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IN PURSUIT OF HUMAN FLOURISHING: A STUDY IN PERSONAL VIOLENCE AND ITS REMEDY, AS INFORMED BY THOMAS AQUINAS WITH HELP FROM ARISTOTLE AND PROCLUS

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Abbreviations list

Aquinas:
Cat. aur. Matt. – Catena aurea in Matthaeum
Comp. theol. – Compendium theologiae
Contra gent. – Summa contra gentiles
De ente – De ente et essentia
De subst. sep.– De substantiis separatis
In De caelo.– In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio
In De div. nom. – In librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio
In Psalmos – In psalmos Davidis expositio
In Symb. – Expositio in symbolum apostolorum
Q.D. de malo– Quaestiones disputatae de malo
Q.D. de pot.– Quaestiones disputatae de potentia
Q.D. de verit. – Quaestiones disputatae de veritate
Q. D. de virtut. – Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus
Sent. De an. – Sententia libri De anima
Sent. Ethic. – Sententia libri Ethicorum
Sent. Met. – Sententia libri Metaphysicae
ST – Summa theologiae
Super 1 Tim. – Super 1 Epistolam B. Pauli ad Timotheum lectura
Super De eb. – Expositio libri Boetii De hebdomadibus
Super De trin. – Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate
Super Gal. – Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Galatas lectura
Super Ioan. – Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura
Super Iob – Expositio super Iob ad litteram
Super Isa.– Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram
Super LDC – Super librum De causis expositio
Super Periherm. – Expositio libri Perihermeneias
Super Phys. – Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum
Super Post. an. – Expositio libri Posteriorum analyticorum
Super Sent. – Scriptum super Sententiis

Proclus:
De mal. – De malorum subsistentia
De prov. – De providentia
De sac. – De arte sacrificali
Dec. dub. – Decem dubitationes circa providentiam
El. theol. – Elementatio theologica
in Alc. – in primum Alcibiadem
in Crat. – in Platonis Cratylum commentaria
in Parm. – in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria
in Tim. – in Platonis Timaeum commentaria
Phil. chald. – De philosophia chaldaica
Theol. plat. – Theologia Platonica

Aristotle:
An. post. – Analytica posteriora
De an. – De anima
De c. – De caelo
De mot. anim. – De motu animalium
Eth. eud. – Ethica eudemia
Eth. Nic. – Ethica Nicomachea
Met. – Metaphysica
Phys. – Physica
Poet. – Poetica
Pol. – Politica
Rhet. – Rhetorica

(Pseudo-) Dionysius
De div. nom. – De divinis nominibus

Chapter 1: Introduction

A. Introduction to the problem

The work of this thesis begins with a rather obvious observation: bad things happen in this world. Very many bad things happen, very often. More specifically, people do bad things to other people, and to themselves. There are a great many people who have invested their lives in addressing varying kinds of harm within human existence, in varying expert ways. Within the messy business of thinking about bad things that happen, however, what has emerged as especially perplexing and vexing to me is the problem of the ordinary ways in which people of relatively good will do personal violence to the people around them in the world. There are of course many contexts of moral education addressing the problems of human interpersonal activity, and many contexts designed to equip people with principles and skills to be responsible human beings. Given that people of good will typically already have some form of moral code to guide their behaviors, and already have some form of moral identity to animate a desire to do good, what can be done about the problem? How are people who already have a desire to do good and a sense of what the good is to approach the reality that they actually at times do harm? Further, how are they to be helped to do otherwise?

This is the problem that this thesis will address – a difficulty that we will refer to as the problem of personal violence.

B. A theological backstory, and a springboard forward

This common, but unsettling, observation could be examined in any number of ways. My approach to the problem will take its inspiration from theological reflection upon the difficulty of human ways of being that do violence to one another. Specifically, it arises from a dissatisfaction with a certain way of viewing human nature and activity *vis-à-vis* the divine. In this section we

will examine that theological dissatisfaction, and show how it will serve as a starting-point for the work of this thesis.

From a theological perspective,[1] discourse upon the problem of personal violence will almost without exception be framed in terms of the notion of sin. A response, for example, that will leap readily to some reader's minds might be that mankind is 'broken by sin', or 'alienated' from God by sin, and therefore doing evil is simply entailed in human existence, even when such is against one's higher ideals and desires. Such a response is not without scriptural warrant, as it seems to invoke the Apostle Paul's description of the human plight:

> "So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"[2]

While this common line of thought does propose an account for the phenomenon (noted in the first section) of tension between a person's values and their actions – and for why human experience can prove vexingly recalcitrant to moral education – I find that such a perspective can be infelicitous, and ultimately insufficient, as a response. My issue with such a view is not exactly conceptual – for it certainly would be difficult to argue that mankind is *not* beset with such moral tension. Rather, my objection proceeds in terms of the *manner* in which such a view tends to approach the issue of sin and its effects. I have in mind the problematic practice of framing sin (or the related notion of 'being right with God') primarily in terms of how human beings relate specifically with and directly to God.[3] Such a view of sin tends to frame, or at least

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[1] In this thesis, a 'theological perspective' will in general be taken in the sense of Christian theology, with focused attention as the thesis unfolds upon Thomas Aquinas's thought. In the conclusion, I do consider the possibility of parallel studies building upon other religious perspectives – see: pp 293–294.

[2] Romans 7:21–24 (New International Version/NIV, 2011).

[3] For a mere sampling of mainstream, popular/devotional treatments of sin in this view: "Evangelical Affirmations Regarding Humanity, Sin, and Salvation" (John S. Feinberg, The Gospel Coalition, 2022; accessed 1/1/23 at: https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/evangelical-theology/); "Repentance and Salvation Part 1: The Doctrine of

foreground, human acts that are sinful as 'against God,' and, perhaps unintentionally, to proceed as though this were an unambiguous way to speak – i.e., that we can have a clear and distinct notion of a human act that is directed specifically against God. The nature of sin, and its remedy, is of course an essential feature of Christian doctrine and a major theme in scripture (as in the example of the Pauline epistle just noted), but I do not believe that such is by any means an unambiguous discourse with regard to the human and the divine. While the notion of 'sin' is understood as theological precisely in that it brings on board the notion of the actor's stance before God, *reducing* the problem of sin to acts 'against God' risks (again, perhaps unintentionally) leaving the issue of acts against other humans quite out of focus, both in terms of the problem and of the solution.[4] This line of thinking seems quite problematic, insofar as it appears to place a hard line between the 'spiritual' and the 'natural,' with a strong privileging of the former.

By contrast, I cannot help noticing that scripture treats of the notion of *love* in a manner that relies upon and even embraces the ambiguity of divine-human relations,[5] framing even divine love in terms of human life – for example in the soaring treatment of 1 John 4:

> Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. … No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. … God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. … We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does

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Salvation in Church History" (Robert N. Wilkin, Grace Evangelical Society, 1 September 1988; accessed 1/1/23 at: https://faithalone.org/journal-articles/repentance-and-salvation-part-1-the-doctrine-of-salvation-in-church-history/); and "The Doctrine of Sin" (Lehman Strauss, Bible.org, 25 May 2004; accessed 1/1/23 at: https://bible.org/article/doctrine-sin).

[4] Clearly, scripture says much about love of neighbor being bound up with love for God (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:5 cf. Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:36–40; John 13:35; John 15:12), and the theme has been the focus of theological reflection throughout church history (see the example of Augustine in the next note). The observation that grounds this thesis, however, is that as much as has been said about the scriptural and theological mandate to love one's neighbor, even people of good will manage to sideline the issue in favor of discourse framed around just the individual person and God, both in terms of doctrine/belief (as seen in the examples of note 2), and in terms of practice (as seen in our daily contexts). The aim of this thesis is to find a way out of these infelicitous patterns of thought and action.

[5] Note: this thesis employs the notion of ambiguity in the non-problematic sense of something having a two-part, or binary nature – i.e., *not* in the problematic sense of being equivocal or 'backhanded.'

> not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.[6]

I think it is fair and reasonable to presume that in general Christians read this text as a beautiful affirmation of love, both for God and for other people – that is, readers will *not* tend to feel the ambiguities and their entailments to be either spiritually infelicitous or theologically fraught. In this framing, human acts of love for and with other humans are not separable from love for and with the divine – the former are not merely the 'effect' of the latter, they are interwoven as to their substance as well, and are indeed the acts to which we have the most direct access in our human experience.

I find that scriptural texts such as this[7], and these accompanying thoughts, suggest the question: what if we applied the divine/human ambiguity we can so comfortably see in acts of love to the more difficult issue of sin? Can the divine/human ambiguity that 1 John 4 introduces in terms of the positive notion of acts of love be faithfully and, it is to be hoped, productively translated into the context of the negative notion of 'sinful' acts, such that human acts of harm are approached as the more accessible and immediately relevant aspects of the problem of sin? As the text points out – in terms of love – we do not have direct 'embodied' access to God ("no one has ever seen God"), but, in the Christian view, we *do* have such access to God-as-present-

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[6] 1 John 4: 7, 12, 16b, and 19–21 (NIV).
We should note, as a magisterial example of the historical attention given to this theme referenced in the previous footnote, Augustine's treatment of this very text, which states that brotherly love is seen in this verse "not only to be from God, but also to be God." Augustine, *De trinitate* 8.8.12.
Ref.: Augustine, *De trinitate,* translated by Arthur West Haddan, revised and annotated by W.G.T. Shedd; in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans/Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2009). Accessed at: https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103/npnf103.i.html.

[7] Other examples of scripture that demonstrate the ambiguity at work in loving God and loving other people: Matthew 22:36–40, Mark 12:28–31, Luke 10:25–27, regarding 'two greatest commandments,' and the Old Testament corollaries, Deuteronomy 6:4–5, and Leviticus 19:18; Isaiah 58:1–10, regarding the essential nature of a religious fast, framed in terms of justice to other human beings; John 14:6–15, 15:1–17, regarding the triangulation of common life and love among the Father, Christ, and the disciples/human beings.

in-each-other. Is it legitimate, and meaningful, to say the same about sin? What if the theological motive of 'being right with God' was enacted through serious examination of 'being right with other people?'

Herein lies the 'springboard' from which our project takes its inspiration. These theological reflections suggest that human acts of violence against the personhood of others can be best understood, addressed, and remedied if viewed as ambiguous *vis-à-vis* the divine. Rather than restricting the problem of sin to the 'spiritual' realm, and by extension the problem of human violence to the 'natural,' we would do better to 'blur the horizon' as it were between the divine and the human. What kind of inquiry does this perspective open up for us, and nudge us toward?

Taking as our starting point the proposed ambiguity of the divine and the human – i.e., an epistemological privileging of human contexts as those which we have direct access to but which at the same time are interwoven with and therefore open to divine sources of the good – we will proceed by seeking a philosophical account of what 'being right with other people' might entail. Specifically, we will frame an account of human nature flourishing, and then an account of what violence against such flourishing would entail. Finally, and I use that word in the philosophical sense of our ultimate goal, we will look to frame ways of engaging one another that can be considered a remedy to the problem of personal violence – ways of being together that, insofar as they promote and safeguard the flourishing of human individuals, are 'contra-violent.' Thus far our project gives the appearance of landing solidly on the 'human' side of the divine/human horizon. Our project's 'blurring' of that horizon, however, prompts us to expect that this human task of contra-violence will be aided by divine sources of good, and aided precisely in the operations of human faculties.

Two items of method should be mentioned here. First, in terms of scope, this project will address personal violence on a small scale – i.e., that which is enacted individual-to-individual (including the relationship of the individual to themself), rather than the socio-political 'large scale' violence that can be enacted by one group against another, or by governments against the governed. Further, on the same point, we will be addressing individual violence in terms of harm to the flourishing of the person's sense of self in the world, i.e., harm to their agency, rather than overt acts of physical, criminal, etc. violence.[8] Second, I have chosen to privilege in this thesis the term 'contra-violent,' rather than 'counter-violent.' This is because the latter can have the connotation primarily of opposing existing violence, without explicitly calling for attention to the conditions within which violence arises. This thesis aims to provide a philosophical account of a disposition that responds not only to existing violence but also proactively to the conditions that undergird the flourishing of humans in their being and personhood, and will use the term 'contra-violent' to represent and engage this orientation.

C. Philosophical methodology

We must pause at this point to clarify just what kind of work this project will undertake. The previous section showed that the project is a theologically-inspired examination into human nature, the context for its flourishing, what violence against such a nature would entail, and what might be a remedy – including a sensitivity toward the role of divine goodness in collaborating with the human task of resisting violence (a dynamic ambiguity we will see captured in the theological term 'grace'). The work itself, however, will not be theological but philosophical. This statement warrants a closer look, a task of clarification for which we will look to the perspective of Étienne Gilson for assistance.

[8] I have stated the problem in this limited sense because it seems to me basic to, and at the same time more elusive than, the problem of explicit acts of violence that are easy to identify as such.

What constitutes a 'philosophical project' when it has been inspired by a set of theological reflections? A first clue can be mined from the second sentence of this section, where we can see that the task of this project is an examination, with ethical import, of human *nature*, specifically insofar as it flourishes in its natural contexts in collaboration with grace. In a general sense we can understand philosophical inquiry as striving to understand the *nature* of things, of the universe, or indeed the meaning of 'nature' itself.[9] Such is the overarching task of philosophy, regardless of what spirit animates the individual philosophers or eras in which they work. Thus, in the language of Gilson, even when the animating spirit of a philosophy is theological commitment, an inquiry into the nature of human beings is a philosophical inquiry insofar as it addresses itself to "the recipient of the grace [in this case, of Christianity]. This recipient is a nature, and nature is the proper object of philosophy. As soon as a Christian begins to reflect on the subject that carries grace, he becomes at once a philosopher."[10] Taking his inspiration from the quintessential era of philosophy thus animated, i.e., the philosophies of the medieval era, Gilson articulates a vision of how genuine philosophical thought and inquiry can be inspired by religious revelation or dogma – a form of philosophy he identifies as 'Christian philosophy.'[11] First, he notes the relation between medieval philosophy and its ancient Greek ancestors: Greek philosophy provided the starting point from which all subsequent western philosophies proceeded, and laid out the central questions and essentials of method that they would possess and be shaped by in common – i.e., the questions of being and becoming, the

[9] E.g., Aristotle, *Physica* 1.1.184a10–15; *De anima* 1.1.402a1–9; Plato, *Timaeus* (see, for example, 27c–29b).
[10] Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, Gifford Lectures 1931–1932, trans. A.H.C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 419.
[11] For a summary of the historical and philosophical debates around the nature of 'Christian philosophy,' including a curated selection of texts by the major interlocutors (such as Gilson, Maritain, Bréhier, Blondel et al.) see: Gregory B. Sadler, ed. and trans., *Reason Fulfilled by Revelation: The 1930s Christian Philosophy Debates in France* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

philosophical way of life, etc.[12] He goes on to show that subsequent philosophies at the same time derive from, differ from, and contribute to those earlier patrimonies and their questions. A somewhat lengthy reference illustrates and illumines this claim, framed in terms of the difficulty of a philosophy addressing both nature and grace:

> The only thing to do was to attempt the work; to attempt it, it was at once indispensable to start from the only known philosophy, that is to say, Greek philosophy, and impossible to rest content with it. The Fathers of the Church and the philosophers of the Middle Ages set out therefore from Greek philosophy, from Plato and Aristotle. Now in setting out from a point you move away from it, but you can also take something along with you. While the man Plato and the man Aristotle stand motionless in the historical past, Platonism and Aristotelianism will live with a new life and collaborate in a work all unforeseen by their authors. It was due to them that the Middle Ages was able to achieve a philosophy. They supplied its idea – *perfectum opus rationis* – they pointed out some of its master problems and, along with them, the rational principles that command their solution and even some of the necessary technique. The debt of the Middle Ages to the Greeks was immense, and is fully recognized, but the debt of Hellenism to the Middle Ages is as great, and nothing is less appreciated; for even from mediaeval religion Greek philosophy had something to learn. Christianity communicated to it some share in its own vitality and enabled it to enter on new career.[13]

How does a faith system, especially one based upon the notion of divine revelation, contribute meaningfully to philosophy, and in such a way that does not denature the philosophy in the process? Gilson sees 'Christian philosophy' as the endeavor of allowing notions gained by doctrine/revelation to inform the questions that philosophers have perennially asked, but precisely as helps and inspirations to reason in its own tasks (i.e., "the fecundation of reason by dogma"), not as 'rationalizations' of those mysteries, nor as attempts to turn those objects of faith into objects of science.[14] For example, he suggests, the doctrine of the Incarnation "while remaining a dogma and, of course, a mystery, might suggest deeper views of certain little-known

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[12] Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy,* 28–30; 411–412; 423–425.
[13] Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy,* 423–424.
[14] Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy,* 35–37; 484–485; see also: 416–417. By contrast, Bréhier claims that "faith exercises its censorship over philosophy, but does not provide it any positive assistance." Emile Bréhier, "Is There a Christian Philosophy?", in *Reason Fulfilled by Revelation: The 1930s Christian Philosophy Debates in France,* ed. and trans. by Gregory B. Sadler, 99–127 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 110.

aspects of physical, psychological, aesthetic and moral reality."[15] Even more vividly, and directly, Gilson observes:

> The Decalogue contains also other truths bearing on facts that are essentially mysterious in themselves, but facts in which reason sees the sole possible solution, and therefore also the necessary solution, of its problems. Such, for example, is the fact of creation, something essentially mysterious in itself, but necessarily affirmed by reason as the sole possible solution of the problem of the ultimate origin of being. God keeps His secret; but the fact that this mysterious act took place is demanded by reason. Here is the field *par excellence* for Christian philosophy, for here it may show itself as at once fully philosophic and fully Christian.[16]

Gilson does explicitly caution, however, that in such a collaboration there is a "line of demarcation" which must be "scrupulously maintained" – namely, between the two species of assent, faith and science.[17] Given such a distinction between these two species of knowledge, Gilson claims, "we should never ask one of them to fulfill what is the proper function of the other."[18] He summarizes, "Thus I call Christian, every philosophy which, although keeping the two orders formally distinct, nevertheless considers the Christian revelation as an indispensable auxiliary to reason."[19]

In the spirit of Gilson's exhortation that a philosophy worthy of the name should have "the honesty to avow their parentage,"[20] we conclude this section by recognizing the two main debts to theological thought that the philosophical work of this project owes. First, as already stated, our examination into human nature (including the conditions of its flourishing, violence

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[15] Gilson, 484.
[16] Gilson, 484–485.
[17] Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, 484; see also: Étienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938/1966), 73.
[18] Gilson, *Reason and Revelation*, 73.
[19] Gilson, 37. This is, clearly, the very reverse of the notion of philosophy as '*philosophia ancilla theologiae*/ handmaid of theology' – but this is precisely Gilson's point. When one is doing theology, philosophy can be resorted to as an assisting, but distinct, discipline; when one is doing philosophy – even Christian philosophy – the roles are to be reversed. Gilson treats of the former as paradigmatically seen in Augustine's *intellectus*: "*understanding* – that is to say, some rational insight into the contents of Revelation, human reason groping its way towards the full light of the beatific vision." See: Gilson, *Reason and Revelation*, 18–19. See also, in contrast: Bréhier, "Is There a Christian Philosophy," 110, 114–115.
[20] Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, 407.

against it, and possible remedies) relies upon a notion of divine/human ambiguity. We will center our examination in the concrete world of human experience, but with the understanding that such is informed by and interwoven with the divine. Second, our examination will explicitly 'locate' this ambiguity, and put it to work, in the theological notion of charity. While maintaining the mystery of charity's divine source, we will show how charity functions with formal, efficient, and final causality in human nature and volitional activity. These philosophical tasks, inspired and assisted by the two theological contributions,[21] will comprise the essential work of this project.

D. An assisted approach to the problem: discourse with Thomas Aquinas

This project will proceed by the method of discourse with a certain philosophical interlocutor. We should begin this introduction to our interlocutor with a word of methodological caution. Our project, introduced in the first two sections, is very decidedly *not* the project of our chosen conversation partner. Rather, their thought will provide philosophical language and tools which will be a starting ground and, to a degree, a workroom from which we will conduct our own inquiry. In our work we will proceed by examining the philosopher's tools on their own terms, and then carrying them rather 'outside' that workspace into the concerns of our present inquiry. Our interlocutor for this thesis is a philosopher and theologian who was himself a master of this method: Thomas Aquinas.[22] We can also note right at the outset that Aquinas is

[21] These two theological contributions are stated here as 'categories' which will be further specified. For example, both notions bring on board the doctrine of creation, with related implications for the divine/human ambiguity entailed in questions of the grace/nature collaboration.

[22] Regarding Thomas Aquinas's scholastic engagement with his *auctores*: McInerny states: "One of Thomas Aquinas's greatest claims on our attention is that fact that he met and mastered this new literature [i.e., a whole library of works from ancient Greece and from the intervening Jewish and Islamic cultures – RM, same location] and synthesized it with what had gone before in the Latin world, a synthesis that was not a concordance, an eclectic assembling of disparate elements, but a whole that was a good deal more than the sum of its parts." Ralph McInerny, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 18. Pieper asserts that in the scholastic method, "*Sicut patet per Philosophum* must be rendered: as has been made clear by Aristotle. Not because it is Aristotle who said it, but because he said it in a way that throws light on the problem." Pieper observes that

particularly valuable for his respect for and dexterity in navigating the distinction between theology and philosophy just addressed in the previous section.[23]

A significant factor in the choice of Thomas Aquinas for the project's interlocutor is the sensitivity in his thought to the ambiguity of divine/human relations that the project's claim and proposal are based upon. Though clearly the divine and the human (or, more generally, the creaturely) are distinct – we can, for example, think of the qualitative chasm between infinite and finite being – when we speak of their 'ambiguity,' we mean that it is difficult in human discourse

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though "Thomas endeavored, in a manner highly unusual from the thirteenth century, to discover Aristotle's real meaning … Nevertheless, the ultimate intent of St. Thomas's interpretation of Aristotle aimed at something beyond Aristotle. … What interests Thomas in Aristotle, then, is not Aristotle but the truth." Josef Pieper, *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 50, 52. Torrell identifies this attitude in Thomas with the scholastic method in general: "[Thomas] wishes to uncover the *intentio auctoris.* That is one of the rules of the *expositio reuerentialis*, let us say of the medieval hermeneutic, whose end is to find what the author 'wished to say.'" Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, rev., ed., and trans. by Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 238. MacIntyre notes Thomas's adeptness with multiple authorities, and associates the same with his tutelage under Albertus Magnus: "Only Aquinas [out of Albertus Magnus's pupils] seems to have immersed himself in both the Aristotelianism and the Augustinianism so as to make a central problem … [how] the truth in each could be reconciled with that of the other." Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, Gifford Lecture Delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1988 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 115. Chenu describes *auctores*, in scholastic method, as "the permanent sources of speculation." M.–D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, translated with authorized corrections and bibliographical additions by A.–M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), 65, 28. Marshall frames the "characteristically scholastic" orientation to sources (in this case, specifically Augustine) as "not so much a set of solutions to be adopted as a set of problems to be solved." Such a problem, in Marshall's telling, is to "identify a logically and linguistically plausible way to take what he says, and explain the theological sense his words make when we take them that way." Bruce D. Marshall, "Aquinas the Augustinian? On the Uses of Augustine in Aquinas's Trinitarian Theology," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, 41–61 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 51. Finally, Torrell assesses, with an historically realistic eye, both how the scholastic approach in general fared, and how Thomas Aquinas served as an example of the method at its best: "The scholastic method … rapidly degenerated and, when it did not result in arranging the earlier testimony to make it say what it did not in fact say, it sometimes became a mere formal mechanism, with no soul. We should not forget, however, that recourse to the Fathers is an integral part of what is best about the theological method. Most of the time, at least in Thomas, we see in this procedure a sign of an ecclesial orientation: the theologian does not think as an isolated being and does not seek originality at any price. He wants to echo a tradition." Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 379.

[23] See, for example, Thomas's treatments of faith and reason in *Summa contra gentiles* 1.7–9, and 4.1, and in *Summa theologiae* 1.46.2 corp. Gilson observes Thomas's ability to faithfully "handle philosophical problems as a philosopher and theological problems as a theologian." Gilson, *Reason and Revelation,* 73. He describes Thomas as "wonderfully equipped" in this regard, and attributes his skill to the fact that "he simply could not help putting everything in its proper place." That is, Thomas was possessed of "a perfect intellectual modesty," by which he "always began by accepting things just as they are," and also of an "intellectual audacity," by which "he would insist on dealing with [each thing] according to its own nature, and he would do it fearlessly, without compromise." Gilson, *Reason and Revelation,* 70, 71–72.

to account for one without including the other. That is, though we have just said that the divine and the creaturely are distinct conceptually, we can also just as meaningfully say that the divine pervades all that is, such that in reality there is no 'being' that is separate from the divine. In terms of philosophical notions, we can see this tension in the language used to distinguish *esse* and *ens*.[24] In metaphoric language, we can engage the divine/human ambiguity by distinguishing a 'vertical' aspect of human existence – i.e., a being's relation to the divine, or to the principle of its being – and a 'horizontal' aspect – i.e., the being's concrete particularity and the specific acts of which it is the agent.[25] It is a sensitivity to this image of the vertical and the horizontal aspects of human existence, and the ambiguity entailed in their actual inseparability, that will to a great degree define our reading of Thomas in this work, and which will shape our engagement with his thought in terms of our inquiry into personal violence.

We can begin to show this vertical/horizontal language at work in Thomas with an example of metaphysical discourse. In his *De substantiis separatis* we see him distinguishing two 'levels' or 'orders' of material being:

> A two-fold order, therefore, is found in a substance composed of matter and form. One is the order of the matter to form, and the other is the order of the composite thing itself to the participated "to be." For the "to be" of a thing is neither its form nor its matter but something coming to the thing through the form.[26]

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[24] We can also note, in terms of philosophical modes of inquiry, that the former is the proper object of cosmology and the latter that of ethics, and can therefore consider the possibility of some degree of ambiguity in how certain philosophers address these philosophical tasks. For example, as we will see, Baltly notes that what might be thought of as Proclus's ethical thought can be found/inferred from his cosmology. See: 75, n235. Dirk Baltzly, "The Human Life," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 258–275 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), at 257.

[25] We must be careful to avoid identifying 'vertical' exclusively with 'divine,' and 'horizontal' with 'human.' As we will see, in Thomas's view of the created world, these are ambiguously interwoven. The two directional metaphors indicate different aspects of human nature and existence – different, but not quite separable in lived reality. Thus, we do not 'conflate' the two, nor do we treat them as irreducibly separate 'worlds.' It is the claim of this thesis that there is benefit to attending to human existence with a sensitivity to the distinct nuances of each aspect, while recognizing their mutual relation – i.e., the horizontal/vertical ambiguity of human existence.

[26] Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis,* 8.44 – "*Invenitur igitur in substantia composita ex materia et forma duplex ordo: unus quidem ipsius materiae ad formam, alius autem ipsius rei iam compositae ad esse participatum; non enim est esse rei neque forma eius neque materia ipsius, sed aliquid adveniens rei per formam.*"

We see here the 'horizontal' explanation of a being, expressed in terms of the composite of matter and form (*ens* – a being), and the 'vertical' explanation, expressed in terms of the relation of the composite being to its source of existence (*esse* – the participated 'to be'). Though in terms of *causality* there is a tremendous difference between a horizontal causal principle and a vertical causal principle (thus Thomas asserts that creation properly speaking is enacted only by God), we can speak meaningfully of the creature in terms of both senses of being, and if we were to give an account of its existence we would need to address both.[27]

The horizontal/vertical motif is present and operative throughout Thomas's thought, and lends significantly to the shape of some of his most beautiful treatments concerning material (especially human) life in a sacred universe. We will briefly, in this introduction, consider the motif as it appears in Thomas's thought upon creation, the nature/grace relation, and the centrality of charity. We will see Thomas's thought on these notions woven throughout this thesis, but a brief mention here of their basic shape is helpful. The themes introduced here are chosen for their centrality to Thomas's work, and the weight that they carry in the work of the thesis.

Ref: Thomas Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis,* Latin text based on the 1968 Leonine Edition, edited by the Aquinas Institute; English translation by Francis J. Lescoe (West Hartford, CT: St. Joseph College, 1962), edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~DeSubstant.
Note: English in this quoted location from Lescoe's original 1959 text.

[27] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.45.5 corp.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Latin text based on the Leonine Edition, 1888–1906; English translation by Laurence Shapcote of the English Dominican Province. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.
It is with this distinction of *ens*/*esse* causality in view (and Thomas's safeguarding of the divine creative act) that Rosemann asserts that "the vertical and the horizontal orders, *esse* and *ens*, represent two irreducibly distinct orders." Philipp W. Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: a "Repetition" of Scholastic Metaphysics*, Louvain Philosophical Studies 12 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1996), 332. Alternatively, Aertsen is interested to show how in Thomas the two 'ways' (i.e., of nature and creation) come together in created beings "into an integrated unity." Jan A. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 131.

Concerning creation, Thomas asserts the relevance, even the necessity, of philosophical knowledge regarding created beings in relation to theological knowledge about God:

> It is, therefore, evident that the opinion is false of those who asserted that it made no difference to the truth of the faith what anyone holds about creatures, so long as one thinks rightly about God. … For error concerning creatures, by subjecting them to causes other than God, spills over into false opinion about God.[28]

For Thomas, the definitive feature of created being, and thus the heart of a proper notion of the act of creation, is the dependance of the created being upon the principle of its production and existence.[29] This notion is so basic to Thomas's metaphysics that, Pieper states, it often goes unexpressed but is in fact the "hidden key" to a proper reading of Thomas's thought across his corpus.[30] This fundamental relatedness and dependency of created beings (i.e., the 'vertical' aspect) does not, however, diminish their status as agents of their own activity (i.e., the 'horizontal'):

> Now, it seems difficult for some people to understand how natural effects are attributed to God and to a natural agent. … However, these points present no difficulty, provided the things previously established be considered. In every agent, in fact, there are two

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[28] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 2.3.6 – "*Sic ergo patet falsam esse quorundam sententiam qui dicebant nihil interesse ad fidei veritatem quid de creaturis quisque sentiret, dummodo circa Deum recte sentiatur, ut Augustinus narrat in libro de origine animae: nam error circa creaturas redundat in falsam de Deo sententiam, et hominum mentes a Deo abducit, in quem fides dirigere nititur, dum ipsas quibusdam aliis causis supponit.*"
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* Book 2, Latin text based on the 1961 Marietti edition: *Liber de veritate catholicae Fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra Gentiles*, textus Leoninus diligenter recognitus, cura et studio P. Marc, coadiuv. C. Pera et P. Caramello (Marietti, Taurini-Romae, 1961); English translation of Book 2 by James F. Anderson, edited by Joseph Kenny (New York: Hanover House, 1955–1977). Accessed at: https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraGentiles.htm.
Pieper notes that this statement of Thomas is a response to the charged atmosphere at the University of Naples around 1240, and to the critiques of "worldliness" raised against studies of Aristotle. Pieper, *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas*, 48.
Porro notes that the kind of errors that can arise from a faulty knowledge of the ordering of the world include erring "about our own place in the universe, as in the case of those who maintain that the human will is subject to the stars, or think that the soul is mortal, or admit other things that derogate from the perfection of human nature." Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, trans. Joseph G. Trabbic and Roger W. Nutt (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 151.

[29] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 2.18. See also: *Contra gent.* 2.6–38, and *ST* 1.44–49; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 3–5. Creation is also spoken of by Thomas in terms of 'total cause' – i.e., causation where nothing is presupposed. See: Aquinas, *Super librum De causis expositio* 18; *In librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* 5.1.624; *Scriptum super Sententiis* 2.1.1.2; *ST* 1.45.1 ad 2; 45.5; 45.6.

[30] Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray and Daniel O'Connor (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 1999), 47–48.

> things to consider: namely, the thing itself that acts, and the power by which it acts. … So, just as it is not unfitting for one action to be produced by an agent and its power, so it is not inappropriate for the same effect to be produced by a lower agent and God: by both immediately, though in different ways.[31]

Torrell signals the salutary ambiguity of divine/human agency reflected in this text in his caution that "we should not conceive the Creator and the creature as two competing causes."[32] Blankenhorn, similarly, reads Thomas's creation doctrine as emphasizing "the operative unity of divine and created agents in a single act"[33]:

> The operation of nature is also the operation of the divine power, just as the operation of an instrument is effected by the power of the principle agent. Nor does this prevent nature and God from operating to the same effect, on account of the order between God and nature.[34]

This text points us nicely to our second area of Thomas's thought where we can see the horizontal/vertical motif at work: Thomas's doctrine of the coworking of nature and grace. Thomas repeatedly, and in varying forms, axiomatically states: "grace does not destroy nature

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[31] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.70.1, 5 – "*Quibusdam autem difficile videtur ad intelligendum quod effectus naturales et Deo attribuantur et naturali agenti. … Haec autem difficultatem non afferunt si praemissa considerentur. In quolibet enim agente est duo considerare, scilicet rem ipsam quae agit, et virtutem qua agit … Sicut igitur non est inconveniens quod una actio producatur ex aliquo agente et eius virtute, ita non est inconveniens quod producatur idem effectus ab inferiori agente et Deo: ab utroque immediate, licet alio et alio modo."*
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* Book 3, Latin text based on the 1961 Marietti edition: *Liber de veritate catholicae Fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra Gentiles*, textus Leoninus diligenter recognitus, cura et studio P. Marc, coadiuv. C. Pera et P. Caramello (Marietti, Taurini-Romae, 1961); English translation of Book 3 by Vernon J. Bourke, edited by Joseph Kenny (New York: Hanover House, 1955–1977). Accessed at: https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraGentiles.htm.

[32] Torrell goes on to note the "fecundity of this theology of creation," insofar as Thomas's thought has prompted and equipped modern thinkers "to put forward a theology of work, matter, the city, war, the Christian presence in the structures of the world, etc.," and points to the breadth of the work of Chenu and Maritain. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 239–240.

[33] Bernhard Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas*, Thomastic Ressourcement Series 4, eds. Matthew Levering and Thomas Joseph White (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 261.

[34] Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 3.7 ad 3 – "*ipsa naturae operatio est etiam operatio virtutis divinae; sicut operatio instrumenti est per virtutem agnetis principalis. Nec impeditur quin natura et Deus ad idem operentur, propter ordinem qui est inter Deum et naturam*."
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia,* Latin text based on the 1953 Marietti edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa, revised by the Aquinas Institute; English translation by the English Dominican Fathers (1932, reprinted 1952), edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~QDePot.

but perfects it."[35] Thomas's work is replete with instances of *how* grace perfects nature – perfections that, even when their end is divine/supernature ('vertical'), are obtained within the created being's own operations ('horizontal').[36] One of the articulations of this theme, frequently invoked, states the notion as "grace presupposes nature."[37] Less explicitly stated, but equally important, is the truth of the notion in reverse: "nature presupposes grace."[38] That is, while it is clear that in Thomas grace operates in collaboration with nature in its activity toward created beings, it is an entailment of that notion that if grace's activity within created beings in bringing them to perfection is proper to the being's nature then the activity of grace is presupposed by the being's nature – it is naturally 'fitted' for grace. Torrell's assessment of Thomas's doctrine of nature and grace itself evidences the ambiguity we are interested in: in some locations he gives attention to the human being's natural openness and capacity to be elevated by grace,[39] while in others he emphasizes and seems to recommend a distinction between nature and grace: "One of Thomas Aquinas's principal contributions to Christian thought is precisely to have taught theologians to distinguish what belongs to the structural order of the nature of things and what rises from the pure gratuitousness of the divine gift. Prior to everything we can say on the supernatural level, there are basic natural data that cannot be forgotten, for they qualify the way in which the gift of grace itself can be received and lived."[40] Difficult though it may be to

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[35] Aquinas, *ST* 1.1.8 ad 2 – "*gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat*." See also: *ST* 1.2.2 ad 1; 1–2.99.2 ad 1; 2–2.10.10 corp.; 104.6 corp.; *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 14.9 ad 8; 27.6 ad 3.
[36] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.147.5; *ST* 1–2.109.5 ad 3; *Scriptum super Sententiis* 4.43.1.1.3 ad 3, and ad 4.
[37] Aquinas, *ST* 1.2.2 ad 1. Torrell explains the significance of the notion: "Prior to everything we can say on the supernatural, there are basic natural data that cannot be forgotten, for they qualify the way in which the gift of grace itself can be received and lived." Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 227.
[38] The notion is hinted at in Aquinas, *ST* 1.45.8 ad 4: "The operation of nature takes place only on the presupposition of created principles" – "*operatio naturae non est nisi ex praesuppositione principiorum creatorum*."
[39] E.g., Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master,* 347; ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.113.10.
[40] E.g., Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 227.

articulate, it is this very ambiguity that illumines the intersection of the horizontal and the vertical in Thomas's thought.[41]

Finally, we arrive at the notion that is perhaps the most central theme, and principle, within Thomas's work: charity/*caritas*. Here, perhaps even more than has been seen thus far, the ambiguity between the divine and the human comes to the fore. Charity is, most fundamentally, divine as to its nature and its origin:

> The Divine Essence Itself is charity, even as It is wisdom and goodness. Wherefore just as we are said to be good with the goodness which is God, and wise with the wisdom which is God (since the goodness whereby we are formally good is a participation of Divine goodness, and the wisdom whereby we are formally wise, is a share of Divine wisdom), so too, the charity whereby formally we love our neighbor is a participation of Divine charity.[42]

The most salient effect of charity in regard to human beings, in Thomas, is the elevation of human nature to regard knowledge and love of God as its ultimate end and happiness (a clear collaboration of 'horizontal' and 'vertical').[43] Thomas's treatment winsomely identifies charity in terms of friendship with God – even "a familiar colloquy."[44] We can note that charity has multiple modes as a principle of causation toward human beings. *Formally*, Thomas states, charity operates to unite us to God.[45] In terms of *finality*, we have seen that charity orients us, and makes us capable of, our ultimate end.[46] It is on the theme of *efficient* causality that the nuances of ambiguity emerge regarding charity – here we see Thomas explicitly addressing the

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[41] We recall the caution in n25 of this chapter, where we noted that we must avoid simply associating, in Thomas, the 'vertical' with the 'divine' and the 'horizontal' with the 'human.'

[42] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.2 ad 1 – "*Ipsa essentia divina caritas est, sicut et sapientia est, et sicut bonitas est. Unde sicut dicimur boni bonitate quae Deus est, et sapientes sapientia quae Deus est, quia bonitas qua formaliter boni sumus est participatio quaedam divinae bonitatis, et sapientia qua formaliter sapientes sumus est participatio quaedam divinae sapientiae; ita etiam caritas qua formaliter diligimus proximum est quaedam participatio divinae caritatis.*" See also: 1-2.65.2 corp., on the perfect virtues as infused from the divine.

[43] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.7 corp. See also: *ST* 1–2.62.1 corp.; 62.3 corp.; 65.2 corp.; 65.3 corp.

[44] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.65.5 corp. – "*familiarem conversationem*"; 2–2.23.1 corp.

[45] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.2 ad 3.

[46] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.7 corp.

tension, using the notion of 'created charity.' Using Aristotelian notions of voluntary action (a 'horizontal' theme which we will consider more closely later), Thomas states that while Lombard asserts that charity is the Holy Spirit dwelling within the human mind, such is a problematic framing that cannot be sustained.[47] This is because we say that charity acts formally, but if charity were simply the Holy Spirit in the mind then we would have to also say that the mind is 'merely' moved, not that it serves as its own principle of movement (as we must in cases of voluntary movement.) Torrell's elaboration clarifies the theological and ethical entailments of this philosophical problem: "If it is the Holy Spirit who acts in our place, it is no longer we who act; the human subject is telescoped. We would not have mastery over our acts of charity, nor their liberty, nor their merit. In fact, we would be excluded from the act of love of God and neighbor; we would only be the theater in which they occurred."[48] Thomas's solution is the notion of *created* charity within the human soul, and the partner notion of created grace: divinely-infused, habitual gifts that reside fully within the human being and belong to them, but in an *accidental* manner, not as according to the 'definition' of human nature.[49] These 'created' infusions safeguard both the agency of the human being ('horizontal'), insofar as the human being serves as the genuine subject of their own acts of charity, and the gratuitousness of the divine gifts ('vertical'), insofar as they are not 'necessary' aspects of human nature that God would therefore be bound to provide. Torrell clarifies that created charity (as, indeed, with grace) must not be understood as if "merely 'plated' (like fine gold on some other type of material) onto the rational creature" – rather, "it is incarnated in him."[50] Thus, while we can indeed observe that the 'actor' of a human act of charity can be spoken of ambiguously both in terms of the Holy

[47] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.2 corp. Ref.: Lombard's *Sentences* Book 1, distinction 17.6.
[48] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 182.
[49] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.110.2 corp.; 2–2.23.2 corp. See: Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 181.
[50] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 183.

Spirit and of the human agent, in Thomas's careful language the human experience of charity is a celebration both of human dignity and of divine munificence.

We can begin to see, even at this early stage, how Thomas Aquinas is well-suited to be an interlocutor in our inquiry into the problem of personal violence.[51] Our initial engagement with but a few of his main concerns and commitments shows indeed a philosophical and theological sensitivity to what we are calling the horizontal and vertical aspects of human experience. We can expect that an account of personal violence and its possible remedies, framed in conversation with Thomas, will provide both a narrative of individual being's flourishing within their own concrete context and a narrative of their place in the world that is a community of created beings.

E. How we get there: an Aristo-Proclean reading of Thomas Aquinas

The reader may observe, however, that such a reading of Thomas is neither self-evident nor inevitable. This would be a fair objection. The notion of a reading of Thomas in which horizontal and vertical aspects of human experience are consistently and meaningfully to be traced and identified as such needs to itself be accounted for. Our earlier identification of Thomas as a master of the scholastic methods of discourse with inherited *auctores* re-emerges helpfully here. It is precisely his identity as a scholastic master that we can mine for support to our proposed reading of Thomas. That is, we can look to *Thomas's* interlocutors, the ancient and early medieval texts he reads and responds to as the starting points of his own inquiries, to consider our options for varying entry points into the world of Thomas.[52] While we plan to take

[51] As we will see, for Thomas 'violence' is understood primarily in terms of what is 'against nature'/'*contra naturam*' – e.g., *ST* 1-2.6.5 corp. See: 105, and n354.

[52] For example, even considering only the few themes in Thomas that we have discussed thus far, we can note several clear and distinct lineages, each of which could frame a 'reading' of Thomas. Thomas's notions of the distinction between *esse* and *ens* and the axiomatic 'grace presupposes nature' both have roots in Boethius – see Thomas's commentary on Boethius's *De hebdomadibus* lecture 2, and his commentary on Boethius's *De trinitate* 2.3. Thomas's psychologically-rich treatment of charity draws heavily from Augustine – see Thomas's reference to "the authority of Augustine" in *ST* 2–2.23.3 s.c. and corp.; see also his deference to Augustine's doctrines in 23.2 ad 1. Blankenhorn states of Thomas's nature/grace doctrine: "Aquinas's mature theology of divine and human action

Thomas's thought forward into our own inquiry, we want to be faithful to his texts on their own terms, as he was with his own *auctores*, and show that we are mining his thought for notions and motifs that are legitimate interpretations of Thomas himself. Specifying the ancestry of 'our reading' of Thomas will both justify our taking it up, and will guide our following the scent of it through our inquiry.

It should without a doubt first be mentioned that Thomas's primary orientation is to the text of Christian scripture as the authoritative articulation of divine thought and will. Thomas shows scripture as the foundation *from which* sacred science proceeds:

> Hence Sacred Scripture, since it has no science above itself, can dispute with one who denies its principles only if the opponent admits some at least of the truths obtained through divine revelation … If our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by reasoning.[53]

In reflecting on the melee of Thomas's scholarly surroundings, influences, and responsibilities, Pieper marvels that "Thomas, while still a young man, accomplished so unique a task: that of joining these two apparently incompatible decisions (*for* the 'Gospel' and *for* 'Aristotle') and creating, intellectually and existentially, a foundation upon which the whole orderly structure of the Christian world view could be raised."[54] The centrality of scripture, and in particular the gospel of Christ, to Thomas's thought can hardly be overstated.

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seems to be original in the thirteenth-century scholasticism. His creative synthesis of biblical providence and Aristotelian and Proclan-Dionysian causality opens the door for a new understanding of God's unitive action in the soul." Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 262. Blankenhorn himself draws upon Lonergan for this interpretation – see: Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Patout Burns (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) 84–88.

[53] Aquinas, *ST* 1.1.8 corp. – "*Unde sacra Scriptura, cum non habeat superiorem, disputat cum negante sua principia, argumentando quidem, si adversarius aliquid concedat eorum quae per divinam revelationem habentur; sicut per auctoritates sacrae doctrinae disputamus contra haereticos, et per unum articulum contra negantes alium. Si vero adversarius nihil credat eorum quae divinitus revelantur, non remanet amplius via ad probandum articulos fidei per rationes*." See also: *ST* 1.1.3 corp.; 3.1.3 corp.

[54] Pieper, *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas*, 49.

The horizontal aspects of Thomas's thought can be traced relatively unproblematically through the influence of Aristotle – *the* Philosopher – and expressed using Aristotelian language. Pieper, invoking Chenu, considers that the remarkable appeal of Aristotle for the schools of the 13th century was "not so much natural reason as nature itself, the natural reality of the universe."[55] Porro notes that as early as Thomas's commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* the significant influence of Aristotle's thought can be seen in the "novelty" of Thomas's two thousand references to Aristotle, contrasted with the one thousand references to Augustine, and five hundred to Dionysius.[56] Pieper considers this "turn" of Thomas to Aristotle, and articulates the importance to Thomas of the Philosopher's method and perspective: "Aristotle, he [Thomas] says, refuses to withdraw from the realities present to the senses, refuses to be distracted from those things that are evident to the eyes. … Here was the decisive turn to concreteness, to the empirical reality of the world. … Which means that the physical world of material reality, *within* man himself also, the body, the senses and what the senses grasp – is all to be taken seriously in a manner hitherto unknown."[57] The language of natural science and logic that Aristotle provided to Thomas's thought served not only as influences but as tools for his own use – McInerny observes: "without Aristotle, Thomas would be unintelligible."[58]

A few cautions, however, can be suggested. It should be remembered, states Torrell, that Thomas's reception of Aristotle was not motivated by the texts for their own sake: "The exact historical reproduction of Aristotle's thought does not interest him in itself" – rather, Thomas is interested in attending as faithfully as possible to "the overall movement of his thought and to

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[55] Pieper, *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas,* 46 (with reference to Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, 33).
[56] Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, 29–30.
[57] Pieper, *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas,* 44–45. Ref: Aquinas, *De subst. sep.* 4.18: "Aristotle, on the other hand, not wishing to be diverted from sensible things … " – "*Aristoteles vero a sensibilibus recedere nolens …* "
[58] McInerny, *St. Thomas Aquinas,* 30.

recall the truth in search of which he set out and that he seeks … to express. At this precise point Thomas feels himself authorized to substitute for Aristotle in order to 'extend' him and make him say some things that he would not even have been able to think. … [He] wanted to go along further within Aristotle's aim and to lead to its fruition the intuition that he thought had been Aristotle's … [i.e., what Aristotle] 'wanted to say.'"[59] Porro also cautions against overstating Thomas's *practical* interest in Aristotle's thought: "Thomas's interest in Aristotle's works is not simply instrumental, that is, it is not directed only at drawing from the well of Aristotelian knowledge what is useful … His interest is, rather, an essential feature of his overall attitude. … Thomas remained convinced (by his personal formation, by his apprenticeship with Albert the Great, by his extraordinary intellectual curiosity) that a good theologian must be, in the first place, a person of science in general, and hold to the duty of never neglecting engagement with the profane sciences, even if he does not take up each one in an analytic way."[60]

The merit of these cautions acknowledged, it seems reasonable to say that Thomas inherits from the thought of Aristotle both a language for and an interest in the horizontal notions of human existence and activity – i.e., the specific acts of human agents, and their relations to the concrete contexts around them. That is, the use of Aristotle as a guide when approaching Thomas's account of the horizontal aspect of human life is unsurprising and rather straightforward, to the degree that it is hard to imagine engaging such an account in discourse without Aristotelian language and notions.

Identifying with precision the philosophical lineage of Thomas's thought regarding the vertical, i.e., cosmological, aspect of human existence will be more difficult. Clearly, this line of

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[59] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work,* 238–239. Torrell also notes a more recent concern "to not exaggerate Aristotle's contributions to Thomas," in view of increased awareness of "Thomas's debt to Stoicism by way of Saint Augustine and Cicero." Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 377.
[60] Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, 340.

inquiry leans into the Platonic way of looking at the world. It would, however, be quite outside the scope of this project to properly distinguish between 'Plato,' 'Aristotle's Plato,' 'Plotinus's and Proclus's Plato,' 'Augustine's Plato,' 'Dionysius's Plato,' 'Boethius's Plato, Aristotle, and Proclus,' 'Albertus Magnus's Plato, Aristotle, Proclus, and Dionysius,' and 'Aquinas's reception of all these,' to name but a few streams in the tradition. We *can* start, however, by observing that since Thomas had direct access to very little of Plato (other than the *Timaeus*, which was *the* cosmological text for the European universities of the 12th and 13th centuries[61]), we should think of the Platonic tradition's influence upon Thomas in terms of Neoplatonism – the philosophical and theological tradition within which the Christian world had taken shape and developed going back to the Patristics.[62] This, however, avails our attempt at clarifying the landscape but little. Gregory observes, and indeed demonstrates, the complex nature of the tradition in the century leading up to Thomas's context: "Through the texts of Latin Neoplatonism the twelfth century absorbed in an original manner a complex philosophical experience which had been brought to maturity in the Hellenistic period and in the early centuries of the Christian era, during which the *Timaeus* had exercised a central and polyvalent influence, by proposing a physical and religious cosmology which had been gradually enriched with diverse elements – Aristotelian, Stoic and the Neopythagorean, Middle– and Neo-Platonic, Gnostic and Hermetic, Jewish and Christian – to form a unique cultural *koinê*."[63]

These complexities notwithstanding, we can recognize the *main* sources of Neoplatonic thought for Thomas's context as Augustine, Dionysius, and Boethius – the three magisterial

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[61] Peter Dronke, "Introduction," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2.
[62] Tullio Gregory, "The Platonic inheritance," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke, 54–80 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 55–56.
[63] Gregory, "The Platonic inheritance," 56.

authorities for Thomas's Christian world, specifically with regard to reception and appropriation of the inherited philosophical sources and traditions.[64] It would be difficult to frame a historical accounting of Thomas's Neoplatonic view of the world without recourse to at least these three. Each of these, however, represents a distinct stream of engagement with ancient and medieval texts that fed into Thomas's own world – thus providing to us distinctive, though related, approaches to Thomas's thought. Though we would expect, and indeed will see, the presence of all in our unfolding engagement with Thomas, choices must be made. We are, in this project, interested specifically in the interlocutor that will best guide us to a framing of Thomas's philosophically-vertical orientation. For this task, we will need a strong philosophical cosmology, and an accompanying set of notions and terms that will help us speak meaningfully about this mysterious, 'invisible' aspect of human life.

With this specification of our need in mind, we will take the time to consider one more articulation of the complexity at work in Thomas's Neoplatonism, as it highlights a significant element that has been obscured in our survey thus far. Edward Booth states: "Thomas's Aristotelian ontology is a prolongation and development of Pseudo-Dionysius's Aristotelianisation of Proclus's ontology; though this can only have become clear to him after William de Moerbeke had begun to translate Proclus's works."[65] Booth's statement does two things for us. First, it reminds us that in Thomas these lines of thought and inquiry will be interwoven and synthesized – that is, although for the sake of clarity in working through the

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[64] Gregory, "The Platonic inheritance," 54–55, 70; McInerny, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 17–18, 77, 94; Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 310; Winthrop Wetherbee, "Philosophy, Cosmology, and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke, 21–53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 29–31.
Note: I have chosen to follow the example of those scholars who omit the "Pseudo-" prefix from Dionysius's name, such as Jean-Pierre Torrell, Fran O'Rourke, Bernhard Blankenhorn, and Eric Perl.

[65] Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, ed. Walter Ullmann, Third series, vol. 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 218.

stages of our inquiry we will examine 'horizontal' and 'vertical' trajectories in Thomas (and their sources) distinctly, they are in reality deeply synthesized and mutually referential within his thought.[66] Second, Booth's comment brings to the reader's attention a source underlying the perhaps more visible influences that Thomas engages (in this case, Aristotle and Dionysius[67]): the Neoplatonist Proclus. Booth presents Proclus to us as a constitutive factor of the ontological discourse engaged by Thomas in his 13th century context – a Neoplatonic source that resided undetected under the surface at some points, but at the same time a source frequently mined and found both fruitful and resilient by thinkers of varying traditions.

We wish, therefore, to consider Proclus as a significant and meaningful source of Neoplatonic influence for Thomas's thought, one that can effectively illumine the vertical aspect of human life. First, we can note that Proclus was a primary influence and source for both Boethius and Dionysius, who we have already identified as direct influences upon Thomas.[68] In this way, we can notice that Proclus was introduced to Thomas through the 'sanction' of

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[66] Gregory articulates a related caution in his observation about twelfth-century Platonism: "It would be misleading to attempt to distinguish between elements deriving directly from the *Timaeus* and those originating from other authors directly or indirectly linked to the variegated Platonic tradition." Gregory, "The Platonic inheritance," 56. Similarly, Torrell reminds us that we should not think of Thomas's appropriation of Aristotle as if in radical contrast with the Platonism/Neoplatonism of his day. The 'two' streams of philosophical inheritance were, rather, quite intermingled. He specifically cautions against framing the 13th century European universities as organized around an "opposition between Augustinianism [i.e. Platonism/Neoplatonism] and Aristotelianism, the latter being identified with Saint Thomas and the Dominicans, and the former with Saint Bonaventure and the Franciscans." Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Vol 1: The Person and His Work,* 38-9.

[67] Dionysius served for Thomas as a significant theological sanction for disagreeing with Augustine in favor of an Aristotelian view of an issue. E.g.: Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.10.1.2 corp. Hankey states that for Thomas, "The *Corpus dionysiacum areopagiticum* possesses an authority for Aquinas surpassed only by Sacred Scripture and never loses it." Wayne J. Hankey, "The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the *Liber de Causis* & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus," *Dionysius* 34 (Dec. 2016): 137–209, at 144. Hankey points to Boland's apt observation: "In Saint Thomas' [very late] commentary on the *Liber de causis* 'the faith' [still] tells against Proclus and against 'platonic positions', against the 'Auctor', against Aristotle but never against Dionysius who remains for Saint Thomas an authoritative source for what the faith teaches." Vivian Boland, *Ideas in God According to St. Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis,* Studies in the History of Christian Thought 69, ed. Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 310 (ref. in Hankey, "Concord … ," 144).

[68] Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 222, 228, 234; Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, 192, 253; Gregory, "The Platonic inheritance," 55-56, 79.

recognized religious authorities.[69] Next, for readers of Thomas, it is interesting to consider how Proclus's thought 'bookends' Thomas's career. Thomas became acquainted with the work of Proclus early in his scholarly career, during his days as a student of Albertus Magnus, through the standard university text of the *Liber de causis* – though he did not recognize it as containing Proclus's thought at the time.[70] He also was introduced indirectly to Proclean thought through his extensive work with Dionysius under the tutelage of Albert, and through the influence of Arab Platonists such as Ibn Sînâ (Avicenna).[71] At the other end of his career, Thomas wrote his commentary on the *Liber de causis* – a text which he now, thanks to the translation work of William of Moerbeke, knew to be based upon Proclus's *Elementatio theologica.*[72] Porro notes that the *Super librum De causis expositio* is likely Thomas's last text addressing metaphysical questions, and he suggests that it is "perhaps the one that more than any other reflects the final development of his thought in this area."[73] We can notice, for but one example of Proclus's influence on the development of Thomas's thought, Thomas's reorganization of the questions of Lombard's *Sentences* in his commentary. In the *Sentences,* the structuring themes reflect a traditionally Augustinian programme: *res* and *signa*, in collaboration with *uti* and *frui*. By contrast, Thomas arranges the questions according to the Neoplatonic plan of *exitus* and *reditus* – a cyclical scheme, Porro states, "borrowed from the *De causis,* Pseudo-Dionysius, and Avicenna and probably assimilated during his theological and philosophical apprenticeship with Albert the

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[69] Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, 30, 383; Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, 42; Wetherbee, "Philosophy, Cosmology, and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," 31 (Wetherbee notes that Boethius, and his secular sources, came into the university setting "endorsed" by Eriugena).
[70] Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile,* 341; Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, 174–178, 221–223.
[71] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, 21–27; Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile,* 5, 12–13; Gregory, "The Platonic inheritance," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, 64–65, 79.
[72] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, 174–178, 221–223.
[73] Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile,* 342.

Great."[74] In parallel, or 'bookend,' fashion, we can see this same "circular interpretation of causal processes" emphasized in his *Super librum De causis expositio,* written near the end of his career.[75]

Finally, and most importantly, Proclus's thought presents one of the most systematized discourses on a vertically-structured Neoplatonic cosmology. His work provides a rich set of notions showing how the world is a complex network of participation in superabundant Good and Being, a system in which each individual both receives its being as a bestowal in its procession from the One and also has a role to play in achieving the fulfilling of its being in its return.[76] We will examine his 'hierarchical'[77] account of reality later in the thesis, but it is enough for now to say that Proclus's notions of cyclical causation, participation, and providential activity can be seen to have resonances in Thomas's account of human flourishing. Thomas does not invoke Proclus as an *auctoritas* to the same degree that he does Aristotle, and certainly not as a theological authority as he does Augustine or Dionysius, but he does engage him directly as a source of clarity regarding how the universe holds together vertically.[78] Proclus's cosmological language, though its *explicit* presence in Thomas is relatively limited in comparison with other authorities, is perhaps as effective at illumining the vertical aspect of created beings in Thomas's account of reality as Aristotle's language is at illumining the horizontal.

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[74] Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile,* 28. (Porro notes that Thomas's scheme on the *Sentences* is not the only one to employ this structure, though these influences are likely the source of Thomas's use of it.)
[75] Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile,* 343.
[76] Marije Martijn and Lloyd P. Gerson, "Proclus' System," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 45–72 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): "All in All and the Modes of Being," 58–61; "Full Circle: Reversion," 55–57.
[77] Note: in engaging Proclus's Neoplatonism, 'hierarchy' is to be understood *not* in the power-over sense often associated with the term in common usage, but in the cosmological sense of an interwoven reality of shared goods and being.
[78] For example, as we will see, in his commentary on the *Liber de causis.*

For these reasons, we have chosen to focus on Proclus, out of the tremendous, polyvalent spectrum of Neoplatonist authorities, as an influence upon Thomas's vertical account of human life. Taken together with Aristotle, these two support and illumine a reading of Thomas that accounts for both the horizontal and vertical aspects of human nature and existence. We will consider, therefore, the particular reading of Thomas that this thesis will employ as an 'Aristo-Proclean' reading.

F. Augustine: the *sine qua non* of Thomas's Christian philosophy

Given that we will proceed in the work of our inquiry using a specifically Aristo-Proclean reading of Thomas, it seems fitting to devote a brief space in our introduction to affirm the magisterial influence of Augustine upon Thomas, particularly within those themes that we will be engaging in our work. Though much of that influence will go unmarked in the midst of our inquiry, we recognize that Augustine's thought and authority constitute a genuine *sine qua non* in Thomas's – a theological and philosophical inheritance, as Chenu states, "outside of which it is impossible to conceive a Saint Thomas."[79] The following briefly-stated doctrines of Augustine, among others in a much greater list, should be presumed in our engagement with Thomas's account of human beings and their place in a sacred universe (i.e., a universe in which visible reality is a participation in the divine).

Creation: Augustine is an authoritative source to Thomas's context for a theological appropriation of the Neoplatonist notion that the cause is present in the effect.[80] In Augustine,

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[79] Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, 54. This comment by Chenu is invoked as an opening declaration in the volume of texts *Aquinas the Augustinian*, edited by Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007).
See also Rist's observation: "Everyone in the Catholic Middle Ages was in some sense an Augustinian." John M. Rist, "Augustine, Aristotelianism, and Aquinas: Three Varieties of Philosophical Adaptation," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, 79–99 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 81.

[80] E.g., Proclus, *Elementatio theologica,* §§8 and 12.

this appears as his central articulation that God is within us more than we are within ourselves (*intimior intimo meo*), an indication of what it means to be *created* beings.[81] Thomas echoes this doctrine (without directly referencing Augustine) in the *Prima Pars*: "Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermostly."[82] Similarly, though in reverse orientation, Thomas draws from Augustine the notion of Christ as the creative wisdom of God by which all things are made, and in whom are precontained the *rationes* of all created things.[83]

Grace: Augustine provides to Thomas a grounding notion of grace as fittingly distinguished between operative and cooperative.[84] In *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, Augustine states:

> It is certain that *we* will, when we will. But God brings it about that we will something good. … It is certain that *we* act, when we act. But God brings it about that we act by furnishing our will with efficacious strength. … In order that we will, then, God works without us; but when we will, and we will in such a way that we act, He works along with us. Yet without Him wither (*a*) working that we will, or (*b*) working along when we will, we are powerless to accomplish good religious works.[85]

Rist observes of Augustine's doctrine of grace: "He does not say that grace is irresistible, but that it is 'effective' … so that it unconquerably desires the good … The function of grace, according to Augustine, is not to drag us, kicking and screaming, to salvation, but to allow us to want and

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[81] Augustine, *Confessions,* 3.6.11: "You were more inward than my most inward part and higher than the highest element within me." Ref.: *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, translation, introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 43.
See: John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 135.
[82] Aquinas, *ST* 1.8.1 corp. – "*Unde oportet quod Deus sit in omnibus rebus, et intime*."
[83] Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura,* 1.3.77 (with reference to Augustine's *De trinitate*); 15.3.2013–2015.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura,* Latin text based on the 1972 Marietti edition, edited by the Aquinas Institute; English translation by Fabian R. Larcher, revised and edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Ioan.
See also: Guy Mansini, "'Without Me You Can Do Nothing': St. Thomas with and without St. Augustine on John 15:5," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, 159–180 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 173.
[84] E.g., Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.2 s.c.
[85] Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 16.32–17.33. *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. by Peter King, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

to do the things that are right and in every sense desirable."[86] Rist further notes that Augustine's vision of human history and of the perfection of human beings is decidedly *linear* (i.e., directed toward a future, superior state) rather than *circular* (i.e., directed toward a return to a past state of perfection or integrity) – a view that will have ramifications in his sense of the shape of the life of faith in this life.[87] Thomas signals this orientation of Augustine in his treatment of Augustine's doctrine of charity as a theology of hope.[88]

Sin: The notoriously-difficult theme of original sin (especially regarding transmission), a theme within which Augustine's thought is deeply interwoven, is quite outside the scope of this project, and our discourse about human nature and its difficulties with flourishing does not read Thomas with that issue specifically in view.[89] However, the issue of transmission aside,

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[86] Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 133–134, with ref. to: Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 16.32 and *De correptione et gratia* 11.35.

[87] Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized,* 112, see note 61. However, we should also note that, as Thomas draws our attention to, Augustine did view the blessings and perfections of the 'beatitudes' as realizable in this life. See: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.69.2 s.c. and corp.

[88] Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, 181–204 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 203; ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.17.8; 28.1 ad 3; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.20.

[89] Thomas treats of original sin in terms of a 'wounding' of human nature, specifically the loss of the graced gift of original justice (a gift that would have transmitted in human nature if it had not been lost, just as its defect is transmitted). Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.81.2 corp., and 85.1 and 3. We can, further, note Johnson's observation that while Lombard, on the theme of original sin, references Augustine more than any other authority (e.g., book 2, distinctions 20–35), when Thomas specifically addresses the transmission of original sin from Adam the use of Augustine "is almost non-existent" – i.e., *ST* 1–2.81.1. In this text, Johnson states, Thomas takes issue with the prevailing explanations of the transmission of original sin precisely in that they do not account for the notion of *culpa* – a notion he connects with an Aristotelian sense of voluntary act. Thomas, therefore, "sets out a different course" – specifically, "leaving behind his prior teaching, and his understanding of Augustine's teaching." Johnson summarizes Thomas's solution: "The homicide that a hand might commit is not imputed to the hand ([as] if the hand were separated from the body), but it is imputed to the hand as being some part of a man that is moved by a first motive principle of the man. And so the disorder that is in a man, derived from Adam, is not in that man by his own will but rather by Adam's, who by the motion of human generation moves others – you and me – who derive their origin from him. And this is why it is called 'original sin,' while the sin deriving from the soul to a bodily member is called 'actual sin.' … Thomas's *alia via* makes Adam the primary motive power, by will, in the whole human body. In this body we are not just members materially, but members such as can be moved by his will in performing that original sin. His was the mortal sin, calling for damnation; ours is a fault of our nature, calling for the cleansing and rebirth in the Lord, but for which no one is liable to the fires of hell" (brackets MG). Mark Johnson, "Augustine and Aquinas on Original Sin: Doctrine, Authority, and Pedagogy," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, 145–158 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 146–147, 155–6, 158.

Thomas's understanding of sin is marked by Augustine's thought regarding the theme of sin as the harming of human nature. We can see, for example, Thomas drawing amply from Augustine when treating of the remedy for sin – i.e., the reason for Christ's incarnation and passion – as the restoring/healing of wounded human nature, which wounds he enumerates as ignorance (wound of the reason with regard to its order to the true), malice (wound of the will with regard to its order to the good), weakness (wound of the irascible with regard to the arduous), and concupiscence (wound of the concupiscible with regard to the delectable, as moderated by reason).[90] In this straightforward articulation of Thomas's we see a theological understanding informed by Augustine's moving sensitivity to the plight of human nature thus beset, a vision of sin as affecting all of human life:

> Nothing makes the mind a devotee of desire but its own will and free choice. … Lust dominates the mind and drags it back and forth, despoiled of the richness of virtue, poor and needy; at one moment taking falsehoods for truths and even making a practice of defending them, at another rejecting what it had previously accepted and nonetheless rushing to other falsehoods; now withholding its assent and often in dread of clear lines of argument; now despairing of the whole enterprise of finding the truth, lingering deep within the shadows of foolishness; now struggling towards the light of understanding but again falling back from it due to exhaustion. All the while, that reign of desires savagely tyrannizes and batters a person's whole life and mind with storms raging in all directions. On this side fear, on that desire; on this side anxiety, on that empty spurious enjoyment; on this side torment over the loss of something loved, on that ardor to acquire something not possessed; on this side sorrows for an injury received, on that the burning to redress it. Whichever way one turns, greed can pinch, extravagance squander, ambition enslave, pride puff up, envy twist, laziness overcome, stubbornness provoke, submissiveness oppress – these and countless others throng the realm of lust, having the run of it.[91]

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[90] E.g., Aquinas, *ST* 3.1.2 corp. (where Thomas references Augustine twelve times); 1–2.85.3. See also: *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 3, 1.1.2. Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 3, Latin text originally based on the 1858 Parma Edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa. Subsequently revised by the Aquinas Institute according to the 1947 M. F. Moos Edition, with noted corrections according to the Provisional Leonine Edition (PLE). English translation in progress, the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.III.

[91] Augustine, *De libero arbitrio voluntatis* 1.11.22.77–78. *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. by Peter King, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

The Trinity: Augustine's magisterial treatment of the Trinity centers firmly on a commitment to approaching the Trinitarian Persons as unfathomable, incomprehensible mystery: "If you have grasped, it is not God; if you were able to understand, then you have understood something else in God's place."[92] To Augustine, any 'trinitarian analogies' between human beings and God must not be understood as illumining the mystery of the Trinity – rather, the Trinity is itself the source of the light of understanding the analogy.[93] Emery states that the first concern in Augustine's trinitarian doctrine is the common operation, or unity of action, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[94] Sherwin notes that Augustine's doctrine of charity entails an invitation to the human individual to participate in this unified action within the Trinity of love for itself.[95] Finally, Marshall observes that in Thomas's 'correction' of Augustine regarding the Trinitarian Persons, where Augustine appears to affirm the rejected position of essential generation, Thomas assumes Augustine to have correct belief that just needed to be explained/clarified in order to be seen as truth:

> To express unity of essence and of person, the holy Doctors have sometimes expressed themselves with greater emphasis than the strict propriety of terms allows. Whence instead of enlarging upon [Marshall translates: "repeat"] such expressions we should rather explain them.[96]

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[92] Augustine, *Sermo* 52.6.16 (cf. 117.3.5). References, with translation, by Gilles Emery/John Baptist Ku in Emery's "Trinitarian Theology as Spiritual Exercise in Augustine and Aquinas," translated by John Baptist Ku, in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, 1–40 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 10. Emery also points specifically to: Augustine, *De trinitate* 7.4.7 (the Trinity is ineffable); 8.5.8 (is not known); 15.7.13 (cannot be "understood"); 15.23.43 (cannot be spoken); 15.27.50 (cannot be explained); 15.27.49 (his mystery is not "grasped"). Emery, 10–11.

[93] See: Augustine, *De trinitate* 15.23.44. Emery, "Trinitarian Theology as Spiritual Exercise in Augustine and Aquinas," 6.

[94] Emery, "Trinitarian Theology as Spiritual Exercise in Augustine and Aquinas," 5.

[95] Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity;" ref.: Augustine, *De trinitate* 15.31–32.

[96] Aquinas, *ST* 1.39.5 ad 1: "*Ad exprimendam unitatem essentiae et personae, sancti doctores aliquando expressius locuti sunt quam proprietas locutionis patiatur. Unde huiusmodi locutiones non sunt extendendae, sed exponendae*." Thomas in this question references and responds to Augustine, *De trinitate* 7.1.2.
Marshall, "Aquinas the Augustinian?", 42.

Humanity as *imago Dei*: The doctrine of human beings' status as the *imago Dei* is the other side of the mystery of the Trinity. Both Augustine and Aquinas can be seen to develop in their understanding and articulation of just how human nature mirrors the divine. Augustine provides a consistent commitment to the notion that human nature images the divine in its *soul*, and specifically in its 'trinitarian' nature and structure,[97] though his identification of the structures of the human soul that form this 'trinity' vary – at times he states the three as mind, knowledge, and love (which trace closely the operations of the divine Persons),[98] and at others he emphasizes the powers (only formally distinct) of self-memory, self-understanding, and self-willing/loving, all resident within the mind.[99] Rist observes that Augustine has commitment both to the notion of the *imago Dei* in the mind/soul and to an understanding of the human person as in some sense a composite of a soul and a body – but that ultimately Augustine, he states, struggles to provide a satisfactory account of these together.[100] Thomas's treatment of the *imago Dei* clearly follows Augustine, especially in terms of its location in the human mind/soul,[101] and in its unified, trinitarian 'shape,'[102] but, on O'Callaghan's reading, his mature treatment emphasizes the *embodied* state of that soul, and its operations as *acts* of the rational soul, not mere powers.[103] O'Callaghan further distinguishes methodologically between Augustine's

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[97] Augustine, *De trinitate* Books 9 through 14. See Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 145 (and n129), regarding the development of Augustine's 'psychological' account of the *imago Dei.*
[98] Augustine, *De trinitate* 9.4.
[99] Augustine, *De trinitate* 10.11; see also 9.4.4. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 145–146.
[100] Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 94–95, 120. Augustine, *De trinitate* 15.7.11; *Sermon* 30.4, after 412; *De civitate Dei* 22.24. Rist also notes that Thomas's engagement with Augustine on the theme of female human beings as the *imago Dei* misses the opportunity to use his Aristotelian hylomorphism to direct the conversation toward an *embodied* soul. Rist, "Augustine, Aristotelianism, and Aquinas," 94–97 (ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1.93.4 ad 1).
[101] Aquinas, *ST* 1.93.4 s.c.; 93.6 s.c.; 93.8 s.c.; 93.7 ad 4.
[102] Aquinas, *ST* 1.93.5; 93.7
[103] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.16.1; *Q,D. de verit.* 10; *ST* 1.93. Regarding *ST* 1.93, O'Callaghan notes that nearly all the articles of the question refer directly to topics in Augustine, but he also notes that the *objections* Thomas engages come "overwhelmingly" from Augustine's *De trinitate.* John P. O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*: A Test Case for St. Thomas's Augustinianism," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering, 100–144 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 125, 145.

'inward turn' in the soul's knowledge of itself, especially insofar as it functions as the *imago Dei*, and Thomas's 'outward turn,' by which the soul knows itself (even in its status as the *imago* Dei) through knowledge of sensible things.[104] Finally, there is interesting discourse regarding whether Thomas's mature doctrine of the *imago Dei* is the result of his engagement with Aristotle (as in the reading of O'Callaghan), in a deeper re-reading of Augustine (as in Merriell), or in a re-reading of Lombard (as in Marshall).[105]

Centrality and sufficiency of Christ/the gospels regarding the essentials of faith: A word needs to be said about Augustine's commitment to the supremacy of Christ for the life of faith in the believer, seen with particular clarity in terms of its influence upon Thomas. In his commentary upon the Credo, Thomas states: "As blessed Augustine says, Christ's Passion is enough to instruct us fully about our way of life. Whoever wants to lead a perfect life has nothing more to do than spurn what Christ spurned on the Cross and to desire what he desired."[106] Responding to objections that the New Law (i.e., the Gospel) insufficiently answers to all the matters treated of in the Old Law, Thomas invokes Augustine's treatment of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Augustine says (De Serm. Dom. in Monte 1, 1): 'We should take note that, when He [Christ] said: "He that heareth these My words," He indicates clearly

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[104] O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*: A Test Case for St. Thomas's Augustinianism," 105–107, 110; ref.: Augustine, *De trinitate* 10.6–7; 11.8; Aquinas, *Q.D. de veritate* 10.7–9.
More generally, Thomas can be extensively seen to assert that human reason's most direct, and reliable, path to knowledge is to proceed from sensible particulars: Aquinas, *ST* 1.85.3 corp.; *Super Sent.* 1, epilogue; *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* 1.2.46; 10.4.1990; *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum* 1.1.8; *Expositio libri Posteriorum analyticorum* 1.4.43.
[105] O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*: A Test Case for St. Thomas's Augustinianism," 115, 135, 145; D. Juvenal Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas' Teaching* (Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 240; Marshall, "Aquinas the Augustinian?", 48–50.
[106] Aquinas, *Expositio in symbolum apostolorum*, 4.919–924 – "*Nam, sicut dicit beatus Augustinus, passio Christi sufficit at informandum totaliter vitam nostrum. Quicumque enim vult perfecte vivere, nihil aliud faciat nisi quod contemnat quae Christus in cruce contempsit, et appetat quae Christus appetiit.*"
Ref.: *Expositio in symbolum apostolorum, reportatio Reginaldi de Piperno*. *Textum Taurini 1954 editum et automato translatum a Roberto Busa SJ in taenias magneticas denuo recognovit Enrique Alarcón atque instruxit. Corpus Thomisticum.* Accessed at: https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/csv.html. English translation by Torrell, in *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol 2 Spiritual Master*, 120.

that this sermon of the Lord is replete with all the precepts whereby a Christian's life is formed.'"[107] In his letter of dedication to the pope accompanying his *Catena aurea* on Matthew, Thomas states succinctly and directly: "In the Gospel the form of Catholic faith is transmitted, as well as the whole rule of Christian life."[108] Torrell observes that, though Thomas does not explicitly mention Augustine at that location: "The Augustinian inspiration behind this is evident."[109] Finally, in his commentary on the gospel of John, Thomas beautifully states (with only a peripheral reference to Augustine, not present in this selection, but with clear formation by Augustine's pastoral spirituality):

> If then, you ask which to way to go, accept Christ, for he is the way …
> If you ask where to go, cling to Christ, for he is the truth which we desire to reach …
> If you ask where to remain, remain in Christ because he is the life …
> Therefore, cling to Christ if you wish to be secure, for you cannot get off the road because he is the way … [you] cannot be deceived because he is the truth and teaches all truth … [you] cannot be troubled, because he is the life and the giver of life.[110]

Charity: It would be nearly impossible, and certainly infelicitous, to represent in a mere paragraph the tremendous significance of charity within the theology and philosophy of Augustine, and Aquinas following him. The attempt must be made though, however impoverished, to at least signal the centrality, transformative power, and even efficiency of divine love within the Augustinian inheritance for Thomas's world – and, as will be seen, within

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[107] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.108.3 s.c. – "*sermonem istum domini omnibus praeceptis quibus Christiana vita formatur, esse perfectum.*"
[108] Aquinas, *Catena aurea in Matthaeum*, Dedication: "*In Evangelio praecipue forma fidei Catholicae traditor et totius vitae regula Christianae.*"
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas. *Catena aurea in Matthaeum.* Latin text based on the 1953 Marietti edition. Published, with English translation, as: *Catena aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers: Vol. 1 St. Matthew Part 1*. Translated by John Henry Parker, J.G.F., and J. Rivington, dedication translated by Joseph Kenny. Oxford, 1841. Accessed at: https://isidore.co/aquinas/CAMatthew.htm.
[109] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol 2 Spiritual Master*, 215 n44.
[110] Aquinas, *Super Ioan.* 14.2.1807 – "*Si ergo quaeras, qua transeas, accipe Christum, quia ipse est via … Si vero quaeras quo vadis, adhaere Christo, quia ipse est veritas, ad quam desideramus pervenire … Si quaeris quo permaneas, adhaere Christo, quia ipse est vita … Adhaere ergo Christo, si vis esse securus: non enim poteris deviare, quia ipse est via … non potest decipi, quia ipse est veritas, et docet omnem veritatem … non potest perturbari, quia ipse est vita et vitam dans.*"

the work of this thesis. Augustine's definition of charity in *De doctrina Christiana,* which Sherwin notes became standard fare for medieval scholars, states: "I call 'charity' the soul's motion toward enjoying God for his own sake, and enjoying one's self and one's neighbor for the sake of God" – though, Sherwin further states, this articulation introduced the problem of framing love for God simply as 'desire' (and "thus reducing God to a means toward our own fulfillment"), and the related problem of "in what sense God can be said to love us from charity."[111] Thomas's appropriation of Augustine, Sherwin states, "can be viewed as saving Augustine's insights from the distortions of later interpreters, friend and foe alike."[112] Specifically (among a much broader body of treatment), Thomas clarifies the ambiguity of God's act of charity for us by speaking of charity in terms of friendship with God – a relation within which God communicates his life to us, a bestowal that serves as the foundation of a union of affection (for which notion Thomas invokes the authority of Augustine) and a mutual well-wishing.[113] Further, Thomas clarifies against its challengers the notion of 'charity as desire for God' in Augustine's definition (a task which Hugh of Saint-Victor accomplishes by asserting that those who look askance this notion are "fools" who "do not understand the character of love"[114]) through his treatment of love as *complacentia boni* – the affective proportion to the good that undergirds any human motion of desire toward that good, a proportion that is accomplished (when the object of desire is God) by the divine bestowal of charity.[115] We can

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[111] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 3.10 [16]; English translation by Sherwin, ref.: "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis Concerning Charity," 184 (and n14); 183, 185.
[112] Sherwin, 183, see especially n7. As already noted above, Thomas explains that, properly speaking, Augustine's treatment of charity is best understood in terms of *hope* – ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.17.8; 28.1 ad 3; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.20. Ref.: p 30, n88.
[113] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.1 corp.; 3 s.c. and corp. (ref. to Augustine: *De moribus eccl.* 11). See Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis Concerning Charity," 195–6.
[114] Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De sacramentis* 176.534; English translation by Sherwin, ref.: "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis Concerning Charity," 188 (and n36).
[115] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.25.2 s.c. and corp.; 2–2.23.5 corp.

notice that Thomas is here using the Aristotelian analysis of motion to explain that Augustine's association of love with desire and joy (and fear and sadness as well) is because love is the *cause* of these.[116] On Sherwin's reading, Aquinas "thus makes explicit what is only implicit in Augustine: love is the first change in the appetite, from which desire and joy spring."[117] Torrell emphasizes, in Thomas's treatment of charity, another aspect of his Augustinian inheritance: its divine, intra-Trinitarian origin – i.e., we are loved with the love with which God loves himself.[118] Both following and building upon Augustine, Thomas extensively speaks of charity both in terms of its source – i.e., the Holy Spirit – as in terms of its presence genuinely within us – i.e., *created* charity.[119] In terms of our appreciation for Thomas's sensitivity to the ambiguities of discourse about divine/human relations, we can note the ambiguity of agency that is entailed in this notion of charity: given that desire/love is the principle of any human act of self-motion, and given that in Thomas (following Augustine) the presence of charity within our soul is directly linked to the Person of the Holy Spirit, we can observe that in any human act of charity there is an interesting duality of genuine agency. This is an issue that will be of significance in the work of our thesis. Further, we can here also signal a connection to the Neoplatonic/Proclean influence at work in Thomas: the final causality of charity. Torrell observes how this theme in Thomas is interwoven with his Augustinian notions of Trinitarian relations, an outlook (he states) that is "as beautiful as it is deep: Since it is in the Holy Spirit and through Him that the Father and the Son

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[116] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.25.2 s.c. and corp.; 26.1 ad 2.
[117] Sherwin, "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis Concerning Charity," 196–7.
[118] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 178; ref.: Augustine, *De trinitate* 8.1.10; 15.19.37. *Note bene*: we can clearly see that Augustine (in the second reference especially) has a great sensitivity to our earlier-stated problem with those who emphasize love of God to the exclusion of love for neighbor. Here is a clear example of the varying paths that our thesis *could* have taken into its work. Our path forward is the result of our choice to enter the question, and frame a remedy, through a reading of Thomas that draws closely from Aristotle's account of volitional motion and from Proclus's notions of causation and hierarchy.
[119] Augustine, *De trinitate* 8.7.10; 15.19.37; Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 1.17.1.1; 2.26.1.1; *Q.D. de verit.* 27.1–2; *ST* 1–2.110.1; 2–2.23.2.

love each other and love creatures, it is also in Him and through Him that their movement of return toward the Father is completed. … The creature's movement of return toward the Father begins only with the gift of sanctifying grace, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and it clearly reaches its end under the Spirit's guidance."[120] The Holy Spirit's role in the created being's 'return' to God as its principle – i.e., another way of speaking about the flourishing of a human individual – will also be an important theme in the work of this thesis. Finally, to conclude this brief treatment of the presence of charity within Thomas's reception of Augustinian thought, Thomas's sermon on the Ten Commandments grounds an understanding of the whole law within the gift of divine charity (a framing that he inherits from Augustine, as he shows):

> Note that this law of divine love produces four very desirable effects in man: First it causes spiritual life in him. For it is clear that what is loved is inside the lover. Therefore whoever loves God has him in himself (1 Jn 4:16): "Whoever remains in love, remains in God and God in him." It is also the nature of love that it transforms the lover into what is loved (Hos 9:10): "They became abhorrent, just like the things they loved." But if we love God, we become divine, because, as it is said (1 Cor 6:17): "Whoever sticks to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." Augustine says, "Just as the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul."
> … The second effect of charity is … promptness in carrying out the divine precepts. For we see lovers doing great and difficult things for the sake of their beloved (Jn 14:23): "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word."
> … The third effect of charity is to be a bulwark against adversity … (Rm 8:28): "For those who love God, everything works together for good." Moreover, even adverse and difficult things seem easy to a lover, as we clearly see by observation.
> The fourth effect of charity is that it leads to happiness. … "After this a crown of justice awaits me, which the just judge will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who love his coming." Note that only a difference in charity, and not a difference in any other virtue, will make a difference in happiness.
> … Besides these, charity has some other effects which should not be passed over. The first of these is the remission of sin. … Another effect of charity is that it causes illumination of the heart. … Another effect of charity is to produce perfect joy in man. … Another effect of charity is perfect peace.[121]

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[120] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 178; ref.: Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 1.14.2.2.
[121] Aquinas, *Collationes in decem praeceptis*, Prologue – "*Sed sciendum quod haec lex, scilicet divini amoris, quatuor efficit in homine valde desiderabilia. Primo causat in eo spiritualem vitam. Manifestum est enim quod naturaliter amatum est in amante. Et ideo qui Deum diligit, ipsum in se habet: I Ioan. IV, 16: qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo. Natura etiam amoris est quod amantem in amatum transformat: unde si vilia diligimus et caduca, viles et instabiles efficimur: Os. IX, 10: facti sunt abominabiles sicut ea quae dilexerunt. Si autem Deum diligimus, divini efficimur, quia, ut dicitur I Cor. VI, 17: qui adhaeret domino, unus spiritus est. Sed sicut*

G. The guiding thread of the inquiry: intelligibility

A key feature of our path forward into the question of human flourishing and violence against it, as well as a remedy, is the notion of the intelligibility of human life. Great care must be taken here at the outset to clarify what is and is not meant by the term in this work. We will begin with two things is does *not* mean.

First, the use of 'intelligibility' as a guiding thread in this thesis does not mean that in our view of human life and experience all the pieces fit together neatly, with no remainder, and can be just as neatly explained – or, stated another way, that human life presents as uniformly logical, cohesive, and complete. There is much about human experience that defies understanding and peaceful acceptance. However, on this point we can also notice that human beings have a sort of expectation that life will, to a certain degree at least, make sense. We can see this perhaps in the negative more in the positive – we often see people expressing frustration or dismay specifically in response to something about the world that 'makes no sense.' Though human life often does *not* register as intelligible, our tendency to notice this precisely points to an intuition that it in some way it *should* – i.e., that lack of intelligibility is not the norm, even if it is the typical.

Augustinus dicit, sicut anima est vita corporis, ita Deus est vita animae. … Secundum quod facit caritas, est … promptitudo implendi divina praecepta. Videmus enim amantem propter amatum magna et difficilia operari. Ioan. XIV, 23: si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit. … Tertium quod facit caritas, est, quia est praesidium contra adversa. … Rom. VIII, 28: diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum; immo etiam adversa et difficilia suavia videntur amanti, sicut et apud nos manifeste videmus. Quartum vero est quod ad felicitatem perducit. … II Tim. IV, 8: in reliquo reposita est mihi corona iustitiae, quam reddet mihi in illa die iustus iudex: non solum autem mihi, sed et his qui diligunt adventum eius. Et sciendum, quod solum secundum differentiam caritatis est differentia beatitudinis et non secundum aliquam aliam virtutem. … Sed praeter illa, quaedam alia efficit quae praetermittenda non sunt. Primo enim efficit peccatorum remissionem. … Item causat cordis illuminationem. … Item perficit in homine perfectam laetitiam. … Item efficit pacem perfectam."
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Collationes in decem praeceptis*, Latin text from the 1954 Taurini edition; English translation of articles 3–12 by Joseph B. Collins (New York, 1939), edited, with prologue and articles 1–2 added, by Joseph Kenny. Accessed at: https://isidore.co/aquinas/TenCommandments.htm#0.

Second, our use of 'intelligibility' should not be taken as a privileging of the rational over, or to the exclusion of, non-rational aspects of human life – especially if 'rational' is taken in the Modern/Enlightenment sense of autonomous reason, a view of human nature which has, with good reason, been sharply critiqued for its violent tendencies against marginalized human individuals and groups.[122] Rather, this thesis takes logical reasoning as the condition of having reasons for things – a significant feature of human agency for this thesis – thus as "properly ubiquitous" in human life and action, to use Robert Sweetman's phrasing. He states, further, that "the logicality by which we self-awaredly distinguish this from that is an irreducible presence (whether in the foreground or background) of all our actions and passions in life."[123]

Given the risks just stated accompanying use of the term 'intelligibility,' what is the gain to be hoped for by using this somewhat fraught word? As will be seen as the work unfolds, this thesis takes intelligibility to signal the interior-causality so essential to a sense of human agency. It stands for the way in which human thought, desires, and experiences provide the 'explanation' for or the 'story' of a person's voluntary actions. This is, again, not to say that people's lives, and even their distinct actions, always answer to their thoughts and wishes. However, when we engage another person in the world around us there is a sense in which the place we should start,

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[122] For but one example of a scholarly tradition addressing the history of rationalist human activity in terms of its violent tendencies, see Reformational Philosophy's strong resistance to a modernist, rationalist account of the human condition, and their association of the same with intellectual abstractions that function as power-moves over concrete particulars – what adherents think of as the problem of "totalizing ontology." See: James Olthuis, "Creatio Ex Amore," in *Dancing in the Wild Spaces of Love: A Theopoetics of Gift and Call, Risk and Promise*, 3-19 (at 15, for quoted phrase in previous sentence), Currents in Reformational Thought Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022). See also Hendrik Hart, *Understanding Our World: An integral ontology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); "Conceptual Understanding and Knowing *Other*-wise: Reflections on Rationality and Spirituality in Philosophy," in *Knowing* Other-*wise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality,* ed. James H. Olthuis, 24–53 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997); and "But Deliver Us From Reason: The Rhetoric of Reason and the revision of religion," paper presented to the Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought. Windsor, Ontario. 30 May 1988.

[123] Robert Sweetman, personal correspondence, 18 July 2022.

My deep thanks are due to Bob Sweetman for being a wise sounding board and conversation partner as I wrestled with articulating my intuitions about the significance of the intelligibility of human life.

and the ‘authority’ we are answerable to as we construct an account of them, is the person’s own status as a truthteller of their narrative – a status which we can understand philosophically as providing the ‘explanation’ for their activity as a self-mover. They may of course not reveal that truth, or not accurately represent it to us. It may, indeed, not even be clear to themself. However, to simply decide on our own to circumvent or disregard that narrative, or to impose one upon them from the outside, is in the view of this thesis a foundational form of personal violence against that individual’s personhood and agency – a violence that undergirds many of the more visible, explicit forms of personal violence that spurred the opening concern of the project. It is the view of this thesis that this sense of the intelligibility of individual human lives can serve as a helpful touchstone, or guiding thread, as we work our way through an examination of human flourishing and what hinders it. When we attend to a person’s thoughts and desires in terms of their serving as explanations or reasons for their actions, we are already at some level orienting ourselves contra-violently; when we fail to do so, whether by commission or by omission, we enact violent effect, even if our intentions are otherwise.

It is the claim of this thesis that Thomas Aquinas’s account of human nature and existence is helpful in illumining this sense of human life as intelligible. In particular, Thomas’s account depicts the ‘narrative’ of a person’s life – the grounding of their intelligibility as an individual agent – as the intersection and interweaving of horizontal and vertical aspects of existence. First, we will see in his engagement with Aristotelian anthropology a sensitivity to how the soul’s activities function as the interior principle of the individual’s self-motions. Second, we will see Thomas grounding this agency of human individuals within the causal network of the created world, a visible reality infused with divine being and goodness.

Aertsen considers such a reading of Thomas as showing two ways of knowing: an Aristotelian 'way of nature' (the horizon of which is the essence of a being, or the species),[124] and a Neoplatonic 'way of creation/origin of existence' (which concerns itself with the radical origin of a thing's being in existence).[125] Aertsen states that these two ways of knowing intersect and come together to undergird Thomas's account of the intelligibility of human life.[126] He notes that being and truth are only truly identical in regard to God (either as to his own nature, or as to his knowledge of contingent beings), but that since contingent beings have their *esse* by participation in God who is unified truth and being, each is a being that "*gives* itself to be known" and, similarly but in reverse orientation, "a being who has an intentional openness to all that is."[127] Further, regarding the Aristotelian doctrine that intelligibility is limited to essences, Aertsen observes that in Thomas's Neoplatonic/hierarchical framing of reality as shared good and being, "the discreteness of the essences is relativized, the boundaries become more fluid," and there is (in Thomas's phrasing) a "marvelous connection of things."[128] He reminds us that, in Thomas, 'true' (as with 'good') is a *relational* transcendental.[129] It is in these ways that, in Thomas's account, individual human lives can be seen as opened up to knowing and being known, i.e., rendered intelligible – though Thomas is careful to affirm that, in sympathy with Bonaventure's concerns, beings are only imperfectly known by human reason, and the truth of a thing emerges as meaningful in terms of its status as a *created* being.[130]

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[124] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 27–28, 81, 95, 171, 315–316. E.g., Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* 1.10.154; 7.3.1308; 7.4.1331–1336; 7.17.1658; *ST* 1.12.8 ad 4.
[125] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 84, 92–93, 119–122. E.g., Aquinas, *ST* 1.45.1; 45.6; 60.5; 104.1; *Super librum De causis expositio* 18.335–348.
[126] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 93.
[127] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 122, 146, 156–7; 307. Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 1.2; *ST* 1.14.1; 1.16.1; *Expositio libri Perihermeneias* 1.3.29.
[128] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 176. Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 2.68 – "*mirabilis rerum connexio.*"
[129] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 393. Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit*. 21.1.
[130] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 157–8 (with reference to: Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 12.15, on p 157, n67). Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 1.4 ad 4; 8.7 ad 2 (fourth series); *Super librum De causis expositio* 6.45.

McInerny considers intelligibility in terms of the mechanics of discourse, with reference to Thomas's *prooemium* to his commentary on the *Perihermeneias* of Aristotle. There, Thomas treats of the varying ways and modes with which human reason speaks meaningfully about the world – i.e., how it makes spoken 'interpretations' of reality in discourse. McInerny reflects on Thomas's phrase *ratio nominis,* reading it as "the account associated with a term … [that] expresses our mental grasp of the thing."[131] This nearly-parenthetic comment by McInerny captures in succinct fashion a key feature of saying that human life is intelligible: the human activity of 'mentally grasping' what is in front of us, using the tools of rational thought and expression, for the sake of discourse about it.

Pieper emphasizes that, in Thomas's account, the knowability of a human life that is genuinely available to finite human reason in no way exhausts the actual intelligibility of that person's being and existence.[132] A human being – precisely because they have their being by gift and participation, which renders it knowable – has an existence that is, to other human beings, unfathomable. But this is not to be taken to mean that the being is itself not possible to be known. Rather, he states: the created being "is too rich to be assimilated completely; it eludes the effort to comprehend it."[133] This accessible-but-inexhaustible intelligibility is, on Pieper's reading of Thomas, grounded in the divine knowledge of the created being: "Things have their intelligibility, their inner clarity and lucidity, and the power to reveal themselves, because God has creatively thought them. This is why they are essentially intelligible. Their brightness and radiance is infused into things from the creative mind of God, together with their essential being

[131] McInerny, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 134. Ref.: Aquinas, *Expositio libri Perihermeneias*, 1.1.5.
[132] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 53–67.
[133] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 60. This is the import that Pieper reads in texts such as: Augustine, *Confessions* 13.38; *De trinitate* 6.10; Aquinas, *Super Ioan* 1.2; *ST* 1.14.12 ad 3; 1.16.1; *Summa contra gentiles* 1.60; *Q.D. de verit.* 1.2.

(or rather, as the very essence of that being!). It is this radiance, and this alone that makes existing things perceptible to human knowledge."[134] In this way Pieper considers the 'negative element' of Thomas's theological approach to God as applicable also to his approach to contingent created beings – an account of human life that, just as with Thomas's theological account of God, is ultimately a doctrine not of agnosticism but of hope. Humanity's status as a knowing subject, both with regard to God and to other human beings, is "neither comprehension and possession nor simply non-possession, but 'not-yet-possession.'"[135] Pieper's reading of Thomas provides a vision of human intelligibility that is genuinely attainable and meaningful to us in this life and is at the same time something to be held loosely and approached humbly by our finite, human reasoning. He cautions that the attempt to by-pass this mystery – i.e., to downplay either the positive or the negative aspect of Thomas's account of human intelligibility – is to run the risk of interpreting Thomas as a Rationalist (as the evidence of some Neo-Scholastic inheritors of Thomas illustrates, he observes), the very concern that was brought up earlier in this section.[136] Pieper's caution seems very apt to our project's intuitions about human life, and about the careful line we must, and intend to, walk through our work using the notion of the intelligibility of human life as a guiding thread.

Finally, this project's use of the notion of intelligibility signals an important basic orientation that we will be assuming in this work. Our work must be understood as entailing a 'hermeneutic' approach to the world, and to human life within it. Inspired by Martha Nussbaum's sense of the philosophical significance of a reader's approach to a literary novel, we wish to orient ourselves to individual human existence with the intellectual humility and

[134] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 55–56.
[135] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 69.
[136] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 69.

attentiveness of a devoted novel-reader.[137] In such an orientation, we view other individuals as subjects within their own narratives, and as truth-tellers of their accounts. In such an orientation, the 'human task' entails approaching another individual with the intention and willingness to patiently 'read' them as faithfully as possible, to discover the ways in which their own thoughts and desires provide an explanation for their actions. This orientation is, therefore, a framing of human interpersonal engagements as hermeneutic encounters of discovery and disclosure, encounters in which our own narrative of the world and our place in it is willingly conditioned by and to a degree answerable to the self-narratives of the people around us.[138]

H. The *ductus*: a spiritual exercise in human flourishing

Having laid out the question of our thesis and the manner in which we will engage it, let us conclude this introduction by sketching the specific path that we will take. This project works from a certain account of human flourishing – i.e., an Aristo-Proclean reading of Thomas Aquinas's account – to conduct an inquiry into the entailments of that account with regard to personal violence and its remedy. It will therefore proceed philosophically, but in a qualified sense. First, insofar as it is a philosophical inquiry that takes its inspiration from a problem suggested by theological reflection: why it is that people of good will do not do the good that they know and love (and taking our cue from a dissatisfaction with locating the cause of that problem primarily as sin 'against God,' rather than 'against other people'). Second, insofar as it builds upon the theological notion of charity, specifically to observe that the formal, efficient, and final causality of charity is ambiguously both divine and human – and that charity as such

[137] Ref.: Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Nussbaum's thought on this theme, and its guiding influence upon our work, will be taken up in the Interstice between chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis.

[138] As can be seen in this paragraph, the thesis's sense of 'intelligibility' is complex, entailing the notion as it is at work in the thesis, as it indicates assumptions about human life in general, and as it addresses sensitivity to the potential intelligibility of individual human lives, both of oneself and others.

'brings on board' the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit. This philosophical project can, therefore, be understood as 'Christian philosophy' in the Gilsonian sense. Alternatively, it can be identified as a project of spiritual exercise – which is to say that, while its tasks and methods will be philosophical, its findings are not intended to taken as 'demonstrations' insofar as they rely upon notions contributed by Christian faith. Further, this framing of the project also naturally leads to the question of whether, and where, there is equivalent philosophically-generative thought in other religious thought, such as that of Proclus or Iamblichus, or other religions 'of the book,' i.e., Judaism and Islam. While this project will operate within the Christian perspective and commitments of Thomas Aquinas, it is to be hoped that it would suggest inquiry for equivalences farther afield. Finally, with grateful humility toward the case of a non-religious reader inclined and willing to provisionally 'bracket' the divine source of charity's causation as we find it in Thomas, it is to be hoped that the project could be taken as an invitation to consider human flourishing along a guided trajectory that would prove productive with regard to particular transformations, i.e., to the individual settings-into-motion of an ethical inquiry, rather than as if proposing comprehensive claims expected to hold in all cases.[139] In this way, it is to be hoped that the intellectual modesty appropriate to such an ethical inquiry (and modeled *par*

[139] See Martha Nussbaum's account of philosophy as therapy, comparing it with the practice of medicine: in *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Regarding this method, she states: "Therapeutic argument is searchingly concrete. It approaches the pupil with a keen awareness of the daily fabrics of her beliefs. And it holds, as well, that this fabric of belief is learned in particular cultural circumstances" (44). Such attention to human particulars "is not value-free or 'scientific': it is justified by appeal to deep human desires and judgments, and it is value-laden" (32). However, she asserts, even a concrete particular is not "*simply* a scene for the application of a dogmatic theory. As in medicine, theory must, in the end, be responsible to the cases, and it must therefore be open to the possibility of discovering new symptoms – or even new insights into the nature of health" (34).
See also Pierre Hadot's influential account of philosophy as spiritual exercise: Philosophy does not "consist in teaching an abstract theory – much less in the exegesis of texts – but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate life–style, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better." Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, edited with an introduction by Arnold I. Davidson, translated by Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 83.

excellence within Thomas's own method, as noted earlier) will imbue this project with a winsome openheartedness and accessibility for readers of all perspectives.[140]

Following the introduction provided in chapter 1, in chapter 2 we will build and articulate the Aristo-Proclean, Thomistic account of human existence and experience that will ground the project. We will discuss human nature in Aristotelian terms and in Proclean terms, in terms of how Thomas appropriates and responds to these, and then in terms of Thomas within his own context and concerns. Special attention will be paid to human beings in their activities of self-motion, to the cyclical dynamics of causality at work in the flourishing and fulfillment of human nature and existence, and to how these relate to the intelligibility of human activity. In Thomas specifically we will see the themes of creation, the *imago Dei*, and the coworking of nature and grace emerge as significant to his account of human life.

In chapter 3, we will examine what personal violence entails specifically within that account of human experience. As with chapter 2, we will consider this in terms of Aristotle's and Proclus's thought, of Aquinas's reception of the same, and of Aquinas's voice on its own terms. We will consider the problem of involuntary action – i.e., specifically those acts to which the actor 'contributes nothing' – and the dramatic effects of estrangement within a hierarchical

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[140] Ref.: n22.
Sweetman articulates the nuanced orientation that underlies the Christian philosophy/spiritual exercise under consideration here: "Christian scholarship is well imagined as a joining of conversations that in our post-Christian world are nearly always already on the go. This joining too entails a proper orientation. Thus, I suggest as orienting exercise the thought that our joining must entail a valuing of the conversation as, on some fundamental level, right and important in that one is set in motion towards it by the very dynamic of one's Christian heart. … On the other hand, the joining I have in mind will also involve in principle a Christian scholar's willingness and ability to assume a critical posture within post- and non-Christian conversations. That is, the Christian joiner will remain attentively open to the task of reinforcing all that is most attractive in the conversations she enters and to the possibility of nudging other less attractive dimensions in different and hopefully healthier directions, directions suggested to her by resources within her own Christian formation." Robert Sweetman, *Tracing the Lines: Spiritual Exercise and the Gesture of Christian Scholarship*, Currents in Reformational Thought (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 14–15. See Sweetman's discussion in this text for a historical survey of spiritual exercise in the Christian tradition.

reality of shared goods. In Thomas we will take up these themes as the notions of defective action and the private good, and then examine them through the example of 'malice.'

In the interstice between chapters 3 and 4, we will briefly engage Martha Nussbaum's account of the relationship between philosophy and literature, and the implications of her account for understanding our thesis as a hermeneutical project.

In chapter 4, we will articulate a vision of human flourishing in response to the work of the previous chapters. In the arc of the project, this account functions as a first-level remedy to the problem of personal violence. We will consider the activities that constitute human flourishing within the Aristo-Proclean, Thomistic account, and give attention to the conditions requisite for these activities of flourishing. We will examine the themes of friendship, similitude, and the crossover notion (imported from grammar, and developmental psychology) of 'second-person relations.' We will give special attention to the way in which, in Thomas, the Holy Spirit moves among human beings – i.e., in collaboration with the agency of human individuals – using this as both illumining human nature in its flourishing, and as a model for our own efforts to live contra-violently.

In chapter 5 we consider the subsequent problem of human beings *not* doing the good that is proper to their, and others', flourishing – even a good that they to some degree already know and love. We will consider this the second level of personal violence that we will examine in this project. We will engage this through the themes of ἀκρασία/incontinence and 'falling away' from the good. In Thomas, we will consider the problematic 'non-act' entailed in *acedia*, and will explore some theological examples of falling away.

In chapter 6 we will consider and articulate interventions fitted to the problem of not doing the good already known and loved as the good. In the arc of the project, this account

functions as a second-level remedy to the problem of personal violence. We will in particular examine the notion of gratitude for its contra-violent potential in such interventions, focusing on gratitude not so much as a felt emotion but rather as activity by which a person is positioned *as* a recipient of the good.

In chapter 7, the conclusion of the project, we will – in addition to summarizing and reflecting upon the work – revisit the notion of how this Aristo-Proclean-Thomistic philosophical account of human flourishing, violence against that flourishing, and a remedy to that violence might prompt further theological reflection upon the nature of sin and its remedy.

Chapter 2: The foundation of the question: the framing of a Thomistic account of human nature and activity

The first chapter of this work introduced a particular framing of the notion of 'intelligibility' as it relates to human experience, and discussed the benefits to be hoped for and the challenges to be expected from applying such a frame specifically to the problem of personal violence. The work of this chapter will be to establish the contours of human intelligibility as this thesis understands and employs the term. We will consider closely what aspects of human experience are illumined by an action-based, 'horizontal' account of human nature, and what aspects are illumined by a cosmological, 'vertical account' account of human nature, and what an account that is sensitive to both orientations would entail, with the belief that it is just such an account that will be fruitful in our inquiry into personal violence and its remedy. We have identified Thomas Aquinas as the primary interlocutor of this project, and a model of such a view of human nature. The work of this chapter, therefore, will be to show both the horizontal and vertical orientations at work in Thomas's thought. In order to show these orientations in the sharpest relief, and to understand how they function in Thomas's thought, we will show the philosophical sources of the ideas for Thomas – both in their own voices and as appropriated by Thomas. Specifically, we will discuss Aristotle's horizontal account, and what Thomas derives from that account in his own work, and Proclus's vertical account, and what Thomas derives from it. Our discussion will show both what Thomas draws from his authorities, and where his appropriation departs from them, shaped by his own contexts, philosophical interests, and grounding principles.

The work of this chapter will be to explicate and to legitimize the use of the term 'intelligibility' as a representation of the ability of a human being to provide the explanation for

their actions in the world. This thesis aims to consider the ways in which a person's view of the world can, and subsequently where it should, be taken as a meaningful ground of the reason for their actions. This chapter will show how the project derives this framing of intelligibility philosophically, and how it will provide the ground of the work in later chapters.

A few important caveats emerged in the introduction that bear repeating, as they help to set up the tasks of this chapter. First, the notion of intelligibility that this thesis employs is *not* limited or restricted to rationalist accounts of human nature. As we will see, there are a number of ways that a person's view of the world illumines their actions, not all of which are rational though some indeed are. Second, the reference to a human being's ability to provide the explanation for their actions, and the significance the thesis places upon this ability, is not meant to be taken as a claim that human life always *does* make sense, or that a person's intentions are always fulfilled. Rather, it is meant to reflect the experiential phenomenon that human beings tend to operate as though people's actions *should* make sense in some way – though, this phenomenon is perhaps most clearly seen in the negative, insofar as people experience frustration or distress by the very fact of things happening that do not make sense, or that they try to make sense of but fail.

A. Aristotle's 'horizontal' account of human activity as the operation of rational self-movers

Aristotle famously opens his *Metaphysics* with the observation that all men by nature desire to know.[141] His *Posterior Analytics* similarly provides the early observation that we believe ourselves to truly know something when "we think that we know the cause of which the

[141] Aristotle. *Metaphysica*, trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 681–929 (New York: Modern, 2001), 1.1.960a20.

fact depends, as the cause of that fact and of no other."[142] We begin our brief examination of Aristotle's account of human existence by asking what is the cause of human life being *this kind* of existence – especially, one that desires and delights in knowing, and is thus oriented toward the intelligibility of things.

Regarding Aristotle's account of reality, we should first observe that the existence and operation of beings in general are contained within their own level of being – i.e., it provides a 'horizontal' explanation of their place in the cosmos. The paradigmatic case of causation for Aristotle is reproductive generation, where one instance of a form reproduces a mirror of that form in another instance.[143] While in generation individual things receive their form from the generating agent, after that reception they are understood as being in full possession of the 'formula' for their essence and of the potential for its fulfillment, which is their own goodness.[144] For Booth, this reality of a thing's form/essence being "totally present" to it gives it a "complete and independent existence," but one that is only knowable in terms of its universal form, with the result that "the individuality of the individual [is] set on one side."[145] For Rosemann, the strictly horizontal nature of the generation of things (i.e., in which "cause and effect remain on the same ontological level") means that "Aristotle's universe is in fact a vertically static one," where levels of being "are all but hermetically closed off and left impenetrable to each other."[146]

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[142] Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora*, trans. G.R.G. Mure, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 108–186 (New York: Modern, 2001), 1.2.71b10–12.
[143] E.g., Aristotle, *Met.* 2.7.198a22–27.
[144] Aristotle, *Met.* 7.13.1038b17–25; 5.16.1021b13–25.
[145] Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*, 3.
Note: the thesis's initial entry point into secondary literature is that of medieval/Thomistic scholarship such as that of Booth, Rosemann, and Aertsen. We will later in this chapter see Aristotelian scholarship such as that of Nussbaum, Bos, and Berryman.
[146] Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile*, 63–64. Rosemann grounds this observation in Aristotle's identification, and collapsing, of final, formal, and efficient causation in the form. Rosemann also addresses the two candidates for "vertical" causation in Aristotle: the sun and the Unmoved Mover. The former (e.g., Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.2.194b13; *Met.* 12.5.1071a15) has a "downward" effect in being the cause of all generation and corruption on earth. The latter (Aristotle, *Met.* 12.1.1072a25) has an "upward" effect of finality in the presence of movement in the cosmos. However, as to the former, he observes the sun does not itself interfere with the transmission of forms; as to the

Aertsen notes that Aristotle's 'horizontal' understanding of the cosmos, and his hylomorphic account of why *this* being is the kind of being it is, "is inadequate to account for the radical origins of things" – however, we might, in response to Aersten's assertion, observe that this may be an indication of Aristotle's interests more than a lack.[147] In Aristotle's account the question of the existence of things (i.e., *an sit?*) is presupposed, or specified, by the question of what they are (i.e., *quid est?*), insofar as it establishes the necessary condition for that subsequent, 'horizontally-oriented' inquiry so interesting to Aristotle. The 'vertically-oriented' question regarding *that* things are in existence is not separated, in Aristotle, as an inquiry in itself.[148] The self-evident existence of things is the precondition and starting point for the kind of inquiry into causes that Aristotle undertakes. He deals with the limited benefit of pressing the question further in a parenthetical remark, and distinguishes such questioning from the more philosophically fruitful kind:

> Now 'why a thing is itself' is a meaningless inquiry (for [to give meaning to the question 'why'] the fact or the existence of the thing must already be evident – e.g. that the moon is eclipsed – but the fact that a thing is itself is the single reason and the single cause to be given in answer to all such questions as 'why the man is man, or the musician musical,' unless one were to answer 'because each thing is inseparable from itself, and its being one just means this;' this, however, is common to all things and is a short and easy way with the question). But we *can* inquire why man is an animal of such and such a nature. This, then, is plain, that we are not inquiring why he who is a man is a man. We are inquiring, then, why something is predicable of something.[149]

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latter, he claims that the finality of the Unmoved Mover is indeed cosmic, and does not influence the "particular internal finalities" of the various forms. Thus, he clarifies these "vertical" causalities as exerting their influence through the horizontal causes. Rosemann, 65–66.

[147] Jan A. Aertsen, "Aquinas's philosophy in its historical setting," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. N. Kretzman and E. Stump, 12–37 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 29.

[148] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 16–17, 25–26, 47. Ref.: Aristotle, *An. post.* 2.1.89b22–35. Aristotle's observation in *An. post.* 1.2.72a20–25 that "to define what a unit is is not the same as to affirm its existence," should be taken in terms of his discussion about the different logical roles that a definition and a hypothesis play in a demonstrative syllogism.

[149] Aristotle, *Met.* 7.17.1041a.15–23.

Thus far our consideration of Aristotle's account seems to be somewhat marked by what it *cannot* give, especially to a reader like Thomas, grounded as he is in faith commitments entailing a being's relation to God as Creator. Indeed, many have found Aristotle's contribution difficult on this point – from Augustinian contemporaries of Thomas such as Bonaventure, who was appalled at the suggestion of created beings known to God only in their quiddities,[150] to the relatively modern Thomism of Pegis who wished to nudge readings of Thomas distinctly away from a conflating of Christian and Greek/Aristotelian accounts of the world.[151]

Where Aristotle's horizontal account becomes fruitful, even generous, is (in addition to its account of the relatedness of individuals within a species) its emphasis upon human beings as capable of providing the explanation for their actions. In terms of our inquiry, Aristotle's human being stands as the author and guardian of its own intelligibility insofar as the form it so properly possesses serves as the roadmap of flourishing for that being, framed in terms of its own operation and goodness (as, indeed, is the case with all beings in Aristotle's universe), and insofar as its specific form is that of a rational being whose distinctive feature is to be a thinking, embodied self-mover.[152]

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[150] Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexameron* 12, 15 (*Opera Omnia* 5, 386), noted in Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 157.

[151] Anton C. Pegis, *Saint Thomas and the Greeks*, Aquinas Lecture, 1939 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1943). Pegis notes: "Far from conceding that the Greeks … had a doctrine of creation, St. Thomas Aquinas implies that their philosophical views are parts of a coherent total view which is precisely *not* a doctrine of creation. … [Some modern readers think, MG] that the doctrine of creation is common to ancient Greek and mediaeval Christian thinkers. St. Thomas Aquinas thinks that the ancient Greeks, Plato and Aristotle included, never arrived at that doctrine. … If Aristotle's great occupation with the continuity of motion seems to be a protest against the abstract immobilism of the Pythagoreans, the Atomists, Parmenides, and Plato himself, it is also true that the order of nature and of motion is itself immobilized by the eternal species which are its content and its purpose. If with Aristotle, therefore, we seem to be defining with greater justice a genuine dynamism of nature, it is only to imitate in a less perfect way the circular life of the outer heavens and, through it, the impassible Thought that thinks on itself. Immobilism is still the goal, because the norm of being. … Now whatever one may think of such a world and of the philosophers who inhabited it, it ought to be perfectly clear that this world has not the nature of a created world, it is not produced by a God who is a creator, nor is it produced in the way that a creating God would produce anything outside of Himself" (67, 69–70, 78–79).

[152] Aristotle, *De anima*, trans. J.A. Smith, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 533–603 (New York: Modern, 2001), 3.3.427a17–19; 9.432a15–20; Aristotle, *Physica*, trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 213–394 (New York: Modern, 2001), 2.1.192b8–22. Note: it should

Note that both of these aspects of intelligibility place significance upon the *interiority* of the principle at work. Regarding the status of an individual being *vis-à-vis* its form, Aristotle's account repeatedly and throughout reminds us that nature, which is the source of (or identical with) the form, operates as an internal principle of a being, and as a principle that is proper to that thing itself.[153] The Platonic Forms are criticized by Aristotle for, among other things, being of a nature that is not *in* the particular beings that are said to participate them, and thus being of no use or help to them ("One might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things," Aristotle pointedly asks).[154] On the other hand, Aristotle introduces the notion of generation by reproduction of natures as 'divine art,' but only insofar as "there is something divine" about forms and nature and insofar as nature, through generation, always "acts for an end" – a notion that is implicit in Aristotle and which will be developed by Thomas and extended much further and made more explicit than in Aristotle's treatment.[155] To Aristotle, the crucial features of a thing's form are that it is interior to it, proper to it, and even inseparable from it.[156]

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be clarified that no material, contingent being fully *realizes* the potential of its form/essence, and thus there are varying degrees to which something can be said to "be." See Aristotle, *Met.* 9, e.g., 6.1048a31–b8. Aertsen, with reference to the work of David Knowles, identifies this application of Aristotle (i.e., locating intelligibility of beings in their interior principles/natures, rather than in their participation in the Forms) as "the 'Philosophical Revolution' of the thirteenth century." Aertsen, "Aquinas's philosophy in its historical setting," 20. (Aertsen's reference is to: David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* [Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1962] 221–234)

[153] E.g., Aristotle, *Met.* 7.7.1032a12–25; 12.3.1070a7–9.

[154] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.9.991a 8–14, esp. at 8.

[155] Aristotle, *Phys.* 1.9.192a17; 2.8.198b10–199b33; cf. Aquinas, *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum* 1.15.135; 2.14.268.

Ref: Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum,* Latin text based on the 1884 Leonine Edition; Greek text of Aristotle transcribed from the edition of W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); English translation of Aristotle based on the translation of R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (New York: Modern, 2001); English translation of books 1–2 of Thomas's commentary by Richard J.Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlkel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963); English translation of books 3–8 of Thomas's commentary by Pierre H. Conway (Columbus, OH: College of Saint Mary of the Springs, 1958–1962; edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Phys.

See: Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 163.

[156] Aristotle, *De an.* 2.1.412a20–21, 28–30; 412b6–9; 413a3–4. Clearly, Aristotle here has in mind (and for the purposes of our inquiry our project does as well) composite, material beings – not separated spiritual substances. That said, the inseparability of the human soul is not an uncomplicated theme in Aristotle. In relative contrast to the above-mentioned texts stands the controversial *De an.* 3.5, where Aristotle speaks of the *nous poiêtikos* (active intellect) in terms of being "separable, impassible, unmixed" (*De an.* 3.5.430a17–18). The ambiguity of Aristotle's

Further, this interiority of a material being's form entails being the principle not only of the kind of thing it is but also of its motions.[157] Aristotle's critique in *Metaphysics* 1.9 (mentioned above) indicts the Platonic Forms as insufficient in regard to efficient causality.[158]

For the purposes of our inquiry, this aspect of form (i.e., as a principle of motion) will require special attention, for in Aristotle motion is an essential aspect of what renders composite, material things intelligible. In *Physics* Book 3, Aristotle claims that if we neglect our understanding of motion we will fail to understand nature.[159] Book 3 of the *Metaphysics* extends the opening statement of the text (i.e., "All men by nature desire to know") to observe that we can say that we know becoming and action and change when we know the source of motion.[160]

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language in this text is well-recognized – see, for example, a summary of the controversy by Christopher Shields in "Aristotle's Psychology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab., Stanford University, Winter 2020; accessed at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-psychology/). This theme in Aristotle becomes especially relevant to our inquiry insofar as Aquinas responds to it in his commentary upon the *De anima.* In considering Thomas's remarks, we should first recall that he is unambiguous in his belief that the human soul survives death – see, for example, *ST* 1.75.6; 77.8; supplement 69.1; 70.1. It is interesting to note that, in his *De anima* commentary, Thomas might have taken the opportunity presented by 3.5 to explicitly show resonance between Aristotle and Christian doctrine. Instead, he emphasizes that, though the active/agent intellect is indeed separable from matter (Aquinas, *Sent. De an.* 3.5.10 n732), it is not to be understood as "a separated substance, subsisting apart from the potential intellect" (n734: "*substantiam separatam, et quod differt secundum substantiam ab intellectu possibili*"), and includes attention to the connectedness of the agent intellect to the material/sensory world (nn730–732). This, he goes on to say, is because "human nature would be a deficient nature if it lacked any one of the principles that it needs for its naturally appropriate activity of understanding; and this requires both the potential and the agent intellects. Hence, complete human nature requires that both of these be intrinsic to man" (n734: "*Non enim homo esset a natura sufficienter institutus, si non haberet in seipso principia, quibus posset operationem complere, quae est intelligere: quae quidem compleri non potest, nisi per intellectum possibilem, et per intellectum agentem. Unde perfectio humanae naturae requirit, quod utrumque eorum sit aliquid in homine*"). For the purposes of our inquiry, we can bracket the question of Aristotle's, and even Thomas's, thought about the status of the human soul after death (or, as 'separated from the body'), and focus on the importance that both lay upon the *intrinsic* nature of the functions of the soul, i.e., as proper to the individual agent, and the role that this plays in the intelligibility of human activity.

[157] Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1.192b12–23. Aristotle does include matter along with form both in his examination of what 'nature' is and in his treatment of the inner principle of motion (see also *Phys.* 2.1.193a27–31; 2.2.194a12), but in both of these he holds the form as the predominant factor (see *Phys.* 2.1.193b7–9).
In the Aristotelian tradition, the flourishing of beings entails a first *and* a second actuality – i.e., the difference between possessing a potential in one's nature and using/actualizing it in lived experience. Thriving, or *eudaimonia*, presupposes the first but arises within the second. See: Aristotle, *De an.* 2.1.412a20–30; 412b13–24. In the work of this section, we will focus on the collaboration of both in a human being's flourishing: we will examine what *kind* of being human nature entails, and *how* human individuals actualize that nature through their activities as self-movers.

[158] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.9.991a 8–14.

[159] Aristotle, *Phys.* 3.1.200b13–14. I.e., to Aristotle, an understanding of motion is a necessary condition for understanding nature.

[160] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.1.960a20; 3.2.996b25.

Why is this so? Aristotle explains in *Metaphysics* 9 this prioritizing of motion: actuality entails movement.[161] Aquinas pauses upon and clarifies this notion in his commentary on the text, observing that "Now of all acts which are perceived by us in a sensible way, motion is the best known and most evident to us; and therefore the word actuality was first referred to motion, and from motion the word was extended to other things."[162] Aristotle observes, in this text, that the philosophers who seek to conflate potency and actuality "do away" with motion, and that in so doing "it is no small thing they are seeking to annihilate."[163] In *Metaphysics* 7 Aristotle claims that knowledge of matter must occur by means of the categories employed in natural/physical science – a claim that Aquinas helps us understand to mean the mode of knowing that begins with and is grounded in motion.[164] In *Physics* 8 Aristotle shows that motion is so clearly evident to the senses that even if all that one can perceive is false opinion or imagination, at the very least they can be quite certain that there is *motion* – for all of these are motions.[165] We can encapsulate Aristotle's orientation toward motion, Aertsen notes, with the observation that while obtaining knowledge of contingent, material beings is a complex affair, motion is an evident and manifest starting point.[166]

In Aristotle, the paradigmatic motion of a self-mover is locomotion: "motion in respect of place is what is in the strictest sense produced by that which moves itself."[167] The capacity to

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[161] Aristotle, *Met.* 9.3.1047a30–33.
[162] Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* 9.3.1805: "*Inter alios autem actus, maxime est nobis notus et apparens motus, qui sensibiliter a nobis videtur. Et ideo ei primo impositum fuit nomen actus, et a motu ad alia derivatum est*." Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae*, Latin text based on the 1950 Marietti edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa; Greek text of Aristotle transcribed from the edition of W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); English translation by John P. Rowan (Chicago: Regnery, 1961); edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY; accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Metaph.
We should note that Aristotle, and Aquinas after him, is here addressing the linguistic relation between the Greek terms for actuality (ἐνέργεια) and motion (κίνησις).
[163] Aristotle, *Met.* 9.3.1047a10–20.
[164] Aristotle, *Met.* 7.3.1029a18–22; Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 7.2.1285.1287.
[165] Aristotle, *Phys.* 7.3.254a3–254b7.
[166] Aristotle, *Phys.* 8.3.254a3–254b7; Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 233.
[167] Aristotle, *Phys.* 8.7.261a25.

translate changes of another kind into local motion belongs, in Aristotle's account, to the purview specifically of animals. In his *De motu animalium,* Aristotle sets up his discussion of the special motions of animals by separating off first "the motion of the universe" (i.e., the heavenly motion caused by the unmoved mover), and then the purely physical movements of bodies striking against other bodies – leaving, he observes, the reality that all other κίνησις is caused by living creatures.[168] This kind of motion, observes Sylvia Berryman, Aristotle finds to be "exceptional and fundamental," and is the focus of his two texts *De motum animalium* and *De anima.*[169]

What is the source of the animal's special capacity to genuinely initiate motion? A.P. Bos reads Aristotle, in treating of this question, as in particular looking for the genuine, efficient principle of an animal's self-motions (a principle that Aristotle claims Plato does not provide in his account of self-motion[170]) – such that we could say an animal is capable of being the principle of its own movement.[171] The term invoked by both Bos and Nussbaum, "efficient cause," is fraught with historical debate as to whether and how Aristotle himself explicitly treated of this concept (see Gilson's summary in his "Notes for the History of Efficient Causality"[172]), but for our purposes it is sufficient to note that Aristotle looked to explicitly articulate the internal cause of locomotion in animal acts of self-movement.

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[168] Aristotle, *De motu animalium*; trans. Martha Craven Nussbaum, in *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium: Translation, Commentary and Interpretive Essays*, by Martha Craven Nussbaum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 6.700b10.
[169] Sylvia Berryman, "Aristotle on *Pneuma* and Animal Self-Motion," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 23*,* ed. David Sedley (Winter 2002): 85–97, at 91.
[170] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.9.991a11.
[171] A.P. Bos, *The Soul and Its Instrumental Body: A Reinterpretation of Aristotle's Philosophy of Living Nature* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 54, 67, 99; see: Aristotle, *De Caelo*, trans. J.L. Stocks, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern, 2001), 1.9.279a15.
[172] Étienne Gilson, "Notes for the History of Efficient Causality," in *Medieval Essays*, trans. James Colbert (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 150–178.

The inquiry of how the soul works to initiate movement upon the body is grounded, for Aristotle, in the principle that animals always impart movement (or are moved) "for the sake of something."[173] The aspects of the animal's soul that enable it to be a mover specifically as toward an end (i.e., reasoning, *phantasia,* sense-perception, choice, wish, spiritedness, and appetite) can be reduced, he states, to thought and desire.[174] These statements in *De motu animalium* are mirrored, or perhaps presaged, in the more complex treatment of how the soul relates to its surroundings in *De anima.*[175] There, he states that the soul is characterized by its faculties of thought and sense, and its ability to initiate local motion – and that the faculty that must be credited with initiating motion most directly and immediately is the appetite/desire (ὄρεξις), which operates in collaboration with those faculties of thought and sense.[176] That is, the ultimate source of movement in an animal is its internalized experience of "a realizable good" in the external world.[177]

However one accounts for an efficient connection between intellect, appetite, and the visible body,[178] Aristotle's notion of a self-mover proposes a being (specifically, an animal) that

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[173] Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 6.700b15.
[174] Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 6.700b15–20.
[175] Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 6.700b5. Regarding the dating of Aristotle's *De motu animalium* and *De anima*, this thesis is following Nussbaum. On the issue of a late dating of *De motu animalium*, Nussbaum discusses (in her translation and commentary) the contributions of Werner Jaeger, as well as F. Nuyens, C. Kahn, etc. She frames the discussion in terms of how questions of authenticity lead to certain views about dating. Her conclusion (which coheres with Jaeger and Kahn – i.e., a dating of *De mot. anim.* later than *De an.*), draws from cross-references (primarily back-references in *De mot. anim.*, e.g., 6.700b5, but also a forward-reference in *De an.* at 3.0.433b20 [or, indeed all of chs. 9 and 10]) and from an analysis of Aristotle's apparent purposes in *De mot. anim.* in relation to other texts (e.g., "to bolster the arguments of *Physics* 8 by an analysis of animal motion"). See: Nussbaum, *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium,* 3–12; and *The Fragility of Goodness*, 281.
Bos expands this discussion in his 2003 text and challenges a number of the interpretive assumptions of the above, but agrees with a later dating of *De mot. anim.* Bos, 8–9, and chapters 2 and 3.
[176] Aristotle, *De an.* 3.3.427a15; 3.9.432a15–20; 3.10.433a10–22, and b27–30.
[177] Aristotle, *De an.* 3.10.433b16–17.
[178] On the difficult issue of the actual meeting point between soul and body, Aristotle states: "The instrument which appetite employs to produce movement is no longer psychical but bodily … that which is the instrument in the production of movement is to be found where a beginning and an end coincide." Aristotle, *De an.* 3.10.433b20–23. Some (e.g., Nussbaum) read Aristotle here, and in *De motu animalium*, as simply indicating the psychosomatic nature of animal movement, and the instrumentality of the bodily elements in general for the sake of the soul's ends. Nussbaum, "Essay 3: The *Sumphuton Pneuma* and the *De Motu Animalium*'s Account of Soul and Body," in

has the capability to translate qualitative changes into local motion.[179] He explains these qualitative alterations in the body as an animal's responses to elements in its environment, specifically those that do not involve physical force – e.g., an animal's experience of passions: "For feelings of confidence, fears, sexual excitement, and other bodily affections, painful and pleasant, are accompanied by heating or chilling, in some cases of a part, in others of the whole body. Memory and anticipation, using things of this kind as likenesses, are … responsible for the same things."[180] These psychosomatic responses are reduced, in this analysis from later in Aristotle's career, to a collaboration of sense, thought, and desire: "This, then, is the way that animals are impelled to move and act: the proximate reason for movement is desire, and this comes to be either through sense-perception or through *phantasia* and thought."[181] His earlier treatment, while focused on explicitly treating the rational, human soul, articulates the base formulation underlying animal self-motion in general: "Inasmuch as an animal is capable of appetite it is capable of self-movement; it is not capable of appetite without possessing imagination; and all imagination is either (1) calculative or (2) sensitive. In the latter all animals, and not only man, partake."[182]

Our examination of Aristotle's account of animal motion to this point has focused on how self-movers operate, and the way in which such operation undergirds intelligibility. Let us pause for a moment in this survey of functionality to consider what the significance of such an account might be for an *ethical* inquiry into human experience, such as this thesis is undertaking.

Aristotle's De Motu Animalium, 144–146, and 149. Others (such as Bos and F.E. Peters) see Aristotle as locating this meeting point between soul and body explicitly in an invisible bodily structure called *pneuma*, Bos, 85, 92–93; F.E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 161.

[179] Berryman, 93; Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy,* rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986)*,* 347; ref.: Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 7.701b15–20.

[180] Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 8.702a1–7.

[181] Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 7.701a.34–37.

[182] Aristotle, *De an.* 3.10.433b27–30.

Nussbaum's engagement with Aristotle's account shows particular interest in what aspects of a human being's interiority 'count' as meaningful explanations of their actions. Her discussion of the relation between *De anima* and *De motum animalium* (the latter of which she takes to be the technically clearer treatment and to be the later-written text[183]) emphasizes the implications for moral training that arise from how we define the role and nature of 'thought' in Aristotle's account of motion. She reads Aristotle as challenging Plato's account (most iconically in the *Phaedo*) of what stands as the αἰτία of a human act. For Plato, this is intellect – i.e., deliberation and rational choice.[184] A consequence of this limitation is that any mental process short of προαίρεσις would be excluded from an account of genuine cause (αἰτία) of animal self-motion, and relegated to the category of "brutish unselective reactions" – Nussbaum believes that "the Plato of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* is willing, even eager, to pay this price."[185] An effect of such an account, she claims, would be that the education of lesser-rational human beings (such as young children) would be reduced to the external manipulation and conditioning such as is employed in the training of animals.[186] Nussbaum's concern can, alternately, suggest as a consequence the possibility that any mental process short of προαίρεσις would be considered not sufficiently relevant to serve as a human being's explanation for their actions.

By contrast, Nussbaum sees Aristotle accounting for other kinds of cognitive activity in his treatment of cause, by setting ὄρεξις at the center of his examination of voluntary action – initially, in *De anima* 3.9, and more explicitly and clearly in *De motu animalium* starting in chapter 6. She reminds us that, in Aristotle's account, there is ὄρεξις in every part of the soul (in the forms of: βούλησις in the rational, ἐπιθυμία in the appetitive, and θυμός in the emotive), and

[183] See note 175.
[184] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 271–2; ref.: Plato, *Phaedo* (esp. at 99).
[185] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 272–3, and 285.
[186] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 272–3, and 285.

there is "in every movement, including movement according to intellect, some sort of *orexis* [ὄρεξις] … involved."[187] The import of Aristotle's nuanced understanding of ὄρεξις, for Nussbaum, is that it suggests we look for an equally nuanced understanding of the cognitions that would correspond to these forms of desire – and that we recognize each of them as legitimate candidates for an explanation of a being's actions. In Nussbaum's reading, an account of animal voluntary motion based on ὄρεξις entails simply the cognitive element of intentional, selective response – which might, indeed, be intellective in the Platonic sense of προαίρεσις, but which need not be. The animal selects the object of its desire, and selects its response to that focused-upon object.[188] Aristotle's "common account" of animal self-motion presents to us a creature capable of responding to the world "via cognition and *orexis* [ὄρεξις], whose movements are explained by its own view of things."[189] In Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle, therefore, we see the central feature of voluntary action, upon which hangs the agency of a self-mover, identified with the being's view of the world – a view that entails a complex set of cognitive possibilities that can properly function as the principle of a human action, including but not limited to the intellective.[190]

Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle draws our attention to the work of accounting for, and subsequently caring for, the tension of a nuanced, complex human interiority being expressed

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[187] Aristotle, *De an.* 3.9.432b5–7; 3.10.433a21–3, b1–4; Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 275, and commentary on *De mot. anim.,* ch. 6.
[188] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 289.
[189] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 275–276, 285.
[190] By contrast, Ursula Coope reads Aristotle as defining specifically human action exclusively in terms of the rational: "[Aristotle] assumes that whatever is the origin of human action must itself be specifically human. Perception, for instance, could not be such an origin, because other animals too share in perception ([*Nichimachean Ethics*] 6.2, 1139a18–20)." Coope, "Aristotle," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, eds. Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell, 2010), 439–446, at 442. It may be that Nussbaum's explicit connecting of *De mot. anim.* with *De an.* on the question of voluntary action contributed to her more expansive view of what human cognition may be said to contain. It is Nussbaum's sensitivity to 'a being's view of the world' as central to voluntary action that renders her reading of Aristotle on human activity especially compelling to me.

through engagement with the surrounding world. Aristotle's account of animal self-movers entails, for Nussbaum, a "reaching out for something in the world … the world with which needy creatures are fortunately endowed."[191] Although an animal individual contains the explanation for their actions by virtue of their nature, which is the inner principle of their operation, those operations do not happen in an isolated inner state, but rather in self-governing interactions of desire with the external world. For this reason, Nussbaum states, in Aristotle "the human being is taken to be a creature of love and desire, even in his or her rational action … Neither inert objects nor perfected gods, neither simply pushed around from without or spontaneously self-moving, we all reach out, being incomplete … That is the way our movements are caused."[192]

On Nussbaum's reading, it is this very use of psychological factors as efficient causes of animal self-locomotion (i.e., the soul functions that allow for selection) that forms a bridge from physical inquiry to ethical considerations in Aristotle: "It is a point of his ethical view that our shared animal nature is the ground of our ethical development."[193] That is, because of his account of animal motion, the ethical nature of human actions for Aristotle is grounded in the fact that they are caused by an interior principle – i.e., a state of affairs seen in the physical/ontological/ethical category of *voluntary action*.[194] In Aristotle, the nature of voluntary action (which is activity that can most properly be said to belong to a self-moving agent) is most clearly shown in its opposite. Involuntary action, he states, "seems to be that whose moving principle is outside, the person compelled contributing nothing."[195] In the explanation of action that we gain from *De motu animalium* (as provided by Nussbaum's commentary), voluntary acts

[191] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 275–276.
[192] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 289.
[193] Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 287; see also 273, 277, and 285.
[194] E.g., Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea,* trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* edited by Richard McKeon, 927–1112 (New York: Modern, 2001), 3.1.1109b30–35.
[195] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110b15–17.

"may be said to be the ones for which the animal itself is the explanation, the ones that are done 'through the creature itself,' not through some external force that uses the creature as its instrument."[196]

Stated another way, we can articulate the ethical significance for Aristotle of the *interiority* of a being's moving principle: actions that in no way have an interior principle of movement cannot be said to belong to the actor, and are therefore are not susceptible to either praise or blame. That is, the ostensible actor of the movement is not the source of the 'explanation' of the action, and therefore not responsible for its effects. Moreover, this framing of a person's movements as generated by and manifestations of their inner operations illumines what is most proper and essential to a human being, and informs ethical considerations of what is most to be honored and cared for in human life.

We will conclude this section by recounting what Aristotle's account of human activity has provided to our inquiry. First, notwithstanding the cosmological limitations of a 'horizontal' account, Aristotle's narrative of human nature identifies intelligibility as a proper attribute of a human individual. On Nussbaum's reading, as we saw, Aristotle's account explicitly grounds the explanation of a being's movements in 'its own view of things' – a view generated by a variety of operations of the soul including intellection, imagination, sense, and emotion.[197]

For our purposes, we can say that this framing prompts us to consider others as intelligible insofar as they provide the explanation for their actions, and that approaching others in this open way be held as an ethical norm. Of course, experience clearly shows that understanding another person's activity on its own terms is a complex, difficult task, one that can easily go astray. However, a judgment of another person as essentially *un*intelligible is to view

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[196] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 282 – Nussbaum is here providing specific analysis of the *De motu animalium*.
[197] Nussbaum, *Fragility,* 275–276, 285.

that person as radically 'other' (as if 'of a different kind' than oneself), or as deficient in a significant aspect of meaningful personhood. As an indication of the work we have yet to do in our inquiry, we can consider and note for later use this emerging sense of personal violence: an influence upon a human being that negates its role as establishing the explanation for its own movements can be understood as a form of violence upon that person.

B. Thomas's appropriation of Aristotle on human nature: human beings as *imago Dei*

We turn now to examine how Aristotle's 'horizontal' account of human nature appears and functions in Thomas's 13th century appropriation. We can begin our examination by grounding it in the search for intelligibility that we have already traced in Aristotle. In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Thomas draws attention to Aristotle's claim that we can say we know a thing fully (or *maxime*, in Aquinas's words) when we know the cause of its movement. He adds that movement can be understood as the actuality of a thing – i.e., the bringing of it in some aspect from potency to act – and reminds his reader that intelligibility arises from a thing being in actuality.[198] This connection between intelligibility and act is central to understanding the possibility of a "science of contingent things," a phrase Thomas uses in his *Summa theologiae* to identify ethics, the objects of which are human actions.[199]

This set of notions merits a closer look. Aquinas recognizes Aristotle's claim that there can be no scientific knowledge/ἐπιστήμη (Thomas's *scientia*) of the contingent, as its proper objects are the universal and necessary, and further notes Aristotle's use instead of the term practical wisdom/φρόνησις (*prudentia*) for the inquiry into human action and virtue.[200] We also

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[198] Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 3.4.382. Ref.: Aristotle *Met.* 3.2.996b20.
[199] Aquinas, *ST* 1.86.3 s.c., and obj. 1: "*Sed quaedam scientiae sunt de contingentibus*.".
[200] Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum* 6.5.4.1165. Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum,* Latin text based on the 1969 Leonine Edition, revised by the Aquinas Institute; English translation by C. I. Litzinger (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964); Lander: WY, Aquinas Institute. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Eth. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 6.5.1140a.25, and 6.6.1140b30.

remind ourselves the repeated cautions we encounter in Aristotle, and Aquinas following him, that scientific knowledge of a thing can only extend to the level of species – demonstration and definition address what belongs to a being *per se* (i.e., qua the species) vs. what belongs accidentally.[201] We do see Aristotle qualifying this commitment by observing that 'definition' can be spoken of in several senses, and that therefore we should examine those usages – though he shows his skepticism of such by adding the caution "but certainly not more than how the facts actually stand."[202] Aquinas recognizes Aristotle's qualification, but notes that the concession that accidents can have a definition "in a secondary and qualified sense" is saying the same thing as saying they cannot have a definition.[203] Aquinas elsewhere strongly defends the possibility of "an immovable science of movable things," though in that location he is still addressing formal aspects insofar as he asserts "Every movement presupposes something immovable."[204] We can see, nevertheless, Aquinas underscoring both the legitimacy of examining beings in terms of their motions and the good sense of it, insofar as motion is what is most evident to the senses – it is even, we might say, a requisite element for a meaningful account of natural things.[205] We noted earlier that Nussbaum reads ethical import in Aristotle's account of motion, and also that Aristotle interweaves his account of self-movers together with his ethics in the notion of voluntary action. We can clearly see a similar connection for Aquinas established in the prologue of the *Prima secundae*, where he grounds his examination of the moral status of human activity in the ontological status of human beings as voluntary agents:

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[201] E.g., Aristotle, *Met.* 7.4.1030a12; Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 7.3.1327.
[202] Aristotle, *Met.* 7.4.1030a28.
[203] Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 7.4.1335 and 1338: "*Et quia posuerat duas solutiones, subiungit quod nihil differt qualitercumque aliquis velit dicere de praemissa quaestione; sive dicatur quod accidentia non habent definitionem, sive quod habent, sed per posterius secundum quid*."
[204] Aquinas, *ST* 1.84.1, esp. at ad 3: "*omnis motus supponit aliquid immobile*;" "*rebus mobilibus immobilem scientiam.*"
[205] Aquinas, *Super Phys.* 1.2.18; *Sent. Met.* 9.3.1805; *ST* 1.2.3 corp.; *Sent. Met.* 7.2.1285–1286; *De subst. sep.* 1.

> Now that we have treated of the exemplar, i.e. God, and of those things which came forth from the power of God in accordance with His will; it remains for us to treat of His image, i.e. man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions, as having free-will and control of his actions.[206]

Perhaps the ambiguity of what knowledge of the contingent entails is beneficial in itself for our inquiry, as it both nudges us away from the totalizing ontologies of definition that have proved so problematic and at the same time presses us toward the intuition that to engage human experience is to indeed claim we *know something* about it (as Aquinas does, in *ST* 1.84, mentioned above).[207] Therefore, in terms of what Aquinas takes from Aristotle regarding human nature, Aristotle's account of voluntary motion is clearly a meaningful place to start, though eventually we will see that he takes those ideas further than Aristotle did.[208]

First, let us note that Thomas, taking his cue from Aristotle, identifies voluntary act as an act that has an internal principle of causation.[209] Thomas understands this claim as grounded in the broader notion in Aristotle of *nature*, which is most simply understood as an internal

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[206] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.1 pr.: "*postquam praedictum est de exemplari, scilicet de Deo, et de his quae processerunt ex divina potestate secundum eius voluntatem; restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, idest de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem.*"

[207] Ref.: chapter 1, p. 40, and n122, regarding "totalizing ontologies;" n204, regarding Thomas's use of *ST* 1.84. Note also: Thomas, following Boethius, distinguishes between contingency arising from motion and contingency arising from dependency, which corresponds to a distinction between natural science and metaphysics. Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate* 5.2 ad 7; *ST* 1.9.2 ad 1.

[208] Note: Aquinas's notion of 'free' human act is informed both by Aristotle and by Augustine. Regarding the former, Thomas articulates 'freedom' in terms of volitional act; regarding the latter, in terms of the ability to act morally. Ref.: *ST* 1.82 and 83. Rist observes that Thomas's treatment of the will and its freedom in these two questions seems to follow Aristotle as he considers freedom in terms of "means and ends and of physical determinism." Rist, "Augustine, Aristotelianism, and Aquinas," 91.

[209] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.68.8. Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* Book 1*,* Latin text based on the 1961 Marietti edition: *Liber de veritate catholicae Fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra Gentiles*, textus Leoninus diligenter recognitus, cura et studio P. Marc, coadiuv. C. Pera et P. Caramello (Marietti, Taurini-Romae, 1961); English translation of Book 1 by Anton C. Pegis, edited by Joseph Kenny (New York: Hanover House, 1955–1977). Accessed at: https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraGentiles.htm.
Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.5 corp., 2–2.175.1.co; Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 3.1.1110a15–17.
In Thomas, this theme of interior/exterior sources of human acts is treated within a constellation of related notions: 'habits,' the powers and dispositions of the soul (see *ST* 1–2 articles 49–54); God as an exterior source, both as 'law' (*ST* 1–2 articles 90–108) and as 'grace' (*ST* 1–2 questions 109–114); sin as an intrinsic principle of *bad* human act (*ST* 1–2.71, especially article 5); 'synderesis' as the intellect's natural ability (habit) to grasp the first principles of practical/moral reason (*ST* 1.79.12).

principle of motion and rest – by contrast, changes that are not caused by nature, i.e., that are not from an internal principle, are caused either by art, by chance, or by violence.[210] Further, Thomas notes that in Aristotle 'natural' movement can entail both active or passive status on the part of the actor – both the potency of an entity for acting upon another and for (assenting to) being acted upon can count as an internal principle of action.[211] We saw Aristotle clarify the nature of a voluntary act by considering its opposite, i.e., one in which "nothing is contributed by the person who is acting or is feeling the passion" – a notion that Aquinas in his commentary reframes as "that action which is derived from an extrinsic principle in such a way that the interior appetitive faculty does not concur in it."[212] In his *De veritate,* we see Thomas invoking Aristotle's language of 'contributing nothing,' when he observes that "things moved by violence are only led [i.e., rather than move of themselves], because they contribute nothing to the mover."[213] This notion of interiority, and the nuanced understanding that Aristotle provides is an important qualification for Thomas insofar as it allows him to discuss how it is that God, as the ultimate cause of all human activity, is not thereby a source of violence against human beings. Rather, Thomas shows

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[210] Aquinas, *Super Phys.* 2.1.142; Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1.192b15, and 7.4.254b10–30. Aquinas will expand upon the possibilities entailed in the notion of nature, addressing how God works with nature to move a creature from within.

[211] Aquinas, *Super Phys.* 2.1.142; *ST* 1–2.6.5 ad 2; Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1.192b10–35; see also Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of* Summa theologiae *1 7–-89* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 149; and Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 287.

[212] Ref.: p. 63–64. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110b5–15. See: Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.387: "*non omne cuius principium est extra est violentum, sed solum quod ita est a principio extrinseco, quod appetitus interior non concurrit in idem*."
Note again, it is not 'action' and 'passion' that distinguish voluntary/compulsory action (see also: Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.4.426–428). Further, not all action with an external principle is an evil (Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 1.68.8; *ST* 1–2.6; 9; *Sent. Ethic.* 3.4.428; 1.386). To summarize these qualifications, we could add to Aristotle's statement of the involuntary: " … where we would expect to see such a contribution, and where we would still consider the action 'belonging to' the actor."

[213] Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 22.1 corp.: "*Violenta enim tantummodo ducuntur, quia nil conferunt moventi.*" Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate,* Latin text based on the Leonine Edition (1970, 1972, 1973), transcribed by Robert Busa; English translation Questions 1–9 by Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952); Questions 10–20 by James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953); Questions 21–29 by Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954). Accessed at: https://isidore.co/aquinas/QDdeVer1.htm.

that insofar as God is the source of a human being's own *inner principle* of voluntary movement, God's sovereign and providential effects upon the human's acts are not to be considered a violence against that person's nature.[214] God is the cause of every human motion, even voluntary ones, in that he is the source of the nature/form that allows human beings to operate in this way.[215] Thomas identifies this operation of God as 'divine art' in a way that goes further than Aristotle, though it is based upon Aristotle's notion of form as interior principle of motion – and Thomas himself sees this identification as philosophically implicit within, or at least not inconsistent with, Aristotle's treatment.[216]

For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, this understanding of voluntary action directly undergirds ethical inquiry insofar as it illumines the issue of individual responsibility for specific acts.[217] Thomas makes use of Aristotle's understanding of how voluntary motions occur in his prologue to the *Secunda secundae*, where he observes that such articulations of moral value should be oriented around particular actions rather than universal laws, as such is more useful to the kind of moral reasoning that human beings do.[218] Of significant moral weight, therefore, is the question of what exactly human beings contribute to actions, such that the actions are voluntary and 'belong' to the agent in a meaningful way. As we saw in Aristotle's account of human motion (and can now consider through the lens of Aquinas's commentary), what individual agents

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[214] Aquinas, *Contra gentiles* 3.67 and 88. In his commentary on the Gospel of John (at chapter 15, where Christ tells his followers that he no longer calls them servants/slaves but friends), Thomas notes that a difference between slaves and friends is that the latter is moved to act by their own will. Aquinas, *Super Ioan.* 15.3.2013–2015.
See also: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.4 ad 2 (regarding how being moved, when in accord with the patient's inclination, is not violence); 6.5 ad 2 (regarding how voluntary act can yet be passive in nature, when it is in accord with the will); 9.4 ad 2 (regarding that not every exterior source of act is a violence, but only those in which the will does not concur). Thomas also discusses how divine miracles can be understood as *not* acts of 'violence.' In *Sent. Met* 5.6.835 he discusses that an effect caused by an exterior source is not 'forced' when the patient has a natural aptitude or receptivity for that motion. In *Q.D. de pot.* 1.3 ad 1, 6.1. ad 18, *ST* 3.1.3 ad 3, and 11.1 he identifies this receptivity to the miraculous as the *potentia obedientalis* of a created being toward its creator.
[215] Aquinas, *Q.D. de pot.* 3.7 corp., at "*Sciendum namque*."
[216] Aquinas, *Super Phys.* 2.14.268. See: Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 163 and 353.
[217] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.383; *ST* 1–2.77; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1109b30–35.
[218] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2 proem.; see also: Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature,* 19.

contribute to a movement can be grouped under the two headings of appetite and knowledge.[219] We see these contributions at play throughout Thomas's work, as he reframes Aristotle's formula of volitional movement: knowledge of a good *as* a good, followed by desire and therefore inclination toward that known good, and then rest in that good.[220] *Summa contra gentiles* 3.3 richly depicts (in section 7) the issue of proportionality of the good to the agent, both as known and desired, and (in section 3) in terms of the agent resting in the end achieved. *Summa theologiae* 1–2.6.1 corp. emphasizes the role of the intellect in choosing its own end in volitional action. *ST* 1–2.1 (especially at articles 1 and 2) similarly emphasizes the notion of "acting for an end," explicitly connecting the notion to Aristotle's *Physics*.[221] In the *Summa theologiae'*s Treatise on Man, at question 82, Thomas examines varying aspects of how the will works with cognition (see especially article 1 at ad 2, article 3 at corp., and the entirety of article 4).

Another implication of having an operation that seems to 'belong' to the agent in a meaningful way is that, for Aristotle and even more explicitly in Thomas, the possession of a proper operation is a ground for understanding an individual as a whole, as a 'subject' in its own

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[219] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1111a20–1111b5; 5.8.1135a20–35; cf. Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.4.426–428; 5.13.1037–1038. These examples of Aristotle wrestling with difficult cases regarding moral culpability illustrate the complexity of how intellect and appetite operate in voluntary action.

[220] Terrence Irwin notes that Aquinas's treatment of the will and the nature of voluntary act are to some degree shaped by the linguistic connection between the two notions in Latin, *voluntas/voluntarium* (e.g., *ST* 1–2.6.2 ad 1, with reference to Aristotle), a connection that is not present in Aristotle's Greek (βούλησις/ἑκούσιοσ). Irwin notes that Aristotle has room for voluntary action that does not include *proairesis*/deliberation, such as that enacted by animals, which Aquinas will relegate to an "imperfect" degree of voluntariness (Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1111a24–6 and b8-9; Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.2 corp.). However, Irwin claims that Aquinas has not misread or misapplied Aristotle's notion of the will as seated in the rational (i.e., Aristotle, *De an.* 3.9.432b5–10; Aquinas, *Sententia libri De anima* 3.14.803 – see citation reference at end of note), and points to the relevance of praise and blame only to rational beings and their ability to deliberate, for both Aquinas and Aristotle, as justifying such a reading. Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.2 ad 2 and ad 3; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1109b30–1110a5; 1110a15–18; 3.2.1112a15–18; 3.3.1112a30–31; 3.5.1113b3–7. See Terrence Irwin, "Who Discovered the Will?" *Philosophical Perspectives* 6 (1992): 453–473, at 462–463.

Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri De anima,* Latin text based on the 1984 Leonine Edition, revised by the Aquinas Institute, orthography adapted to standard Ecclesiastical Latin; English translation by Kenelm Foster and Sylvester Humphries (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951); revised and edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~DeAn.

[221] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.1.1 corp.: "*Unde oportet quod omnes actiones humanae propter finem sint*." Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.9, and 2.5.

right.[222] That things are unified subjects having their own operation is a phenomenon that is a given, and is readily accessible to sense experience – and it is from this more evident notion that Aristotle infers that the First Principle/God must be a unity in a pre-eminent way.[223] Thomas applies these notions to the significant issue of whether a human being can be completely identified with its soul (to which he responds with an emphatic negative).[224] In building his case, Thomas invokes Aristotle's claim in *Nicomachean Ethics* 9 that a man is "most properly identified with the most authoritative element" within it, and builds upon this to claim that "whatever performs the operations proper to a thing, is that thing" – a principle that causes him to identify with full confidence the human 'operating subject' as a composite of soul *and* body.[225] An implication for Thomas, therefore, of Aristotle's sense of form as an explanatory principle is this notion of identifying a thing (including a human being) with its proper operations.[226] While the notion of a being's 'proper' operation must, in a faithful reading of both Aristotle and Aquinas, be taken preeminently as indicating the distinctly-human act of rational

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[222] This notion of individuals as 'wholes' should not be taken here in the sense of an autonomous, 'solipsistic' individual, living in self-sustaining isolation. Nor should it be taken to imply monadic or even homogenous kinds of being, in which the presence of difference or complexity within is excluded. Nor are we even thinking of a 'complete' kind of being, where all parts fit together with no remainder and no parts are missing. The notion of a whole that this thesis has in mind is that being to which we could attribute the agency of a subject in its own right. Oliver Davies discusses this sense of subjective unity in *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003). Davies grounds his notion of the subject in "the Aristotelian insight that self-knowledge entails unity and that unity is the principle of existence; … the unity that inheres in the reflexivity and self-possession of the conscious subject grounds a sense of existing as a subject." Davies, 19; ref.: Aristotle, *Met.* 10.1. In Thomas, we can see the agency of such a subject entailed in his statement that a human being holds the natural light of reason, as his natural perfection, "in his full possession (*plena possessio*)." Aquinas *ST* 1–2.68.3 corp.
An example of Thomas putting this notion of a subjective whole to explicit use can be seen in *ST* 2–2.58.2 corp., where he shows that justice is meaningfully spoken of (i.e., is intelligible) only as between whole beings, not parts – e.g., we say that a man strikes another with his hand, not that the hand strikes – an argument that he grounds in the assertion that actions belong properly to whole beings, not parts or functions of a being.
[223] Aristotle, *Met.* 12.7.1072b13–29; Aquinas, *ST* 1.47.3 ad 1.
[224] Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.4. See: Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 221–2.
[225] Aristotle, *EN* 9.8.1168b28–33; Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.4 ad 1; 1.75.4 corp.: "*autem est unaquaeque res, quod operatur operationes illius rei"*; 1.76.1–4; Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 222.
[226] Aquinas, *ST* 1.115.5 corp.; *Contra gentiles* 2.20.385. See: Robert Pasnau, "Philosophy of Mind and Human Nature," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, eds. Brian Davies and Eleanore Stump, 348–368 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 352–3.

thought,[227] Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle reminds us that an act is 'proper' to a being when we can say that it belongs to it as operating subject in a meaningful way.[228] In either sense (i.e., whether we speak of an act as proper to a human individual insofar as it is originated by the actor's rational thought, or as proper insofar as the human actor can be seen as providing the 'explanation' of the activity in a meaningful way), we can maintain that the subject of the act is the composite human being, and we can further note the ethical significance of saying that the complex spectrum of psycho-somatic reasons for a human being's actions both belong to and affirm the unified subjectivity of the agent *as* a human being. In addition, given that such subjectivity arises in the human person's engagement with the material world and its inhabitants, we can further articulate the ethical 'shape' of human activity with Oliver Davies' observation: "That [i.e., Aristotelian] language of being expresses the subject's sense that it has come to itself in and through the other, and not in opposition to the other."[229] Both of these themes will be given closer consideration when we take up the question of what violence against such a view of human nature entails.

We have seen that in Thomas, as in Aristotle, the notion of 'what a being contributes' to an action understood as belonging to it in a meaningful way carries ethical weight. This we have seen in his engagement with Aristotle's account of the structures of voluntary motion. At the same time, our discussion has suggested what is to be understood as belonging most properly to a human being: thought and desire. On this point we can see Thomas *transforming* notions

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[227] E.g., Aquinas, *ST* 1.76.1 s.c.; Aristotle, *De an.* 2.2.413b25–30, 3.3.427a8–15; 3.10.433b27–31.
[228] Ref.: p. 63, and n194, regarding how ethical import is attributed to actions in Aristotle's thought.
[229] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 19. Davies goes on to explicitly assert: "I therefore contest the assumption that is widespread in contemporary philosophical texts that the philosophy of consciousness is of necessity to be equated with a sovereign and isolated self, who is resistant to process and whose substantial nature is set up over and against a frozen world of essences." Davies, 19. In this discourse, Davies is contrasting his own sense of being and the language of being with Descartes, and builds his position articulated here using a Heideggerian notion of 'presence' in collaboration with an Aristotelian sense of what human subjectivity entails.

inherited from Aristotle, putting them to the service of his own theological projects. In Thomas, the two 'contributions' of a human being to its movements (i.e., knowledge and desire), are theologically significant in that they are analogous to the actions manifest in the two divine Missions (i.e., of the Word and of the Spirit/Love) – an analogy which grounds the special status of human beings as the image of God, the *imago Dei*.[230] The ontological significance of this analogy rests upon the fact that these two faculties are proper to and immanent within human nature.[231] Stated another way, while all creatures have a generic likeness (i.e., in the genus) to the divine insofar as they are beings and have their own operations, humans have a specific likeness (i.e., in the species) insofar as they are rational beings, whose operations are intellect and will.[232] This theme of human beings' status as the *imago Dei* will be taken up again, but with a Neoplatonic shape, when we examine Thomas's appropriation of Proclus. For the purposes of our inquiry at this point, we can notice that in Thomas's notion of the *imago Dei* we see both of the features we found central to Aristotle's account of human nature: the importance of an *interior* principle, and the importance of the faculties that undergird human beings' idiosyncratic

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[230] Aquinas, *ST* 1.45.7 corp.; 1.93 articles 1–9. See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 86–7; Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 239–248. Care must be taken here, as Thomas is very clear that the similarity of human beings to God (elevated as the "image" is above the lesser status of "likeness" possessed by other created beings) is to be understood as limited to "analogy" – i.e., "the (limited) continuity between the inner life of the Godhead and the laws that govern creaturely existence" – see Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile*, 349; e.g. in Aquinas: *Q.D. de pot.* 2.5 ad 6; *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 1, 8.1.2 corp.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 1, Latin text originally based on the 1858 Parma Edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa, subsequently revised by the Aquinas Institute according to the Mandonnet edition; English translation in progress, the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.I.
[231] Aquinas, *ST* 1.27.5 corp.; *Q.D. de pot.* 9.9 corp.; *Summa contra gentiles* 4.26.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* Book 4, Latin text based on the 1961 Marietti edition: *Liber de veritate catholicae Fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra Gentiles*, textus Leoninus diligenter recognitus, cura et studio P. Marc, coadiuv. C. Pera et P. Caramello (Marietti, Taurini-Romae, 1961); English translation of Book 4 by Charles J. O'Neil, edited by Joseph Kenny (New York: Hanover House, 1955–1977). Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.IV.
See Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 380.
[232] Aquinas, *ST* 1.93.2 corp.; *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 2, 16.1.2.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 2, Latin text originally based on the 1858 Parma Edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa, subsequently revised by the Aquinas Institute according to the Mandonnet edition; English translation in progress, the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.II.

activities as rational self-movers.[233] We might, reasonably, observe that Thomas specifies human beings' status as the image of God using the Aristotelian notions of individual persons having 'their own view of things' and 'providing the explanation for their own actions' – and therefore that discourse about the significance of the *imago Dei* should give attention to these aspects of human existence in ourselves and others.[234] Further, we can hardly avoid noticing the element of intelligibility woven throughout this account, nor that in Thomas the notion of human experience as meaningfully, though not perfectly, intelligible thus gains theological significance.

C. Proclus's 'vertical' account of human existence as participation in a cosmic hierarchy

We must begin our examination of Proclus's account of human nature and existence by observing, at Baltzly's suggestion, that in Proclus all things ethical are to be found implicit in his explicit and expansive cosmology.[235] Put another way, Proclus's cosmology is a 'vertical'

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[233] Note: it should be understood clearly that though Thomas does give attention to a wide landscape of human soul operations and affect (see his psychological mapping in *ST* 1-2, esp. at questions 22–48 on the passions, and the whole of the 2–2), Thomas does specifically speak of the rational intellect as the seat of the *imago Dei* (for example, in the text mentioned above: *ST* 1.93.2). We might ask, however, if Nussbaum's 'stretched' reading of Aristotle's interior principle of motion (i.e. as including a variety of cognitive operations, beyond intellection properly speaking) suggests that we might similarly nuance Thomas's language about the 'rational intellect' by which human beings image God. It is not within the scope of this project to execute this challenge/nuancing, but it is to be hoped that the work we do here, including especially the work of chapter 4, where we consider the work of the Holy Spirit among human beings, could inform such a theological inquiry.

[234] On the theme of the *imago Dei* especially, in Thomas's theology, we must remember that Thomas's thought presupposes an Augustinian ground and builds its own discourse on that foundation – as was discussed briefly in chapter 1, 33–34. We see, for example, Augustine invoked throughout Thomas's treatment of human beings as the image of God in his *ST* 1.93, as the foundation of the nuanced discourse he presents. Merriell asserts: "Since Augustine, no work has supplanted the *De Trinitate* as an authoritative guide for the theological reflection of the Western Church on the scriptural notion of the image of God." He states that Augustine's magisterial accomplishment (a "theological tour de force") on the theme of the *imago Dei* was to locate the image within the very nature of human beings – an accomplishment that, Merriell further claims, was uniquely appreciated by Aquinas among the scholastic masters. Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity*, 3–4. The purpose of our claim here regarding Aquinas employing *Aristotle's* notions in his treatment is to emphasize Aquinas's distinctive foregrounding of these acts as proper to the nature of human beings as self-movers (a task for which he leans heavily upon Aristotle's account, as we have seen), and that attention to these acts will be significant in our framing of a Thomistic account of violence and its remedy.
(See also n322 regarding Thomas's centering his own discourse on the *imago Dei* within an Augustinian framework.)

[235] Baltzly claims that the absence of an explicit ethics in Proclus's works is not as much of a limitation upon their usefulness to ethical inquiry as might be expected, since to Proclus a right understanding of metaphysics will contain the ground of a moral imperative. See: Dirk Baltzly, "The Human Life," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 258–275 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), at 257.

narrative of reality, in which the 'explanation' for things is oriented toward a view of the whole universe as one interwoven network connecting beings at varying levels of existence – i.e., the Neoplatonic notion of hierarchy.[236] An implication of a hierarchical sense of reality is the notion of *anagogy* – the idea that all creation is oriented toward ascent or return to the divine, and that objects in the physical world have special ontological/metaphysical significance in that as symbols or images they serve to foster a being's ascent or return to the divine.[237] That is, we can observe that in a hierarchical reality the existence of each being derives its contours from the existence of more noble beings above it in the hierarchy (i.e., beings that, to the degree that their nature is more like the Form of the Good and less connected to matter, are said to possess being more purely) – with the result that all beings in all of reality in some way are a reflection of the One, which is at once the unity of the whole.[238] Thus, each being's intelligibility is exactly that measure of the degree to which and manner in which it participates the One.[239] A Proclean account of the intelligibility of human existence, therefore, will proceed as an examination of the nature of the cosmos itself, and as an analysis of the varying kinds of activity that occur within it.

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[236] While the notion of reality as a hierarchy is undisputedly of Neoplatonic provenance, the term itself is credited as an innovation of Dionysius: hierarchy/ιεραρχία See, for example: Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 164, n45.

[237] M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, elected, edited, and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 82–3.

[238] E.g., Proclus, *Elementatio theologica,* translated by E.R. Dodds, as *Proclus: The Elements of Theology, A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*. 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press 1963), §§11, 12, 13, and 18.

[239] Carlos Steel notes that Proclus, in *De providentia* 18, steers toward a notion of each soul as a 'rational' world (κόσμος λογικός) in contrast to Plotinus's 'intelligible' world (κόσμος νοερός) – ref.: Plotinus 3.4.[15].3.22. Steel states: "According to Proclus, we are not an 'intelligible world', but a 'rational world', having within our souls the *logoi* which are images of the Forms. The soul is both image and paradigm." Ref.: Proclus, *De providentia,* translated [with notes] by Carlos Steel, Ancient Commentators on Aristotle, gen. ed. Richard Sorabji (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 78, n79. I read Steel as clarifying that, in Proclus's account, we must not say that human existence is absolutely intelligible – or that it exists completely in the 'intelligible realm.' However, this project takes the position that it is reasonable to speak of the *degree* of intelligibility that belongs to each thing insofar as it participates in the One.

First, in this examination of the cosmos, we start by observing that Proclus's account of reality is an account of causality.[240] It is the nature of the First Principle to produce, uphold, and conserve all beings in their existence, a feature of its own Goodness that permeates all of reality.[241] Further, it is a feature of each existent being that it naturally "proceeds to generate those things which it is capable of producing, imitating in its turn the one originative principle of the universe."[242] The one level of being (beneath the One[243]) that is not capable of causation is

[240] The rules of causation articulated in *Theologia Platonica* and *Elementatio theologica* can be understood as a mapping of Proclus's ontology. See Marije Martijn and Lloyd P. Gerson, "Proclus' System," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 45–72 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 52.
Proclus's account of reality is based upon a number of collaborating triads:
> The fundamental module of limit/πέρας, unlimited/infinite/ἀπειρία, and mixed/μικτόν – Proclus, *El. theol.* §§89–92 and 102; see: Stephen Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," in *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Gersh, 80–107 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 84–5.
> The modes by which these unfold (an admittedly difficult triad to express with precision): existence/unity/ὕπαρξις, power/δύναμις, and being/ὄν – Proclus, *El. theol.* §§91–2 and 89–90; Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*, 3.9.12.44–45. Ref.: Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*, translated by Thomas Taylor* (see end of note), as *The Six Books of Proclus, the Platonic Successor, on the Theology of Plato* (London: Valpy, 1816), location reference numbers taken from *Théologie platonicienne*, edited and translated by L. G. Westerink and H.D. Saffrey, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968-1997. See: Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 85; see also: Gerd Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 73–97 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 85, and 93.
> The prime hypostases (i.e., products/μικτόν) of Being/ὄν, Life/ζωή, and Intellect/νοῦς – Proclus, *El. theol.* §101; see: Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 86.
> The basic motions at work in causation: the cycle of remaining/μονή, procession/πρόοδος, and reversion/ἐπιστροφή – Proclus, *El. theol.* §35.
Proclus shows these triads at work within a universe of contraries and polarities, such as cause and effect, identity and difference, motion and rest, and unity and manifold. See: Gersh, *Proclus as theologian*, 85; Martijn and Gerson, 48, 50, 52. Martijn and Gerson observe that in Proclus contraries are not logical opposites (e.g., black and white), but rather the inferior concept is (quoting Warnock, 1950) "the furthest you can go without leaving the same road" – i.e., if "one" is white, then "many" is dark grey, not black. Insisting upon a cohesiveness within reality, Proclus works to resolve these without hermeneutic violence by introducing mediating categories or concepts, essentially seeing even dyadic pairs in terms of triadic structures, or by employing strategic ambiguity. See: Martijn and Gerson, 51; Gersh, "Proclus as Theologian," 85, 88; Marije Martijn, *Proclus on Nature: Philosophy of Nature and Its Methods in Proclus' Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 65.
* This thesis uses Thomas Taylor's translation with caution, given the problems of his use of unreliable manuscripts and his liberal method of translation. See Appendix 2: "Proclus' Works" in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 329–337 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 336 n1.
[241] Proclus, *El. theol.* §12, §13, §25.
[242] Proclus, *El. theol.* §25. See also: Martijn and Gerson, 54.
[243] I.e., all levels beneath the One, which can, or even ought to, be excluded from an analysis of motion insofar as it transcends the relevant categories; see: Gersh, "Proclus as Theologian," 1. See also: Wayne Hankey's caution against the error of reading Proclus as treating ontologically what is, in his system, above ontology. Wayne Hankey, "God's Care for Individuals: What Neoplatonism gives to a Christian Doctrine of Providence," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring–Fall 2011): 4–36, at 8–9.

matter, as there is no lower level to which it could be superior.[244] Thus, the quality that is identified by Proclus as the most remote from, the most unlike, the divine is sterility.[245]

In the Proclean universe, hierarchical causation is not a simple straight line through the levels of reality, but rather a series of repeating circles of the fundamental triad of limit/infinity/mixture.[246] Further, these repeating cycles themselves are not extended merely end-to-end, distinct from each other, but are a network of overlapping activities.[247] Trouillard states that in this way procession is "polycentric": "It bursts forth from each as from a center; the center is everywhere, and the inner part of the universe is in each of these points; always total, it is everywhere identical and nevertheless different through the unfolding."[248] The basic circles at work in Proclus's account of causation are seen in the cycle of remaining/μονή, procession/πρόοδος, and reversion/ἐπιστροφή.[249] These merit a closer look, as they figure largely into the intelligibility of existing individual beings – a feature of being that is captured to a degree in Proclus by the notion of 'self-constitution.'

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[244] Proclus, *El. theol.* §7 – re: a cause must be superior to its product.
[245] Proclus, *El. theol.* §25.
[246] Stephen Gersh, *ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ ΑΚΙΝΗΤΟΣ: A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*, Philosophia Antiqua: A Series of Monographs on Ancient Philosophy, ed. W.J. Verdenius and J.H. Waszink (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 60, 67; Jean Trouillard "*Procession néoplatonicienne et création judeo-chrétienne*," *Les Cahiers de Fontenay: Néoplatonisme, Mélanges Offerts à Jean Trouillard* 19, 20, 21, 22 (Mars 1981): 15–30, at 19.
[247] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.2.9.12–10.14; 5.18.69.17–21; see: Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 89.
[248] Trouillard, 19, translation mine: " *... elle jaillit en chacun d'eux comme en autant de centres.* La procession est polycentrique. *Le centre est partout, et l'univers intérieur en chacun de ses points. Toujours total, il est partout identique et cependant différent par le déploiement ...* ."
Tullio Gregory identifies the phrase "infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere" as originating in the medieval text of uncertain authorship the *Liber XXIV philosophorum.* Gregory, "The Platonic Inheritance," 78–79.
Van Riel clarifies, however, that an effect, insofar as it is μικτόν, can only operate productively in the modalities of Limit (generating ὕπαρξις, i.e, a "new existent thing") and Unlimited (endowing it with δύναμις), but that the combined unity that is a "real being" (i.e., ὑπόστασις – "a being that has a proper character and a proper place in the structure of reality") comes each time from the First Principle. See: Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 82–83; Gerd Van Riel, "Horizontalism or Verticalism? Proclus vs Plotinus on the Procession of Matter," *Phronesis* 46, no. 2 (May 2001): 129–153, at 145–146. (references in Van Riel: Proclus, *in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria* 1054.27–8; *Theol. plat.* 3.7.29.28–30; 2.8.34.16–17; 2.8.32.1–2).
[249] E.g., Proclus, *El. theol.* §35.

Gersh's treatment of self-constitution in Proclus provides the mechanics of how the motions of causation constitute an activity of *causa sui*. He explains that the metaphysical principles of identify and difference[250] are responsible for the processes of remaining/μονέ and procession/πρόοδος (inseparable from each other, in that the cause retains the effect's principle and thus the likeness, even as by its difference the effect proceeds – a tension between cause and effect captured in the term κοινωνία).[251] By contrast, it is the metaphysical principle of similarity/ὁμοιότης that fuels a being's reversion/ἐπιστροφή to its cause.[252] Proclus understands this return to cause in terms of a thing's desire for its own principle, i.e., its own good.[253] This makes the motion significant to its constitution, insofar as in its return a thing more fully obtains/achieves its own being. The role of the thing *itself* in the motion of the return (i.e., the meaning of 'self' in 'self-constitution') lies in what Gersh describes as a hermeneutical act.[254] That is, defining what it is that is different yet still the same about an effect as toward its cause is an interpretive activity (i.e., the differentiating between the 'prior to itself' and, thereby 'itself'), one that is conducted by the being itself.[255] The produced being, thus, has a proper role in the completion of its own causation.

Trouillard's treatment of self-constitution emphasizes the interplay at work between cause and effect. The self-constitution/automobility of the contingent existent requires being awakened by an external force.[256] This is the ineffable, in Trouillard's way of speaking, which is

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[250] Rosemann notes that the principle of *difference* is essential in Proclus to prevent "a fall into radical monism." Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile*, 94. See, for example, Proclus, *El. theol.* §103.
[251] Proclus, *El. theol.* §§29, 30, 33, 35; Gersh, *ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ ΑΚΙΝΗΤΟΣ*, 54.
[252] Gersh, *ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ ΑΚΙΝΗΤΟΣ*, 75-6.
[253] Proclus, *El. theol.* §31.
[254] Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 98.
[255] Gersh connects this act to explanations in Proclus, *El. theol.* §§167, 144, 146; Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 100.
[256] Proclus, *in primum Alcibiadem*, translated by William O'Neill, as *Proclus: Alcibiades 1 A Translation and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Dordrecht: Springer, 1971), 280.6; Trouillard, 18.

the ultimate source of the principles that provide for and govern the existence of contingent individuals – a provision, however, that occurs through a partnership that assigns a significant role to the produced being. Trouillard observes that in order for a principle to *be* a principle, there must be a derivative: "That is to say, that it is through soul and the self-constituents that the principles actualize their character of principle."[257] Trouillard envisions the individual soul striving to achieve the agency of self-mobility almost heroically: it must "rise of itself under the motion of the Ineffable," and be "the originator of its own being, of its life, and of its thought."[258] It achieves its place in the cosmos by taking up the principles of its being (the discerning of which is a hermeneutical act, in terms of Gersh's account) and "introducing them in its own proper cycle and in giving them a being of manifestation."[259] Trouillard sees this "unfolding" of the undefined cosmic forces and principles into "different situations and individual histories" as a "self-realization without ever running out" of the Cosmic Soul, via the singular soul.[260] Trouillard summarizes Proclus's Neoplatonic doctrine on the interplay of individual motion and cosmic causation in the notion of contingent instances of *causa sui*: "All true being proceeds

[257] Trouillard, 20, translation mine: "*Cela revient à dire que c'est à travers l'âme et les autoconstituants que les principes actualisent leur caractère de principe*."
[258] Trouillard, 20, translation mine: "*Pour que l'âme surgisse d'elle-même sous la motion de l'Ineffable, il faut qu'elle soit l'auteur de son être, de sa vie et de sa pensée.*"
[259] Trouillard, 20, translation mine: "*Elle atteint donc ses principes en les introduisant dans son cycle propre et en leur donnant un être de manifestation*."
[260] Trouillard, 19, translation mine: "*Et ce déroulement indéfini de situations différentes et d'histoires individuelles manifeste son autoréalisation sans jamais l'épuiser.*" Trouillard takes this to be the significance of Proclus's interpretation of the myth of Er, in his commentary on Plato's *Republic* II.96-359. Regarding the role of, as Trouillard states, "changeable individualities and material conditions" in the unfolding of the cosmos ("une série d'individualités changeantes *et conditionnés par la matière,*" Trouillard, 19, translation mine), see: Proclus, *in Platonis Timaeum commentaria,* Book 3, trans. Dirk Baltzly, as *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus IV, Book 3 Part 2: Proclus on the World Soul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 246.10–14; 264.13–18; *in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria,* trans. Glenn E. Morrow and John M. Dillon, as *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's* Parmenides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). 3.817.4-819.29

of/from itself, and at the same time proceeds immediately from the Ineffable, regardless of its rank in the hierarchy."[261]

Now we turn to a second observation about Proclus's account of reality: the cosmos is structurally relational, where each being is in some way ordered to the others. His cosmology is a complex undertaking concerned throughout with how the varying levels of reality fit together.[262] On the one hand, his account can seem to be bound up in preserving distance between causes and their effects, insofar as transcendent causes are to be understood as having no relation with the beings they produce.[263] On the other hand, however, his account yields the notion that the great ill that must not be tolerated in our account of reality is the suggestion of gaps or 'empty places' in the hierarchy of being – *all* beings derive from the One, and the being of each entails the being of all.[264] In Proclus, beings "whose unity entails other things are also sources of providence to one another, from which comes the unity of the world" – a state in which, Butler summarizes, beings "are the objects of providence just insofar as they are capable of being subjects of providence as well."[265]

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[261] Trouillard, 19, translation mine: "*Tout être véritable procède de lui-même, et du même coup procède immédiatement de l'Ineffable, quel que soit son rang dans la hiérarchie.*"

[262] Proclus's cosmology is built upon levels of triads, and sub-triads, in which each member interpenetrates the other and predominates at different points. In such a hierarchy of hypostases, each one is not to be taken in isolation from those prior to and posterior to it in the order of procession, but rather interpreted in terms of its interpenetrations with proximate neighbors. See Gersh, *ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ ΑΚΙΝΗΤΟΣ*, 18, 111–12; Martijn and Gerson, 52.

[263] E.g., Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.7.29.10–30.2; *El. theol.* §122. See: Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 74; Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 94; Martijn, *Proclus on Nature,* 28–29. See also: Proclus, *in Platonis Timaeum commentaria,* Book 1, trans. Harold Tarrant, as *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, Book 1: *Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.24–11.5.

[264] Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 73; ref.: Proclus, *in Tim*. Book 1, 378.25–6; *Theol. plat.* 3.4.15.24–6; *De prov.* 20; *De malorum subsistentia*, translated [with notes] by Jan Opsomer and Carlos Steel, as *Proclus: On the Existence of Evils*, Ancient Commentators on Aristotle, general editor Richard Sorabji (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 13.9–10, 14.13;
See also Gersh: in hierarchy, "everything is in sympathy with everything else," "Proclus as theologian," 94; ref.: Proclus, *El. theol.* §§124, 140. See also Martijn and Gerson, regarding the "harm" of empty spaces, and of separation, 54, 57; ref.: Proclus, *El. theol.* §23, §24, §81.

[265] Edward P. Butler, *Essays on the Metaphysics of Polytheism in Proclus* (New York: Phaidra, 2014), 228 and 233; ref.: Proclus, *Decem dubitationes circa providentiam*, translated [with notes] by Jan Opsomer and Carlos Steel, as *Proclus: Ten Problems Concerning Providence*, Ancient Commentators on Aristotle, general editor Richard Sorabji

Proclus sees unity as the grounding quality of reality.[266] The First Principle/One establishes the basic shape of reality as layers of unities and multiplicities, and provides for the connectivity of individual beings to other individuals and to reality as a whole, i.e., a hierarchy: "In each order or causal chain there exists a single monad prior to the manifold, which determines for the members of the order their unique relation to one another and to the whole."[267] We must not, however, understand the One as presiding at the very pinnacle of the hierarchy (such that, for example, the order of procession/production would be: One > Being > Soul), but rather as transcending and permeating the whole hierarchy of being with its divine character, all the way to the very bottom, "even to the last regions of being" (*El. theol.* §125) – thus making the order of procession to be: Being > Soul > Sensibles, all undergirded by the One.[268] As a result of this inner cohesion, Proclus' account of reality sees the various levels of being as relating in mutual interpenetration and interdependence between members within and between levels.[269] [270] On this theme of unity, the universe must be understood as one continuous

(New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 3.18.7-8. In the view of this thesis, the productive, horizontal relatedness depicted here is operational in beings' *return* to their source, not in their *emanation* from it.

[266] Proclus, *El. theol.* §25, and §13.

[267] Proclus, *El. theol.* §21.

[268] Eric D. Perl, *Thinking Being: Introduction to Metaphysics in the Classical Tradition,* Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition 17, eds. Robert M. Berchman and John F. Finamore, Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Texts and Contexts, eds. Robert M. Berchman and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 131. We should be careful to emphasize that each henad (i.e., the head at each level of being), only adds *layers* of causation to the causation of the One---they are not other/different *agents* of causation. See: Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 93–94. On the origins of mis-readings of Proclus in this regard, O'Rourke observes that Dionysius read the Platonists as positing that each divine "name indicated a different origin" (ref.: Dionysius, *On Divine Names,* 5.2.258), and considers that Aquinas, in engaging his sources (including the theologically authoritative Dionysius, as well as the philosophically authoritative Aristotelian portrayal of Platonism), may have reduced Proclus "too summarily for accuracy." Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 119-120; Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus,* translated by Colm Luibeid and Paul Rorem, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: Complete Works*. Translated by Colm Luibheid. Notes and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. Classics of Western Spirituality, editor-in-chief John Farina (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987).

[269] Ref.: n262.

[270] (Note: unless otherwise noted, all locations in this footnote are from Proclus, *El. theol.*)
At the same time, however, we must not lose grasp of the notion that the First Cause is the Unparticipated, i.e., utterly transcendent and unaffected by any other being (e.g., §23, §24).

series, with one unified network of causation – it comprehends all being, and no beings exist or operate apart from it.[271]

Finally, related to our original claim that Proclus's account is essentially one of causality, we can also observe that to Proclus the cosmos is intrinsically fecund. Summarizing Proclus at *Elementatio theologica* §122, Van Riel states: "Goodness is always productive – if something is not productive, it cannot be good."[272] He describes the Proclean hierarchy as accounting not only for the existence but also the vitality of all of reality – he notes Proclus's invoking of the *Chaldean Oracles* in its identifying the Ultimate as the "source of sources."[273] That is, on Van Riel's reading, the defining characteristic of an account of reality as 'creation' is the presence of divine, creative δύναμις functioning at every level of reality, and put to work afresh *by* every level of reality: thus, the First as "the source of sources."[274] As noted by Trouillard, the power of

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The concept of "an unparticipated term" in Proclus is significant, and difficult. In its most general sense it refers to the head of an order of being; §100 and §101 identify these heads as unparticipated terms and principles of a series. How the series proceeds from this unparticipated head is explored in Proclus's henadology, §113–165. There, §116 states that "every god is participable, except the One;" §122, however, states that each of these gods "transcends the beings for which it provides: its providence involves no remission of its pure and unitary transcendence." Gersh provides an example of the difficulty of the theme in his discussion of the ambiguity woven throughout Proclus's henadology. See: Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 92–97.

More difficult yet is the concept of "*the* Unparticipated" – i.e., the primary term to which all things refer and from which they derive (§100). That is, is the primary Unparticipated appropriately identified as the One? In §4, for example, we see discussion of the One as unparticipated and transcendent from its products, all of which yet participate in unity, and §116 states (as mentioned before, in terms of the henads) that "Every god is participable, except the One." §20, however, states that the One is prior to Intelligence, insofar as all things participate in unity (i.e., by implication, the One) but not all things participate in intelligence. Similarly, §13 (which claims that "the Good is identical with the One") states that "the Good, wherever it is present, makes the participant one, and holds its being together in virtue of this unification." It is perhaps best, or at least most precise, to follow Proclus where he identifies the primary Unparticipated as the ineffable First, rather than by the quality-grounded names of One or Good: "Only the First Principle is completely unknowable, as being unparticipated" (§123).

These two ways of understanding the First Cause are, it must be remembered, mutually referential: in order for the One to provide the immanent unity of each being, it must be transcendent to them all – i.e., each being both is and is not the One (ref.: §103; Plotinus, 5.2.1.1; 5.2.2.25–27).

[271] Proclus, *El. theol.* §98; Perl, "Neither One nor Many: God and the Gods in Plotinus, Proclus, and Aquinas," *Dionysius* 28 (Dec. 2010): 167–192, at 184.

[272] Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 81.

[273] Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 79; ref.: Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.451.17–18; *Theol. plat.* 3.7.30.3–10.

[274] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.9.39.4–14; 3.21.74.11–18; *in Parm.* 6.1119.4–1123.21. See: Van Riel, "Horizontalism or Verticalism?" 141, 148.

God is most put on display not only by creating beings, but by creating beings that themselves are capable of being causes.[275] Thus, Van Riel reads the self-weakening of the divine which occurs in the procession of all reality not as an infelicitous byproduct of hierarchy, but as manifestation of the reality that sterility is incompatible with the nobility of the One – even when that means eventually producing something that *cannot* produce any further.[276] The 'embarrassment' (on Pegis' telling[277]) of the dilution of the One's creative δύναμις is in reality the manifestation of its munificence: "because the gifts of the first principles are transmitted everywhere in reality … they do not only generate the more perfect things, but also those things that are less perfect in their mode of being."[278]

We will conclude this section by recalling that in Proclus's 'vertical' account of reality (where the source of the very being of things is the prevailing question) gaps or empty spaces between beings in the hierarchy constitute an ill of the gravest sort – i.e., a negative effect upon a being's perfection as a contingent being.[279] Of course, we should clarify, in the 'downward' procession of generation gaps are actually impossible, due to the necessity of production in the perfect being of the Good.[280] Where the ill of gaps is possible is in the return of a being to its principle – especially insofar as the cycles of many beings' journeys from and to their principle

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[275] Trouillard, 70.
[276] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.10.41.12–15; *in Tim.* 1.372.27–373.3. See: Van Riel, "Horizontalism or Verticalism?" 150.
[277] On the question of whether Proclus's cosmology can be read as providing a genuine account of the world as "creation," Anton Pegis hastens to point out that this is a gross conceptual mismatch, as the ancient Greeks had no such concept – although Pegis seems to hold that the primary condition of a genuine creation account is an identifiable beginning (which, indeed, Neoplatonic cosmology does not provide). Pegis asserts (following Gilson) that the "emanationist" universe of the Neoplatonists is thus one that has no history. Pegis, 72–74; ref.: Étienne Gilson, *St. Thomas Aquinas Lecture on a Master Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 6–7.
[278] Van Riel, "Horizontalism or Verticalism?" 150.
[279] As noted above (n264), on this point see: Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 73, ref.: Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.378.25–26; *Theol. plat.* 3.4.15.24–26; *De mal*. 13.9–10, and 14.13; *De prov.* 20. See also: Gersh's statement that in hierarchy, "everything is in sympathy with everything else." Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 94; ref.: Proclus, *El. theol.* §§124, 140. See also: Martijn and Gerson, regarding the "harm" of empty spaces, and of separation, 54 and 57, ref.: Proclus, *El. theol.* §23, §24, §81.
[280] Martijn and Gerson, 54.

'overlap' (as we saw earlier) and interweave with each other. Marion's examination of Neoplatonist hierarchy elaborates upon this, observing in hierarchy the responsibility of each member to "translate the original gift," to "liken himself to the gift" on behalf of the other members.[281] He notes that "a failure [to mediate the divine gifts] defeats not so much the one who commits it as the one near him, and so on," and he soberly contemplates "the seriousness of the hierarchical community" – i.e., the reality that "hierarchy can transmit the failure of abandonments as much as redundancy delivers a gift."[282] To Marion, the immediacy of being, of the Good, requires mediation "at every point in the hierarchy."[283] Proposing hierarchy as the structure of reality is therefore serious business, because "only mediation produces immediacy; abolished, it would give way to barbarism."[284] Gilles Mongeau (in his examination of Thomas Aquinas's relational pedagogy, to which we will return later), picks up this theme of the evil of estrangement and the seriousness of the call to mediation in his observation that "what is opposed to friendship is not the enemy … but the stranger."[285] In terms of our inquiry, we shall take a cue from Mongeau's notion of the 'stranger' and close with our guiding theme of intelligibility: in a universe of hierarchy, in which each being is at once a cause in terms of its own journey of return and also in terms of its neighbor's, to judge another person to be unintelligible (i.e., a 'stranger' as to their being – one who is not only not related to or connected with one's own being, but who is in practical reality unable to be so) is to create a gap between oneself and that person. In chapter 3 we will examine more closely what such a gap might entail.

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[281] Marion, 168.
[282] Marion, 168. Note: Marion here seems to be going beyond Proclus, insofar as Marion's language seems to leave room for downward direction (where a flaw would have consequences for the remaining emanation). The failure for Proclus could only be upward, and after one mistake upward there is no consequence for higher layers.
[283] Marion, 170.
[284] Marion, 170.
[285] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom: The Summa theologiae as Spiritual Pedagogy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015), 193.

D. Thomas's appropriation of Neoplatonism: beings in a sacred universe

As mentioned in chapter 1, our project considers the influence upon Thomas of Neoplatonism not primarily in a general sense (for which we could have looked not only to the mystical Plotinus, but also to the Christian Neoplatonisms of Dionysius, Boethius, and Augustine), but specifically as the Neoplatonism of Proclus. The 'practical' benefit of this choice will be seen at work in this section: Thomas's direct engagement with the clear, structural account Proclus provides of the universe as an interconnected whole. In this section we will consider several of the significant contributions that Proclus's 'vertical' account makes within Thomas's thought, including the grounding of the intelligibility of beings in their place in the cosmic hierarchy. We will proceed by first examining Aquinas's most direct engagement with Proclus's cosmology: his commentary upon the *Liber de causis*, which (thanks to the translation work of William of Moerbeke) he was able to recognize as a clear representation of Proclus's thought.[286] In this brief examination, we will consider the text in two ways. First, we will consider Aquinas's main concern in the text – i.e., what he is ever holding in his mind to 'get right' in discourse about reality. Second, we will take note of a few of the moves he makes to clarify and safeguard a right understanding of this concern, some of which are philosophical and some of which are theological. After considering Aquinas's direct engagement with the *Liber de causis* we will identify several key ways in which Neoplatonism's vertical orientation enriches Thomas's understanding of the universe, especially on the theme of the intelligibility of contingent beings.

[286] Carlos Steel, "William of Moerbeke, translator of Proclus," in *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Gersh, 247–261 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, 49, 102, 174–178, 221–223; Hankey, "The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the *Liber de Causis* & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus," 159–161.

Thomas's main interest in his *Super librum De causis* is to clarify and explain how all being derives in all ways from the First Cause, which is God.[287] He engages this motif explicitly throughout, but he also chooses to frame his closing statement around the theme, with proper theological éclat: "And so ends the entire Book of Causes. Thanks be to almighty God, who is the first cause of all things."[288]

Thomas clearly sees this Neoplatonic theme treated by both the author of the *Liber de causis* and Proclus. Proposition 1 of his commentary sets the tone quickly, asserting that secondary causes do not act independently of the first cause; the causality of the first cause is present more directly to the effects than any secondary causes that act afterward.[289] Here he draws from the clarity and strength of Proclus's parallel propositions (*El. theol.* §56 and §57) without much correction, and concludes: "The first cause of all things … is compared to the whole of nature as nature is to art. Hence that which first underlies the whole of nature is from

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[287] This is my reading of Thomas's thought in his *Super LDC,* or at least my reading of his thought in terms of the interests of this thesis.
By contrast, for example, Porro sees proposition 9 as the crucial point for Thomas's commentary: "The first cause does not have *yliatim* [form/shape] because it is being alone." Aquinas, *Super LDC* 9.57. For Porro, this expresses "one of the fundamental theses – or perhaps *the* fundamental thesis – of Thomas's metaphysics: the basic composition is not matter/form (the composition that constitutes the essence of sensible realities) but that between essence and existence. … The real metaphysical difference that characterizes Thomas's universe is not between what is material and immaterial … but between what possesses form (a form) and that which is above every form. What truly distinguishes God, or the first cause, is not the simple fact that he is above matter; it is that he is above every form. … The topic of the distinction between being and essence, and of the superiority of pure being over what is also form, thus, permits Thomas to mark in the clearest way the distance between God and creatures and, at the same time, fully to safeguard the dignity and even the (relative) perfection of creatures. Each creature is such because it has a form (an actuality) to which a further actuality is added (existence). Therefore, the limit of each creature is not in some grave imperfection or ontological deficiency but in the fact that these two actualities do not coincide, as they do in God." Porro, 344–345.

[288] Aquinas, *Super librum De causis expositio* 32.145: "*Et sic terminatur totus liber De causis. Sint gratiae Deo omnipotenti, qui est prima omnium causa*."
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Super librum De causis expositio,* Latin text based on the 1954 Saffrey edition, transcribed by Robert Busa; English translation by Vincent A. Guagliardo, Charles R. Hess, and Richard C. Taylor. In *St. Thomas Aquinas: Commentary on the Book of Causes.* Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996. Latin text quoted accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 32.467–468.

[289] Thomas, in his commentary on the *Liber de causis,* associates this proposition with Proclus's *Elementatio theologica*, §56 and §57. He references proposition 1 of the *Liber* in, for example, *Q.D. de verit.* 5.8 s.c. 9.

the first cause of all things, and the function of second causes is to make it suitable for singular things."[290]

Proposition 3 (which addresses the three activities of the noble soul: animate, intellectual, and divine) is an important location in the text for Aquinas regarding God as the source of all being, and his commentary involves a complex set of corrections and affirmations.[291] It deals with the activities of soul, including being the source of motion, but becomes a context for examining the nature of the divine. Thomas asserts early on that the "noble soul" in this text should be understood in terms of Proclus's "divine souls" in his *Elementatio theologica* §201.[292] Thomas goes on to make an explicit theological correction against any hint of a multiplicity of gods,[293] though, considering the importance of that point for Christian theology, Thomas does seem to give a charitably wide berth to the legitimate ways people use the word "divine" to refer to beings other than God.[294] Of seemingly more pressing concern is the philosophical problem of the Platonists' multiple sources for different aspects of existence: goodness, being, life, intellect, etc. At issue is the status of individual beings as possessing an internally-grounded unity (which is essential for actions to be said to belong to them), and Thomas invokes Aristotle to argue for an ultimately unified source of being, which he identifies as God.[295]

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[290] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 1.9: "*comparatur autem prima omnium causa ad totam naturam sicut natura ad artem; unde id quod primo subsistit in tota natura est a prima omnium causa, quod appropriatur singulis rebus officio causarum secundarum*." Latin text accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 1.38.
[291] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 3.17. Thomas references this proposition favorably: e.g., *ST* 1.45.5 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.66.8; *Q.D. de verit.* 5.9. obj. 7 and ad 7; *Q.D. de pot.* 3.1 corp.
[292] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 3.18: "*Quae autem dicatur* ***anima nobilis*** *intelligi potest ex verbis Procli qui hanc propositionem ponoit CCI, sub his verbis:* omnes divinae animae triplices habent operationes: has quidem ut animae, has autem ut suscipientes intellectum divinum, has autem ut diis extraiunctae. *Ex quo patet quod* ***anima nobilis*** *dicitur hic* ***anima divina****.*" Latin text accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 3.64
[293] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 3.20; Thomas credits Dionysius with the correction, referencing Dionysius's *On the Divine Names*, 5.2.
[294] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 3.21.
[295] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 3.22–25; Aristotle, *Met.* 2.1.993b24–25; 3.6.1003.a11ff.

In several propositions Aquinas reads essential continuity between Proclus and the *Liber de causis*, and we see Thomas simply using Proclus's philosophical clarity to illumine what (in his view) the *Liber de causis* author is attempting to say, needing only the simple theological correction from Proclus's "all" or "every divine thing" to the *Liber de causis*'s more proper, monotheistic "First Cause," "God," or "divine" in the singular sense. Examples of this usage can be found in propositions 20, 23, and 26. On occasion, the error to be corrected lies in the *Liber de causis* text as *contrasted* with Proclus, such as in proposition 24, where Proclus's *Elementatio theologica* §142 is needed to help the *Liber de causis*'s reader avoid the error of failing to reduce all diversity to the First Cause.[296] On the other hand, Thomas is quick to note when the *Liber de causis* author does the same for Proclus, as in proposition 25 where Proclus's excellent explanation (from *El. theol.* §45) of self-subsistent beings is enriched with the caveat that such an explanation should not be taken to say that such beings are not dependent on a higher being.[297] Some propositions Thomas needs to explicitly reject, not just correct. An example is proposition 10, which we see Thomas in clear terms addressing (in another text) as in error and not to be followed.[298]

Finally, we will end this brief survey with focus upon two propositions that in a special way illustrate Aquinas's interest in the text and illumine its influence upon his thought. Proposition 18 depicts the deeply formative notion in Neoplatonism of the universe as an interconnected reality of downward-flowing causation/participation, with no gaps. Aquinas finds the same notion expressed in Proclus's *Elementatio theologica* §111. What is surprising is that Aquinas is willing to attribute a right understanding of this most important notion about the

[296] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 24.122.
[297] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 25.126.
[298] Aquinas, *Q.D. de pot.* 3.9 ad 10.

universe to both theological perspectives: "The causality of these things [i.e., on all levels of reality – M.G.] belongs to the divine order, whether we assert that there are many gods ordered under the one, according to the Platonists, or only one [God], possessing all things, according to us, for the universality of causality is proper to God."[299] Proposition 32 is similarly remarkable in that Thomas makes modest note of theological issues, but almost seems to bypass the distinction between one God and many gods in deference to the importance of grounding all causal participation in one First Cause:

> Third … he shows that all things depend upon this first one. To understand what he says here, we ought to take Proposition 116 in Proclus, which is as follows: 'Every god is participable, except one.' Proclus asserts this proposition to show how the Platonists maintained that there are many gods. For they did not maintain that all [the gods] are equal but that one is first, which participates nothing but is essentially the one and good. They maintained that the other lower gods participate the one and good itself. And he presents the proof of this because it is clear that the first and supreme God participates nothing, otherwise he would not be the first cause of all things.[300]

Clearly, Thomas sees not only theological but philosophical urgency in correctly joining all beings to the First Cause, God, as the origin and principle of their being. Given the importance of the notion of similarity in a hierarchical universe, it would seem he is right to be very concerned about the source of each thing's nature and ultimately *what* each thing is participating in its place in the world.

Taking our cues from this engagement by Thomas with the *Liber de causis*, we can identify three themes in Thomas that show meaningful enrichment from his Proclean-

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[299] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 19.106: "*Causalitas autem horum ad ordinem divinum pertinent, sive ponantur multi dii ordinati sub uno secundum Platonicos, sive unus tantum in se omnia habens secundum nos: universalitas enim causalitatis propria est Deo.*" Latin text accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 19.352.

[300] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 32.144–145: "*Tertio ibi:* **necessarium est unum faciens** *etc., ostendit quod ab isto uno primo omnia dependeant. Et ad intellectum huius quod hic dicitur, sumenda est CXVI propositio Procli, quae talis est:* omnis deus participabilis est, excepto uno. *Quae quidem propositio ponitur ab eo ad ostendendum quomodo Platonici ponebant plures deos. Non enim ponebant omnes ex aequo, sed unum ponebant primum, qui nihil participabat, sed est essentialiter unum et bonum; alios vero deos ponebant inferiores participantes ipsum unum et bonum. Et huius probationem inducit quia de primo et supremo Deo manifestum est quod nihil participat, alioquin non esset prima causa omnium*." Latin text accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 32.463–465.

Neoplatonic inheritance. First, he gains a notion of creation as a unified whole. Second, he gains another layer (i.e., in addition to that gained from Aristotle) in his understanding of individual beings as wholes. Third, he gains also another layer in his notion of human beings as *imago Dei* (again, adding to that which he derived from Aristotle) insofar as they can achieve a complete return to their principle.

Regarding the first, a significance of this contribution from the 'vertical' orientation of Proclus's account is seen in how Thomas uses the notion of hierarchy to illumine the nature of the world as creation (a theme received with theological authority by Thomas through scripture and Augustine). We clearly see throughout his commentary on the *Liber de causis* his appreciation, and appropriation, of the notion of the world as a unified whole from top to bottom in which all things depend for their being upon the First Cause. We can add, however, a significant feature of Proclus's Neoplatonism that made his cosmology, even with his use of the theologically fraught notion of 'emanation,' an important philosophical companion to Thomas's Christian notion of creation: Proclus's account of the cosmos as a hierarchical unfolding of the One *includes matter*.[301] Though Thomas elsewhere credits Plato (specifically, in his *Timaeus*) as deriving the unity of the world from the prior unity of its Exemplar/the One,[302] it is clear from his *Liber de causis* commentary that Thomas wishes to more specifically establish that without exception all of the material world is derived from God as First Cause, and is a manifestation of

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[301] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.9.37.21–38; 3.8.33.3–34.5; *in Parm.* 6.1119.4–1123.21. Van Riel sees Proclus identifying matter as "sheer receptivity" (i.e., as to form). Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 93. Perl notes that, in the levels of reality depicted in the "divided line" of Plato's *Republic* (511d6–e4), even the lowest level is not "ignorance" properly speaking, i.e., absolute absence of intelligibility – thus, "to be anything at all is therefore to have some share of divinity." Perl, *Thinking Being,* 34, 40–1. Thus, in Perl's reading of Proclus, we can observe that 'intelligibility' and 'a share in divinity' are two ways of saying the same thing. On the extension of the Good all the way to matter, see: Proclus, *El. theol.* §72 and §138.
Compare with: Aquinas, *ST* 1.45, with reference both to emanation as a mode of creation and to the creation of matter by God.
[302] Aquinas, *ST* 1.47.3 ad 1.

his goodness.[303] We can see that this assertion has implications regarding the supremacy of God's creative goodness: there is nothing outside his providential governance.[304] The resonance between Proclus and Aquinas on this theme, however, is curious. For Aquinas, embodiment within the material world is actually advantageous to the human soul. We are well-suited to thrive in such a universe, and thus our embodied experiences belong in even a positively-construed explanation of our actions.[305] For Proclus, even though he affirms that matter is entailed in the causation of the highest Cause,[306] embodiment in matter is seen more as an entanglement that hinders us from being fully actualized in our return.[307] However, they both are committed to a notion of the material world as a manifestation of, derivation from, and participation in the divine First Cause. In a vertical narrative of reality, the universe and every individual thing in it is sacred.

Second, an extension of a notion of the world as a unified, cosmic hierarchy is the notion of individual human beings as unified wholes. Here, again, the resonance between Proclus and Aquinas is interesting, insofar as both ground their treatment of unified individuals in an account of divine knowledge: Proclus through the polytheistic system of henads, and Aquinas through the monotheistic notion of the Christian God. Theologically, these are worlds apart, and thus the distance between Neoplatonism and Christianity on this point can perhaps be more easily noticed

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[303] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 1.9. Aquinas can be seen to treat the good in terms of its being 'self-diffusive' (i.e., *bonum est diffusivum sui esse*): Aquinas, *ST* 1.4.4 ad 2; *Q.D. de verit.* 21.1 ad 4; *Super Sent.* 1.34.2.1 ad 4.
[304] Aquinas, *ST* 1.47.1 corp., and 3 corp.
[305] Aquinas, *ST* 1.75, 76, 85, 86.
[306] Proclus, *El. theol.* §72; see Jan Opsomer, "The Natural World," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 139–166 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 158. See also Proclus, *in Parm.* 1.641.6–12.
[307] See Proclus, "Hymn to Helios," 1132–1133, where human souls "suffer once they have fallen under the yoke of the body with the result that they forget the bring-shining court of the lofty Father." Proclus, *Hymns,* translation by Robbert M. van den Berg, in *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translation, Commentary*. Philosophia Antiqua: A Series of Studies on Ancient Philosophy, edited by J. Mansfeld and J.C.M. van Winden (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 150.

than the resonance.[308] However, both recognize and engage the tension between unity and multiplicity at work in divine knowledge, and thus in reality. Both recognize the impossibility of saying that the simplicity of the divine is shaped somehow by the multiplicity of the contingent in divine knowledge of all things – and both resolve the problem by framing the mode of knowing in terms of the knower, rather than the thing known.[309] A meaningful feature of both treatments is that divine knowledge of contingent beings ultimately entails an understanding of individuals as wholes. In Proclus, this is addressed as the issue of "knowing according to the one," which is the divine way of causing/knowing, and entails causing/knowing each individual as something that "is in some way one" – a cosmic activity that is grounded, according to Butler, in the "concrete individuality of the henads."[310] In Proclus, this knowledge of things as units is prior to but also undergirds the more detailed knowledge of things in community (i.e., in the hierarchical network of parts and wholes).[311] Things are intelligible insofar as they are wholes – which, in Proclus, can be genuinely understood as 'to the degree that' or 'in the way that' they

[308] Emphasizing the distance can take two forms: repudiating Neoplatonism as simply incompatible with Christianity, insofar as it operates by 'pagan Greek' notions of God, or (ironically) distorting the nature of Neoplatonism's henadic structures in an attempt to make them compatible with Christian monotheism. Regarding the first, see Pegis' historical summary in his lecture *Saint Thomas and the Greeks*. Regarding the latter, see Wayne J. Hankey's "Neoplatonist Surprises: The Doctrine of Providence of Plotinus and his Followers both Conscious and Unconscious," paper presented to the Faculté de Philosophie, Université Laval, 23 October 2009. By contrast, the genuine resonance requires rejecting the continuum suggested by the other versions, and allowing Proclus and Aquinas to speak in their own voice and to their own times – see Perl, "Neither One Nor Many," 168–169.
[309] Proclus, *El. theol.* §124, §173; *de Prov.* 64; *Liber de causis*, prop. 8; Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 1.38.1.2 corp.; *Super LDC* 8, 10, and 11. Note that Thomas earlier in his life receives this notion from Boethius, and later directly associates it with Proclus, and brings Proclus, Augustine, and Dionysius into accord on the question. See Hankey, "Neoplatonist Surprises," 4. Perl addresses the nuanced relation between Proclus and Aquinas on this issue by describing the "opposition" between Proclus's polytheistic treatment and Aquinas's monotheistic treatment as "confessional rather than philosophical." Perl, "Neither One Nor Many," 190. However, such a claim would require a hard distinction between nature and grace, which does not align with Aquinas's vision of the world.
[310] Proclus, *Dec dub.* 1.4.37. Edward Butler argues that without the notion of henads as irreducible wholes at the apex of the hierarchy, the procession of unity from the One becomes an impossibility. See: Edward P. Butler, "The Gods and Being in Proclus," *Dionysius* 26 (Dec. 2008): 93–114, at 94, and 93–95.
[311] Proclus, *Dec. dub.* 1.4.30–35; *El. theol.* §§1–3, cf. §§66–69. See: Butler, *Essays on the Metaphysics of Polytheism in Proclus*, 214. The divine perspective (shared by "truly wise people"), Proclus states, also includes an appropriate understanding of how the whole and the parts are related in terms of being ordered to the good; see: Proclus, *De prov.* 34.

are unities. In Aquinas – who, it has been noted, directly engaged Proclus on this issue[312] – the tension between unity and multiplicity emerges when God is identified in his simplicity as *ipsum esse* (and the locus of the transcendentals), and as therefore in his activity as Creator as the cause not only of the formal principles of *what* things are (i.e., the species) but also of the principles of individual existent beings in *that* they are.[313] At issue for Thomas is how God's knowledge can be said to comprehend contingent individuals. He directs his explanation on one level to the status of matter as divinely created and therefore subject to divine knowledge, but emphasizes that God is Creator of singular things most "innermostly" in that he is the principle of their *being*.[314] An implication of these notions is that insofar as God creates things immediately as whole individuals, so also are things *intelligible* most properly as whole, existing individuals, rather than merely according to their quiddities.[315] In this reasoning, Perl observes, Aquinas is aligning himself with the Neoplatonist rather than the Aristotelian view of the world.[316]

Finally, we conclude this section by examining the clear enriching of Thomas's *imago Dei* with the language of Neoplatonic cosmology. We have seen that the basic grounding of human beings' status as the image of God is framed in Thomas according to an Aristotelian

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[312] Ref.: n296, regarding God as the source of unified being in creatures.

[313] Aquinas, *ST* 1.8.1 corp.; 1.14.11 corp.; 1.47.1 corp. Thomas frames his treatment (esp. in Q. 47) in terms of matter as divinely created, but he clearly emphasizes (e.g., in 1.14.11 corp.) that things are intelligible by God primarily insofar as effects of divine causation – i.e., God's knowledge extends as far as his causality (*intantum se extendit scientia Dei, inquantum se extendit eius causalitas*).

[314] Aquinas, *ST* 1.47.1; 1.8.1 corp.

[315] Aertsen reads Aquinas as "not satisfied" with Aristotle's horizon of the species in his account of the intelligibility of human existence insofar as it excludes individuals from that account (though he cannot quite escape that horizon if intelligibility arises from definitions). The notion of creation as art, Aertsen claims (which in Aquinas bears the marks of Neoplatonic influence), gives to Thomas the status of the individual that he desires, insofar as divine art needs to be completed in individual acts of human art (e.g., Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.100, 3.24; *ST* 1.27.1 ad 3). Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 90–1, 163. Pasnau, too, claims that in Thomas the doctrine that creatures contribute to the perfection of the universe *only* in virtue of their species "is not a conclusion that Aquinas wants." That may be true for animals like oxen and sheep, but humans do indeed contribute meaningfully to the universe by their own (i.e., individual) operations of knowing and loving God (e.g., Aquinas, *ST* 1.65.2 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.112.1, 3, 8, and 9). Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature,* 401.

[316] Perl, "Neither One Nor Many," 188–9.

notion of their proper faculties: intellect and will. However, it is the Neoplatonic language that shows us how such a role is actually *fulfilled*. It should be noted that as Proclus does not have a doctrine of human beings specifically as the image of God, Thomas's reception of Proclean Neoplatonism on this theme is to be understood as appropriation and adaptation, obtained through other concepts that are explicit in Proclus.

First, we can note that, in commentaries upon the *Liber de causis* and Dionysius, Thomas explicitly expands Aristotle's notion of man's 'desire to know' from knowledge of the causes of things to the desire to know and to be united to one's principle.[317] We can also notice in Thomas's own theological work a clear invoking of the Neoplatonic notion of reversion, as of the perfection of thing when obtaining or being united with its principle, achieved through its own activity.[318] Thomas emphasizes the element of desire in this activity: each thing is connected to its own good/principle by *desiring* it.[319] Further, Thomas applies these principles specifically to the reversion of human beings.[320] The reversion of humans is special among the

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[317] Aquinas, *Super LDC* proem.; *In librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* 1.3.94 (with reference by Thomas to *Platonici*).
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *In librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*. Latin text based on the Marietti: Textum Taurini 1950 editum et automato translatum a Roberto Busa, edited by the Aquinas Institute; English translation by Urban Hannon. Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~DeDivNom.
[318] Aquinas, *ST* 1.63.4 corp.; 12.1 corp.; *ST* 1–2.2.5 ad 3; *Contra gent.* 2.46.2 (at *tunc enim*); *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 4, 1.3.1.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* Book 4, Latin text originally based on the 1858 Parma Edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa, subsequently revised by the Aquinas Institute according to the 1947 M. F. Moos Edition, with noted corrections according to the Provisional Leonine Edition (PLE); English translation prepared by Beth Mortensen, edited and annotated by Michael Bolin, Jeremy Holmes, and Peter Kwasniewski, taken from *The Sentences, Book 4: On the Doctrine of Signs*, translated by Giulio Silano. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009. Used with permission. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.IV.
[319] Aquinas, *In De div. nom.* 1.3.94. It is not surprising that we find this theme in Thomas with reference to the Christian Neoplatonic mystic Dionysius, who so vividly envisions the activity of reversion in terms of desire, or even love, for one's cause. See also: Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.18; *Compendium theologiae* 103.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae.* Latin text based on the 1979 Leonine Edition, edited by the Aquinas Institute, orthography adapted to standard Ecclesiastical Latin. English translation by Cyril Vollert. St. Louis: Herder, 1947, edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~CT.
[320] Care must be taken here. When we are speaking in terms of the reversion of human beings to God as to the origin and principle of their natural ends, we can speak of human beings achieving this through their own activities of knowing and loving. However, Thomas is clear that when we are speaking in terms of the reversion of human beings

variety of created beings because of the similarity of the essence of the human creature to that of the divine cause (in other created beings the analogy only obtains to the level of 'likeness'). That is, because the human is a being of intellect, as it desires/approaches/reverts to God it is able to be more fully assimilated to God as its principle insofar as God is intellect, though pre-eminently.[321] In this way, human beings can draw closer, as it were, in the return to God as principle than to other created beings. It is important to keep in mind that it is through *both* the intellect and the will that humanity operates as the *imago Dei* – we want to be careful to avoid the error of thinking that it is in our intellective faculties that we most closely image God, *to the exclusion* of the faculties of desire and love.[322]

Interestingly, it is in commenting on Proclus – who provides the notions of metaphysical likeness and relative sameness to principles, though not specifically as *imago Dei* – that Thomas's depiction of what such an image entails emerges with remarkable clarity. In his commentary on the *Liber de causis*, he first notes that it is mark of the most perfect beings to obtain a complete reversion/conversion upon itself. Quoting Proclus, he observes: "Everything that knows its very self is in every way able to turn upon itself."[323] He further notes the principle (again, quoting Proclus directly): "The gods are present to all in the same way [namely, as gods], but not all things are present to the gods in the same way. Rather, each assumes their presence

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to God as their ultimate, supernatural end, grace is required to elevate man's faculties to understand God as such. See: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.68.2 corp.; 69.1 corp.; 109.3 corp., ad 1 and 2; 110.2 corp.; 111.2 corp.

[321] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.25.1, 2, 3, 7, and 8; *Q.D. de verit.* 10.3; *ST* 1.12.1 corp.

[322] Recall the concern expressed in n233 about grounding Thomas's sense of the *imago Dei* in the intellect. Thomas does, following Augustine, 'locate' the *imago Dei* explicitly in the mind (see Aquinas, *ST* 1.93.6 corp.; 7 ad 2; Augustine, *De trinitate* 9.3; 10.11–12, though, it should be noted that for Augustine *mens* is not a synonym for intellect, but includes sensitive as well as intellective apprehension). In his explication of *how* the human being images the divine, Thomas emphasizes both the acts of knowing and loving (*ST* 1.93.4 corp.). See also the brief treatment in chapter 1, 33–34, of Thomas's inheritance of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei.*

[323] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 15.89, with reference to Proclus, *El. theol.* §83: "*Quintam propositionem sumamus LXXXIII libri eius, quae talis est:* omne suiipsius cognitivum ad seipsum omniquaque conversivum est." Latin text accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 15.306.

according to its order and potency."[324] That is, in a hierarchical universe, while all beings participate to some degree in the First Cause, it is possible to be 'closer' to the First, and thus to be 'more present to,' or 'more like' the First than other beings. Recalling the Neoplatonist identification of being/causing/knowing,[325] and recalling what Thomas has said about perfect beings knowing and reverting upon themselves, a significant implication emerges for those beings that are similar to a greater degree to the First – an implication that he provides in his *Liber de causis* commentary. He states:

> Since those closer to the first cause have greater power, they receive the first cause and its infusion more perfectly. And because every knowing substance, insofar as it has being more perfectly, knows both the first cause and the infusion of its goodness more perfectly, and the more it both receives and knows this the more it takes delight in it, it follows that the closer something is to the first cause the more it takes delight in it.[326]

Placing this commentary in conversation with *Summa contra gentiles* 3.25 and *De veritate* 10.3, we see a notion of the *imago Dei* in which human beings, as creatures of intellect and will, are capable both of receiving an infusion of the goodness that is God's essence and of knowing and desiring God in his goodness to a degree that they are assimilated to his very nature – an activity that occurs entirely within the province, however, of human faculties and activity.[327] A significant implication of this similarity and assimilation to the divine is an enhanced grounding of our experience of the intelligibility of reality *other* than the divine. That is, by the infusion of

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[324] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 24.121, with reference to Proclus, *El. theol.* §142: "*Hoc autem totum quod praemissum est, continet propositio quae ponitur in libro Procli CXLII, quae talis est:* omnibus quidem dii assunt eodem modo, non autem omnia eodem modo diis assunt." Latin text accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 24.396.
[325] E.g., Proclus, *in Parm.* 967.
[326] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 24.123: "*cum illa quae sunt propinquiora causae primae sint maioris virtutis, sequitur quod perfectius recipiant causam primam et eius influxum. Et quia omnis substantia cognoscens quanto perfectius habet esse tanto perfectius cognoscit causam primam et influxum bonitatis eius, et quanto hoc magis recipit et cognoscit tanto magis in eo delectatur, consequens est quod quanto aliquid est propinquius causae primae tanto magis delectetur in ea.*" Latin text accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus, at 24.400.
[327] See: Aquinas, *ST* 3.4.1 ad 2; Aquinas refers here to the ability of human nature of "attaining to him [God] through its own operation of knowledge and love" as being "capable of God/*capax Dei*." See also: Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 10.7; here, Aquinas clarifies that the human intellect images God primarily when the object of its thought is God himself, and secondarily when the object of its thought is its own self. The intellect in its operation of contemplating material objects attains by that activity only the degree of likeness, or vestige, of God.

God's goodness (which, in Thomas, we will see preeminently as charity) we more fully achieve the actuality and thus intelligibility of even our human nature, *and* we increasingly participate in the knowing, loving, and responding of God toward created beings, including ourselves.[328] In this way, Ryan observes, the intelligibility of the world "is enhanced by divine love."[329]

On this theme of the *imago Dei* we can thus see within the thought of Thomas an intersection of the horizontal orientation of Aristotle (i.e., humans as imaging God in their proper acts of intellection and desire) and the vertical orientation of Proclean Neoplatonism (i.e., humans as being assimilated to God through their proper acts directed toward him as their end).[330] This is a development that Thomas himself presaged in his early commentary on the *Sentences*, with characteristic appeal to the magisterial Augustine and the philosophical mystic, Dionysius.[331] Having traced this appropriation by Thomas through our study of his inheritance of

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[328] Aquinas, *ST* 1.43.5 ad 2; 1–2.111.1 ad 1; 111.2 ad 1; 2–2.45.2. In *Q.D. de verit.* 2.7, Thomas makes the interesting but difficult claim that God's knowledge of an individual takes them as a unified whole, such that the varying accidents that to us are 'external' to the individual's essence are, in God's knowledge, understood as proper to the individual. Pasnau addresses this difficulty of the text, describing his experience exegeting it as arriving at the "brink" of what can and should be said about the metaphysics of essence and accident: "Aquinas has little to say about his deepest metaphysical level, presumably because he thinks there is little we can say" – a position in which he joins himself to Thomas, asserting, "I don't propose to go any further." Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature,* 168. He summarizes, however, what such a notion of divine knowledge would entail: "Since God knows the particular essences of everything, from his point of view there are no 'external' accidents. Everything fits together, embraced by God's all-encompassing wisdom" (428, n19). Thomas insists that such knowledge is above the reach of human nature. Pasnau notes this reality, and concludes with what might be a human being's way of understanding this mystery: "From the deepest metaphysical perspective, all of my various properties, necessary and accidental, flow from my own distinctive essence. Hence God, who understands that essence, understands everything about me, past and future" (168).
Regarding the formal role of charity in Thomas, including the elevated, "loving" knowledge of God, ourselves, and others resulting from the gift of charity, see: Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 4.21–22; 3.151; *ST* 1–2.66.6; 112.1 corp.; 2–2.28.1 corp.; 23.1 and 2; 24.1 ad 3; 182.2 corp. This theme will be taken up more fully in chapter 4.
[329] Thomas Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 49–68, at 50. The issue of how the divine infusion of charity affects human knowledge of and engagement with the world will be taken up in chapter 4.
[330] See Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 358.
[331] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 4.49.1.3.1 resp.: "And since all things proceed from God insofar as he is good, as Augustine says [ref. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 1.32], and also Dionysius [Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 4.1.693C–696A], therefore all created things, according to an impression received from the Creator, are, each according to its own mode, inclined by appetite to the good, so that a certain circularity is found in things: for, having gone forth from the good, they tend toward the good. However, this circularity is brought to perfection in certain created beings, while in others it remains imperfect. For those creatures that are not ordered so as to attain the first good itself from which they proceeded, but merely to acquire some sort of likeness of it, do not perfectly exhibit this

Proclus, and Aristotle, we go on now to a closer examination of how Thomas uses what he has drawn from Aristotle and from Proclus on his own terms and for his own distinctive purposes.

E. Thomas's synthesis of horizontal and vertical accounts of reality: the coworking of nature and grace

Having examined how Thomas recognizes and appropriates a horizontal account of reality from Aristotle and a vertical account of reality from Proclus, and seen where these accounts intersect in his doctrine of the *imago Dei*, we will conclude this chapter by considering Thomas's own view of reality – specifically in terms of human nature – especially insofar as it extends beyond the *intentio* of Aristotle and of Proclus. We will examine Thomas's distinctive doctrine on the coworking of nature and grace.

Thomas's account of human nature must be understood as a coworking throughout of both nature and divine gift (i.e., 'grace').[332] First, Thomas sees the very notion of willing at all (so central to the notion of human beings as agents) to be the gift of God. In one sense, this divine gift is formal, as the origin of human nature *as* being a thing that wills; in another sense,

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circularity. But only those created things that are able to attain, in some way, the first principle itself do; and this belongs solely to rational creatures, which are able to gain God himself through knowledge and love – in which gaining their beatitude consists." – "*Et quia omnia procedunt a Deo inquantum bonus est, ut dicit Augustinus, et Dionysius; ideo omnia creata secundum impressionem a Creatore receptam inclinantur in bonum appetendum secundum suum modum; ut sic in rebus quadam circulatio inveniatur; dum, a bono egredientia, in bonum tendunt. Haec autem circulatio in quibusdam perficitur creaturis, in quibusdam autem remanet imperfecta. Illae enim creaturae quae non ordinantur ut pertingant ad illud primum bonum a quo processerunt, sed solummodo ad consequendam ejus similitudinem qualemcumque non perfecte habent hanc circulationem; sed solum illae creaturae quae ad ipsum primum principium aliquo modo pertingere possunt; quod solum est rationabilium creaturarum, quae Deum ipsum assequi possunt per cognitionem et amorem: in qua assecutione beatitudo eorum consistit.*"

[332] Thomas's language around the grace of God is complex. He differentiates, and at the same time interweaves, the terms 'grace' (indicating the nature of a gift), 'gifts' (indicating something that *activates*, or elevates, an aspect of the soul that we are in potentiality to naturally, but which we cannot achieve on our own – including the 'theological virtues' of faith, hope, and charity), and 'virtues' (indicating something that *disposes* us to cooperate with God where we are naturally open, and where we are the principle). E.g., *ST* 1–2.68.1 and 2. See Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Unity with God*, 274; Andrew Pinsent, "The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, edited by Brian Davies and Eleanore Stump, 475–488 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), at 477; Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts*, Routledge Studies in Ethics and Moral Theory 17 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 31–41.

this divine gift is efficient, as the origin of the will actually *willing* something.[333] Second, and even more explicitly, Aquinas observes that while human beings are naturally suited for a certain degree of knowing God (i.e., a rather clouded one, framed in terms of the origin of the material world as we experience it), pursuing God as their final end through both a "clear and beautiful" knowledge and love of that known end requires an act of divine grace to elevate the human nature to this higher orientation.[334] Thomas speaks of this gift as the divine act of "turning the face" of the human being to understand God as its origin and ultimate Good, through the infusion of charity into the human soul.[335] He also includes knowledge of the Trinitarian Persons, and the illumination that gives to our own nature as well, in the divine gifts of grace (in this case, through the revelation of scripture).[336]

The basic formulation of this relation between nature and grace in Thomas states: grace presupposes nature.[337] That is, nature is the bearer and the subject of grace's effects.[338] Again,

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[333] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.9.4; 19.8; 109.3 corp.; 110.2 corp.; 111.2 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.89.8 (at *Item*); 3.148.4 (at *amplius*); *Super Ioan* 6.5.935; *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* 3.3 corp. (see citation reference at end of note). Thomas invokes Aristotle as identifying the need to stop the "infinite regress" of cause of the will's first motion, and his general, metaphysical identification of this initial cause as "God" – see: Aristotle, *Ethica eudemia* 7.14 and 8.12.1248a17–32. In Thomas this notion of God as both formal and efficient moving cause of the will willing is explicitly identified theologically as "grace" – see, for example, his biblical reference in both *Contra gent.* 3.148 and *Super Ioan.* 6.5: "It is God who works in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to good will" (Philippians 2:13). See Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 227–230, and Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God,* 262–264.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de malo.* Latin text based on the 1982 Leonine edition, edited by the Aquinas Institute, orthography adapted to standard ecclesiastical Latin. Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/la/~QDeMalo; English translation by Richard Regan, edited by Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[334] Aquinas, *ST* 1.93.8 (quoted reference at ad 3 is to Augustine, *De Trinitate* 14.6); regarding human nature as in potency to the blessed knowledge of God (the *visio Dei*): *ST* 3.9.2; *ST* 1.62.1 corp.; *ST* 2–2.2.3 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.150; regarding the incomplete knowledge of God natural to human souls: *ST* 1.2.3; 1.12; regarding the elevated, 'loving' knowledge of God resulting from the gift of charity: *Contra gent.* 4.21–22; 3.151; *ST* 1–2.66.6; 112.1 corp.; *ST* 2–2.28.1 corp.; 23.1 and 2; 182.2 corp.

[335] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.38.1.1–2; *Q.D. de verit.* 27.2 resp.

[336] Aquinas, *ST* 1.32.1 corp.

[337] Aquinas, *ST* 1.2.2 ad 1; *ST* 1.62.7 s.c.; *Q.D. de verit.* 27.6 obj. 3 and ad 3; *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate* 2.3 corp. Or: grace does not destroy nature but saves/preserves it, as in *ST* 1.48.2 ad 3 (with reference to Dionysius, *De div. nom.* 4).

[338] Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 27.6 corp.; *ST* 1–2.94.6 ad 2.

but said in reverse orientation, God's act of grace does not eliminate nature, but rather is presupposed in the natural, autonomous functions of the soul.[339] A significant implication in Thomas of this nature/grace relation is a notion of the 'coworking' of human and divine operations. One metaphor employed by Thomas (following, and transforming, Aristotle) is that of art: the divine art produces nature, and the human art effects completing that nature in the return.[340] In another metaphor, God's act and human act are envisioned as operating together as one movement, just as the craftsman's operation and the operation of the instrument he uses are one act – a movement in which *both* are considered immediate agents of the effect, though in different ways.[341] On this theme we also see him invoking the language of Christian scripture, in

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[339] Aquinas, *ST* 1.48.2 ad 3; *ST* 1.45.8. corp. and ad 4.

[340] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.18.1.2 resp.; *Contra gent.* 3.65.6 (at *amplius*); *ST* 1.14.12 ad 3; 44.3; 66.1 obj. 2; 91.3 corp.; *Q.D. de pot.* 3.7 s.c. (Praeterea); *Q.D. de verit.* 3.1; *Super Phys.* 2.14.268.
Note: Thomas's use of the metaphor of art goes beyond Aristotle in a significant manner. In Aristotle, the dictum is "Art imitates nature" insofar as it works "for the sake of something" (i.e., the form) See: Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.2.194a22; Aquinas, *Expositio libri Posteriorum analyticorum*, proem. (see citation reference at end of note); *Sent. Met.*12.3.2444). Beyond the difference that nature is an intrinsic cause and art is extrinsic, Aristotle notes that *nature* is the univocal transfer of form via generation (i.e., determined as to effect), but *art's* synonymy occurs as the result of thought/mind – with the implication that the former is more noble than the latter. Aristotle, *Met.* 6.1.1025b22; 7.7.1032a15–33; *Phys.* 2.8.199b14–18, 26–32; Aquinas, *Super Phys.* 2.14.267–268. Further, in Aristotle art is worked upon those things *already* brought about by nature, and is associated with *human* effort. Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1.192b10–23; *De an.* 2.1.412a12–17; Aquinas, *Super Phys.* 2.1.142, *Sent. De an.* 2.1.218. Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle's sense of nature as the divine art, i.e., as God's creative work, first of all flips Aristotle's dictum to observe that nature indeed imitates the *divine* art, rather than *human* art doing the reverse. E.g., Aquinas, *ST* 1.14.12 ad 3; 1.66.1 obj. 2, mentioned above. Second, in switching the status of art from human activity to the divine, and identifying its product as nature itself (i.e., creation), Aquinas makes explicit a notion of thoughtful intent in the efficient cause that is not visible in Aristotle's notion of nature, insofar as in the process of generation formal, efficient, and final causes coincide. Aquinas, *ST* 1.44.3 corp.; *Sent. Met.* 5.2.775; *Super Phys.* 2.ll.242; Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.7.198a22–27. Aertsen claims that Aquinas's reading of Aristotle on nature as divine art is *not* a theological transformation/insertion, but rather a proper philosophical understanding (in Aquinas's view) of Aristotle's thought in *Phys.* 2.8.199b14–32. Ref.: Aquinas, *Super Phys.* 2.14.268. That is, although both Aristotle, and Aquinas in his commentary, indicate that deliberation is not essential to saying that the artist acts for a purpose, Aquinas's interpretation of art as divine activity emphasizes the knowledge of God that is prior to the act of creation, and thus implies a "revaluation" of the practical intellect. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 98–99, 163–164; Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 2.8.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Posteriorum analyticorum,* Latin text based on the 1989 Leonine Edition (editio altera retractata), revised by The Aquinas Institute, orthography adapted to standard Ecclesiastical Latin; Greek text of Aristotle transcribed from the edition by W.D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); English translation by Fabian R. Larcher, revised and edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Post.

[341] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.2 corp.; *Q.D. de pot.* 3.7 ad 3; *Contra gent.* 3.70.5 (at *Haec autem*) – i.e., one as the lower, instrumental agent, and one as the higher source of power.

describing the highest form of human beings' likeness to the divine as their being 'coworkers/coadjutors' with God.[342] Aquinas does stipulate that the operation of the divine act is more extensive, and intimate in its nature toward its effects, than that of its human coworker – a doctrine in which we see explicit reference by Aquinas to the Neoplatonism of Proclus. First, insofar as God upholds immediately the being of human agent itself as an agent (which Aquinas links to the *Liber de causis,* prop. 1), and second, insofar as the effect of being, which is properly only the effect of the divine, is "more intimate than all the other effects" (by which he reflects prop. 9).[343] However, even with this distinction it is clear that, to Thomas, there is no competition between God and human operation – indeed, it is part of the eminence of God's goodness that he makes created beings to be causes themselves.[344] In fact, in that very distinction of God's unique creative operation, Thomas points out that while indeed there are no intermediaries between God and his creative act – i.e., in the *egress* of things from God – there are intermediaries in the *return* of beings to God as their source, and it is in this way especially that human beings operate as causes both toward themselves and, 'providentially,' toward others.[345] That is, insofar as things diffuse goodness to other beings they are operating as cause to

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[342] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.21, esp. at 8 (at *Item*), with reference to 1 Corinthians 3:9.

[343] Aquinas, *Q.D. de pot.* 3.7 resp. (at *Si autem* and *Sciendum*, respectively): "*Ipsum enim esse est communissimus effectus primus et intimior omnibus aliis effectibus.*"

[344] Aquinas, *Comp. theol* 103; *Contra gent.* 3.21 and 69.

[345] Aquinas, *Q.D. de pot.* 3.4 ad 1; *ST* 1.104.1 and 2 (esp. at ad 1); 22.3 corp., and 2 ad 3, ad 4, and ad 5; *Contra gent.* 3.24.8 (at *Ex quo patet); De subst. sep.* 14.77 and 79.
While Aquinas explicitly (and rather famously) denies creative causation to intermediaries – especially in terms of "correcting/limiting" the function of Proclus's henads in the *Liber de causis* (see *Super LDC* prop. 3, section 20) – he also extensively (and less famously) discusses the providential role of intermediaries, in which he draws favorably from Proclus's notions of intermediary causation. See: Aquinas, *De subst. sep.* 3.17, with implicit use of Proclus, *El. theol.* §§119, 120, 122, 134, 145, 204.
Trouillard notes that in this theme Aquinas draws from Neoplatonism to correct Augustinian attempts to exalt the Creator through weakening the causality of the creature ("*S. Thomas, nous l'avons noté, s'oppose aux augustiniens qui croient grandir le Créatur en exténuant la causalité de la creature*") – i.e., those who oppose atheism by saying "If man created himself, there is nothing for God to do" ("*Si l'homme se crée lui-même, il n'a que faire de Dieu*"). Rather, in the Judeo-Christian appropriation of a Proclean hierarchy, we would instead say "This very thing manifests the power of God, the capability of producing true causes" ("*il manifeste en cela même la puissance de Dieu, capable de produire des causes véritables*"), even to the point of affirming "The more man acts, the more God acts" ("*Plus l'homme agit, plus Dieu agit*"). Trouillard, "Procession Néoplatonicienne," 20 (translations mine). We

those others – and thus it makes no difference whether we say that a thing tends toward becoming the cause of others, or that it tends toward the likeness of the divine, or that it tends toward its own perfection.[346] All three articulations express the same truth about the existence of human beings in a world of motion that is at the same time a sacred universe.

In this way, we can see Thomas's doctrines regarding the coworking of nature and grace informing his own account of the world understood as the effect of *both* a horizontal and a vertical causality. Regarding the horizontal, Thomas posits every existing thing as a good in itself, by virtue of its inherent form. Regarding the vertical, he posits things as good insofar as they participate in the exemplar Good (from which they receive their being).[347] For this reason, he states (employing a Proclean theme), there is "one goodness and yet many goodnesses":

> Everything is therefore called good from the divine goodness, as from the first exemplary effective and final principle of all goodness. Nevertheless, everything is called good by reason of the similitude of the divine goodness belonging to it, which is formally its own goodness, whereby it is denominated good. And so of all things there is one goodness, and yet many goodnesses.[348]

Aertsen reads Thomas's nature-grace doctrine as accounting for how Thomas overcomes the closed φύσις of Aristotle, without leaving it entirely behind.[349] For Thomas, Aertsen states, "nature must be opened up for a reality which is 'supernatural.'"[350] The very intelligibility of the universe for Thomas, he claims, arises from "an analysis that embraces both nature and creation."[351] Such an analysis we see Thomas provide with clarity in *De potentia,* question 3:

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should note, however, that in Thomas such intermediaries should be understood as *functional*, rather than *ontological*, intermediaries – i.e., as intermediary but not intermediate.

[346] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.24.8 (at *Ex quo patet*).

[347] Aquinas *Q.D. de verit.* 21 resp.

[348] Aquinas, *ST* 1.6.4 corp.: "*Sic ergo unumquodque dicitur bonum bonitate divina, sicut primo principio exemplari, effectivo et finali totius bonitatis. Nihilominus tamen unumquodque dicitur bonum similitudine divinae bonitatis sibi inhaerente, quae est formaliter sua bonitas denominans ipsum. Et sic est bonitas una omnium; et etiam multae bonitates*." Ref.: Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.1.14.4–6.

[349] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 385.

[350] Aertsen notes that the term *supernaturalis* itself is of Neoplatonic origin. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 385.

[351] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 315.

> God's power is in every natural thing, since he is in all things by his essence, his presence and his power. Now it cannot be admitted that God's power forasmuch as it is in things is not operative: and consequently it operates as being in nature. And it cannot be said to operate something besides what nature operates, since evidently there is but one operation. Therefore God works in every operation of nature. …
> God acts perfectly as first cause: but the operation of nature as second cause is also necessary. Nevertheless God can produce the natural effect even without nature: but he wishes to act by means of nature in order to preserve order in things.[352]

We see in this text a reminder that, in reading Thomas, we must be careful to avoid reducing 'horizontal' causality to nature and 'vertical' causality to grace.[353] Divine, creative grace indeed is the origin and sustainer of nature in all its facets and operations in the cosmos.

This feature of Thomas's thought – the coworking of nature and grace – is distinctive and formative throughout his work. We can therefore expect it to shape our examination of his sense of personal violence and the account of a remedy which his thought offers.

[352] Aquinas, *Q.D. de pot.* 3.7 resp., and ad 16.
[353] Ref.: n25.

Chapter 3: The problem, part one: What happens when our kind of being is thwarted?

In this chapter our inquiry takes a methodological turn. In chapter 2 we engaged the ontologies of Aristotle, Proclus, and Aquinas, which are amply available and salient in their works and thus able to be approached fairly directly. The examination thus far will serve as the foundation of what follows. As we take up specifically the task of examining how violence appears in each of these three, and what the intersections between them might be, we must prepare ourselves to approach the landscape in a different way. Aristotle, Proclus, and Aquinas understand violence, or phenomena we will associate with violence, in different ways. Moreover, none of them treats it as a significant theme in its own right (i.e., as the subject of a treatise). In this endeavor, therefore, our path forward into our material will at times be oblique, and we will be guided in our inquiry by a 'scent' of violence rather than a definition that holds in all cases. The work of this chapter is to consider what personal violence against a human being would entail within the account of human nature that we have laid out in the previous chapter.

Our guiding notion, which we bring forward with us from the previous chapter, is the claim that intelligibility is a central feature of flourishing human existence in an Aristo-Proclean reading of Aquinas – horizontally, in terms of the thoughts and desires of an individual agent providing the explanation for their actions, and vertically, in terms of how individuals achieve the fulfillment of their nature through the 'hermeneutical,' hierarchical activity of discerning and participating the principles of good proper to their own flourishing. We will, therefore, conduct the work of this chapter with the goal of uncovering what denying or obstructing such intelligibility and flourishing might entail – i.e., whether we might think of such as a philosophically significant form of violence. The goal of such an accounting is not to create a 'properly Thomistic' definition of violence for its own sake, but rather to articulate a meaningful

set of notions that can be carried forward into an inquiry into those measures that could reasonably be thought to counter those harmful effects.

We will first consider what might be considered a violence against intelligibility in Aristotle's 'horizontal' account of human existence. Here we will show how Thomas inherits and responds to Aristotle's account of involuntary action. Next, we will consider what might constitute violence in a Proclean 'vertical' account of reality. Here we will consider the notion of estrangement, and we will examine where Thomas's engagement with this Neoplatonic notion is direct and where it is oblique. Finally, we will take up the notion of violence in Thomas's own voice. We will here see hints of his inheritances from Aristotle and Proclus, and we will see his own framing of the notion of violence – a framing that will shape and direct our account of a remedy.

Thomas often speaks of violence in terms of what is 'against nature.'[354] This framing merits some pause and elaboration, as in this project the notion of 'nature' is key to dismantling an opaque notion of violence. Our work in this chapter should be understood as the task of examining what happens when our specific kind of being (i.e., the lives of beings that have a nature such as ours) is opposed, confounded, confuted, or countered – that is, what it looks like for a person of our nature to be prevented from thriving. In this approach to the problem of personal violence, what is entailed in the notion of the intelligibility of a human being's actions is not a matter only of epistemological concern, but is deeply and meaningfully intertwined with concerns about harm to human flourishing.

[354] See, for example, Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 2.25.11; 2.83.12–13; *ST* 1–2.6.5 corp., for Thomas's notion of what is "*contra naturam*."

A. Violence through an Aristotelian lens: the strange case of the inert agent

The notion of violence arises in Aristotle through his use of βία, conveying the sense of force or compulsion, or βίαιον, the sense of compulsory action – for example, in his definition of involuntary act at the outset of *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 3 (which we saw in chapter 2's examination of the voluntary).[355] Aquinas's treatment of violence/*violentia* has roots in Aristotle's use of βία, seen both in Aquinas's commentary on the *Ethics* and in his theological use of Aristotle's notions (e.g., *ST* 1–2.6.5). In this chapter's inquiry into personal violence, therefore, we will take our cue from Aquinas and begin by examining Aristotle's notion of the involuntary more closely. In particular we will pay attention to Aristotle's sensitivity to intelligibility – that is, following in his tracks we can notice that perhaps the most unsettling aspect of involuntary action to him is its lack of connection to the thought and will of the apparent agent. In his treatments of human action, Aristotle appears to be drawn to account for cases when an agent's inner states fail to serve as the explanation for its actions (to use Nussbaum's language) – i.e., where there is a breach of the intelligibility we would expect in a rational agent's actions. In this task, we can see Aristotle expressing special concern over two categories of problematic cases: instances where thought does not lead to action (when we would expect it to), and actions in which the agent of an act contributes nothing to the motion.

We should pause at this point to recall an important qualification introduced in the previous chapter about the nature of voluntary/involuntary action in both Aristotle and Aquinas.[356] As we saw, it is not a distinction between 'action' and 'passion' that distinguishes voluntary from compulsory action – either status of the actor toward the impelling force can arise

[355] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a1–5. Ref.: chapter 2, 63–64.
[356] See: chapter 2, 67–69, and nn211, 212.

in both voluntary and compulsory acts. Aristotle's sense of the involuntary explicitly contains both action and passion:

> Those things, then, are thought involuntary which take place under compulsion or owing to ignorance; and that is compulsory of which the moving principle is outside, being a principle in which nothing is contributed by the person who is acting or is feeling the passion.[357]

Aristotle's notion of involuntary action is elaborated upon and clarified by Thomas in his commentary:

> However, not every action whose principle is from the outside is a forced action but only that action which is derived from an extrinsic principle in such a way that the interior appetitive faculty does not concur in it. This is what he means by his statement that a forced action must be such that a man contributes nothing to it by means of his own appetitive faculty.[358]

Here we see Thomas translating the notion of an agent as making a 'contribution' to an act into the related image of an agent interiorly 'concurring' in an act.

We can at this point add another important qualification about involuntary action as Aristotle treats it: not all action with an external principle (i.e., compulsory) is an evil. Aristotle offers common-experience examples such the activities of medical care or teaching – which, he points out, the patient or student seeks out for himself and concurs in, though the 'actor' is most properly the doctor or the teacher.[359] We might reflect this caveat by stating Aristotle's definition

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[357] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a1–5. The notion of acting in ignorance is here both grouped with and distinguished from coerced action – i.e., both are seen as instances of involuntary action, but the former refers to instances of 'spontaneous' activity, absent of recourse to intellectual reflection, and the latter to instances where knowledge is present but the will is impeded. Only the latter is considered an effect of violence. On the nature of spontaneous acts in Aristotle, see Robert Sweetman, "Reading Ancient and Medieval Philosophers after Vollenhoven," *Philosophia Reformata* 86 (2021): 208–231, at 221–223.

[358] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.387: "*sed quia ipse etiam appetitus moveri potest ab aliquo extrinseco, non omne cuius principium est extra est violentum, sed solum quod ita est a principio extrinseco, quod appetitus interior non concurrit in idem. Et hoc est quod dicit quod oportet tale esse violentum in quo nihil conferat, scilicet per proprium appetitum.*"
See also: Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 1.428–431.

[359] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1111a32–3.

of involuntary action as: those acts to which the agent of the act contributes nothing, *where we would expect him to.*

Finally, in our recollections before we move into the work of this section, we should note that Aristotle's inquiries into these difficult cases arise within the context of identifying what grounds our judgments of praise and blame. That is, his inquiry is grounded in the larger consideration of what acts can truly be considered truly voluntary, or 'belonging to' the actor in a meaningful way – and therefore he attends closely to cases that seem to resist such a framing.[360] Again, the two problematic categories that seem to be of special interest in this way to Aristotle are instances where thought does not lead to action (when we would expect it to), and actions in which the agent of an act contributes nothing to the motion. It is in Aristotle's treatment of these problematic categories of 'involuntary' action that we can get a sense of an *ethical* notion of violence in Aristotle (i.e., a notion that is both distinguished from and takes its shape from the violence which he associates with physical force).[361]

The first category – instances where thought does not lead to a corresponding action – is present in *De motu animalium*, but it is treated less directly and explicitly than in *De anima*, perhaps because in the former the calculating faculty of human beings is not a primary focus.[362] In *De anima* Book 3 Aristotle moves efficiently through an inventory of cases that can be reasonably accounted for in human activity where thought is seen to occur but not lead to action: speculative reasoning, moral weakness, the failure to judge correctly between a real and an apparent good, and a complex of (generally) exonerating incidences of ignorance.[363] Though not

[360] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1109b30–35.
[361] Aristotle also includes the category of actions that seem 'mixed' as to voluntariness/involuntariness – the prime example of which is actions based upon fear, such as in his example of the sailors throwing cargo overboard in a storm. Ref.: Aristotle, *EN* 3.1.1110a4–15.
[362] Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 7.701a5.
[363] Aristotle, *De an.* 3.9.432b27–30; 9.433a1–5; 10.433a23–28; see also: *EN* 1.1110b20–1111a20.

strictly related to our inquiry into involuntary action that can be considered an effect of violence, we have made a point of noting this category of cases because in them the notion of intelligibility functions as a reliable touchstone for Aristotle. Each of these potentially problematic cases were able to be set aside when a sufficient account could be made of why they might occur – even when that reason did not speak well of the actor. By contrast, in cases where the intelligibility of a human agent's action is genuinely compromised, or outright missing, there we should expect to find Aristotle not so ready to be satisfied. We see Aristotle addressing the cases from this category which seem to genuinely resist explanation under the problematic heading of 'incontinence'(ἀκρασία), which we will take up more closely in chapter 5.

Less perplexing perhaps, but equally troubling for our purposes, are cases from the second category, actions to which the apparent agent contributes nothing. Here we will examine more closely Aristotle's definition of involuntary acts, in light of that second category. Aristotle's definition of involuntary acts, as we saw, states: those actions that "take place under compulsion or owing to ignorance; and that is compulsory of which the moving principle is outside, being a principle in which nothing is contributed by the person who is acting or is feeling the passion."[364]

Aristotle's definition begins with the base concept of *compulsion*. The tone of the text suggests, at the beginning of the treatment, that it is not strange or difficult to judge that an act executed under overt compulsion (i.e., force) does not truly belong to the agent, beginning with the basic examples of a person carried away by wind or by abduction.[365] Aristotle's treatment explicitly connects the concept to his prime concern in this text, i.e., moral responsibility, concluding that pardon is bestowed "when one does what he ought not under pressure which

[364] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a1–5; see 107, n357.
[365] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a1–4.

overstrains human nature and which no one could withstand."[366] Next, Aristotle adds the notion of *ignorance*: Aristotle again works methodically through varying ways a person could be acting in ignorance – in most cases concluding that genuine ignorance relieves an act of moral culpability.[367] From the perspective of our inquiry, it seems that Aristotle's succinct treatment of involuntariness arising from ignorance shows a sense almost of complacency – i.e., that he has clearly and effectively dealt with the nature of ignorance and its relation to human agency. By contrast, he seems concerned that his audience properly understand compulsion, and returns to that notion to more precisely highlight the element of the *moving principle.* Apparently not content with a concise identification of a principle of movement that is "exterior to/outside" the agent, Aristotle goes on to elaborate in explicit detail: "a principle in which nothing is contributed by the person who is acting or is feeling the passion."[368] He reiterates this elaboration several times in this relatively brief treatment, as if to keep the image of a radically inert agent in our minds: "Without qualification, [compulsory] actions are so when the cause is in the external circumstance and the agent contributes nothing."[369] In these repetitions, he presses us to imagine a strange figure, an agent whose will is utterly silent and still, as impotent as it is possible to be: "The compulsory, then, seems to be that whose moving principle is outside, the person compelled contributing nothing."[370]

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[366] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a.25; Aristotle adds a caveat to this claim that there is a degree of proportionality to be expected here – i.e., there are some acts which no compulsion short of threat to life, and some not even then, should introduce into the realm of the possible.
[367] Aristotle, *Eth.Nic.* 3.1.1110b20–1111a20.
[368] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a5.
[369] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a30–35.
[370] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110b15. It may be that Aristotle is here thinking of a clear case such as a slave, who has no individual will at work in the acts that in a practical sense can be attributed to them. However, as just seen, Aristotle identifies and sets aside cases that can be readily explained, and focuses attention on those remaining cases that are more vexing and difficult to account for. It is in this light that this thesis reads Aristotle on the theme of the 'agent who contributes nothing.'

It is hard to not hear Aristotle suggesting that this final element he treats of in his examination of involuntariness is the most troubling – i.e., when the actor contributes nothing to a movement that is yet attributed to him. We should, therefore, recall what it is that human beings can be expected to contribute to their own actions. We saw in chapter 2 that rational agents are said to provide the explanation to their actions by their own operations of knowing and desiring/willing. Thus, to get a more concrete sense of what Aristotle's notion of involuntariness caused by violence suggests to us, we should imagine cases where neither the thoughts nor the desires of a person contribute to an action that would still be considered to belong to them.

First, we can consider cases of 'negatively-construed violence' where one person judges another's thoughts and desires to be invisible, irrelevant, or impotent in terms of providing an explanation for their actions – and thus denies the legitimacy of the act as genuinely intentional and reasonable: "There can't possibly be a good reason for doing *that*." In this case, the violence operates relationally or socially, by treating another person's acts as unintelligible, or inscrutable. A commonplace example (not particularly serious, but serving to illustrate) is the reaction of incredulity one driver makes to another's actions in traffic which go against the first's expectations or wishes – such as slowing down on a highway instead of maintaining speed. More serious examples entail dismissing the relevance, or even the truth, of a person's narrative of racial- or gender-based experiences.

Second, we can consider cases of 'positively-construed violence' where the thoughts and desires of the actor are actively displaced within the action by the thoughts and desires of another person – especially insofar as the other person stands to the actor in a relation of power, whether political, social, economic, psychological, relational, etc. This displacement could happen, for

example, through collective 'we think X, not Y' statements, or through directives that presuppose the concurrence of the actor's thoughts and desires with those of their leaders. In cases like these, the violence operates as an active dismantling and supplanting of a person's own explanation for an act they engage in – or as influencing a person to take up an act they do not concur with as if it were their own.

Finally, we should consider cases of what we might think of as violence against oneself by providing the context or impetus for any of the above to occur toward oneself. This could occur perhaps through dismissing the legitimacy of one's own thoughts and desires in the face of external pressures, or through intentionally taking up another's thoughts and desires as worthy to replace one's own, or even through convincing oneself that an action is really in keeping with one's thoughts and desires, even when explicit experience says otherwise. In the view of this project, the examples from all three categories imagined here illustrate the form of involuntariness that an Aristotelian account depicts as 'the actor contributing nothing, where we would expect them to,' and which our project identifies as an effect of violence against the acting person.

Let us therefore summarize what our survey of Aristotle has yielded. We have been presented with an image of human agency framed in terms of voluntary motions. Voluntary human actions, we have seen, can be understood in terms of the collaboration of the intellect and the appetite on the part of the person acting.[371] In the operations of these functions, the actors are

[371] As we saw in the previous chapter (e.g., n220), Aristotle's treatment of voluntary action uses a constellation of terms, including appetite/desire/wish//ὄρεξις/ἔπιθυμία/βούλησις (e.g., *De an.* 2.3.413b2–3), choice/προαίρεσις (e.g., *Eth. Nic.* 2.5.1106a2), voluntary/involuntary//ἑκούσιος/ἀκούσιος, (e.g., *Eth. Nic.* 3.2.1111b5), and compulsory/βίαιος (e.g., *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110b1). Aquinas's appropriation of Aristotle's treatment takes up these notions in company with the notion of will/*voluntario/voluntate/sponte* (e.g., *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.382, and 2.5.301). Our discussion of Aquinas's thought will therefore reflect this transition, i.e., to an explicit notion of the will, noting that it is an expansion of Aristotle's usage. Regarding Thomas's appropriation of Aristotle on the theme of 'will,' see: Irwin, "Who Invented the Will?" Regarding the question of the notion of 'will' in Aristotle, see Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation,* The Gifford Lectures (Oxford: Oxford

able to contribute the interior principle, and hence the explanation, of their actions. Thus, they are, at least potentially, the source of the intelligibility of their acts. Aristotle repeatedly uses (in varying forms) the phrase 'the agent contributes nothing' to communicate the specific kind of case that he wants to identify as strange. He holds before us the sober, even contradictory, image of an agent in some way disconnected from its own act. While Aristotle initially uses the word most closely associated with violence – βίαιον – in the context of examples such as a person being carried by a wind or a person held in the grip of another's power, it is his description of an agent not meaningfully connected to the principle of its motions that emerges as among the most perplexing.

B. Thomas's commentary upon and appropriation of Aristotle's account of violence

The paradigmatic case for examining Aquinas's inheritance of Aristotle's account of voluntary and involuntary action is his commentary upon *Nicomachean Ethics*, as we saw in chapter 2.[372] In this section we will revisit that text, and show his explicit appropriation of Aristotle's notions within his own inquiries (*ST* 1–2.6.5).

In his commentary, Aquinas draws attention to Aristotle's statement that a forced act arises from an exterior principle, but reads Aristotle as recognizing that not all actions with an exterior principle are forced.[373] Aquinas emphasizes this element in Aristotle's treatment with an addition in his commentary (italics mine): "a forced action must be such that a man contributes nothing to it *by means of his own appetitive faculty*."[374] While Aristotle's concern here, as

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University Press, 2000), esp.: "Reason Versus Rational Desire for the Good: Aristotle's Restructuring of Plato," and "Aristotle's Proairesis Distinct from Responsibility and Will-Power," (in chapter 21, "The Concept of the Will," 319–340) 322–323, and 325–327.

[372] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110b5–15; Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.387. Ref.: chapter 2, 65–74., e.g., n212, n217.

[373] Ref.: n358. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1111a32–3; Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.4.428. See also: Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 1.68.8; *ST* 1–2.6.5 ad 2; 1–2.9.4 corp.

[374] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.387: "*Et hoc est quod dicit quod oportet tale esse violentum in quo nihil conferat, scilicet per proprium appetitum*."

Aquinas points out, is the political/legislative question of praise and blame, we can readily see how this question of an exterior principle of human acts would be especially important theologically for Thomas to clearly qualify.[375] Further, Aquinas reads Aristotle's depiction of the voluntary as "a movement of the appetitive power presupposing a knowledge via sense or reason because a good perceived moves the appetitive power."[376] Regarding this, he explains that the involuntary, as privation of the voluntary, is the simpler act since it can have one cause: either the exclusion of mental awareness (i.e., ignorance) or the exclusion of the appetitive power (i.e., violence).[377] By contrast, voluntary act must entail a concurrence of both.[378] Thomas also draws attention to Aristotle's emphasis on the time-bound, particular nature of voluntary acts, and interprets him as indicating that the nature of an act must therefore be judged according to particular circumstances rather than generalities.[379] Finally, Aquinas notes Aristotle's treatment of actions done from fear, and his identification of their "mixed" nature, having something of the voluntary and something of the involuntary in them.[380]

Thomas's use of Aristotle's definition and explanations of the voluntary are directly put to use in his examination of human acts in the *Summa theologiae* (1–2, questions 6–21, esp. at question 6). Here we can, to a degree, see him following closely in Aristotle's footsteps. First,

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[375] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.385. Recall, for example, chapter 2, 68–9 where we consider Thomas's concern that a notion of God as moving cause not be taken as entailing violence against human beings.
[376] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.386: "*Voluntarium autem importat motum appetitivae virtutis, qui praesupponit cognitionem apprehensivae virtutis, eo quod bonum apprehensum movet appetitivam virtutem*."
[377] The involuntary act *could* be causally related to both ignorance and violence, but the point in this claim is that one of those two causes is sufficient to render an act involuntary.
[378] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.386.
[379] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.390.
[380] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.390: "Then, at 'Operations of this kind,' he solves this doubt by concluding from his previous remarks (387) that the afore-mentioned actions done out of fear are mixed, i.e., have something both of the involuntary (inasmuch as no one absolutely wishes to throw his goods overboard) and of the voluntary (inasmuch as a sensible man wishes this for the safety of himself and others" – "*Deinde cum dicit: mixtae quidem igitur etc., solvit praemissam dubitationem, concludens ex eo quod dictum est, quod praedictae operationes, quae ex timore fiunt, sunt mixtae, idest habentes aliquid de utroque; de involuntario quidem inquantum nullus vult simpliciter res suas in mare proiicere; de voluntario autem, inquantum quilibet sapiens hoc vult pro salute suae personae et aliorum.*" Ref.: Aristotle, *EN* 3.1.1110a4–15; see n361.

we can note that this set of sixteen questions is placed immediately after an introductory inquiry into what man's final end entails – similar to the pattern we see in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* which opens with an exploration in Book 1 of what the ultimate good for humans, i.e., happiness, comprises. Second, we can see that the questions and themes directly parallel Aristotle's. We see the nature of the voluntary as having an internal principle of movement (will) informed by knowledge of the end of the act (sense/intellect).[381] We see violence depicted as being in very nature contrary to the voluntary, and that it can be considered as a cause of involuntariness.[382] We further see ignorance depicted as a second cause of involuntariness, and we see Thomas qualifying, just as Aristotle had, with brilliant clarity the kinds of ignorance that can indeed be said to cause genuine involuntariness and those which do not hold up under scrutiny (i.e., acts which should be understood as entailing *intentional* elements of ignorance, and hence are voluntary).[383] We see also a discussion of the mixed nature of acts caused by fear (coming to similar conclusions to those that Aristotle had), and an additional treatment wondering if concupiscence leads to a similarly-mixed degree of agency (which, Aquinas concludes, it does not – full voluntariness and culpability are present in such acts).[384] As we might expect, Aquinas's reliance upon Aristotle in this text is further signaled by invoking Aristotle's examples, such as the case of sailors tossing cargo overboard out of fear.[385]

If we were *looking* for shades of difference, we might note that Aquinas seems to make a more explicit distinction between ignorance as cause of involuntariness through exclusion of mental activity and violence as cause through exclusion of the will.[386] That is, violence has direct

[381] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.1.
[382] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.4, and 5.
[383] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.8. See pp 108–109 re: Aristotle's treatment.
[384] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.6, and 7.
[385] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.6.
[386] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.386; *ST* 1–2.6.5, and 8.

effect only in terms of the will, though the voluntary does presuppose the will to be in possession of knowledge regarding the desired end. We recall Aquinas's attention to Aristotle's qualifying an exterior force that leads to involuntariness, and can now note that he explicitly added "by means of his own appetitive faculty" to Aristotle's simpler "a forced action is such that a man contributes nothing to it."[387] Whether Aquinas's language in this regard is meant to sharpen Aristotle's distinction between ignorance and violence as causes of involuntariness or is simply expositing Aristotle's notions in more detail, we can certainly notice that Aquinas chooses to explicitly frame Aristotle's notion of involuntariness as the *privation* of the voluntary.[388] This term can hardly fail to call to our minds the Neoplatonic notion of evil as the privation of good[389] – a notion that includes the senses of an evil suffered as and an evil manifest in the privation of what ought to be present. In this way we can consider in what specific ways Thomas's reading of Aristotle is itself shaped/helped by his Neoplatonic inheritance.

C. Violence through a Proclean lens: the terrible case of estrangement

We considered the notion of personal violence in Aristotle somewhat indirectly, through the notion of force and its effects upon voluntary action. The notion will be even less explicit in Proclus, as he considers human beings not in terms of physical motions as Aristotle does, but in

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[387] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.387: "*Et hoc est quod dicit quod oportet tale esse violentum in quo nihil conferat, scilicet per proprium appetitum*." Note: Aristotle is 'quoted' here in terms of Aquinas's paraphrase; the original to which Aquinas is referring has been translated as "Those actions are entirely compulsory that have their cause from the outside, the person involved contributing nothing;" see *Sent. Ethic.* 3.2, and cf. with Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110b2.

[388] Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.1.386.

[389] E.g., Dionysius, *De div. nom.* 4.23.221. Steel discusses the complexity entailed the Neoplatonic theory of evil as privation, and invokes Proclus's caution regarding misconceptions of the notion: "Evil … must be explained as a lack, a deficiency, a shortcoming, or privation, rather than as a positive nature, essence, property, or power. This does not mean that privation as such is evil. Proclus devotes an entire chapter of his treatise [*De mal.*] to rejecting the identification of evil with privation. Evil is not a privation of substantial form or being but of a perfection, of a good that a being is supposed to have." Carlos Steel, "Providence and Evil," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, edited by Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 240–257 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 251. See Proclus, *De mal.* 7.28–41 (re: evil as privation of good); 38 (re: the clarification of evil as privation in a qualified sense); 50.1-3 (re: evil as having a 'parasitic' nature).

terms of cosmology. Thus, the analogical application of the physics-based term βία/force will not serve him in the same way to illumine the personal and interpersonal problems of human agency as it did for Aristotle. What we *can* carry forward into our examination of Proclus is Aristotle's sense of intelligibility as central to an examination of these problems. Insofar as the identity of knowing and being is a hallmark of Greek thought in general,[390] we can examine Proclus's thought specifically in terms of harmful effects that arise when an individual being's knowledge of how they are connected within the cosmological network of reality is weakened. In this section, then, the 'privation of good' that will be examined can be approached in terms of such a loss of knowledge by an individual being, and the ontological instability that results. More specifically, the forces or activities that effect such harms will be viewed, in terms of our project, as enacting 'violence' upon that being.[391]

We begin by considering Proclus's treatment of how beings receive and are kept in their kind of existence. In *in Parmenides*, this process is identified with Nature, which is shown to provide the interior 'reason-principles' that allow each thing to be the kind of thing that it is and to have the activity appropriate to it – and which is itself upheld by the transcendent, demiurgic universal cause of all (differentiated in this text by its activity that is both knowing and creating, unlike Nature whose activity is only creating).[392] In the *Elementatio theologica* these activities he

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[390] E.g., Parmenides, Fragment 3; Plato, *Timaeus* 30c, and 393; Aristotle, *Met.* 7.1028a10–30, *De an.* 2.1.412a5–10; Proclus, *El. theol.* §173, §176, and §180. Eric Perl claims that in terms of the fundamental principle that to be is to be intelligible, "Aristotle does not stand in fundamental opposition to Plato, and late antique philosophy as represented by Plotinus, and Neoplatonism in general, is not an aberrant or marginal development, [to be regarded] not as an offshoot but as the main trunk of the tradition as it extends from Plato and Aristotle to Aquinas." Perl, *Thinking Being*, 5-6.

[391] To clarify this framing of violence, we must remember that the primary interlocutor of this project is Thomas. Thus, our examination of Proclus is enacted through the lens of how Thomas inherited Proclus and what use he made of Proclus's thought. While the effects that we will be considering in this section are considered as serious ills by Proclus, one can question whether they constitute a proper notion of 'violence' to him. However, it is the position of this project that these 'ills' illumine what Thomas will consider to be 'against nature' – and therefore are constituent of the notion of violence we can construct from his thought.

[392] Proclus, *in Parm* 3.792–794.

identifies with Nature are spoken of as fulfilled by the henads – the divine excellences, or specific goodnesses, which are the principles that undergird the unity of things as the kind of thing they are.[393] These goodnesses, whether the divine monads or the contingent beings that participate them, are not to be understood, however, in isolated units. The henads are best understood in their responsibility for the complex interweaving of similar beings in the cosmic hierarchy. *In primum Alcibiadem* speaks of this network of beings in terms of soul:

> Ascending there and arriving among the incorporeal beings, you will see that order of souls which exists above bodies, self-moved and self-activated and possessing its subsistence in and of itself, but nevertheless plurified and already possessed of the stamp of 'the being which is divisible in association with bodies' [*Tim* 35a-37c]: you will behold multitudinous relationships of ratios, proportions, connecting bonds, wholes, parts, circles of the soul and 'a variety of powers' [Plot. IV, 4, 36, 9]: their perfection not eternal or all abiding together, but unrolled in time and subsisting in phases – for such is the nature of the soul.[394]

On this theme of interrelated, mediated reality the *Theologia Platonica* emphasizes the ontological significance of similarity.[395] Building upon the dictum that "like may be grasped by like,"[396] Proclus states:

> For it is not possible that the dissimilar genera of secondary natures should be united without media to the cause which is exempt from multitude; but it is necessary that the contact should be effected through similars … And on this account similitude is that which it is, causing many things to be allied, to possess sympathy with themselves, and friendship with each other and *the one*.[397]

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[393] Proclus, *El. theol.* §21, §119, and §144. See also *Theol. plat.* 3.4.15.20–26.
[394] Proclus, *in primum Alcibiadem*, translated by William O'Neill, as *Proclus: Alcibiades 1 A Translation and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Dordrecht: Springer, 1971), 1.248–249.
[395] See also: Proclus, *El. theol.* §28 and §111, where the principle of similarity is put to work in explaining how diversity in the universe comes to be. Each level of being is distinct in some way from the level above it, but it must also in some way be similar to it such that being could be passed continuously down from the One through the whole interconnected hierarchy of being.
[396] Proclus attributes this dictum to Aristotle (ref.: Aristotle, *De an.* 405b15) in *in Alc.* 1.247.
[397] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.4.15.20–16.14: Οὐδὲ γὰρ τῷ ἐξῃρημένῳ τοῦ πλήθους αἰτίῳ δυνατὸν ἀμέσως ἑνοῦσθαι τὰ ἀνόμοια γένη τῶν δευτέρων, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων ἀνάγκη γίνεσθαι τὴν συναφήν. (…) Καὶ διὰ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὅπερ ἐστίν, ὁμοιότης, ὁμόγνια τὰ πολλὰ ποιοῦσα καὶ συμπαθῆ πρὸς ἑαυτὰ καὶ φίλα πρός τε ἄλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἕν.

The notion of 'friendship' is an interesting one for Proclus to invoke, as he does not have much to say about how fellow-beings should *treat* each other, nor about what concern we ought to have for each other. It is clear, however, that individuals hold their kind of being in common with each other, and that their being is derived within and thus bound up in a community of related existents.[398] Thus we should perhaps read Proclus's notion of 'friendship' more in terms of 'kinship,' a state within which individual beings confirm the aspects of their existence that define the kind of being they are.[399] Through similitude, the cosmological analogue for the more social notion of 'friendship,' one individual teaches, mirrors, and strengthens for another the principles of their being that connect them to the First Cause and faithfully direct them in the direction through which to complete their return. Similarity, as we will see, entails a cosmology of fundamental, shared intelligibility that binds created beings together, for good or for ill.

An implication of each level of being having a specific mode by which it participates in the divine is that each kind of being thereby possesses a degree of intelligibility. Martijn and Gerson, with regard to the principle 'All in all, but appropriately to each' (*El. theol.* §103), note the importance of Proclean participation for human life: "This is where metaphysics and epistemology are most closely intertwined. Because of 'all in all', all levels of reality are present in some way in intellect, in the soul, and in mathematics. The principle thus forms the foundation of real knowledge and perception."[400] The notion of intelligibility is woven throughout the cosmos – the kinds of existence at each level of reality are knowable in how they are like and unlike each other. Baltzly understands this intelligibility in terms of differing modes of happiness

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[398] Proclus, *El. theol.* §21.
[399] See also: Plato, *Symposium* 212a–b (re: how the love of the gods, and even immortality if such a thing could be, belongs to those human beings who have birthed and nourished true virtue through contemplation of true beauty); *Phaedrus* 246a–248b (re: how souls follow the chariots of the gods that they are like).
[400] Martijn and Gerson, "Proclus's System," 58–60, at 60.

(i.e., εὐδαιμονία), based upon the "individual vocations that match the role that our 'leading god' plays in the gods' providential care for the world."[401] That is, even though the *source* of each kind of goodness is indeed the One, each kind's *appropriation* of it is marked and even defined by that kind of being.[402] The ethical-epistemological task of human existence, therefore, is to understand its proper end, a knowledge gained in tandem with ontological reflection: "For a soul of my sort, this is what happiness consists in."[403] It is this knowledge of our kind of existence and its proper end that comprises the path of our return/ἐπιστροφή to the First Principle of all being.

Upon this notion of intelligibility, therefore, hangs the possibility of our happiness and well-being – and here the narrative of human existence in Neoplatonism takes a darker turn, one in which the theme of similarity returns, with sober import.

In Proclus (as in Platonism in general), the human being's status as an embodied soul is epistemologically disadvantaged, and therefore ontologically imperiled. In *De providentia* Proclus observes that when the human soul "is brought down to sense perception and made irrational and corporeal, it goes along with the things below, lives together with them as with some drunken neighbors, and it is dominated by the cause that reigns over them."[404] *Elementatio theologica* reminds us that every particular soul's descent to material existence consists in taking on "vestures increasingly material," which are the "irrational principles of life," and of which the soul needs to become "clean and bare" if it is to ascend.[405] In *Theologia Platonica,* Proclus

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[401] Baltzly, "The Human Life," 262.
[402] While care must be taken here to remember that this treatment is speaking of orders, not explicitly about unique individuals, Proclus sees the significance of the lives of particular individuals, and devotes himself to arguing for real divine knowledge of individuals. See Opsomer's and Steel's introduction to their translation of Proclus's *Decem dubitationes circa providentiam*. Ref.: Proclus, *Dec. dub.* 1–67, esp. at 6.
[403] Baltzly, "The Human Life," 262; ref.: Proclus, *in Tim.* 3.279.14–19.
[404] Proclus, *De prov.* §20. Note: this text has been read, e.g., by H.D. Saffrey, in a socio-political sense, as referring to the presence of Christians in Athens and their actions in taking over the temple to Athena near the school.
[405] Proclus, *El. theol.* §209.

asserts that the materiality of partial natures subjects them to "corruption, privation of symmetry, deformity and all-various mutations."[406] Further, and worse yet, such fallen beings also "obscure their share of the Good" which they indeed receive but are meant to make further manifest in reality:

> Others, situated at the last levels of the wholes, truly themselves enjoy the goodness of the gods as far as their nature allows … , but "having received such an effluence" [*Phaedrus* 2541b1-2], it is their nature not to keep the gift that has descended to them pure and unmixed, nor to maintain the permanence and sameness of their appropriate good, but becoming weak, particular, material, and thoroughly filled with the lifelessness of the substrate they produce disorder alongside order, irrationality alongside reason, and wickedness alongside and opposite virtue.[407]

These texts draw attention to, if not explicitly answer, the question of what harms can be passed along in a hierarchical world – a world where our existences, while distinct, are in reality continuous with one another, interconnected by our common status of dependency upon the First Cause for our being, our goodness, our intelligibility, and our end. We can here recall Mongeau's insight that in such an interconnected reality "what is opposed to friendship is not the enemy … but the stranger."[408]

In concluding this portion of our examination of Proclus's thought, let us articulate our findings. We have seen an ontological thread in Proclus, in which we have seen that the hierarchical nature of the universe entails causality and productivity pulsing through the veins of the universe. Insofar as beings are emanations of the First Cause, they are each of them also

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[406] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 1.18.85.26–86.1: κατὰ πάντα δηλοῦντα ὡς φθορᾷ καὶ <ἀσυμμετρίᾳ <καὶ> αἰσχρότητι> καὶ τροπαῖς ἐκδίδοται παντοίαις.

[407] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 1.18.83.26–84.9 – translation by John Phillips, in his study *Order From Disorder: Proclus' Doctrine of Evil and its Roots in Ancient Platonism,* Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition 5, eds. Robert M. Berchman and John F. Finamore, Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Texts and Contexts, eds. Robert M. Berchman and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 40.
[Phillips' bibliographic citation: Proclus. *Théologie platonicienne*. Texte établi et traduit par H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink (Collection des Universités de France), Paris, *Livre I*, 1968; *Livre II*, 1974; *Livre III*, 1978; *Livre IV*, 1981; *Livre V*, 1987; *Livre VI*. *Index général,* 1997.]

[408] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 193. Ref.: chapter 2, 84.

causes. We have seen an ethical thread in Proclus's hierarchical account of reality, in terms of the essential call to pass along providential care to other beings that resides in the nature of all that participates goodness (e.g., *El. theol.* §122, which we saw Van Riel paraphrasing as "if something is not productive, it cannot be good"[409]). We have in this chapter added a notion of the ontological significance of similarity/friendship/kinship in Proclus (as in all Greek thought[410]), by which individual beings affirm both their derived sense of the Good proper to their own level of reality, and the hierarchical connections shared by similar beings due to which they also have a shared finality toward their origin as end. Finally, we have added the epistemological element of the need for an awareness of the divinely-provided sense of what kind of beings we are in order for us to understand what our happiness consists in and, by extension, our successful return.

Recalling that we will *not* find in Proclus a specific ethic of contra-violence, and that our examination of Proclus (and Aristotle) is conducted as a focused propaedeutic to our closer examination of our primary interlocutor, Aquinas, we will conclude this section with a creative exercise in articulating what interpersonal human violence in a Proclean universe might entail. In this exercise, we are looking to envision the shape of violence against a rendering of human nature and experience informed by a Proclean cosmology, with the belief that doing so will fruitfully undergird our inquiry when we turn to Aquinas.

In a Proclean cosmology, an individual views proximate other beings in the hierarchy as radically 'other' at the peril of either the other's or their own sense of self, or both – with sober implications for the flourishing of being that in Proclean language we envision as 'the return' to

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[409] Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 81. Ref.: chapter 2, 82.
[410] See Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile*, chs. 1 and 2. E.g., Plato, *Timaeus* 33b; *Symposium* 207c–208b; *Parmenides* 132d–e; Aristotle, *De an.* 2.4.415a26–b7; Proclus, *El. theol.* §28, §30.

the source. Our task is to ask what, in the hierarchical view of human existence that we have framed, is the effect of an imagined stance by one individual toward another of 'you are unintelligible to me,' an orientation that is unfortunately all too easy for human beings to fall into.

First we can articulate this alienation in terms of an epistemological harm. A judgment by one person that another's existence is unintelligible implies a rejection on some level of that second person's estimation and narrative of human flourishing. Such a rejection may be framed as a judgment that the second individual's narrative is grounded in values that the first judges to be *not* in fact constitutive of human flourishing or not even a form of goodness at all. To the degree that the judgment 'succeeds' in suppressing the second person's account of the what human flourishing entails, especially within their own thought, to that degree the alienation shuts down certain personally-relevant paths for that person to enact their return. In modern terms, we might envision such a harm as a philosophical form of 'gaslighting,' i.e., casting doubt on the validity of a person's own view of the world and the goodness of it. We might, of course, feel that we are doing the person a favor in preventing false belief – and, indeed, a Platonist view of truth can appeal to and fuel any inclination we might have toward confidence that we have discerned 'the truth.' In this regard, our framing of the problem as a rejection of another's intelligibility may help us recognize this form of violence: when we catch ourselves guided by a negative feeling that another person is 'unintelligible to me,' we can take that as a reason to perhaps pull back and reflect.

Alternatively, this imagined rejection of another's narrative can be understood as effecting a socio-ethical harm. The rejection could be framed as a judgment that the other person's narrative, including their activity, does not qualify as a legitimate manifestation of a

specific, societally-affirmed goodness. Such a claim would be especially insidious insofar as it is motivated or accompanied by manifestations of power – whether political, social, economic, personal, etc. – such that the other person is in some concrete way denied this community-based form of goodness as a path for actualizing their complete self. In modern terms, we can see this kind of harm as socio-cultural judgments that marginalize, or estrange, those who do not reflect the norms of the majority. In Neoplatonic terms, this harm can be understood as failing to act providentially toward another person within a community (or, indeed, toward those for whom a person in power has socio-political responsibility).

We can, at the suggestion of Proclus's thought, further consider what such estrangement and neglect means when the other that we are rejecting is in fact a 'kinsman.' Does not such closing off, or shutting down, paths of goodness for one also in some way risk closing it down for others who share the same kind of being, including ourselves? By rejecting a kinsman's account of the good, we are in effect cutting off access to that form of good as a 'reason-principle' for other people in our neighborhood of being. How would we recover that lost notion of the good, once the truth-tellers for it have been silenced and estranged? In doing so, are we not making a rip, creating a gap, in a universe whose very strength is the interdependent connectedness of goodnesses?[411] The notion of hierarchical similitude should press us to consider the serious cosmo-ontological risk when we treat the unfamiliar, or the unpreferred, as the unintelligible. While, from a Neoplatonist view, we can hardly avoid being mixed/divided

[411] Such gaps could not be imagined, in a Proclean sense of reality, in the procession of being from the One to individual existents, but we could imagine them in terms of rent 'horizontal' relations between individuals, and in obstructions to the reversion of things to their origin. Proclus speaks of 'fractures' of individual beings' circles of procession and return, and asserts that such fractures are locations for the introduction of death rather than life/good into the existence-cycle of a being; see: Proclus, *De mal.* 24.
See also: Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.378.25–6; *Theol. plat.* 3.4.15.24–6; *De mal*. 13.9–10, 14.13. See also: Van Riel, "The One, the Henads, and the Principles," 73 (with ref. to Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.378.25–6); Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 94 (with ref. to Proclus, *El. theol.* §124, and §140); Martijn and Gerson, regarding the "harm" of empty spaces, and of separation, 54 and 57 (with ref. to Proclus, *El. theol.* §23, §24, and §81).

beings of relative moral and ontological disarray, there is still a certain sense of dismay appropriate to the thought of intentional acts that make of a neighbor a stranger, and the tendency thereby of effecting "disorder alongside order, irrationality alongside reason, and wickedness alongside and opposite virtue."[412]

We have in this section employed Mongeau's insight regarding the harm of estrangement. We can also now recall with greater appreciation Marion's articulation of what is at stake in a Proclean sense of the universe: "Hierarchy can transmit the failure of abandonments as much as redundancy delivers a gift."[413] To Marion, as we saw, the mediation of the good is required "at every point in the hierarchy," and "[if] abolished … would give way to barbarism."[414]

In Proclus, we are prompted and equipped to consider varying contingent, particular manifestations of cosmological alienation. Taken up in the context of our inquiry, these failures of hierarchical unity can be viewed as forms of violence against human beings.

D. Thomas's commentary upon and appropriation of Proclus's account of violence

We now turn to consider what effect a Proclean account of human existence, and what violence against it might entail, may have had on Thomas's thought. On the question of how Aquinas directly engages Proclus on the subject of violence, we should hasten to say right at the outset that given the qualifier 'directly' the proper answer is that he did not. Our first reason might be that, as we have already seen, Proclus himself treats of violence in only the most oblique manner. It would be a hard case to make that *any* reader of Proclus engages him 'directly' on the subject of violence. Further, we can add that those texts from which we in this

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[412] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 1.18.83.26–84.9. See: p 121, and n407.
[413] Ref.: chapter 2, 84. Marion, 168–9. Marion reflects here on the sense of hierarchy and its implication found in Dionysius, whom we have seen to be a significant bridge between Proclus and Aquinas.
[414] Marion, 170.

inquiry have drawn an analogous sense of violence (primarily *in primum Alcibiadem*, *in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria, Theologia Platonica,* and Proclus's theurgical writings) were not available to Thomas – thus, *a fortiori*, he did not directly engage them.

How, then, can we say that Thomas's sense of violence was influenced by Proclus? The strongest response will appear in the next section, where we consider Thomas's own treatments of violence. There, we will be able to note the Proclean themes that undergird the notions of harm among human beings that Thomas is concerned with.

However, we can here at least revisit the main themes that Aquinas focused on in his commentary on the *Liber de causis* – often with explicit reference to Proclus – to see what can be mined. One of these that is particularly relevant to an examination of violence conducted in terms of intelligibility is Thomas's insistence that divine knowledge of material beings comprehends each thing in its individuality.[415] In Proclus we saw that the divine, because of its essential simplicity, knows things according to its own mode of unity: that is, it knows things according to the way in which they are one.[416] Thomas clarifies (or rather, praises Proclus for speaking more clearly than the *Liber de causis* author) that to speak of knowledge at all is to reference "beings," "that which finitely participates 'to be,'" or "some 'that which is.'"[417] That is, while the ineffable divine is itself above such comprehension, to speak of divine 'knowledge' entails that such activity must understand material beings as existent subjects.[418] Addressing the same reality from another angle, we saw in Proclus, and affirmed by Thomas, that divine unity is

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[415] In Aquinas the divine intellect is associated with God, the First Cause; in Proclus the One/First is above intellect. However, since the One is fundamentally both ineffable and transcendent, any discussion by Proclus of divine interaction with material beings can be read as enacted by the divine beings below the One, but yet deriving their natures and abilities from the One. See *Liber de causis* Propositions 3, 6, and 9.
[416] Proclus, *Dec. dub.* 1.4.37. See chapter 2, n310.
[417] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 6.47, with reference to Proclus, *El. theol.* §123: "*Et haec probatio hic praetermittitur, sed Proclus probat per hoc quod omnis cognitio intellectualis vel rationalis est entium."* Latin accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~LibCaus.L6.29, at location 6.174.
[418] Proclus, *El. theol.* §123.

the ground and origin of the multiplicity of the world – an origination that occurs through the divine activity of knowing.[419] Finally, an implication of these doctrines is that even as material beings of irreducible multiplicity, individuals are intelligible in terms of their relative unity.[420] Thomas does clarify (even to the point of obliquely correcting Proclus, whether or not it is deserved) that considering the varying faculties definitive of the human being as distinct and irreducible to each other requires at the same time a recognition that they reside in one soul/form. Further, he insists, this single form derives in unified fashion from God alone – not in separate bestowals from distinct monads under the One – which thus accounts for the unity of the human being.[421]

Let us summarize the themes can we draw from this survey that might contribute to Aquinas's treatment of human interpersonal violence. Human beings, as 'horizon creatures,' are beings whose existence entails a genuine multiplicity of parts and faculties.[422] At the same time, human beings have a genuine unity, derived from their status as originating in the One – which, as we saw, is accounted for in Thomas by the divine gift of *esse* "innermostly" within us.[423] Thus, individual beings have an intelligibility that is properly their own, which is grounded in

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[419] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 24.122–3, with reference to Proclus, *El. theol.* §142, §18.
[420] *Liber de causis* proposition 8.
[421] Aquinas, *Super LDC* 3.18, with reference to Proclus, *El. theol.* §116. Thomas clearly reads the Platonists/Proclus as positing multiple origins for the varying parts of the soul, and invokes Dionysius and ultimately Aristotle to argue for a unified soul. It may be, however, that he (along with many others of his day – see Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas vol. 1*, 187–190) is overstating the import of Proclus's understanding of henadic causality. For Proclus, the fundamental principle in hierarchical causality is that there is *one* flow of causation from the One through all of reality – the mediating henads merely add layers of specificity to that one originating cause. (Ref.: chapter 2, n268.) In that sense, though he does ground modes of being in the separate gods (i.e., "being," "life," "knowing," etc.), all modes of existence are ultimately grounded and unified in the One – see, for example, Proclus, *El. theol.* §129. It may be that Thomas is at pains to clear himself of the controversies of his day regarding unicity of form. Indeed, elsewhere in Thomas's commentary on the *Liber* he is willing to state: "But the causality of these things [i.e., body, soul, intellect, etc. – MG] belongs to the divine order, whether we assert that there are many gods ordered under the one, according to the Platonists, or only one [God], possessing all things, according to us, for the universality of causality is proper to God" (Aquinas, *Super LDC* 19.106.
[422] *Liber de causis* proposition 19.
[423] Aquinas, *ST* 1.8.1 corp.: "*Unde oportet quod Deus sit in omnibus rebus, et intime.*" Ref.: chapter 1, 29, n82

their status as unified subjects. Finally, we see that in a hierarchical reality, the intelligibility of the world must be at once both that of each individual and of the whole community of existence taken together.

Clearly, these notions do not explicitly address personal violence, either in their original Proclean form or in Aquinas's engagement with them in his own thought and through the work of his commentaries. It is the claim of this thesis, however, that, insofar as we have shown that Thomas's account of human nature is informed by his engagement with Proclean thought (in chapter 2), our reading of Thomas's thought on violence against this vision of human existence should also be guided by this 'scent' of Proclean cosmology. We will show that such attention to Thomas's inheritance of Aristotle and of Proclus helpfully and fruitfully guides our reading of Thomas on the subject of human interpersonal violence, and ultimately to the consideration of possible remedies.

E. Thomas's account of violence

In Thomas's texts we at last have reached, in terms of our study, the historical appearance of 'violence' properly speaking: *violentia*, the term that is both the direct ancestor and the translated equivalent of the modern English word. However, even with this nearly one-to-one correspondence of the medieval and modern terms, the trajectory of our examination of the concept itself will require a continuation of an oblique inquiry. First, we should note that Thomas does not give us an explicit 'treatise on violence.' The theme appears in Thomas as it is put to use in other treatments. Regarding the term itself, there is certainly a plentiful enough supply of explicit instances of *violentia* to draw from across Thomas's corpus. However, since the claim of this project is that an 'Aristo-Proclean' reading of Thomas on the subject of violence yields significant insights that might be otherwise missed, we will want to not only examine Thomas's

use of the term, but also look specifically for where the contributions of Aristotle and Proclus are put to work in Thomas (which sometimes will and sometimes will not entail use of *violentia*). We will start in this portion of the chapter with Thomas's use of *violentia* in general. We will then examine several themes that arise in Thomas's treatments of violence, supplemented by his treatment of evil. We will conclude with an example of these themes coming together in a cohesive depiction of a violent way of human life: Thomas's treatment of the notion of malice, and his application of the same in his biblical commentary on Psalm 51.

E1. A brief survey of *violentia* in Aquinas

To ground our study of the more 'latent' Thomistic sense of violence, we should first take a brief survey of his explicit treatments. This is by no means a sparse field, or a peripheral theme for Thomas. His usage extends throughout his corpus, and instances appear in high variety of contexts and purposes. The *Index Thomisticus* lists more than 650 cases of *violentia*, in varying grammatical forms.[424] Taken in *very* broad strokes (and leaving many interesting cases unaccounted for) we can group Thomas's use of *violentia* under a few main headings.

First, a main category of cases are those that address forceful crime against a person (e.g., rape, robbery, tyrannical force).[425] Naturally, many of these instances occur in his ethical

[424] I.e., accounting for inflected forms such as *violentiam.* Ref.: Roberto Busa, SJ and associates.
The cases of the highest concentrations can be grouped into two categories of texts. First, we note the cases in Thomas's theological works: *Commentary on the Sentences*, *Summa theologiae*, *Summa contra gentiles*, his biblical commentary on Job, and his *Q.D. de veritate*, *Q.D. de potentia*, and *Q.D. de malo.* Second, we note the cases in Thomas's commentaries on Aristotle: on *Physics*, on *Metaphysics*, on *Ethics*, and on *De caelo et mundo*.

[425] E.g., Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.55, 61, 62, 64, 66, 104, 118, 151–4; *Q.D. de verit.* 15. Somewhat related are cases of force or harm between spiritual beings and humans, or Thomas's attempts to depict pre-Fall conditions – e.g., Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.19.1.4. corp.; 21.1 prol.; 24.1.4 corp. Thomas's biblical commentary on the book of Job has a noteworthy number of cases, ranging in sense from crimes against another person, and the related theme of injustice, to depictions of force, such as the dramatic act of being taken away from God by divine judgment. Aquinas, *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* 8.1, 20.2, 22.1, 35.1, etc.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Iob ad litteram,* Latin text based on the 1965 Leonine Edition, transcribed by Roberto Busa, revised by the Aquinas Institute; scripture text in Latin from the Clementine Vulgate of 1598; scripture text in English from the Douay-Rheims (with minor edits to both by the Aquinas Institute); scripture text in Greek from the Septuaginta, edited by Alfred Rahlfs, second revised edition, edited by Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart:

treatments in the *Summa theologiae,* where he also considers the relevance of violence to the judgment of morally complex acts. For example, he asserts that a woman who has been forced by violence into intercourse is innocent of lust.[426] Another large body of these cases occurs in his commentary upon the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Thomas's focus is on the intersection between notions of voluntary/involuntary act and judgments of praise and blame, as well as on a nuanced examination of justice.[427] Though these explicit cases of *violentia* are in many ways the clearest, most uncomplicated statements by Thomas about the ethical problems of violence, they are also perhaps the least likely to challenge our way of thinking about life together as human beings. It is easy to believe ourselves to be already in possession of these principles of the ethical life and already in agreement with the values they entail – though we might be deceiving ourselves in doing so. The strength of Thomas as an interlocutor of our subject of violence, however, is that his account does not end here.

We also see Thomas using the word in addressing aspects of being, in terms of what is opposite to a nature, with special focus on the notion of interior vs. exterior principle of movement (i.e., voluntary vs. involuntary motion).[428] This second category of usage in Thomas is grounded in his Aristotelian metaphysics, by which forces that cause motions or changes in a thing for which it has no disposition are considered 'violence' upon it.[429] In these discussions,

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Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); English translation by Brian Thomas Becket Mullady, edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2016.)

[426] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.64.5 ad. 3. In this location, Thomas reads as genuinely concerned with the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the woman victim. In the question more properly dealing with rape (2–2.151), it is disappointing to modern philosophical expectations that Aquinas says more about the varying levels of justice due to the men in the victim's life than to the victim herself (or, from the perspective of the confessor, how transformed living might occur in a contrite perpetrator of rape).

[427] For example, Thomas follows closely behind Aristotle to examine notions such as what counts as external force (Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 3.5), the nature of moral effect of habit (3.12-13), nuances of distributive and commutative justice *vis-à-vis* violent crime (5.4), and the landscape of the acts of the just/unjust man (5.13).

[428] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2 6.1 corp.; 9 corp.; *Q.D. de verit.* 24.1 corp.; 28.4 ad 2.

[429] E.g., Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 7.6.1395; *In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio* 3.5.576; 3.7.591.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio,* Latin text based on the 1886 Leonine Edition, revised by the Aquinas Institute; English translation by Fabian R. Larcher and Pierre H. Conway

Aquinas is contrasting the causation of violence with the causation of nature insofar as the moving principle is either exterior or interior to the thing moved.[430] That is, while some forces can be said to operate 'in accordance with' the natural dispositions of a being (*secundum naturam*), other forces operate 'beside' its nature (*praeter naturam*) – and it is these latter that are identified as 'violence.'[431] Aertsen notices that, particularly in Thomas's commentary upon *De caelo* 3.2, the contrast between activity that is in accordance with a thing's nature and what is beside it is made in the context of the intelligibility of such motions.[432] When the explanation for a motion in no way arises (whether actively or passively) from an interior principle, the motion can be understood as a violence upon the being.

We see examples of this category put to theological service in Thomas's treatment of the union of the human soul with a body, where he is concerned to show that the divine act of creation does not constitute a violence against the rational human soul.[433] We can also place under this heading cases idiosyncratic to Thomas's specifically Christian context, such as the violence of Christ's passion and crucifixion, as well as considerations of whether events like ascension and rapture, or even the drawing of a soul to salvation, are violent.[434] We see Thomas using the notion of *violentia* to clarify, by contradistinction, how it is the Holy Spirit is said to move human beings: i.e., through its effect upon a being's own inner principle of movement, by

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(Columbus, OH: College of Saint Mary of the Springs, 1964), Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~DeCael.

[430] I.e., an act to which the agent contributes nothing. Recall Aristotle's sense of a compulsory, or violent, act: "That is compulsory of which the moving principle is outside, being a principle in which nothing is contributed by the person who is acting or is feeling the passion," Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a1–5.

[431] Aquinas, *In De caelo* 3.5.576. Cf. Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.83.12–3, where Aquinas observes that "Natural appetite immediately issues in act if no obstacle stands in the way … But whatever obstructs the realization of natural appetite does violence to it." – "*Appetitus autem naturalis statim prodit in actum nisi sit aliquid impediens… Sed omne impediens executionem naturalis appetitus, est violentiam inferens*."

[432] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 282.

[433] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 2.83.12; *ST* I.118.3 corp.; *Q.D. de verit.* 28.3 ad 16.

[434] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 3.21.2.4, 22.3.2; *ST* 2–2.175.1 corp.; *Sent. Met.* 5.20.16; 7.7.5; 7.16.6; 9.1.18; 10.1.3.

making them a lover of God.[435] We see him using the notion in considerations of whether events like ascension and rapture, or even the drawing of a human soul to salvation, are violent.[436] Thomas's theological usage of *violentia* in these cases is remarkable: we can see that Thomas frames his task as explaining how the operations of the omnipotent, sovereign God honors even human agency, rather than as explaining how the operations of an omnipotent, sovereign God are good even in their violence.

Let this suffice for our abbreviated and broad-stroke survey of Aquinas's use of *violentia*.[437] Recalling our observation at the opening of this section that Thomas does not provide us with a formal 'treatise on violence,' we can see already that a caution is in order regarding further inquiry: much of Thomas's usage arises from the particular utility of the term within specific questions he engages, more than from a 'systematic' treatment of the theme. If we wish to examine the concept of violence in Aquinas (including, but not limiting ourselves to, actual cases in which the term *violentia* is used) with the hope of drawing insights for our own engagement with the problem, we should be careful to be grounded in what *is* systematic: his sense of human nature, and what helps or harms its proper function.

E2. Violence as privation of cause/defective action: the 'bite of nothingness'

We will now turn to examine some of the themes that emerge as having the 'scent' of violence in Thomas, especially insofar as they are related to the hindering or harming of a being's flourishing, approached through the lens of intelligibility that we have established as significant to an Aristo-Proclean account of human existence. We will begin with the notion that

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[435] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 4.22.5.
[436] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 22.3.2; *ST* 2–2.175.1 corp.
[437] Note: The largest concentration of Thomas's use of *violentia* occurs in his commentaries on the *Physics* and *De caelo*, where by far the most common usage in reference to physical/natural force and movement. This usage was outside the scope of this project. We note it here simply so as to not leave unrecognized the largest category of appearances of the term in Thomas.

grounds the inquiry into intelligibility for Thomas (following the Greeks): causation. We will start by briefly recalling the nature of causation in Aristotle and in Proclus, and what violence against such a notion of intelligible being would entail.

First, in Aristotle we saw that intelligibility, or the 'explanation' for human activity, is act-centered, and is intrinsic to an individual being. A person is a voluntary agent insofar as they are the cause of, and can provide the explanation for, their own actions. 'Violence' in such an account constitutes that which supplants, hinders, or destroys an actor's status as the genuine cause of its own movements (where we would expect them to be, and including both active and passive modes).

Next, in Proclus, we saw that a being's account of self, and the good that is proper to it, is a gift obtained in the context of its place in a sacred, hierarchical universe. A person's life is intelligible insofar as it understands the causal principle of its origin, and the same principle as the end to which it directs its life. 'Violence' in this case is seen in terms of the ethical obligation that each being has for mediating the goodness of the First Cause to other beings and for maintaining a continuous community of being in the hierarchical universe. To fail as a secondary cause, especially insofar as our actions belong to us by choice, is to perpetuate an ethical-ontological analogue of violence – grotesque in contrast to our ability to participate the very goodness of the divine.

In Aquinas, we have seen the influence of this Aristo-Proclean inheritance in his sensitivity to anything that compromises the notion of a truly voluntary agent fulfilling its place in a sacred universe where its nature, existence, and functions are a divine gift. From the perspective of this project, we are particularly concerned with those human activities that *bring*

about a diminishing of this personal agency of individual human beings.[438] With this vision of agency in mind, we might make an initial framing of Aquinas's sense of violence as 'privation of cause' – or, more precisely, as 'cause of a privation of cause.'[439] We use this notion cautiously, as distinct from but related to the well-trodden notions of the problem of evil as framed by Neoplatonists in terms of a 'privation of the good,' and as 'that which has no cause.'[440] Thomas can be seen to make a similar argument to that which we saw in Proclus earlier in this chapter,[441] qualifying the notion of 'privation of the good':

> But not every absence of good is evil. For absence of good can be taken in a privative and in a negative sense. Absence of good, taken negatively, is not evil; otherwise, it would follow that what does not exist is evil, and also that everything would be evil, through not having the good belonging to something else; for instance, a man would be evil who had not the swiftness of the roe, or the strength of a lion. But the absence of good, taken in a privative sense, is an evil; as, for instance, the privation of sight is called blindness.[442]

The phrase 'privation of cause' takes its meaning, for us, from a vision of Thomas's notion of cause as holding in one hand the notion of a rich Aristotelian account of human voluntary action, with its strong language detailing the nuances of human agency, and holding in the other the Neoplatonic notion of the infinite Good as the source of individual human goodness achieved in

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[438] This thesis's interest in ambiguity prompts us to note that such harms to agency can take the form of human activities enacted by, or at least contributed to, a person against their own self, enacted against others, or both at the same time – i.e., the act of harming another often entails harm to the agent themself (see 139–141). In the view of the thesis, distinguishing between these with precision is not necessary to the goal of our inquiry – i.e., framing contra-violent ways of being together.

[439] We see this notion in Aquinas's treatment of evil as the effect of a "defective agent," in *De subst. sep.* 17: "*Neque igitur malum, inquantum huiusmodi, principium activum habet, neque principium activum esse potest, sed consequitur ex defectu alicuius agentis.*" (Note: some sources of *De subst. sep* identify this chapter, i.e., on the error of the Manicheans, as number 16.)
See also: *Contra gent.* 3.10.7: "*Sic igitur malum causatur per accidens ex parte agentis, inquantum agens est deficientis virtutis. Propter quod dicitur quod malum non habet causam efficientem, sed deficientem: quia malum non sequitur ex causa agente nisi inquantum est deficientis virtutis, et secundum hoc non est efficiens*."

[440] E.g., Proclus, *De mal.* 47.2–4; Dionysius, *De div. nom.* 4.32.732D.

[441] See page 117, and n391; 120–121, and nn406, 407.

[442] Aquinas, *ST* 1.48.3 corp.: "*Non autem quaelibet remotio boni malum dicitur. Potest enim accipi remotio boni et privative, et negative. Remotio igitur boni negative accepta, mali rationem non habet, alioquin sequeretur quod ea quae nullo modo sunt, mala essent; et iterum quod quaelibet res esset mala, ex hoc quod non habet bonum alterius rei, utpote quod homo esset malus, quia non habet velocitatem capreae, vel fortitudinem leonis. Sed remotio boni privative accepta, malum dicitur, sicut privatio visus caecitas dicitur*."

an interconnected community of created beings. Such a depiction of cause, we have seen, provides a rich ground of intelligibility for individual persons. Further, we have seen that the interfering with or denaturing of any of these elements of cause (i.e., a 'privation') emerges as our study's framing of human, personal violence.

Though our inquiry is restricted to the problem of personal violence, rather than the general problem of evil, it will nevertheless be helpful at this point to enrich our discourse with the vivid Neoplatonist language of Dionysius on the theme of evil, and with Thomas's appropriation of it. Dionysius illustrates to near-perfection the notion of privation of cause in his treatment of the nature of evil, at a location where Thomas himself paused with patient attention in his commentary. Dionysius observes:

> Evil is contrary to progress, purpose, nature, cause, source, goal, definition, will, and substance. It is a defect, a deficiency, a weakness, a disproportion, a sin. It is purposeless, ugly, lifeless, mindless, unreasonable, imperfect, unfounded, uncaused, indeterminate, unborn, inert, powerless, disordered. It is errant, indefinite, dark, insubstantial, never in itself possessed of any existence.[443]

In this text we can see Dionysius's Christian concern with good and evil marked by both an Aristotelian concern with volitional act, and also a Platonist concern with a cosmological order mirrored in the individual's participation of the same – a fruitful interweaving that is a hallmark of much Neoplatonist thought, though it presented challenges for medieval readers assessing its philosophical ancestry and orientation.[444]

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[443] Dionysius, *De div. nom.* 4.32.732D. Cf. Aquinas, *In De div. nom.* 4.22.585-590.

[444] Recall (chapter 1, 24, n65) Booth observes that "Thomas's Aristotelian anthropology is a prolongation and development of Pseudo-Dionysius's Aristotelianisation of Proclus's ontology," Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology*, 218. Blankenhorn discusses at length the complex appropriations enacted by Thomas, among other medieval theologians: "Aquinas fuses Aristotelian as well as Dionysian and Augustinian anthropologies into a systematic whole wherein each source is modified. … Thomas develops Aristotle's anthropology and strips it of Platonizing Peripatetic glosses, but in conversation with Dionysius. Aquinas's critical reading of historical texts helps to explain the difference between his anthropology and that of Albert. In Thomas's epistemology Aristotle and Dionysius ultimately trump Augustine, as the Italian friar builds on Albert's critique of Augustinian illumination. … Thomas's mature approach to divine action and actual grace (partly marked by Proclean and Dionysian

Thomas, in addressing the nature and the cause of evil in his own work, directly invokes Dionysius's treatment of evil: "Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv), 'Evil is neither a being nor a good.'"[445] He employs the Neoplatonist dictum that "[evil] is itself a corruption or privation of good," and extends the principle to insist that "no being is called evil by participation, but by privation of participation."[446] Thomas notes that by its nature evil can have no formal cause, insofar as "it is a privation of form," nor a final cause, because "it is a privation of order to the proper end."[447] Rather, he states, the cause of evil is a "defect of some principle of action."[448] Moreover, in Thomas's account, when an agent causes an evil action, the evil is understood as *accidental* to the agent and its nature – thus having an inferior status in terms of causation (we might paraphrase Thomas as describing evil as a 'bastard' instance of causation, insofar as it is not properly derived from the agent).[449] Maritain reads Thomas's account of such evil, i.e., a defective principle of action, in terms of an "ontological wound" in the human agent:

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metaphysics) prepares the way for greater emphasis both on God's direct unifying action in the soul and on the human capacity to cooperate with him," etc. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 452, 454.
Porro writes "Thomas ascribes to Pseudo-Dionysius … [what] is actually a combination of Aristotelianism and Pseudo-Dionysian (and indirectly Proclean) Neo-Platonism," Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, 253. Readers can contrast Thomas's own early assertion that "Dionysius nearly everywhere follows Aristotle," (*Super Sent.* 2.14.1.2 corp.: "*Dionysius autem fere ubique sequitur Aristotelem*") with his later observation that "generally he [Dionysius] uses the style and mode of speaking that the Platonists use" (*In De div. nom.* Prooemium: "*quia plerumque utitur stilo et modo loquendi quo utebantur Platonici*").

[445] Aquinas, *ST* 1.48.1 s.c.: "*Sed contra est quod Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom., malum non est existens neque bonum.*"

[446] Aquinas, *ST* 1.48.1 ad 4: "*quia est ipsa corruptio vel privatio boni*;" *ST* 1.49.3 ad 4: "*nullum ens dicitur malum per participationem, sed per privationem participationis*."

[447] Aquinas, *ST* 1.49.1 corp.: "*Causam autem formalem malum non habet, sed est magis privatio formae. Et similiter nec causam finalem, sed magis est privatio ordinis ad finem debitum*."

[448] Aquinas, *ST* 1.49.1 corp.: "*defectum alicuius principiorum actionis*." Thomas clarifies that a morally flawed action cannot be caused by a defect of power in the agent, for then the actor would be not blameworthy; rather, since morality is grounded in the voluntary, the morally flawed action is grounded in the will choosing to go into action in pursuit of a good that is not a proper good. See: *Contra gent.* 3.10.13–16; *Q.D. de malo* 1.3.

[449] Aquinas, *In De div. nom.* 4.22.584; see also: *Contra gent.* 3.10.6; 3.11.5; cf.: Aristotle, *Met.* 5.7; 7.4 and 7. Dionysius articulates this notion of evil as having only an accidental existence with regard to an agent: "For evil, being must be posited according to an accident and on account of another and not from a proper principle" – "*Malo, esse ponendum est secundum accidens et propter aliud et non ex principio proprio*." Dionysius, *De div. nom.* 4.32.732C. (Note: This Dionysian text is reproduced here as presented in Thomas's commentary, since we are engaging Thomas's response to it. English translation is also from the text of Thomas's *In De div. nom.* used in this thesis.)

> In the world of nature, *evil of action* always presupposes another evil—*evil of being.* As for evil of being itself, or ontological wounds, defects, distresses, pains and destructions suffered by beings at work in nature, this evil has its origin in these beings themselves, each of which is good, but whose characteristic action, also good, cannot be accomplished without accidentally going beyond the finality proper to the being in question, thus producing by accident some privation in another being. The action of each of the beings involved in matter is good in itself, but these beings cannot act without at the same time wounding one another.[450]

Maritain describes these disordered actions as cases where the will "*noughts*" – that is so say, it "does nothingness," or "makes non-being."[451] The disordered will can, by "slink[ing] from the influx of the First Cause, [which is] loaded with being and goodness," actually render that influx of goodness sterile – it "*nihilates* it."[452] Because, as Maritain envisions it, nothingness "bites into the act," he frames the harm of defective agency as being "bitten by nothingness."[453]

How should we understand this 'privation of cause' as a form of harm? What does it mean to 'do nothingness,' and how might that be conceived as a form of violence? In considering these questions, we should note clearly that the 'bite' is not made into the agent's *nature*, but into the *acts* that the agent executes.[454] Further, we should note that the violence of

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[450] Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, Aquinas Lecture 1942 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1942), 21. Ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1.49.1; *Q.D. de malo* 1.3; *Contra gent.* 2.46.
A clarification at this point may be in order. A reader might observe: "If the person inflicting violence on another person is thus 'ontologically wounded,' they are in some sense not to blame, yes? Also, are we therefore saying that an action can be both good and violent?" Regarding the first: in this project, we are not so much concerned with the *origin* of evil/violence, nor with *blame* per se, so much as how to best recognize and counter it where we find it. Thus, a perpetrator of personal violence may indeed be themselves a victim of prior violence. In such cases, it is all the more important to be able to recognize the complex nature of violence so that it can be concretely countered. Regarding the second: I read Maritain as addressing the unfortunately 'mixed' nature of human existence. Even when a person is 'aiming for good,' they can at the same time do harm to others. For example, a parent can be aiming to provide for their family, and to model hard work, but they can do so in a way that marginalizes mental health, personal relationships, etc.
[451] Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 33–4.
[452] Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 34.
[453] Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil,* 22.
[454] Thomas is clear that the wound of sin does not damage human *nature* but rather its *operations* (i.e., not its first perfection, but the second). Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 386. See: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.85.1, 2, and 3; *Q.D. de malo* 2.12; *Super Sent.* 2.4.5 ad 5.

defective action can extend both to another person as a recipient of such an action and to the agent themself in their execution of it.

Thomas explains that in every action there are two movements: the act itself and the prior act of 'taking up the measure' that orders the act properly.[455] The 'rulers' (Thomas uses the metaphor of a carpenter making a cut in a piece of wood) are reason and divine law – they provide the agent with the proper notions of the good by which to shape and execute the operation of human faculties. In voluntary action, the will's tasks are to take up the appropriate notion of the good (in the intellect), provided either by reason or divine law, and then to apply that notion to its act. The will is free and capable of both these movements in all its actions – in that sense, even the defective act is voluntary. Properly speaking, the 'defect' in the disordered act is the neglect of the will to take up the appropriate measure, and the 'evil' is the will proceeding to go into act without those guiding principles.[456]

Thus far, Thomas's account explains the kind of explicitly violent acts enacted by one person against another that we noted in our initial survey of *violentia* in Thomas – i.e., the 'evil' that results from going into act without the guiding moral principles that align us to the good. Maritain's analysis and elaboration, however, helps us to avoid simply reducing violence to the category of explicit, visible harm – e.g., robbery, rape, tyrannical force, etc. He helps us see in Thomas another category: the overflow, or toxic reproduction, of defective agency that can pass from one person to another. We saw in the portion of text quoted that defective action "cannot

[455] Aquinas, *Q.D. de malo* 1.3 resp.
[456] Aquinas, ST 1–2.75.1 ad 3. See also *ST* 1.49.1 ad 3: "But in voluntary things the defect of the action comes from the will actually deficient, inasmuch as it does not actually subject itself to its proper rule. This defect, however, is not a fault, but fault follows upon it from the fact that the will acts with this defect" – "*Sed in rebus voluntariis, defectus actionis a voluntate actu deficiente procedit, inquantum non subiicit se actu suae regulae. Qui tamen defectus non est culpa, sed sequitur culpa ex hoc quod cum tali defectu operatur.*"

act … without wounding another," and that the wound is the very producing of "some privation in another being."[457]

We should here recall, from the discussion in chapter 2, the Proclean notion that the individual soul's activity of returning to its principle, and thereby achieving the full flourishing of its own nature and existence, can be described as a *hermeneutical* act.[458] This 'return' entails discerning the principles of its being and "introducing them in its own proper cycle and in giving them a being of manifestation."[459] We also saw, in chapter 2, Thomas's treatment of the formal role of charity in the fulfilling of human nature, insofar as it enables the human being to truly know and love itself (as well as God, and others).[460] We should begin to consider, therefore, the possibility of a subtler harm to the recipient of a defective act within their own agency – a 'hermeneutical' or 'epistemological' violence, by which a person's ability to know and love the principles of their flourishing is harmed. Does the defective act harm the recipient's own 'taking up' of the good, by causing them to doubt or reject their own view of the world, or replacing a true sense of the good with a false one? One thinks of the lament invoked by the prophet Isaiah: "Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."[461] For the purposes of this project, this seems to be at least a possibility of what it could mean to 'nought,' to 'make non-being,' or to 'nihilate' the

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[457] Maritain, *St Thomas and the Problem of Evil,* 21.
Again, the perceptive reader may object: "Does this mean that all actions by a material, embodied being necessarily are violent?" I reiterate: I read Maritain as working to illumine the human condition as unfortunately, and it seems ubiquitously, beset by evil. Whether his treatment can, or should, be taken in an absolute sense ontologically – and, further, is to be absolutely attributed of Thomas's anthropology – is another matter.
[458] Ref.: Gersh, "Proclus as theologian," 98. See: chapter 2, 78, n254.
[459] Trouillard, 20, translation mine: "*Elle atteint donc ses principes en les introduisant dans son cycle propre et en leur donnant un être de manifestation*."
[460] Ref.: Regarding the formal role of charity in Thomas, including the elevated, "loving" knowledge of God, ourselves, and others resulting from the gift of charity, see: Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 4.21–22; 3.151; *ST* 1–2.66.6; 112.1 corp.; 2–2.28.1 corp.; 23.1 and 2; 24.1 ad 3; 182.2 corp. See: chapter 2, 96–97, and n328.
[461] Isaiah 5:20 (translated from the Vulgate). Thomas engages this failed mode of human activity in his commentary upon the text, and connects it to the two movements of human actions. We will revisit the implications of this text for Thomas in chapter 5. See: chapter 5, 215, n711.

influx of the good that should be passed along to the other person. To deny or to harm another person's access to the good that is their principle is indeed a wounding of their agency, and of the intelligibility that is proper to their existence as a self-mover in a hierarchical universe.

We can also frame the violence of defective action in terms of harm to the agent. Thomas is clear that both parts of a motion, even a defective one, are fully under the control of the actor – therefore even a defective act is 'voluntary' in that sense. However, we have seen that such an act suffers from a 'privation of cause.' As we have seen earlier in this chapter, forces that reduce the degree to which an actor functions as the genuine cause of their activity cut away at the intelligibility of that individual as an actor, and thereby enact a degree of violence against that person.[462] We can, therefore, also understand defective actions as a form of violence against oneself – that is, against one's dignity as a self-moving, moral agent. In such an action the agency, and the intelligibility, of the actor becomes deformed into a state that is a rather grotesque conflation of voluntariness and involuntariness. The sad image of King Midas, in Greek mythology, seems to capture this state: having chosen the 'gift' of the golden touch, he discovers to his horror that his touch now effects harm and death instead of abundance and prosperity. The Apostle Paul similarly captures the agony of such a state:

> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing … So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?[463]

The bite of nothingness is indeed deadly, as we can see, both to the agent and to the recipient of an act beset by a privation of cause. We have seen in this section how such defective acts, in Thomas's account, are a source of harm not only in their explicit effect against the

[462] Ref.: 111–112, 122–125.
[463] Romans 7:19-24 (*English Standard Version,* 2016).

recipient but also in that they operate *against the nature* of human beings as self-moving, moral agents – the telltale feature for Thomas in recognizing violence at work.[464] This distorting of an agent's actions *as* voluntary acts, and the toxic fecundity of that distortion upon the recipient of the act in their own agency, shows that defective human acts – wherein the acting will is dissociated from the good appropriate to the act – can be fittingly called *violent*.

E3. Violence against the hierarchy: the private good

Maritain's analysis of Thomas's notion of evil draws attention to another aspect of defective action that is relevant to our inquiry: the element of isolation in acts of evil (or, defective acts). In the good act there are always two causal participants, God and man, but in the evil act there is only one: man by himself.[465] Thomas observes that in order to do good man must act with God, but man can do evil all on his own.[466] Maritain reads this claim as an entailment of Christ's words presented in the gospel of John 15:5: "Without me you can do nothing." In terms of doing good, this scripture can be read as a straightforward statement of man's inability to cause goodness on his own. However, when the act at issue is evil, Maritain suggests that taking the liberty of rearranging of the words (from the Vulgate) is warranted, in that doing so leads us to a more fitting interpretation and insightful understanding of how things stand: "*sine me potestis facere nihil*" – i.e., "without Me you can do nothingness, without Me you can introduce into action and being the nothingness which wounds them and which constitutes evil."[467] We have already examined defective agency in terms of introducing the evil of nothingness into an act. Maritain's 'restructured' reading puts before us another framing of the problem of defective

[464] Recall our noting, at the opening of the chapter (see n354), this framing of violence in Aquinas's thought: Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 2.25.11; II.83.12-13; *ST* 1-2.6.5 corp., regarding Thomas's notion of what is "*contra naturam*."
[465] Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 35–6.
[466] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.112.3 ad 2.
[467] Maritain, *St Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 36.

action: the isolated human agent, and the accompanying notion of a 'private good,' *bonum privatum*.

We can see the problem of the private good, first of all, implied in Thomas's treatment of its opposite: the virtue of justice. In the reduced form of a definition, Thomas states, justice is "a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will."[468] His treatment, however, addresses much more. There, we can see that justice directs a person to be oriented to the common good, or to the good of the whole.[469] Justice, by its nature, orders a person toward others and their good, whether the other be an individual or the community.[470] Elsewhere, he states, as quoting a truism, that "The common good is always more divine than the good of one alone," and shows that God has organized the universe such that even divine

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[468] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.58.1 corp.: "*Et si quis vellet in debitam formam definitionis reducere, posset sic dicere, quod iustitia est habitus secundum quem aliquis constanti et perpetua voluntate ius suum unicuique tribuit*."

[469] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.58.5 corp.: "Justice, as stated above (Article 2) directs man in his relations with other men. Now this may happen in two ways: first as regards his relation with individuals, secondly as regards his relations with others in general, in so far as a man who serves a community, serves all those who are included in that community. Accordingly justice in its proper acceptation can be directed to another in both these senses. Now it is evident that all who are included in a community, stand in relation to that community as parts to a whole; while a part, as such, belongs to a whole, so that whatever is the good of a part can be directed to the good of the whole. It follows therefore that the good of any virtue, whether such virtue direct man in relation to himself, or in relation to certain other individual persons, is referable to the common good, to which justice directs" – "*iustitia, sicut dictum est, ordinat hominem in comparatione ad alium. Quod quidem potest esse dupliciter. Uno modo, ad alium singulariter consideratum. Alio modo, ad alium in communi, secundum scilicet quod ille qui servit alicui communitati servit omnibus hominibus qui sub communitate illa continentur. Ad utrumque igitur se potest habere iustitia secundum propriam rationem. Manifestum est autem quod omnes qui sub communitate aliqua continentur comparantur ad communitatem sicut partes ad totum. Pars autem id quod est totius est, unde et quodlibet bonum partis est ordinabile in bonum totius. Secundum hoc igitur bonum cuiuslibet virtutis, sive ordinantis aliquem hominem ad seipsum sive ordinantis ipsum ad aliquas alias personas singulares, est referibile ad bonum commune, ad quod ordinat iustitia*."

[470] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.57.1 corp.: "It is proper to justice, as compared with the other virtues, to direct man in his relations with others: because it denotes a kind of equality, as its very name implies; indeed we are wont to say that things are adjusted when they are made equal, for equality is in reference of one thing to some other. On the other hand the other virtues perfect man in those matters only which befit him in relation to himself. Accordingly that which is right in the works of the other virtues, and to which the intention of the virtue tends as to its proper object, depends on its relation to the agent only, whereas the right in a work of justice, besides its relation to the agent, is set up by its relation to others" – "*dicendum quod iustitiae proprium est inter alias virtutes ut ordinet hominem in his quae sunt ad alterum. Importat enim aequalitatem quandam, ut ipsum nomen demonstrat, dicuntur enim vulgariter ea quae adaequantur iustari. Aequalitas autem ad alterum est. Aliae autem virtutes perficiunt hominem solum in his quae ei conveniunt secundum seipsum. Sic igitur illud quod est rectum in operibus aliarum virtutum, ad quod tendit intentio virtutis quasi in proprium obiectum, non accipitur nisi per comparationem ad agentem. Rectum vero quod est in opere iustitiae, etiam praeter comparationem ad agentem, constituitur per comparationem ad alium*."

goodness is passed along from one created being to another.[471] We can infer, therefore, that it is an act of *injustice* to direct our thoughts, desires, and operations toward our private good, if doing so is to the exclusion of the good of others.

Thomas more explicitly introduces the problem of the private good in discussing the interworking of divine grace and human nature. In its integral state (i.e., before the fall), human nature on its own was able to think of itself hierarchically: "Now it is manifest that good of the part is for the good of the whole; hence everything, by its natural appetite and love, loves its own proper good on account of the common good of the whole universe, which is God."[472] However, in its fallen state, man instead "follows its private good" – an orientation that Thomas associates with the corruption of man's nature, which requires it to be "cured by God's grace."[473] Thus, it is *against our nature* to withdraw ourselves from the community of the shared good (which is derived from and ordered to God as the First Cause) and to instead think of applying our faculties toward an isolated, individual good. Such a sense of the self denies the role the self plays in the interwoven network that is the Good manifest in the visible world – an act of 'violent separation' of oneself from the good order of the universe.[474] We can think of this isolation of the self from the common good as another manifestation of the 'bite of nothingness,' the 'doing of nothingness' that human beings are capable of on their own. Here we can notice, clearly, the Proclean influence in Thomas's cosmological framing of the individual agent within a hierarchy of shared good and being – this time, with negative effect.

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[471] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.69.16: "*quia bonum commune semper invenitur esse divinius quam bonum unius tantum.*"
[472] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.109.3 corp.: "*Manifestum est autem quod bonum partis est propter bonum totius. Unde etiam naturali appetitu vel amore unaquaeque res particularis amat bonum suum proprium propter bonum commune totius universi, quod est Deus*."
[473] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.109.3 corp.: "*Sed in statu naturae corruptae homo ab hoc deficit secundum appetitum voluntatis rationalis, quae propter corruptionem naturae sequitur bonum privatum, nisi sanetur per gratiam Dei."*
[474] My thanks for this insight to Jeremy Wilkins, and the community of the 2017 Aquinas Studium in Toronto, Ontario.

In the case of *bonum privatum*, the harm at issue occurs with regard to human individuals precisely in their nature as hierarchical beings – i.e., beings who (as we have seen, in chapter 2) actualize the good that is proper to their flourishing within the context of giving and receiving the shared, common good of others and of the whole.[475] Such an against-nature orientation robs the individual of the intelligibility their self-narrative derives from this shared access to the principles of their flourishing. The separation of individuals from the whole that is enacted through orientation to the private good can, therefore, also be fittingly called *violent*, and can be added to our account of violence that is arising from Thomas's thought.

E4. Example: a brief study of malice, as seen in Thomas's commentary upon Psalm 51

The varying themes that we have examined in the previous sections can be seen at work in Thomas's treatment of *malice*. In the *Summa theologiae* 1–2 question 78, Thomas reminds us that principles of voluntary act are the intellect and the appetite (both sensory and rational, which is the will). In that context he defines malice as the will's intentional choosing of evil as an end.[476] Further, he asserts that sins that arise from malice are more grievous than those that arise from passion, because "the worst of all defects is defect of principle."[477] Finally, Thomas invokes Aristotle's description of the man who sins by malice using the analogy of a chronic disease, contrasted with the man who sins by passion who suffers but intermittently.[478]

Thomas applies these notions in his biblical commentary on Psalm 51. He states that the psalm is structured to dramatize evil action, and to effect an abhorrence of such evil in the

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[475] Ref.: chapter 2, 80–82. In Thomas's hierarchical cosmology, the separation of a person from the community in terms of how they receive, possess, and pursue the good is a cause of harm *both* to that individual and also to others. While we recognize that there may be important social and psychological differences between these harms, articulating such differences with precision is outside the scope of this thesis. See: n438.
[476] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.78.1 corp.
[477] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.78.4 corp.: "*Semper autem defectus principii est pessimus*."
[478] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2 78.4 corp. (ref.: Aristotle, *Ethic. Nic.* 7.8).

reader.[479] The specific evil addressed by the psalm is malice, which Thomas illumines by contrast with goodness. Goodness, he states (building upon the Latin term *benignitas*) is a 'good fieriness,' which "liquefies the human soul to communicate goodness" – that is, goodness melts the human heart toward another, and moves it to share the divine gift of the good.[480] By contrast, malice is the "interior impulse toward harm" – a way of being that entails a disposition toward the other that is "cold and sluggish."[481] Further, he extends the psalmist's phrase "you have loved all the words of ruin" to explicitly frame the harm in terms of others: "you have loved words of bringing others down."[482]

We can already recognize in Thomas's language hints of the problem of defective act and of the hierarchical harm of orientation to the private good. We can see the specific aspect of isolation emerging with even sharper clarity in his examination of the divine punishment for malice. The one who has loved malice instead of goodness, he says, will be "plucked out (*evellet te*)" – that is, he will be separated "from all these things in which and through which you were rooted in your prosperity."[483] God will, in fact, remove his "root from the land of the living," which Thomas takes to indicate the removal of the divine gift of charity, the source of thriving in human nature.[484] We can see, then, that isolation is here not to be understood as the selfish person 'getting their way,' to the neglect of their neighbors, but actually as the worst state that

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[479] Aquinas, *In psalmos Davidis expositio*, 51.510.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *In psalmos Davidis expositio,* Latin text of Thomas's commentary on *Psalms* 1–51 based on the Parma edition (Typis Petri Fiaccadori, Parmae, 1863), edited by the Aquinas Institute; Latin text of Thomas's commentary on *Psalms* 52–54 based on Roberto Busa's edition (Frommann-Hoolzbog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, 1980), edited by the Aquinas Institute; scripture texts in Latin from the Douay-Rheims (with minor edits by the Aquinas Institute); English translation by Albert Marie Surmanski and Maria Veritas Marks, Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Psalm.
[480] Aquinas, *In psalmos*, 51.511: "*facit liquescere animum hominis ad bona communicanda*.".
[481] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 51.511: "*impetum hominis ad nocendum … frigidi et remissi*."
[482] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 51.511: "*dilexisti omnia verba praecipitationis*;" "*dilexisti verba praecipitandi alios*."
[483] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 51.512: "*ab omnibus istis in quibus et per quos es in prosperitate radicatus*,"
[484] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 51.512: "*radicem tuam de terra viventium*."

could befall a human being, setting it in a context that is *against its nature* and inimical to its thriving.

Finally, Thomas shows the true nature of malice by setting up its contrary: the fruitfulness of the olive tree. Here, the great difference between the person of malice and the person of goodness is in their willingness to communicate good to their fellow man:

> First is that they have benevolence for their neighbor, becoming fruitful in their regard; therefore, the just man is compared to an ***olive tree***, as if to say, 'The sinner is uprooted without fruit, but I am like a fruitful olive in the house of God.'[485]

Notice first the orientation of the just man – he is fruitful in regard of his neighbor. Second, notice his groundedness – unlike the uprootednesses of the wicked, the good man is planted "in the house of God." Both of these invoke a hierarchical sense of community, contrasted with the violent upheaval, unnatural isolation, and sterility of the man who has willed evil – who has 'made non-being,' who has willed himself to 'nought.'

F. Conclusion

We have come in this chapter to a complex sense of violence, identified as those aspects of human experience that entail a loss of flourishing and intelligibility through the disfunction (or harm) of the structures of voluntary human act – i.e., defective action – and through the disturbance of the hierarchical community of interwoven, shared good – i.e., *bonum privatum*. These articulations of violence came to light through examining what goes against, or thwarts, human existence such as it is framed in Thomas, an account that is informed by and draws from Aristotle's action-based anthropology and Proclus's hierarchical cosmology. In both of these forms of violence, the integral asset that is lost or harmed is an interior principle. In the former, it is the principle of the voluntary actions of a moral agent. We examined, in both Aristotle and in

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[485] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 51.514: "*Primo in hoc quod bene se habent ad proximum, fructificando in eis: et ideo justus comparatur **olivae**; quasi dicat: peccator sic evellitur sine fructu: sed ego sicut oliva fructifera in domo Dei.*"

Thomas, troubling cases in which an agent voluntarily goes into act disconnected from the good that rational thought (or revealed divine law, in Thomas) identifies as the appropriate and fitting principle for that kind of act – i.e., cases marked by a privation of cause. In the latter, the loss is of the principle by which an individual being is upheld in their nature and their existence, and we examined the Proclean ill of estrangement, mirrored by Thomas's treatment of the 'injustice' of the isolated agent. In both the harms of defective action and *bonum privatum* we saw, helped by Maritain's analysis, elements of the wounded agent, the 'bite of nothingness,' and the will that 'noughts.' As we were able to show that these harms have the dread effects that they do because they work against human nature and its flourishing, we were able to justify identifying defective action and the problem of *bonum privatum* as forms of violence (to others, to self, and/or to both), according to a Thomistic account of human existence. We were also able to show how a specific effect of such violence is a diminishing of the intelligibility that marks human activity: the ways in which a person's thoughts and desires/choices provide the explanation for their actions in the world, and the narrative of the flourishing of their being achieved through connection to other individuals, the world as a whole, and God. Finally, our reading of Thomas, aided by our use of Aristotle and Proclus as interlocutors and guides, has helped us to avoid reducing human violence to the explicit, external ill effects of evil action (e.g., physical or political violence), as terrible as those may be. Instead, we have been able to focus on subtler, less easily noticed, and therefore in some ways more confounding forms of violence between human beings, those that affect the inner principles undergirding the agency and flourishing of an individual.

In chapter 4 we will go on to consider, as a first mode of contra-violence, the contexts and influences that assist human beings in fulfilling rather than harming human existence – and

the resulting effects both in oneself and in others. That is, we will consider in detail what it would take for human beings to flourish.

Interstice: A 'novel' approach to human flourishing

In chapter 2 we set up the scaffolding of our inquiry by showing how Thomas's account of human nature attends both to horizontal, i.e., action-based, aspects of human existence and to vertical, i.e., cosmological/hierarchical, aspects. We showed also how these sensitivities in Thomas were shaped by his inheritance of Aristotle and Proclus. In chapter 3 we considered what these accounts suggest violence against human individuals might entail. In chapter 4 we will go on to consider what they might suggest in terms of a remedy. Before we do, however, I wish to linger over one particular notion that has emerged in this line of inquiry: the framing of the human task of flourishing as a *hermeneutical* project.

I wish to ground this reflective pause in Martha Nussbaum's thought regarding, in her words, "the relationship between literature and philosophy, especially moral philosophy."[486] I have been helped by her conception of and approach to the literary genre of the novel, and how its structure entails a hermeneutical posture by the reader toward human experience. Nussbaum observes the emphasis upon human particularity that one encounters in a novel: "The novel as a genre is committed, in its very structure and in the structure of its relationship with its reader, to the pursuit of the uncertainties and vulnerabilities, the particularity and the emotional richness of the human form of life."[487] She goes on to depict in greater detail what such literary engagement with human particularity entails:

> Novels conduct a philosophical investigation into the good of a human being. Their many more concrete Aristotelian contributions—their rich exploration of the noncommensurability of the valuable things, their concern for particular context-sensitive

[486] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), ix. In this interstice, I am both animated by and responding to Nussbaum's framing of the philosophical work that the novel does, seen throughout her essay collection *Love's Knowledge*, and in varying ways across her body of work. See, for example, her essays "Love's Knowledge," "Transcending Humanity," "Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature," and "Flawed Crystals: James's *The Golden Bowl* and Literature as Moral Philosophy." I am, of course, reading her view 'in reverse,' and imagining what good might be gained by approaching other human individuals in the stance of a reader toward a novel.
[487] Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 390.

> judgments and for particular loves, their allegiance to the emotions as sources of insight––seem to derive, at some level, from the choice they make along with Odysseus, the fundamental choice to live as human, and thus to take on the riskiness and incompleteness of a mortal life.[488]

Nussbaum draws from her work in Greek philosophy and literature to observe that moral inquiry requires careful attention to specifically *human* goods and flourishing, and asserts that novels delve into these matters with unique adeptness: "They cultivate the forms of vision and concern that inhabit the human form of life generally, and would be unavailable to beasts, uninteresting to gods."[489] She asserts that this kind of inquiry, into specifically human flourishing, addresses human beings both in terms of their own individual good, and in terms of the good of the larger narrative of the human community:

> I insist on the importance of particularity for good ethical judgment … Yet, since it was always for the person *as a human being* that the good was being sought, one must not lose hold of general notions of human functioning and human capability. … The importance of context and particularity for us as we are is inseparable from the fact that we are bodily finite beings of a particular sort, beings who go through time in a particular way.[490]

Finally, and most importantly for this section, Nussbaum's vision of the orientation of the reader of a novel is illumining as a metaphor, or even a model, of how human beings can openheartedly engage one another. The orientation of reader of a novel is one of openness both to the subjectivity of the individual characters they encounter and to the shared narrative of human experience that emerges from the whole. The point of a novel, in my appropriation of her vision, is that the varying subjects' storylines are each intelligible to readers in themselves (i.e., as illumining the shared human condition from which our own particular storylines derive), but also somehow come together to make a larger narrative that has a richness of its own. That is, the

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[488] Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 390.
[489] Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 391.
[490] Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 391.

story as a novel is to be approached as a *collaboration* of the individual threads, not a mere *collective* of them. Though on the one hand the individual characters of a novel each must be 'read' as having their own good, as providing the explanation for their own view of the world and their actions within it, on the other hand each story thread in a novel is exactly *not* a story on its own. The presumption in the mind of the reader is that each individual story thread within a novel will somehow be rendered more intelligible *through its relation to the others* – that it would not be the story that it is if read in isolation. This is what makes the novel genre so exacting, and so exciting.

We need not say, moreover, that the varying threads of the story must run in neatly coordinating courses in order for the novel to be intelligible. In fact, a delightful aspect of the novel genre is indeed the contrasts and tensions between the sub-narratives. The reader can get pulled into one more than another, and be pulled back again at the start of a new chapter with a sigh as if, with the turn of a page, a jarring note of dissonance with what came before resounds. Certainly, not all of the threads achieve a pleasant resolution, and there is often a great deal left on the table when all the parts have run their course. The intelligibility of the novel as a cohesive story does not arise from all the parts fitting together with no remainder. The intelligibility arises from the reader's complicit belief that the novel itself would be less rich without any one of its parts. It would be less what it is, and not just by quantity. This is what is meant by a genuine 'collaboration' of narratives, not just a 'collective.' One feels that if any of the parts were to have been omitted, each of the other parts, even if left otherwise unchanged, could not possibly provide the exact same telling of their own part of the novel's tale. Could such a thing be done, it would be an act of literary violence to tear away one storyline from the fabric of a novel. It would not be a clean pull. There would be gaps – jagged and unraveling. Even the (admittedly

more realistic) act of skipping a chapter is in some way stepping outside of the story and separating oneself from the truthtelling community that it is.

In my view, Nussbaum's vision of how novels work as a literary form can be extended to a vision of human life itself in a horizontal-vertical vision of the world – a vision in which human beings are best approached with attentiveness both to their particularity and to their place in a larger human narrative. More specifically, in this interstice I am suggesting that the contra-violent account of human activity that we will construct in the following chapters can be anticipated by a helpful comparison with the posture of a reader of a novel toward the characters they engage within. To see a person as *only* a part of the whole is to do violence to their status as a subject of their own narrative, by attributing meaning and intelligibility to them only insofar as they serve and fit within the narrative of others.[491] At the same time, to treat a person's self-narrative as radically independent, or radically 'other,' is to alienate them from the human community, and, further, to impoverish the human community by the omission of that narrative. Regarding the former, we must not say of a person that they are only intelligible if their narrative coheres neatly and without remainder in relation with ours and that of our other neighbors. Regarding the latter (which is perhaps to address the same problem a different way), we must not reject, deny, or devalue the parts of human experience that seem to create a dissonance – that feel

[491] This suppression of an individual's voice in their own narrative is a problem that can occur by the domineering (or even the careless) use of the collective first-person pronoun 'we.' When spokespeople for a group articulate for all the members what 'we' think or will do, such articulations rob individuals of establishing their own account of what they think and will do, and marginalize/oppress minority perspectives within the community.
MacIntyre depicts the dangers of this oppressive 'we' usage in his critique of modern nation-states' "misconception of its citizens as constituting a *Volk*, a type of collectivity whose bonds are simultaneously to extend to the entire body of citizens and yet to be as binding as the ties of kinship and locality." Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*: *Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, Paul Carus Lecture 20 (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 132. The reason, he states, that such a move is dangerous is that a true collective entails a mutual giving and receiving of common goods, the organizing of which must reflect the individual voices of the participants. However, he states, "in a modern, large scale nation-state no such collectivity is possible [i.e., as grounded in the voice and agency of the individual participants] and the pretense that it is is always an ideological disguise for sinister realities" (132).

to us like a distraction or detraction from either the unfolding of our own story thread or the interwoven part of the human story that we know best.

Both of these problematic modes operate through the violence of estrangement – a great ill in a hierarchical account of the human story. Davies, similarly employing the language of 'reading' another faithfully, describes this problem of alienation as "occlusion," which "as oppression, is necessarily linked with a failure in the hermeneutical process of reconstructing Other-I precisely as free centre of its own world."[492] In a hermeneutically-framed account of human experience such as Davies proposes, a primary obligation of one person to another is the affirmation of their subjectivity, an affirmation that must include that person's view of the world.[493] Of course, we can, and sometimes should, mourn darkness and recoil from apparent evil. We can rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, and be angry and sin not. But, as a faithful reader, we should treasure each 'storyline' in the belief of its own intelligibility, and of the aspect of truth that it brings to the whole story of humanity – even on those occasions when the 'storyline' we encounter in another person is not only dark but violent, we can 'stay with the story' as an act of hermeneutical love. Belief in the goodness of being should press us to resist the urge to skip pages. To stay with a story, sitting with it and attending to it in its ebbs and flows of truthtelling joys and discomforts, is to combat the violence of estrangement.

As we move forward in the work of this inquiry, we will need to keep in mind this 'hermeneutical' aspect of human experience. Every person that we encounter is to be 'read' with the same care and humility with which we would approach a literary text. That is, not as with a normative gaze imposing an exterior framework of order and value, but rather as with a charity

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[492] Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 36.
[493] See chapter 2, regarding Davies' treatment of subjectivity. See: 70–72, esp. at n222, and n229.

that regards the individual as a subject in their own right, and as the starting point for the explanation of their actions and narrative. It may be that it is a troubled narrative, or even a dark one. It may call for some interpretive response from us, either of supportive engagement or of challenge. However that may be, a hermeneutically-charitable approach to another human being at the very least recognizes that the meaning of the story emerges most truly by approaching the subject on their own terms, and proceeds most effectively by giving the story the time and room to disclose and unfold itself to its reader.

Chapter 4: A first response to violence: an account of human nature flourishing

Our work in chapter 2 examined the contours of human being in an Aristo-Proclean reading of Thomas's anthropology – i.e., what it means to be a creature of our kind, namely a rational self-mover that achieves the flourishing of its nature and existence through connection with the world, other individuals, and the First Cause of all good. In chapter 3 we examined what violence against that kind of existence would entail – in particular, the deprivation of intelligibility that is experienced through the harms of defective action and the 'isolated' agent. In this chapter, we will examine what contexts, activities, and principles are entailed in bringing the potentials resident within human nature into a flourishing state, with special attention to the relational contexts requisite for human thriving. We will show that human nature itself, to the degree that it is actualized through its operations, constitutes a response to the menace of interpersonal violence. That is, in framing a response to the violence of defective action and alienation, we will first examine the requisite conditions for a human being's nature operating as it should.

In the last chapters we saw that, in Thomas, the intelligibility of an individual being is grounded in its 'horizontal' status as a subject in its own right and at the same time in its 'vertical' status as participant in a network of shared being and goods. An implication of this intersection is that it is almost impossible to think of the wounds of a violent act in terms of the recipient without also thinking in terms of the actor. Violence hurts at the same time the individual self, the individual other, and the human community. While on the one hand this framing of the issue can result in a certain ambiguity with regard to the nature of violence and the location of its effect, on the other hand it is the very thing that suggests the shape of a contra-

violent mode of human existence. If the effects of violence are thus intermingled, so must be the remedy.

In this chapter's task of understanding the context of human flourishing, Oliver Davies' treatment of the self and other offers a helpful framing for our path forward.[494] Davies envisions human nature as a collaboration of unified self as subject ('I') and a relational self that comes to understanding of itself through another ('me').[495] The former (the sense of self as 'I') is a necessary condition for knowledge of the world around us and our experiences within it – Davies affirms "the self in its unity, as that which enables us to identify all the narratives of experience as existence that is 'mine.' Such a sense of unity is the ground of the narrative structure of experience as such."[496] The latter (the sense of self as 'me') is an entailment of horizontal existence, where each self "*comes to itself* precisely within such narratives [which constitute our social and historical identity], and within its relation with multiple forms of otherness" – thus, a person's narrative of their experiences in the world affirms "the subject's sense that it has come to itself in and through the other, and not in opposition to the other."[497] A consequence entailed by these ontological framings is a necessity to affirm other individuals as subjects in their own right and in terms of their own narrative and truth-telling: "Affirmation of the other requires recognition of the other precisely and specifically in terms of their own world."[498] This affirmation is, first, a *practical* necessity in order to understand oneself as a rational agent –

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[494] Davies sees his interdisciplinary work, including his later emphasis upon social cognition systems, as both rooted in and a response to his early studies of German religious texts. His personal biography for King's College London states: "I worked on the German medieval theologian Meister Eckhart (*Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings, Penguin Classics*, 1994), before publishing *A Theology of Compassion* (Eerdmans, 2001), which marked an attempt to rethink Christian tradition in the light of contemporary perspectives concerning phenomenology, language, ethics and the self." See: https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/professor-oliver-davies, accessed 9 August 2023.
[495] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 45.
[496] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 8.
[497] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 8, and 19.
[498] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 35.

affirmation of the other's agency constitutes, in fact, an "epiphany of the self's own answerability to the other, and thus the extent to which otherness stands at the heart of the self's own self-possession as knowing subject."[499] Second, the affirmation of this 'Other-I' (the other person affirmed as a subject) is *morally* necessary to avoid committing the ontologically-violent act of "occlusion" – i.e., "the opposite of affirmation, being the suppression of the other precisely as a free world-centre and the appropriation of the other as object into the parameters and goods of our own world."[500] Finally, affirmation of the other specifically as a subject is necessary in terms of the very possibility of contra-violence and redemption. For Davies, without the mutual-reference of the self with another-self "we can never know what it is to fall into alienation from being, nor to be called back to being."[501]

In this chapter, therefore, we will consider the affirming of a human individual as a subject in its own right as the primary contra-violent function available to human nature. As we will discover in later chapters, this 'contra-violent activity' will not be entirely sufficient to address the problem of personal violence – we will notice, in particular, the pernicious persistence of the problem of defective acts – but it is the right place to start in an account such as we have framed, and it will provide the foundation upon which other interventions will be built. We will examine what such an affirmation of agency entails in the context of the Thomistic account of human experience we have established.

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[499] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 41. Davies' argument is that compassion is the central location, and vehicle, for such an epiphany.

[500] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 35. Alasdair MacIntyre uses a similar image of "obscuring" to address how a deficient view of another as subject (specifically, others with disabled or disfigured bodies) blocks "what is in both ourselves and others to which we ought to be responding in different contexts," a problem which will cause us to "lead distorted lives." MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 136–137.

[501] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 53. I read Davies' sense of 'being' here not in an absolute sense of the metaphysical notion, but rather in an ethical, profound sense of human flourishing.

A note on method: as we move forward in this thesis, we will be examining Thomas's thought mainly on its own terms, with less attention to Thomas's reception of or direct engagement with Aristotle and Proclus. It has been the claim of this project that approaching Aquinas's account of human nature with an ear for the specific contributions of Aristotle and Proclus yields a reading of Thomas that is fruitfully sensitive to intelligibility as a grounding theme – a reading that we claim is useful in framing a response to the problem of personal violence. We have pursued this task explicitly in chapters 2 and 3, and are now ready to use that reading of Thomas as the main interlocutor for our inquiry into a contra-violent way of living together in human community. Thus, while we will still begin the discourse of each chapter with references to Aristotle's and Proclus's thought, as a way of setting up the issues taken up in that chapter, it will be in conversation primarily with Thomas that we will frame our unfolding account of a remedy to the problem of violence.

A. Aristotle: Contra-violence as the community of friendship with 'other selves'

We have seen in Aristotle that a primary feature of being is the possession of one's essence as an interior principle of being – in Aristotle's account each material thing, in terms of its nature, has "a complete and independent existence."[502] As to the thing *flourishing*, however, this will generally require resources quite outside of the thing itself, the possession of which, for human beings, is often a matter of moral luck.[503] For this reason, he states, it is not in accordance with human nature to live a solitary life.[504] No one, Aristotle insists, would choose to gain even the whole world "on the condition of being alone."[505] He describes the person who

[502] Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*, 3, 7. See: Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1.192b15; *Met.* 5.18.1022a26–27.
[503] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1.8.8.1099a31–1099b7. Aristotle gives examples of 'personal/relational' goods such as children and friends, and 'public/practical' goods such as money and political power, as well as 'social caché' goods such as beauty and a good birth.
[504] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9.1169b.15–22.
[505] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9.1169b17–20.

seems to prefer an isolated life (invoking Homer) as a " 'Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one' … a lover of war" – and (with a rather sharp turn of imagery) like an "isolated piece at draughts."[506] The natural context for human thriving, therefore, is in a general sense society and in a more specific sense friendship.[507]

A reason that Aristotle gives for why a person needs friends in order to thrive is that such close relationships increase the intelligibility of human experience for the person, including especially their own. Given that the good life entails being active, and the contemplation of virtuous activity, friends are helpful to the good person insofar as "we can contemplate our neighbours better than ourselves and their actions better than our own."[508] Further, since "as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also," a person's neighbor provides to that person access to his own nature to a greater degree than he would have on his own – in this way, Aristotle famously asserts, "his friend is another self."[509]

What is the content of this 'mirrored self-knowledge'? That depends largely on the manner in which they spend time together. Aristotle observes that in order to obtain the pleasure of knowledge of self through another, the two need to truly share their lives – what Aristotle calls 'living together' in the sense that we today might say 'doing life together.'[510] For Aristotle, such a friendship would paradigmatically need to include activities such as "sharing in discussion and thought," and he contrasts this with the intellectual impoverishment of merely attending to the material needs of life together "as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place."[511] Besides this rather blunt comparison with the activities of livestock, Aristotle also

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[506] Aristotle, *Politica,* trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, 1113–1316 (New York: Modern, 2001), 1.2.1253a1–7.
[507] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.2.1252b30–1253a17.
[508] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9.1169b30–35.
[509] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9.1170b7.
[510] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9.1170b10–15.
[511] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9.1170b15.

does not hesitate to discuss varying kinds of activities in terms of differing 'kinds' of men (i.e., such that only members within each kind are 'equals'[512]) – and indicates that individual ways of being are rendered intelligible by sharing the activities that reveal what it is people find valuable in life, and which reinforce the relative goodness of such a way of life:

> Whatever existence means for each class of men, whatever it is for whose sake they value life, in *that* they wish to occupy themselves with their friends; and so some drink together, others dice together, others join in athletic exercises and hunting, or in the study of philosophy, each class spending their days together in whatever they love most in life … Thus the friendship of bad men turns out an evil thing (for because of their instability they unite in bad pursuits, and besides they become evil by becoming like each other), while the friendship of good men is good, being augmented by their companionship; and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mould of the characteristics they approve.[513]

Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle suggests that life itself, both another's and one's own, should be and can be intelligible: "The real individuality of another person is not just something ineffable and indescribable; among its most important constituents are excellences that can be shared by others … . The ideal is a thoroughgoing and unconstrained sharing in *all* activities that people judge to be pertinent to their human good living."[514] Nussbaum notes the importance of the ordinary in this context for human thriving: "It is one of the distinctions of Aristotle's thought to see in the everyday and the apparently trivial a scene for the expression of human excellence."[515] Of course, Aristotle's framing itself suggests that differing 'kinds' of human life will be *un*intelligible to each other –an infelicitous but conspicuous weakness in his account.[516]

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[512] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 8.13.1162a35–1162b5.
[513] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.11.1172a1–15.
[514] Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 357–358.
[515] Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 359.
[516] While Thomas does not explicitly 'correct' Aristotle on this, his depiction of the generosity of God in making human beings 'connatural' with the divine stands in stark contrast with Aristotle's sharp divisions among classes of being, and has implications for human beings' stances toward each other. See sections C3 and C4 of this chapter. On the themes of classism and gender bias in Aristotle, see (for example), Martha C. Nussbaum, "Medical Dialectic: Aristotle on Theory and Practice," in *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, 48–77.

Finally, it is important to recognize that Aristotle's notion of friendship, and the support such friendship provides to human flourishing, entails both mutuality and independence. While both participants enjoy the benefit of 'another self' through shared goodness and activities, each also must be recognized and affirmed as "a being with a separate good" and as "separate centers of choice and action."[517] What Aristotle identifies as 'well-wishing' among friends, an essential component of friendship, we can understand in light of the affirmation of the other we are looking to account for in our inquiry.[518]

We can conclude this section by noting that in Aristotle's account the intelligibility, and indeed the possibility, of the good life that arises among friends requires a strong element of trust, and the time and experience that are necessary for its development.[519] Thus, while Aristotle's ontological treatment of human being frames the significance of an independent, interiorly-possessed essence, his *ethical* thought paints a broad landscape of human community and shared human activities that illumine and nurture the good life. In the contexts of friends 'doing life together,' mutual affirmation arises between the friends. Insofar as one affirms the individuality and goodness (and thus the intelligibility) of another, the other affirms the individuality, goodness, and intelligibility of oneself.

B. Proclus: Contra-violence as the community of similitude and the well-daimoned life

In Proclus we have seen that the status of beings as subjects entails their active participation in the hierarchy of reality – i.e., beings are "the objects of providence just insofar as they are capable of being subjects of providence as well."[520] Key to this interwoven network of

[517] Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 355; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 8.2.1155b27–31.
[518] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 8.2.1155b27–1156a5.
[519] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 8.3.1156b25–30; *Eth. eud.* 7.1.1237b12.
[520] Butler, "The Henadic Structure of Providence in Proclus," 228, 233; ref: Proclus, *Dec. dub.* 3.18.7–8. Ref.: chapter 2, 80–81.

providential care is the element of *similarity*. While in Proclus there is thin treatment of care for the other from a personal or moral motivation, the practical reality of shared being and goodness places individual beings in a vital community that operates through the similitude of one thing to the things above and below it in the hierarchy. We will revisit the nature of this community, and how it frames the relation between self and another, through the lenses of 'a community of shared goods,' and 'a well-daimoned life.'

A hierarchical account of reality entails that all beings share in the goodness of the One – i.e., the one Good and the many goodnesses that derive from it.[521] This communal good, however, is no mere static possession. It is an active way of being, one which entails attentiveness not only to the ontological status of one's neighbors (higher and lower) but also to their 'preparedness' to participate in the sharing of the good:

> All beings are united with one another in this manner, and for everything everywhere there is brought about a communion of goods, the perfective causes ready to communicate, and the destined participants aroused to participation, the former proffering their perfective potency and the latter having already assumed their receptive potency of suitability. Potency is twofold, one active, and one passive: the former is the mother of activity, the latter the means of reception of perfection. On one side the future agent must be full to overflowing and so prepared for activity that, although the destined recipient is not present, it is itself at full strength and stimulated to communication, and on the other side the subject to be acted upon must be eager for participation and apply itself to the perfective power, and if that be not present, through the most eminent suitability be aroused towards participation.[522]

We see in this text two modes of readiness to participate in the hierarchical community. The higher being, in any set of two neighbors, is ready by being itself full to the point of overflowing and "at full strength," by being disposed with an openness toward the other, and by being poised for the activity of communication. The lower being is ready by its attentive

[521] Proclus, *El. theol.* §21, §119, and §144; *Theol. plat.* 3.4.15.20–26. For Thomas's appropriation of this notion, see: Aquinas, *ST* 1.6.4.
[522] Proclus, *in Alc.* 122.

eagerness and active presenting of itself – though it must also be a suitable vessel, able in fact to receive goodness from that kind of cause. Proclus notes that intelligible causes are always present, everywhere the same, and in the same way to all, whereas sensible/movable causes are sometimes present and sometimes withdrawn (as, for example, in the case of the sun).[523] He also insists that there must be an actual analogy of being between the two such that the good intended to be communicated 'belongs' to both the cause and the recipient:

> These two prerequisites are necessary in all communications of goods, the perfective power of the intended giver, and the utmost suitability of the intended recipient, and in some way the perfection of the giver must coincide with the suitability of the recipient.[524]

Thus there are two components to achieving a communication of good: both participants present to each other, and an ontological resonance between the two – a shared status captured by the notion of 'similitude':

> For similitude itself by itself conducts the many to *the one*, and and binds and converts secondary natures to the monads prior to them. For the very being of similars so far as they are similars is derived from *the one*. Hence it conjoins multitude to that from which it is allotted its progression. And on this account similitude is that which it is, causing many things to be allied, to possess sympathy with themselves, and friendship with each other and *the one*.[525]

We see Proclus using the winsome notion of friendship to depict the ontological realities of a hierarchical universe. Certainly this seems to resonate with the Aristotelian notion of mutuality at work in friendship – though clearly in Proclus such friendship cannot be 'between equals.' The friendliness of what he calls elsewhere "the common life," or "the integrated life,"

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[523] Proclus, *in Alc.* 122.
[524] Proclus, *in Alc.* 123.
[525] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 3.4.16.7–14: Ἡ γὰρ ὁμοιότης αὐτὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν συναγωγός ἐστι τῶν πολλῶν εἰς ἓν καὶ συνδετικὴ καὶ ἐπιστρεπτικὴ τῶν δευτέρων εἰς τὰς πρὸ αὐτῶν μονάδας.
Καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸ ὁμοίοις εἶναι τοῖς ὁμοίοις ἀφ' ἑνός· πρὸς ἐκεῖνο δὴ οὖν καὶ συνάπτει τὸ πλῆθος ἀφ' οὗ τὴν πρόοδον ἔλαχε. Καὶ διὰ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὅπερ ἐστίν, ὁμοιότης, ὁμόγνια τὰ πολλὰ ποιοῦσα καὶ συμπαθῆ πρὸς ἑαυτὰ καὶ φίλα πρός τε ἄλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἕν.

occurs exactly in relations between higher and lower levels of being.[526] Rather than being a tarnish upon the good will of such a friendship, however, the higher/lower relation of providential care between one being and another is what undergirds the very notion of happiness in Proclus. The "*eudaimôn* life" literally means, as Baltzly notes in his translation of Proclus, "the well-daimoned life."[527] The role of the δαίμων, he states, is simply that of "exercising providential care for that which is proximately dependent" – and he states that, in Proclus, anything that fulfills this role "counts as a *daimôn*."[528] Thus, the life that is well-daimoned is one in which the superior beings above it are present to it and ready with overflow, and which itself is "eager for participation and [to] apply itself to the perfective power."[529]

What are the modes of similitude that can function in this εὐδαίμων way? Proclus, in his commentary on the *Alcibiades*, indicates that "sometimes it happens by nature, sometimes by intelligence, and sometimes it is effected by the causality of a spirit, sometimes by a god" – which he then illustrates by the case of Socrates's providential relation to young Alcibiades.[530] That is, whether a being experiences resonance of similarity with a higher being through shared elements of their natures, or through the intentional act of an intellect, or through the gift of the divine, the effect of providential care is for the being to be called upward toward the One – to be assisted in its ἐπιστροφή.[531]

We can conclude this section by specifically noting that the eudaimonic relationship of similitude entails a mutual recognition of the presence of the other to the moment of communion, and of their suitedness to each other in terms of a common good. The well-daimoned life,

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[526] Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.44.30–45.5.
[527] Baltzly, "The Human Life," 262; ref.: Proclus, *in Tim.* 3.290.30–292.2.
[528] Baltzly, "The Human Life," 262.
[529] Proclus, *in Alc*. 122.
[530] Proclus, *in Alc.* 123.
[531] Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 19; ref.: Proclus, *El. theol.* §31.

therefore, requires affirmation of our neighbors (upper and lower), as subjects and objects of providential care and as participants in their own right in the community of shared good.

C. Aquinas: Contra-violence as the human art of second-person relations

In Thomas's narrative of collaborative nature and grace, the notion of 'human art' functions as an analogue of Aristotle's second actuality and builds upon the first actuality of the natures gifted to creatures by 'divine art.'[532] A being's nature, including all its potentialities, is given by God as he brings the being to existence, constituting the being's 'first perfection.' The actualization of that nature through concrete acts is the work of the individual itself, as its 'second perfection.' In Aristotelian terms, individual human beings achieve their goodness and perfection by their own operations, especially through their most proper activities of thinking and desiring.[533] In Neoplatonic terms, individual humans achieve their return to their principle through these proper operations – human beings are *ordered* to the good by the divine, but they *achieve* the good through their own modes of knowing and loving.[534] As we also saw, in chapter 2, they contribute to the dispersion of the divine good throughout the cosmos by transferring the good one to another – a work of providential care they accomplish, once again, through their own activities and operations.[535]

We notice that in 'human art,' understood as the dynamic context comprising human thriving, there is a natural orientation toward others. Things have a deposit of the good in themselves, but their goodness is perfected in relation to others – where others are understood both as objects of knowing and desiring that propel us into motion (i.e., in Aristotelian terms)

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[532] Aquinas, *Comp. theol.* 103; *Contra gent.* 3.65.6; 3.100.6; 2.24.5; 2.46.3 – here we also see Thomas's language of 'first and second perfection.' See also Aquinas, *ST* 1.73.1 corp.; 3.29.2. Cf: Aristotle, *De an.* 2.1.412a20–30; 412b13–24 (see chapter 2, 55).
[533] Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 1.11. ad 3; *ST* 1.105.5 corp.; 1.76.1; 1–2.3.2; 1.43.3 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.25; 3.69.14.
[534] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.18; *Comp. theol.* 103; *ST* 1–2 68.2 corp.; 69.1 corp.; 109.3 corp., ad 1 and ad 2; 110.2 corp.; 111.2 corp.; *Super Sent.* 4.49.1.3 resp. 1.
[535] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.69.16. Ref.: chapter 2, 89–91, 95–96.

and as participants of providential care from whom we receive and to whom we give the good (i.e., in Neoplatonist terms).[536] Further, we can understand this human art not only as providing the *possibility* of thriving, but also as entailing a vocational *call* to participate in and contribute to those activities that effect the flourishing of the human community. Therefore, in an account of the contexts undergirding human thriving, we would expect to find the operations of knowing and loving deeply marked with a call to affirm the being and intelligibility of other persons, as well as of oneself. Insofar as such an account is provided by conversation with Thomas's thought, we would also expect the divine and the human to be deeply interwoven. Therefore, in the rest of this chapter we will propose an account of sacredly-infused 'human art' as our first explicit framing of a contra-violent human existence.

C1. Human nature's innate capability for growth

A beautiful aspect of Thomas's account of human nature is how human nature is 'naturally' suited, or situated, to cooperate with divine grace for its growth and perfection. Not only does grace presuppose the nature of a being and its proper operations (as we have seen, in chapter 2), but grace further presupposes nature in that human beings are naturally outfitted, as Aertsen states, with "the capacity for further completion" beyond what can be achieved within the finite human horizon.[537] A specific nature is the end of reproductive generation, and that nature as present in an individual being is ordered to its perfection through its own operations (all

[536] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 354; Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 21.5. Strictly speaking, in a Neoplatonic, hierarchical cosmology we 'receive' from those above us, and 'give' to those beneath us. If we think of hierarchical network ethically, i.e. analogously, these are not necessarily distinct and fixed groups – there are varying ways that someone can be 'beneath' us in one way, such that we assist them to the good, and 'above' us in another, such that they assist us.

[537] Ref.: chapter 2, 99–102. Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 355; Aquinas, *De ente et essentia* 1.
Ref: Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia,* Latin text based on 1976 Leonine Edition, edited by the Aquinas Institute, orthography adapted to standard Ecclesiastical Latin; English translation by Robert T. Miller (c) 1997, revised 2017, edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~DeEnte.

of which is a gift of divine grace).[538] This work of natural perfection, Thomas observes, entails engagement with things outside of the being itself:

> A thing is called a being inasmuch as it is considered absolutely, but good, as has already been made clear, in relation to other things. Now it is by its essential principles that a thing is fully constituted in itself so that it subsists; but it is not so perfectly constituted as to stand as it should in relation to everything outside itself except by means of accidents added to the essence, because the operations by which one thing is in some sense joined to another proceed from the essence through powers distinct from it. Consequently nothing achieves goodness absolutely unless it is complete in both its essential and its accidental principles.[539]

However, human nature is also ordered to a further end beyond itself: the *complete* perfection of that being in its ultimate end of knowing and loving God. While an individual works toward this ultimate end by its own operations of knowing and loving, the very activity itself is an effect of grace insofar as divine grace orders the individual being's intellect and will toward God as its ultimate good – *and* insofar as the individual comes to regard proximate objects of knowing and loving as sacred entailments of the divine good.[540] It is clear that Thomas understands this capacity to be elevated by, even connected to, the divine to be an intrinsic feature of human nature – what he calls "capax Dei" (being "capable of God").[541]

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[538] Aquinas, *ST* 1.105.5 corp.; 1–2.49.3 corp.; 1–2.110.3 corp.; 2–2.23.2 corp.; *Super Sent.* 2.26.1.4 corp.

[539] Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 21.5 resp. (at *Cuius*): "*Nam unumquodque dicitur esse ens in quantum absolute consideratur; bonum vero, ut ex dictis patet, secundum respectum ad alia. In seipso autem aliquid perficitur ut subsistat per essentialia principia; sed ut debito modo se habeat ad omnia quae sunt extra ipsum, non perficitur nisi mediantibus accidentibus superadditis essentiae: quia operationes quibus unum alteri quodam modo coniungitur, ab essentia mediantibus virtutibus essentiae superadditis progrediuntur; unde absolute bonitatem non obtinet nisi secundum quod completum est secundum substantialia et secundum accidentalia principia.*"

[540] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.110.3 corp.; 2–2.25.1 corp.; 23.2 corp.; *Super Sent*. 2.29.1.2 resp.; 26.1.4 resp.

[541] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.113.10 s.c. and corp., where Thomas states that justification, properly speaking, is not 'miraculous' in the same sense as, for example, resurrection, because "the soul is naturally capable of grace" ("*quia naturaliter anima est gratiae capax*"). We can note that in this location Thomas invokes Augustine's treating of humanity as *imago Dei* in terms of the notion of *capax Dei* in his *De trinitate* 14.8.11. Torrell observes that while the phrase and its implications originate in Augustine, Thomas contributes "added force" by his use of the term "natural." Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 347. Rist remarks/cautions that the Latin phrase *capax Dei* is itself "almost untranslatable." Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized,* 146.
See also: Aquinas, *ST* 3.4.1 ad 2. Here, Thomas is showing how human nature was fitting and suitable for Christ to inhabit – i.e., by its own operations of knowing and loving it was naturally 'capable' of the divine.

We can discern several things relevant to our inquiry in Thomas's doctrine of the perfection of human nature. First, the perfection of human nature entails a properly-human receptivity to and engagement with divine grace. Second the perfection of an individual being entails openness and active engagement with beings outside of itself – finite, contingent engagements of the accidental order. Finally (or, perhaps, the natural outcome of the previous), in human existence, orientation to God as man's ultimate end and orientation to one's proximate neighbors are intertwined. We will consider the implications of these related statements as this chapter unfolds. We will begin by examining Thomas's account of how the Holy Spirit operates toward human beings – a mode of activity that illumines the collaboration between nature and grace, and informs our understanding of how the perfection of human beings' activities entails orientation toward other human beings. As we proceed in the work of this chapter, it is important to remember the guiding notion of 'human art' – i.e., such that all of these contexts, dynamics, and experiences are to be understood as in some way *proper to* human existence and as a development of human existence *in accordance with* its nature, rather than as an alien incursion, howsoever supernaturally benevolent.[542] At the same time (or, saying the same thing a different way), we can notice a growing sense of the ambiguities at work in the nature-grace collaboration that grounds Thomas's vision of human life – i.e., ambiguity as to divine/human agency in acts of charity-infused knowledge and love, and ambiguity as to the divine/human objects of such acts. The theme is not explicitly treated as such in Thomas; rather, the spirit of it, through

[542] Recall, from the introduction (see pp. 11–12, and esp. 17–19), the formal causation of charity within human nature in Thomas's account, i.e., as the convergence of nature and grace, brings along with it an ambiguity of agency. Human acts of charity can be linked both to the human actor and the Holy Spirit acting with and within the human actor. Charity itself, in such an account, therefore has an element of ambiguity to it, as it is of divine nature, yet in its formal operation allows human beings to actualize their natures precisely *as* human beings. It is in this way that this thesis considers Thomas's doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be philosophically significant – i.e., in how it illumines the flourishing of human beings in their proper operations. E.g.: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.2.
See also: Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowing and Connaturality in Aquinas," 65.

interesting hints here and there throughout his account, help illumine the genuine wonder of the nature-grace relation in Thomas's thought.

C2. The Holy Spirit's causality: the operative collaboration of divine and created agents

Thomas's doctrine of grace is complex. His vision of how divine grace operates toward creation entails an interrelated coworking of grace, gifts, and virtues – a vision which he articulates with renowned precision.[543] His treatments employ an imposing array of concepts distinguishing varying degrees and species of divine act: sanctifying, gratuitous, operative, cooperative, prevenient, subsequent, infused, acquired, habitual, actual, etc.[544] A thorough mapping of Thomas's thought on divine grace, gifts, and virtues is beyond the scope of this work.[545] However, a few specific notions are needed in order for us to proceed with our examination of how the Holy Spirit operates with regard to human beings.

First, Thomas sees the effects of grace in terms of the entire landscape of human nature, informing our natures from beginning of its perfection to the attaining of its end. These effects, he states, are: first, the healing of the soul; second, desiring of the good; third, carrying into effect the good proposed; fourth, perseverance in the good; and fifth, to reach glory.[546] We can see varying aspects of formal causation at work in those effects. We can also, however, see an intermingling of human agency/efficiency and divine influence. Both are essential to Thomas's

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[543] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.68–70. For but one example of Thomas's attention to precise distinctions: *Q.D. de verit.* 27.2 corp., where Thomas discusses how grace is prior to charity.

[544] See, for example: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.109–111; 1–2.68; 2–2.19.

[545] For examples of such a mapping, see: Blankenhorn*, The Mystery of Union with God*, ch. 6: "Grace in Thomas;" Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective In Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts*, esp. chs. 1–3.
Grace can, in a simplified narrative, be distinguished in terms of capacity and of application in regard to human nature. Grace understood as a divine gift is 'habitual' grace, and relates to human nature in terms of capacity. Grace understood as a divine help is 'actual' grace, and relates to human nature in terms of application/operation. My thanks to Jeremy Wilkins (Boston College), and Robert Barry (Providence College), for this succinct articulation of the distinction between habitual and actual grace, which arose in an exchange examining the notion of *privatio boni* in Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.109.3, at the 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, 1 June 2017.

[546] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.3 corp.

understanding of divine grace at work in human nature. Thomas insists that God does not work in us without us (even in terms of our justification) – grace requires that humans contribute consent and the operation of the will.[547] He invokes Augustine on this point: "[God] operates that we may will, and when we will, he cooperates that we may perfect."[548] In this way Thomas indicates the dual-nature of divine grace as operative and cooperative: "Now man is helped by God to will the good, through the means of operating grace. And hence, the end being already intended, grace cooperates with us."[549] Though Thomas does elsewhere advise caution in conflating the varying effects of divine operations toward human nature, in this instance he is willing to conclude that "the whole operation [of justification] pertains to grace."[550]

Second, Thomas differentiates generally between gifts and virtues in terms of their effect upon human nature. Although both are understood (as above) to have their origin in grace, virtues are dispositions that perfect a human being in accordance with how it is natural for it to be moved; gifts dispose human beings to be moved by God.[551] Thomas groups the divinely-infused virtues as: the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love), the cardinal/moral virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and courage), and the intellectual virtues (wisdom, science, and understanding).[552] The seven divine gifts are articulated in terms of the virtues to which they correspond, insofar as providing the divine assistance of ordering them to their supernatural end

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[547] Aquinas *ST* 1–2.111.2 ad 2 and ad 3.
[548] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.2 corp.: "*Unde post praemissa verba subdit Augustinus, ut autem velimus operatur, cum autem volumus, ut perficiamus nobis cooperatur*;" ref.: Augustine, *De gratis et lib. arbit.* 17. See also Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.1 ad 3; *Contra gent.* 3.89.
[549] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.2 corp., ad 3: "*Homo autem per gratiam operantem adiuvatur a Deo ut bonum velit. Et ideo, praesupposito iam fine, consequens est ut gratia nobis cooperetur*."
Recall: Aquinas's doctrines of operative and cooperative grace are informed by the Augustinian tradition. See: Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 16.32–17.33; Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.2 s.c. Ref.: chapter 1, 29–30, nn84, 85.
[550] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.2 ad 2: "*Ad secundum dicendum quod Deus non sine nobis nos iustificat, quia per motum liberi arbitrii, dum iustificamur, Dei iustitiae consentimus. Ille tamen motus non est causa gratiae, sed effectus. Unde tota operatio pertinet ad gratiam*." See also: Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 27.2 resp.
[551] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.68.1. See: Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 31–32.
[552] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.62, 60, and 57. There are also 'acquired' virtues of the moral virtues, of the same names – see: Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 3.33.1.2.4 corp. See also: Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective,* 14–15.

(understanding and knowledge, both appended to faith; fear, appended to hope; wisdom, appended to love; counsel, appended to prudence; piety, appended to justice; courage, appended to courage).[553] Finally, regarding the 'relative priority' or 'ranking' of the gifts and virtues, and how they fit together in their operations, Thomas states that the theological virtues are the principle/origin of the gifts, and the gifts are the principle/origin of the intellectual and moral virtues.[554]

Third, the paradigmatic act of divine munificence toward human beings is seen, for Thomas, in the infusion of the theological virtue of charity. The wonder of this bestowal, in Thomas, is that charity is both proper to the divine nature and at the same time fitted to collaborate seamlessly with human nature – recall Thomas's notion of *capax Dei*.[555] Regarding its effect in human beings, charity can be seen to function as a formal, final, and efficient causal principle toward and within human nature.[556] *Formally*, Thomas states, charity operates to unite us to God.[557] Thomas describes the nature of charity in intimate terms as the friendship of man for God, a description grounded in the Aristotelian notion of friendship as entailing mutual love, well-wishing, and communication of good.[558] Thomas envisions this friendship as "a certain familiar colloquy" – a friendly conversation, as it were.[559] In the friendship of charity, God

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[553] Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 274–277. Pinsent notes that the virtue of 'temperance' does not correspond to a gift insofar as it relates to a good perceived by the sensitive appetite, so it is meaningless to speak of being moved by God (or of 'God's stance') regarding matters addressed by temperance. Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective,* 31, 60.
[554] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.19.9 ad 4. Ref: Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 277; Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective,* 33.
[555] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.113.10 s.c. and corp.: "the soul is naturally capable of grace" – "*quia naturaliter anima est gratiae capax*"). Ref.: 167, and n541.
[556] Ref.: chapter 1, 17–19.
[557] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.2 ad 3.
[558] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.1 corp. (regarding mutual benevolence, and communication of good); 27.2 (regarding the union of affections).
[559] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.65.5 corp.: "*Haec autem societas hominis ad Deum, quae est quaedam familiaris conversatio cum ipso, inchoatur quidem hic in praesenti per gratiam, perficietur autem in futuro per gloriam.*" Diana Fritz-Cates observes that Thomas's invoking the human-relation image of a colloquy for the friendship of God with man suggests that it "will have to include something like a weaving together of perceptions, beliefs, and desires through

communicates his happiness, his knowledge and love of his goodness, to the human being – a goodness that, thereby, the person takes as their own, connatural good.[560] Ryan notes that Thomas's notion of connaturality means that the divine gifts, while often "strange and wonderful," are "not alien incursions into human life and awareness," but rather "'the Mystery of God working palpably within him.'"[561] In terms of *finality*, we have seen that charity orients us to our ultimate end.[562] In chapter 2, we saw the divine, gracious act of "turning the face" of the human being to understand God as both its origin and ultimate Good, through the infusion of charity into the human soul.[563] This role of charity as enabling a loving and resting in the good can also be seen in Thomas's doctrine of *complacentia boni*, a theme that will inform the work of chapters 5 and 6.[564]

Thomas goes onto observe, however, that while charity acts formally and finally toward human beings, the acts that arise from charity still require an *efficient* cause belonging to the agent – the human will.[565] Hankey reads Thomas on this point as insisting that divine causality cannot function "as an invisible hand."[566] Though charity *enables* human beings to be moved by God, it is still the human agent who must *enact* the moving. How does Thomas account for acts of human agency whose principle is divine charity? As we saw in chapter 1, Thomas's solution

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the deliberate sharing of conversation and activity over time." Diana Fritz Cates, *Choosing to Feel: Virtue, Friendship, and Compassion for Friends*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 120.

[560] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.60.2; 112.1; 2–2.45.2 corp.; 23.1 corp.; 1–2.68.2 corp.; 112.2 corp. See also: *ST* 1.43.5 ad 2; 1.12.13 ad 3. Ref.: Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 63–64.

[561] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowing and Connaturality in Aquinas," 65; with ref. to: Anthony J. Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit: Aquinas and the Modern Context," *The Thomist* 38 (April 1974): 193–231, at 196–197.

[562] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.7 corp.

[563] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.38.1.1–2; *Q.D. de verit.* 27.2 resp. Ref.: chapter 2, 99, n335.

[564] See: 215; 223–225; 231–232, and n754.

[565] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.23.2 corp. We recall (ref. n548) that the human being's ability to act, or to will, at all is a gift of the divine within human nature. Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.111.2 corp.: "*Unde post praemissa verba subdit Augustinus, ut autem velimus operatur, cum autem volumus, ut perficiamus nobis cooperatur*;" ref.: Augustine, *De gratis et lib. arbit.* 17. See also Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.6.1 ad 3; *Contra gent.* 3.89.

[566] Hankey, "God's Care for Human Individuals," 23. For Hankey, this stance in Thomas is a salient example of his Aristotelian-enriched Neoplatonism.

is his doctrine of created charity – a divinely-infused habitual gift that belongs properly to the human being (though, as we saw, in an accidental manner) such that the human agent operates as the genuine subject of their own acts of charity.[567]

All this comes together in Thomas's treatment of the Person of the Holy Spirit. Charity comes to human nature as the infusion of the Holy Spirit – as "the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in the mind."[568] In this way, human nature comes to be elevated above itself – it is 'informed' with the divine way of knowing, loving, and responding, and can *put those to use within its own operations*.[569] Thomas describes the Holy Spirit as the gift of God to us that makes us his friends, by uniting us to him, and shaping and fitting us to receive divine truth from him.[570]

Thomas understands the Spirit's names, which indicate the proper attributes of the divine Person, to be Love and Gift. These names illumine not only what the nature of the Holy Spirit is in itself, but also in its operation among human beings.[571] In examining these names, we should first note that in Thomas the nature of the Spirit's mode of procession itself ('spiration') entails

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[567] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.110.2 corp.; 2–2.23.2 corp. Recall, from chapter 1, 17–19: these 'created' infusions safeguard both the agency of the human being ('horizontal'), insofar as the human being serves as the genuine subject of their own acts of charity, and the gratuitousness of the divine gifts ('vertical'), insofar as they are not 'necessary' aspects of human nature that God would therefore be bound to provide.

[568] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.24.2 corp.; 23.2 corp.: "*ipse spiritus sanctus mentem inhabitans*."
Recall, from chapter 1, 37, and n119: Both following and building upon Augustine, Thomas extensively speaks of charity both in terms of its source – i.e., the Holy Spirit – as in terms of its presence genuinely within us – i.e., *created* charity. Ref.: Augustine, *De trinitate* 8.7.10; 15.19.37; Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 1.17.1.1; 2.26.1.1; *Q.D. de verit.* 27.1–2; *ST* 1–2.110.1; 2–2.23.2.

[569] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.60.2; 2–2.45.2.

[570] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 4.21.5 and 8. See also *Super Ioan.* 14.4.1916.

[571] Both Fergus Kerr and Bruce Marshall note that Thomas has been criticized in varying ways for 'leaving nothing for the Holy Spirit to do' – i.e., unlike the Father and the Son, the Spirit is seen to have no proper operation of its own. Both object to this categorization – Kerr, pointing to the dynamic, operative gifts of the Spirit in Aquinas's *ST* 1–2.68–70, and Marshall, emphasizing "how freely Thomas assigns particular temporal actions and outcomes to the Holy Spirit in his *Commentary on John*, and in other biblical commentaries as well." See Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 132–133; Bruce D. Marshall, "What Does the Spirit Have to Do?" in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, eds. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, 62–77 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), at 62–63. It has long seemed to me a fruitful question to consider how the Holy Spirit's ways of acting among human beings might be considered not only as an effective influence upon but also a model for human interpersonal activity. This is one of the questions that grounds the work of this chapter.

movement – both of God, in tending toward the beloved, and of the human being who is similarly moved by the Spirit toward acts of love.[572] Insofar as the effect of the Spirit upon human nature is to dispose it to be moved by God, we can understand the work of the Spirit toward human beings as the gift of movement.[573]

As to the first of the names, Thomas states that 'Love' is a proper name of the Holy Spirit, but qualifies that the articulation must encompass the divine origin or agent of the tending-toward, the object of that tending, *and* the dynamic motion of the tending – such that in saying that a name of the Holy Spirit is 'love' we must understand that name as "love proceeding."[574] We should also note, as significant to our discussion, that the divine act of tending-toward (i.e., the movement of the Holy Spirit) encompasses as its object both the divine, primarily, and created beings, secondarily:

> The Father loves not only the Son, but also Himself and us, by the Holy Ghost … As the Father speaks Himself and every creature by His begotten Word, inasmuch as the Word "begotten" adequately represents the Father and every creature; so He loves Himself and every creature by the Holy Ghost, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost proceeds as the love of the primal goodness whereby the Father loves Himself and every creature. Thus it is evident that relation to the creature is implied both in the Word and in the proceeding Love, as it were in a secondary way, inasmuch as the divine truth and goodness are a principle of understanding and loving all creatures.[575]

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[572] Aquinas, *ST* 1.27 corp., and ad 3.

[573] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.68.1 corp. In his commentary on the gospel of John (see *Super Ioan.* 14.6.1958), Thomas speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit as giving us the capacity to receive and grasp the teaching of the Word (Christ). Thomas's phrase *capaces facit* seems to also in a parallel sense evoke the image of 'making space' within us for receiving the things of God.

[574] Aquinas, *ST* 1.37.1 corp. The theme of 'what' the procession of the Holy Spirit indicates is difficult to articulate with philosophical precision, a difficulty that Thomas partly attributes to weakness/ambiguity of grammar – see also article 2 of Q37. Thomas clarifies that the Holy Spirit itself is not 'the love of God,' but is God's love proceeding – i.e., from the Father and the Son – and is thus the third person of the Trinity (see 1.37.1 ad 3). However, Thomas concedes that human language will require a certain amount of circumlocution (*circumlocutionibus*) when speaking about the Person of the Holy Spirit (1.37.1 corp.). Certainly, we see in his treatment of the name 'Gift' that the Holy Spirit is spoken of as both the act of giving and the gift itself.

[575] Aquinas, *ST* 1.37.2 ad 3: "*Pater non solum filium, sed etiam se et nos diligit spiritu sancto … Unde, sicut dicit se et omnem creaturam verbo quod genuit, inquantum verbum genitum sufficienter repraesentat patrem et omnem creaturam; ita diligit se et omnem creaturam spiritu sancto, inquantum spiritus sanctus procedit ut amor bonitatis primae, secundum quam pater amat se et omnem creaturam. Et sic etiam patet quod respectus importatur ad creaturam et in verbo et in amore procedente, quasi secundario; inquantum scilicet veritas et bonitas divina est principium intelligendi et amandi omnem creaturam*."

Regarding the second name, Thomas states that to say the name of the Holy Spirit is properly 'Gift' (even "a most excellent gift"/*donum excellentissimum*) indicates more than just the sending of the Holy Spirit from the Father – for the same is said of the Son in John 3:16: "God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son."[576] Instead, the name also indicates two things significant to our understanding of how the Holy Spirit operates toward and within human beings. First, a gift is something that, when given, belongs to the recipient, to use and enjoy as they wish.[577] As rational creatures, Thomas reminds us, it is only human beings that can be said to enjoy the person of the Holy Spirit and to use its effects within their own operations:

> Other creatures can be moved by a divine person, not, however, in such a way as to be able to enjoy the divine person, and to use the effect thereof. The rational creature does sometimes attain thereto; as when it is made partaker of the divine Word and of the Love proceeding, so as freely to know God truly and to love God rightly. Hence the rational creature alone can possess the divine person.[578]

Second, the name Gift indicates that the recipient of the Holy Spirit, though able to possess it and use it once given, can in no way obtain it on its own power – it must be given from another source:

> Nevertheless in order that it may possess Him in this manner, its own power avails nothing: hence this must be given it from above; for that is said to be given to us which we have from another source. Thus a divine person can "be given," and can be a "gift."[579]

In Thomas's treatment of the Holy Spirit, the names Love and Gift, and the realities they signify, ultimately coincide. It is particularly fitting to speak of the Holy Spirit's procession as a gift, or

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[576] Aquinas, *ST* 1.38.2 ad 1; *Super Ioan.* 14.4.1916.
[577] Aquinas, *ST* 1.38.1 corp.
[578] Aquinas, *ST* 1.38.1 corp.: "*Aliae autem creaturae moveri quidem possunt a divina persona; non tamen sic quod in potestate earum sit frui divina persona, et uti effectu eius. Ad quod quandoque pertingit rationalis creatura; ut puta cum sic fit particeps divini verbi et procedentis amoris, ut possit libere Deum vere cognoscere et recte amare. Unde sola creatura rationalis potest habere divinam personam*."
[579] Aquinas, *ST* 1.38.1 corp.: "*Sed ad hoc quod sic eam habeat, non potest propria virtute pervenire, unde oportet quod hoc ei desuper detur; hoc enim dari nobis dicitur, quod aliunde habemus. Et sic divinae personae competit dari, et esse donum*."

bestowal, insofar as we speak of a person 'giving their love' to another when they begin to love them.[580]

One final element of Thomas's account of the Holy Spirit that especially illumines how the Holy Spirit moves among human beings is his treatment of the fruit of the Spirit identified as benignity/*benignitas*, which perfects a person in regard to external things.[581] Thomas states that the nature of the benignity is signified by the etymology at play: benignity is a "good fire" (*bona igneitas*), one that "makes a man melt to relieve the needs of others."[582] He describes the benign person as one "in whom the salutary flame [*bonus ignis*] of love has enkindled the desire to be kind to their neighbor."[583] One of the effects of love, he states, is melting toward another:

> The freezing or hardening of the heart is a disposition incompatible with love: while melting denotes a softening of the heart, whereby the heart shows itself to be ready for the entrance of the beloved.[584]

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[580] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 4.23.11. Thomas qualifies the use of 'begin' as reflecting the effect in time of God's eternal love when an individual is drawn toward him. It is interesting to consider the finite, time-bound status of humanity as illumining the philosophical difficulty of God's love for the individual: the 'gift' of God's love is manifest in drawing individual persons to love God, each 'turning' being is a distinct historical event that 'locates' the eternal love of God *vis-à-vis* a specific, finite individual. (Contrast this with Thomas's treatment in *ST* 1.20.2 ad 2, which emphasizes the *eternal*, and thus universal, aspect of divine love for creatures.) See also the discussion in n610 regarding Thomas's wrestling with varying notions of God's knowledge of and love for individuals.

[581] E.g., Aquinas, *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Galatas lectura* 5.6.332.
Ref: Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Galatas lectura.* Latin text based on the 1953 Marietti edition, prepared by Raffaele Cai, transcribed by Robert Busa, and revised by Enrique Alarcón and other editors and collaborators of this bilingual edition, Pamplona: Fundación Tomás de Aquino, 2012. English translation prepared by Fabian R. Larcher, Matthew Levering, Jeremy Holmes, of Ave Maria University, and edited by the Aquinas Institute. Scripture text in Greek the Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th Revised Edition, edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993. Edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Gal.
See: chapter 3 n480.

[582] Aquinas, *Super Gal.* 5.6.332: *"facit hominem fluere ad subveniendum necessitatibus aliorum*." I am indebted to Andrew Pinsent for drawing attention to Thomas's use of this imagery. Pinsent, "The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit," 482.

[583] Aquinas *ST* 1–2.70.3 corp.: "*dicuntur enim benigni quos bonus ignis amoris fervere facit ad benefaciendum proximis*."

[584] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.28.5 ad 1: "*Unde cordis congelatio vel duritia est dispositio repugnans amori. Sed liquefactio importat quandam mollificationem cordis, qua exhibet se cor habile ut amatum in ipsum subintret*."

Just as the Holy Spirit disposes the human being to be moved by the things of God (by making them objects of desire connatural to us), so also it disposes them to be melted toward another, open and ready to receive the other into itself as a beloved.

C3. Joint attention: human activity toward other humans as a shared stance with the divine perspective

We have seen in Thomas's account that when human nature is infused with charity, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the result is a new connaturality between an individual and the perspective of God. Connaturality, in this way, means that a human being can operate "as if it is natural and normal for us to know, feel, love, and act as God does."[585] Ryan envisions this connaturality as a "change in horizon" for natural human operations, where the human being is "increasingly receptive to God's mode of knowing, loving, and responding."[586] By means of the gifts of the Spirit, human beings experience a "vertical freedom where there is 'a dismantling of limited horizons of knowing and loving.'"[587] We are speaking, it should be clarified, of the transformative power of charity upon human faculties in terms of their *ends*, not the nature of the operations themselves. This is the wonder of the coworking of nature and grace – unity with God is enacted through *human* modes of knowing and loving. As Mongeau observes: "Communion with God is the radical horizon within which we act concretely, expressing love for God and neighbor."[588]

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[585] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 60. Ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1.1.5 ad 2; 1–2.27.2 ad 2. Similarly, Torrell observes that to grasp how human beings should act in the world, we should look to how God acts in the world. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, 73.
[586] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 63.
[587] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 66; Kelly, "The Gifts of the Spirit: Aquinas and the Modern Context," 212.
[588] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 136–137.

Ryan notes that when Thomas is emphasizing the being-moved aspect of the divine-human collaboration, connaturality is spoken of as compassion – that is, the person's orientation is identified with *patiens,* but "where the objects one is moved by are 'divine things:'"

> It belongs to wisdom as a gift of the Holy Ghost to judge aright about them on account of connaturality with them: thus Dionysius says (Div. Nom. ii) that "Hierotheus is perfect in Divine things, for he not only learns, but is patient of, Divine things." Now this sympathy or connaturality for Divine things is the result of charity, which unites us to God.[589]

We can note that in this context *compassio* can be translated as 'sympathy' rather than 'compassion' – a helpful signal for modern readers insofar as it nudges us toward the sense of 'feeling with,' and away from infelicitous notions of pity or superiority.[590] Ryan clarifies further (*pace* the Dominican translators) that in this way connaturality can be understood as "not just sympathy 'for' the things of God but sympathy 'with' or conformity with God as friends sharing a life together."[591] Being 'moved by' the things of God clearly entails a dynamic relation with things external to us, but, as we have seen, Thomas is very clear that the movements themselves do not originate externally. He contrasts being moved by God with a purely instrumental mode of activity:

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[589] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 63. Ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.60.2; 2–2.45.2 corp.: "*rectum iudicium habere de eis secundum quandam connaturalitatem ad ipsa pertinet ad sapientiam secundum quod donum est spiritus sancti, sicut Dionysius dicit, in II cap. de Div. Nom., quod Hierotheus est perfectus in divinis non solum discens, sed et patiens divina. Huiusmodi autem compassio sive connaturalitas ad res divinas fit per caritatem, quae quidem unit nos Deo*."

[590] Nussbaum notes the difficulty of the association of superiority with the term 'pity,' and separates that from her own understanding and usage of 'compassion." I find her sensitivity to this issue helpful, but apply the caution also to the term 'compassion' itself. I have reservations about framing the object of compassion specifically as the *suffering* of another, rather than as simply the other – especially insofar as the latter subsequently requires attentiveness to the other's self-narrative in order to know *what* it is we are 'feeling-with.' Therefore, I notice with appreciation the Dominican Fathers' translation of *compassio* in this text as 'sympathy,' and rely upon that reading as a guide for understanding Thomas's notion of compassion in terms of 'feeling-with.' (Note also that in both Dutch and German the word for compassion and sympathy is literally 'suffering with,' as a transliteration of 'compassion': Mitleitung in German, and medelijden in Dutch.) See: Martha C. Nussbaum, "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13, 1 (Winter 1996): 27–58, at 29.

[591] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 63–64.

> [Consider] the case of an instrument which has no faculty of action, but only of being acted upon. But man is not an instrument of that kind; for he is so acted upon, by the Holy Ghost, that he also acts himself, in so far as he has a free-will.[592]

How does such a collaboration work, concretely? Gilles Mongeau observes that this moving of the Spirit among human beings is imitated by the activity of teachers toward their students – their work is to stir up acts of knowing within the students themselves, that belong properly to the students.[593] Jordan reads Thomas as emphasizing that the teacher limits, or we might say restrains, their power to the act of *assisting* the inner agency of the student (*coadiuvans agens principale*).[594]

Pinsent identifies this 'pedagogical' relationship between humans and the Holy Spirit as "gift-based movement," and examines what it might entail by comparison with the psychological phenomenon of "joint attention."[595] In acts of joint attention, a person attends to something *with another person*.[596] That is, two people share attention to some object (paradigmatically, at the suggestion of one of the persons to the other). An essential feature of such an act is a mutual awareness of the other person's presence and active engagement as a distinct participant in the moment – an awareness that is reflected grammatically in our use of the pronoun 'you.'[597] Pinsent directs his focus primarily to the mutual presence entailed in the pronoun 'you.' However, we can extend this grammatical analogy to note that second-person relations, reflected

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[592] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.68.3 ad 2: "*Ad secundum dicendum quod ratio illa procedit de instrumento cuius non est agere, sed solum agi. Tale autem instrumentum non est homo; sed sic agitur a spiritu sancto, quod etiam agit, inquantum est liberi arbitrii.*"
[593] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom,* 78. See: Aquinas, *Q.D. de verit.* 10 and 11.
[594] Aquinas, *ST* 1.117.1 corp.; Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas,* Publications in Medieval Studies 24, edited by Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 196–197.
[595] Pinsent, "The Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit," 478–479; *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics*, 34–35, 41–43.
[596] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics*, 42.
[597] Pinsent, *The Second-person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics*, 47.

in the articulation 'you,' entail an explicit affirmation of two first-person 'I's – i.e., meaningful use of 'you' requires two agents, each consciously aware of their own presence in the moment.[598]

An inescapable effect of such an act is that a person's experience of the object becomes "qualitatively different" – the presence of the other person not only accounts for (in some cases) a person's attention to the object at all but also shapes their *experience* of the object.[599] We do not see it, understand it, or engage with it in quite the same way that we would on our own; our experience of the object is different for the other person being there and consciously sharing in the moment. We experience a "shared stance."[600] In shared attention, it must be clarified, the focus of attention is not upon the other person primarily, but on the object being considered together.[601] In the case of gift-based movements shared by human beings and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit not only draws our attention to certain things, but affects how we understand and engage those things. To return to Ryan's language, it is in acts of joint-attention with the Holy Spirit that we come to know, feel, love, and act as God does.[602] [603]

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[598] Thus, we might more fully (though awkwardly, to be sure) represent the joint-attention dynamic as "I, seeing you observe X, and you seeing me observe X, and each of us seeing the other seeing the other." Davies treats extensively of the ethical significance of human interactions understood as meetings of 'I' and 'Other-I.' Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, see esp. 34–37.

[599] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics*, 42–43. Here, 'object' should be taken in the soft sense of 'what one directs their attention to' – which, of course, could be another person.

[600] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics*, 43, 49.

[601] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics*, 32, 42–43.

[602] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 60.

[603] Pinsent extends the developmental analogy of joint attention to the *absence* of this behavior/ability as well. He speaks of people who, developmentally, cannot 'be moved' (e.g., people on the autism spectrum), and compares this with the spiritual problem of lack of docility. See Pinsent, "The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit," 478–480. However, this is a problematic move. It parallels a spiritual openness to being moved by the Holy Spirit with a neurotypical set of social abilities. Though we have indeed examined Aquinas's treatment of the problem of the 'frozen' or 'hardened' heart (see Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.28.5 ad 1), it seems that the analogy of joint attention should be taken as appropriate and instructive only in the affirmative sense, not the privative. Instead, we would want to speak of how neurodivergent individuals participate in the divine nature as *imago Dei* and cooperate with the moving of the Holy Spirit among human beings. Such an inquiry lies outside the scope of this thesis, but it is a significant aspect of the project of providing a theological account of human nature – and one that the language of this thesis should leave room for. My thanks to David Giordano, and Bob Sweetman, for drawing my attention to this issue.

We will next examine, in this inquiry into 'gift-based movement,' what the divine things are that the Holy Spirit draws our attention to and toward which we can have a shared stance. In Thomas, without question, the Holy Spirit pre-eminently draws us to know and love God as our ultimate end – i.e., the Vision of God, or beatitude.[604] However, it is equally essential to understand that, in Thomas, knowledge and love of God entails knowledge and love of other creatures.[605] We see in Thomas two main reasons for this.

First, Thomas addresses the theological/divine imperative to love our fellow man along with our love for God. Certainly scripture, as Thomas points out, declares the divine command to do so, and indeed the person who says he loves God but hates his brother is taken to be lying about the first.[606] From a 'theologically practical' standpoint, as it were, Thomas also points out that that to love God in Himself alone (which we could indeed do) is simply less perfect than to love one's neighbor for God's sake, which would necessarily include the love of God – he identifies such isolated love of God (i.e., without extension to our neighbor) as an "inadequate and imperfect love of God."[607] Thomas shows that there is a circulation, or completeness, when the divine and human objects of our faculties of knowing and loving are taken together: whereas

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[604] Aquinas, *ST* 1.26.2 and 3; 1–2.68.2 corp.; 109.3 corp., and ad 1; 6.corp.; 2–2.2.3 corp.; 3.9.2 corp., and ad 3; *Contra gent.* 3.150.3; 4.1.

[605] Thomas addresses this two-fold 'shared stance' in his commentary upon Christ's words in Matthew 11:29: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (translated from the Vulgate: "*Tollite iugum meum super vos, et discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde*"). Thomas states: "For the whole new law consists in two things: in meekness and humility. By meekness a man is ordered with respect to neighbor. … By humility, one is ordered with respect to oneself and with respect to God" – "*Tota enim lex nova consistit in duobus: in mansuetudine et humilitate. Per mansuetudinem homo ordinatur ad proximum. … Per humilitatem ordinatur ad se, et ad Deum.*" Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura,* 11.3.970.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura,* Latin text based on the 1951 Marietti edition, supplemented by the Leonine Commission at 11:5–6:8, and 6:16–19, and edited by the Aquinas Institute; English translation by Jeremy Holmes and Beth Mortensen, revised and edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Matt.

[606] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.27.8 corp.; ref.: 1 John 4:20–21.

[607] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.27.8 corp.: "*dilectionem Dei insufficientem et imperfectam*."

our knowledge of God must begin with knowledge of creatures and then proceed upward, our love of creatures begins in love for God and moves downward.[608]

Second, and perhaps most significant to our work in this chapter, our love for God must include loving other beings because *God Himself does* – and therefore, insofar as the Holy Spirit moves us to acts of joint-attention, we will regard other people as precious objects of knowledge and love:

> Whoever loves a person must, as a consequence, also love those loved by that person and those related to him. Now, men are loved by God, for He has prearranged for them, as an ultimate end, the enjoyment of Himself. Therefore, it should be that, as a person becomes a lover of God, he also becomes a lover of his neighbor.[609]

While a philosophical justification for how the divine can be said to know and love individuals is a complex question with a difficult history, Thomas clearly states in texts such as this that, from the human perspective, love for God includes love for our neighbor *as the beloved of God*.[610]

Having considered humans as a special object of God's love and attention, and toward which human beings can enact a 'shared stance' with God, we will now consider *in what manner*

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[608] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.27.4 corp., and ad 2; see also 25.1 corp., regarding that the love of one's neighbor entails the love of God.

[609] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.117.3: "*Quicumque diligit aliquem, consequens est ut etiam diligat dilectos ab eo, et eos qui coniuncti sunt ei. Homines autem dilecti sunt a Deo, quibus sui ipsius fruitionem quasi ultimum finem praedisposuit. Oportet igitur ut, sicut aliquis fit dilector Dei, ita etiam fiat dilector proximi*."

[610] This paper takes the notion of 'God's love for mankind' in the commonsense manner of including love for individual persons – for which there is certainly a ground in Thomas (see above; see also Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 4.23.11, where God's love is seen to extend as a gift to finite individuals in time). The philosophical difficulty of how God is said to know, exercise providential care for, and love individual human beings is beyond the scope of this paper, but is important to understanding the precision with which Thomas wrestled with the inheriting and employing of Aristotle, Neoplatonism, and Christian Neoplatonism in his day. (Recall in chapter 2, 54, Bonaventure's critique of Thomas as suggesting that divine knowledge should extend only to things in their quiddities – Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexameron* 12, 15 [*Opera Omnia* 5, 386], noted in Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 157). Pasnau notes that Thomas is clear that individuals contribute the perfection of the universe only as to their species (or as the good of a part for the whole), even in terms of human beings (Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 2.84.5; *Super Sent.* 2.17.2.2 ad 6; *Sent. De an.* 18 resp.; *ST* 1.73.1 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.17.1) – however, he states, "this is not a conclusion that Aquinas wants," because "human beings are qualitatively different [from sheep and oxen] in this regard." Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature,* 401. By contrast, Pasnau concludes, "It is indeed the central feature of God's relationship to us that he does care: he loves us and takes joy in us, he is provident and merciful toward us." Pasnau, 403–404. See: Aquinas, *ST* 1.65.2 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.112. See also: Hankey, "God's Care for Human Individuals."

God views human beings, and thereby the nature of the 'stance' itself. We will conduct this part of our inquiry through an examination specifically of Thomas's treatment of mercy.

C4. *Misericordia*: a case-study in shared perspective

We stated earlier that, in Thomas, our life as human beings entails a vocation to know and love other persons. We need to now consider that we fulfill our vocation as human beings most perfectly when we know and love others not only *because* God does, but also *as* God does, and examine what our properly-human participation in that divine manner entails.[611] This is a bold vision of human love, but one that we have been prepared for by the notion of similarity, as we saw it treated of in Proclus's doctrines on providential care, and the Christian notion of the *imago Dei.*

Thomas identifies the attitude of God toward humanity as preeminently that of mercy/*misericordia*:

> It belongs to mercy to be bountiful to others, and, what is more, to succor others in their wants, which pertains chiefly to one who stands above. Hence mercy is accounted as being proper to God: and therein His omnipotence is declared to be chiefly manifested.[612]

When treating of dispositions like this specifically in God (dispositions that in human terms we associate with emotions – such as love, anger, joy or sorrow, etc.), Thomas is very clear: there can be no *passions* properly speaking in God.[613] Thomas explains that in God these dispositions are in general spoken of metaphorically, and are in reality functions of his will – thus the activity associated with love, for example, is a *tending toward* something, rather than a *being affected by*

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[611] I.e., the vocation to participate in divine providence. See: Ryan, "Aquinas on Compassion: Has He Something to Offer Today?" *Irish Theological Quarterly* 75, 2 (2010): 157–174, at 170–1. Ref: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.91.2; 2.4 ad 1; 1.22.3; *Contra gent.* 3.21.

[612] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.4 corp.: "*Pertinet enim ad misericordiam quod alii effundat; et, quod plus est, quod defectus aliorum sublevet; et hoc est maxime superioris. Unde et misereri ponitur proprium Deo, et in hoc maxime dicitur eius omnipotentia manifestari*."

[613] Aquinas, *ST* 1.19.11 corp.; 20.1 ad 1, and ad 2.

(such that we associate with the activity of 'feeling').[614] The case of mercy/*misericordia* is especially helpful in illumining the action-based nature of God's dispositions. Ostensibly, mercy entails being "sorrowful at heart [*miserum cor*]" at another's misery, as if it were one's own, accompanied by a desire to alleviate it.[615] Thomas's elaboration of what 'misery' can mean sets the stage for understanding God's disposition toward human beings. He identifies misery as a 'defect' of some kind of goodness, one that diminishes or prevents some aspect of human happiness.[616] God, therefore, in his complete goodness naturally apprehends a concrete human situation in terms of the varying defects of goodness – not necessarily as a 'moral' judgment, but as a practical reality of what it means to be the divine intellect. When such an apprehension and appraisal is accompanied by love, the effect is an impulse to remedy that defect with a bestowal of the requisite goodness.

Thus we first note, in our inquiry into the manner of God's stance toward us, that it is action-based. God's goodness by its nature manifests in action. In stating this, however, we can also note how Thomas invokes Dionysius to illustrate just how remarkable it is that God, in loving us, should be said to put himself in act toward human creatures:

> A lover is placed outside himself, and made to pass into the object of his love, inasmuch as he wills good to the beloved; and works for that good by his providence even as he works for his own. Hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv, 1): "On behalf of the truth we must make bold to say even this, that He Himself, the cause of all things, by His abounding love and goodness, is placed outside Himself by His providence for all existing things."[617]

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[614] Aquinas, *ST* 1.19.11 corp.; 20.1 corp.; 2 corp.
[615] Aquinas, *ST* 1.21.3 corp.
[616] Aquinas, *ST* 1.21.3 corp.; 4 corp.
[617] Aquinas, *ST* 1.20.2 ad 1: "*Ad primum ergo dicendum quod amans sic fit extra se in amatum translatus, inquantum vult amato bonum, et operatur per suam providentiam, sicut et sibi. Unde et Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom., audendum est autem et hoc pro veritate dicere, quod et ipse omnium causa, per abundantiam amativae bonitatis, extra seipsum fit ad omnia existentia providentiis.*"

Thomas explains this 'placing Himself outside Himself' in this way: God always primarily loves his own goodness – but in the loving of his creation, "he puts the other, as it were, in the place of himself; and regards the good done to him [the other] as done to himself."[618] We see, therefore, that in God's loving stance toward us there is also a desire for a mutual presence – i.e., that we should be in God and that God should be in us, each fully and therefore ambiguously present as both lover and beloved.[619] It is not surprising that Thomas should draw upon Dionysius's mystical language to express the wonder of the divine's merciful engagement with humanity.

Further, we should give attention to the 'apprehension' implied in the act of divine mercy. In order for God to be said to volitionally act to dispel a defect within an individual, God must understand the human being in their finite particularity.[620] He must know the nature and extent of the defect, and what form of goodness would remedy it – including, Thomas states, the goodness/healing of forgiveness.[621] For that, he must know the individual being as a subject with its own good and a contingent context of flourishing. For Thomas, the loving activity of God entails knowledge of beings as subjects in their own right, and therefore the affirmation of each being as the ground of their intelligibility. In God, however, this activity (indeed, all his activity) entails a unity of intellect and will. In God, knowing and loving are unified in one motion, and thus mutually entail each other. Rowan Williams observes that an implication of the inseparability of divine knowing and loving is that even the perfect, eternal divine knowledge

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[618] Aquinas, *ST* 1.20.1 ad 3: "*Et sic utitur eo tanquam seipso, referens bonum ad illum, sicut ad seipsum.*" Ryan depicts Thomas's sense of this 'ecstatic' aspect of divine compassion as "the willingness to enter another's chaos" – a phrase he borrows from James F. Keenan. Ryan, "Aquinas on Compassion: Has He Something to Offer Today," 170 n73; ref.: Keenan, "AIDS and Casuistry of Accommodation," in *Reflecting Theologically on AIDS: A Global Challenge*, ed. Robin Gill, 186–202 (London: Hymns, Ancient and Modern, 2007), at 202.
[619] See also: Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 4.21.4; *ST* 1–2.66.6 corp.
[620] Aquinas's treatment of mercy in *ST* 1.21.4 employs language that entails intent and intellection in God's bestowing of perfection – for example, in justice the good must be proportionate; in liberality the good must be not for God's use, etc.
[621] Aquinas, *ST* 1.21.3 ad 2.

does not commit the violence of containing the other as an absolute object – the divine understanding of the other is "never a possessing, because it is the act (the knowledge) of love."[622] A result of the unity of God's knowing and loving is an affirmation of human subjectivity.

When Thomas extends his treatment of mercy to the context of human activity, as he does in his treatise on charity and what it entails, the contours of human participation in the divine stance begin to emerge.

Just as with our consideration of what is entailed in divine mercy, here we can first see the significance of *act* in the human participation of the divine. The human virtue of mercy, deriving its nature from the analogous activity in God, is manifest in acts of bountiful generosity to relieve the suffering of another, or to fill a want, and is a primary way that we become like God.[623] We *do* the same kinds of things that God himself does. Mercy, Thomas says, "likens us to God as regards similarity of works."[624] In fact, he goes so far as to say that, in regard to the external works that arise from being unified to God through charity, "The sum total of the Christian religion consists in mercy."[625]

We can, therefore, begin our inventory of contra-violent existence – both in terms of avoiding committing violence ourselves and in terms of working to remedy, or even prevent, effects of violence we encounter in the world around us – by the claim that our orientation

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[622] Williams, "What does love know? St. Thomas on the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 82, 964 (June 2001): 260–272, at 272. Thomas deals extensively with the issue of the unity of the divine operations specifically as it relates to the difficulty of the distinct identities of the Trinitarian Persons, a question that is outside the scope of this work. See also: *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, edited by Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005) – esp. Gilles Emery, "Biblical Exegesis and the Speculative Doctrine of the Trinity in St. Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on St. John*," 23–61, and Bruce D. Marshall, "What Does the Spirit Have to Do?" 62–77.
[623] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.1; 4 corp.
[624] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.4 ad 3: "*assimilamur Deo secundum similitudinem operationis*."
[625] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.4 ad 2: "*summa religionis Christianae in misericordia consistit*."

toward others should be *action-based*. Whatever we desire our disposition toward the other to entail needs to be exteriorly expressed in action – even as it is in God.

However, the reason that these acts play a significant role in our 'shared stance' with the Holy Spirit is not limited to their excellence in similarity to divine activities – i.e., insofar as by doing them we are acting *as God does*. The significance of them to the 'joint perspective' is that they are *shared* activities. There is an intimacy, a union, that arises from doing activities with another, especially when those activities are proper to the nature of both actors – a *conversatio*, as Blankenhorn frames it, of shared acts of knowing and loving.[626] Returning to the 'ambiguity' that is of real interest to our work, we see here that in divine/human 'shared activities,' there is a genuine way in which the activity is proper to both the Holy Spirit and to the human agent, and also proper to the two working together, such that in a sense the operations are indistinguishable, or at least inseparable. In terms of acting as God does towards human beings, therefore, we should extend this notion of shared activities with God to the importance of shared activities *with other people*. If divine providential care for human beings includes the intimacy of the shared activities of knowing and loving, then our participation in providence should include an openness to activities of knowing and loving not only *of* other people, but perhaps even more so *with* them. It is an instance of acting *as* God does when we work to know and love the world around us collaboratively with other people – paradigmatically, *not* the people we already consider as like-minded friends. In practical reality, the suggestion of enacting our most personal and proper activities in tandem with some other person, especially one we see as an 'object' of providential care, seems rather alarming – it seems to put the integrity of our self-operations at risk, and thus

[626] Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 289; ref.: Aquinas, *Q.D. de virtutibus* 2.2 ad 7.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus,* Latin text based on the 1953 Marietti edition, edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/la/~QDeVirt.

our role as subject of our own narrative. We should recall, in such moments, the 'boldness' of Dionysius's description of divine love. He was right to say he 'made bold' because the suggestion was indeed shocking. How can it be said that God should 'go outside of himself' and yet still be God? Similarly, how can a human being 'share' their acts of knowing and loving and still be a human agent? Williams, engaging the same question, observes the marvel that a person – whether divine or human – should accept the "risks of knowledge, as a process in which the life of the other lives in me – and not only lives in me, but, as loved, not just known, also lives in me as provocation to further action."[627] The kenotic mystery of the union of the divine with human beings is thus extended to the mystery of charitable union between one human being and another – an act most vividly 'kenotic' when we open ourselves in this way to persons whose narratives we may struggle to understand and relate to.[628] Just as the procession of the Holy Spirit is the love 'gift' of the divine self to humanity, so we are called to give the gift of shared presence to others – to enact our own 'love proceeding' into the world.

We therefore add to our inventory of contra-violence an openness to *shared* acts of knowing and loving, both *of* and *with* other people, particularly those not naturally like ourselves.

Second, in our examination of mercy as a case-study, we should consider the ways in which the 'apprehensive' or 'intellective' aspect of mercy manifests in our attempts to act as God does. Recalling that, in the divine stance, there is a unity of knowing and loving, we should

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[627] Williams, "What does love know? St. Thomas on the Trinity," 272.

[628] See pp 190–191, regarding the role of charity in dismantling alienation; 84 n285, regarding Mongeau's assertion that "what is opposed to friendship is not the enemy … but the stranger"; 122–125, regarding the problem of viewing another person as 'radically other' – i.e., the problem of estrangement; 152–153, regarding the problem of dismissing 'storyline' (other people's narratives) that we do not resonate with.
Note again Keenan's description of this kenotic sense of *misericordia* (noting as he does so Thomas's claim that by this virtue we most imitate God's work – ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.30.4 ad 3) as "the willingness to enter into another's chaos." Keenan, "AIDS and Casuistry of Accommodation," 202. Ref.: n618.

expect that in our act of joint attention with the Holy Spirit there should be at least a deep intertwining of knowing in our attempted acts of merciful love.[629] We have seen that God apprehends the finite, particular narrative of a human being in order to direct his bountiful love toward them – a work of intellection he does completely and with precision. From the perspective of God's knowledge of the sufferer, seen in Thomas's treatment of *divine* mercy, the 'misery' suffered by another person is envisioned in terms of a defect, or want. Knowledge of the sufferer's lack is wedded with God's tending-toward them in mercy. In Thomas's treatment of the *human* virtue of mercy, the connotation of *miseria* as experienced by a suffering other (reflected in the translation work of the Dominican Fathers) changes to a sense of distress.[630] This seems at least on some level fitting, as a sensitivity to the emotional aspects of suffering seems in accordance with our modes of sensing and knowing – i.e., that human nature is capable of *passiones*. In this context, we see the shape of the human way of knowing emerging. Thomas's treatment of human mercy addresses with nuance varying levels of felt anxiety, arranged in terms of the nature of the sufferer's relation to the onset of their troubles.[631] He invokes the Apostle Paul's exhortation to "Weep with them that weep."[632] He identifies the passions of pity and nemesis with the activity of 'estimating' the nature of a sufferer's narrative.[633] In Thomas, we should understand the cognitions accompanied by such perceptions, sensitivities, and intuitions to be not only forms of feeling but actual forms of knowing – as legitimate "bearers of truth and insight."[634]

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[629] Alasdair MacIntyre observes that, in Thomas, it is when the feeling of *misericordia* "is informed by the appropriate rational judgment" that it "names a virtue and not just a passion." MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 123–124; ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.3.
[630] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.1, 2, and 3.
[631] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.1 corp.
[632] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.2 corp.; ref.: Romans 12:15.
[633] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.30.3 ad 2.
[634] Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 68. See also: Cates, *Choosing to Feel,* 24–27; Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 274. Ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.28.1 ad 3.

If we consider this 'affective knowing' in the light of shared stance with the Holy Spirit, we should ask in what way such thoughts could be the ground of acts of merciful love.[635] We can note that, for Thomas, the mechanics of human epistemology entail a tension/collaboration between objects as they are in themselves and as they are received by our faculties – a distinction that roughly corresponds to, or at least illumines, the activities of sensory and intellective apprehension, with extended implications for the integrity of the notion of the other in human acts of knowing and loving.[636] In a sense, this tension is part of the 'mystery' of the other, but human agents can go wrong when we fail to appreciate the importance of how things are *in themselves* as we execute our activities of knowing them. As we have seen, in God acts of knowing and loving are not separable, but rather operate in union. We can see in the gift of wisdom a hint of how human beings can participate this divine stance toward the world: wisdom is seen to operate in terms of the will, insofar a person (by charity) achieves a connaturality with divine things, and in terms of the intellect, insofar a person judges rightly about them.[637] Properly speaking, the object of wisdom is the divine things, but as we have seen in numerous ways, proximate objects of knowing and loving are taken up in the knowing and loving of God as the ultimate end.[638] Consequently, the notion of joint attention suggests that under the influence and formation of charity, we can direct the intellect to approach objects of knowledge also as objects

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[635] Mongeau addresses how 'affective knowing' is an intelligible operation: "it is a rational measure of the specific good as corresponding (or not) to the genuine flourishing of this virtuous person here and now." Gilles Mongeau, "Mystery on the Move: Aquinas's Theological Method as Transforming Wisdom," *The Thomist* 80 (2016): 285–300, at 292. (Note: Mongeau is here engaging the work of Rafael-Tomas Caldera in *Le judgement par inclination chez Thomas d'Aquin* [1980]).

[636] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.22.2: "*Vis autem apprehensiva non trahitur ad rem, secundum quod in seipsa est; sed cognoscit eam secundum intentionem rei, quam in se habet vel recipit secundum proprium modum*."

[637] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.45.2 corp.

[638] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.25.1 corp.; 27.4 corp.; *Contra gent.* 3.25.9.
I read 'divine things,' (in locations such as *ST* 2–2.45.2 corp.) as the divine Persons and divine law, both in terms of their role as humanity's final end and in terms of the human ability to know, feel, love, and act toward contingent things *as God does* – see 180 n602.

of love – i.e., as subjects in their own right, and as intelligible *in themselves*. That is, just as charity grants us connaturality with the things of God, such that we can truly know and love them, so we can understand charity as giving us a practical 'connaturality' with other persons, so that we can truly know and love them. The barriers to intelligibility that cause one human to feel of another 'your kind of existence is utterly alien to me' are dismantled by the connaturality a stance of charity establishes.[639] This graced knowledge of the other is the human analogue to the divine knowledge of them – it is knowing the other *as* God does, made possible by knowing the other *with* God (i.e., ambiguously, through charity).

Human knowing of the other as God knows them, we should clarify, will not be perfect or complete.[640] The point of such graced human knowledge is that it will entail a divine-like openness to, or care for, the other – a 'providential' knowing. This still-very-human endeavor, therefore, can be helped by recalling Aristotle's assertion that the beginning of human inquiry is wonder (in Thomas, *admiratio*).[641] Wonder arises precisely where there is a felt ignorance – *and*

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[639] MacIntyre states that in Thomas's treatment of *misericordia* "to understand another's distress as one's own is to recognize that other as a neighbor" – an act which, when directed to someone who is otherwise rather *outside* of one's natural community, "extend[s] one's communal relationships so as to include those others within." MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 125–6. Interestingly, MacIntyre also sees the status of the stranger as something that has a goodness of its own in terms of the moral activity of a community: "among the roles that play a part in [the members of a community's] shared lives there should be that of 'the stranger', someone from outside the community who has happened to arrive amongst us and to whom we owe hospitality, just because she or he is a stranger." MacIntyre, 123. Note that the community, in this case, is not exercising hospitality so as to make the stranger one of themselves, but rather to extend such generosity to him or her exactly *as* a stranger. In this statement, the status of the stranger is not seen as something to be overcome, but is a meaningful identity that informs the development and even the ongoing operation of virtue in the community. See also David I. Smith and Barbara Carvell, *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), esp. Part 2: "Aims: Embracing the Stranger," 55–103, regarding the role of the stranger in a community, and the community's engagement with strangers.

[640] I think it is important to qualify that 'knowing as God does' does *not* entitle a person to claim they know *what* God knows (except when such is articulated through revelation, and even then with appropriate caution and humility). First, such a move is unjustified in Thomas's anthropology (e.g., Aquinas, *ST* 1.14.7; 32.2, re.: divine knowledge; cf. 85.1; 85.2; 88.1, re.: human knowledge). Further, it is to be avoided insofar as it can operate as a power-over move against other human individuals: i.e., when a person claims to know 'what God knows/wants,' there is an implied assumption that the person's own statements be taken as carrying the clarity and authority of the very mind and will of God. This thesis does *not* include such a view of human knowledge in the notion of a divine/human shared stance.

[641] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.982b12; Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 1.3.55

where there is an affirmation of something as an object of inquiry. In order to be questionable, Thomas shows, a being must be affirmed as a composite of two things: a subject (i.e., something that is, in its own right – a 'this'), and something about that subject which is not evident (i.e., but which could be obtained by proper questioning).[642] Thus, a contra-violent orientation toward another person entails an element of wonder – a notion that recalls the effect of love as 'melting toward the other.' It maintains a commitment to a stance of openness toward that person as a worthy object of knowing and loving (a stance of joint-attention with the divine), affirms their status as a subject in their own right, and affirms the value of their self-narrative as a unique 'bearer of truth and insight' in the universe.

We will add this special orientation toward the other as a third item in our inventory of contra-violent human activities.

D. Conclusion: an inventory of natural contra-violent orientations

In this chapter we have worked to frame a vision of contra-violent existence that arises from Thomas's account of human flourishing, an account grounded in the coworking of nature and grace. What has emerged is a narrative of human being as naturally equipped to oppose the violence of alienation and 'occlusion' of individual intelligibility.[643] Human nature itself, insofar as it is perfected through the 'human art' of knowing and loving, provides what this thesis sees as a first level of remedy to the problem of interpersonal violence: the mutual affirming of individual human beings as subjects within their own narratives.

We have seen that Thomas's doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit, and how it operates toward human beings, illumines the manner in which human nature functions when most flourishing. We saw that the human individual operates in a perfected, but still natural, manner

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[642] Aertsen, *Nature and Creature,* 16–17; Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 7.17.1651; ref.: Aristotle, *Met.* 7.17.1041a10–15.
[643] Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, 35.

when it engages in activities of 'joint attention' with the Holy Spirit toward other human beings. Through the help of this properly ambiguous, 'shared stance' with the divine, human nature's proper activities of knowing and loving become rightly ordered as to their objects and manner of operation. Based on this study, we have constructed an inventory of three specific aspects of flourishing human operation that directly support the human vocation of affirming human subjectivity:[644]

First, our natural orientation toward others should be *action-based*. Whatever we desire our disposition toward the other to entail needs to be exteriorly expressed in action.

Second, human flourishing should entail an openness to *shared acts* of knowing and loving, both *of* and *with* other people, particularly those not naturally like ourselves.

Third, a perfected natural orientation toward another person should maintain an attitude of *wonder*: it should regard that person as a worthy object of knowing and loving, affirm their status as a subject in their own right, and affirm the value of their self-narrative as a unique 'bearer of truth and insight' in the universe.

This is by no means a complete or exclusive articulation of the human vocation to others-orientedness. However, these three together form a genuine response to what our project has identified as a critical effect of interpersonal violence – loss of individual intelligibility, especially that which occurs through alienation. Together they work toward safeguarding existing intelligibility, nurturing growth of new, healing that which is damaged, and helping to

[644] These three proposed interventions (and those that will follow in later chapters) can be understood as the result of Thomas's, and this thesis's, philosophical encounter with Christian faith and doctrine – i.e., the point of the encounters we have enacted with Christian faith and religion (e.g., Thomas's trinitarian and pneumatic doctrines) is philosophical understanding, in ways that could not perhaps be conceptualized quite so clearly without that encounter.

recover that which has been lost. Together, they work to build and strengthen connections of knowing and loving between individual subjects.

Our contra-violent inventory thus far can be summarized (made into a 'golden rule,' as it were) in the notion of second-person relations, which we have seen to be analogous to, or in the shape of, the Holy Spirit's movements among human beings. The grammatical notion of 'you' provides a contra-violent context for human relations. It locates intelligibility within mutual subjective presence. It binds us to affirm every 'other' that we engage first and foremost as an 'I' in their own right, ontologically prior to any role they may play in our own narratives. The sense of 'me' entailed in the mutuality of second-person relations encourages a humble, grateful recognition and remembering of the debt each owes to their proximate others for their very sense of self.

Chapter 5: The problem, part 2: what happens when we *don't*?

In this chapter our inquiry arrives at the most difficult aspect of our topic – one that can be stated simply (as in the chapter title), but is not dealt with simply at all. We recall that our project is addressing specifically *personal* violence – i.e., not physical or socio-political violence – especially insofar as one human being harms the flourishing of another (or themself). In this chapter we will further specify our inquiry to consider a more subtle and confounding aspect of the problem of personal violence. We examined, in chapters 2 and 3, what human existence and activity consist in and what violence against the same entails – framed in the main as defective action and alienation, or estrangement. In chapter 4 we examined what ways of life support the flourishing of such human existence, such that we could think of them as contra-violent orientations. In all this we have been helped by Thomas's sensitivities to an Aristotelian, 'horizontal' view of human nature in act and a Proclean, 'vertical' view of human nature as participating in a network of common good. Thus far we have constructed a vibrant account of human being flourishing in its proper activities of knowing and loving the good, especially as ambiguously directed toward divine and human objects.

We arrive now, however, at a disturbing observation that common experience provides: even people of good will often do not act in accord with the good that supports human flourishing. We should understand this vexing problem as a significant and serious entailment of the divine/human ambiguity of agency that we examined in chapter 4. Recalling Thomas's observation that in order to do good man must act with God, but man can do evil all on his own, we can recognize that human agents can remove themselves from the collaborative stance of connaturality.[645] Even people of good will can be seen to dis-orient themselves from the good.

[645] We can add: or contribute to their removal, e.g., by unnoticed participation in circumstances that lead to such separation. Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.112.3 ad 2. Ref.: chapter 3, 141.

This issue, we can see, is a different problem than not properly apprehending the contexts of human flourishing, a problem responded to in the previous chapter. It is also a different problem than the outright opposing of human flourishing that is manifest in explicit acts of physical or political violence. Here, we see the *neglect* of the good presumably acknowledged and ostensibly valued by persons of good will – the very problem identified at the opening of the thesis, which we are now better-positioned to address.[646]

The problem of the failure to do good can be manifest in varying degrees. It can be seen as an act of omission: the failure of a person to choose the good. It can be seen in cases entailing more active intent: a person choosing to *not* do the good. It can, ultimately and terribly, entail events in which a person chooses evil as if it were a good. This last degree can arise from what might be called a 'hermeneutical distrust': an orientation to the world, and the people in it, as agonal to the agent rather than as comprising a context of flourishing. In such a distrustful orientation, the rational agent can falsely view violence as an instrument of their own good, with injurious result. In all of these 'defective actions,' a tell-tale feature of the problem, one that helps us examine the nature of what we are dealing with, is a breach of intelligibility within the

[646] We must practice caution as we proceed through this chapter. The notion of 'not doing the good, even though known and loved,' we claim, is a very serious one. We will show the effects of such failure, and in doing so establish what is at stake in this second framing of violence. In this framing, neither education nor good intent is sufficient to prevent the harms enacted, including violent ones, by neglecting the good. Here, we are considering the neglect of good specifically as already known and even previously loved by an individual agent. An appropriate humility is needed in our approach – there are no easy fixes, and this chapter is not to be taken as a cut-and-dried articulation or abstract analysis of the problem. We are not suggesting that the problem is a matter as simple as a person 'not feeling like doing the good today,' nor that the solution would be to 'snap out of it,' or to 'just do it.' We recognize that there may be any number of complex factors underlying a person's ceasing to choose the good: psychological, social, physical, mental, or spiritual, to name but a few. Though underlying factors like these in many cases lie outside the scope of this work, it is our intention to provide a philosophical framing of the problem that shows sensitivity to these human complexities, and that could be supportive of the solutions sought even by those specialized fields. In the case of Thomas's context, the specialization is pastoral care – we will consider that motivation, and revisit this posture of caution, more closely when we turn specifically to Thomas's thought on the issue. For now, it is fitting to remind ourselves that the use of philosophical notions in this chapter, a portion of the work that deals with human existence precisely in its fragility and vulnerability, is specifically ordered to aiding the flourishing of particular, individual human beings.

acting agent: in the problem of the failure to do good as we are understanding it in this chapter, there is a disconnect between (or a distortion of, as in the last case noted above) what the agent knows and affirms as the good – including especially the good for their own nature and existence – and what they direct themselves toward in their acts.

What help can a Thomistic account of human existence offer to an examination of this problem? How does the Thomistic anthropology that we have framed in our inquiry thus far view the failure of persons of good will to do good? As we will see in this chapter, human activity is particularly susceptible to defective action, including violent tendencies, when it is alienated from the pre-reflective rest in the good that Thomas identifies as *complacentia*.[647] We will examine Thomas's relevant texts both in terms of the human agent's engagement, or non-engagement, with acts of goodness (i.e., horizontal aspects of the problem), and the cosmological relation of the individual agent to the good that is the principle of their own flourishing (i.e., vertical aspects of the problem).

This spectrum of the problem of failure to do the good will comprise the work of this chapter. We will first look at Aristotle's account of the related problem of defective acts of incontinence; we will then go on to examine a Proclean sense of the problem of 'falling away from' the good. In turning to Thomas's thought upon the problem, we will reverse this order. First, we will examine Thomas's treatment of 'falling away from the good' as the loss of the formal principle of charity, a harm whose contours are further illumined by considering the nature of divine restoration. We will then consider the case study of the non-act of 'acedia.' This chapter will provide the foundation for the work of the next: after addressing the problem of the failure of good people to do good, we must go on to ask: what can be done about it?

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[647] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.25.2 corp.; 13.5 ad 1; 2–2.26; *Super Sent.* 3.27.1. See: Frederick E. Crowe and Michael Vertin, *Three Thomist Studies* (Boston: Lonergan Institute of Boston College, 2000).

A. Aristotle: ἀκρασία/incontinence

As we saw in chapter 3, in Aristotle the notion of a thought that does not lead to the corresponding act in an agent is a problem that he takes seriously. We also saw that Aristotle's approach to varying cases was shaped by his ability to account for the intelligibility of the agent's failure to act. We noted that Aristotle was able to comfortably identify and set aside cases where the disconnect between thought and action could be reasonably accounted for (e.g., speculative reasoning, failure to judge between real and apparent goods, some forms of ignorance, etc.) – such that even unflattering sources of intelligibility presented a different level of concern than the problem of unintelligibility. There is one category of cases where thought does not lead to action that Aristotle finds harder to account for and deal with, and which we will take up in this chapter under our heading of 'what happens when we *don't* act according to the thoughts and desires that are oriented to the flourishing of our nature?' This is the curious case of ἀκρασία/incontinence.

Aristotle introduces incontinence in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as the second of three kinds of "moral states to be avoided," the other two being vice and brutishness.[648] Incontinence in a general sense can be understood as "having knowledge but not using it," a state which Aristotle states is not quite identical with wickedness (vice) but also not quite *un*like it either – it is not of an entirely different genus.[649] The incontinent person is one that has a correct view of the good, but "whom passion masters so that he does not act according to the right rule" – however, he is not so mastered that he views the wrong act as a genuinely right one (as the self-indulgent person

[648] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.1.1145a15–17. Terence Irwin notes that Aristotle depicts incontinence in his earlier *De anima,* as "the overcoming of *boulêsis* by non-rational desire." Irwin, "Who Discovered the Will?" 457; Aristotle, *De an.* 3.11.434a11–14.

[649] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.3.1147a12; 7.1.1145a35–1145b1. Some cases of incontinence in respect of appetite are so imbued with evil intent (i.e., 'plotting against others') that Aristotle does identify them as genuine moral incontinence and a form of vice – see *Eth. Nic.* 7.5.1149b15–19.

does) or loses the correct principle of the good.[650] This is something of a fluid state, one that a person could slide in and out of, rather than a governing tendency of character – Aristotle compares its "intermittent badness" to epilepsy, as opposed to a permanent disease such as consumption.[651] He depicts the possibility of incontinence in a person as imbued with unpredictability, or even ambiguity: "The same man is thought to be continent and ready to abide by the result of his calculations, or incontinent and ready to abandon them. And … the incontinent man, knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion."[652]

This is a state that goes further astray than the mere issue of humans functioning only at the level of the animal soul's capacity for self-movement (i.e., "desire taking the place of questioning or thinking"[653]) – here, on some level intellectual calculation has taken place and the knower's actions run contrary to this knowledge.[654] That such an act should occur under the purview of fully-operating human reason and yet yield results isomorphic with chance appears to be a disturbing possibility for Aristotle. Although he observes that common experience confirms that incontinent acts do indeed happen, he wonders if Socrates is correct (in Plato's *Protagoras*) to hold that true incontinence is impossible: "If someone were to know what is good and bad, then he would not be forced by anything to act otherwise than knowledge dictates, and intelligence would be sufficient to save a person."[655]

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[650] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.9.1151b11–25.
[651] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.8.1150a30–35.
[652] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.1145b10–13.
[653] Aristotle, *De mot. anim.* 7.701a30.
[654] Aristotle does distinguish between incontinence of 'impetuosity,' where proper reasoning does not occur, and incontinence of 'weakness,' where reasoning does occur but the agent sides with the passion pressing him to go against reason. The defining feature for both seems to be the act being 'contrary to choice.' See *Eth. Nic.* 7.7.1150b19–8.1151a7.
[655] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.2.1145b25; Plato, *Protagoras* 352.b–c. Ref.: Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell, in *Plato: Complete Works,* eds. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson, 746–790 (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

In Book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle works his way through a list of apparent kinds of incontinence, to see if any of them hold up as genuine instances of incontinence. He includes the activity of a person who has knowledge but is not actually thinking of it – a state which is to be avoided but is not actually strange, perhaps best understood as intellectual carelessness.[656] He considers the activity of men under the influence of passions such as anger or sexual passions, which he describes as similar to the cases of sleep, madness, or drunkenness – noting that in such cases we can expect eventually "the ignorance [being] dissolved and the incontinent man regain[ing] his knowledge."[657] Present in his list is activity arising from the confusion of objects of knowledge that are universals with those that are sense-particulars. On this, Aristotle adds a telling assertion: it is for this reason that lower animals cannot be said to be incontinent, namely that "they have no universal judgment but only imagination and memory of particulars."[658]

Aristotle does decide that Socrates being "entirely opposed" to the very idea of incontinence would seem to be justified: "It would be strange … if when knowledge was in a man something else could master it and drag it about like a slave."[659] However, since common experience shows us that incontinence does happen, Aristotle explains Socrates's claim that "there is no such thing as incontinence" by clarifying that *proper* knowledge (i.e., the rational activity of προαίρεσις, which properly follows the lead of νοῦς) indeed cannot be "dragged about as a result of the state of passion," in the way that merely perceptual knowledge can.[660] Whether or not the distinction is essentially a circularity (i.e., 'if a person has knowledge but acts in

[656] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.3.1146b31–35.
[657] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.3.1147a10–15; 1147b5–10.
[658] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.3.1147a5; 1147a25–1147b5.
[659] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.2.1145b24–5.
[660] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.3.1147b.15–17.

opposition to it, it must be imperfect knowledge'), it is apparently the hypothesis supporting Socrates's position, and seems to Aristotle a sufficient, if not altogether satisfactory, ground: "This must suffice as our answer to the question of action with and without knowledge, and how it is possible to behave incontinently with knowledge."[661]

Though Aristotle appears to have conceded the 'playing field' to Socrates's view of the supremacy of reason, he goes on to grapple with what can be made of the reality that people *do* act incontinently. Aristotle's observation that the lower animals cannot be said to be incontinent because they do not have universal judgment would seem to be an odd distinction to make unless it were possible for the higher, rational animals, who do have universal judgment, to yet be incontinent. It may be that the proverb Aristotle presents in his initial list of views to be tested is more than a mere "some say"[662] – he states: "To the incontinent man may be applied the proverb 'when water chokes, what is one to wash it down with?' … He acts in spite of his being persuaded of something quite different."[663] Aristotle employs, as he so often does, a number of metaphoric images to help gain a purchase on this difficult reality:

> The incontinent man is like the people who get drunk quickly and on a little wine, i.e., on less than most people.[664]
>
> Incontinence is not vice … for incontinence is contrary to choice while vice is in accordance with choice … As in the saying … "The Milesians are not without sense, but they do the things that senseless people do," so too incontinent people are not criminal, but they will do criminal acts.[665]
>
> The incontinent man is like a city which passes all the right decrees and has good laws, but makes no use of them … but the wicked man is like a city that uses its laws, but has wicked laws to use.[666]

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[661] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.3.1147b.15.
[662] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.1.1145b20: "These, then, are the things that are said."
[663] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.2.1146a35.
[664] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.8.1151a3–4.
[665] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.8.1151a5–11.
[666] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.10.1152a20–24.

Aristotle also finds it helpful to distinguish between practical wisdom and cleverness, which distinction helps eliminate some of the ambiguity:

> Nor can the same man have practical wisdom and be incontinent; for it has been shown that a man is at the same time practically wise, and good in respect of character. Further, a man has practical wisdom not by knowing only but by being able to act; but the incontinent man is unable to act – there is, however, nothing to prevent a *clever* man from being incontinent; this is why it is sometimes actually thought that some people have practical wisdom but are incontinent.[667]

We can note also, however, that Aristotle is here leaning again toward Socrates's position, insofar as Aristotle seems to assert that a truly incontinent act is not strictly speaking voluntary. He is not *able* to take the rationally-directed action. This is somewhat difficult – is it not a *choice* to set aside the dictates of reason, and is such an agent not responsible for the effects of such a decision? Aristotle does also distinguish incontinence "without qualification" (i.e., 'simple' incontinence) from incontinence "in a particular sense" (i.e., with respect to a particular thing, such as "money, gain, honor, or anger"), stating that only the former is fully blameworthy as a vice.[668] Perhaps this is because the latter may yet be successfully appealed to by means of some other good or object about which they are not incontinent – they are not by nature, or perhaps dispositionally, incontinent. This distinction also has bearing on Aristotle's degree of hope of the incontinent person being 'cured.'

It is interesting to note that Aristotle's standard for judging the blameworthiness of incontinence is, as might be expected, what the average man can be affected by and yet still remain in control of his actions (as was hinted at in the above image of the person who simply gets drunk on lesser quantity of wine than his peers). He concludes his treatment of incontinence with these comparisons in mind:

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[667] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.10.1152a8–12.
[668] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.4.1147b20–1148a3.

> Now incontinence and continence are concerned with that which is in excess of the state characteristic of most men; for the continent man abides by his resolutions more and the incontinent man less than most men can. Of the forms of incontinence, that of excitable people is more curable than that of those who deliberate but do not abide by their decisions, and those who are incontinent through habituation are more curable than those in whom incontinence is innate; for it is easier to change a habit than to change one's nature; even habit is hard to change just because it is like nature.[669]

It does seem, after all, that in Aristotle's account, shaped though it was by Socrates's doctrines, the possibility of the incontinent man is indeed 'left in possession of the field' – and therefore must be considered seriously by any examination of human nature influenced by Aristotelian thought.[670]

In terms of our chapter's inquiry, therefore, we should think here of the spectrum of injurious and lamentable acts that go against what a person may know is constitutive of human flourishing – both in terms of the actor and the recipient – and which they may yet undertake in a manifestation of incontinence (whether momentary or dispositional). Aristotle's inventory of vices takes on another level of seriousness when considered in the light of the possibilities opened up by the problem of incontinence. A relatively good man is capable of an incontinent act – Aristotle's insistence that the incontinent man is likely to repent indicates a conflicted posture by an 'at other times' good person.[671] The 'good person,' therefore, is vulnerable to committing the acts we see enumerated as vices in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: cowardice, self-indulgence, insensitivity, meanness, vulgarity, niggardliness, vanity, irascibility, obsequiousness, churlishness, boorishness, shamelessness, injustice, etc. Aristotle at some points hesitates to outright judge the incontinent person as especially evil, but at other points wants to hold firm regarding the assessment that incontinence furnishes the infelicitous ingredients for a *good*

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[669] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.10.1152a25–31.
[670] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.3.1146b5.
[671] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.8.1050b30.

person to act in genuinely *not-good* ways – a mode of existence that stands as something of an ethical contradiction in Aristotle's act-centered moral universe.[672] It seems very much a part of the problem of incontinence that it appears almost as a tragic 'absurdity': a moral/intellectual failure so incongruous with the rational good life that one does not guard against it as a relevant threat, thereby making the threat all the greater.

The moral danger that the possibility of incontinence opens up to human beings seems thus related to the legendary problem of ὕβρις/hubris. In Greek thought, hubris is often held up in contrast with pity – the latter being the appropriate response to misfortunes of others such as: death, bodily injuries, old age, diseases, lack of food, friendlessness, scarcity of friends that one has, deformity, weakness, evil coming from a source where one would expect good, the arrival of good too late for it to be enjoyed, or the absence of good fortune at all.[673] Pity is the 'appropriate' response insofar as the wise person will recognize the moral innocence of the sufferer, and that they themselves are susceptible to similar evils, and therefore their own thriving is bound up with the thriving of the sufferer.[674] Hubris, by contrast, Aristotle explains to be the "presumptuous insolence" of believing that one is above or immune from such personal disasters.[675] Another way that Aristotle depicts hubristic insolence is the "pleasure" of feeling superior to a victim of suffering or shame.[676] Finally, in the Greek mindset, such a disposition sets up the arrogant, superior person themself for a fall into grief – at the very least, in terms of

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[672] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 7.6.1149b23–19; 4.1148a20–1148b14.
[673] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.8.1386a7–17.
Ref.: Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, translated by W. Rhys Roberts, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, 1317–1451 (New York: Modern, 2001).
[674] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.8.1385b12–19.
[675] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.8.1385b20–23.
[676] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.2.1378b22–27.

Aristotle's treatments, because a view of oneself as self-sufficient for thriving is precisely the *false* view of human existence (as we saw in chapter 4).[677]

Thus, to the Aristotelian view of the world that we are considering in this section, the madness of hubris adds another degree of seriousness to the already-laden problem of incontinence, by framing incontinent acts as unlikely absurdities, safely outside of one's character and the expected outcomes from life choices. Hubris itself can increase the likelihood of a fall into incontinence. Worse yet, hubris can prompt a feeling of moral superiority, even a dark sense of pleasure, at the 'absurd' incontinent acts of another, driving out any vestige of sorrowful fellow-feeling or human solidarity. Nussbaum concretizes this notion of human disconnect in social terms, observing that "all kinds of social barriers – of class, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation – prove recalcitrant to the imagination" that enables us to see other people as sharers of common human possibilities.[678] Hubris in this way may help account for the mystery we are examining in this chapter, and which is seen in Aristotle as the perplexing problem of ἀκρασία/incontinence: the problem of human beings *not* doing the good seems to arise, to a degree, from the problems of alienation and estrangement examined in chapter 3, and from a hubristic rejection of the shared intelligibility considered in chapter 4.

We can see in the work of this section that a troublingly persistent aspect of the problem of ἀκρασία for Aristotle is its tendency to elude intelligibility. The heart of the problem is the very question of *why* an otherwise good person would choose not to do the good they know to do. What Aristotle's account *does* contribute is a clear and detailed depiction of the reality that,

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[677] E.g., Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 9.9.1169b.15–22; *Pol.* 1.2.1252b30–1253a17. Hence we see the problem of hubris accounted for in association with or in terms of one or another form of *ate*, the irrational. See Dodds' treatment in the essay "From Shame-Culture to Guilt-Culture," in his *The Greeks and the Irrational,* 28–63 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

[678] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 316–319.

pace his optimistic estimation of the powers of human rational and moral faculties, such failure to adhere to the good, and the acts of personal violence that follow, cannot easily be denied or explained away in human experience. This is an important acknowledgement, insofar as it sharpens the point that a proposed solution to the problem of personal violence cannot be merely some version of telling people 'don't do it.' Aristotle's account may not be entirely sufficient to diagnose the nature of this secondary problem, but it does give us, in dramatic fashion, reason to avoid framing possible solutions exclusively in terms of rational moral imperatives.

B. Proclus: 'falling away' from the good

On the question we are focusing on in this chapter – i.e., what happens when we fail to choose the good proper to human flourishing – Proclus's treatment takes, predictably, a different tone than Aristotle. Whereas in Aristotle the failure to thrive as a human is a surprising or troubling disappointment, in Proclus it is a struggle that is to be readily expected of human existence. While we are not outright condemned by necessity to such woes (as we will show in the next chapter), by far and away the material embodiment of the human soul is seen as a disadvantage rather than a help. As we saw in chapter 3, the notion of violence arises obliquely in Proclus, and should be approached, for our purposes, through the lens of the contribution to Thomas's thought on human thriving and the ill effects that arise from a failure to thrive. Such is very much the case in the work of this chapter as well. Proclus's treatment of human failure to thrive is clear and vivid, and quite central to his account of human nature, but it does *not* directly address the problem in terms of human interrelations. What it does contribute is a rich vocabulary identifying what it is that goes wrong when human beings fail to participate the good – a vocabulary that we will see taken up extensively in Thomas's treatment of human failure to thrive.

In Proclus we encounter what Finamore and Kutash call the "tragedy" of "admixture with matter," and, it may be, the limit of the possibility of optimism in Proclus's account of human nature and its proper good.[679] For, on this, Proclus (in *Theologia Platonica*) is grimly clear: particular souls, "connecting the participation of the good with temporal mutation and motion, are incapable of preserving the gift of the gods immovable, uniform and simple," and worse yet, "[those] which are also material, in a much greater degree pervert their proper good."[680] We should be careful, however, to not say that it is matter itself that somehow 'draws' the human soul against its will toward evil. Emphasizing the relevance of human choice to the problem, Proclus asks "How can one explain why among the souls that are generated in matter, some gaze at intellect and the good, whereas others gaze at generation and matter, if matter draws all of them alike to itself, troubling them and doing violence to them … ?"[681] We should further note that Proclus is not saying that the material conditions of human existence make it *incapable* of receiving good, or that because of human nature's low status it has no proper good. Indeed, he says the opposite. The problem is that humanity's material, 'partial' nature predisposes it to *lose hold of* the good, and to pervert the good that is indeed its own – that is, to cause it to turn aside from its purpose of completing its causation cycle, and thereby its own being, through ἐπιστροφή. In the *Elementatio theologica* we see this perversion described as *falling away*: "If anything fall away from the gods and become utterly isolated from them, it retreats into non-being and is obliterated, since it is wholly bereft of the principles which maintained its unity."[682]

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[679] John F. Finamore and Emilie Kutash, "Proclus on the *Psychê*: World Soul and the Individual Soul," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, edited by Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 122–138 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 135.
[680] Proclus, *Theol plat.* 1.18.85.12–15. Edit of Taylor's translation from "the God" to "the gods" in this text suggested by Marije Martijn.
[681] Proclus, *De mal.* 33.25–30.
[682] Proclus, *El. theol.* §144; see also: §124: "The lower can fall away from the higher;" §154: "The perfection of any existent consists in its laying fast hold of the primals, remaining steadfast in its own being."

In Proclus's theurgical writings we see this human problem identified as *forgetfulness*: "In the gulf of heavy-resounding life, [men] suffer once they have fallen under the yoke of the body with the result that they forget the bright-shining court of the lofty Father."[683] *In primum Alcibiadem* provides a vivid description of this forgetfulness and falling away (evoking Plato's imagery in *Phaedrus* 248c): "reversion to the inferior is a misfortune of the soul that has 'shed its wings' and fallen into forgetfulness both of itself and at the same time of what precedes it."[684]

These references illustrate the sober reality of contingent, embodied existence in Proclus's epistemologically-infused cosmos. The cycle of causation provides the principles of contingent beings' existence.[685] Desire for those principles, and their divine cause, drives a being's ἐπιστροφή.[686] A being that does not call to mind the principles of its own kind of existence, nor the prior being through which it participates those principles, by this "forgetfulness" short-circuits the desire for its own good that comprises its ἐπιστροφή. We can see such forgetfulness as a destructive force against a being's intelligibility as well as its fulfillment.

We should keep in mind, however, that this forgetfulness is a *tendency*, not itself a metaphysical condition of human nature. Rather, Proclus claims, "When the soul acts according to its nature, it is superior to the condition of being led by fate."[687] Proclus continues, however, to show that this higher nature and superior condition exists very much at the edge of an ever-present threat: "But when it is brought down to sense perception and made irrational and corporeal, it goes along with the things below, lives together with them as with some drunken

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[683] Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 149–150; ref.: Proclus, "ΕΙΣ ΗΛΙΟΝ" (hymn), lines 28–32.
[684] Proclus, *in Alc.* 20.1–5.
[685] Proclus, *De prov.* 18.
[686] Proclus *El. theol.* §31.
[687] Proclus, *De prov.* 20.

neighbors."[688] The origin of the evils of forgetfulness and falling away, he states, is this "continuous communion and cohabitation with what is inferior to us" – modes of being that Proclus identifies with "oblivion and ignorance, which come about by looking at that which is dark and not the divine."[689] We can notice, in these references, that while human beings are capable of the divine activity of intellection (and, as we saw in chapter 3, participation in providential care of others[690]), it is in the operation of our distinctly *human* modes of being that we are most vulnerable to being pulled aside from our higher good. Most characteristic of human nature, Proclus explains, is the ambivalence of our moral orientation: "Choice characterizes the soul, since choice is equally open to both … Choice is a rational appetitive faculty that strives for some good, either true or apparent, and leads the soul towards both. Through the faculty the soul ascends and descends, does wrong and does right."[691] Butler associates this ambivalence with the measure of autarchy that secondary beings possess by virtue of their participation in Proclus's henadic hierarchy – that is, the *non*-participation of beings (or: *reduced/impaired* participation) is ascribed to the participants themselves as a manifestation of their self-governed effective causality, effectual negatively as well as positively.[692]

Finally, we see these threads drawn together – i.e., the negative collaboration of material embodiment with the soul's faculty of choice – in Proclus's evocation of the banquet of the blessed in Plato's *Phaedrus*.[693] Treating of human souls in their fallen state, he concludes: "For the soul this is indeed a weakness, namely, to fail to participate in the banquet, and to precipitate downwards."[694] Proclus does add, however, "it is its power, on the other hand, to get up there

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[688] Proclus, *De prov.* 20. Ref.: chapter 3, 120.
[689] Proclus, *De mal.* 24.33–34.
[690] Ref.: chapter 3, 119, 121.
[691] Proclus, *De prov.* 57 and 59.
[692] Butler, "The Henadic Structure of Providence in Proclus," 228–9; ref.: Proclus, *Dec. dub.* 3.18.2–3; 19.6–7.
[693] Ref.: Plato, *Phaedrus* 247a8.
[694] Proclus, *De mal.* 24.1–2.

before sinking into the depths" – a hopeful allusion to the human ways of life that assist the soul in its ascent.[695]

We will see echoes of this Platonic understanding of human nature as vulnerable to weakness, and the framing this weakness in terms of tendency to 'fall,' as we turn to Thomas's treatment of human failure to thrive.

C. Aquinas

We have seen in Thomas's account of human existence a certain Aristotelian optimism about human nature and its ability to flourish in accordance with its own mode of being, which he envisions as the collaboration of nature and grace. The question of this chapter, however, directs us to examine how Aquinas addresses the reality that humans do not always actually *do* the things that support flourishing, either in terms of themselves or others – and here his treatment both utilizes and departs from Aristotle's thought, aided by Proclean hierarchical language. While Thomas does not share Proclus's negative view of material embodiment, he also is not surprised or perplexed by the reality of good people failing to do good things. He will, in Aristotelian fashion, envision human failing in terms of actions – including the moral difficulty of 'non-acting' – but he will illumine the cause of such a failure through Proclean notions of relation to the good. This coming together of the Aristotelian and Platonic influences in Thomas's treatment of the frailty of human agency is a reflection of, and a reminder to us in the work of this thesis, his Augustinian formation.[696]

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[695] Proclus, *De mal.* 24.1–2.

[696] In the Augustinian tradition, *akrasia,* understood as weakness of will, is treated in terms of an object-specific weakness that we wrestle with at specific, occasional times. By contrast, *concupiscentia* is the notion of an all-pervasive human vulnerability to temptation. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 137-38. See Augustine, *Confessions* 10.28.39, regarding the divided self that results from this weakness. Rist connects, in Augustine, this weakness of nature with loss of intelligibility: "For not only is our mind too weakened to be able to understand ourselves, but the inherent irrationality of our sinfulness would seem to render us necessarily unintelligible to ourselves and to our now rather perverted powers of introspection. (Should Augustine have said, indeed, that we are unintelligible even to God?)" Rist, 138.

We should bear in mind, as we examine the problem of failure to do the good, that in Thomas such discussions are pastoral – i.e., sympathetic with and compassionate toward the plight of sufferers. His detailed analysis of the moral human landscape (i.e., the *Secunda secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, regarding virtues and vices) is enacted to equip pastoral 'diagnosis' of such spiritual sickness, so that activities of healing can be appropriately and effectively engaged.[697] The precision with which Thomas speaks of these 'failures' of human flourishing, and our appropriation of it within our inquiry, is directed toward the articulation of a remedy. Moreover, insofar as such treatment deals with particulars (as Thomas asserts[698]), neither any articulation of the problem nor of remedies suggested are to be understood as if holding in every case. Rather, these examinations are undertaken to help us get a purchase on the nature of the problem, and to see how they might point us forward to a better understanding of our role in promoting human flourishing.

C1. Thomas's appropriation of the problem of 'falling away'

We can see in Thomas a variety of ways of speaking about human failure to thrive that operate on the imagery of falling. While certainly the image of falling down is a commonsense

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[697] See, for example, Gilles Mongeau's treatment of the deeply-pastoral formation of Aquinas's Dominican vocation. Mongeau, "Cultural and Pastoral Dimensions of Aquinas' Program," in *Embracing Wisdom*, 39–65.
See also: Mark D. Jordan, *Teaching Bodies: Moral Formation in the* Summa *of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 12: "[The *Summa*] is teaching for Dominicans but thus for human beings. It aims to form future teachers of moral maturity. Its order of topics must situate practices of caring for souls within traditional professions of Christian faith."
See also Leonard E. Boyle's treatment of the "'pastoral' possibilities" of Thomas's *Secunda*, including how Thomas framed this task within a full theological context, rather than as an isolated moral manual. Boyle, "The Setting of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas—Revisited," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope, 1–16 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 11.
Note how these depictions stand in contrast with the earlier characterization of the Schoolmen by Chenu: "Whereas the Fathers of the Church and the writers of the early Middle Ages were occupied with a pastoral ministry in which a popular type of teaching and the realities of every day life imposed on their writings, both a variety of literery forms and working conditions that were more concrete and exciting, the clerical teachers and university masters spoke to a special type of listeners and were conditioned in their work by the demands of their professional techniques. … Even their sermons, witness those of Saint Thomas, were scholastic. The Church herself called the greatest among them her 'Doctors,' and no longer her 'Fathers.'" Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas,* 61.
[698] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2 prol.

descriptor for failure of many kinds, Thomas's use is shaped by the hierarchical image of falling *away from* or *back from* the good, rather than as a simple image of failed activity in itself. It is as if the Aristotelian picture of a fall frames the image closely around the agent and its own action of falling, while the Neoplatonic picture broadens the frame to include the context from which the agent has fallen. In Thomas, the notion of a fall encompasses a complex network of realities arising from the collaboration of nature and grace in human existence.

First, we can see Thomas using this imagery in his theological depiction of creaturely dependence upon the divine for their very being: a creature would, he states, "fall into nothingness" (*in nihilum redigerentur*) if it were not preserved in its being by divine power.[699] Invoking Augustine, he further states that beings would "collapse" (*concideret*) if the divine were to withdraw its power.[700] Of course, it has *not* been the case that God has withdrawn his power from the existence of creation, so this location is using the language of falling hypothetically, to illustrate and illumine the difficult notion of contingency.[701]

By contrast, in his commentary on Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus*, Thomas takes up the image in terms of beings that have indeed fallen. Specifically, Dionysius is treating here of demons, but as he does not believe they are by nature evil, his comments on their case as creatures can illumine that of human beings.[702] Dionysius, in his discussion in chapter 4 regarding fallen beings, states:

> The whole good given to them was not varied, but they fell from the whole good given … they do not see, closing their virtues inspective of the good … and by privation and recession and falling from the good things befitting them, they are called evil.[703]

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[699] Aquinas, *ST* 1.104.1 corp.: "*in nihilum redigerentur, nisi operatione divinae virtutis conservarentur in esse.*"
[700] Aquinas, *ST* 1.104.1 corp.; ref.: Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 8.
[701] See also: Aquinas, *ST* 1.8.1 corp.
[702] Dionysius, *De div. nom.* 4.23.725C.
[703] Dionysius, *De div. nom.* 4.23.221: "*Et non variatum est datum ipsis totum bonum, sed ipsi deciderunt a dato toto bono; … quamvis ipsi non vident, claudentes ipsorum boni inspectivas virtutes . . . dicuntur mali*." I have chosen to provide here the text (both in the Latin and the English translation by Hannon) as presented in Thomas's

Thomas responds to this text, elaborating on the notion of 'falling from the good' by connecting it to the act of voluntarily closing one's eyes to the good that is proper to one's nature by the divine gift, an act that constitutes having a defect in the operative actualization of one's being:

> Then when he says, ***Yet they are called evil***, he shows according to the defect of what good they are called evil; and he says that ***they are called evil on account of the fact that*** they have themselves defectively in the operation that applies to their nature …
> Therefore he says that the universal ***good***, namely the divine, which is ***given*** to them inasmuch as somehow they are made participators of it, ***is not varied*** in any way. Whence they were not made evil on account of the variation of the good, but because ***they fell*** from the universal ***good given*** to them …
> But that ***they do not see***, this arises from the fact that through free choice they closed their ***virtues inspective of the good***, that is, they voluntarily turned their intellect away not from the consideration of the true, but from the inspection of the good, inasmuch as it is good, namely because they refuse to follow it.[704]

Thomas here identifies falling away not with a defect in the act of *knowing* the good but with a defect in the act of *loving* it, i.e., dwelling upon and following the good in devotion. In this case, falling specifically indicates falling *away* from the good as an object of devotion and delight. Thomas's reference to the operation proper to the fallen being's nature seems to refer to the angel's ability to see God as he is in his adorable goodness. The fallen angel's great evil, therefore, is to fail to appreciate and fulfill that capability given it by the gift of God. The parallel imagery Thomas uses of closing the eyes, or turning way from looking, recalls to mind what Thomas has spoken of as the first movement of grace toward human beings: turning the

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commentary, i.e., the text to which he is responding in the next reference. Ref.: Aquinas, *In De div. nom.* 4.19 introductory text at: 4.23.221.

[704] Aquinas, *In De div. nom.* 4.19.537 and 541: "*Deinde, cum dicit:* ***mali autem*** *etc., ostendit secundum cuius boni defectum, dicantur mali; et dicit quod* ***dicuntur mali propter hoc quod*** *defective se habent in operatione quae competit naturae eorum … Dicit ergo, quod universale* ***bonum****, scilicet divinum quod* ***datum*** *est eis inquantum aliqualiter facti sunt eius participes,* ***non est variatum*** *aliquo modo. Unde non sunt facti mali propter boni variationem, sed quia* ***ipsi deciderunt*** *ab universali* ***bono dato*** *eis … Sed quod* ***ipsi non vident****, hoc provenit ex hoc quod ipsi per liberum arbitrium clauserunt suas* ***virtutes inspectivas boni****, idest averterunt voluntarie suum intellectum non a consideratione veri, sed ab inspectione boni, inquantum est bonum, quia scilicet nolunt illud sequi*."

creature's gaze to God as the good.[705] For our purposes in this chapter, we should think of the defect of loving the good in terms of the pre-reflective 'resting' in the good that is prior to (and a condition of) any specific 'tending-towards' the good – i.e., Thomas's notion of *complacentia*.[706] Placing that notion in conversation with this text from Thomas's commentary on Dionysius, we can see an illustration of Thomas's doctrine that creatures cannot obtain grace on their own (i.e., the ability to see and know God is a divine gift – whether that seeing is simple, as in the case of angelic knowledge, or rational, as in the case of human modes of knowing) but they *can* separate themselves from it on their own.[707]

For humans, the operation proper to our nature is the ability to direct our lives to God through acts of knowing and loving – i.e., what marks us as the *imago Dei*.[708] For us, therefore, to fall from the good is to turn our gaze away from God as the origin and end of all the good in the universe we experience. This will, clearly, have harmful effect on an individual's own flourishing in their being. Pressed by the concerns of our inquiry, however, we need to go on to specify that such a detaching of a person's operations from the unified good of the universe would have widespread effect on that person's activities among other persons. In terms of the parallel case of the fallen angels, Thomas shows that the falling of one, higher angel influenced the fall of other angels, even to the point of attributing a sense of causation to the former toward the latter.[709] In terms of human beings, we can recall that in chapter 3 we saw 'gaps' in the

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[705] Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.38.1.1–2; *Q.D. de verit.* 27.2 resp. Ref.: chapter 2, 99, n335; chapter 4, 172, n563.
[706] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.25.2 corp.; 13.5 ad 1; 2–2.26; *Super Sent.* 3.27.1. When the good being rested in is our ultimate good, this is *complacentia boni.* While beatitude itself can be achieved completely only in eternity, an imperfect beatitude is experienced here, "chiefly … in contemplation [an operation of the speculative intellect] but secondarily in the operation of practical intellect ordering human activities and human passions." Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," *Theological Studies (Baltimore)* 20, no.1 (1959): 1-39, at 36. Ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.16.4 corp.
[707] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.112.3 ad 2. Again, recall Thomas's observation that in order to do good man must act with God, but man can do evil all on his own. Ref.: chapter 3, 141.
[708] Aquinas, *ST* 1.45.7 corp.; 1.93. Ref.: chapter 1, 33–34; chapter 2, 72–73, and n230.
[709] Aquinas, *ST* 1.63.8 corp.

hierarchy of reality identified as instances of hindered or even destroyed sharing of good among participants, affecting the operations and actualization of all individual beings.[710] Here, even without the intent of alienating another person (as was the issue in chapter 3), being oneself 'fallen away' from the good will in practical reality have a similar effect. As was implied at the opening of the chapter, a disturbance of the natural (albeit graced) human disposition of openness to the basic good of the universe morally disorients the agent's faculties. An alienation of the soul from the natural orientation of the intellect to grasp the good of the universe *as* good (*synderesis*), and of the will to love that good (*complacentia*) can cause the human agent to mistake one thing for its opposite, and go into act with those false apprehensions in hand.[711]

We can now see that Thomas's framing of the problem of falling away from the good, while relying heavily on a Proclean notion of good as the principle of an individual's very existence and way of being in the world, also bears the marks of Aristotle's ἀκρασία: dissociation from the good results in defective action, harmful to both the agent and to others. We will go on now to consider the problem through the lens of a specific manifestation of such dissociated, defective action in Thomas's thought: the 'non-act' of *acedia*.

C2. A case-study: the problem of 'non-act': *acedia*

Thus far in our examination of the problem of falling away as Thomas presents it, we have considered the act of falling in terms *what happens when* a person turns away from the

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[710] Ref.: chapter 3, 120–125.

[711] Aquinas, *ST* 1.79.12; 1–2.94.1 ad 2 (re.: *synderesis*); *ST* 1–2.3.5 corp.; 25.2 corp. (re.: *complacentia*).
We see this disorientation addressed in Thomas's commentary on Isaiah 5:20 (translated from the Vulgate): "Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" – "*Vae qui dicitis malum bonum et bonum malum, ponentes tenebras lucem et lucem tenebras, ponentes amarum in dulce et dulce in amarum!*" Thomas identifies the first phrase with the practical effect in act, the second with the effect on the intellect, and the third with the effect on the affections. See: Aquinas, *Commentaria cursoria super Isaiam* 5.l.3.192.
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram,* Latin text based on the 1974 Leonine Edition, edited by the Aquinas Institute, orthography adapted to standard Ecclesiastical Latin; English translation by Louis St. Hilaire, 2019; edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY, accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Isaiah.

good, but we have not focused on *why* a person turns away to begin with. We will, in this section, consider this aspect of the problem as we see it in Thomas.

To recap, in Aristotle, we saw that a person not choosing the good is either a case of some form of ignorance (especially in choosing an apparent good in place of a real good) or the perplexing case of incontinence. In Proclus, we saw that the problem was the result of a human being's higher faculties becoming dull and muddled by being mixed up with the matters of the material world, much in the way of a person being brought down in their way of being by living their days among drunken neighbors.

In Thomas, we see two general categories of reason for a person not choosing the good. The first, and most directly accounted for, is the simply the case of a higher good being passed over for a lower good.[712] This is a common human experience and is typically related to pleasures/luxuries of the body. We can see this in simple form in instances such as a person compromising their work performance for the sake of leisure activities, or imperiling health by overindulgences of varying kinds. What Thomas primarily has in mind of course is spiritual goods being passed over for mutable goods of the bodily passions, and much of the *Secunda secundae* addresses how the soul can, with divine help, order its passions appropriately to God as its ultimate end. While Thomas explains that any sin, insofar as to sin is a disordered act of the will, entails some degree of aversion for (a 'turning away' from) God in favor of some mutable good, he clarifies that only when the disordered turning to a lesser good is *properly speaking* away from God as principle is the sin mortal.[713] This category of the problem *could* be helped by moral education and support. In this inquiry, we are primarily concerned with those cases that

[712] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.20.1 ad1; 3 corp.; 4 corp.
[713] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.71.5 corp.; 6 ad 3; 72.5 corp.; 2–2.20.1 ad 1; 3 corp.

are more confounding: that presuppose a knowledge and affirmation of the good already present in the defective agent.

A second category we see in Thomas is the case of the will declining to choose any good at all – whether a higher or a lower good. While Thomas will consider this state in the light of sin, i.e., the human acts and dispositions that contribute to the state of a disordered will, we must keep in mind that the fundamental 'happening' here is the loss of *complacentia boni* – the affective response to the good that *is*, prior to the desire for a good that is absent.[714] In Thomas, this problem becomes manifest as the problem of *acedia* – a state of 'non-act,' where the will has lost its appetite for the good, and lacks the desire to act.[715] *Acedia* is addressed in Thomas through a constellation of notions. We see the term translated as 'torpor' (or 'sluggishness') in his treatment of sorrow in *ST* 1–2 Q. 35, and as 'sloth' in his treatment of despair in *ST* 2–2 Q. 20 and his treatment of the vice of sloth in *ST* 2–2 Q. 35. We see torpor understood as laziness in act shown as arising from the disposition of *acedia* in *ST* 2–2 Q. 54. In general, the varying treatments of *acedia* seem to fall into two categories: the vice (i.e., the disposition of disinterest in the good) and the effect (paralysis of act).

An account of *acedia* can begin with Thomas's treatment of sorrow. Thomas identifies sorrow as a species of pain that "arises from an interior apprehension, of the imagination or of reason."[716] The proper effect of such interior pain, he states, is a "flight of the appetite."[717] Thomas clarifies that he is not addressing a mere emotional sadness, which is concerned with

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[714] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.9.3 corp.; 4 corp.; 111.2 corp.; 22.1 corp. See: Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," 16–17. *Complacentia boni* in Thomas indicates rest in the *ultimate* good (i.e., beatitude). In a derivative sense, practical human activity in this life operates from *complacentia* of earthly goods (see 214, and n706]. Crowe, 36.
[715] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.35.8 corp.; 1 corp.
[716] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.35.2 corp.: "*dolor autem interior sequitur apprehensionem interiorem, imaginationis scilicet vel etiam rationis*."
[717] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.35.8 corp.: "*Proprius autem effectus tristitiae consistit in quadam fuga appetitus*."

external goods/evils, but the true state of spiritual apathy (*accidia*), which is a "boredom or sadness regarding a spiritual and interior good."[718] Initially, this state in which spiritual things "taste good to us no more" can arise as a result of habituating our passions to bodily pleasures.[719] If allowed, however, such boredom can grow into the vice of sloth, which outright shuns (or flees from) the divine good as "toilsome," "troublesome," and "a hindrance to bodily pleasures."[720] As the opposite of charity, which rejoices in spiritual goods, sloth is disposed to being grieved at divine goods such as wisdom.[721] Thus, sloth is an evil in itself insofar as it views a good – especially the divine good – as not a good but as a source of sorrow. Thomas describes this vice rather simply, but with terrible portent to an Aristotelian-infused sense of human nature – sloth is an "oppressive sorrow," which "so weighs upon a man's mind, that he wants to do nothing."[722]

Aquinas further clarifies that *acedia* is not of an absolute nature, of the same degree in all cases. Rather, because sin consists in acts, the vice of sloth can occur in varying degrees. In early stages of the disposition, when engaged only in terms of bodily sensuality, sloth manifests simply as "opposition of the flesh to the spirit," and is a venial sin.[723] If, however, the disposition has progressed to the degree of "the flesh utterly prevailing over the spirit," reason becomes complicit in the heightened disordered activities of dislike/*fuga*, horror/*horror*, and detestation/*detestatio* at the divine good – and this, Thomas states, is a mortal sin.[724]

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[718] Aquinas, *Q.D. de malo* 11.1 ad 4; 11.1 resp.: "*Accidia autem est taedium vel tristitia boni spiritualis et interni*."
[719] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.20.4 corp.: "*bona spiritualia non sapiunt nobis quasi bona*."
[720] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.35.2 corp.: "*refugit spirituale bonum prout est laboriosum vel molestum corpori, aut delectationis eius impeditivum*."
[721] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.35.1 s.c. (*acedior*, re: being pained or wearied); 2 corp. (*tristor*, re: being sad, displeased).
[722] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.35.1 corp.: "*tristitia aggravans, quae scilicet ita deprimit animum hominis ut nihil ei agere libeat*." *Pace* the Dominican Fathers, a clearer rendering, in terms of the paralyzed agency Thomas seems to be getting at, might be "he does not want to do anything."
[723] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.35.3 corp.: "*repugnantiam carnis ad spiritum*."
[724] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.35.3 corp.: "*carne omnino contra spiritum praevalente*." We must again keep in mind that by

At this point of the account, the issue is no longer only the problem of 'oppressive sorrow' – now, Thomas addresses the condition under the notion of 'despair.' Alongside hatred and disbelief, despair stands contrary to the theological virtues (charity, faith, and hope, respectively).[725] We note that in this framing, the problem of falling away from God is not directly opposed to charity, but hope. We can note that (in our approach of Thomas's account) at despair the problem has fulfilled the 'negative promise' begun earlier by allowing the appetite for the higher goods to be dulled by the bodily passions. At that point, Thomas states, the problem was not valuing the true good as a good worth having even if it is difficult to achieve.[726] Now, the problem, having run its course, is that the person despairs of obtaining the good at all: "when this state of mind dominates his affections, it seems to him that he will never be able to rise to any good."[727] Finally, Thomas shows that, while "strictly speaking it is more grievous sin to disbelieve God's truth, or to hate God," despair is the most dangerous out of the three principle sins, "since hope withdraws us from evils and induces us to seek for good things, so that when hope is given up, men rush headlong into sin, and are drawn away from good works."[728] We can notice that here Thomas has explicitly depicted a person of good will falling away from ('rushing headlong' from) the good that they have, presumably, known and loved.

Thomas closes his question on despair by reframing the sin in an illumining but rather provocative fashion: "This very neglect to consider the Divine favors arises from sloth."[729]

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identifying sins of *acedia* as 'mortal' Thomas is not speaking in 'economic' terms – i.e., as if suggesting that one act utterly disrupts charity, and warrants eternal punishment – but is rather engaging the serious reality that these human acts do indeed imperil a person's connection to the good.

[725] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.20.1 ad 1.

[726] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.20.4 corp.

[727] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.20.4 corp.: "*quando in affectu hominis dominatur, videtur ei quod nunquam possit ad aliquod bonum relevari*."

[728] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.20.3 corp.: "*Unde maius peccatum est, secundum se loquendo, non credere Dei veritatem, vel odire Deum*; *desperatio est periculosior, quia per spem revocamur a malis et introducimur in bona prosequenda; et ideo, sublata spe, irrefrenate homines labuntur in vitia, et a bonis laboribus retrahuntur*."

[729] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.20.4 ad 3: "*ipsa etiam negligentia considerandi divina beneficia ex acedia provenit*."

Thomas causally links the syndrome of ills surrounding *acedia* with a subsequent neglect to see the good as indeed divine gift. We see the suggestion that despair (and the related constellation of *acedia*, torpor, and sloth) bear the marks of what we might call a 'positional ingratitude' on the part of a being whose existence and individual good is contingent – i.e., obtained by participation. The dispositions of boredom, neglect, detestation, flight, and ultimately despair of the good seem to evidence a more foundational loss of connection to the hierarchical narrative of the universe: the good that *is* is a good that is simultaneously *given* and *received*.[730] Such dispositions, whether actively intended or not, seem to regard our existential resting upon and enjoyment of the good (*complacentia*) as if it were instead merely optional to our existence – and as if we could (at least in those early stages) set it down when in the mood and pick it up again at will. This is what we mean by 'positional ingratitude.' With or without the accompanying emotion or affect we might associate with ingratitude, a person who does not view themselves as the ongoing recipient of the good as *bestowed* will not be careful to position themselves for the receiving of it. That is, given the Proclean notion that the divine good is an *ongoing* bestowal into the world, a posture of ingratitude is not only a rearward-facing disconnect as to a completed act of giving, but is a current posture of 'non-receptivity' in regards to one's present source of the good. This is how we can envision the problem of 'not considering the divine gift (favors).'

In this section we have examined the question of what might be an underlying narrative of the person who, having previously known and loved the good, does not choose to do it. We

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[730] Recall, we are in this section addressing the *problem*, using Thomas's graphic theoretical terms, so that we can as effectively as possible frame a response in the next chapter. These listed dispositions and activities should elicit compassion, as they are common human responses to experiences in the world, and indeed in Thomas's treatments they indeed *do* elicit compassion. See, for example, Thomas's charitable and hopeful treatment of remedies the problems of sorrow and torpor in *ST* 2–2.35 and 38.
Further, Gilles Mongeau describes this compassionate orientation in his treatment of the contribution of the Dominicans in the 13th century – i.e., filling the need articulated by Lateran IV for "a new kind of pastor," one able to provide *cura animarum* for the people and a "right consoling word" to touch the troubled soul. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*; see esp.: "The Transformation of Pedagogical Ideals," 53–65, at 58–9.

showed how such defective action can be understood as arising from a more fundamental failure of an agent to locate themself within a shared network of participating that good. Such a failure, what we have called 'positional ingratitude,' can be seen to effect also a disorientation that extends beyond itself in disordered relation to others in acts of harm or even violence. We should, therefore, examine the possibilities of gratitude as a foundational posture of creaturely existence – and, therefore, of its role in a contra-violent mode of life among human beings. We will take up these possibilities in the next chapter.[731]

C3. Theological examples: Thomas's use of 'falling away' in his commentary upon the psalms, and the possibility of restoration with the good

Having claimed that Thomas's philosophical analysis of human vice and virtue is pastorally motivated, we will in this final section take up a few examples of his theological use of the philosophical framings we have seen. We will look at several locations in his biblical commentary on Psalms, where his pastoral sensitivity to human frailty often comes to the fore.[732] In particular, we can notice Thomas's drawing attention to the role of charity in the individual's life, and what is entailed in its loss. We will look at selections from Thomas's commentary on three psalms: 52, 43, and 50.

Psalm 52 examines the nature of the wicked person, which the psalmist identifies in verse 1 as a "fool," who has "said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" To the extent that people are of this

[731] It bears repeating that this notion of 'positional ingratitude' must be understood as indicating an *orientation* regarding the good (i.e., as of non-receptivity), rather than an emotional state about the good. This is an important clarification, lest we be read ultimately as suggesting that a 'positive attitude' about difficulties suffices as a solution to the problem of human violence. Instead, the point of considering ingratitude, and gratitude, as significant in this thesis is the issue of how these notions intersect with a human agent's relation to the good that is the principle of their being and their activity.

[732] Eileen Sweeney observes that in the *Summa theologiae* 2–2.87 Aquinas can be seen to soften his "rather harsh" explanations of the human problem of sin by invoking "a beautiful passage from the Psalms that transforms his conclusion into a prophetic context, one of relationship, of absolute demand but also absolute love and mercy." Eileen Sweeney, "Vice and Sin (1–2, qq. 71-89)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas,* ed., Stephen J. Pope, 151–168 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 155.

disposition, the psalmist declares: "All have gone aside; they have become unprofitable together; there is none who does good, no not one."[733] Thomas, in his commentary, considers "going aside" (*omnes declinaverunt*) in terms of "falling away from the root" (*recessum a radice*).[734] We see here again the framing of failure in terms of separation of oneself from the good, in this case, the 'root' – an organic metaphor that Thomas uses to connect the act of turning away with the psalmist's notion of becoming "unprofitable" thereby (*inutiles*), both to oneself and to others.[735] Here, we see Thomas explicitly associate a person's effect on another with their connection to the good – a theme that could be reasonably inferred from his *De divinis nominibus* commentary, but is brought out clearly here.[736] Thomas explains these 'unprofitable works' in terms of humanity's ultimate end, i.e., "the prize of eternal life" (*praemium vitae aeternae*), and explicitly attributes the lack of usefulness to a lack of charity – such acts are "not informed by the love of God" (*non sunt informata amore Dei*).[737]

In Psalm 43, the psalmist(s) is speaking from a place of distress, rather than judgment. Here, they cry out in their affliction, but also declare their firm attachment to God as their good:

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[733] Psalm 52:1. 4, translated from the Vulgate: "*Dixit insipiens in corde suo: 'Non est Deus.' ... Omnes declinaverunt; simil inutiles facti sunt: non est qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum*."
[734] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 52.519.
[735] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 52.519.
[736] Ref.: p. 212–213, n704.
[737] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 52.519. Note: Thomas throughout his treatment of Psalm 52 uses *amor* to address the love of God, rather than *caritas* (as he does in his treatment of Psalm 43). In this case Thomas appears to use *amor* synonymously with *caritas* when speaking of God, particularly in terms of the formal influence of *caritas* we have emphasized in our inquiry. For example, in section 516 Thomas observes that "Just as fear, knowledge, and love of God is the principle of every good work, so when knowledge and love of God are taken away, a good life is entirely taken away" – "*Sicut timor, cognitio et amor Dei est principium omnis boni operis, ita sublata cognitione et amore Dei omnis bona vita tollitur.*" In section 518, Thomas does highlight the human, affective element entailed in such love of God: "There are two things that should happen in relation to God: namely, that the intellect should be fixed on the knowledge of God, and that the emotions should tend toward God as toward their end" – "*Sunt duo quae oportet circa Deum fieri, scilicet ut intellectus intus figatur in Dei cognitionem et affectus tendat in Deum sicut in finem*." Finally, in section 519, Thomas explicitly speaks of love of God – specifically as *amor* – in terms of formal influence: "… things that do not occur in the virtue of faith and are not informed by the love of God are objectively not good" – "*ea quae non fiunt in virtute fidei et non sunt informata amore Dei, non sunt bona simpliciter*." It seems, therefore, justified to read Thomas in this text as speaking of *amor* in the way that he speaks elsewhere of *caritas*, and so we have brought his treatment of Psalm 52 into our examination of the effects of the loss of charity/*caritas*, even though his terminology is different.

"Yet we have not forgotten you, and we have not done wickedly in your covenant. And our heart has not turned back, neither have you turned aside our steps from your way."[738] Once again, we see that Thomas reads 'turning back' in terms of the loss of charity, and in this case he explicitly identifies such defective activity as sin, invoking and connecting two related scriptural texts in his treatment: "So, he says, ***our heart has not turned back*** through the loss of charity. *No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God* (Luke 9:62). *They have gone away backwards* (Isa. 1:4), namely, sinners."[739] Though Thomas is still connecting the turning away from the good with dire implications, he also in this text emphasizes the sustaining and preserving role of divine grace: "And he says, ***neither have you turned aside our steps from your way***, as if to say 'You have not allowed our actions to turn aside from the way of your justice.' *This is the way, walk in it* (Isa. 30:21)."[740] It is noteworthy that in Thomas the grace of God operates directly to uphold human beings' connection to the divine – but humans can still indeed override, as it were, that grace and diminish the causal influence of charity in their souls.

Recalling Thomas's pastoral concern for the healing of the soul thus wounded, we can notice how Thomas is quick to rejoice in the far-reaching riches of the mercy of God. Compare what we have seen in his commentary on Psalm 43 with his charitable and hopeful commentary on Psalm 50, the iconic psalm depicting David's repentance and restoration after committing

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[738] Psalm 43:18–19a, translated from the Vulgate: "*Nec obliti sumus te, et inique non egimus in testamento tuo. Et non recessit retro cor nostrum; et declinasti semitas nostras a via tua*."
[739] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 43.448: "*Et ideo dicit,* ***non recessit retro cor nostrum****, per dismissionem caritatis: Luc. 9:* nemo mittens manum ad aratrum *et cetera. Isa. 1:* abalienate sunt retrorsum, *scilicet peccatores.*"
[740] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 43.448: "*Et dicit,* ***non declinasti semitas nostras a via tua****: quasi dicat: non permisisti quod actiones nostrae declinarent a via justitiae tuae. Isa. 30:* haec est via, ambulate in ea."

adultery and murder.[741] Addressing David's plea "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy,"[742] Thomas states:

> He does not wish to struggle; he does not seek to argue; he uses rather the quick path: ***have mercy.*** He also does not assert the motivation for mercy—the service that he has given God, the dangers he has endured for him—but he simply begs God's mercy, ***according to your great mercy***. *For it is not for our justifications that we present our prayers before your face, but for the multitude of your tender mercies* (Dan 9:18). And it should be noted that someone can hope in the divine mercy for two reasons: one, from consideration of the divine nature; another, from consideration of and following upon the multitude of his effects. Therefore, he first shows that he hopes in God's mercy from consideration of the divine nature, because it is proper to the divine nature that it be goodness itself … So this mercy of God is nothing other than goodness in relation to misery that needs to be removed. Therefore, when I consider that it is proper to goodness to remove misery, and furthermore that he is goodness itself, I confidently hasten back to his mercy.[743]

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[741] The notion of 'mortal sin' (such as seen in the examples here of adultery and murder, as well as blasphemy, perjury, etc.) provides a hermeneutical challenge to readers of Thomas, but should not be passed over too quickly in discussing this text. The point of the category, in Thomas's thought, is that by turning away from God as principle (i.e., destroying charity in one's soul), the sinner is in effect willing to sin everlastingly (*ST* 1–2.87.3 ad 1), a state that a person cannot help themselves out of, but that God can aid by grace (1–2.87.3 corp.). It is this second notion that provides a hint of Thomas's pastoral concern in these texts, and the suggestion to nuance the terms accordingly. If taken at face value, it would seem unclear how a person in whom charity is truly 'destroyed' by committing a mortal sin interacts with that divine grace. Thomas shows that 'satisfactory punishment,' which is an operation of grace that removes the stain of sin by restoring the soul to the right ordering of divine justice, must entail agreement of the person's will (1–2.86.2 corp.; 87.6 corp.). That is, in Thomas's thought, God does not go around repairing people unsolicited; yet, the fundamental problem of the mortal sin is that it precludes/hinders the person from making the request. It seems, philosophically, that the 'eternal' nature of a mortal sin is the practical reality of the person *not ever choosing* to repent (or avail themselves of divine grace), rather than the person *not being capable* of repenting – making the situation more captured by the notion of 'sin/harm that was not ever repaired' rather than 'sin/harm that is not reparable.' Even more to the point, Thomas seems to be wanting to show that the effect of such sin needs to be understood in terms of the loss of communion with God, one's very principle of life and good. See also: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.71.4 corp.; 87.3 corp.; 88.2 corp.; 72.5 corp., and ad 1, as examples of difficult texts regarding the apparent devastation possible from a single act of sin.
My thanks to Bob Sweetman for his insights on this theme. Ref.: personal correspondence, 4 July 2022.

[742] Psalm 50:3, translated from the Vulgate – "*Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam*."

[743] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 50.501: "*Non vult contendere, non querit disputare, sed brevi utitur via,* ***miserere****. Item non allegat misericordiae causam, non servitia quae fecit Deo, non pericula quae sustinuit pro eo, sed solum Dei misericordiam implorat; unde dicit,* ***secundum magnam misericordiam tuam****. Dan. 9:* non in justificationibus nostris prosternimus preces ante faciem tuam; sed in miserationibus tuis multis. *Et notandum, quod aliquis potest sperare de misericordia divina, duplici ratione. Una ratio est ex consideratione divinae naturae: alia ratio est ex consideratione et secundum multitudinem effectuum ejus. Primo ergo ostendit quod sperat de misericordia Dei ex consideratione naturae divinae, quia naturae divinae proprium est quod sit ipsa bonitas … Unde nihil aliud est haec Dei misericordia, nisi bonitas relata ad depellendam miseriam. Ergo cum considero quod bonitatis miseriam repellere est proprium, et tamen est ipsa bonitas, confidenter ad misericordiam recurro*."

Thomas's language in this selection not only compassionately takes up David's inner thoughts and motivations, but also gives ample room for the infinite goodness of God to intervene and restore David in charity and communion with God. How could this occur? Thomas here states that there are three elements to spiritual restoration (properly speaking, "spiritual joy" – but in the context of this psalm it is specifically *restored* joy: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation"[744]):

> It should be known that spiritual joy has three steps. The first consists in the satisfaction of desire, the second in the enlarging of the heart, the third in the advance toward external things.[745]

We notice here resonances with the work of the Holy Spirit, such as we examined in chapter 4: bringing about *complacentia* (the state of loving and resting in the good), enlarging the heart (making room) for the love of God where it has been shut out, and enabling the soul to move again by loving the good outside of it – in this case, loving God as principle, by the restoration of charity.[746] We include this brief treatment of the theme of healing, and the role of *complacentia* in human flourishing, to suggest a bridge to the work of the next chapter: we can expect that the remedy suggested in chapter 6, i.e., a remedy addressing the problem of falling away from the good, will entail activity that is properly human and at the same time cooperates with, or mirrors, in some way the mode of activity Thomas associates with the Holy Spirit.

D. Conclusion

In this chapter our project's problem reaches its peak: why is it that otherwise well-intentioned people act in ways that do violence to other people's flourishing (and their own)? That is, what happens when we *don't* do the good that is proper to our way of being? This second

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[744] Psalm 50:14, translated from the Vulgate: "*Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui*."
[745] Aquinas, *In psalmos* 50.505: "*Spirituale gaudium habet tres gradus. Primo existit in complacentia affectus; secondo in dilatatione cordis; tertio in progressu ad exteriora*."
[746] See chapter 4, section C2, on the workings of the Holy Spirit among human beings.

level of our inquiry into personal violence considered the part of the problem that seems to elude moral education, or even good intention. We showed in chapter 3 and 4 the ethical significance of understanding those contexts and activities that undergird 'natural' human flourishing, a notion which can be equally identified as 'graced.' Here, that account of human flourishing met its limits. We took on the experienced reality that human beings, even while knowing and affirming the good that is proper to their flourishing, can and do choose to do otherwise – a defective state of agency whose operation can range from a simple omission of the good, to a neglect of the good, to an outright choosing of an evil as if it were a good.

Thomas's account addresses the problem in terms of a defect in our most proper activity: acts of knowing and loving God, a defect that extends to our acts of knowing and loving other people. A Thomistic account of falling away from the good entails, perhaps even paradigmatically, defective human acts (i.e., the 'horizontal' aspect of the problem), but at the same time is not limited to the failure of individual, discreet acts – human failure is not merely a matter of 'falling down' in the operation of some specific act, but also entails a 'falling away from' God as the principle and source of our good (the 'vertical' aspect). We examined this falling away in terms of the loss of *complacentia* – the basic activity of resting in the good that is prior to tending toward it as an object of desire. We regarded falling away, therefore, as entailing a profound 'unsettling' of the soul from its basic good, a restlessness, or even distress, that manifests in acts of harm to human flourishing. We examined *why* such turning away, or defect of act, might occur, which we engaged through the case-study of Thomas's treatment of *acedia*. Here, we saw falling away framed as the problem of 'positional' ingratitude. Failure to view one's good as a good that is *given* disrupts a person's orientation to the good (an orientation given shape through their thoughts and loves), with deleterious effect in the agent's activity.

Prompted by our findings in this chapter, in the next we will take up this situation in reverse. We will consider the possibilities of *gratitude* as a foundational posture of creaturely existence – and, therefore, of its role in a contra-violent mode of life among other human beings, including its connection to the knowing and resting in the good that is seen in Thomas's notion of *complacentia boni.*

Chapter 6: A second response to violence: the human art of gratitude

This chapter presents the final pieces in our proposed account of contra-violence. Before we start, therefore, let us revisit the path we have taken. In chapter 2 we saw the causal activity of the divine operating in terms of bestowing the natures of things in the created realm, such that the effect of this 'divine art' was the presence of an internal principle of operation in each thing. Specific kinds of things have their own ways of being in the world, modes of being which frame what thriving entails for that kind of thing. In the case of self-movers, and human beings in particular, this mode of thriving includes the ability for individuals to supply the explanation, or ground, for their actions in the world – thus, intelligibility is a natural and proper attribute of human existence, arising from the personal agency of individual human beings. The significance of such intelligibility, especially in terms of the thesis's interest in personal violence, relates both to the self-intelligibility of a person's engagement with their own agency, and the other-intelligibility of one person interacting with another's agency. In chapter 3 we examined what violence to such a way of being might look like, paying particular attention to the ways in which intelligibility of individual persons can be hindered, damaged, or robbed – e.g., denying a person the status of subject within their own narrative, rejecting a person's 'explanation' for their actions as arising from their own experience of the world, subsuming the subjective 'I' narrative of another person into a singular 'we' narrative, viewing a human neighbor as an ontological 'stranger' such that their way of being is unknowable to us, etc. In chapter 4 we considered a first response to such violence, one that can be understood as the fulfillment, in human particularity, of the divine creative art. We examined the ways in which the flourishing of human individuals and communities, considered in terms of the operations and the intelligibility that are proper to human nature, serve as a foundation level of a contra-violent way of living. We constructed an

initial inventory of ways of being, especially in terms of one's orientation toward others, that counter the violence identified in chapter 3, including various manifestations of 'second-person relations' that operate as mutual affirmation between two subjective 'I's. In chapter 5 we faced the problem that common experience places before us: people often simply do not choose the good – even when their sense of human flourishing is well-informed by knowledge and charity – thereby committing violence against others (and themselves) in terms of their agency and flourishing. We examined the perplexing problem of 'falling away' from the good: first, as it appears in Aristotle's 'horizontal' account of human nature, then in Proclus's 'vertical' account, and finally in Thomas's account, which is sensitive to and addresses both orientations. In the work of this chapter we will, as before, look primarily to the thought of Thomas as a companion and guide to our inquiry, with initial brief examinations of how Aristotle and Proclus engage the issues at stake.

In this chapter we will address the question that chapter 5 set before us. Given this account of the failure of good people to do good, what can be done about it? What can be done when the internal principles of a self-mover fail to move them to choose or hold fast to the good that is the condition of human flourishing? Our account of human thriving, and what violence against it entails, should make us resist solutions that operate by doing something 'to' someone in an absolute sense, even to help them improve. A solution that helps people hold fast to a contra-violent way of living that is proper to their nature should itself be contra-violent.

In turning to this question, we can start by revisiting the notion of 'art' in the general, i.e. 'human,' sense.[747] In contrast to nature, art is a causal influence upon a being that is *exterior* to

[747] Ref.: pp. 100, 165–166, 168, 192.

the being (in Aristotle's categorizations).[748] However, in contrast with violence, which is also understood as an exterior force, art (specifically insofar as it 'works upon' human beings in practical arts such as medicine or education) is understood as collaborating with the will of the patient.[749] If it did not, art would fall under the Aristotelian sense of violence we examined in chapter 3: a principle of act to which the person acting or feeling the passion contributes nothing.[750] We might observe that in this way this sense of human art may be considered 'divine,' insofar as it imitates the way in which the Holy Spirit moves among human beings (as we saw in chapter 4) – that is, disposing human beings to be moved by things exterior to them, but always in collaboration with the will of the person.[751] We recall, from chapter 2, that in Aquinas 'human art' functions as a collaborative counterpart to 'divine art' – i.e., human beings not only passively receive their nature from the divine, but also actively, or 'artfully,' complete that nature.[752] For our purposes in the work of this chapter, we will extend this metaphor to consider as 'human art' contexts of distinctly human experience in which human beings intentionally position themselves to be moved by what is exterior to themselves – or mediate/assist others in those attempts.[753] We will consider such orientations, by which an agent aligns themselves with an external good with an openness to being moved and shaped by it, to be a 'second level' contra-violent mode of human living, presupposing and building upon the

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[748] Aristotle, *Met.* 7.7.1032a12–33. Aquinas illumines Aristotle's distinctions, identifying both nature and art as 'proper' (or *per se*) causes – the only difference being nature is intrinsic and art is extrinsic to the thing being moved. Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 7.6.1381.

[749] Though art provides an *accidental* form to its object, its operation does not destroy or work against the *essential* form – in human beings, this form entails the will. See Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1; *De an.* 2.2.413b24–29; *Eth. Nic.* 1.7.1097b23–1098a7.

[750] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a1–5. Recall the added clarification: 'where we would expect them to.'

[751] E.g.: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.60.2; 2–2.45.2; 1–2.112.1; 1.43.5 ad 2; 1.12.13 ad 3.

[752] See 100, n340. Ref.: Aquinas, *Super Sent.* 2.18.1.2 resp.; *Contra gent.* 3.65.6 (at *amplius*); *ST* 1.14.12 ad 3; 44.3; 66.1 obj. 2; 91.3 corp.; *Q.D. de pot.* 3.7 s.c. (Praeterea); *Q.D. de verit.* 3.1; *Super Phys.* 2.14.268.

[753] The reader may observe that this framing of a 'remedy' for falling away from the good requires a basic desire in the fallen agent *to be* restored. This may legitimately be viewed as a limitation of the thesis. However, such a desire can be 'mere' to a remarkable degree. We can be reminded of the anguished cry of the father approaching Jesus on behalf of his afflicted son: Lord I believe, help my unbelief. (Ref.: Mark 9:24).

primary mode we established in chapter 4. We will view as 'human art' the varying activities by which a person hopes to be reconnected to the good, framed as ways of being that contribute to and uphold the thriving of the varying persons in their circles of living. In our inquiry, we will approach this orientation of connectivity, and the activities by which we maintain or strengthen it, in terms of the human disposition of *gratitude.*

A helpful distinction to clarify this view of gratitude can be made between the notions of 'grateful *for*' and 'grateful *to*.' In the view of this work, the former is an affirmation of the goodness of a gift itself – related to the key Thomistic notion of *complacentia*[754]; the latter is the active orientation of a person *as* a receiver of a gift *toward* the source of that good bestowed (corresponding to what in the last chapter we called 'positional ingratitude'). The former is more properly identified as a disposition; the latter, an activity – taken together, they constitute a 'dispositional activity.' In one sense, the former is conceptually and experientially prior to the latter – we have to engage both the goodness of something and the givenness of something, it would seem, before we can express appreciation to the source of the gift.[755] This would appear to be the natural order of operations in gratitude, when all is going well and the individual is well-aligned to the source of their good. However, in another sense, the act of turning oneself toward a benefactor as a source of bestowed good is a positional/relational activity that is available to us even when the 'knowing and loving' disposition of the first mode has failed – i.e., when a person has dispositionally 'fallen away' from a good they have known and loved. For example, a person

[754] Properly speaking, gratefulness for a specific gift already given would indicate 'joy' or 'enjoyment.' A disposition of gratefulness for life itself, and the goodness of the universe – understood as gift in the cosmic sense – indicates *complacentia*. What the two have in common, Crowe explains, is the loving of the good that is an affective response to the good that *is*, contrasted with the desire entailed in the pursuit of a good that is absent. Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," 18. See: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.28.2 and 3.

[755] For the insight of this first articulation of the distinction I am indebted to Jeremy Wilkins (Boston College). Ref.: 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, "*Conversatio*" session 30 May 2017, examining Aquinas's *ST* 2–2.23.6 ad 1. My articulation of a subsequent implication is in response.

can mentally position themself to be grateful to their employer for the fact of having employment, even when they have in meaningful ways lost appreciation or joy for the job itself. This dynamic similarly applies to relationships such as between parents and children, siblings, friends, or neighbors. It applies to contexts such as home ownership, or being a resident of a certain region or country. As people age, they may speak of a similarly complex relation with their bodies. People who participate in religious communities may engage in spiritual activities as a source of divine good to them, even at times when they do not feel like it.

It is the claim of this project that the positional activity of 'gratitude to' in this way can work retro-actively, as it were, to reawaken the 'gratitude for' that is entailed in human participation of the good.[756] Gratitude of this kind can be undertaken as an 'intervention' to reestablish gratitude of the first kind. We can understand the work of the previous chapters, in particular chapter 2 and chapter 4, as a gratitude of the first kind. There, we examined human nature in terms of the contours of the goodness of human existence and flourishing, known and loved self-reflectively as such. In this chapter, we will examine more closely the activity of the second sense of gratitude – i.e., the ways in which we can position ourselves to the sources of our good, as interventions within the problem of falling away.

We will, therefore, in this chapter consider gratitude as the activity of identifying and aligning oneself specifically *as* an ongoing recipient of good from exterior sources, and specifically *to* those sources – a working definition that we arrive at by consideration of Thomas's thought, but which we recognize goes beyond Thomas's own theorizing. Further, the

[756] Though this has been stated in a number of ways, it bears repeating: in Thomas, restoration of the basic view of the universe as good and as divine gift – the *complacentia* that is the effect of charity in the soul – after it has been diminished by mortal sin requires some degree of divine intervention and grace. It is this thesis's reading of Thomas, moreover, that such divine benevolence and assistance paradigmatically reaches individual persons through secondary human causes, contexts, and activities. (Note: though, for Thomas, such mediations are not 'miracles' insofar as they belong to the realm of the natural, surely we can view the activity of humans mediating divine bestowals of grace as indeed wondrous.)

work of this chapter, while relying upon Thomas's theoretical account of gratitude and human existence, will be oriented intentionally toward the practical – and will, for that reason, not be exhaustive nor absolute in its conclusions. As we mentioned in chapter 5 (in the introduction to section C), our approach to the problem of personal violence, following Thomas, is framed in terms of particulars and therefore we do not view these observations and suggestions as holding in every case.[757] Rather, our aim is to provide a concrete vision of the possibility of countering personal violence through the case of gratitude – i.e., we aim to illumine the *kind* of human activities that can function contra-violently, by proposing and examining specific examples. The caution that we issued in the last chapter merits repeating once again: the notion of gratitude as we will engage it in this chapter must be understood as indicating an orientation of receptivity toward the good rather than an emotional state about the good.[758] This is an important clarification, lest we be read ultimately as suggesting that a 'positive attitude' about difficulties suffices as a solution to the problem of human violence. Instead, we will consider how an individual's active orientation of receptivity to the good might affect (or, better yet: effect) their affective disposition to, and rest in, the good as their principle and end. We will examine certain kinds of human activities in terms of their helpfulness in restoring and affirming a person's dispositional connection to the good they know, and thereby countering the human tendency of falling away from the good and perpetrating interpersonal violence. In this chapter, therefore, we will show gratitude in action as the consummate human art, and an efficacious contra-violent orientation.

One final word of clarification is called for in the work of this chapter, regarding the relevance of Aristotle's and Proclus's thought specifically to Thomas's treatment of gratitude.

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[757] Ref.: chapter 5, 211.
[758] Ref.: chapter 5, n731.

We do not want to suggest that Thomas was particularly influenced by – especially in the case of Proclus – Aristotle and Proclus on the theme of gratitude. Thomas's treatment of gratitude is first and foremost a reflection of his Christian faith and theological commitments. That said, it has been a methodological principle of this inquiry that attending closely to the Aristo-Proclean elements in Thomas's thought on human nature can provide readers of Thomas with a fresh understanding of his narrative that can prove fruitful in the task of identifying and countering personal violence. Further, our readings of these three have been shaped by the conviction that an ethical narrative is most fruitfully engaged when approached as a response to, or consequence of, certain anthropological and metaphysical commitments.[759] Given the significant influence of both Aristotle and Proclus upon Thomas's anthropology and cosmology that we have examined thus far, our work in this chapter is shaped by a cautious continuation, or extension, of this method – the shapes of gratitude that we find in Aristotle and Proclus can be considered relevant to that of Thomas insofar as they may provide inspiration, or hints as to where to look, for reading Thomas afresh on this theme as well. Taking in hand the anthropological and cosmological similarities, and differences, that we have seen among the three, we will begin with brief examinations of gratitude as it appears in Aristotle and Proclus, and use these as a springboard to an examination of gratitude as it appears in their inheritor, Thomas.

A. The theme of gratitude as it appears in Aristotle

The notion of gratitude serving as a contra-violent orientation appears to hit a snag right out of the gate in Aristotle. Famously, Aristotle does not see gratitude as befitting the 'great-souled' person, as he describes him in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> He is the sort of man to confer benefits, but he is ashamed of receiving them; for the one is the mark of the superior, the other of an inferior. And he is apt to confer greater benefits in return; for thus the original benefactor besides being paid will incur a debt to

[759] Recall Baltzly's observation about Proclus's ethics *vis-á-vis* his metaphysics: chapter 2, 75, and n235.

> him, and will be the gainer by the transaction. They seem also to remember any service they have done, but not those they have received (for he who receives a service is inferior to him who has done it, but the proud man wishes to be superior), and to hear of the former with pleasure, of the latter with displeasure.[760]

Unwinsome as it may seem to modern moral sensibilities, Aristotle of course means for this litany of qualities to be understood as a praise of the proud man rather than a critique.[761] Though Aristotle goes on to discuss how the proud man is indeed ready to be generous, and that he avoids the "vulgar" practice of having a "lofty bearing" among people of humbler circumstances, Aristotle is quite clear on the notion that a great man avoids being the recipient of a gift: "It is a mark of the proud man also to ask for nothing or scarcely anything."[762]

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[760] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 4.3.1124b9–15.

[761] Aquinas's commentary on this passage softens the disposition to a degree, stating that "the magnanimous man does not choose to be unmindful of favors received but is anxious to bestow greater favors" – "*Secundum electionem autem magnanimus non obliviscitur beneficiorum. Set studet ad hoc, quod maiora recompenset.*" This rather euphemistic image of the proud man being careful to not forget benefits given, even 'studying' them 'so that they can be more fully paid back,' however, does not seem to line up with Thomas's explanation of the examples Aristotle subsequently provides. There, the proud man's ego must be placated and massaged by avoiding any mention of benefits done to him: "He gives two examples of this. The first is taken from the writings of Homer who represents Thetis (called the goddess of water) approaching Jove (called the king of all the gods). She does not recount the benefits she herself has conferred on Jove, as if this would not be acceptable to him, but rather the benefits she has received from Jove. To this Jupiter listened more willingly. The other example is taken from Greek history in which it is narrated that certain Spartans, when seeking the help of the Athenians, did not recite the favors they had done for the Athenians but the favors received from them" – "*Et circa hoc ponit duo exempla. Quorum primum sumitur ex dictis Homeri, qui introducit Thetim, quam dicebant esse deam aquarum, accedentem ad Iovem, quem dicebant esse regem omnium deorum. Et quod Thetis non dixit Iovi beneficia quae ipsa Iovi contulerat, quasi hoc non esset ei acceptum, sed potius beneficia quae ipsa acceperat a Iove, quod Iupiter libenter audiebat. Aliud autem exemplum sumit ex historia Graecorum; in qua narratur quod quidam cives, scilicet Lacones Atheniensium auxilium implorantes non dixerunt eis beneficia quae fecerant, sed quae receperant*." Ref.: Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 4.3.10.764, and 765.
In this way, we see Aquinas explaining and responding to the examples given by Aristotle on their own terms, while leaving room for the Christian value of gratitude.

[762] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 4.4.1124b17–18, 23–24. See also MacIntyre on the "illusion of self-sufficiency" demonstrated by Aristotle's *megalopsychos*, and Aristotle's apparent approval of the same, an illusion that entails the neglect of what MacIntyre calls "virtues of receiving: … knowing how to exhibit gratitude, without allowing that gratitude to be a burden, courtesy towards the graceless giver, and forbearance towards the inadequate giver." MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 126–127. Sweetman nuances Aristotle's resistance to gratitude as an appropriate virtue for the great-souled man by noting that "he preferred to live a life of action, of acting upon rather than of being being acted upon." Further, Sweetman notes that the value of gratitude as a virtue is recognized in Aristotle, but is limited to those naturally dependent, i.e., women, children, slaves, foreigners, barbarians. Sweetman, "From Aristotle to Seneca: Gratitude within an Ancient Greco-Roman World," paper given as part of a series of faculty development seminars held at King's University in Edmonton AB, funded by the Templeton Foundation, and organized by the grant holder Joshua Harris of the Philosophy Department of King's University on 9 August 2021, see 1–2, and 3.

In remarkable contrast, we see Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* asserting that the proper disposition of the philosopher toward those who have gone before in the work is indeed gratitude.[763] We can note that in this location Aristotle grounds the gratitude in justice: "It is *just* that we should be grateful, not only to those with whose views we may agree, but also to those who have expressed more superficial views; for these also contributed something."[764] The issue here seems to be correctly attributing credit to all those who have contributed to the ongoing progress of philosophy, which Aristotle does clearly identify as something which "we have inherited."[765] Though Aristotle's comments here seem rather outshouted by the proud portrait of the great-souled man, the depiction of gratitude as a philosophical orientation of justice leaves open a crack for an examination of what such an orientation might entail in Aristotle's thought.

We recall that in the work of this chapter we are considering gratitude not so much as a feeling but as a posture of receptivity toward an exterior source of good *especially* insofar as we expect that alignment to have an ongoing, ordering effect upon us. Given that framing, we can consider where in Aristotle even the great-souled person positions themself with something exterior specifically in a posture of readiness to be thereby aligned in some way to living well. On Nussbaum's reading, where we see such as posture most clearly is *not*, as might be expected,

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[763] Aristotle, *Met.* 2.1.993b12–15.

[764] Aristotle, *Met.* 2.1.993b12–15, emphasis mine.

[765] Aristotle, *Met.* 2.1.993b18. In his commentary on this text, Thomas affirms the justice of Aristotle's suggestion: "Now it is only fitting that we should be grateful to those who have helped us attain so great a good as knowledge of the truth." Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 2.1.288 – "*Est autem iustum ut his, quibus adiuti sumus in tanto bono, scilicet cognitione veritatis, gratias agamus.*"
After examining Aristotle's statements in the *Metaphysics*, we may consider Thomas's charitable reading noted earlier of the magnanimous man in the *Nicomachean Ethics* excerpt as more justified. Here, the philosopher does indeed seem to be wanting to avoid the injustice of being "unmindful of favors received." See: Aquinas *Sent. Ethic.* 4.3.10.764 (ref.: 234–235, n761). Given that the dating of Thomas's commentary on the *Metaphysics* is unclear, we might enjoy imagining that Thomas, in writing his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, had the grateful philosopher in mind as he was envisioning Aristotle's great-souled man. (On the difficulty of dating Thomas's *Metaphysics* commentary, see Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, 344.)

in the activity of contemplative philosophy.[766] Where we see the great-souled man placing himself so as to be shaped is in the cultural experience of tragic poetry/drama. Aristotle's treatment of tragic poetry praises the 'tragic emotions' of pity and fear as virtuous in terms of their relation to the human value of 'fellow feeling' – and emphasizes that the purpose of such literature is the very evoking of these.[767] These emotions are virtuous, in Aristotle's account, insofar as they stand in contrast with the hubristic belief in the impossibility of evil befalling oneself.[768]

The reader might note that, in apparent contrast with this identification of pity and fear as virtues, Aristotle also asserts that they are to be evoked in the audience by the tragic poet for the explicit purpose of the "catharsis of such emotions."[769] The possibility of considering a person's engagement with tragic poetry to be an orientation similar to that of gratitude relies on a specific understanding of the notion of κάθαρσις. Nussbaum, in contrast to what she refers to as the common ways of interpreting the term (i.e., morally, as 'purification,' or medically, as 'purgation'), claims that both the history of the term in philosophical usage and the context of Aristotle's famous assertion should lead us to interpret the term in terms of knowing and learning – i.e., as 'clarification.'[770] This ought not be understood, she further states, as specifically or

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[766] Nussbaum claims that Aristotle's clear and exuberant praise for contemplation as the highest form of activity for human life that is seen specifically in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.6–8 is "incompatible with the main line of the argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics.*" Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 384 n59. Rather, she states, Aristotle's thought overwhelmingly tends toward cautioning human beings *against* aiming for a way of life that is fitting for the gods rather than human beings – a striving that is itself a form of *hubris*. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge,* 381, 384–385. See also: Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness,* chapter 12: "The vulnerability of the good human life: relational goods," which contributed to the work of chapter 4 of this project. For examples of Aristotle treating of the distinctly *human* goods that the well-lived life entails, see: Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1.7.1097b7–1098a19; 9.9.1169b3–22; 7.1.1145a27; *Pol.* 1.2.1253a1–35.

[767] Aristotle, *De Poetica*, trans. Ingram Bywater, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 1453–1487 (New York: Modern, 2001), 6.1449b27-8; 13.1453a3–5.

[768] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 8.1385b22–23. Pity, Aristotle further states, is the virtuous mean between "presumptuous insolence" and being "panic-stricken." Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1385b32–34. Ref.: chapter 5, 204–205 (regarding hubris).

[769] Aristotle, *Poet.* 6.1449b27–28.

[770] Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 388–389, with ref. to: Plato, *Republic* 508C, *Phaedo* 65ff, 69C, 110ff, *Cratylus* 426B.

exclusively an intellectual exercise. Rather, catharsis is a practical activity by which the participants achieve clarification of *themselves*, in terms of their particularity and their actions.[771] In Aristotle's view, Nussbaum claims, "the human world is held together by pity and fellow-feeling."[772] Rather than 'purging' oneself of such emotions, therefore, we should embrace them as 'clarifying' the flourishing of our own lives and our place in the world. Thus, we can envision the person who 'places themselves' within a cultural experience of tragic poetry as accepting the possibility, and even embracing it as desirable, of this activity of personal clarification – i.e., of being led to a right understanding of oneself in terms of self-sufficiency and right attitude toward other persons as significant to one's own flourishing. Stated otherwise, *pace* Aristotle's *megalopsychos*, the good person will embrace an orientation of receptivity to the benefits that aid them in living the good life of a human being – a posture, effectually, of gratitude.

B. The theme of gratitude as it appears in Proclus

We recall that our examination of Proclus as a conversation partner to Aquinas began with Baltzly's observation that Proclus's work is often taken to be lacking a treatment of ethics – and Baltzly's response that such an absence presents not as much of a limitation as might be expected since, to Proclus, a right understanding of metaphysics will contain the ground of a moral account of the world.[773] We find Baltzly's intuition borne out once again in the work of this chapter. While we will not find in Proclus a cataloguing of human emotions such as fear and pity, we *have* seen that the very notion of a hierarchical reality entails relations of benevolence and dependance. Moreover, Baltzly shows, the notion of virtue *is* addressed by Proclus, insofar as the virtues are essential to the ascent of becoming like the divine and therefore are conceived

[771] Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 390–391. See Aristotle, *Poet.* 6.1450a15–20.
[772] Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 375.
[773] Baltzly, "The Human Life," 257. See chapter 2, 75, and n235.

as a gradation of goodness that spans and connects bodily being upward through to the intellectual and godlike.[774] Thus, in Proclus, the notion of accepting and embracing dependency upon a superior being is to be viewed as the attitude of the wise toward the process by which they might aspire to the 'flowering' of their being.[775] It is in this context that we will find what might be called a treatment of gratitude in Proclus.[776]

Gratitude in Proclean Neoplatonism is most eminently due to the gods (and thus is also framed as worship, or prayer), and paradigmatically takes the form of ἐπιστροφή – i.e., becoming like them.[777] This is not seen as a 'repayment' of the goods bestowed upon human beings (the gods have no need of such), nor a placating of divine vanity, but is seen as a fitting response insofar as the gods, as providential mediators of the Good, wish for beings to participate the good.[778] While, to the Neoplatonists, the highest happiness for human lives is becoming like the divine – and, indeed "any form of reversion … however humble, is a form of worship"[779] – true 'deiformation' is the limited to those who devote their lives to "theurgic power, which is more excellent than all human wisdom, and which comprehends prophetic good, the purifying powers of perfective good, and in short, all such things as are the effects of divine possession."[780]

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[774] Baltzly lists the graded, ascending categories of Platonic, deiforming virtues that Proclus, following Iamblichus, distinguishes: natural, ethical, political/civic, purificatory/kathartic, theoretic, paradigmatic, and hieratic. He also notes, however, that compiling and articulating that list is not without complications. Baltzly, "The Human Life," 263–264, and 274 n8.
[775] Proclus, *in Parm.* 6.1044–1045.
[776] We can see simple references to acts of gratitude, such as in locations where Proclus gives thanks to his predecessors in the tradition, for example in the opening chapter of the *Theologia Platonica*.
[777] Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.43, 28–44, 19; 2.209.13–21. Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns,* 19–20.
[778] Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.44.15f. Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns,* 20.
[779] Van den Berg, "Theurgy in the Context of Proclus' Philosophy," in *All From One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d'Hoine and Marije Martijn, 223–239 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 225 (ref. by Van den Berg to: Proclus, *On Sacrifice and Magic*, 148.10–18, and 149.12–18).
[780] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 1.25.113.6–10. Van den Berg states that the primary benefit hoped for by the practice of theurgy, beyond even such impressive miracles as "rainmaking in times of drought, preventing earthquakes and healings," is "the salvation of the human soul." Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 69.

Gratitude, for Proclus, is expressed most perfectly in the ritual, liturgy, and life orientation of theurgy.

The exaltation of the human soul through theurgy, however, is in practical reality not available to all – it is the experience of the select, privileged few who are invited into the purification of the theurgic initiations.[781] This does not mean, however, that the orientation of gratitude is not relevant in a meaningful way to the average life. Despite the complexity and exclusivity of Proclean mystical ascent, there are aspects of theurgic practice which can further illumine for us the shape of what could be any human soul's reversion to its source, and can therefore help us articulate what an orientation of gratitude might concretely entail in a hierarchical world. Just as with our examination of gratitude in Aristotle, these themes can serve to challenge a thin reading of Proclus and to fill in the landscape around the more well-known, landmark themes.

First, we can observe that, for Proclus, theurgy is an exegetical/hermeneutical discipline, one that he sees as entailing the task of 'reading' the visible beings in the world as participations of the divine.[782] Because the demiurge reveals higher realities through visible images made of those realities, we can 'read' the visible world as participating in the divine. In theurgy, the participant applies the skill of setting up ritual statues that reflect the divine; we see the same impulse at work in a lower way in philosophy, where participants read the material world itself as participations of the divine.[783] Proclus's connection of a philosophical view of the world to the

[781] Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 29, 69–70, 75. Van den Berg notes (75 and 29, resp.) that Proclus, for example, is said to have been initiated into the Chaldean mysteries by Asclepigenia, the granddaughter of Nestorius, and also by Syrianus.
[782] Anne Sheppard, "Proclus as exegete," in *Interpreting Proclus: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Gersh, 57–79 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 73–74.
[783] Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 1.29.124.12–125.2. In this passage, Proclus refers to the Cratylus, and discusses three ways of invoking the divine: the demiurge makes images of the intelligible forms, in philosophy one makes images of reality in words (and divine names which are like statues of the gods), and in theurgy one invokes divine goodness

mysteries of theurgy suggests that he imbues the task of reading the world with a seriousness and difficulty that precludes a casual, 'been there done that' attitude toward discerning the divine in the ordinary. For our purposes, if a 'non-specialist' wishes to do reverent justice to the task of approaching returning to our source, we will need to approach it with a humility that presses us to 'submit ourselves' to the mysteries of the divine as present in creation, and to study long before we dare to turn the page and move along.

Further, we can see the significance of material reality for the cosmic activity of a being's return beautifully demonstrated by the theurgist's specialized, ritualized use of symbols/σύμβολα – i.e., individual objects, or categories of objects, that are believed to have a 'sympathy' with the gods, such that the skilled theurgist could use them to attract the attention, interaction, and help of the gods.[784] On this, we can observe that, despite the theurgist's goal of purifying the soul of external, material entanglements, it is remarkable that in the ritualistic use of symbols as mediating the divine ascent it is in fact elements of the material world that function as intersection points with the divine.[785] Thus, the work of the theurgist, specialized and exclusive though it may be, demonstrates an application of what is perhaps the most fundamental Neoplatonic dictum regarding the material world: 'all in all, but in each appropriately.'[786]

To contextualize and frame what we have noted thus far, we can take up for consideration the theurgic hymns. While Proclus states in *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* that "Our hymn to the Father does not consist in words, nor in rites, but in becoming like him," this does

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through symbols. See also: Proclus, *in Parm.* 4.847; Van den Berg, "Theurgy in the Context of Proclus' Philosophy," 225–226.

[784] Proclus shows both senses of the material world serving as visible participation of the divine in *in Parm.* 4.847. See Van den Berg, "Theurgy in the Context of Proclus' Philosophy," 225–6; Dodds, "Theurgy," Appendix 2 in *The Greeks and the Irrational,* 291–299, at 292.

[785] Proclus, *in Alc.* 280.6. See also Blankenhorn on Proclus's contribution to Neoplatonist mysticism in terms of the role of mediations in the divine ascent. Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union with God*, 7.

[786] Proclus, *El. theol.* §103; *in Parm.* 1.641. See Van den Berg on the specific connection of theurgic objects, such as divinized statues, to Proclus's dictum. Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns,* 79–80.

not mean that Proclus does not also have in mind the literal singing of musical hymns.[787] Proclus's leadership in the Athenian Academy entailed composing and participating in the singing of hymns – songs/poems addressed to the varying divine figures in Proclus's hierarchy of the gods – seven of which remain.[788] Proclus's hymns can be understood as liturgical manifestations of the 'cosmic' hymn that is sung by every creature insofar as it orients itself toward the divine as its cause.[789] Before we examine these hymns in terms of gratitude, we should note that a number of Proclus's hymns express fear, anxiety, and even horror over the soul's condition – as well as pleas to be delivered from material entanglement.[790] That being said, we do indeed see a profound and detailed gratitude to the gods for their help to human beings, even in this life. We will first briefly list segments from Hymns 2–6 that show such gratitude, and then focus on the magisterial hymns to Helios/Apollo and Athena (1 and 7, respectively):[791]

- In praise for the good of procreation, the theurgist gives thanks for the divine act which "because of the evil-averting wishes and providential acts of the Father, wishing to increase the infinite universe with birth, aroused in the souls a yearning for the earthly existence" (H. 2.7–9)

- "We hymn the light that raises man aloft," that has "taught them to strive eagerly to follow the track leading beyond the deep gulf of forgetfulness, and to go pure to their kindred star" (H. 3.1, 6–7)

- Praise to the gods for "having kindled an upward-leading fire," to the gods who are "leaders towards bright-shining wisdom" (H. 4.2, 12)

- Praise to the goddess for "her evil-repelling help" – by her, "a firm, bright-minded race sprout up from the birth-achieving beds, theirs was in every way a calm, bountiful life" (H. 5.2, 10–11)

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[787] Proclus, *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* Fr. 2 Fr. 2, 207.22–24 (see in: Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*, 18–19, and 78).
[788] Van den Berg, "Theurgy in the Context of Proclus's Philosophy," 236; *Proclus's Hymns*, 22–23, 29–30, 34. See also Van den Berg's discussion and chart of the levels of divine beings in Proclus, based upon the work of Saffrey-Westerink and Steel, in *Proclus' Hymns,* 38–40. Ref.: Proclus *in Tim.* 1.197.5–10.
[789] Proclus, *De arte sacrificali* 148.10ff (see in: Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns,* 20).
[790] E.g., H. 4.7–12; H. 6.10; H. 7.41–42. Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns*.
[791] All translations from R.M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns.*

- To Rhea, the mother of the gods: "Yea, I beg you, give me your hand, and wish your winds bring me to the harbour of piety, exhausted as I am" (H. 6.11–12)

From Hymn 1 "ΕΙΣ ΗΛΙΟΝ":
- Praise to you, Helios, who "channel off from above a rich stream of harmony into the material worlds" (3–4)
- Praise to you, Helios, who "always send life-producing drops down for earthlings" (10)
- "From your evil-averting band that imparts pleasant gifts Paiêon sprouted, and he imposed his health by willing the wide cosmos with harmony wholly devoid of harm" (21–24)
- "May you always through your evil-averting help give holy light rich with blessings to my soul … and to my body fitness and gift-bestowing healthy"

From Hymn 7 "ΕΙΣ ΑΘΗΝΑΝ ΠΟΛΥΜΗΤΙΝ"
- Praise to you, Athena, "who opened the gates of wisdom trodden by the gods" (7)
- Praise to you, Athena, "who loved the revered power of the mortal-awakening virtues; you, who adorned our whole life with many kinds of skills by casting noeric craftsmanship into souls" (18–20)
- "Give me, as I am roaming around the earth, a blessed harbour" (32)
- "Breathe into my love a power so great and of such a kind that it pulls me up back again from the vaults of matter to Olympus" (34–36)
- "Give steady and propitious health to my limbs" (43)
- "Give calm winds to the voyage of my life, children, a spouse, fame, happiness, lovely joy, persuasion, conversations with friends, nimble wit, power against my enemies, a place of prominence among the people … Hearken, hearken, mistress … And you, lend me a gentle ear" (47–52)

We can see in these hymns two things that might surprise us, given their Neoplatonic origin. First, we see a concern and delight for genuinely human aspects of creaturely existence. Though these appear alongside to-be-expected references to the spiritually-nomadic nature of material life, there is much here of help and comfort to be hoped for in this life. Second, we see a belief that such things are the gift of the divine. Taking together the varying aspects of theurgy that we have examined, a profile of a human gratitude grounded in hierarchical existence emerges. We see that gratitude toward the gods for divine goods can, and should, embrace human modes of participation in those goods.[792] Notwithstanding the justifiably well-noted Neoplatonic disdain for material entanglements, we see the theurgist rejoicing in embodied,

[792] See also: Proclus *in Tim.* 3.5.17–32, where Proclus depicts the creation of the perceptible world as "the ten gifts of the Demiurge."

earthly life, and desirous of its continuation in a thriving manner. We see, or perhaps infer, that a flourishing life on earth is continuous with the hope of its fulfillment in divinization. A grateful orientation toward the divine entails these things. In this way, Proclean theurgy provides a potential candidate for a counter-narrative, or at least a complementary narrative, to a reading of Neoplatonism as dismissive of and neglectful toward embodied human existence.[793]

In Proclus, one final aspect of theurgical activity, and the orientation of gratitude that it engenders, can be seen – a secondary effect, or consequence, of theurgy that has great relevance to our inquiry into contra-violent ways of being together. The person who has become truly like the divine, through theurgy, takes on not only the noetic perspective of the gods, but also their activity of providential care toward others:

> "The theurgic one … no longer did he limit himself to contemplative virtue nor did he live according to just one of the two characteristic properties of the divine beings, i.e., he did not just engage in *noeric* activity and reach out to the superior beings, but already he exercised providence (πρόνοια) towards the inferior."[794]

We thus conclude our brief examination of an orientation of gratitude in Proclus with this final observation: it is paradigmatic of the grateful person that a constitutive aspect of their having

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[793] Baltzly helps his reader to nuance this 'commonplace' reading of Neoplatonist anthropology. He distinguishes Plotinus's 'unfallen soul' from Proclus's 'fully-descended soul.' Regarding the former: "Everything apart from this [i.e., the intellectual soul, assimilable to the divine] is *not me*, but merely something I wear. If I do things, like living among my fellow human beings or feeding myself, I perform these necessities not for myself, but for the sake of the living body joined to me." Baltlzy, "The Human Life," 261. For Proclus, the goal of divinization takes into account that the human soul is fully embodied, and the wise person envisions the ascent in those terms: "For a soul of my sort," Baltzly summarizes, "this is what happiness consists in." (See, for example, Proclus *in Tim.* 3.279.14–19). Baltzly, 262. Proclus's program of virtue does, however, include the category of "purificatory or kathartic virtues," by which reason "discards the body as its instrument and restrains activities that depend on this instrument." Baltzly, 264. Baltzly reminds us that in Proclus, as in Neoplatonism in general, "Strictly speaking, the virtues are qualities that allow something alive to perform its function well and thus to live well." Baltzly, 265. Given the Proclean dictum "all things in all, but in each a manner appropriate to the subject" (ref.: Proclus, *El. theol.* §103), in Proclus "our assimilation to god will (at least initially) require us to become like divinities that are significantly more causally proximate to the visible universe into which our souls have descended." Baltzly, 261.
For a brief discussion of the Christian reception of Neoplatonism in the West, specifically in terms of historical readings of Platonism and Neoplatonism as contributing to a problematic, dualistic framing of human nature, see the appendix to the thesis, pp 301–305.

[794] Marinus, *Vita procli* §28.2–8 (trans. by Van den Berg, in "Theurgy in the Context of Proclus' Philosophy," 235).

been helped by the gods to achieve the flowering of their own being is simultaneous attention to the flourishing of those that life has in some way placed within their sphere of influence. The whole orientation of gratitude, including the embracing of dependency and the disciplining of one's life to the fulfilment of one's nature as gift, entails therefore both the possibility of one's own flourishing and an obligation attendant upon that flourishing. The truly divinized being not only rejoices with gratitude for their graced assimilation to the divine, but by the same impulse *acts* like the divine. Though we discussed the notion of providential care for the other in chapters 2 and 4, for our purposes in this chapter we can note that in Proclus, gratitude toward the divine entails an orientation of openness to others.

C. The theme of gratitude as treated in Aquinas[795]

As we turn to Thomas's treatment of gratitude, let us refresh our view of the work in this chapter. We are considering possible responses/remedies to the problem of effecting violence in the world as a result of falling away from a good that one ostensibly knows and loves. The situation may be compared to a technological device that has poor connectivity with the radio, cellular, or WiFi signal that it needs. It does no good to focus on the immediate problems of why the device won't do the things we expect it to, or does them badly. Neither will it help to simply insist that the device worked just fine in the past. The appropriate response would be to reposition/reorient the device such that it can receive the signal in the present – sometimes by changing position, sometimes by refreshing the receptivity by turning off and on again, etc. One needs to reawaken the device exactly as a receiver before it can return to its status as a doer. Similarly, it will not do to simply direct oneself, however strictly, to 'just do' the things we know

[795] In the work of this section, I am deeply indebted to the insights and generous conversations of the participants in the 2017 Aquinas Studium, held in Toronto, Ontario, which assembled to examine Thomas's treatment of gratitude as it appears in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* 2–2.106, primarily, and which was guided by the leadership of Bob Sweetman (Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto).

as good but aren't doing. People can be dismayed when they discover that they have 'fallen away' from practices of charity, respect, or justice, for example, that once were important to them. If that is a person's reality, but they on some level wish it were otherwise, it may be that they have 'lost the signal.' Before they can re-establish themself in the activities of participating the good, they need to be reawakened simply as a recipient of the good. The claim of this chapter is that varying human activities of gratitude do this very thing. Gratitude most basically, and far more importantly than any 'behaving nicely' aspect of it, postures a person specifically *as* a recipient of a good from a source larger than themselves. It quite literally re-aligns the soul to the source of their good. (Recall: being grateful *to* helps reignite our connection with the substance of what we can be grateful *for*.[796]) The further claim of this chapter is that we access this source of the good through relational, social, and sacred contexts that constitute human beings' place in the universe. The positioning of ourselves toward (or within) these contexts precisely as sources of our good is the human art of gratitude.

We have seen so far in this chapter how Aristotle's sense of the cultural experience of tragic poetry fulfills this role in a certain way, though its effectiveness is limited to the degree that Aristotle's reader views his account as entailing a resistance to gratitude as a way of life in general. In Proclus we saw a commitment to the significance of the material world within theurgic rituals of gratitude designed to assimilate the practitioner to the good. Similarly, however, the effectiveness of theurgy as a remedy for falling away from the good was limited considerably by the difficulty and exclusivity of the activity.

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[796] Ref.: 231–232. Bob Sweetman notes that Aristotle's exhortation to give thanks to those who have gone before us in the philosophical tradition, and Aquinas's commentary upon it, emphasizes the act rather than the disposition: "Notice that the response is not to feel gratitude though that may be a proper emotional response. Rather it is to be grateful." Sweetman, "Gratitude and the Movement of Being 'Outward,'" Introductory address to the 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, 29 May 2017, 3.

We have seen, through the previous chapters, that Thomas's treatment of human existence is sensitive to both the horizontal orientation of human beings in their operations within the material world and the vertical orientation of human beings in their status as created, dependent beings – a sensitivity nurtured by the influences of Aristotle's account of human nature, Proclean Neoplatonism, and Scripture. His treatment of gratitude, therefore, is similarly sensitive to these orientations.[797] We will show how Thomas's version of the practices of gratitude overcomes the limitations seen thus far, and provides a mode of 'reconnecting to the signal' that can meaningfully be considered a genuinely contra-violent response to the problem of falling away from the good. We will start with an examination of Thomas's treatment of gratitude in general. Then, we will go on to examine concrete contexts in which Thomas envisions and explores varying activities of gratitude – first, in terms of gratitude toward God, and second, in terms of gratitude toward other humans. Following in the steps of our work in chapter 4 (in which we constructed our first level of response to violence), we will create an inventory of activities and orientations that a Thomistic account of gratitude prompts us to regard as contra-violent ways of living in the world, with a special eye for relevance and accessibility to common human contexts (i.e., overcoming the limitations observed in Aristotle's and Proclus's treatments of gratitude).

C1. Thomas's general account of gratitude (*ST* 2–2, Q. 106)

In Thomas, gratitude is the properly human disposition toward the fact that our being, indeed the whole universe, comes to us as gift.[798] In a technical sense it is correct to say that

[797] The clarification articulated in the introduction of this chapter (pp 233–234) can now be revisited with greater specificity. Proclus's treatment of theurgy does not directly inform Thomas's thought on gratitude. The relevance of Proclus's theurgic work for our understanding of Thomas lies in its exegetical nature with regard to the approaching the material world as manifestation of, or participation in, the divine.

[798] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 1.81; *ST* 1.45; 1.90–91. As has been shown, the affective response of *complacentia* presupposes acknowledgement (pre-reflective) of the good that is, and is therefore a condition of this grateful orientation. Ref.: chapter 5, 213–214.

Thomas bases his treatment of gratitude on an Aristotelian sense of the act of repaying favors.[799] However, in this aspect of human experience we see Thomas taking his cue especially from Seneca and Cicero[800] – there is much in his account that shows sensitivity to the emotional and psychological contours of interpersonal relations of giving and receiving. We will see these factors enliven the possibilities of gratitude as an orientation of receptive alignment toward the good, in contrast with a transactional activity of keeping accounts of indebtedness clear.

Thomas opens his treatment of gratitude, Q. 106 of the *Secunda secundae*, with Cicero's identification of thankfulness as "a special part of justice."[801] He goes on by placing the activity of giving thanks in the context of debts to be paid (whether to God, to human fathers, to the sources of generally-bestowed favors, or to the sources of particular favors).[802] However, invoking Seneca, Thomas contrasts repayment that is animated by indebtedness with that which is animated by gratitude.[803] Repayment that is animated by gratitude arises from an "affection of the heart," distinct from the mere intent to return payment for a benefit given – thus, Thomas quotes, Seneca asks and advises: "Do you wish to repay a favor? Receive it graciously."[804] Again, Seneca is shown to assert that "Who receives a favor gratefully, has already begun to pay it back."[805] Drawing from Cicero, Thomas explains (in a separate treatment on how gratitude is

[799] E.g.: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.1 ad 3: "Repayment of favors belongs specially to the virtue of gratitude," – "*recompensatio beneficiorum specialiter ad virtutem gratitudinis pertineat*."
[800] The following examples will be framed in terms of Thomas's invocations of Seneca and Cicero, and thus will reference Thomas's texts, not the originals.
[801] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.1 s.c.: "*Tullius ponit gratiam specialem iustitiae partem*."
[802] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.1 corp.
[803] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.4 s.c.
[804] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.4 corp.: "*Unde Seneca dicit, in II de Benefic., vis reddere beneficium? Benigne accipe*."
[805] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.3 ad 5: "*Unde Seneca dicit, in II de Benefic., qui grate beneficium accipit, primam eius pensionem solvit*."

related to justice) that what is proper to gratitude is "recollecting the friendship and kindliness shown by others," and desiring to give a gift in return.[806]

This animation of the act of repayment by the disposition of gratitude displays what Gilles Mongeau describes as the contrast between a mercantile/legal economy and a gift-based economy (the latter being the context Thomas has in mind in these texts), a distinction Mongeau states should shape our reading of the 'repayment' under consideration in Q. 106.[807] In a gift economy, the notion of *debitum*, or that which is owed to be repaid, is relational rather than strictly transactional. We see this relational emphasis in Thomas's treatment of gratitude. Insofar as gratitude is a part of justice, it is classified by Thomas as one of the virtues by which a person is directed outward toward another person – the aspect of a gift most to be kept in mind and honored is the *beneficent activity of the other person*, including the context and nature of the relation, rather than the *amount or kind of the gift*.[808] The primary act of gratitude, as a relation between effect and cause, is the turning of the receiver toward the giver as to a principle of some good, rather than the repayment itself.[809] Sweetman observes (remarking on Aristotle's admonition to show gratitude to our predecessors, and Thomas's appropriation of it in the discipline of *sacra doctrina*): "'To be grateful' marks out an orientation of the whole person

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[806] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.80.1 corp.: "*Et sic adiungitur iustitiae gratia, in qua, ut Tullius dicit, amicitiarum et officiorum alterius memoria, remunerandi voluntas continetur alterius*." Notice here the role of 'recollecting.' Thomas makes a similar connection in his treatment in *ST* 2–2.106.3 ad 5, where he states that the most simple form of repayment can be that "the kindness that [the benefactor] has done should be held in memory" – "*memoria debet haberi praestiti beneficii.*" – a statement he connects to Aristotle at *Eth. Nic.* 9.4.3.1165b32–33.

[807] Mongeau, 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, "*Conversatio*" 31 May 2017, regarding Aquinas *ST* 2–2.106.1. Mongeau discusses the pastoral, moral, and social-justice challenges that the transition in 11th and 12th century Europe toward a monetized merchant economy presented. See also Mongeau*, Embracing Wisdom*, 50–53. See also Jaeger on the "favor relationships" prevalent in both court and monastic life (and seen in the teacher-student relations of the cathedral schools) in the 11th and 12th centuries, and which had shaped the world in which Thomas lived, thought, and worked. C. Stephen Jaeger, *Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 103–106.

[808] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.5 ad 2. Thomas shows that, just as in the case of giving a gift, gratitude is a matter more of the receiver's heart toward the giver than of their ability or lack thereof to make exact repayment. See also article 3 ad 5.

[809] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.3 corp.

toward the persons who have given us what they had to give; a cherishing them for the gift they have given."[810] Further, gratitude is seen to be relational rather than transactional insofar as the receiver wishes to pay back more than was originally given – i.e., a grateful person, wishing to repay the 'gratis' disposition of the giver rather than the amount of the gift bestowed, aims to freely repay over and above what was originally given.[811] Thomas explains this overturning of the scales by grounding the 'transaction' of gratitude in the 'relation' of charity between friends: "The debt of gratitude flows from charity, which the more it is paid the more it is due, according to Romans 13:8, 'Owe no man anything, but to love one another.'"[812]

The relational nature of gratitude is seen also in the etymology at work in the constellation of terms Thomas employs. Insofar as Thomas uses *gratia* for both grace and gratitude, the grace of the giver and the gratitude of the receiver are placed in conversation with each other – they are the participating poles in the event of giving.[813] Further, the grace of the giver and the gratitude of the receiver have the same 'essence' – i.e., they both indicate act that is freely undertaken, a good that is freely done or given.[814] A 'gift economy,' or gift-based relations, typically operate within the grammatical notion of second-person relations[815] – while it is possible to be an anonymous giver, or the grateful beneficiary of a good the giver was unaware of bestowing, or even a recipient of a good without knowing to whom one is indebted for it, the

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[810] Sweetman, "Gratitude and the Movement of Being 'Outward,'" 3.
[811] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.6 corp.
[812] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.6 ad 2: "*debitum gratitudinis ex caritate derivatur, quae, quanto plus solvitur, tanto magis debetur, secundum illud Rom. XIII, nemini quidquam debeatis, nisi ut invicem diligatis*."
[813] E.g. (drawn from *ST* 2–2.106 – comparisons here are made using the translations of the Dominican Fathers): in article one, Thomas uses *gratia* for 'thankfulness,' and *gratitudo* for 'gratitude'; in article 2, Thomas renders 'thanksgiving' as *gratiarum actio,* and 'grace' as *gratia*; in article 3, we see Thomas use *grate* for the sense of 'gratefully'; and in article 4, quoting Seneca, Thomas uses the plural *grates* ('thanks') for 'gratitude.'
[814] Sweetman, "Gratitude and the Movement of Being 'Outward,'" 6. For Sweetman, this proportionality comes out especially in the second article of *ST* 2–2.106.
[815] Recall the significance of the second-person pronoun 'you' in terms of the joint-attention activities discusses in chapter 4 – see: 179–180, and n598.

flowering of the good as given seems to call for a mutual, subjective awareness between both participants in the event.[816]

Finally, the relational nature of gratitude is illustrated by an interesting wordplay that Thomas offers in his treatment of *how* the grateful and the ungrateful persons act. In the fourth article (Q. 106), we saw that the grateful person receives a gift 'graciously.' Thomas's term rendered as 'graciously' by the Dominican translators is *benigne*, which, we recall from chapter 4 (regarding the related word *benignitas*), Thomas envisions as the quality of 'good fire' which melts the heart toward another.[817] In the third article, Thomas asserts, rather strongly, that "It is the height of malevolence to refuse to recognize a kindness."[818] It is interesting to note that Thomas's term, which the translators read as 'malevolence,' is *malignitas* – an 'evil fire' that might be envisioned as scorching both the possessor of it and those around them. Whether the wordplay is intentional on Thomas's part or not, the parallel usage illumines his understanding of gratitude, and the lack of it, as an active, relational, and even *efficient* event. Gratitude is not merely a conclusion to an earlier event – it is a subsequent happening of its own that introduces a fresh instance of relational activity (for good or for ill, in the case of ingratitude) into the orientation of the recipient of the good toward the source.

C2. Concrete contexts of gratitude, part 1: Gratitude toward God (with special reference to selections from Thomas's treatise on religion, found in *ST* 2–2, QQ. 81-91)

For Thomas, as for Proclus, gratitude is due "primarily and chiefly [to] God, in that He is the first principle of all our goods."[819] It is interesting to note that Thomas does not find it

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[816] A theological extension of this claim can be seen in the observation (made recently by a student) that the efficacy of the freely-given, sufficient, redemptive work of the cross does at the same time entail, or is conditioned by, some degree of awareness/knowledge of that gift on the part of the human recipient.
[817] See Aquinas, *Super Gal.* 5.6.332. See chapter 4, 176–177, and nn581–584.
[818] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.3 ad 3: "*Summae malignitatis est non vocare beneficium*."
[819] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.2 corp.: "*In Deo autem primo et principaliter invenitur causa debiti, eo quod ipse est primum principium omnium bonorum nostrorum*."

philosophically awkward nor theologically unfitting to put that cosmic debt in the same frame as the debts of gratitude we owe our parents and other human benefactors, pointing to what Sweetman identifies as a "continuum" of grace.[820] We recall, from chapter 4, that for Thomas the divine gifts of grace are never meant to be seen as alien incursions, but as graced collaborations with the conditions of human life.[821] Similarly, our grateful response to God for the goods of being does not take us 'outside' of the natural world, but is grounded in our lives as contingent, material beings. That is, we should expect to find that what we 'return' to God even for his divine gifts is in origin and nature an interweaving of the human and divine.

Thomas shows sensitivity to this contingent, particular nature of human gratitude. First, he states that since we are talking about *actions* of gratitude, we should expect to see that expressions of gratitude would reference the present context, rather than general ideals or universal notions of benevolence: "Since actions are about singulars, in matters of action, we have to take note of what is such here and now, rather than of what is such absolutely, as the Philosopher observes (Ethic. iii) in treating of the voluntary and the involuntary."[822] It is not surprising that on the theme of grateful actions insofar as they are *actions* Thomas takes his cue from Aristotle. Second, Thomas shows that we should expect such singular actions to be sensitive to the modes of the people involved: "Hence the natural order requires that he who has received a favor should, by repaying the favor, turn to his benefactor according to the mode of each."[823] Specifically, Thomas is here speaking of the mode of the benefactor to whom one

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[820] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.1 corp.; Sweetman, "Gratitude and the Movement of Being 'Outward,'" 6.
[821] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.60.2; 2–2.45.2; 1–2.112.1; 1.43.5 ad 2; 1.12.13 ad 3. See: Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," 63–5. Ref.: chapter 4, 172, and n561.
[822] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.2 corp.: "*Et quia actus circa singularia sunt, in his quae agenda sunt magis consideratur quod est hic vel nunc tale, quam quod est simpliciter tale, sicut philosophus dicit, in III Ethic., de voluntario et involuntario*."
[823] I.e., 'in a way that is appropriate to each.' Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.3 corp.: "*Et ideo naturalis ordo requirit ut ille qui suscipit beneficium, per gratiarum recompensationem convertatur ad benefactorem, secundum modum utriusque*."

wishes to make appropriate repayment, but the principle he is using applies to the mode of the person making the repayment as well, as he shows in his response to the fifth objection of this article.[824]

In both of these passages, the basic principles of human activity remind us that the virtue of gratitude, even when expressed toward God, will be contextualized by our human mode of being. That is, even the attempt to 'reconnect with the source of our good' is not an exercise in transcendence. Rather, it is an exercise of belief in the sacred significance of human contexts, and in a basic continuity between divine goods and contingent particulars. A first item for our inventory of contra-violent applications of gratitude, therefore, is the suggestion that language of gratitude, even (or perhaps especially) toward the divine, be expressed in terms of concrete, contingent particulars – i.e., indicative of the experience of divine benevolence within the concrete contexts of human life.[825]

We will further examine Thomas's treatment of human repayments of gratitude to the divine in his set of questions in the *Secunda secundae* on the forms of religion and what they entail. In these discussions, Thomas shows that human gratitude to God preeminently takes the form of giving oneself to God – i.e., devotion.[826] Since we are keeping our eye on the human particularity of gratitude, we should ask: what exactly is happening in the activity of 'giving oneself to God'? Thomas discusses this notion in a number of ways – we will examine three.

My thanks to Bob Sweetman for suggesting this translation clarification (ref.: personal correspondence of 19 July 2022).

[824] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.3 ad 5: "A poor man is certainly not ungrateful if he does what he can. For since kindness depends on the heart rather than on the deed, so too gratitude depends chiefly the heart" – "*etiam pauper ingratus non est si faciat quod possit, sicut enim beneficium magis in affectu consistit quam in effectu, ita etiam et recompensatio magis in affectu consistit*."

[825] I am indebted to Gilles Mongeau for his passionate, exemplary, and winsome emphasis upon the significance of this principle in a Thomistic, biblical view of the world. See, for example, his centering of concrete cultural contexts in his description of spiritual formation, in Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, esp. at 90.

[826] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.82.1 corp.

First, in Q. 83 of our selected text, Thomas shows that gratitude as devotion is expressed through the activity of prayer, insofar as a person so doing "subjects himself to Him, and by praying confesses that he needs Him as the Author of his goods."[827] This depiction of prayer recalls Thomas's observation that, reduced to its simplest terms, gratitude is holding the kindness one has been shown in the memory.[828] Human beings show gratitude to God, and give themselves to him, by devoting their minds to the remembrance of his generous outpouring of goodness. An example of this kind of devotion is seen in Thomas's commentary upon Psalm 28 – a psalm of thanks to God at the completion of the tabernacle. Regarding the phrase in verse 2: "bring to the LORD glory to his name," Thomas states that the purpose of such prayer is "that we may recognize him as the beginning of every good of ours and the end to which all things must be referred."[829]

Second, Thomas discusses, in Q. 85, the large category of sacrifices that human beings make to the divine. He first addresses the formal, ritualized sacrifices that are determined by one's place in a community.[830] In his discussion of this location in Thomas, Sweetman connects this notion of communal rituals of devotion with the previously identified notion of gratitude as holding the giving of good in the memory. He states that a modern moral problem for sacred communities is the "loss of memory around the 'ought' of simply being human."[831] That is, the

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[827] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.83.3 corp.: "*Per orationem autem homo Deo reverentiam exhibet, inquantum scilicet se ei subiicit, et profitetur orando se eo indigere sicut auctore suorum bonorum*."
[828] Aquinas *ST* 2–2.106.3 ad 5: "… *memoria debet haberi praestiti beneficii. Ut patet per philosophum, in IX Ethic.*;" ref.: Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 4.3.1165b32–33. See also: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.80.1 corp. Ref.: p. 248–249, n806.
[829] Psalm 28:2, from the Douay-Rheims English translation of the Vulgate: "*afferte Domino gloriam nomini ejus*"; Aquinas, *In psalmos,* 28.258 – "*ut cognoscamus eum principium omnium bonorum nostrorum, et finem, in quem omnia sunt referenda*."
[830] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.85.4 corp. I.e., Thomas addresses the varying sacrifices of those who were in communities governed by the Old Law, the New Law, or which were not under either but had obligations based on who they lived among.
[831] Sweetman, 2017 Aquinas Studium, Toronto, Ontario, "*Conversatio*" session, 31 May 2017, regarding Aquinas *ST* 2–2.85.4 corp.

diminishing of participation in sacred communal ritual may be a result of a moral failure to 'hold in memory' the degree to which we as human beings possess and enjoy the good proper to our being *as a gift*.

Thomas goes on, however, to address a secondary version of sacrifice, by which "the outward actions of the other virtues are performed out of reverence for God."[832] Notice here the prioritizing the 'to' aspect of the virtuous act over the substance of the act itself – it is the *orientation* of the virtuous act (i.e., toward God, as reverence to the source of the good) that makes the act an instance of grateful devotion. It is in this way that active attention to the moral life – a practical-theological task that entails properly understanding the ways in which divine truths apply to contingent particulars – is a giving of oneself to God. It is an activity of gratitude. Applying Sweetman's observation to this secondary notion of sacrifice, we could further state that lack of interest in the human vocation to mediate the divine good within the created world (i.e., as moral virtue) could also be an effect of a moral loss of memory.

Combining the first and second kinds of giving of oneself that we have seen in Thomas, we can add to our inventory of contra-violence what we might call personal rituals of moral memory. Rituals, envisioned in this way, are planned, specifically-undertaken acts (whether private or communal) by which we either hold in our minds the remembrance of divine goods bestowed (an 'interior' activity of gratitude), or translate a universal virtue into a particular act (an 'exterior' activity of gratitude) – *both* versions enacted from the perspective of recognizing how we are upheld in our very being by such divine bestowals. Specifically, we are referring to *the practices themselves* as contra-violent interventions, rather than the feelings one would hope to stir up by them. While we would not want to encourage 'soulless' activities as such, we are

[832] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.85.4 corp.: "*Aliud vero est exterius sacrificium quando actus exteriores aliarum virtutum in divinam reverentiam assumuntur*."

suggesting that activities of intentional 'gratitude *to*,' can be taken up for the end of awakening a person's connection with what one is 'grateful *for*.' We will return to this item when we address contexts of gratitude directed toward other human beings.

Third, Thomas shows gratitude as giving oneself to God through adhering to him. Recalling that our problem under consideration is 'falling back' from the good, this aspect of devotion can at first glance appear unhelpfully circular in terms of our inquiry – i.e., if one is adhering to God, then one is precisely *not* falling away, yes? Said another way, the solution to the problem of falling away can't just be a restatement of the virtue of not falling away. However, Thomas does indeed give us more than that on this theme, particularly in Q. 82 of our selected text. In the third article of this question, Thomas considers factors at work in both adhering to God and in falling away from him:

> The one [kind of consideration – MG] is the consideration of God's goodness and loving kindness, according to Psalm 72:28, "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God": and this consideration wakens love ['Dilectio,' the interior act of charity; cf. 27] which is the proximate cause of devotion. The other consideration is that of man's own shortcomings, on account of which he needs to lean on God, according to Psalm 120:1-2, "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me: my help is from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth"; and this consideration shuts out presumption whereby man is hindered from submitting to God, because he leans on His strength.[833]

We notice here Thomas identifying three things about a person's adhering to God. First, it is a personal good to that individual – i.e., it contributes to their flourishing as a human being. Second, it functions to *awaken* (a theme of key interest to our work in this chapter) charity. Third, charity is the proximate cause of adhering to God in devotion. Thomas himself notices the

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[833] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.82.3 corp.: "*Una quidem quae est ex parte divinae bonitatis et beneficiorum ipsius, secundum illud Psalm., mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est, ponere in domino Deo spem meam. Et haec consideratio excitat dilectionem, quae est proxima devotionis causa. Alia vero est ex parte hominis considerantis suos defectus, ex quibus indiget ut Deo innitatur, secundum illud Psalm., levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi. Auxilium meum a domino, qui fecit caelum et terram. Et haec consideratio excludit praesumptionem, per quam aliquis impeditur ne Deo se subiiciat, dum suae virtuti innititur*."

circularity implied in this way of speaking – devotion seems to be the cause and also the effect of charity (we see him proposing this very challenge in the first two objections to the second article). His response to this challenge starts with an analogy of friendship (for which he has precedent – see *ST* 2–2.23.1 corp.). Thomas observes that "charity both causes devotion (inasmuch as love makes one ready to serve one's friend) and feeds on devotion."[834] If one is already a 'believer' in the mysterious supremacy of charity, this statement reads as an engaging aphorism. However, as with many aphorisms, if one is looking for an *explanation* of how something is so, the statement is less satisfying. Thomas, however, seems to notice this as well, and goes on: "Even so all friendship is safeguarded and increased by the practice and consideration of friendly deeds."[835] The relevance of this additional statement to our work in this section can hardly be expressed strongly enough. Here we see recourse to *both* versions of our proposed intervention of ritual: the consideration of friendly deeds, and the practice of them. Further, we notice that these human activities do not *cause* friendship/charity (Thomas must be careful to locate the origin of charity in God – i.e., as the work of the Spirit within the human soul), but they do have an effectiveness in terms of *safeguarding* and even *increasing* the presence of charity in our lives. Thomas reiterates this collaboration in terms of charity and religion (understood as human acts of devotion): "It belongs immediately to charity that man should give himself to God, adhering to Him by a union of the spirit; but it belongs immediately to religion, and, through the medium of religion, to charity which is the principle of religion, that man should give himself to God for certain works of Divine worship."[836] Here we see again the

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[834] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.82.2 ad 2: "*caritas et devotionem causat, inquantum ex amore aliquis redditur promptus ad serviendum amico; et etiam per devotionem caritas nutritur.*"
[835] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.82.2 ad 2: "*sicut et quaelibet amicitia conservatur et augetur per amicabilium operum exercitium et meditationem*."
[836] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.82.2 ad 1: "*ad caritatem pertinet immediate quod homo tradat seipsum Deo adhaerendo ei per quandam spiritus unionem. Sed quod homo tradat seipsum Deo ad aliqua opera divini cultus, hoc immediate pertinet ad religionem, mediate autem ad caritatem, quae est religionis principium*."

mediating, secondarily-efficient, role of human activity (the 'to' actions) in relation to divine goods (the 'for' by which the actions are of the kind they are). Charity, as the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human soul, is the form, or the essence, of a human being's adherence to God, but human acts of devotion are the medium through which that adherence is enacted in the world.

In terms of our contra-violent inventory, adherence through charity is not a separate intervention to add to the list. Rather, as a result of the examination of this third species of devotion, we will add to the previous inventory item, and restate it as: Individuals can establish charity-informed rituals of moral memory, whether interior (as acts of holding kindnesses bestowed in the mind), or exterior (as concrete acts of virtue toward other persons) – rituals that function to awaken the soul to the debt of good that we owe for every aspect of our being. In this way, our Thomistic account of gratitude as a contra-violent orientation now entails, as it absolutely should, the formal role of charity.

C3. Concrete contexts of gratitude, part 2: the 'sacred' activities of *clarificatio* and *convenientia*

In the previous section, we considered gratitude specifically as oriented toward God, the source of human good. We considered particular acts of repayment of the good to its divine source, but we worked to contextualize human acts of gratitude toward God within human modes of operations and experience, and considered how those activities might function as contra-violent interventions within the problem of falling away from the good. We can see in that discussion the method of this thesis at work – i.e., an encounter with Christian faith and religion that comes to have philosophical import for our inquiry into human contexts of interpersonal violence and possible remedy. In this section we will continue this contextualization by changing

the framing of gratitude from an orientation toward the divine to an orientation toward human beings. We will consider the contours of gratitude when oriented toward *particular* sources of good – i.e., the people around us. That is, we will consider how aligning ourselves to other human beings as sources of good relates to the problem of falling away from the good.[837] A device that we will use is the consideration of how human beings act as mediations of the divine good, especially in contexts where they imitate the workings of the Holy Spirit and the Word/Son among human beings.[838] Insofar as human beings mediate the divine activity for each other, and assist each other in the task of being aligned as grateful recipients of the divine good, such contexts of 'grateful to' activity can be understood as 'sacred.' A guiding thread in this line of inquiry will be a return to the notion of wonder/*admiratio* seen in chapter 4 – i.e., approaching another person as a sacred mystery.[839] The activities that will be examined as paralleling the workings of the Word and the Spirit are the hermeneutical/rhetorical strategies of *clarificatio* and *convenientia*, employed by Thomas and his mendicant brothers in the practice of *sacra doctrina*. We will conclude by considering how these concrete 'sacred activities' are works of gratitude-to that align us to the good, and thus function as contra-violent interventions.

Wonder, we recall, is for Aristotle the starting point of philosophy.[840] Aristotle enlarges this statement to say that "even the lover of myth is in a sense of lover of Wisdom, for the myth is composed of wonders."[841] That is, poets are, in a sense, philosophers. Aquinas's commentary on this location reverses the statement:

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[837] To clarify: in the previous section we considered the mediating role of virtuous acts toward other people in the expression of our gratitude for God. In this section the direction is reversed. We are considering the role of interactions with other people as mediating the divine bestowal of good toward us.
[838] We must keep in mind, however, as we proceed with the work of this section, that it is almost always a mistake to absolutize a distinction between the work of persons of the Trinity. In the case of our inquiry the work of the Spirit and of the Son entail reference to each other.
[839] Ref.: chapter 4, 191–192.
[840] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.982b12–13.
[841] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.982b19–20.

> And since wonder was the motive which led men to philosophy, it is evident that the philosopher is, in a sense, a philo-myth, i.e., a lover of myth, as is characteristic of the poets. Hence the first men to deal with the principles of things in a mythical way, such as Perseus and certain others who were the seven sages, were called the theologizing poets. Now the reason why the philosopher is compared to the poet is that both are concerned with wonders.[842]

On this telling, philosophers are, in a sense, poets – they are concerned with wonders.[843] This admittedly attractive imaging of the work of philosophy (what academic wouldn't like to be thought of as a kind of poet?) carries significant philosophical weight for the good life in general. Framed in the terms of our inquiry, when we connect Thomas's statement with our sense of gratitude as the consummate 'human art' we can see that it illumines for us a contra-violent orientation toward other people. Fundamentally, wonder is associated with an encounter with something that one does not yet, or even cannot, understand.[844] Thomas states:

> Now wonder is a kind of desire for knowledge; a desire which comes to man when he sees an effect of which the cause either is unknown to him, or surpasses his knowledge or faculty of understanding.[845]

A *violent* response to something we don't understand, as we have seen in chapter 3, sees such an object as flawed – if it is not understood, it must in some way be unintelligible, either in itself or

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[842] Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 1.3.55: "*Et ex quo admiratio fuit causa inducens ad philosophiam, patet quod philosophus est aliqualiter philomythes, idest amator fabulae, quod proprium est poetarum. Unde primi, qui per modum quemdam fabularem de principiis rerum tractaverunt, dicti sunt poetae theologizantes, sicut fuit Perseus, et quidam alii, qui fuerunt septem sapientes. Causa autem, quare philosophus comparatur poetae, est ista, quia uterque circa miranda versatur. Nam fabulae, circa quas versantur poetae, ex quibusdam mirabilibus constituuntur. Ipsi etiam philosophi ex admiratione moti sunt ad philosophandum*."

[843] On this theme, see also: Sweetman, "Aquinas on Narrative and Reflective Understanding," unpublished paper given at the conference "Scriptural Imagination" sponsored by Villanova University, Wayne PA on11 October 2015.

[844] Though Thomas builds on Aristotle for his treatment of wonder/*admiratio*, he goes further than Aristotle. For Aristotle, wonder is associated with what one *does not yet* understand, and therefore with being propelled toward investigation that leads to understanding – e.g., *Met.* 1.2.982b11–17, regarding inquiry into the movements of the heavenly bodies. For Thomas, wonder also entails an orientation toward what one *cannot* understand (such as, for example, the essence of God), which, we can note, he nevertheless categorizes as 'pleasureable' in the text next referenced, insofar as it includes the hope of gaining the desired knowledge. Ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.32.8 corp.: "*Et ideo admiratio est causa delectationis inquantum habet adiunctam spem consequendi cognitionem eius quod scire desiderat*."

[845] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.32.8 corp.: "*Est autem admiratio desiderium quoddam sciendi, quod in homine contingit ex hoc quod videt effectum et ignorat causam, vel ex hoc quod causa talis effectus excedit cognitionem aut facultatem ipsius*."

in relation to the viewer (i.e., either irrational/nonrational, or radically 'other').[846] This can be understood also, as an extension of our work in chapter 5, as a person 'falling away' from the *particular* good of another person.[847] The significance of this claim in a Thomistic account of the world is dramatic, given the interwoven (i.e., ambiguous) connection that Thomas makes between humanity's proximate goods and God as its ultimate good.[848] To fall away from a proximate, especially human, good is to a degree falling away from God as the ultimate source of the good.

In contrast to this 'violent' orientation to a perplexing other, wonder assumes that the viewer's lack of understanding resides in an *excess* of meaning belonging to the thing encountered. The account of the thing, i.e., that which would render it intelligible, is either not possessed by the viewer (quantitative excess), or escapes the manner of operation by which viewer is approaching the situation (qualitative excess). To the philosopher-poet, this excess is a source not of alienation, but of delight, as we see when Thomas continues his thought:

> Consequently wonder is a cause of pleasure [*delectationis*], in so far as it includes a hope of getting the knowledge which one desires to have.[849]

It is interesting to note that, in Aristotle's description of the great-souled man in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the great man is not given to wonder, specifically because nothing to him seems great in that way.[850] He does, in the *Rhetoric,* concede that "learning and wondering are

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[846] See chapter 3, 122–125.
[847] Ref.: chapter 5, section C1, 211–215: "Thomas's appropriation of the problem of 'falling away.'"
[848] Aquinas, *Contra gent.* 3.117.3 and 6; *ST* 2–2.25.1 corp.; 1.103.2 corp. Thomas also addresses the preeminent case of this principle of identity as that of Christ making known the Father (Aquinas, *Super Ioan.* 14.3.1890–1891), and as extended into the sending of the Spirit by the Son (14.4.1907–1910).
[849] Aquinas, *ST* 1–2.32.8 corp.: "*Et ideo admiratio est causa delectationis inquantum habet adiunctam spem consequendi cognitionem eius quod scire desiderat*."
[850] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 4.3.1125a3. Again, Aquinas 'softens' this statement by framing it in terms of exteriority/interiority: the great-souled man is not easily impressed with exterior things "because his whole life is busy with internal goods, which are truly great": "*Sed magnanimo non est aliquid magnum eorum quae exterius occurrere possunt, quia tota intentio sua versatur circa interiora bona, quae sunt vere magna*," Aquinas, *Sent. Ethic.* 4.10.777.

pleasant," though he locates those activities within the contexts of "acts of imitation" (such as painting, sculpture, and – unsurprisingly – poetry) or "hairbreadth escapes from perils."[851] In Aquinas (as, indeed, in Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 1) the proper orientation of the philosopher-poet to the difficult-to-understand other is to approach them as mystery – i.e., as a source of delight, and as an invitation to expand (quantitatively, or even qualitatively) so as to be able to receive the excess. In terms of our inquiry, we can say that insofar as such a mysterious other is held as a presumed instance or source of some good and, even more, as a potential agent of change in the viewer, wonder is indeed a form of gratitude.

Given this account of gratitude as wonder, however, what does this mean for concrete practices? How do we actively approach another person, especially one who is to some degree initially inexplicable to us? It is certainly better to marvel at the difference than to alienate the person on account of it, but surely a genuinely contra-violent orientation will entail bridging the gap of intelligibility in some concrete way, while still leaving room for the other to be embraced specifically *as* mystery.[852] Since we have already framed this question in terms of wonder toward the other, it seems fitting to turn for help to the methods and strategies Thomas uses when approaching the difficult mysteries of theology. Two aspects of Thomas's scholarly method that seem particularly relevant to an orientation of wonder, and therefore gratitude, toward an object of inquiry are the principles of *clarificatio* and *convenientia*. We will examine these principles as case studies in orientations of gratitude toward mystery, drawing especially from Mongeau's account of the pedagogical-rhetorical method Thomas employs in his *Summa theologiae*.[853]

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[851] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.11.1371b4–12. I find this nod to the pleasure of swashbuckling adventure a delight in itself.
[852] Note that Thomas's inclusion of hope in *ST* 1–2.32.8 corp., mentioned above, precludes stopping our engagement with a mysterious other at a simple 'celebration of difference.' Truly treating a different other as mystery, in a Thomistic sense, requires making the necessary effort and changes in ourselves so that the other person is not held off as 'radically other.'
[853] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 87–90, and 155–162.

First, let us briefly contextualize these two principles into the larger setting of medieval scholarly method. We can first note that these are principles of rhetoric.[854] Mongeau reminds us that rhetoric (as framed by Aristotle) "promotes connaturality with the good and the beautiful *in a particular situation*."[855] We can therefore further observe that, insofar as rhetoric presses its audience to 'read' the good and the beautiful in terms of their own contexts, rhetoric entails hermeneutics. Finally, recalling that Thomas's vision of scholarly inquiry arises from the medieval cathedral-school modality of *aemulatio*, we can consider the hermeneutical modes of the student/reader as corresponding to, or continuous with, the rhetorical modes of the teacher/rhetor.[856] This collaboration is important to our work of considering how (re)connection to the good can be mediated in concrete, human contexts – and how those can be 'sacred' insofar as they imitate the preeminent workings of the Word and the Spirit.[857] We will first examine the rhetorical-hermeneutical principle of *clarificatio*.[858] As we go, keep in mind the guiding thread in

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[854] Mongeau's reading of Thomas's rhetoric emphasizes *praxis* – i.e., what things are to be *done*, especially in terms of one's social, cultural, and religious contexts. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 4. Mongeau sees this press toward practical contextualization as an application of what Lonergan correctly discerns in his reading of Thomas. Gilles Mongeau, "Bernard Lonergan as Interpreter of Aquinas: A Complex Relation," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* (Oct.–Dec. 2007): T 63 Fasc. 4. Os Dominios da Inteligência: Bernard Lonergan e a Filosofia / The Realms of Insight: Bernard Lonergan and Philosophy (Oct.–Dec. 2007):1049–1069, esp. at 1068–1069.

[855] Mongeau, "Mystery on the Move," 297, emphasis mine. Ref.: Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.1.1356a1–35.

[856] Sweetman notes that in the cathedral schools of the medieval Europe, the student's gratitude toward the teacher was expressed as *aemulatio*, a form of 'competition' between friends by which they would strive to outdo the other in virtue. Sweetman, "*Aemulatio* and the Practice of Scholarly Friendship in Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* and His and Heloise's Subsequent Exchanges," unpublished paper delivered at the conference "A Sacrifice of Praise: Liturgy, Prayer, and Hymnody at the Center of Life" sponsored by Villanova University, Wayne, PA on 14 October 2017, 3–4.
See also, Sweetman, "The Circle of Gift and Gratitude and the Calling of the Teacher-Scholar," a paper given as part of a series of faculty development seminars held at King's University in Edmonton AB, funded by the Templeton Foundation, and organized by the grant holder Joshua Harris of the Philosophy Department of King's University on 9 August 2021.

[857] Mongeau observes that, in Thomas's pedagogy, "the interpersonal relation between master and pupil [functions] as a mediating structure of knowledge," and that in this work, the teacher imitates, or participates, the work of the Holy Spirit. Mongeau, "Mystery on the Move," 295; *Embracing Wisdom,* 77–79. Sweetman's discussion of the *aemulatio* at work in the teacher/student relations in the medieval cathedral schools and universities (including the relation between Thomas and his own teacher, Albertus Magnus) reminds us that the friend-love entailed in such relations was reciprocal, insofar as the practice of *aemulatio* entailed an admiration for the qualities of the other that one does not oneself possess – see n856.

[858] I.e., 'rhetorical' strategy when one is seeking to be understood, 'hermeneutical' strategy when one is seeking to understand.

these case studies – in examining these rhetorical/hermeneutical principles, we are considering the orientation of an individual toward mystery, such that they view the excess of meaning gratefully, i.e., as gift, rather than violently, as radically 'other.'

Mongeau explains *clarificatio* as the medieval appreciation for explicit manifestation of what is structurally at work in a context, whether in Gothic architecture or in scholastic argument, especially where such might be naturally hidden or easy to overlook.[859] Simply put, *clarificatio* as a rhetorical method means making abundantly clear what one is doing and how. In Thomas's *sacra doctrina*, this strategy can take the form of a structural preference on the one hand for "short simple sentences arranged for effect ('punch'), where emphasis is directed to maximizing the expressivity of the final word or words on the question," and on the other hand the complex practices of "internal cross-referencing by means of *analepses* and *prolepses*, to make explicit the returns backward and the leaps forward which the *ductus* of the composition requires of thinking."[860] *Clarificatio* can be illumined by comparison with the related quality of *claritas* – which, as one of the conditions of the intelligibility of the beautiful, entails "communicativeness of itself to a perceiver."[861] Similarly, the merit, and operative range, of *clarificatio* is reflected in the soul's delight when mysteries are well-represented in alternate forms of language such as fables, which, Sweetman observes, are delightful precisely because the soul enjoys the hermeneutical work of collation – piecing things together. Thomas states: "When the wonder has been well transposed into a representation delight appears, because reason is delighted in acts of putting one thing together with another [*collatio*]."[862] From the

[859] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom,* 88–89.
[860] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom,* 89.
[861] Mongeau, "Mystery on the Move," 293.
[862] Aquinas, *Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Timotheum lectura* 4 l.2: "*Unde in miro bene repraesentato videtur delectatio, quia ratio delectatur in collatione*."
Ref.: Thomas Aquinas, *Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Timotheum lectura,* Latin text based on the 1953 Marietti edition, prepared by Raffaele Cai, transcribed by Robert Busa, and revised by Enrique Alarcón and other editors and

teaching/rhetorical perspective, one of the active modes of *clarificatio* is *manuductio* – i.e., leading by the hand.[863] That is, the teacher does not simply *utilize* the pedagogical structures of pointing toward truth – they i*nhabit* them, engaging the student in living acts of guidance, leading them 'by the hand.' Putting the teacher's activity of manuduction together with the *collatio* of the student, we see the work of approaching a mystery as an intimate, shared task participated both by one who is working to make the good clear and communicative, and by another who is working to piece together the collected bits into a cohesive, intelligible narrative – a shared stance of gratitude toward the wonder of a mysterious other.

Significantly, this *clarificatio* by manuduction is precisely the work that is attributed to the Word/Son in relation to human beings. Quite literally and practically, Christ hand-led his disciples by his own teaching to the truth of the gospel, which they in turn wrote down and handed on to others (a divine work that is imitated by preachers).[864] Theologically, manuduction is also an imagery that is used to speak of the redemptive effect of the Incarnation upon human beings – i.e., that it is precisely through his humanity that Christ 'takes us by the hand' and leads us to God.[865] Thomas explains:

> Yet such is the weakness of the human mind that it needs a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of Divine things by means of certain sensible objects

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collaborators of this bilingual edition, Pamplona: Fundación Tomás de Aquino, 2012; English translation prepared by Fabian R. Larcher, Matthew Levering, Jeremy Holmes, of Ave Maria University, and edited by the Aquinas Institute; Scripture text in Greek the Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th Revised Edition, edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Muenster/Westphalia, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993. Edited by the Aquinas Institute, Lander, WY. Accessed at: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~1Tim.
See also *ST* 1–2.32.8 corp., where Thomas states "For the mind finds joy in juxtaposing one thing with respect to another, since to put together one thing and another is a proper and connatural act of reason as the philosopher says in the *Poetics*" – "*gaudet enim anima in collatione unius ad alterum, quia conferre unum alteri est proprius et connaturalis actus rationis, ut philosophus dicit in sua poetica*." Translations by Sweetman, in "Aquinas on Narrative and Reflective Understanding," 10–11.

[863] Mongeau, in conversation with the work of Peter Candler, discusses Thomas's work in the *Summa theologiae* as manuduction – the process of a teacher guiding the student 'by the hand' through the developmental processes of gaining truth. Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 5–6.

[864] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 179.

[865] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 2 Spiritual Master*, 110.

> known to us. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ, according to the words of the Preface [Preface for Christmastide], "that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible." Wherefore matters relating to Christ's humanity are the chief incentive to devotion, leading us thither as a guiding hand.[866]

Though we have spent some time showing that a work of the Holy Spirit is just this sort of leading by 'joint attention' (hence our caution earlier against overly-separating the works of the Son and the Spirit[867]), in this case it is the guiding hand of Christ's humanity by which he makes God the Father known to us that is significant. In terms of human beings imitating and mediating this work of Christ, we should understand all humanity as sacred in this way, insofar as it is capable of participating in the nature of Christ, and therefore individual persons are capable of leading one another, through solidarity in the concrete details of their own humanity, to the love of the good that is God. The irreducibly complex modes of human experience in the world provide a rich multiplicity of concrete contexts and opportunities for activities of wonder-infused *clarificatio* to occur.

The second of the rhetorical-hermeneutical principles related to an orientation of wonder in Thomistic inquiry that we will examine is *convenientia.* Properly speaking, the term *convenientia* conveys the idea of 'fittingness' – it characterizes the structure of certain arguments Thomas makes when addressing mysteries.[868] Mongeau, however, sees the employing of *convenientia* in Thomas's work not merely as finding the best idea for an argument but as the introduction of "a new disposition of the student or reader" when faced with mysteries.[869] He

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[866] Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.82.3 ad 2: "*Sed ex debilitate mentis humanae est quod sicut indiget manuduci ad cognitionem divinorum, ita ad dilectionem, per aliqua sensibilia nobis nota. Inter quae praecipuum est humanitas Christi, secundum quod in praefatione dicitur, ut dum visibiliter Deum cognoscimus, per hunc in invisibilium amorem rapiamur. Et ideo ea quae pertinent ad Christi humanitatem, per modum cuiusdam manuductionis*."
[867] Ref.: n838. We see the resonance/overlap here with the work of the Holy Spirit discussed in chapter 4 under the lenses of the teacher's collaborative relation with the student (discussed by Mongeau and Jordan) and of the activity of 'joint attention' (discussed by Pinsent). See: chapter 4, 179.
[868] E.g., Aquinas, *ST* 3.1.
[869] Mongeau*, Embracing Wisdom*, 156.

observes that the rhetorical merit of *convenientia* lies less in its relation to the logic of an argument (which may, he states, leave the reader unsatisfied) than in its function as "intellectual therapy," whereby new possibilities of perspective toward the text are opened to the student/reader.[870] That is, the notion of *convenientia* signals a pedagogical invitation to shift one's horizon – it provides, as it were, 'permission' to set aside intellectual rubrics that require truth to be categorized with no remainder, and to look for an approach that better aligns with the contours of the truth as it appears before us for consideration.[871] This hermeneutical strategy can be understood as stirring up humble gratitude in us for the other precisely as encountered, on their own terms, lest the integrity of their narrative be compromised by our attempts to stretch or reframe it to fit our own ways of viewing the world.

Mongeau demonstrates this interpretation of *convenientia* by examining Thomas's argument in the example of Q. 1 in the *Tertia Pars*, on the reason for the Incarnation. In the third article, Thomas addresses whether the Incarnation would still have happened if man had not sinned. Thomas's response, reduced, observes that we can only know what *actually* happened in history, and should thus limit ourselves to the reasons given in scripture for why those things happened.[872] Mongeau reads Thomas's decision "to stay within the concrete and historically revealed" as an application of *convenientia* – i.e., it is 'fitting' that we should avoid speculations about what would have happened if things were other than as they are. Further, Thomas's decision illumines the pedagogical mindset at work within the rhetorical-hermeneutical mode of *convenientia*. Mongeau states:

> This [decision] fits into the trust of *convenientia* and serves to discipline the spirit of inquiry into a proper humility before the mystery. By contrast, the proponents of an

[870] Mongeau, *Embracing Widsom*, 156.
[871] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 155.
[872] Aquinas, *ST* 3.1.3 corp.

> either/or solution are revealed to have eliminated the paradox or tension in the mystery by a kind of intellectual pride.[873]

We see here that *convenientia* is as much about shaping the student/reader's orientation to divine mystery as it is about providing a sound explanation of a difficulty. As a rhetorical-hermeneutical-pedagogical mode, *convenientia* helps place a student/reader within an "appropriate horizon" – i.e., one informed by gratitude – for approaching and understanding mystery.[874]

Mongeau identifies another aspect of *convenientia* visible in Thomas's method in the fifth article, where he is addressing the issue of the historical timing of the Incarnation (one that is hinted at in the previous example). There, Mongeau observes, within Aquinas's reasons of fittingness he "proposes multiple ways of understanding God's pedagogical wisdom."[875] This openness to multiple possibilities is another manifestation of the humility appropriate to *convenientia* (in the previous example, this appeared as the rejection of inappropriate 'either/or' solutions). Such an orientation renders the student/reader "able to integrate the excess of intelligibility contained in the mysteries of faith while orienting reason to a humble and respectful stance before them."[876] Mongeau concludes: "In this way, Thomas makes room for the beautiful, which is the splendor of truth."[877]

It is this last statement – i.e., the image of *convenientia* as making room within the student/reader for the beautiful and the true – that is particularly significant in terms of humans imitating and mediating divine ways of moving among human beings. In Thomas, this 'making

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[873] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 158.
[874] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 162.
[875] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom,* 159.
[876] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom*, 161. Mongeau is here engaging and referencing the work of Gilbert Narcisse on this theme in *Les raisons de Dieu: arguments de convenance et esthétique théologique selon saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Fribourg, Suisse, 1997).
[877] Mongeau*, Embracing Wisdom*, 161.

of room' in a person for the good is the work of the Holy Spirit.[878] Again (as with *clarificatio*), we should recognize that scholarly momentum leans toward associating the notion of *convenientia*/fittingness with the second person of the Trinity, rather than the Spirit. Mongeau states: "Theological argumentation is a participation in the process of redemption which the Incarnation operates, and arguments from *convenientia* are the privileged pedagogical instrument of this participation."[879] However, in this study we are considering the mode of *convenientia* in its operation of broadening the heart of the student/reader, of opening up 'space' within the soul for the good, the true, and the beautiful. We see this activity preeminently enacted by the Holy Spirit in Thomas's commentary on the gospel of John. In his commentary on John 14:26, Thomas states:

> Next he mentions the effect of the Holy Spirit, saying, ***he will teach you all things*.** Just as the effect of the mission of the Son was to lead us to the Father, so the effect of the mission of the Holy Spirit is to lead the faithful to the Son. Now the Son, once he is begotten Wisdom, is truth itself: ***I am the way, and the truth, and the life*** (John 14:6). And so the effect of this kind of mission is to make us sharers in the divine wisdom and knowers of the truth. The Son, since he is the Word, gives teaching to us; but the Holy Spirit enables us to grasp it.[880]

First, we can notice immediately the reference to the work of the Son that we have examined: manuduction ("lead us to the Father"). Second, we also see the work of the Son and the Spirit shown in a collaboration to "make us sharers in the divine wisdom and knowers of the truth." Finally, and most significantly to the specific work of our *convenientia* case study, we see that the work of the Spirit is rendered as making us 'able to grasp' the divine truth. When we examine Thomas's Latin for this notion, we see the work of the Spirit identified as *nos capaces*

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[878] Ref.: chapter 4, 174, n573, regarding the Holy Spirit's work of *capaces facit*.
[879] Mongeau, *Embracing Wisdom,* 162.
[880] Aquinas, *Super Ioan.* 14.6.1958: "*Consequenter agit de effectu spiritus sancti: dicens ille vos docebit omnia. Nam, sicut effectus missionis filii fuit ducere ad patrem, ita effectus missionis spiritus sancti est ducere fideles ad filium. Filius autem, cum sit ipsa sapientia genita, est ipsa veritas; supra XIV, 6: ego sum via, veritas et vita. Et ideo effectus missionis huiusmodi est ut faciat homines participes divinae sapientiae, et cognitores veritatis. Filius ergo tradit nobis doctrinam, cum sit verbum; sed spiritus sanctus doctrinae eius nos capaces facit*."

facit. Though the translated sense of 'able to grasp' does indeed indicate capabilities and faculties (such as 'grasping truth'), we also might consider an extended sense, without doing violence to the text, in which *capax* is understood as 'spaciousness' or 'roominess.' Thomas explains that the Spirit does this through its presence in the listener's heart – a presence which entails an infusion of divine charity.[881] In this way, we can identify the work of the Spirit as making room in the soul for the good. Most properly, this is the truth of Christ – but in a sense of the world as a Neoplatonic hierarchy of goods (which Thomas holds to, as we have seen in chapter 4), this would include all of the goods that are conditions for human thriving. The posture of *convenientia*, therefore, is a rhetorical-hermeneutical-pedagogical openness to being enlarged in our souls toward the good – a posture of 'intellectual charity,' or 'intellectual gratitude,' which approaches even the person who is a mystery to us as a particular manifestation of the divine good, and an opportunity for us to be open toward the goodness of God. For Christians, any human participation in that activity is an imitation and mediation of the work of the Holy Spirit in human lives.

Turning to the final element of our work in this section, we should ask: how shall we articulate these rhetorical-hermeneutical-pedagogical strategies, activities which imitate the workings of the Word and the Spirit among human beings, in concrete terms of common human experience that operate as modes of gratitude? How are interactions between human individuals, especially when they are mysterious or perplexing to each other, to be animated by the principles of *clarificatio* and *convenientia*? How can we frame the work of this section in a specific contra-violent intervention?

[881] Aquinas, *Super Ioan.* 14.6.1958. Ref.: chapter 1, 37; chapter 4, 172–173.

First, let us note what our starting point of wonder has contributed: the value of approaching the 'unknown other' as mystery, and therefore a source of delight, rather than as unintelligible. Second, we can note that in both strategies of *clarificatio* and *convenientia* there is an essential element of humility and openness toward the other. A 'reader/listener' must set aside the impulses to reduce the intelligible possibilities of the other either out of pride, or out of a false sense of loyalty to the sufficiency of a set of moral, intellectual, or theological categories. Excess of meaning is not a hermeneutical or moral disaster – it is a gift. A gift that a person must be 'led by the hand' to, by the shared humanity of the participating individuals. A gift that the person must make room for in their heart and (perhaps what is more difficult) in their mind. On this last point, we should state explicitly what has been implied: the act of approaching another with 'intellectual-relational charity' is quintessentially a receptive act, a making space *in ourselves* in which the other can unpack their thoughts and self-identity in the safety of love. Further, such an orientation of openness toward the excess of meaning in another entails an increased possibility of subsequent *complacentia* present and at work in the relation, as the distance between unlike people becomes transformed into connection.[882]

Here we now can see how interpersonal activities of gratitude are 'sacred' undertakings – undertakings that can have even cosmological import. Making room for another human being in one's soul, and accepting their offer to do the same, are acts of creational hospitality. As we saw

[882] For some readers, such an 'resolution' of the mystery/unknown that prompted wonder may call to mind Aristotle's treatment of wonder in *Met* 1.2.983a13–21, specifically with regard to the 'better state' of coming to marvel at the opposite of what we thought at the outset of an inquiry: "Yet the acquisition of it [knowledge, MG] must in a sense end in something which is the opposite of our original inquires. For all men begin, as we said, by wondering that things are as they are, as they do about self-moving marionettes, or about the solstices or the incommensurability of the diagonal of a square with the side; for it seems wonderful to all who have not yet seen the reason, that there is a thing which cannot be measured even by the smallest unit. But we must end in the contrary and, according to the proverb, the better state, as is the case in these instances too when men learn the cause; for there is nothing which would surprise a geometer so much as if the diagonal turned out to be commensurable." My thanks to Marije Martijn for suggesting this parallel.

earlier in this chapter, Thomas uses *gratia* with an ambiguity that encompasses in one context of gift-sharing both the orientation of the giver and of the receiver.[883] To open oneself in hospitality to another is both to bestow and to receive a good – and the same is true when one is the recipient of hospitality. Further, the divine/human causal ambiguity we have examined allows us to understand these human bestowals of the good as imbued with the possibility of mediating even the divine good that is our principle of being.[884] The naturally incomplete condition of finite, creaturely existence means that our being is always in a state of being divinely added to, including in these human ways. (As Kerr frames it, God "without annulling or withdrawing anything given can always give more."[885]) The relevance of this principle for our immediate inquiry is that bestowals of the good (even, by participation, of the providential good that is our principle of being) are mediated by one human being to another precisely in their shared-but-perplexingly-different humanity. The ordinary contexts of human life provide limitless opportunities to experience other people in the 'excess of meaning' presented by their individuality – not only in the delight of the mystery that they present to us, but also as a location through which we can align (or, re-align) ourselves to the good. To live contra-violently, we must learn to pay attention to how specific aspects of a person's humanity (personal, social, political, theological, etc.) interact with our established categories for processing life, and to treat as mystery and gift the 'remainders' that don't fit – i.e., receive them gratefully as creational bestowals of being.[886] It is in the intention and discomfort of these very spaces that a person is

[883] See: 250; ref.: Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.106.
[884] E.g., 187.
[885] Kerr, *After Aquinas,* 146–147. Kerr adds Eric Mascall's statement: "Creation is a most intimate and incessant donation of the creature to itself by God." See Mascall, *Via Media: An essay in theological synthesis* (London: Longman, Green, 1956), 155.
[886] Clearly, some interactions with other human beings entail encountering aspects of human experience that are decidedly *not* 'good,' and it is part of our human vocation to call out injustice, etc., when we see it. However, the claim proposed by this thesis is *not* that everything we encounter in human experience is to be embraced as good, but rather that encountering another person as a location of being-that-has-been-bestowed, and therefore as gift, is an

presented with the opportunity to 're-align' themselves with the good they had become presumptuous of, and even fallen away from. Within such particular, concrete instances of 'resting in' and 'enjoying' the good that is another, as a good in itself, we can be simultaneously refreshed in the *complacentia affectus* that orients us to the divine good that is our principle.[887] Further, just as with the 'continuum' within which the teacher's and the student's activities collaborate and coalesce, so the lines between whether the 'gift' of excess of meaning is located more in the sharing of it or in the receiving of it are beautifully blurred – recall that for Thomas *gratia* indicates the grace both of giving and receiving.[888] Whether we are participating in the 'leading by the hand' or the 'making room,' the effect is a living, human connection to the good. Insofar as such activities are undertaken in the spirit of charity, they are graced.

Here, at last, we are ready to articulate a properly philosophical notion of grace – i.e., as a philosophical analogue to the Grace that for Thomas belongs to the supernatural and is only explorable through theology. We note that the very name 'supernatural' points to excess, to what lies beyond, and mystery in this sense is the purview of theologians. However, if nature itself contains excess, then mystery is also a reality that we experience within the world of creatures a philosopher properly explores. Wherever we encounter the 'excess' of creaturely mystery, we experience creaturely, i.e., philosophical, grace. The intelligibility we are concerned about in this thesis is an intelligibility that exists with respect to one or another such mystery in its creaturely being-mystery, and philosophical commitment to engaging and honoring such intelligibility is a

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encounter with the good that is the principle of our own being, and an opportunity to be aligned with that good, regardless of the moral complexity of the specific human encounter and context in front of us.

[887] While formally, the love of God is prior to love of our neighbor, Thomas in his articles on charity shows that the two are interwoven, especially insofar as the knowledge of our neighbor can lead to the knowledge of God. Aquinas, *ST* 2–2.25.1 corp. (regarding love of God and neighbor as specifically the same act); 26.2 corp. (regarding the intermingling of the loves); 26.2 ad 1 (regarding love of other persons as the first objects of love); 27.4 corp. (regarding the order of love from God to others, and the order of knowledge from others to God).

[888] Ref.: 250.

journey of grace. In this way, we see our thesis's method delivering on its promise, i.e., that its encounters with Christian faith and religion would prove fruitful for philosophical understanding.

Our third contra-violent intervention of gratitude, therefore, can be stated thus: In any concrete human encounter, especially those in which the other is perplexing to you, pay attention to where the excess of meaning is, and treat it as gift – i.e., as a graced opportunity for your soul to be expanded by the good.

D. Conclusion: An inventory of interventions of gratitude

We began our work in this chapter with the problem of how individuals can become re-aligned to a good they have known and loved but have fallen away from. Given the narrative we encountered in the work of chapters 3 and 5, we understood such a falling away from the good as causing the individual to enact violence toward the people around them, whether or not they intend to. That is, a diminishing of *complacentia boni* disrupts the soul's natural relation to the good (especially insofar as it is, for Thomas, the affective correlative to *synderesis*, the soul's natural 'grasp' of the good), such that a person becomes capable of undertaking evil as though it were their good. In this chapter, we have examined how an orientation of gratitude can have an efficient effect upon an individual's connection to the good, or their attempt to re-establish it – an effect that we framed as a reversal of the natural priority of interior, dispositional-acts of 'gratitude for' over exterior, concrete acts of 'gratitude to." This framing required an understanding of gratitude as act-centered, rather than emotion-centered. We considered how intentionally undertaken, exterior acts of 'gratitude to' can function efficiently as interventions to re-awaken the soul to the interior, dispositional-acts of 'gratitude for,' effecting a re-alignment of the individual as a receiver of the good, and thus with the good itself as known and loved.

In this task, we have added to the inventory of contra-violent interventions begun in chapter 4, with the following three interventions of gratitude:

First, language of gratitude toward the divine should be expressed in terms of particulars rather than universals – i.e., indicative of the experience of divine outpouring of the good within the concrete contexts of human life.

Second, individuals can establish charity-informed rituals of moral memory, whether interior (as acts of holding kindnesses bestowed in the mind), or exterior (as concrete acts of virtue toward other persons) – rituals that function to awaken the soul to the debt of good that we owe for every aspect of our being.

Third, in any concrete human encounter, especially those in which the other is perplexing to you, pay attention to where the excess of meaning is, and treat it as gift – i.e., as a graced opportunity for your soul to be expanded by the good.[889]

We recall that our work in this chapter was meant to be *illuminative* rather than *demonstrative*. This is an important distinction to keep in mind when conducting philosophical inquiry by means of spiritual exercise – i.e., where the discovery of truth is to be found not in abstract, justificatory arguments, but in transformed living. We aimed to get a purchase on the *kinds* of acts that might function retro-actively as interventions to reestablish a person's connection to the good that is their principle. In such an endeavor, the efficacy of the work emerges insofar as these interventions serve as pointers for individuals to discover, frame, and establish ways of being that are life-affirming in their own contexts. In this way, the truth of the matter, to whatever degree it indeed is, will be seen in the particularity of human life.

[889] This intervention is a particularly clear example of 'philosophical spiritual exercise' as this thesis envisions it – i.e., a conceptual orientation with transformative intent.

Finally, in concluding this study in the contra-violent potential of gratitude, it is fitting to end with a brief reflection by Bob Sweetman, whose extensive and sensitive work so deeply informed the direction of this chapter, on the wonder of life as gift:

> The great cosmic drama revealed by Scripture is played out in the ordinary patterns of human living, including all the pedestrian occasions that trigger the giving of gifts and their reception. There, *in concreto*, in our care for the seemingly little and insignificant situations of our lives, the cosmic drama is played out; it is there that we work out our salvation in fear and trembling in the conviction that God is at work in us in our living, enabling us to work and to will for his good pleasure.[890]

[890] Sweetman, "Aquinas on Gratitude and the Shaping of Graced Living," paper given as part of a series of faculty development seminars held at King's University in Edmonton AB, funded by the Templeton Foundation, and organized by the grant holder Joshua Harris of the Philosophy Department of King's University on 9 August 2021, 4.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Intelligibility 'other-wise,' the 'beautiful risk'

This final chapter will draw the work of this thesis to its conclusion in several ways. First, I will revisit the main contours of the argument, paying attention to the specific notions and suggestions this thesis contributes to discourse regarding personal violence. In the second part I will reflect on how the key notions emerged and evolved through the work, specifically in response to difficulties and critiques that arose as the thesis developed. In the third section I will address how I would like to see the work of the thesis carried forward. Finally, I will offer a concluding set of thoughts celebrating a core value of this project: the wonder and value of human particularity.

A. Overview of the findings: the creation of a contra-violent inventory

This project's task of framing a response to the problem of personal violence employed two levels of inquiry: the speculative and the practical.[891] Faced with the problem that people of good will often do acts of violence that they already know are wrong (or, alternatively, neglect the good that they already know is right), we set out to frame an account that offered meaningful help to just such a person: one who to some degree knows and values the good, who to some degree wants to do it, but who finds themself in fact *not* doing the good. For such a person, this project can carry normative, rather than merely descriptive, weight by virtue of these prevenient commitments and experiences. The speculative level of our inquiry is designed to enlarge the reader's vision of what personal violence among human beings actually entails, by framing our

[891] We are not suggesting that these forms of intellective inquiry, especially in terms of this project, are radically distinct. See Jordan's treatment of the distinction in Thomas in *Ordering Wisdom*, esp. at "The Order of the Sciences," and "Moral Pedagogy in Discourse About the Soul,' 77–83, and 142–148. See also Mongeau's brief discussion "From *scientia* to *sapientia*," where he distinguishes the speculative from the practical in Thomas's approach to *sacra doctrina*, in *Embracing Wisdom*, 15–16.) In this thesis's appropriation of Thomas, the distinction is understood as between inquiry that is aimed at adding to our conceptual understanding of one thing or another, and inquiry that is aimed at our concrete understanding of how to orient ourselves with regard to the concrete beings, events, and states of our experience. In this regard, the disciplines, while distinct, are mutually enriching.

narrative in terms of human flourishing. The practical level then animates this narrative by addressing concretely how well-meaning people may go astray of this vision of human good, and how they can position themselves to do otherwise. Finally, the narrative is characterized, energized, and guided by the notion that human existence unfolds as an intersection of a 'horizontal' element (i.e., our status as personal agents in a world of motion) and a 'vertical' element (i.e., our status as created, contingent beings in a cosmos sustained by a divine good). This distinctive feature of our inquiry is a motif that is developed through engagement with the thought of Thomas Aquinas – specifically as read in conversation with Aristotle and Proclus – as the theme of the collaboration, and the ambiguity in operation, of nature and grace.

In this way the project was conducted as a spiritual exercise in moral imagination, inviting and guiding a reader to consider how a certain view of human nature and flourishing could transform their orientation toward and engagement with other individuals. In this way it is also open-ended, intended to be carried forward and deepened.

The following outline is a simplified rendering of the path we took in the work of our inquiry, creating an inventory of concrete interventions that can be taken up in support of an endeavor to frame contra-violent ways of being together in the world.

• **A basic articulation of human nature (chapter 2):** Thomas's account of human nature and its flourishing entails a collaboration of nature and grace[892] through both horizontal (i.e., action-based) and vertical (i.e., cosmological) aspects of human existence. The cohering of these aspects, and what they contribute to human nature, serves as a ground for the *intelligibility* of individual human life. Put another way, human agency is seen in operation when a person's view

[892] Our use of Thomas's notions of nature and grace has emphasized the collaborative ambiguity of the human and the divine – e.g., pp. 15–17. However, in the course of our inquiry we have built upon this foundational theme in Thomas toward a notion of creaturely grace that serves as a properly-philosophical analogue to divine Grace – see pp. 273–274.

of the world – which will include both horizontal and cosmological orientations – serves as the principle, or explanation, for their actions. In such an account, acts of knowing and loving in particular emerge as paradigmatic with regard to human beings' experience of and place within the world.

• **A first articulation of personal violence (chapter 3):** Given this account of human nature and experience, personal violence can be articulated, in a reduced form, as an individual's doing harm to or causing the loss of some internal human principle, both their own and that of others. The effects of violent acts, in such an account, are experienced by human beings with distinctive force in their acts of knowing and loving – i.e., the acts by which human agents take responsibility for and make sense of their experience of themselves in the world.

• **A first articulation of contra-violent interventions (chapter 4):** Thomas's account of the Holy Spirit's movements among human beings, we saw, illumined the formal, efficient, and final causal role of charity in human nature, as well as an attendant ambiguity of divine/human agency in acts put into motion by created charity.[893] These notions prompt us to consider Holy Spirit's movements among human beings as a model that can inform our human experiences and interaction. In response to an examination of this model, we can articulate the following contra-violent interventions with regard to our engagement with other human beings:

> First, our natural orientation toward others should be *action-based*. Whatever we desire our disposition toward the other to entail needs to be exteriorly expressed in action.

> Second, human flourishing should entail an openness to *shared acts* of knowing and loving, both *of* and *with* other people, particularly those not naturally like ourselves.

> Third, a perfected natural orientation toward another person should maintain an attitude of *wonder*: it should regard that person as a worthy object of knowing and loving, affirm their status as a subject in their own right, and affirm the value of their self-narrative as a unique 'bearer of truth and insight' in the universe.

[893] Ref.: 172–173, and n568.

> This first part of our contra-violent inventory can be summarized (i.e., as a 'golden rule') as: treat other people pre-eminently in second-person relations. The grammatical notion of 'you,' insofar as it locates intelligibility within mutual subjective presence, functions as a contra-violent orientation to others. It binds us to affirm every 'other' that we engage first and foremost as an 'I' in their own right, ontologically prior to any role they may play in our own narratives. Finally, the sense of 'me' entailed in the mutuality of second-person relations encourages a humble, grateful recognition and remembering of the debt each owes to their proximate others for their very sense of self.

• **A second articulation of personal violence (chapter 5):** Even assuming agreement with the above accounts of human nature, people of good will can fall away from the good that they have known and loved, effecting violence against people around them, and themselves. Given the framing of our account of human existence as both action-based (horizontal) and hierarchical/i.e., involving a sharing of the good (vertical), this vexing difficulty can be approached as the problem of *defective action.* We can consider such actions in terms of an apparent neglect of or failure to do the good, or, more precisely, as the various strange and tragic ways that people can choose evil as if it were the good. How are we to account for these mal-directed acts? A Thomistic understanding of the good of human nature and existence as *gift* presses us to consider such a falling away from the good in terms of those things that cause disconnect between the source of the good and the receiver precisely *as* a receiver of the gift. It is in this Thomistic, gift-centered context that we can use the term 'ingratitude' in our account of violence to indicate a *posture*, rather than an emotion – a posture that separates an individual agent from the principle of their good, with negative effect upon their actions.

• **A second articulation of contra-violent interventions (chapter 6):** An understanding of defective action, and the personal violence it effects, as entailing a fundamental ingratitude (i.e., a failure of 'gratitude-for'), presses us to take up intentional practices of 'gratitude-to' as interventions to help re-align us as receivers of the good and reestablish our orientation to human flourishing. Thomas's account, read with an eye for these themes, provides a plentiful

vision of gratitude that can be interpreted and applied as a way of life, rather than in the limited sense of the proper response to certain circumstances. Gratitude can, as was seen, serve as the animating spirit of the activities of *admiratio*, *clarificatio* and *convenientia*. Based on its potential for aligning and vitalizing the individual's relation to the good that is their principle, gratitude can be taken to be a contra-violent orientation, and we can articulate the following as contra-violent interventions:

> Language of gratitude toward the divine (or, as if toward the divine[894]) should be expressed in terms of concrete, contingent particulars – i.e., indicative of the experience of divine outpouring of the good within the concrete contexts of human life.

> Individuals can establish charity-informed rituals of moral memory, whether interior (as acts of holding kindnesses bestowed in the mind), or exterior (as concrete acts of virtue toward other persons) – rituals that function to awaken the soul to the debt of good that we owe for every aspect of our being.

> In any concrete human encounter, especially those in which the other is perplexing to you, pay attention to where the excess of meaning is, and treat it as gift – i.e., as a graced opportunity for your soul to be expanded by the good.

The contra-violent work of the thesis comes together in the notion of *intelligibility*. Most simply, in terms of our inquiry and its goals, this term indicates an orientation to another person (or, indeed, to oneself) as an intelligible subject in their own right and as one whose acts of knowing and loving, and their own view of the world, provide (or at least *can* provide) a meaningful explanation for their activity and way of being in the world. The importance of this aspect of human existence to human flourishing lies behind the 'violent' problems of estrangement, alienation, and defective action. Its significance also serves to animate the interventions we have envisioned to counter these problems and to foster health and flourishing in human lives and relationships. In the view of this thesis, this vision of human intelligibility

[894] This is a framing of spiritual exercise such as the thesis is proposing that a non-Christian can engage, i.e., an encounter with religious thought that has concrete philosophical import: treat the other as if sacred, just as Christians claim they are required to treat their God.

brings along with it an ethical imperative – a veritable obligation to attend to and to value, perhaps even to cherish, the truth-telling self-narratives of the individual people in the world around us. Of course, 'intelligible' is not identical with 'joyful.' A person's narrative may, and likely will, entail pain, anger, confusion, or regret. It may be troubled and dark. It may be troubl*ing* for the hearer to encounter, or even hurtful. As James Olthuis has observed, however, the life of human openness to oneself and to the other is "the beautiful risk."[895] It is to be hoped that the understanding of intelligibility that we have worked to establish, justify, and illumine in this project could be fruitfully taken up in further inquiries of many kinds into human flourishing.

B. The *ductus* as an evolving response to critique and difficulty

The specific path of inquiry taken in this project was neither envisioned nor designed *a priori*. It was instead the result, as it should be, of engagement with a number of important critiques and difficulties that arose along the way.

My guiding notion going into initial research was the intuition that personal violence could be meaningfully spoken of in terms of the hindering of individual human agency. Part of my initial draw to the topic of the relation between personhood, agency, and violence was how readily people responded with their own thoughts and examples when I mentioned it as a possible research theme. I quickly noticed that the question of what harms personal agency translated as interesting, difficult, and relevant to a wide variety of perspectives and orientations, academic and non-academic alike, and could be discussed productively in a variety of language styles. This seemed to indicate a line of inquiry that had a complex, interdisciplinary history, in which there was significant work yet to be done.

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[895] James H. Olthuis, *The Beautiful Risk: A New Psychology of Loving and Being Loved* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

The choice of Thomas Aquinas as interlocutor emerged early, but without a specific vision for what contribution his work would make to the question of personal violence. The initial igniting of possibilities occurred when I engaged Thomas's observation (in which he uses Aristotelian language and notions) that violence, as an extrinsic principle of action, is opposed to voluntariness, and can be said to cause involuntariness.[896] This was the first indication, for me, of the shape and language that a philosophical account of personal violence framed in terms of human agency might entail.

The first critique of this theme that I encountered occurred in the company of Thomist theologians I had the benefit of conversing with early on in the thought process. They appeared doubtful as to the helpfulness of such a framing of violence (i.e., an act with an exterior principle of motion), since the notion of 'being moved' could hardly be *de facto* spoken of as a violence. I recognized the validity of this objection – and its significance for Christian theology – as well as the related observation that there are many instances in life where we willingly place ourselves in the hands of exterior forces, such as in the practices of medicine and teaching. I learned to speak of violence in terms of an exterior principle of motion *where we would expect an interior principle*. However, I retained my intuition that there was indeed something to be gained by thinking about human agency and violence in this way, and that Thomas could help me figure out what that might be.

My reading of Thomas early on took shape around his anthropology, and therefore emphasized the Aristotelian elements of human beings as rational self-movers. My research at this stage of the inquiry was informed by the work of Martha Nussbaum and of Jan Aertsen. My sense of the problem of personal violence began to be framed in terms of the ethical-ontological

[896] Aquinas, *SCG* 1.68.8; *ST* 1–2.6.5 corp.; 2–2.175.1 corp.; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.1.1110a.

significance of voluntary motion for human beings. I had strong belief that a remedy would emerge from within Thomas's account, but I did not have a solid framing of it yet.

Two further critiques arose at this point. The first came from within myself. I began to have an uncomfortable feeling that thus far I was really using Aristotle, through Thomas's use of him, rather than Thomas himself. What was I gaining by invoking Thomas's use of Aristotle, rather than just going straight to Aristotle? I did not have an answer to this, but I began to realize that if my intuition about the usefulness of Thomas as an interlocutor was correct, there would have to be other significant pieces added to my core understanding of violence that I was deriving specifically from his work.

A second critique came from peers as I began to share my developing work at conferences and workshops. I began to experience a real resistance to using ontological language in the context of ethics. I did appreciate the concern that was being raised, on two levels. First, I was aware that to say something about human beings' very nature, and to make normative claims based on those notions, risked becoming a form of violence itself. Second, I was aware that the critique had its own roots in the scholarly trend of resisting 'modernist' ontologies – i.e., articulations of human nature that privileged rationality to the exclusion of other aspects of human experience. I did recognize the validity of the historical concern, and the work that had been done in that scholarly vein.[897] I realized this early on, and accepted those critiques and cautions, but this methodological issue would be a persistent difficulty throughout my work – again and again trusted voices would point out that my language was leaning too far toward

[897] Ref.: chapter 1, 40, n122, regarding "Reformational Philosophy's strong resistance to a modernist, rationalist account of the human condition, and their association of the same with intellectual abstractions that function as power-moves over concrete particulars."

absolute claims about human experience.[898] It is this feature of working in ethics – i.e., the careful use of language with regard to individuals – that has required the most transformation within my own style and method.

As I proceeded with my research into Thomas's notions of human nature, I was beginning to see a need for me to think and speak with more clarity about *how* I was using Thomas. It would not do to simply import his notions of human nature into modern ethical discourse. Even if I myself were enriched by doing so, I risked my readers finding such a project possibly interesting for specialized scholarly discussion, but ultimately an application of scholastic-era, rationalist thinking such as has been long judged infelicitous for real-world concerns. Further, I had not yet found the language that would allow me to speak effectively about human nature that at the same time did justice to individual human experience.

Help for this set of difficulties came first in the introduction of Proclus as a secondary interlocutor. In the early days of developing my thesis topic, I had spent time with the Christian appropriation of Platonist and Neoplatonist thought that infused the scholarly world Thomas inhabited – including the preeminent examples of the works of Augustine, Boethius, and Dionysius. It was not long before I encountered the thread of Thomas's engagement with Proclus appearing here and there within the tapestry of Thomistic scholarship. At the suggestion of Prof. dr. Marije Martijn, Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit (one of my two supervisors), I began to consider how taking up Proclus as a secondary interlocutor to my work might guide and inform my reading of Thomas. It would be hard to exaggerate the significance that this decision bore upon my eventual understanding and use of Thomas. It was through my

[898] As has been mentioned in the body of the thesis, Fr. Gilles Mongeau was one of the earliest and most memorable influences on my thinking in this regard. For his conversations that were both gracious and direct, I am ongoingly grateful. Ref.: chapter 6, 253, n825.

studies of Proclus, and the scholarship dedicated to Thomas's appropriation of Proclus, that I was able to contextualize Thomas's Aristotelian anthropology. Formative for me at this stage was the work of Edward Booth, Philipp W. Rosemann, and Stephen Gersh, as well as Proclus scholars Carlos Steel, Dirk Baltzly, and Marije Martijn. With the help of this scholarship, I was able to more fully appreciate and articulate Thomas's Aristotelianism as but one trajectory of his account, illumining the action-based, 'horizontal' orientation of human nature, and which was complemented by another, illumining the cosmological, 'vertical' orientation. Thomas's skillful sensitivity to *both* of these orientations, and to their complementary and collaborative nature, became the guiding and defining feature of my reading of his thought. Here I had found my articulation of what I was gaining by specifically using Thomas, not just Thomas's Aristotle, as my interlocutor. I was still largely working within an ontological frame, with its attending challenges, and I was still struggling to get the language right regarding a Thomistic view of human nature in terms of the individual. Further, I did not yet know how even this vertical-horizontal collaboration present in Thomas's thought would prove helpful in articulating a contra-violent way of human living.

Ultimately, these final aspects of the project came together and achieved clarity through the notions of human flourishing and intelligibility. First, by framing my inquiry explicitly in terms of human *flourishing*, as an extension of my examination of human *nature*, I was able to speak with the sensitivity to individual life appropriate to an ethical work. Second, it seemed to me that the notion of human life as characteristically imbued with *intelligibility* captured effectively the shape of personal violence against human agency that Thomas's horizontal/vertical account of human nature had been suggesting provocatively to me for quite some time. For this methodological move, I was helped and energized by the work of Martha

Nussbaum, Jan Aertsen, Eric Perl, and Andrew Pinsent. One great gain by using the notion of intelligibility as a central principle in my account was the ability to identify the ethical activity of approaching others contra-violently as a *hermeneutical* project, which opened up all kinds of possibilities for understanding and articulating specific contra-violent orientations.[899]

The great risk/challenge accompanying this gain, however, would be the tendency for 'intelligibility' to be construed in terms of an exterior, typically rationalist, standard imposed by one person or group upon another person's or group's activities and way of life. In such a scheme, to be 'intelligible' is a status either granted or denied by others, often as a result of varying kinds of power dynamics, and often framed in terms that exclude 'non-intellectual' human activity from its calculus. My challenge would be to articulate and uphold an alternative notion of intelligibility. Based on my Aristotelian-Proclean reading of Thomas, my project came to propose a sense of intelligibility as an *interior* feature of human life that arises from, and thus is illumining of, an individual person's view and experience of the world – i.e., the ability of an individual to have their thoughts and desires, broadly considered, function as the principles of their own actions. In my account, such principles could be expected to arise from a variety of inner states and operations of the soul. My account does not intend or desire to limit these principles to the strictly rational, but respects the significance and efficacy of human emotions, senses, intuitions, and non-verbal apprehensions and impulses of the soul to serve as principles of human intellective understanding and voluntary actions. To whatever degree my account privileges 'logicality' in the human soul's operations, which I recognize it may do, this is more a

[899] Ref.: chapter 1, 44–45; chapter 2, 78–79 (regarding the hermeneutical activity entailed in a being's return to its principles); chapter 3, 139 (regarding hermeneutical violence against an agent's self-narrative); chapter 5, 196–197 (regarding an orientation of hermeneutical distrust toward the world); chapter 6, *passim* (regarding the hermeneutical strategies/disciplines of theurgy, wonder/*admiratio, clarificatio*, and *convenientia*, especially in terms of their contra-violent potential with regard to human beings' engagement with the world and the people around them).

reflection of the theoretical nature of philosophical investigation that allows one to attend to the ubiquity of such in human life and activity rather than an assertion of per se superiority. In general, human beings have an expectation that on some level things that people do will 'make sense' (i.e., be intelligible) – an intuition that is confirmed and articulated perhaps even more clearly by our dissatisfaction or discomfort when things don't.[900] That said, I do affirm that the reasons for what we do can be grounded in a variety of functions of the human person. In my account, the key feature of principles of human voluntary action is that they are interior to the agent, such that the agent themself serves as truthbearer of their legitimacy and significance. I also recognize that such an account, especially insofar as claiming to be grounded in Thomas's notion of human nature, may be viewed as a minority reading of Thomas and his scholastic perspective, so often viewed as decidedly favoring the rational in human experience.[901] In support of this reading, I look to the similarly broad reading of Aristotle's account of self-movers by Nussbaum we saw in chapter 2, and also to the reading of Thomas's work as animated by pastoral concern for human individuals in all their complexity as embodied, rational, social, sacred beings that we saw in chapter 5.[902] I came to see my commitment to this qualified sense of human intelligibility through the lens of Olthuis's phrase, seen in the title of this chapter: knowing 'other-wise.' This evocative phrase, and the epistemological caution and charity that it entails, signals an intelligibility conceived of *otherwise* than as it sometimes appears in

[900] Recall Sweetman's comment: "the logicality by which we self-awaredly distinguish this from that is an irreducible presence (whether in the foreground or background) of all our actions and passions in life." Ref.: chapter 1, 40, n123.
[901] Recall Pieper's observation regarding the rationalism of some Neo-Scholastic inheritors of Thomas, in chapter 1, 44, n136.
[902] Ref.: chapter 2, 61–64, regarding Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle as allowing for a variety of soul operations as interior principles of self-motions; chapter 5, 211, n697, regarding the treatment of Thomas's pastoral orientation by Mongeau, Jordan, and Boyle. Other scholars whose work informed my reading of Thomas as sensitive to non-intellectual aspects of human existence are Diane Fritz-Cates, Michael Sherwin, and Thomas Ryan.

rationalist discourse, and in a way that is attentive to (or *wise* toward) the flourishing of the *others* around us.[903]

A secondary risk to my choice of method would be the concern of overreaching its methodological warrant. Given my desire to ground this ethical inquiry within an account of human nature as such, I would need to be constantly vigilant against language that invoked universal import for its claims and insights. It was precisely in the context of this challenge that the importance of framing my work as a spiritual exercise came to the fore.[904] While my style of philosophical inquiry sees certain metaphysical/cosmological frames (especially ancient and medieval) as productive entry points into ethical considerations, the ways of considering human experience that emerge must be understood as philosophically helpful but in a limited sense. The language and claims of such a line of inquiry may hold for discourse about human experience in general, or when applied to certain particular cases, but they will indeed fail at times in others – thus risking being either insensitive to or outright violent toward individual human experiences and narratives. In order to conduct the kind of inquiry I wished, but to do it responsibly and effectively, I became convinced to frame my suggested account of human nature and subsequent

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[903] My gratitude is due to James Olthuis for this phrase, for his blessing to appropriate it within the context of the work of this thesis, and for the formation of my own thought that his generous influence effected. See: *Knowing* Other-*Wise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality,* Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, 1st edition, James H. Olthuis, ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). See also: James Olthuis, *Dancing in the Wild Spaces of Love: A Theopoetics of Gift and Call, Risk and Promise*, Currents in Reformational Thought Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022).

[904] The case for this framing, represented in the sentences that follow, was suggested compellingly by Bob Sweetman in a conversation about these very challenges, in personal correspondence of 20 July 2022.
One important concern that emerged was the need for my articulation of intelligibility to do justice to the complexity and ambiguity of human experience – the 'explanation' for a person's actions might be unfortunate or even dark, it might be concealed from their conscious thought, it might contain contradictions, competing motives, false conceptions of reality, or self-destructive impulses. To say that human life is characteristically intelligible is not to say that people always succeed in understanding themselves, let alone others. I do consider that some of these difficulties could be, and were, productively examined and engaged under my framing of personal violence. However, a systematic examination of the specific, including pathological, ways that human intelligibility can be thwarted lies outside the scope of this project, and would be a helpful continuation of the work, especially in collaboration with other fields of specialization.

implications and proposals in the mode of spiritual exercise: in this case, a guided exploration taking its philosophical 'permission' to think in a certain trajectory from a carefully examined set of metaphysical/cosmological frames.

With all these methodological guiderails in mind, and with Thomas Aquinas as guide and conversation partner, the shape of my inquiry came into focus. The questions that would animate my philosophical inquiry into personal violence emerged: What is suggested about the shape of human life by an account in which the horizontal and the vertical naturally collaborate? Further, what is suggested when the work of nature and grace are fitted to each other – i.e., presuppose the other in their own operation? Distinctive of Thomas's account is that grace is not an intrusion into, nor a 'reshaping' of, the natural. Any ethical suggestions that emerge are to be considered germane to the domain of natural human operations. Of course, in Thomas's point of view graced human nature has the benefit of being able to collaborate with the divine – even to the point, in the case of acts of charity, of an ambiguity of agency – such that an inquiry into human nature operating at its most positive entails a sense of humans not only being helped by but outright participating the divine. Thomas's ethics do very much presuppose, depend upon, and respond to divine grace. Even here, however, we return to Thomas's distinctive: the shape of a remedy to violence, even when considered as informed by divine grace, will be a very human remedy. Though this project is a spiritual exercise specifically undertaken within the context of Thomas's Christian philosophy, my desire would be that its account of what is natural and proper to human existence and flourishing would be of interest, and even productive, for readers regardless of their religious perspective.[905]

[905] Ref.: chapter 1, 45–47, and n139, regarding this thesis's approach to the method and possibilities of spiritual exercise.

One possibly outstanding critique that might be suggested by the observant reader is the ambiguity raised by invoking the notion of 'human art' in treating the theme of human flourishing – an issue that is mirrored in the notion of spiritual exercise taken in Hadot's sense of the "art of living."[906] In both these cases, the activity in question can be construed positively on the one hand, as affirming of human life and flourishing, and on the other hand negatively, as operatively disruptive ('positively/negatively' in a logical/grammatical sense, not in a moral 'good/bad' sense).[907] I would like to think that the thesis introduced such 'therapeutic disruption' in my challenging of the theological privileging of sin as primarily 'against God,' and the accompanying suggestion to move the horizon of the discourse to specifically *human* interactions. However, the notion of how practical arts work does indeed merit a closer look than perhaps I have here given it. In theory, art is not 'violent' as long as it does not operate 'against' the inclination, or nature, of the matter/patient – a qualification that I associated with the 'non-violent' manner of God's action toward and within human beings.[908] However, I recognize that the notion of art, insofar as it is an exterior cause, does retain an ambiguity as to whether it is

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[906] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 82–3; ref.: chapter 1, 46–47, n138.

[907] Regarding art as an external, i.e., 'disruptive' force upon matter: Aristotle, *Met.* 7.7.1032a12–25; Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 7.6.1381, 1404, 1407; *Super Phys.* 2.14.268.
See: Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* 91–93, regarding spiritual exercise as "a combat, amicable but real." See also: Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire,* 32, where Nussbaum claims that such therapeutic philosophy "is highly critical of ordinary belief, and sees many of our ordinary beliefs as impediments to flourishing;" and 34–35, where Nussbaum shows that while "the whole point of philosophy is human flourishing" its work "requires delving deep into the patient's psychology and, ultimately, challenging it and changing it."
Sweetman describes the need for the disruption enacted through spiritual exercise, in terms of the perspective of ancient Greek philosophers: "It was their judgment that the social and cultural formation of their day was profoundly distorted and unhelpful, right from the get-go. People were set on wrong paths by the very stories told in the nursery. And the distortions only became more sophisticated as children were reared and received subsequent, formal training. As a result, it was their judgment that if one were truly to learn the love of wisdom, one needed to learn to think outside of one's social and cultural formation … These philosophers appealed in their exercises to a principle of intelligibility in the cosmos that was deeper and truer than its articulation via social and cultural formation, a principle they called 'nature.' This principle *could* be accessed anew beyond that formation – provided one learned to feel, to imagine, and to think from starting points that put one at odds with one's formation, and so (it was assumed) in touch with the nature from which that formation had become alienated." Robert Sweetman, *Tracing the Lines: Spiritual Exercise and the Gesture of Christian Scholarship*, 4.

[908] Aquinas, *Sent. Met.* 5.6.834–5; *Contra gent.* 2.30. Ref.: chapter 6, 229–231.

'against' the inclination or even the nature, of the matter/patient. That is, can the wood really be said to be 'inclined' to be shaped into a chair? Where is the line at which a teacher's challenging of a student's view of the world in practical reality becomes an act of violence against their agency? I do concede that this thesis's honoring of an individual agent's 'status as truthteller of their own account' presupposes a stability in that agent such that the role of the disruptor is cast as a form of violence. Other voices in the conversation may focus more than I have on differentiating between a disruptive and a violent engagement with an individual agent's acts of knowing and loving as providing the explanation for their actions or their view of the world, and on the importance of such disruptive influence.[909] There is merit to that view, and I would welcome such engagement. That said, I do believe that the more basic obligation is the honoring of another person's agency and truthtelling status. Given a choice between failing to honor a person's agency and failing to therapeutically disrupt their view of the world, I would choose in favor of honoring agency. It seems to me to be the condition upon which the other activity can be faithfully engaged. In spiritual terms, we can be reminded of the Apostle Paul's words:

> If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.[910]

C. Carrying the thesis forward

Two aspects of the questions raised by this thesis strike me as particularly fruitful lines through which the work could be carried forward. One is an expansion of the

[909] Also, as mentioned in chapter 6, my framing of the 'remedy' for falling away from the good presupposes at least a modicum of desire on the part of the suffering agent to be restored. This is indeed a limitation of the thesis's scope, but a limit imposed self-reflectively on my part as a consequence of the value I place upon human agency within the work of this inquiry. Ref.: chapter 6, n753.
[910] 1 Corinthians 13:1–2 (NIV).

theoretical/historical scope of the work, and the other is a return to the theological observation that was the impetus for this project.

Regarding the historical scope, I would like to see this thesis's reading of Thomas – i.e., in which the vertical and horizontal aspects of human life collaborate – placed in conversation with medieval philosophers/theologians of other traditions. I would be interested to whether there is a parallel notion to charity, expressing the divine/human ambiguity it bears in Thomas, and functioning with formal, efficient, and final causality. I have in mind, for example, the Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon (Maimonides/RAMBAM), with his dual-treatment of the soul through the notions of *ruah*, which conveys both the 'breath' of the divine spirit and its presence in the intention or will of the human being, and of *nephesh,* which conveys the sentient reason that is the distinguishing characteristic of human beings.[911] I am thinking also of Ibn Sînâ (Avicenna), his vision of philosophy as medicine and healing, and his sense of the intimate fittedness between a soul and the body it unites with.[912] Finally, for example, I am interested in the thought of Ibn Rushd (Averroes), with his notion of the body's connection to the soul as a mirror receiving and reflecting divine light.[913] I would be interested to read these authorities with an eye for how they account for and speak of, or do not, the horizontal and vertical aspects of human nature, the ambiguity of divine/human causality in human activity, and the intelligibility of human life.[914] In this way I would hope to extend the spiritual exercise of my thesis, and see

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[911] See, for example: Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed,* translated from the original Arabic text by M. Friedländer, second edition, revised (New York: Dover, 1956), chs. 15, 16.
[912] See, for example: Ibn Sînâ, "Concerning the Temporal Origin of the Soul," chapter 12 in *Concerning the Soul from Avicenna's Psychology*, translated by Fazlur Rahman (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1952).
[913] See, for example: Ibn Rushd, *Tahafut al-tahafut,* First Discussion, Fourth Proof, 107, in *Averroes' Tahafut Al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) Volumes I and II*, translated from the Arabic with introduction and notes by Simon Van den Bergh (Middlesex, UK: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2016).
[914] The 2006 comparative study of medieval thought by Rémi Brague is an example of an examination that would undergird and guide this kind of inquiry. See: Rémi Brague, *The Legend of the Middle Ages: Philosophical*

what shape it might take with different interlocutors. I would be interested to see how flexible and resilient the exercise is as I have framed and shaped it, not only in terms of what alterations it could withstand and still hold the main lines of its view of human nature, but also in terms of how fruitful the exercise might be as a model or framework that could be meaningfully appropriated by other modes of thought. Along these lines, I would also like to see an inquiry with Proclus, or Aristotle, as the *primary* subject conducted with the concerns and findings of this thesis in mind (for example, on the themes of violence and gratitude). I have limited my engagement with Proclus and Aristotle, in this thesis, by the consideration of how they were inherited by Thomas. I would be interested to see if, and in what ways, our 'Thomistic' engagement with Proclus and Aristotle illumines their thought on their own terms.

Regarding the theological impetus of this thesis, I would be interested to see how the work done here might spur further thought about the framing of sin as against other human beings rather than primarily as against God.[915] This would, of course, require quite a different way of speaking not only about the nature of sin but also about 'what happened' in the work of Christ in his death on the cross than is typically found in perspectives such as prompted the initial dissatisfaction expressed in this work.[916] I would like to suggest that the admittedly controversial thought of René Girard could provide a conception of sin and soteriology that resonates with the threads of this thesis, and prove fruitful in inspiring a fresh understanding of these themes so central to Christian faith and theology.[917]

Explorations of Medieval Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[915] The work of J. Richard Middleton could perhaps be seen as operating within this kind of horizon – for example, his *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (mentioned in the Appendix, pp 301–305). His work, however, emphases the cosmological and teleological aspects of such a framing of sin and redemption, and I have in mind a pressing of the theological-ethical aspects.

[916] Ref.: chapter 1, 2, n3.

[917] Girard's central treatment of his thesis regarding mimetic violence is presented in his 1972 (1977 translated into English) text *Violence and the Sacred.* In 2001 he provided a companion account, *The One by Whom Scandal*

Girard sees the human problem of sin as a problem of violent mimetic rivalry, or the problem of the escalation of violent acts in an atmosphere of negative reciprocity.[918] In Girard's account, humans in society have a tacit/blind 'agreement' to participate actively in a rivalry of escalating violence: what you do to me, I will return to you, and then some. Girard envisions this rivalry as a social contract that frees people from feeling bad about their behavior. They can each claim, according to the agreement, 'I'm not the bad person – you are.' Thus, a person of ill-will can treat another person badly, banking on the culturally-conditioned response of accelerated reciprocation which will (in his mind) justify his own violent participation in the "cycle of escalating conflict."[919] This state of human affairs is not only a negative typicality, it is a tragic reality to which we are all bound from our entrance into society at birth. The only way to stop an economy of negative collaboration, in such an account of human nature, is for one participant to refuse to reciprocate – to take the hit, so to speak, and end it there. Ironically, such an action would be seen as a breach of the social agreement, an ignominious failure of the person to be a collaborator in the structures of society. Girard calls this refusal "disobeying" a violent person, and claims it is the only way to short-circuit the "lethally contagious" activity of mimetic rivalry.[920]

Comes, in which he retraces the most important lines of his argument, and also qualifies, even amends, some of the more controversial and misunderstood elements (see 41–45). *Violence and the Sacred* is much the denser and more detailed account, and despite his explicit caveat that "No attempt will be made here to consider the Judaeo-Christian texts in the light of this theory, or vice versa," he seems to have ruffled a good number of theological feathers. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1977), 309. Girard notes the irony of the title of his later work, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, in light of the reception of his earlier work. René Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes,* trans. M.B. DeBevoise, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture, series ed. William A. Johnsen (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014), ix.

[918] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 11, 18–19.

[919] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 9–11, 18–19, at 19.

[920] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 20. Note: a corollary of this theme for Girard is his complex account of the intersection of mimetic rivalry and the sacred in the violent practice of scapegoating. See Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 31–41.

Where does Girard find this solution in Judeo-Christian texts? The Gospels, he claims, are the only texts that explicitly "recognize the mimetic character of human relations" and demonstrate actively countering them. He draws his example from the gospel of Matthew, where Christ says to his disciples:

> You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.[921]

This text shows us, Girard claims, "the sole rule of the Kingdom."[922] This is the key to understanding the drama of the gospel narratives: Christ's identity as 'the god-man who didn't fight back – the man who died,' coupled with the news of his resurrection, signaled the unmasking of the lie of violent reciprocity, and the hope of a different way of living as humans together.[923]

We see strikingly similar readings of the import of this gospel text by the authorities Thomas collects in his *Catena aurea* – a resonance that hits my ear as an invitation to re-think the 'work of Christ on the cross' in this light of unmasking and derailing the human community's problem of violent reciprocity. First, we see Thomas presenting Augustine's explanation of the original Old Testament law referenced in this text:

> This law, *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth*, was enacted to repress the flames of mutual hate, and to be a check on their undisciplined spirits. For who, when he would take revenge, was ever content to return just so much harm as he had received?[924]

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[921] Matthew 5: 38–40 (NIV).
[922] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 41.
[923] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 20, 37, 41.
[924] Aquinas, *Cat. aur. Matt.* 5.20: "*Augustinus contra Faustum 19.25: Quod quidem ad reprimendas flammas odiorum in se invicem saevientium et immoderatos animos refrenandos ita praeceptum est. Quis enim facile contentus est tantum rependere vindictae quantum accipit iniuriae*?"

Augustine clarifies that the law was not intended as a vehicle for vengeance, but rather that it would "hinder the flames already kindled from further spread."[925] He then goes on to explain Christ's addition to/continuation of the law:

> I might state it yet thus: It was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not take unequal retaliation; But I say unto you, Ye shall not retaliate; this is a completion of the Law, if in these words something is added to the Law which was wanting to it; yes, rather that which the Law sought to do, namely, to put an end to unequal revenge, is more safely secured when there is no revenge at all.[926]

We can clearly see the shape of "mimetic rivalry," and Christ's remedy for it, in Augustine's words. Thomas then brings in the words of Jerome, which reach right to the heart of the matter:

> Thus our Lord by doing away all retaliation, cuts off the beginnings of sin. So the Law corrects faults, the Gospel removes their occasion.[927]

(We can see Girard echoing Jerome's intuition, claiming that the cross "deprives Satan of his chief resource" – i.e., removes the very ground and context of retaliative violence beginning at all.[928]) Thomas adds to his collation Pseudo-Chrysostom's rhetorical question about the efficacy of retaliation, and his reply affirming its futility:

> Or has your return blow at all restrained him from striking you again? It has rather roused him to another blow. For anger is not checked by meeting anger, but is only more irritated.[929]

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[925] Aquinas, *Cat. aur. Matt.* 5.20: "[*Augustinus contra Faustum 19.25:*] *non ut id quod sopitum erat, hinc accenderetur, sed ne id quod ardebat, ultra extenderetur*."
[926] Aquinas, *Cat. aur. Matt* 5.20: "[*Augustinus contra Faustum 19.25:*] *Poteram autem et ego sic ponere: dictum est antiquis: non iuste vindicabis; ego autem dico vobis: ne vindicetis, quod adimpletio est, si per haec verba, quod legi defuit, a Christo additum mihi videretur; ac non potius id quod lex volebat efficere, ne iniuste se quisquam vindicaret, conservari tutius, si omnino non vindicaret.*"
[927] Aquinas, *Cat. aur. Matt.* 5.20: "*Hieronymus: Dominus ergo noster, vicissitudinem tollens, truncat initia peccatorum: in lege namque culpa emendatur, hic peccatorum auferuntur exordia*."
[928] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 40.
[929] Aquinas, *Cat. aur. Matt.* 5.20: "*Chrysostomus super Matth: Numquid autem si repercusseris eum, compescuisti eum, ut te non percutiat? Sed magis excitasti eum ut adhuc percutiat. Nam iracundia per iracundiam non compescitur, sed amplius irritatur*."

Thomas uses Augustine to move the discussion yet further into the 'contra-violent' way of Christ, showing how the divine call prompts us to suffer unjustly rather than engage in retaliative justice:

> Whence the Lord judges that others' weaknesses should rather be borne with compassion, than that our own should be soothed by others' pain.[930]

Finally (and perhaps the most interesting in terms of our suggested inquiry insofar as it explicitly invokes the work of the cross), Thomas shares with us Augustine's intuition that Christ's words to his disciples were ultimately self-revelatory:

> For the Lord was ready not only to be smitten on the other cheek for the salvation of men, but to be crucified with His whole body.[931]

Thus we return to Girard's central intuition about the work of Christ on the cross: its efficacy lay in the fact that by it "God Himself reuses the scapegoat mechanism [i.e., the sacralized manifestation of violent, mimetic rivalry], at his own expense, in order to subvert it."[932] Girard's account, on my reading, depicts the efficacy of Christ's passion and crucifixion as a divinely-enabled but humanly-enacted 'absorbing,' and thereby ending, of the escalating violence of human mimetic rivalry, and the providing for others the possibility of a new, non-violent way of being human even in a world of violence.[933] I do realize that Girard's soteriology, at least in this text, stands in contrast to a substitutionary atonement model, and therefore may be read as incompatible with or infelicitously alien to, for example, an evangelical theological perspective. Though aware of the risk of 'scandal,' I would nevertheless like to propose this

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[930] Aquinas, *Cat. aur. Matt.* 5.20: "*Augustinus de Serm. Dom 1:20: Unde dominus potius misericorditer perferendam alterius infirmitatem iudicat, quam alieno supplicio suam mitigandam*."
[931] Aquinas, *Cat. aur. Matt.* 5.20: "*Augustinus de Serm. Dom 1.19: Paratus enim fuit dominus non solum in alteram maxillam caedi pro salute omnium, sed in toto corpore crucifigi*."
[932] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes,* 43.
[933] Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, 20, 41. Note: I realize that Girard's account of violence culminates, even paradigmatically perhaps, in the literal, physical violence of the crucifixion. On my reading of his thought, however, the mimetic escalation of violence that Christ absorbs and ends in his passion includes the vexing kinds of personal (non-physical) violence this thesis is concerned with.

extension of the spiritual exercise taken up in this work. If this thesis has made a compelling case for the ambiguity of the divine and human in human agency and flourishing – including, specifically, the notion of knowing and loving the divine good through engagement with the finite, concrete good around us – I invite specifically theological consideration of both the problem and the remedy of sin in a similarly ambiguous way. What, I ask, might be the implications within a variety of Christian doctrines if we more explicitly shift our soteriological horizon to the earthly and the concrete (assuming a Thomistic understanding of the created world as imbued with divine grace)? In this sense, the entire work of this thesis can perhaps be considered as a propaedeutic exercise, setting up a conversation space where we might say: "*Now,* we are ready to talk about sin and salvation afresh." I would be fine, and in fact quite pleased, with that estimation.

D. Final words: in praise of particularity, and the 'beautiful risk'

In closing this work I return to the observation made earlier in this chapter that contra-violence, as I have envisioned it, is a hermeneutical project. Entailed in the interventions I have suggested is a curiosity and openness to the narrative of another individual's unique view of the world and their place in it. When we approach people as we would a story, as Nussbaum suggests we do, we open our minds and hearts in acts of intellectual hospitality to the accounts of human experience we 'read' there, including the layers of mystery and excess of meaning that the complexity of human life inevitably presents. Recalling Thomas's observation that insofar as philosophers engage their craft in a spirit of *admiratio* they are poets and storytellers,[934] it seems fitting to conclude with a moment of poetic wonder for this miracle of particular existence we are treated to on every side in this world. Things have conceptual identities that we can grasp, think,

[934] Ref.: chapter 6, 259–260, n842.

and talk about – their *whatness*, as Aristotle has shown us – but the narratives of their individuality that exceed those conceptual identities both require and invite us to an activity that has been so difficult for philosophers to account for, especially in terms of the divine, and yet is ubiquitous to human life: knowledge of particular beings.[935] While affirming, as Thomas does, the mystery of divine knowledge of created beings, we can at the same time celebrate the extraordinary human fittedness to knowledge of individual beings. In a sense, this activity represents human nature at its finest and perhaps most glorious – entailing a collaboration of intellect and senses, enriched with emotions, intuitions, and valuations, unfolding within and persevering through time, all occurring in the sacredness of embodied spiritual experience that is social human life. Unfortunately, it also represents the darker possibilities of human nature – the violence of denying, devaluing, or disfiguring the self-narrative of another person, hindering it from flourishing on its own terms and obstructing it from engagement with the larger human community. To marvel at the beauty and power of the former affirmation is to concede the possibility of the latter calamity. Returning to Olthuis's wonderfully evocative phrase, the human project of approaching and affirming one another as intelligible subjects is "the beautiful risk."[936] We close with the hope that this thesis inspires its reader to take this risk, and to embrace the sacred tasks of human flourishing.

[935] Ref.: chapter 1, 40, and n122; chapter 2, 91–93, esp. at n315; chapter 3, 119–120, n402; chapter 4, 182, and n610.
[936] James H. Olthuis, *The Beautiful Risk: A New Psychology of Loving and Being Loved* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

Appendix: The reception of Augustinian Neoplatonism in the Christian West

A theme of auxiliary interest for this thesis is the manner by which certain philosophical and theological voices (both individual and collective) notice and critique the 'otherworldliness' emphasized by pietist, orthodox, and evangelical streams of Protestant Christianity. The claim of such critique is that Platonist and Neoplatonist influences are responsible, at least conceptually, for this problematic otherworldliness. That is, the critique asserts that the Platonist/Neoplatonist division of the cosmos into transcendent and non-transcendent realms (or, immaterial and material realms), with an attending valuing of the former higher than the latter, is the ground of Christian devaluation of the material world, including suspicion of the physical body, and focus upon the spiritual.

In the view of this thesis, the Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophical inheritance, while indeed entailing a profound vision of the causal influence of the transcendent good upon and within all material being, need not be read as leading uncomplicatedly to a devaluation of embodied human life in a material world. Instead, such a negative view arises from a *certain reading* of Platonism/Neoplatonism. For one reason, Neoplatonism itself is not uniform, and is comprised of varying ways of approaching the cosmos. Second, certain figures in late-antiquity Christianity loom so large in the tradition as to nearly-inexorably imprint the Neoplatonic inheritance for later generations with their own view of the matter. Such is the case with the magisterial influence of Augustine, whose Plotinian Neoplatonism marks the theologies of Christian communities (especially those in pietist/orthodox/evangelical streams) with a value-dualism up through current times.

It is my hope that this thesis's engagement with Proclus, especially in terms of his influence upon Thomas Aquinas, will provide modern perspectives with a compelling counter-

narrative to the prevailing 'dualist' reading of Platonism and Neoplatonism – especially for the pietist/orthodox/evangelical, and for those who critique them. I believe that a more nuanced understanding of Neoplatonist thought can provide real help to the ongoing task of understanding and evaluating the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the Christian view of the world. In support of that endeavor, the following abbreviated, swiftly-moving summary traces a sampling of ways that the inheritance of Augustinian Neoplatonism has been understood and engaged by relatively recent discourse. Whether all of these interpretations are fair representations of Augustine's thought is another matter. At issue for us is how readers have understood and engaged the Augustinian version of Neoplatonism in their approach to the world and human beings' place in it. It is a goal of this thesis to show how attention to the Proclean elements at work in Thomas's thought can help contextualize these 'prevailing winds,' specifically in pietist/orthodox/evangelical thought, and enable fresh examination of them. Note: full bibliographic references are provided at the end of the appendix, for ease in reading this summary.

In historical-philosophical terms, an important effect of the inheritance of Augustine's (Plotinian) Neoplatonism in the Christian West is a 'dualist' anthropology, especially with negative implications for the soul's relation to the body. Bertrand Russell identifies the Christian inheritance of this Neoplatonist privileging of the soul over the body as "the defect of encouraging men to look within rather than without" (Russell, 296–297). Étienne Gilson credits Augustine with not taking the Platonic framing of human nature as 'soul that uses a body' literally in the sense of total identity of a person with their soul, but does observe that for Augustine it serves as a "forcible expression of the transcendent superiority of the soul over the body" (Gilson, 74). M.-D. Chenu states that Augustine's orientation of interiority "took external

objects as mere occasions for [the soul's] enrichment," such that "nature became thereby a mere field for man's interior existence." In this way, Chenu states, "Augustinianism instilled into Christian spirituality the radical indifference of Platonic οὐσία (essence) to the world of concrete things in which men presently live [i.e. "Platonic dualism"]" (Chenu, 64). More specifically, Beryl Smalley describes the role of the body in Augustine's anthropology as "a penance or hard necessity" (Smalley, 293). Terence Irwin depicts the same as "an unwelcome appendage" (Irwin, 219). Tullio Gregory, in Dronke's history, notes that Augustine himself highlights the "close affinity between the teachings of the 'Platonists' and Christianity," quoting Augustine in *De vera religione* 4.7: "'You would only have to change a few words and expressions and they would become Christians,' Augustine had written" (Gregory, 56). Charles Taylor states that "Augustine's whole outlook was influenced by Plato's doctrines as they were transmitted to him through Plotinus," an influence by which "the Christian opposition between spirit and flesh was to be understood with the aid of the Platonic distinction between the bodily and the non-bodily," and which also included "the full panoply of related oppositions … the higher realm was that also of the eternal as against the merely temporal, of the immutable in contrast to the ever-changing" (Taylor, 127).

Theologically, negative consequences of Augustine's anthropology, and especially its roots in Greek Neoplatonism, have been seen by some as contrasting with biblical thinking. Herman Dooyeweerd criticizes Augustinian anthropology specifically for its roots in Greek thought: "[Augustine] conceived of the relation between the 'soul' and the 'body' within the framework of the Greek ground-motive. For him the soul was an immortal substance characterized by the faculty of theoretical thought. The body was merely a 'material vehicle' of the rational soul. The divine revelation of the religious root-unity of human existence was thus again undermined by

Greek dualism" (Dooyeweerd, 115–116). Joel Green credits Rudolf Burtmann with 'correcting,' in the twentieth century, an infelicitous reading of the Apostle Paul on the theme of body and soul, reframing Pauline anthropology as "'Man does not *have* a *soma*; he *is soma.*'" Green summarizes the theological struggles in the early part of century to articulate Pauline anthropology faithfully, using the "waffling" of Wheeler Robinson as an example: "He claims that Paul inherits the monism of the Hebrew Scriptures and that, while Paul was influenced by Hellenism, he did not succumb to its dualism … but then [Robinson] refers to the 'separation of the "spirit" from its present body of flesh, an idea which was not reached in the Old Testament'" (Green, 4–5, n12). Matthew Lamb more charitably reads Augustine as specifically having *not* succumbed to a radical dualism of soul and body, and challenges the readings of such as Charles Taylor. He goes on to associate such dualism with a "modern failure to appreciate … how the revelation of eschatology in Holy Scripture supernaturally fulfills the finality of the created universe rather than simply destroying and negating it in a final conflagration, as if that were all," and critiques Bultmann (*pace* Green) as committing this eschatological error (Lamb, 258, 265). Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, with reference to Dooyeweerd, depict (and critique) the explicit influence of Platonism upon Christian theology, observing that "this extreme dualism was the intellectual climate within which the faith of the early church had to be proclaimed and formulated," and tracing that foundational influence through the theological thought of Augustine and Aquinas (Walsh and Middleton, 108–113). Regarding Augustine's "pessimistic, otherworldly outlook" Middleton goes on to state: "We need to account for his Neoplatonic framework, which is pervasive in his writings. It is especially prominent in his famous notion of the two exclusive loves—love of the eternal versus love of the temporal—and in his consistent devaluing of the body vis-à-vis the soul. In Augustine's thinking the motif of

allegiance to God versus apostasy and disobedience (a central and legitimate biblical motif) is superimposed on (and continually struggles with) the Neoplatonic value framework of two realms, one transcendent and higher, the other earthly and lower" (Middleton, 292).

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Summary

This project's task of framing a response to the problem of personal violence employed two levels of inquiry: the speculative and the practical.[937] Faced with the problem that people of good will often do acts of violence that they already know are wrong (or, alternatively, neglect the good that they already know is right), we set out to frame an account that offered meaningful help to just such a person: one who to some degree knows and values the good, who to some degree wants to do it, but who finds themself in fact *not* doing the good. For such a person, this project can carry normative, rather than merely descriptive, weight by virtue of these prevenient commitments and experiences. The speculative level of our inquiry is designed to enlarge the reader's vision of what personal violence among human beings actually entails, by framing our narrative in terms of human flourishing. The practical level then animates this narrative by addressing concretely how well-meaning people may go astray of this vision of human good, and how they can position themselves to do otherwise. Finally, the narrative is characterized, energized, and guided by the notion that human existence unfolds as an intersection of a 'horizontal' element (i.e., our status as personal agents in a world of motion) and a 'vertical' element (i.e., our status as created, contingent beings in a cosmos sustained by a divine good). This distinctive feature of our inquiry is a motif that is developed through engagement with the thought of Thomas Aquinas – specifically as read in conversation with Aristotle and Proclus – as the theme of the collaboration, and the ambiguity in operation, of nature and grace.

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[937] We are not suggesting that these forms of intellective inquiry, especially in terms of this project, are radically distinct. See Jordan's treatment of the distinction in Thomas in *Ordering Wisdom*, esp. at "The Order of the Sciences," and "Moral Pedagogy in Discourse About the Soul,' 77–83, and 142–148. See also Mongeau's brief discussion "From *scientia* to *sapientia*," where he distinguishes the speculative from the practical in Thomas's approach to *sacra doctrina*, in *Embracing Wisdom*, 15–16.) In this thesis's appropriation of Thomas, the distinction is understood as between inquiry that is aimed at adding to our conceptual understanding of one thing or another, and inquiry that is aimed at our concrete understanding of how to orient ourselves with regard to the concrete beings, events, and states of our experience. In this regard, the disciplines, while distinct, are mutually enriching.

In this way the project was conducted as a spiritual exercise in moral imagination, inviting and guiding a reader to consider how a certain view of human nature and flourishing could transform their orientation toward and engagement with other individuals. In this way it is also open-ended, intended to be carried forward and deepened.

The following outline is a simplified rendering of the path we took in the work of our inquiry, creating an inventory of concrete interventions that can be taken up in support of an endeavor to frame contra-violent ways of being together in the world.

• **A basic articulation of human nature (chapter 2):** Thomas's account of human nature and its flourishing entails a collaboration of nature and grace[938] through both horizontal (i.e., action-based) and vertical (i.e., cosmological) aspects of human existence. The cohering of these aspects, and what they contribute to human nature, serves as a ground for the *intelligibility* of individual human life. Put another way, human agency is seen in operation when a person's view of the world – which will include both horizontal and cosmological orientations – serves as the principle, or explanation, for their actions. In such an account, acts of knowing and loving in particular emerge as paradigmatic with regard to human beings' experience of and place within the world.

• **A first articulation of personal violence (chapter 3):** Given this account of human nature and experience, personal violence can be articulated, in a reduced form, as an individual's doing harm to or causing the loss of some internal human principle, both their own and that of others. The effects of violent acts, in such an account, are experienced by human beings with distinctive

[938] Our use of Thomas's notions of nature and grace has emphasized the collaborative ambiguity of the human and the divine – e.g., pp. 15–17. However, in the course of our inquiry we have built upon this foundational theme in Thomas toward a notion of creaturely grace that serves as a properly-philosophical analogue to divine Grace – see pp. 273–274.

force in their acts of knowing and loving – i.e., the acts by which human agents take responsibility for and make sense of their experience of themselves in the world.

• **A first articulation of contra-violent interventions (chapter 4):** Thomas's account of the Holy Spirit's movements among human beings, we saw, illumined the formal, efficient, and final causal role of charity in human nature, as well as an attendant ambiguity of divine/human agency in acts put into motion by created charity.[939] These notions prompt us to consider Holy Spirit's movements among human beings as a model that can inform our human experiences and interaction. In response to an examination of this model, we can articulate the following contra-violent interventions with regard to our engagement with other human beings:

> First, our natural orientation toward others should be *action-based*. Whatever we desire our disposition toward the other to entail needs to be exteriorly expressed in action.

> Second, human flourishing should entail an openness to *shared acts* of knowing and loving, both *of* and *with* other people, particularly those not naturally like ourselves.

> Third, a perfected natural orientation toward another person should maintain an attitude of *wonder*: it should regard that person as a worthy object of knowing and loving, affirm their status as a subject in their own right, and affirm the value of their self-narrative as a unique 'bearer of truth and insight' in the universe.

> This first part of our contra-violent inventory can be summarized (i.e., as a 'golden rule') as: treat other people pre-eminently in second-person relations. The grammatical notion of 'you,' insofar as it locates intelligibility within mutual subjective presence, functions as a contra-violent orientation to others. It binds us to affirm every 'other' that we engage first and foremost as an 'I' in their own right, ontologically prior to any role they may play in our own narratives. Finally, the sense of 'me' entailed in the mutuality of second-person relations encourages a humble, grateful recognition and remembering of the debt each owes to their proximate others for their very sense of self.

• **A second articulation of personal violence (chapter 5):** Even assuming agreement with the above accounts of human nature, people of good will can fall away from the good that they have known and loved, effecting violence against people around them, and themselves. Given the

[939] Ref.: 172–173, and n568.

framing of our account of human existence as both action-based (horizontal) and hierarchical/i.e., involving a sharing of the good (vertical), this vexing difficulty can be approached as the problem of *defective action.* We can consider such actions in terms of an apparent neglect of or failure to do the good, or, more precisely, as the various strange and tragic ways that people can choose evil as if it were the good. How are we to account for these mal-directed acts? A Thomistic understanding of the good of human nature and existence as *gift* presses us to consider such a falling away from the good in terms of those things that cause disconnect between the source of the good and the receiver precisely *as* a receiver of the gift. It is in this Thomistic, gift-centered context that we can use the term 'ingratitude' in our account of violence to indicate a *posture*, rather than an emotion – a posture that separates an individual agent from the principle of their good, with negative effect upon their actions.

• **A second articulation of contra-violent interventions (chapter 6):** An understanding of defective action, and the personal violence it effects, as entailing a fundamental ingratitude (i.e., a failure of 'gratitude-for'), presses us to take up intentional practices of 'gratitude-to' as interventions to help re-align us as receivers of the good and reestablish our orientation to human flourishing. Thomas's account, read with an eye for these themes, provides a plentiful vision of gratitude that can be interpreted and applied as a way of life, rather than in the limited sense of the proper response to certain circumstances. Gratitude can, as was seen, serve as the animating spirit of the activities of *admiratio*, *clarificatio* and *convenientia*. Based on its potential for aligning and vitalizing the individual's relation to the good that is their principle, gratitude can be taken to be a contra-violent orientation, and we can articulate the following as contra-violent interventions:

> Language of gratitude toward the divine (or, as if toward the divine[940]) should be expressed in terms of concrete, contingent particulars – i.e., indicative of the experience of divine outpouring of the good within the concrete contexts of human life.

> Individuals can establish charity-informed rituals of moral memory, whether interior (as acts of holding kindnesses bestowed in the mind), or exterior (as concrete acts of virtue toward other persons) – rituals that function to awaken the soul to the debt of good that we owe for every aspect of our being.

> In any concrete human encounter, especially those in which the other is perplexing to you, pay attention to where the excess of meaning is, and treat it as gift – i.e., as a graced opportunity for your soul to be expanded by the good.

The contra-violent work of the thesis comes together in the notion of *intelligibility*. Most simply, in terms of our inquiry and its goals, this term indicates an orientation to another person (or, indeed, to oneself) as an intelligible subject in their own right and as one whose acts of knowing and loving, and their own view of the world, provide (or at least *can* provide) a meaningful explanation for their activity and way of being in the world. The importance of this aspect of human existence to human flourishing lies behind the 'violent' problems of estrangement, alienation, and defective action. Its significance also serves to animate the interventions we have envisioned to counter these problems and to foster health and flourishing in human lives and relationships. In the view of this thesis, this vision of human intelligibility brings along with it an ethical imperative – a veritable obligation to attend to and to value, perhaps even to cherish, the truth-telling self-narratives of the individual people in the world around us. Of course, 'intelligible' is not identical with 'joyful.' A person's narrative may, and likely will, entail pain, anger, confusion, or regret. It may be troubled and dark. It may be troubl*ing* for the hearer to encounter, or even hurtful. As James Olthuis has observed, however,

[940] This is a framing of spiritual exercise such as the thesis is proposing that a non-Christian can engage, i.e., an encounter with religious thought that has concrete philosophical import: treat the other as if sacred, just as Christians claim they are required to treat their God.

the life of human openness to oneself and to the other is "the beautiful risk."[941] It is to be hoped that the understanding of intelligibility that we have worked to establish, justify, and illumine in this project could be fruitfully taken up in further inquiries of many kinds into human flourishing.

[941] James H. Olthuis, *The Beautiful Risk: A New Psychology of Loving and Being Loved* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).