French Revolution that gave rise to the cult of human reason. Rationalism of the age of the Enlightenment denied all religion, all faith “in anything that crosses the limits of human reason and forces person to recognize something higher than themselves.”<sup>32</sup> In the post-revolutionary period, the revival of religious life was, as Jacek Woroniecki writes, initially

overwhelmed by great distrust toward reason and horror at the atrocities it brought about. It was apparent for the generation that saw these crimes that reason is essentially a destructive element, an element of pride and denial to the point that it is simply unable to cooperate with faith and serve God’s cause.<sup>33</sup>

Attempts to perceive faith as independent from reason and founding it on different ideas, or on itself, were to make it safe and protected from attacks of the wrongful reason. However, reason comes ahead of and leads to faith and can prove the truths of faith, hence the assumption of the harmonious cooperation of reason and faith.<sup>34</sup> Fideism with its influence on broad social groups has not always represented the rebellion against the gravity of religion, but rather a persistence “in the un-

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<sup>32</sup> Jacek Woroniecki, “Życie religijne współczesnej inteligencji polskiej [Religious life of the Contemporary Polish Intelligentsia],” in *U podstaw kultury katolickiej [At the Basis of Catholic Culture]* (Lublin: Fundacja Servire Veritati, 2002), 42. Although author’s remarks refer to a specific group of people in other time, they signal universal and current tendencies occurring in the religious life in Western civilization.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, 44–45.

conscious belief that such separation of faith from reason is a condition of its perfection.” Meanwhile, fideism is

if not thoughtlessness raised to the dignity of principle, then definitely thoughtlessness toward what is most important to person, that is, toward the truths of faith! It is also very often a mental laziness, aversion to spiritual effort, and sometimes even cowardice toward these struggles that may be necessary before a person cleans their mind of various influences of the surrounding mental atmosphere in order to be completely absorbed in God’s truth.<sup>35</sup>

Fideism makes enfeebled Christian communities unable to defend their faith against any threats and attacks.

Fideism is affiliated with sentimentalism, whose origins Jacek Woroniecki explains in the following way:

With such a radical rejection of reason as a participant in religious life, one had to rely on some other constituent of psyche, and at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the element that gained primary role and was ready to guide entire spiritual life was feeling.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, he indicates that in modern languages everything that occurs in human psyche is named feeling. Although sentimentalism continued to strengthen throughout the nineteenth century, only when it became one of the philosophical foundations of modernism did it appear to threaten the ideas of religion and freedom. Although after condemnation by Pope Pius X, sentimentalism as a doctrine has not been upheld, it still persists as a mindset, and in language, which solidifies the misconception that religion belongs to the sensual-emotional field (for example, the offence of religious “feelings” instead of beliefs). This overlaps with the broader background of anthropological error, that is, identifying the phenomena of spiritual life with bodily and sensual feelings. Yet the emotional sphere being sensual and mate-

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

rial carries such features as subjectivity, egoism, inertia and individualism.

According to Woroniecki, sentimentalism should be questioned not by way of promoting pure rationalism, but by bringing out the importance of the will (subordinate to reason) for the moral life of human person. The distinctive features of the will involve objectivity derived from the cognitive faculties of reason to learn about reality, and capacity for creative acts (which do not result from feelings alone which in fact restrict human freedom), and therefore religious life should be based on the will not feelings whose role should only be ancillary toward the spiritual powers of the will.<sup>37</sup> Karol Wojtyła also emphasizes its indispensable importance:

The final and highest level in the sphere of our aspirations is, however, the will. It confers the fundamental direction to our internal experiences. The whole expression of our human “I” is shaped by it. The deepest functions of personal life concentrate in it. Notwithstanding this, the will does not somehow lie “on the surface” of the acts of our lives and the will’s processes—although we discover them in so many experiences of ours—run their course as if hidden in emotional experiences and even the reactions of the organism. And a certain penetration and inference is required in order to draw the will out from the depths of experience and establish the simple fact of its real existence and essential distinctiveness.<sup>38</sup>

Another phenomenon negative for religious life is individualism, as a primary focus on individualistic forms of spiritual life and piety, with neglect of their social forms. The response to the individualistic liberalism of the nineteenth century emerged in the form of socialism, which in turn emphasized social forms of life to the point where human

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<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.*, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man—Rozważania o istocie człowieka*, trans. John Grondelski (Lublin–Roma: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu & Società Internazionale Tommaso D’Aquino, 2016), 99–101.

individuality dissolved in the ontologized social organism. In view of the radical antagonism of these two concepts, it is necessary to underline the social nature of human person, which manifests itself in the external dimension of religious freedom having an extremely communal character, this being a preventive measure against the dispersion and division of religious communities endlessly, and against impulsive, whimsical and erroneous individual interpretation of the truths of faith. Social forms of worship preclude individualistic distortions and support the integral development of spiritual life.<sup>39</sup>

### **On the Rational and Objective Nature of Freedom and Religion**

Realistic interpretation (philosophy) provides a defense against reductive approaches to freedom and religion. It neither designs these phenomena nor detaches them from the reality of human activity; instead it describes and explains them adequately, pointing to their reasons.<sup>40</sup> Freedom appears as a property of every human being, consisting in their capacity (potential) of self-determination for action and free choice of good as a motive. Its subjective causes are spiritual powers of person: the reason and will, while its objective cause—good as a goal-motive of action (objective hierarchy of goods). This freedom (in Mortimer J. Adler, the natural or inherent “freedom of self-determination”) demonstrates itself in various areas of human life: in science, morality, politics (as “political liberty”) and economics, in artistic and technical creation, and finally in the field of religion where it touches upon the choice of the ultimate goal of human life. This manifested and realized freedom is called by Adler an “acquired freedom of self-perfection” as

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<sup>39</sup> See Woroniecki, “Życie religijne współczesnej inteligencji polskiej,” 47, 51.

<sup>40</sup> See Krapiec, *Ludzka wolność i jej granice*, 11–76; Zdybicka, *Człowiek i religia*, 199–344.

dependent on spiritual struggle and moral effort, and above all on the state of consciousness of an individual. Difficulties in its realization are visible in the category of Adler's "circumstantial freedom," associated with the context of human action that may or may not be compelling regardless of the internal attitudes of the acting individual. Freedom is not tantamount to absoluteness or arbitrariness, that is why for centuries societies have penalized false and morally wrong choices. Furthermore, freedom actually develops through the choice of objective and true good. The greater number of right judgements and choices of objective good, the freer person becomes.<sup>41</sup>

Freedom is directly associated with morality and responsibility for the effects of free choice, which are constantly experienced by every acting person; as Karol Wojtyła points out:

Man experiences it endlessly; he feels himself constantly driven internally to make decisions, to choose. He is incapable of avoiding the yoke of that above all internal responsibility that hangs over him. He must constantly use his freedom, even when these or those external conditions press upon him or when some or another internal habits bind him, even then it is only that they limit the scale of possibilities for employing the freedom of the will, but the very fact of that freedom does not leave him as long as he is aware of himself.<sup>42</sup>

What is demonstrated here is the drama and the greatness of freedom, which ultimately fulfills itself in the love of the objective but contingent good of a human person and the absolute good of the Divine Person.

Religion in realistic and personalistic interpretation, explained by pointing out the ontic reasons-causes of natural and social religious fact, reveals its ontic foundations:

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<sup>41</sup> See Bogdan Czupryn, *Prawda o człowieku fundamentem rozwoju osobowego [The Truth on Man as a Foundation for Personal Development]* (Lublin: Fundacja *Servire Veritati*, 2015), 47.

<sup>42</sup> Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 111.

[T]he ontic status of a person, the real existence of a personal Absolute (God) and their mutual ontic relations, which lay the grounds for conscious and free personal relations. In human personal structure and personal action, person is open to infinity, they desire infinity. Open to truth, they crave truth, seeking it constantly. Focused on good, they desire good and constantly strives for it, remaining insatiable with goods that do not have the quality of perfection. Person shows unquenchable desire for happiness as an unconscious desire for God. All this makes them capable of knowing and loving the Truth, Good and Beauty—personal Absolute—transcendent You.<sup>43</sup>

The objective dimension of religion therefore concerns the relationship between a human person as a religious being and the Person of the Absolute, capable of fulfilling human insatiable desire for happiness, while at the same time religious faith (namely religious cognition accepted under pressure of will) reveals the deepest foundations of the rationality of all reality, repeals the senselessness and absurdities of voluntarist atheism, scientism and naturalism. At the same time, in this field we discover the deepest and mysterious connection of freedom and religion:

The Personal Absolute (God) is the first source and the highest Good—a purpose that brings meaning to the life of every human person. And in this most important area of life [as Zdybicka emphasizes], person remains a sovereign: they can say “yes” or “no” to God—which has consequences for their whole life.<sup>44</sup>

We may as well notice that it is religion that ultimately founds and guarantees the true freedom of human person in relation to impermanent and unnecessary goods.



<sup>43</sup> Zdybicka, “Religia,” 722.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

**Freedom and Religion: A Realistic Correlation**

## SUMMARY

The article points to voluntarism as a tendency in the history of philosophy, which consists in the theoretical justification for the phenomenon of the absolutization of freedom. This phenomenon also occurs in practical life, where freedom is no longer understood as freedom to truth and goodness enjoyed within the limits of natural law, but as negative freedom, i.e., as a space of free choices made without any determination, limitation and coercion (sometimes understood as any external influence on the individual, even cultural or educational), as privacy, or ultimately as complete independence from one's own nature, from the world and other persons. The absence of natural limitations to human freedom leads to its absolutization and permissiveness, and consequently results in attempts by the state and the law to limit it which, in turn, leads to its negation. However, the conflict between freedom and nature, nature and culture, freedom and law is illusive. The article points out: 1) the essence of human freedom, 2) a synthesis of freedom and religion in the form of the right to religious freedom, and 3) threats to freedom and religion from atheism, fideism, sentimentalism and individualism. What defends against the reductionist account of freedom and religion is a realistic philosophy that indicates the rational and objective character of freedom and religion.

## KEYWORDS

Freedom, religion, human nature, person, religious freedom, human rights, fideism, sentimentalism, individualism, realistic philosophy.

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# **Book Reviews**

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Brian Welter

*Dieu existe-t-il? Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu*  
by Frère Pierre Marie\*

A steady stream of books by Catholic writers attempts to counter the errors of modern philosophy. Few of them strike at the heart of the matter and succeed at keeping focused on the essentials as well as *Dieu existe-t-il?* The assertive, critical, and corrective tone supports the book's aim of speaking against the modernist post-conciliar Church. Dominican author, Frère Pierre Marie, who resides at the traditionalist abbey at Avrille, France, discusses the shortcomings of modern philosophy from the vantage of Thomist philosopher Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877–1964). The latter's many books and articles include summaries and commentaries on the works of Thomas Aquinas. Frère Pierre Marie argues that Garrigou-Lagrange, Pope John Paul's doctoral supervisor in the 1940s in Rome, defended the Church against modernism. The strongest part of *Dieu existe-t-il?*, the analysis of modernist philosophies, examines these philosophies' shared underlying foundation. In addition to readers curious about theology and philosophy, *Dieu Existe-t-il?* offers a must-read analysis for apologists of the faith, particularly because of the pithy summaries of the basics behind this philosophical issue.

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\* Frère Pierre Marie, O.P., *Dieu existe-t-il? Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu* (Editions du Sel, 2020), 94 pages. ISBN: 9782361430795.

The chapters which describe the shortcomings of modern philosophies provide clear definitions and analysis. The author identifies the basic problem: “Modern philosophy is *agnostic*” in that “it believes that human reason is incapable of saying anything with certitude about God.”<sup>1</sup> This one grave fault led to another, and affected even Christian thinkers, many of whom strove thereafter to create a novel path for belief out of human existence rather than from the philosophy of being. Pope Pius X termed the core faults *agnosticism* and *immanentism*, the latter of which aims to “reach God through inner experience.”<sup>2</sup> Judging this defective, Garrigou-Lagrange asserted, according to the author, that, through his intelligence, “man can know God with *certitude*.”<sup>3</sup> Rejecting the possibility of this certitude leads to all sorts of philosophical shortcomings.

Only someone who, for whatever reason, cannot think well adopts agnosticism or atheism. These two viewpoints not only err, but also cause harm and sin. They stem from a lack of sound reasoning and good faith:<sup>4</sup>

Atheism is always a sin, or at least the consequences of sin. Perhaps the atheist has put himself into an intellectual state that no longer permits the comprehension of the demonstration for the existence of God. But he could not have gotten into such a position without being partly at fault. No one can admit an invincible ignorance regarding the existence of God.<sup>5</sup>

Such people must take responsibility for their personal theological failings. In fact, the author suspects that some self-declared atheists actually fail to tell the truth about their beliefs. At first glance, this may not

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Marie, *Dieu existe-t-il?*, 5. Translations are those of the reviewer; italics are always from the original text.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

seem “pastoral” or sensitive to the realities of the atheist or agnostic. However, such confidence and assertiveness in both Garrigou-Lagrange and Frère Pierre Marie add to the credibility of this simple and short book.

The basics are well-presented. Immanentism, represented by Maurice Blondel and Lucien Laberthonnière, rejects certitude about God’s existence through reason alone. Supposing our minds’ insufficiency, the expounders of immanentism turned towards life experience instead of towards “the real.” The opposite error, ontologism, asserts the sufficiency of human intelligence to know God without reason-based demonstration or sensory data. Frère Pierre Marie corrects this, noting that because only God is pure act, we cannot know Him directly.<sup>6</sup> This implies that we can know God through analogy, which the author defines in a footnote as “a procedure that allows us to know one reality based on another reality which has some resemblance to the first.”<sup>7</sup> A more detailed discussion on analogy would have greatly aided readers by distinguishing the correct use of analogy, which points to God’s existence, from an incorrect application, which would cast doubt on God’s existence. Interestingly, Frère Pierre Marie adds that St. Thomas rejected St. Anselm’s ontological argument from the *Proslogion*, which demonstrates that even great theologians like St. Anselm struggled to prove that God exists.

The author’s overviews of modern thought reiterate the shared roots for the many schools of philosophy. The rejection of “the philosophy of being which leads to the existence of God”<sup>8</sup> lies at the heart of modern philosophy. Frère Pierre Marie traces the two potential directions this rejection has led: on the one hand, empiricism and idealism. Idealism, represented by Kant, asserts that “man is not capable of know-

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

ing reality with certainty. He only knows appearances or phenomena.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the philosophy of becoming, represented by Bergson, replaces being with becoming.

As with much of this book, the chapter on phenomenology strongly challenges those who have assumed the potential coexistence of Catholic philosophy and theology with elements of modern philosophy. Frère Pierre Marie calls for a total and complete rejection of modern thought, regardless of its variations, due to its roots in the rejection of the philosophy of being. Likely aware of most theologians’ tendencies to cherry-pick modern thought, the author notes, “In order to demonstrate the existence of God, the Thomistic proof starts from the being of the real in the world that is exterior to man.”<sup>10</sup> The author links phenomenology to modern philosophy’s core rejection: Phenomenologists wrongly assert that “we cannot know being itself, but only the phenomenon.”<sup>11</sup> His enumeration of the erroneous teachings of a range of writers shows the ancient lineage of this line of thought: the Epicureans, Sextus Empiricus, William of Ockham, Hobbes, Berkeley, and, above all, Kant and Hume, whose writings he examines more closely. Mindful of the core rejection of being, the author sees phenomenology as not “a return to the real world, but strictly an analysis of the experience of the phenomena emanating from thought.”<sup>12</sup> Husserl’s method does not lead to greater understanding of the essences because the method does not deal with being. Even John Paul II’s personalist project fails. While these conclusions may disappoint many readers, the author’s consistent rejection of modern thought, regardless of its representatives, makes this forceful and coherent reading.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

The rejection of being leads to the collapse of causality, which the author covers well. The author's appeal to common sense highlights the absurdity of idealism: "idealism, in claiming that the laws [of nature] originate in the fact that phenomena find a place under 'categories of our understanding' . . . does not explain why such phenomena always fall under the same category."<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, the author sees all of modern philosophy as leading to absurdity. But the author does not leave us bereft of an answer. He shows how St. Thomas's discussion of quality and species shows how the intellect can know the exterior world.

The author treats the philosophy of becoming as tenaciously as he does the other troublesome versions of modern philosophy, particularly because of its influence on several Catholic writers including Blondel, Maritain, and Péguy. Frère Pierre Marie implies that the shortcomings of one branch of modern philosophy engenders more troublesome branches because modern thinkers refuse to go back to the source problem. He characterizes Bergson's philosophy as "a reaction against the narrow scientism and positivism of the end of the nineteenth century: there is something else . . . besides matter and its laws."<sup>14</sup> Bergson likewise reacted against the Kantian rejection of philosophical discussion of God and the spiritual.<sup>15</sup>

The author makes clear that Bergson's thought amounts to the same old modernist rebellion against the philosophy of being, in his case by replacing being with *pure becoming*. He cites Garrigou-Legrange's identification of the outcome: God becomes a God of becoming, rather than a God of being. This rejects the Biblical *I am Who I am* God of Moses. This world of becoming necessitates a philosophical invention, intuition, which searches for understanding of the higher things. Frère

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

Pierre Marie implies the absurdity of this line of thinking. The philosophers of becoming set out their arguments, according to Frère Pierre Marie, as if being and non-being exist simultaneously, which violates the principle of noncontradiction. The author follows Garrigou-Lagrange's reflection on Aristotle regarding the outcome of this violation. The outcome echoes the moral relativism in which we now live: words lose their meaning; things lose their essences; truth comes under relentless attack; and, ironically, in the end the notion of becoming fails. This rings powerfully and convincingly true for the contemporary western reader. The author links the historical appearances of the philosophy of becoming with historical periods suffering from a "crisis of intelligence"<sup>16</sup>—much like our own—though the author does not go off track to address current cultural or political issues despite their relevance to his argument. He lets readers make their own connections. His discussion of the Aristotelian philosophy of act and potency clarifies much of the problem.

The author addresses two common reasons to deny God: evil and the perceived lack of a need for a creator. The author bases this part on the Vatican II schema's discussion on the deposit of the faith, which outlines St. Thomas's proof for the existence of God. Much of the discussion turns on the issue of cause, which briefly brings the author back to Kant: "For the philosopher of Königsberg, I see that one event follows another, but it is my spirit that classifies the two events in such a way that the first event is the cause and the second the effect. Causality [for Kant] is a 'category' of my spirit,"<sup>17</sup> and nothing more. Such references to previously-discussed philosophy not only add cohesion but reinforce the argument by juxtaposing bad thinking with good.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

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Alternative philosophies are, frankly, absurd for this author and call for a review of basic Thomistic proofs for God's existence. The introduction through the Vatican II schema provides a novel perspective. These basics provide powerful proofs for God's existence, such as the following:

If we admit that movement is the passage from potency to act, we can see that nothing can give itself movement. For to suppose that would be to suppose that we could give to ourselves a perfection, which is to say an act, that we do not possess because we are in the state of potency.<sup>18</sup>

However, readers curious for a deeper analysis of act and potency or other causality-related issues will have to go elsewhere, given such a short, to-the-point book.

By the end, readers have a very clear idea of why modern philosophy leads to the rejection of God, and how we can fix this error—by refuting modern philosophy and its rejection of being. The slim size of this book eases readers' understanding of the argument by presenting the most significant points, which will help them better discern the many faults of modern thought and provide more convincing counter-arguments. It is a challenging introduction to the basics of Thomistic thought and also a powerful apologetic resource for well-versed Thomists.



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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

*Dieu existe-t-il? Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu*  
by Frère Pierre Marie

SUMMARY

This paper is a review of the book: Frère Pierre Marie, O.P., *Dieu existe-t-il? Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu* (Editions du Sel, 2020). The author highlights that Frère Pierre Marie's book (1) describes the shortcomings of modern philosophies, and (2) can serve as both a challenging introduction to the basics of Thomistic thought and a powerful apologetic resource for well-versed Thomists.

KEYWORDS

God, modern philosophy, atheism, agnosticism, immanentism, phenomenology, idealism, philosophy of becoming, philosophy of being, Thomism.

REFERENCES

Frère Pierre Marie, O.P. *Dieu existe-t-il? Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu*. Editions du Sel, 2020.