

THOMAS AQUINAS AND ISLAM

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The work of Thomas Aquinas may be distinguished from that of many of his contemporaries by his attention to the writings of Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), a Jew, and Ibn Sina [Avicenna] (980–1037), a Muslim. His contemporaries, especially in Paris, were responsive to the work of another Muslim, Ibn Rushd [Averroës] (1126–1198), for his rendition of the philosophical achievements of Aristotle, but Aquinas' relation to Averroës and to those who took their lead from him was far more ambivalent. Aquinas respected "Rabbi Moses" and Avicenna as fellow travelers in an arduous intellectual attempt to reconcile the horizons of philosophers of ancient Greece, notably Aristotle, with those reflecting a revelation originating in ancient Israel, articulated initially in the divinely inspired writings of Moses. So while Aquinas would consult "the commentator" [Averroës] on matters of interpretation of the texts of Aristotle, that very aphorism suggests the limits of his reliance on the philosophical writings of Averroës, the *qadi* from Cordova. With Maimonides and Avicenna his relationship was more akin to that among interlocutors, and especially so with "Rabbi Moses", whose extended dialectical conversations with his student Joseph in his *Guide of the Perplexed* closely matched Aquinas' own project: that of using philosophical inquiry to articulate one's received faith, and in the process extending the horizons of that inquiry to include topics unsuspected by those bereft of divine revelation.

We may wonder at Aquinas' welcoming assistance from Jewish and Muslim quarters, especially when we reflect on the character of his times: the popular response to the call to arms of the crusades as well as a nearly universal impression on the part of Christians that the new covenant had effectively eclipsed the old. Aquinas may have shared these sentiments, for all we know, yet his overriding concern in reaching out to other thinkers was

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always to learn from them in his search for the truth of the matters at hand. In this respect, he epitomized the medieval respect for learning with its conviction that "truth was where one found it". So he was more inclined to examine the arguments of thinkers than their faith, trusting in the image of the creator in us all to search out those traces of the divine handiwork, a theological premise that will prove useful in guiding our explorations into Aquinas' reliance on Islamic thinkers, and better than attributing to him an ecumenical or interfaith perspective *avant la lettre*. Yet it would not be untoward for us to note how other thinkers attempting to employ the inherited philosophy to elaborate their faith-perspective were for that very reason helpful to Aquinas in his vocational task.

It is worth speculating whether the perspective of Aquinas and his contemporaries was not less Eurocentric than our own. What we call "the west" was indeed geopolitically surrounded by Islam, which sat astride the lucrative trade routes to "the east". Moreover, the cultural heritage embodied in notable achievements in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and well as the logical, philosophical commentary, translation, and original work in metaphysics begun in tenth-century Baghdad, represented a legacy coveted by western medieval thinkers.¹ Marshall Hodgson has called the culture that informed this epoch and extended from India to Andalusia "the Islamicate", intending thereby to include within its scope Jewish thinkers like Maimonides who enjoyed the protected status of *dhimmi* and contributed to Muslim civilization.² Christians like John of Damascus enjoyed a similar status, reserved by Qur'anic authority for "people of the book", yet the divisions in Christendom saw to it that thinkers in Paris were better acquainted with Muslim and Jewish thinkers than with their co-religionist in Islamic regions.

Aquinas' own geographic and social origins could well have predisposed him to a closer relationship with thinkers representative of the Islamicate than his contemporaries could be presumed to have had, in Paris at least. For his provenance from Aquino in the region of Naples, itself part of the kingdom of Sicily, reflected a face of Europe turned to the Islamicate, as evidenced in the first translations commissioned from Arabic: "Latin, Muslim, and Jewish culture mingled freely in Sicily in a unique way that was peculiarly Sicilian."³ Moreover, in his later years, when his Dominican province asked him to direct a theological *studium*, Aquinas expressly chose Naples (over Rome or Orvieto) for its location, and that for intellectual reasons: "there was a vitality about Naples that was absent from Rome or any other city in the Roman province".⁴ So it might be surmised that these dimensions of his own personal history led him to be more open to thinkers from the Islamicate than his co-workers from Cologne or Paris might have been. In any case, the number and centrality of the citations from Avicenna and Moses Maimonides leave no doubt as to their place in his intellectual development. By styling that place as one of interlocutor, I have tried to finesse

the vague historical category of *influence* in favor of one more familiar to philosophers and theologians of every age, and especially those consciously working in a tradition of inquiry, who treasure what they learn as a result of contending with their predecessors' arguments, even when their interlocutors lie beyond the reach of actual conversation.

Towards an Interfaith, Intercultural Environment

The mentoring of Georges Anawati, O.P., at the Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales in Cairo, with the assistance of the Dominican host community there, succeeded in opening my perspectives to see how much Aquinas' classical synthesis of Christian philosophical theology was already an interfaith achievement.⁵ Indeed, were it not for the "Eurocentric" perspectives of western medieval scholarship, his numerous and strategic citations of "Rabbi Moses" Maimonides, of Avicenna [Ibn Sina] and of "the Commentator" Averroës [Ibn Rushd] should have suggested that conclusion long ago. For me, the privilege of working in the foyer created by scholars in Cairo may have offered the Mediterranean perspective needed to appreciate the way in which Aquinas' intellectual inquiry bridged the divide initially posed by alien faiths, allowing him to discover and exploit cognate strategies for explicating shared perspectives on creation, providence, and often parallel trajectories towards the goal of human fulfillment. Louis Gardet has shown how Aquinas' debt to the Islamic thinkers whom he knew directly lay largely in the area of conceptual strategies: "Rather than an encounter between Christian and Islamic worlds, the work of Thomas Aquinas bears witness to an encounter between Christian thought and an Islamic philosophy of Hellenistic inspiration, with a few forays into *kalâm*."⁶ Yet it took the extensive work of Louis Gardet and Georges Anawati, epitomized in their ground-breaking *Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane* in 1948 to call our attention to the ease with which Aquinas negotiated the thought world of Islam.⁷

Besides the major philosophers noted, Aquinas' main source for Islamic religious thought was Moses Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, from which he profited in Latin translation.⁸ So it seems he knew next to nothing about the relation between "the philosophers" [*falâsifa*] and the religious thinkers whom we identify with *kalâm* (or "dialectical theology") and whom Aquinas' translations led him to classify as "those speaking [*kalam*] with regard to Islamic law" [*loquentes in lege Maurorum*]. He cited them mainly as witnesses for a view of the created universe which removed any authentic causality from it, and so our having the requisite knowledge of natural things by that *scientia* which Aquinas (following Aristotle) demanded. And since Aquinas' primary goal was to show how *theologia* could be a *scientia* within the perspective afforded by a creator, a conclusion of that sort was clearly to be avoided. The philosophers would also require correction in the direction of

free creation of the universe, yet Aquinas had no inclination to identify their works with Islamic teaching, even though he had no access to al-Ghazali's critique of them nor to Averroës' rejoinder. This strengthens Gardet's contention that his was not a cultural dialogue; he never attempted to use his interlocutors to explore their Islamic background, but rather regarded them as fellow inquirers into issues metaphysical and theological. What may astound us is the way his ease of access to their works and their conceptual strategies combined with an apparent insouciance regarding the faith tradition which those same works should invariably manifest. Yet that would be quite understandable were he to regard their faith as utterly alien, yet recognize their stellar intellectual capacities for what they were: a common humanity and intellectual acumen would unite what an alien faith could easily divide.

What seemed to have given Aquinas such access to the works of thinkers from the Islamicate, including Maimonides, was their synchrony regarding the oneness of God. This primordial revelation of the Hebrew scriptures and the Qur'an crowns Aquinas' presentation of the doctrine of God in the initial section of his *Summa Theologiae*, where the apparently unsurprising query—whether God is one? (1.11)—caps the eight previous questions detailing how we might use our intellectual tools to identify God uniquely. As the placement of this question, together with its internal development, reveals, it is asking much more than whether there be but one god. The “oneness of God” elaborated there is closer to what the rabbis and imams celebrate as the signal revelation of God to Moses and to Muhammad, respectively. Moreover, the presence of Jews and Muslims to Aquinas' consciousness may well have directed him to accentuate the oneness of the divinity at the outset of the *Summa* which he constructed for purposes of improved pedagogy. An additional motivation, closer to prevailing Dominican concerns, would have been the specter of Manichean dualism stemming from the mission against Albigensians which had fairly defined Dominic's earliest preaching.⁹ With regard to the presence of Judaism and Islam, however, it is worth reminding ourselves that the novel revelation of Islam only reinforced the original Jewish insistence that God is one, which had figured trenchantly in the early elaboration of Christian doctrine. Why else can we surmise that it took four centuries to clarify the central teaching of Christianity about Jesus (Chalcedon, 451) out of which a full-blown trinitarian doctrine emerged?¹⁰ In this respect, then, Aquinas could be said to be beginning at the beginning when he sets out to underscore the oneness of God in the opening questions of the *Summa*. Yet that strategy also served to link his treatment with the tenet of faith central to both Jews and Muslims, allowing him to appreciate the contributions of a Maimonides or an Ibn Sina as confirming an inquiry shared.

As Louis Gardet observed, however, it was primarily in the domain of conceptual strategies that Aquinas mined his Islamic predecessors. Yet as he did

with Aristotle, we shall find him appropriating them to his use, where his use is more determined by the perspectives of scripture and Catholic teaching than simple philosophical coherence. For while Aquinas was scrupulous about proper argument—"lest weak arguments seem to give plausibility to the other side of the debate"—his sensitivity to what Robert Sokolowski has dubbed "the distinction" of creator from creation dominated his project of showing how *theologia* could be a *scientia* within the perspective afforded by a creator.¹¹ For whereas Plato had suggested some facsimile of a creator, Aristotle had presumed an eternal universe in a way that ruled out any question of origins. So the work of Moses Maimonides would prove especially fruitful, while that of Avicenna required extensive modification, though his central distinction between *essence* and *existence* would prove utterly strategic, as we shall see.¹²

Resolving a Standing Aporia of Aristotle

The most complete map of these conceptual alternations has been provided by Edward Booth, in his *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Writers*.¹³ The *aporia* in question can be made evident quite easily: Aristotle insisted that the existing individual offered the paradigm for substance—that *which is*, yet every time we characterize a substance we do so by using a formula. The structure of that formula (or definition) is meant to display the matter-form composition of substance, yet in such a way as to express the species and not the individual. So individuals end up being nothing more than instantiations of species, and the primacy of "first substance" gives way to what seems to be the subject of any discourse: "second substance". Tracing this recurrent *aporia* through the subsequent commentary tradition yields little progress in resolving it, and even offers some explanation why the earliest interpretation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* tended in a Neoplatonic direction. Indeed, subsequent presentations of portions of Plotinus' *Enneads* as the "Theology of Aristotle", and of selections from Proclus as the *Liber de causis* (thought by many to represent a development of Aristotle), confirmed that direction.¹⁴ One had to wait until the sixth century for John Philoponus to recover something of the more properly Aristotelian synthesis of Alexander of Aphrodisia (late second century), yet the urge to syncretism favored the earlier Neoplatonic readings into the golden age of Islamic philosophers. Al-Kindi, as a believer, "found the categories of Proclus, modified in a monotheistic sense, very suited to express his religious sense of dependence of the world on God" (p. 90), while al-Farabi went on to develop the emanation scheme which furnished the hallmark of classical Islamic philosophy.

Yet the translation of Aristotelian texts by the early thirteenth century led medieval thinkers like Albert to grapple directly with that *aporia*. He resolved it in a "logico-emanationist" direction, however, relying on Boethius' "iden-

tification of universal with individual" (p. 175) to develop "structures [which] seemed to make the ultimate individual, logically (and emanationally) conceived, identical with the individual, physically conceived" (p. 192). A resolution of this sort effectively turned "*Metaphysics* VII, which is really a record of metaphysical uncertainty, [into] a subject for systematic and rational exposition" (pp. 195–196). So with regard to the recurring *aporia*, one would have to class Albert with the commentators, seeking to resolve a dialectically fruitful tension into a logically acceptable teaching. Booth credits pseudo-Dionysius' treatise on the *Divine Names*, which he had studied "attentively" with Albert, with directing Aquinas away from Albert by showing that "*esse* could not be limited to a single radiation or formality amongst many from the divine first cause" (p. 204). His final chapter recounts how Aquinas attained "the superior viewpoint of *esse*, [and so was] capable of appreciating the individual according to any and every aspect, [thereby] liberating Aristotelian ontology from is aporetic hesitance" (p. 263). Which is to say that Aquinas only succeeded in resolving the original *aporia* of individual/formula for substance by raising the entire discussion to a new level: the presence of the One as creator, bestowing *esse* to each individual, retained proper Aristotelian respect for formal structures while offering such immediacy to the creator/creature relation that the status of individuals as paradigms for substance was clearly vindicated.

A recent masterful study, *Substantiality and Participation in Thomas Aquinas*, by Rudi teVelde, shows how pseudo-Dionysius' way of employing the language of *esse* allowed Aquinas to move beyond the accepted Platonic view of a plurality of forms by stipulating that "the perfection of being [*esse*] virtually includes every other perfection".¹⁵ This form of analysis could maintain "that God possesses the fullness of perfection in virtue of his being alone" (p. 256), since *esse* could not be a form like other forms, and identifying God's as *esse subsistens* not only distinguishes the creator from everything else (that is, all creatures), but shows why such a one might freely allow its essence to be participated in its act of creating. Only God can create, Aquinas insists, for "producing existence absolutely, not merely of this thing or of that sort of thing, belongs to the meaning of creation. . . . [And] among all effects the most universal is existence itself, which should accordingly be the proper effect of the most universal cause, which is God" (*ST* 1.45.5). The atmosphere here is thoroughly Neoplatonic, though appropriately "corrected", as we have seen, by Dionysius. So the final resolution of Aristotle's standing *aporia*, itself a legacy from his own formation under Plato, will require an adroit set of Platonic strategies, notably an account of creation by way of *esse* which will bring *participation* as its inevitable corollary. Now it will be an Islamic transformation of Proclus, translated from Arabic into Latin as the *Liber de Causis*, which will offer Aquinas the strategies required to articulate the creator as *cause of being*.

Critical Assistance in Articulating a Cause of Being

As his commentary on this seminal text (which he recognized to be an Islamic adaptation of Proclus) displays, however, the Neoplatonic scheme it followed and propagated could hardly on the face of it expound a free creator. So Aquinas' re-directing of the Arabic text, *Kitâb al-khaîr* [*Book of the Pure Good*], will prove to be as significant (or more) as the particular recasting of Proclus by the anonymous Muslim writer. Yet the fact remains that Aquinas did fasten on this work as key to his endeavor to incorporate a free creator into the Hellenic heritage, just as he insisted on employing the term "emanation" for creation, even after removing and gutting the scheme of necessary emanation enthusiastically adopted by the Islamic thinkers, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, ostensibly to articulate the revelation of a unitary creator of the universe. That same scheme, trenchantly attacked by al-Ghazali and Moses Maimonides in the name of revelation as impugning a free creator and so rendering revelation itself incredible, was rejected by Aquinas for mediating the act of creation.¹⁶ So another way to cast our net is to ask why Aquinas still felt that *emanation* offered the best metaphor for the *sui generis* activity of creation, even of a free creator.

The need for a fresh perspective becomes evident once we remind ourselves that Aquinas realized full well that none of Aristotle's four causes could describe the act of creating, notwithstanding his celebratory identification of Aristotle's *prime mover* with the liturgical formula: "*quod est Deus per omnia saecula saeculorum*" (closing his commentary on the *Physics*). Indeed, his occasional use of "efficient cause" to identify the creator of all is manifestly "loose" or "improper", and only intended to contrast this causality with others even less apt. For Aristotle's *efficient cause* always presupposes a subject upon which to work. So Aquinas needed a conception of *causality* not available from Aristotle, yet intimated (as we shall see) in the *Liber de causis*; indeed, a *cause-of-being*. Furthermore, one of the crucial arguments opposing free creation to necessary emanation had been that the axiomatic model used to propose it (and make it *necessary*) failed to distinguish the originator from all that originated from it, since an axiom differs from other premises only by its prominent place in the deductive order. Yet "the distinction" of creator from creation proves notoriously difficult to articulate, as Robert Sokolowski has shown so ably in his *God of Faith and Reason*.¹⁷ Indeed, customary western attempts to separate creatures from the creator falsify the relation as effectively as some "eastern" attempts to collapse them. Fear of pantheism has moved western thinkers to parse the *distinction* as a *separation*, yet I shall argue that this strategy has diluted the specific assertions of Jewish-Christian-Muslim faith in a creator, so demoting the creator to "the biggest things around" and promoting a secular ethos.¹⁸

Yet affirming that shared faith in a free creator will entail philosophical effort, and watching Aquinas adapt the *Liber de causis* to that end might encourage us to similar efforts. Allow me first to identify those who have helped me to the point of appreciating what the *Liber de causis* must have meant for Aquinas, and how we might be enabled to make similar intellectual moves ourselves. I have already mentioned Sokolowski's careful and extended inquiry into "the distinction" of creator from creation, to articulate its *sui generis* character. A trenchant remark by Bernard McGinn at our conference on "God and Creation" (in which Sokolowski participated) alerted me to the partial and polemical way in which I was then (1989) opposing free creation to emanation, while Sara Grant's exploring Shankara's use of nonduality to probe "the distinction" which Aquinas proposed began to dispel my fears of pantheism.¹⁹ Still more recently, and doubtless in conjunction with John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock's "radically orthodox" proposals for reading the Christian tradition (including Aquinas), I have become fascinated with two thinkers thus far relatively marginal to philosophical theology: Scottus Eriugena and Meister Eckhart.²⁰ Their affinity with Neoplatonic vehicles of thought to help articulate "the distinction" *not* as a *separation* has led me to find them to be better guides to what Aquinas was trying to articulate in a "cause-of-being" (and hence "the distinction") than what has often passed as canonical Thomist interpretation. And the inquiry into Aquinas' use of the *Liber de causis* will, I hope, indicate why this is the case.

Let us begin by posing a question which I have hitherto been content simply to deconstruct: how is it that the One, whose proper effect is things' very being, effects that? Given the precision of Aquinas—there can be no *process* whereby things come to be—it is easy to deconstruct: there is no *how*; coming to be takes no time, creation involves no *change* (in Aristotle's sense) from one thing to another, requiring a substratum. But is there then no way at all to articulate what happens in the infinite shift from nothing to something? We could, as I have, simply reiterate Aquinas' insistence that the "proper effect of a creator is the to-be of things", but that tells us very little indeed; and should we parse it as "bestowing being on things", that way of speaking (we shall see) falsifies the relation as well. Here is where the *Liber de causis*, as Aquinas adapts it, may well lend a hand: think of creating as an ordering—a salient feature of the emanation scheme, for things come to be according to their kind, whether we are following Genesis or Aristotle! *Existing*, of course, is not a kind, but whatever is, is inanimate, animate, or intelligent, in the sense that something may simply exist, or exist as a living being, or as an understanding being. Now this fact of categorization (or levels of *formal cause* [Aristotle]) elicits two opposing pictures. One is additive: being + self-motion + intentional; and hence subtractive as well: taking away intelligence will yield vegetative, removing that yields simple inanimate being. The other retains the sense of modes of existing, regarding them as ascend-

ing levels as well, but relates these levels not additively but virtually. That is, the being of inanimate things is regarded as restricted, those capable of growth and/or of self-motion more ample, and those also endowed with understanding and intention yet more fully realizing the reaches of being.

Both pictures are present in the *Liber de causis* as well as in Aquinas, yet the effort to incorporate a free creator into the scheme of categorization will inevitably privilege the *virtual* picture. The tension surfaces quite dramatically (for those who can unveil drama in ontology!) when Aquinas proposes to identify the creator God uniquely as the One whose very essence is to-be. This succinct formula offers *simpleness* as the “formal feature” securing “the distinction” by singling out God in the only way possible—without turning God into god, the “biggest thing around”, and so effectively eclipsing God’s divinity as well as “the distinction”.²¹ Yet we must meet the *prima facie* objection that what is simple is ontologically “lower” than what is composed or complex, much as animate things are more complex than inanimate. He does this by reversing the picture itself, proposing that the One whose essence is to-be (and so can cause all else to be) should not be conceived as “mere being” but as the fullness of being, so that *simpleness* here denotes plenitude rather than a lack.²²

But how can we execute such an about-face? What makes one see (as in Wittgenstein’s duck/rabbit example) that the virtual picture of levels of being must take precedence over the additive? I suspect that the effort to incorporate and properly articulate a creator into one’s metaphysics will decide it, but there are supporting arguments as well. The most telling, I believe, is one derived from Aristotle’s argument to the unity of substantial forms, captured in the maxim: the being of living things is to live.²³ Indeed, contrary to the *prima facie* sense of the *Liber de causis*, the levels of being are not separable or subtractible. Take away *life* from a living thing and *it* remains inanimate for a very short while; indeed, what is left begins to decompose into elements and is soon no longer identifiable as one thing. This fact supports the virtual picture: being expresses itself in different ways. Moreover, if “higher levels” were simply added, what would make the resultant being one sort of thing? This is what Aristotle meant by the “unity of substantial form”. Moreover, a closer reading of the *Liber de causis* reveals just such a picture. The bestowal of being [*esse*] by the first cause is an orderly bestowal, yielding an inherent order structuring each existing thing so that higher levels are implicit in lower. Indeed, were this not the case, were being not an abundant source expressing itself in different ways, then *existing* would have to be pictured (as many do) as something added to a potential thing, as in “actualizing a possible state of affairs”. But that picture is doubly redundant, for it presumes (1) “potential things”, that is, an order or structure present before something exists; and (2) that *existing* is a feature (or “accident”) which can be added to a non-existing “thing”. These two

incoherencies are in fact one, but it is instructive to see how *existing* must be construed as a feature once one adopts “possible things”.

Ironically enough, so-called “existential” readings of Aquinas, by their description of *esse* as “act of existing”, can unwittingly turn *esse* [to-be] into a feature. It is true, of course, that by identifying *esse* as *act* Aquinas expressly intended to eliminate that move, suggested by Avicenna’s terminology of *existing* as an “accident [‘*arad*]”. Yet his own expression of “receiving *esse*” could subvert his own intentions as well.²⁴ So how can we escape these traps? The *Liber de causis* offers a way: to see creation as the orderly bestowal of things’ being, which adopts the metaphor of *emanation* and sees *existing* as a participation in being by virtue of the One whose very essence is to-be, and so alone can make things participate in being. And as a way of spelling out the metaphor of *participation*, we are invited to see it as an order inherent in each thing. So *existing* is no more something *added* to a thing than learning is something acquired, like a degree after one’s name. The degree is acquired, of course, as a step in credentialing, but *learning* (as Socrates insisted) is really *recollection*, as we utilize others to hone the faculties already present in our being intentional persons. What comes with our mode of being is an ordered set of capacities, which stand to be perfected and need help to do so, but when perfected are so from within. Moreover, these capacities in intentional beings *desire* their perfection, that is (in *Liber de causis* terms) they are so shaped from within as to strive to return to their proper good, their source. Such is the power of a creation-centered picture of *being*: *virtual* (not additive), and *directional* towards its source. This picture is completed in fully intentional (or free) agents, whose freedom can be expressed as a “hunger for the good” and so best seen as a response rather than an initiative.²⁵ Such a picture underscores the antinomies which Socrates had already exposed in the alternative view of freedom as “doing what I want to do”, which can so easily mean slavery to multiple desires; and also express Nietzsche’s model of self-creation as exactly what one must undertake without a creator.

The fullness of the act of existing is displayed in its order, much as the efficacy of any of our actions is assured by the ordering it displays towards its goal. We focus authentically, not by eliminating all but one feature, but by aligning all the relevant features in a proper order, so that the effect is orchestrated. Notice that we cannot escape metaphors here, for there is no given ordering. Revelation assists by allowing us to name “the Good”. And further by providing us with some strategies of ordering—the Torah, the example of Jesus, the Qur’an—yet here again, discernment is always needed, and traditions can subvert as well as elaborate a given revelation or way. The up-pattern derives from creation, as conceived by the *Liber de causis*: orderly emanation from the One so that the intentional portion of creation desires to return to its source. Moreover, such an order is not imposed but inherent, as *existing* is not an added feature but an inherent gift. This is seen most fully,

according to Aquinas, when we can appreciate this source as freely bestowing what it truly is. That is, its manner of being is triune, so that in creating, it freely communicates the manner in which it naturally communicates.²⁶

Before concluding this elucidation of creator as “cause of being”, let us return to the original question: how is it that the One, whose proper effect is things’ very being, effects that? The “first cause infuses all things with a single infusion, for it infuses things under the aspect [*sub rationem*] of the good” (123 [110]). Aquinas concurs, reminding us that it had already been shown that “the first cause acts through its being, . . . hence it does not act through any additional relation or disposition through which it would be adapted to and mixed with things” (123–124 [111]). Moreover, “because the first cause acts through its being, it must rule things in one manner, for it rules things according to the way it acts” (134 [111]). The following Proposition 21 links this “sufficiency of God to rule” (125 [112]) with divine simplicity: “since God is simple in the first and greatest degree as having his whole goodness in a oneness that is most perfect” (126 [113]). Hence Proposition 23 can assert: “what is essentially act and goodness, namely, God, essentially and originally communicates his goodness to things” (1342 [118]). With such a One there can be no anxiety about “control”; indeed, the simile which the proposition on divine rule elicits is that “it is proper for a ruler to lead those that are ruled to their appropriate end, which is the good” (*ibid.*). For to “infuse things under the aspect of the good” is precisely to bring all things to be in a certain order, inherent in their very existing, so there is nothing “external” about divine providence, no imposition—neither “inasmuch as it establishes things, which is called creation; [nor] inasmuch as it rules things already established” (137 [122]). Indeed, the initial diversity comes from the first cause, who “produces the diverse grades of things for the completion of the universe. But in the action of ruling, . . . the diversity of reception is according to the diversity of the recipients” (137 [123]). Yet since the original order comes from the One, the One in ruling will “effortlessly” adapt itself to the order established in creating. Another way of putting all this, and one which should dissolve most conundra regarding “divine action”, is to remind oneself that the creator, in acting, acts always as creator; and this proposition elucidates Aquinas’ contention that *creating* and *conserving* are the same action, differing only in that conserving presupposes things present.

Yet since the manner of that action will ever escape us, for its very simplicity belies any *manner* at all—no “relation or disposition”, the best we can do is to remind ourselves that it ever acts by constituting the order which inheres in each existing thing, in the measure that it is. (And since essence measures *esse*, it is pointless to oppose essence to existing in things that are.) Yet since “order” is a consummately analogous term, we can never be sure we have detected the originating divine order in things, though our conviction that there is one, inscribed in their very being and our intentional atti-

tudes towards them, will continue to fuel our inquiry. Crude classifications—inanimate, animate, intentional—can be supplemented by refined mathematical structures and symmetries (as in DNA), yet each stage of analytic tool will be serving our innate desire to unveil the activity present in these infused “goodnesses” (130 [116]) which constitute our universe. And to grasp something of that constitutive ordering is to come closer to its sources, “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 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” (138 [123]). All is not light or delight, of course, because in truth we cannot, ourselves, hope to *know* “the first cause and the infusion of goodness”. Indeed, “the most important thing we can know about the first cause is that it surpasses all our knowledge and power of expression” (46 [43]), for “our intellect can grasp only that which has a quiddity participating in ‘to-be’ [while] the quiddity of God is ‘to-be itself’” (52 [17]). Indeed, that is why Aquinas can concur that “the first cause is above being inasmuch as it is itself infinite ‘to-be’” (51 [47]). Yet since “what belongs to higher things are present in lower things according to some kind of participation” (30 [17]), we can be said to share, as beings, in this inaccessible One.

Reflecting on Aquinas’ particular task, we can fairly say that he was concerned to show how *theologia* could be a *scientia*—with neither of those terms translatable into their current modern language cognates. To accomplish this task he received help from thinkers in the Jewish and Muslim traditions: from Maimonides, the very strategy itself; and from the *Liber de causis*, a philosophical focus on faith in divine unity [*tawhîd*]. Yet as we have noted, he managed as well to exploit the resources of his own tradition, notably in assimilating creation to processions within a triune God. We are placed to appreciate and to develop other features of his thought, as Eckhart did, underscoring the *sui generis* relation which creation is, and search for metaphors to elucidate it, like *nonduality*. In this way, we can use his subtle appropriation of the *Liber de causis* to carry out similar adaptations of our own. For me, this has meant coming full circle to appreciate the mode of reflection enshrined in *emanation* to illuminate the uniqueness of the creation-relation, in full realization that we shall never adequately articulate it. Yet we can reach for metaphors, as Aquinas did in appropriating the *Liber de causis*, or as Sara Grant did in expounding Shankara’s *nonduality*, in a vein reminiscent of Meister Eckhart. And should some be put off by the apparently disembodied “intellectuality” of all this, they need only recall Pierre Hadot’s reminders that such rarified modes of thought can only be executed in a milieu shaped by sustained and rigorous “spiritual exercises”.²⁷ Such is the inherent *telos* of philosophical theology, as it strains, in the persons of its practitioners, to align itself with the goodnesses infused in things, the divinely ordained order of being.

Cultural Exchange Enriching Conceptual Strategies

In the wake of John Paul II's exploratory encyclical *Fides et ratio* (1998), one of my confreres, then serving as rector of a Catholic seminary in Africa, was invited to Rome for a global consultation on the complex relations between faith and reason. His African perspective emboldened him to add culture to the diptych to form the triad: reason, culture, and faith. When I heard this, I was initially impressed by his unwitting insertion of Charles Sanders Peirce into the discussion: any polarity is ever in danger of becoming just that, so a third will invariably be needed. Beyond that general recommendation, however, these observations regarding Aquinas' extraordinarily fruitful use of conceptual strategies adapted from Islamic inquiries confirms his recommendation. For despite his frequentation of Paris as a venue for teaching and scholarship, Aquinas' Mediterranean roots drew him to encounter "an Islamic philosophy of Hellenistic inspiration", as Louis Gardet has put it, to determine how much of that might be put at the service of Christian thought in general as well as his specific task of showing how *theologia* could be a *scientia*. It was cultural difference which fertilized his prescient metaphysical elaboration of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith in a free creator—something which each averred but had articulated in different ways. Moreover, it may have been the dominant role which creation must play in Islam that motivated Islamic thinkers to develop this article of faith. For while it can be said that the "coming down" of the Qur'an to humankind via the Prophet parallels the covenant of God with Israel and the incarnation of the Word in Jesus, what the Qur'an asserts—in countless ways—is the origin of all things in the One (God), to the point where their central religious thinker, al-Ghazali, will insist that "the meaning of faith in divine unity [*tawhîd*] is that there is no agent but God most high".²⁸ That is, in the absence of either covenant or incarnation, the creating activity of the one God is central for Islam, though in practice it is the verses [*ayât*] of the Qur'an which alert human beings to recognize the things in this world as signs [*ayât*] of the presence of its creator.

Such features of the Islamic worldview, as Louis Gardet has noted, utterly escaped Aquinas, whose sense of unity-in-difference among human inquirers must nonetheless have encouraged him to adopt and adapt thought-forms which flourished in the world of Islam. We are better placed, of course, to appreciate that world as a culture counterpoised to our own, as we are better informed about the myriad differences. Ironically enough, however, that does not easily translate into our willingness to learn from cultures different from ours—especially when it is a matter of adopting or adapting new conceptual strategies. Yet the touted ideal of pluralism, as well as current attention (in the francophone world) to *difference*, should predispose us to opening to diverse ways of thought and expression, notably in "essentially contested" matters like those germane to philosophical inquiry. Yet the fact

is that “pluralism” is better commended than observed among philosophical practitioners in western academe itself, so what would motivate inquirers who tend to shun difference within a culture to venture beyond it? Nothing short of what Alasdair MacIntyre has called an “epistemological crisis”, which is exactly what Aquinas encountered in the celebrated *aporia* bequeathed from Aristotle.²⁹ Yet the inertia endemic to academic subfields can easily obscure the edges of any epistemological crisis, nor is the inadequacy of current categories to meet the demands of a particular inquiry necessarily evident. One may have a pervasive sense of inadequacy, but until a prescient diagnostician emerges, usually armed with a fresh scheme, these will not be felt as “crises”.

The best contemporary example of this situation is itself controversial: Samuel Huntington’s proposal to analyze international relations by the pregnant metaphor of a “clash of civilizations”. Himself an acknowledged leader in the field of international relations, his initial proposal (in *Foreign Affairs* [1993]) intended to challenge the model of statecraft prevailing in the discipline by introducing cultural factors hitherto considered quite irrelevant for constructing explanatory models. That proved upsetting enough to practitioners of the trade, as distinguished contributors to a subsequent issue of *Foreign Affairs* demonstrated palpable resistance to learning such new languages. Huntington’s arguments for adopting a new paradigm were persuasive enough: religious convictions and other cultural practices have clearly been more effective markers of personal identity than citizenship; social mores a more effective molder of attitudes than laws.³⁰ Yet these will be far less susceptible of quantitative analysis than survey research of stated attitudes. So entire subdisciplines would be challenged for their relevancy should these factors be accepted as relevant. Moreover, Huntington’s own presentation of this fresh paradigm for analysis proved especially faulty in its structure, which predictably imported preoccupations from settled ways of analysis. One could begin with the title, “clash of civilizations”, where the dominance of *clash* bespoke the overriding preoccupations of statecraft politics so accurately summarized by Hegel’s “every state needs an enemy”. Moreover, “civilizations” appeared on stage with many of the trappings of states: identifiable entities with geographical borders, without a hint of the porous and shifting character of cultural constructions. All of this, of course, is perfectly understandable, as those who attempt to offer a fresh paradigm for inquiry will inevitably exhibit traces of their settled methods.

More telling, however have been the examples offered to show how this new analysis might proceed, where countless *obiter dicta* presumed a superior evaluation of “western civilization”, with its forms of thought and analysis, redolent of nineteenth-century colonizing attitudes—“Orientalism” *redivivus*. Indeed, Edward Said’s screed describing those manners of presenting and analyzing others which he collated to exhibit a set of features “Orientalism” continues to pose an articulate challenge to anyone seeking

to understand someone or something different. However starkly and polemically his depictions may be drawn, it is difficult at once to escape their point or to negotiate successfully so formidable a task.³¹ Moreover, successful passage seems notably blocked by political and economic hegemony. Besides the relative absence of motivation on the part of “haves” to come to know “have-nots”—as these conventional descriptors show all too well, everything conspires for the “haves” to present themselves as the veritable paradigm of human being. Bernard Lewis’ own screed, composed in response to 11 September 2001—*What Went Wrong?*—admits of two antithetical readings: with us? or with them?—but the presumptions operative in the book’s “argument” nowhere suggest the first option.³² Something must have gone wrong with them! The direction of his polemic utterly obscures the fact that western liberal society appears to have reached at least an “epistemological crisis”, as public space recedes more and more, income disparity becomes obscene, and raising children with integrity more daunting than ever. Yet jeremiads of this sort are common coin to self-styled radicals and conservatives alike.

So it might behoove western thinkers to attend to an alternative like the one proposed by President Mohammad Khatami of Iran in addressing the United Nations General Assembly on 21 September 1998, where he called for a “dialogue among civilizations”. Admittedly presented as a counter-response to Huntington, the journal *Global Dialogue* devoted its Winter 2001 issue to the subject, inviting participants from Europe, America, and central as well as west Asia. They struggle with how one may try to understand others in a way that does not obliterate their difference, and the results manifest how the effort demands that we leave the presumed certainties of our native perspective to solicit assistance from those same others in our inquiry. Epistemological issues abound: can we simply presume the analytic categories we usually employ to be adequate to understanding realities that systematically elude our considerations? Or must we rather presume that anything which eludes our considerations cannot be real, so that the first option cannot be a real one? Put this starkly, which is a philosopher’s wont, it would be difficult to accept either horn of the dilemma. The way out, of course, is to be open—as cultures have ever been, though not without protest—to adopting and adapting unfamiliar forms of thought and analysis to meet a situation that keeps presenting itself as intractable.

In a characteristically penetrating essay in this issue of *Global Dialogue*, Fred Dallmayr uses Hans-Georg Gadamer to delineate the sort of epistemological strategies needed for “civilisational dialogue”.³³ In the process he notes how much western civilization owes to his Graeco-Roman and to its Judeo-Christian components, anticipating Remi Brague’s recent twist on that dual legacy, detailing its refraction through Rome: *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*.³⁴ So interculturality seems rather to be the norm than the exception. Yet where the cultures are in fact in conflict, carrying it off will

require, as Chaim and Rivka Gordon have underscored, actively confronting the injustice which dominant cultures continue to visit on others, and which short-circuit the very dialogue which Khatami counsels.³⁵ Yet confrontation will be fruitless if it leads by accusation; it must take the form of a "joint quest for justice". Only then can there be a "genuine dialogue between persons from different spiritual heritages [that] can add substantially to the breadth and depth of the mode of existence of those involved in dialogue".³⁶ These seasoned observations of Chaim and Rivka Gordon reveal the underside of our "ecumenical" age, where we can find ourselves carrying on a "dialogue" abstracted from the devastating effects wrought in the name of our respective religious faiths. It is this specific form of "bad faith" which their directions mean to expose and re-direct. Yet as we mentioned at the outset, the times in which Aquinas lived were more characterized by separation and relative ignorance of one another's faith-life. The single exception reflects the situation of Christians in Islamic lands, and is reflected in his extended response to a query by the "Cantor of Antioch" to respond to standard Muslim objections to Christian doctrine.

Antioch, like Andalusia, sported regular disputations between Muslims and Christian interlocutors, which itself offers a fascinating perspective on Islamic culture. Yet Aquinas' response—"Reasons for the Faith against Muslim Objections"—shows little or no appetite for disputation, but simply takes the opportunity to offer a succinct resumé of Christian doctrine regarding those points which the Cantor identifies for him as neuralgic for Muslims: that Christ is the "Son of God", that he was crucified, that Christians eat his body, and that merit must give way to "divine decree" or "predestination".³⁷ Apparently composed in 1264, in the wake of a work designed to give the "reasons for faith," the *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG), Aquinas summarizes much of his treatment there in response to the specific queries of the Cantor. He is not responding directly to a Muslim interlocutor, as he has already professed his ignorance of the particulars of the Muslim faith in the just completed *Summa* (SCG 1.2), but rather trying to equip the Cantor with a set of strategies for an informed response: that is, one which takes the opportunity of the objections to plumb more deeply what we already believe as Christians.³⁸ By adopting this tack, Aquinas shows himself to be responding as we have described his overall strategy with respect to other faiths: we can learn from their questions better ways to elucidate our own set of beliefs. This confirms Bernard Lonergan's assessment of Aquinas' theological *élan*: a continual searching for the truth of matters revealed.³⁹

Concluding Reflections

Ours is a very different world from Aquinas', yet his ability to see the presence of interlocutors from other faiths as a spur to understanding of his own tradition offers us a model which deftly eschews intellectual colonizing, and

displays the way in which every living tradition grows by carefully responding to challenges from without. Yet what must animate that approach is a lively confidence in the truth of one's own tradition, together with the realization that such a truth will continue to outstrip any standing articulation of it. So one seeking the truth of matters revealed will always have something to learn from others; the polar opposite (again from Lonergan) is to *need* certitude. Yet a proper phenomenology of a living religious faith will be able to identify needs of that sort as obstructions to the internal development of the faith itself, exposed so neatly in Kierkegaard's ridiculing of anyone intent on "defending the faith".⁴⁰ We have explored in detail the appropriation which Aquinas made of a set of philosophical strategies transmitted to him by an Islamic rendition of a Neoplatonic text, the *Liber de causis* [*Kitab al Khair Mahd*], as he sought to articulate the faith assertion—central to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike—of a free creator, in properly metaphysical terms as the "cause of being". The deft way in which he adapts this (already adapted) text of Proclus displays how he executed his calling to show that *theologia* could be a *scientia*: not by reducing itself, Procrustean-fashion, into Hellenic categories, but by employing them in a way that respects their logical power yet allows them to illuminate, rather than pretend to explain, matters which will resist explanation in simply human terms.⁴¹ No wonder his synthesis of Christian doctrine, once shown to be the intercultural, interfaith achievement it is, has proven to be normative for subsequent generations as well.

NOTES

- 1 Joel Kraemer *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986).
- 2 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (3 vols.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961).
- 3 James Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1983) p. 15.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 296.
- 5 *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers", in Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 60–84.
- 6 Louis Gardet, "La connaissance que Thomas d'Aquin put avoir du monde islamique", in G. Verbeke and D. Verhelst, eds., *Aquinas and the Problems of His Time* (Leuven University Press/The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), pp. 139–149; citation at p. 149.
- 7 Paris: J. Vrin, 1948, 1970, 1981.
- 8 Two scholars, independently of each other, undertook to translate the *Guide* into Latin soon after its composition: Samuel Ibn Tibbon and Jehudah al-Harizi. Ibn Tibbon checked his work with Maimonides to produce a quite literal rendering, while al-Harizi wrote in a superior style. Most likely Aquinas had access to al-Harizi. See my "Aquinas' Debt to Maimonides", in Ruth Link-Salinger et al. eds., *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), pp. 37–48.
- 9 John Inglis, "Emanation in Historical Context: Aquinas and the Dominican Response to the Cathars", *Dionysius* Vol. 17 (1999), pp. 95–128.

- 10 Thomas Wienandy: *Does God Change?: the Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Press, 1985).
- 11 Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982 and Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995); the reference is to Aquinas, *On the Eternity of the World*, trans. Cyril Vollert (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1964) *ad fin.*
- 12 *Knowing the Unknowable God* (see note 5); "Essence Avicenna and Greek Philosophy", *MIDEO* [= *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales* (Cairo)] Vol. 17 (1986), pp. 53–66.
- 13 Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- 14 See Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the "Theology of Aristotle"* (London: Duckworth, 2003), and the treatment by Cristina d'Ancona Costa in her *La Casa della Sapienza* (Milano: Geurini, 1996).
- 15 Rudi teVelde, *Substantiality and Participation in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), p. 256.
- 16 See my *Knowing the Unknowable God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).
- 17 Robert Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982 and Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).
- 18 See my "Creation, Metaphysics, and Ethics", *Faith and Philosophy* Vol. 18 (2001), pp. 204–221.
- 19 See her study, *Towards an Alternative Theology*, which comprises the Teape lectures given at Cambridge and Bristol in 1989, with the subtitle: "Confessions of a Non-dualist Christian" (Bangalore: Asia Trading Corporation, 1991 and Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).
- 20 See John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), along with the insightful introduction to Eckhart by Deidre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Bernard McGinn's masterful study, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart, the Man from whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: Crossroad, 2001).
- 21 See my *Aquinas: God and Action* (London: Routledge and Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).
- 22 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.3.; see Rudi teVelde, *Substantiality and Participation in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 266–279.
- 23 Aristotle: *De anima*, Bk II, ch. 4, 415b12–13; Aquinas: *Com on De anima*, lib. 2, ch. 7, lines 172–187 (pp. 97–98 of Lenonine); paragraph 319 of the Marietti-Pirota edition.
- 24 See my "Essence and Existence: Avicenna and Greek Philosophy", in *MIDEO* [= *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales* (Cairo)] Vol. 17 (1986), pp. 53–66.
- 25 See my "Freedom and Creation in the Abrahamic Traditions", *International Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 40 (2000), pp. 161–171; and the development by Eleonore Stump, "Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities", in Michael Beatty, ed., *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 254–285; amplified in Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 177–206.
- 26 *ST* 1.32.1.3.
- 27 Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, essays edited by Arnold Davidson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- 28 Al-Ghazali, *Book of Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence*, trans. David Burrell (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2002), p. 42.
- 29 Alasdair MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narratives, and Philosophy of Science", *The Monist* Vol. 60 (1977), pp. 453–472.
- 30 The original article in *Foreign Affairs* (1993), pp. 23–49, was subsequently expanded into a book: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
- 31 *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1978), and see Norman Daniel's equally articulate review: "Edward Said and the Orientalists", in *MIDEO* [= *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales* (Cairo)] Vol. 15 (1982), pp. 211–221.
- 32 Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 33 "A Gadamerian Perspective on Civilisational Dialogue", *Global Dialogue* Vol. 3 (2001), pp. 64–75.

- 34 Translated by Samuel Lester (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2002).
- 35 Haim and Rivka Gordon, eds., *Israel/Palestine: The Quest for Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).
- 36 Haim Gordon, "Lessons in Dialogue: The Israeli-Palestinian Experience", *Global Dialogue* Vol. 3 (2001), pp. 76–83, at pp. 79, 81.
- 37 *De rationibus fidei* (*Opera omnia*, Leonine ed. Vol. 40 B [Romae, 1969]), with Preface by H.-F. Dondaine; English translation by Joseph Kenny, O.P., *Islamocristiana* Vol. 22 (1996), pp. 31–52; French translation by Gilles Emery, O.P., *Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Les raisons de la foi* (Paris: Cerf, 1999).
- 38 For a thorough treatment of the background for Aquinas' observations regarding Islam in SCG 1.6, as they reflect, while sometimes modifying, "habitual themes of the Muslim-Christian polemic", see Simone Van Reit, "La Somme contre Gentiles et la polémique islamo-chrétienne", in *Aquinas and the Problems of His Time* (note 6). In my analysis of *De rationibus fidei*, I have been assisted by a study of Christopher Wells, to appear in a volume of papers from the "Light Conference" in Oxford in 2002.
- 39 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1972).
- 40 Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980): "Now we see how extraordinarily stupid . . . it is to defend Christianity, . . . how it connives even if unconsciously, with offense by making Christianity some poor, miserable thing that in the end has to be rescued by a champion" (87).
- 41 For a detailed literary exploration of this prowess of Aquinas, see Olivier-Thomas Venard, O.P., *Littérature et théologie: Une saison en enfer* Vol. 1: Thomas d'Aquin Poète et Théologien (Geneva: Ad Solem, 2002).