

THOMAS AQUINAS' *DE DEO* SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON HIS THEOLOGICAL METHOD

Modern theologians have criticized Thomas' presentation of trinitarian doctrine in his *Summa Theologiae* because it appears to be a rational demonstration of the Trinity from the one divine essence. Taking their cue from, among other things, the ordering of the *Summa Theologiae* I in which the discussion of God as one (qq. 1-26) precedes the discussion of God as three (qq. 27-43), they contend that Thomas derives the Persons from the essence by means of «Augustinianian psychological speculations».

«At the point of departure of his theory, one meets a unique God, subsisting, possessing a spiritual nature, a perfect God, and having all the characteristics of a 'personal' God, of a divine Person. In order to study the nature of this God, our doctor applied, by way of analogy, the analysis that he has deduced from psychological observations [...] he proclaims the distinction between God speaking and his Word, between God loving and his Love»¹.

Thomas' considerations of the intellectual acts of knowing and loving in God are read as leading to the same well-known quandary in which Anselm found himself². That is, if we attempt to derive the Persons from such acts in God (taken as the divine essence), then we will end up with a multitude of processions since each Person (resulting) will have his own knowledge and love.

«[H]e begins from a human philosophical concept of knowledge and love, and from this concept develops a concept of the word and 'inclination' of love; and now, after having speculatively applied these concepts to the Trinity, he must admit that this application fails, because he has clung to the 'essential' concept of knowledge and love, because a 'personal', 'notional' concept of the word and 'inclination' of love cannot be derived from human experience»³.

¹ «Au point de départ de sa théorie, on rencontre un Dieu unique, subsistant, possédant une nature spirituelle, Dieu parfait, et présentant tous les caractères d'un Dieu 'personnel', d'une Personne-Dieu. Pour étudier la nature de ce Dieu, notre docteur applique, par voie d'analogie, les analyses qu'on a déduites des observations psychologiques [...] il proclame la distinction entre Dieu parlant et sa Parole, entre Dieu aimant et son Amour» (TH. DE RÉGNON, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, [Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892-98], vol. II, p. 212).

² ANSELM, *Monologion*, ch. 61-63. For a consideration of this problem as a methodological feature common to Anselm and Thomas, see DE RÉGNON, *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 170-173, 222-23.

³ Karl RAHNER, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997; reprint of the 1970 edition) p. 19. Original German text appeared in *Mysterium Salutis*, Bd. II (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1967) pp. 317-404.

Putting the matter in these terms obscures the delicate and precise nature of Thomas' theological grammar in which «not only the thing signified but indeed the manner of signifying must be considered»⁴. Thomas quite explicitly denounced such demonstrations as Anselm⁵ attempted. By means of reason alone, one can know only what pertains to the oneness of God not to the Trinity of Persons. Moreover,

«he who attempts to prove the Trinity of Persons by natural reason derogates the faith in two ways: First, because it demeans the dignity of the faith which, as it pertains to invisible things, exceeds human reason [...] Secondly, when someone, for purposes of evangelization, offers proofs of the faith that are not cogent, he risks being mocked for having believed on account of such reasons»⁶.

Describing the real distinction and real unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, however, cannot but involve analogies.

«For even though the mystery of the Trinity is beyond the range of philosophical proof, it is nevertheless right to try to clarify it though things we do understand [...] Therefore, just as we make use of vestiges or images found in creatures for the manifestation of the divine Persons, so we may also use the essential attributes. Making the Persons known through the essential attributes is called 'appropriation'»⁷.

Thomas' attempt to coordinate our language about the divine Persons with that concerning the divine essence is simply an effort «to make the divine Persons known by way of similitudes and dissimilitudes»⁸. His presentation of trinitarian doctrine is neither a demonstration nor a systematic construction, only a manner of understanding what is beyond but not contrary to reason.

Thomas' work on the Trinity has for the past century been seen, along with Augustine's *De Trinitate*, as representative of a Latin trinitarian tradition. This tradition «begins with the one God, the one divine essence as a whole, and only afterwards does it see God as three in persons»⁹. Philosophical concerns rather than the revelation of God in Christ are assumed to be the basis for the discussion of this doctrine since all divine works *ad extra* are common to the three Persons and accordingly give us no information about the Persons' proper identities. According

⁴ «[Q]uia ad veritatem locutionum, non solum oportet considerare res significatas, sed etiam modum significandi» (*Summa Theologiae* I q. 39, a. 5c).

⁵ «[Q]uatenus auctoritate scripturae penitus nihil in ea persuaderetur, sed quicquid per singulas investigationes finis assereret, id ita esse plano stilo et vulgaribus argumentis simplicique disputatione et rationis necessitas breviter cogeret et veritatis claritas patenter ostenderet» (ANSELM, *Monologion*, prol.).

⁶ «Qui autem probare nititur Trinitatem Personarum naturali ratione, fidei dupliciter derogat. Primo quidem, quantum ad dignitatem ipsius fidei, quae est ut sit de rebus invisibilibus, quae rationem humanam excedunt [...] Secundo, quantum ad utilitatem trahendi alios ad fidem. Cum enim aliquis ad probandum fidem inducit rationes quae non sunt cogentes, credit in irrisionem infidelium: credunt enim quod huiusmodi rationibus innitatur, et propter eas credamus» (*ST* I q. 32, a. 1c).

⁷ «Licet enim Trinitas Personarum demonstratione probari non possit, ut supra dictum est, convenit tamen ut per aliqua magis manifesta declaretur [...] Sicut igitur similitudine vestigii vel imaginis in creaturis inventa utimur ad manifestationem divinarum Personarum, ita es essentialibus attributis. Et haec manifestatio Personarum per essentialia attributa, *appropriatio* nominatur» (*ST* I q. 39, a. 7c).

⁸ «[S]ed ad manifestandum Personas per viam similitudinis vel dissimilitudinis» (*Ibid.*, ad 1um).

⁹ RAHNER, *Ibid.*, p. 17.

to many contemporary theologians, the immanent life of God in this tradition is thereby separated from the rest of Christian faith and, consequently, has no relevance for the believer.

«Thus, the treatise on the Trinity occupies a rather isolated position in the total dogmatic system. To put it crassly, and not without exaggeration, when the treatise is concluded, its subject is never brought up again. Its function in the whole dogmatic construction is not clearly perceived. It is as though this mystery has been revealed for its own sake, and that even after it has been made known to us, it remains, as a reality, locked up within itself. We make statements about it, but as a reality it has nothing to do with us at all»¹⁰.

The Latin trinitarian tradition is understood to be a failure to appreciate the biblical, creedal and liturgical priority of salvation history in which the three Persons play specific roles in the work of restoration and thereby initiate distinctive relations with creatures.

The present state of trinitarian theology can be characterized as a repudiation of Thomas' (and Augustine's) methodology. Since the four-volume work of Th. de Régnon was published in the late 19th-century¹¹, Augustine and Thomas have been seen as the key figures in the western, Latin trinitarian tradition as opposed to the eastern, Greek tradition. These traditions, though admittedly not corresponding to strict linguistic or geographical divisions, can be delineated with the help of certain key features¹². Such features including the starting point (the diversity of Persons for the Greeks and the unity of nature for the Latins) and manner of argumentation (from the works of salvation history or «missions» for the Greeks and from psychological speculations for the Latins) were identified by de Régnon and have been used ever since.

In this century Michael Schmaus was perhaps the key figure in bringing de Régnon's schema into mainstream theological thought¹³. According to him, the focus of de Régnon's study is the difference between Bonaventure and Aquinas and the way such differences can be explained *vis-à-vis* Dionysius and Augustine. The result is the identification of «traditions», the boundaries of which can be used to determine the fundamental orientation and sources of other theologians¹⁴. A useful

¹⁰ RAHNER, *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹ Théodore DE RÉGNON, *Études de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*, cited edition. The second two volumes were published posthumously.

¹² De Régnon focused primarily on scholastic texts and on their respective origins in the Cappadocians and Augustine. Hence, the lines of division according to representatives is as follows: (Greeks) Cappadocians - Dionysius - Richard of St. Victor - William of Auvergne - William of Auxerre - Alexander of Hales - Bonaventure; (Latins) Augustine - Anselm - Peter the Lombard - Albert the Great - Thomas Aquinas. Cf. DE RÉGNON, *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 133-43, 447-51.

¹³ M. SCHMAUS, *Der Liber Propugnatorius des Thomas Anglicus und die Lehrunterschiede zwischen Thomas von Aquin und Duns Scotus*. Vol. II: «Die Trinitarischen Lehrdifferenzen» (Münster, 1930) pp. 574-566. Throughout this work, Schmaus is in dialogue with A. Stohr who, according to Schmaus, had advanced de Régnon's work in his own *Die Trinitätslehre des hl. Bonaventura* (Münster, 1923).

¹⁴ SCHMAUS, *Der Liber*, pp. 650ff. For a recent survey of this discussion and the problems raised regarding the labeling of certain figures, see Zachary Hayes' excellent introduction to Bonaventure's *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, trans. by Z. Hayes (St. Bonaventure, New York: The

short-hand for these lines of division is the manner of proceeding from Persons to essence (Greek) and from essence to Persons (Latin).

«While in the so-called 'Greek' explanation of the Trinity that treats first, in accordance with Holy Scripture, the three Persons in their personal properties as well as in their activity in salvation history and then in the second place brings into consideration the unity of essence and the equality of Persons, the so-called 'western' meaning, whose main representative is Augustine, first and directly brings into view the unity of essence grounding the oneness of God and then considers in the second place the threeness of Persons»¹⁵.

With the writings of Karl Rahner, the divisions themselves became the grounds for criticizing the representatives of the latin tradition¹⁶. Rahner, in an article first appearing in 1967 and again in book form in 1970, denounces the Latin trinitarian tradition because of what he perceives to be the direct consequences of an unsatisfactory method. According to Rahner, the Latins speak of the «necessary metaphysical properties of God, and not very explicitly of God as experienced in salvation history»¹⁷. The Greeks, on the other hand, «would have us start from the one unoriginate God, who is already *Father* even when nothing is known as yet about generation and spiration»¹⁸. The Greeks then proceed according to biblical revelation and salvation history in establishing the doctrine of the Trinity while the Latins «derive» the Persons from psychological speculations on the «One God» who is known according to certain metaphysical properties. The consequence of the latin approach is the complete separation of the doctrine of the Trinity from Christian faith and experience. The systematic division of treatises on the One God who is Creator and the Trinity implies, in Rahner's eyes, a discontinuity between God *in se* and God's self-revelation¹⁹. In a system wherein a Trinity is speculatively derived from the oneness of God, the reality of Persons «remains locked up within itself [...] [having] nothing to do with us at all»²⁰. The traditional Latin denial that the

Franciscan Institute, 1979) pp. 13-29.

¹⁵ «Während in der sog. 'griechischen' Trinitätserklärung im Anschluß an die heilige Schrift primär und unmittelbar die drei Personen und zwar sowohl in ihrem personalem Eigensein als auch in ihrer heilsgeschichtlichen Wirksamkeit, und erst an zweiter Stelle die Einheit des Wesens und die Gleichheit der Personen in den Blick genommen werden, wird in der sog. 'abendländischen' Deutung, deren Hauptvertreter Augustinus ist, zunächst und unmittelbar die in der Einheit des Wesens gründende Einzigkeit Gottes ins Auge gefaßt und erst an zweiter Stelle die Dreiheit der Personen» (M. SCHMAUS, «Das Fortwirken der augustianischen Trinitätspsychologie bis zur karolingischen Zeit», in *Vitae et Veritati*. Festschrift für K. Adam [Düsseldorf, 1956] p. 45).

¹⁶ Barnes would argue, on the other hand, that the debate is more defined by de Régnon than by Rahner. This judgment is right in so far as the major lines of dividing Greek from Latin presentations of trinitarian doctrine were drawn by de Régnon, but it was only with Rahner that the battle ensued over the value and implications of the Latin side. See his «De Régnon Reconsidered»: *Augustinian Studies* XXVI (1995) pp. 51-79.

¹⁷ K. RAHNER, *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁸ K. RAHNER, *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁹ K. Barth noted the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity almost 30 years before Rahner's famous statement, but he did so in a less dramatic and persuasive manner. Hence, Rahner is generally credited with the statement. See *Church Dogmatic* 1-1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) p. 382.

²⁰ K. RAHNER, *Ibid.*, p. 14.

revelation of Christ actually tells us anything about the individual Persons means that we can have only an appropriated relation with each divine Person and not a real one. The upshot is that there is no reason for the revelation of the Trinity if it remains an isolated mystery.

Rahner's answer to these problems is his thesis that the Trinity we encounter in the economy of salvation is the Trinity *in se*: «the economic trinity is the immanent trinity»²¹. God *in se* is the God of our salvation. The fact that it is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word, who becomes incarnate tells us a great deal about that particular Person. Moreover, it is important that we recognize the Persons as distinct agents of our salvation with whom we have real, distinct relations²². Consequently, the western Latin trinitarian tradition needs to be seriously reexamined and rebuilt upon an ontology of the economy.

It is not at all certain, however, that there is such a tradition. The belief in the existence of this Greek/Latin paradigm is «a unique property of modern trinitarian theology»²³. Since Schmaus, the awareness of this paradigm's history has faded. De Régnon's simplistic dichotomy has become so well-embedded in modern systematic theology that it is now the unseen lens through which the tradition is read. Many theologians assume the truth of the paradigm without investigating its history or demonstrating its accuracy. Instead, the representatives of each «side» are lined-up as examples of the failures or successes of each type of theological procedure. This unreflective grouping of rather distinctive theologians is due to a «penchant for polar categories» by which modern systematic theologians seek to make comprehensive statements about our complex theological heritage. The paradigm rather than textual analysis is then the ground for the diagnosed problems. The resulting reconstructions of the history of trinitarian theology are held captive to what are essentially «modern interpretive categories» that prevent a reading of the texts outside of de Régnon's paradigm²⁴.

Most of the treatments of trinitarian doctrine in our time take as their point of orientation Rahner's polemic. Congar, Jüngel, Kasper, Moltmann and Simonis are just a few of the many theologians who have unconsciously embraced de Régnon's categories with Rahner's diagnosis and consequently advocate an embrace of the «Greek» approach beginning with the «economy»²⁵. Those such as Barnes, Jorissen, Schmidbaur who do oppose such reductive readings still find themselves having to

²¹ K. RAHNER, *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²² K. RAHNER, *Ibid.*, pp. 80-120.

²³ M. R. BARNES, «Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology»: *Theological Studies* LVI (1995) p. 238.

²⁴ BARNES, *Ibid.*, p. 239.

²⁵ Y. CONGAR, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols. (New York: Seabury, 1983) esp. III intro; E. JÜNGEL, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984); J. MOLTSMANN, *Trinität und Reich Gottes zur Gotteslehre* (München: Kaiser, 1980); *The Crucified God: The cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. by R. A. Wilson and J. Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); W. SIMONIS, «Über das 'Werden' Gottes. Gedanken zum Begriff der ökonomischen Trinität»: *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* XXXIII (1982) 133-39.

argue according to the established lines of debate²⁶. They are constrained to «kick against the goads» as it were by taking account of Rahner's criticism and diffusing it even though they know full well that the Greek-Latin scheme is an invention of de Régnon with limited heuristic value²⁷. Still others who accept the terms of the debate but disagree somehow with Rahner can only offer a correction of his interpretation of a particular figure. H. Jorissen, for example, though greatly sympathetic to Thomas' work, gives an account of Thomas' method of argumentation within Rahner's terms²⁸.

We are now at the high point of this movement to bypass or correct the Latin tradition with the Greek tradition in order to develop a new grammar for speaking of God as Trinity in a meaningful way. Contemporary systematic theologians emersed in Rahner's polemic must decide to what point in the pre-Augustinian tradition we must return or how we may appropriate the Greek tradition as an avenue of circumventing our own²⁹. One can find any number of theologians championing the Cappadocian formulations, proposing alternatives for the term «person» (what is plural with respect to God)³⁰, redefining what it means for God to

²⁶ M. R. BARNES, «Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology», pp. 237-50; H. JORISSEN, «Zur Struktur des Traktates *De Deo* in der *Summa theologiae* des Thomas von Aquin», in *Im Gespräch mit dem Dreieinen Gott* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1985) pp. 231-57; H. SCHMIDBAUR, *Personarum Trinitas. Dei trinitarische Gotteslehre des heiligen Thomas von Aquin* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1992).

²⁷ Schmidbaur does use de Régnon's categories in the second part of his study, yet he demonstrates an ability to think outside such categories as he discusses some of Thomas' immediate predecessors according to other terms. See H. SCHMIDBAUR, *Ibid.*, pp. 194-330.

²⁸ H. JORISSEN, «Zur Struktur des Traktates *De Deo* in der *Summa theologiae* des Thomas von Aquin», pp. 255-256.

²⁹ C. Gunton argues for a return to the Cappadocian teaching, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991) ch. 1; E. Jüngel suggests a revival of Luther's passionate and suffering-filled Christology on whose basis we may be certain of God's love, *God as the Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983) pp. 368-76. The imprecision of Jüngel's language regarding «God» and the proper names, however, muddles his discussion and gives a strong impression of modalism. For instance, he often refers to the «Incarnation of God» (pp. 320-372); W. Kasper proposes a return to the work of Tertullian and Athanasius, that is, a return to the realm of «confession» as opposed to «doctrine», *The God of Jesus Christ*, pp. 251-63; C. LaCugna advocates a return to pre-Nicean theology. She is especially sympathetic to the views of Arius and Eunomius as well as non-Palamite Orthodox thought which she combines together with modern personalism, feminism and liberation theology, *God for Us* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco 1991) pp. 30-40 and ch. 10; J. Moltmann argues for a revival of pre-Tertullian views limited to salvation history without substance metaphysics and its «dangerous» generic terms, *In der Geschichte des dreieinigen Gottes* (München: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1991) ch. 8.; P. Schoonenberg, like Kasper, is uncomfortable with any definite discussion of God *in se* beyond a mere discussion of God's «modes» of revelation or expression and seems therefore to long for the confessional period of pre-Tertullian theology, «Trinity—The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God»: *Studies in Religion V* (1975) pp. 111-116.

³⁰ K. Barth sees the doctrine of the Trinity rooted in Old Testament revelation in so far as God reveals Himself as Lord and thereby distances the doctrine from the revelation. Barth therefore proposes *Seinsweisen* or «modes of being» in his *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1-1, pp. 352-62; K. Rahner follows Barth for the most part but with an eye toward avoiding suspect terms, hence, he prefers «distinct manners of subsisting», *The Trinity*, pp. 109-115; G. W. H. Lampe with his Joachimist reading of history prefers simply to refer to God as «Spirit», for that is the manner of God's presence in the

be relational³¹ and some even attempting to relieve creedal formulations of their sexist language³².

Thomas' discussion of appropriation³³ is the point in the *Summa* at which there is the strongest evidence against such generalizing interpretations. It is in that discussion that Thomas makes his most important statements about theological method and grammar. Thomas also clarifies for the reader what he as a theologian understands himself to be doing. The problem of how one can predicate essential attributes of each Person of the Trinity (the theory of appropriation) constituted probably the greatest difficulty in formulating a coherent system of trinitarian grammar. The clarity of his presentation both rests upon and goes beyond the work of other medieval theologians, particularly with respect to his consciousness of the limitations of theological language.

In order to pursue this project, we will examine the way in which Thomas treats the issue of predication. That is, how does he order his larger discussion to set up questions about predication? The order of Thomas' text is a vital element in understanding his method and the import of his arguments. It is our express intention to see Thomas neither as a representative of a homogenous theological tradition nor as the synthesis of disparate traditions but only to investigate Thomas' method as a way of illuminating and better understanding his teaching.

THE CONTEXT FOR THOMAS' DISCUSSION OF THE TRINITY

A. *The structure of the whole Summa.*

We will begin our discussion of Thomas' teaching on the Trinity in the *Summa Theologiae* by highlighting Thomas' own statements about the order and the way in

world, *God as Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) pp. 206-28.

³¹ E. Jünger argues that God is related to the world in such a way that God is constituted as «God» only in the act of creating, *God as the Mystery of the World*, pp. 221-225; LaCugna builds upon Jünger's work yet without the sophistication of Jünger's concept of divine freedom and creation as a «going into nothingness». LaCugna then proposes a stronger identification of creation and relation whereby God is God by relation to the creation in as much as the creative act is a real procession out from God in her strongly neoplatonic system. Hence, she has abolished the distinction between the absolute and ordained power of God (possible and actual) such that God by nature creates and creates in this way and could not do otherwise. LACUGNA, *God for Us*, pp. 168-169, 353-356; J. Moltmann follows Barth in advocating a discussion built upon the idea of God's lordship or dominion thus including the revelation of God before the Incarnation in his discussion of God's relatedness, *In der Geschichte des dreieinigen Gottes*, ch. 8; additionally, Moltmann advocates a future-oriented faith that is «liberated» from the past, that is, liberated from Church dogmas, hierarchy and so forth such that the Trinity becomes merely a social programme of communitarianism. MOLTSMANN, *Ibid.*, introduction.

³² M. DALY, *Beyond God the Father. Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); S. MCFAGUE, *Models of God. Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); R. RUETHER, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); P. WILSON-KASTNER, *Faith, Feminism and the Mutual Relation* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981). Many of these attempts to reformulate Trinitarian language involve the resurrecting of Gnostic terms or the borrowing of Jewish ones.

³³ ST I q. 39.

which he prepares the reader for the difficulties of trinitarian discourse. Thomas states that this science, *sacra doctrina*, is principally about God and all else is considered as referring to God as the principle and end of all³⁴. It is neither an equal treatment of God and creatures nor is it a study of human salvation *per se*, hence, it is more speculative than practical. Further, this science comprehends all the philosophical sciences, both speculative and practical, by reason of being knowable in the *divinum lumen*³⁵ by being *revelabilia*³⁶. The primary subject is God who is then the principle of ordering all else. Thomas therefore intends to treat every aspect of reality as it is ordered to God as the beginning and end of all things, alpha and omega.

In the prologue to his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas states that the reason for this work is his own dissatisfaction with the available theological textbooks. According to him, these texts, including the *Sentences* of Peter the Lombard, contain numerous useless questions and arguments, neglect to treat the subject matter according to the order of teaching and needlessly repeat themselves all of which leads to «boredom and confusion» in the students. Moreover, there seems to have been no small disagreement about the precise subject matter of theology. Others proposed that theology is a study of creation or Christ, both as head and body of the Church. But such things are, for Aquinas, only a part of theology and must be subsumed into the order of the whole; that is, the order of things to the primary subject, God³⁷. According to Aquinas, the best order of learning is the order of existence, the *ordo rerum*. It is then a mistake peculiar to modern scholarship to assume a common conception of theological method in the medieval Church³⁸.

Thomas presents the broad outline of his work in the prologue to question two. He states that the three parts of his *Summa* will cover (1) God - Pt. I, (2) the movement of rational creatures to God, Pt. I-II, II-II, and (3) Christ, who as man is the way to God, Pt. III³⁹. Thomas' organization appears to be rational, beginning

³⁴ «Sacra doctrina non determinat de Deo et de creaturis ex aequo, sed de Deo principaliter et de creaturis secundum quod referuntur ad Deum, ut ad principium vel finem» (*ST* I q. 1, a. 3 ad 1um).

³⁵ «Sacra doctrina [...], una existens, se extendit ad ea quae pertinent ad diversas scientias philosophicas propter rationem formalem quam in diversis attendit, prout sunt divino lumine cognoscibilia» (*ST* I q. 1, a. 4c).

³⁶ «Quia igitur sacra Scriptura considerat aliqua secundum quod dictum est [a. 1 ad 2um], omnia quaecumque sunt divinitus revelabilia, communicant in una ratione formali objecti huius scientiae» (*ST* I q. 1, a. 3c).

³⁷ «Quidam vero, attendentes ea quae tractantur in ista scientia, et non ad rationem secundum quam considerantur, assignaverunt aliter materiam huius scientiae, vel res et signa, vel opera reparationis, vel totum Christum, idest caput et membra. De omnibus enim istis tractatur in ista scientia, sed secundum ordinem ad Deum» (*ST* I q. 1, a. 7c).

³⁸ The situation of the modern theologian is then not unique and so far removed from that of ancient and medieval theologians. Many of the same problems and obstacles are shared. Those such as Mackey and Wiles who plea for the unique problems of our time as a justification for a wholesale rejection of the tradition which Thomas represents have an overly-simplistic view of history. See J. MACKEY, *The Christian Experience of God as Trinity*, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1983); M. WILES, *Faith and the Mystery of God*, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1982).

³⁹ «[...] ad huius doctrinae expositionem intendentes, primo tractabimus de Deo; secundo, de motu rationalis creaturae in Deum [p. 2]; tertio, de Christo, qui, secundum quod homo, via est nobis tendendi in Deum [p. 3]» (*ST* I q. 2 prol.).

with God in Himself as cause, followed by creation (effect), then the natural desire and motion of rational creatures to their end, and finally the way to God provided through Christ (means). But some modern theologians may ask, «how can we discuss God apart from creation?». Moreover, it appears that Thomas has distorted the order of revelation by discussing the Trinity that was revealed in Christ before discussing Christ directly. Hence, we may ask, how is one to interpret this order?

In his foundational study of 1939⁴⁰, M.-D. Chenu opened a new avenue of investigation by proposing an comprehensive schema for interpreting the structure of Thomas' *Summa*, and thereupon determined the direction of that interest well into our own day. Chenu contends that for structuring his presentation of theology, Thomas had recourse to the neoplatonic themes of emanation and return, *exitus et reditus*⁴¹. Since theology is a science of God, one studies all things in their relation to God in their production and in their finality.

«Such is the plan of the *Summa theologique*, and the movement that it treats. *Prima Pars*: the emanation, God as principle; *Secunda Pars*: the return, God as end; and because, in fact, this return is made possible by Christ, the God-man according to the free and wholly gracious design of God, a *Tertia Pars* will study the 'Christian' conditions of this return»⁴².

This structure arises from Thomas' effort to provide an *ordo disciplinae* for the science of theology which encompasses all things. This organizational plan is then not meant to jumble the biblical narrative but to put them into a macro structure that allows for the systematic treatment of doctrines within a larger plan.

Chenu failed to make clear, however, whether he was defining the development within the text or the nature of the structure; that is, whether he was pointing to the process itself within the text by which things proceed from and return to God. The question of motion then becomes important for defining the division. If the scheme is read according to temporal motion, the *reditus* does not begin until the Incarnation, the *Tertia pars*. If, on the other hand, the structure is conceived of as ontological only, then the *reditus* can be said to begin with Thomas' account of the moral life in the *Secunda pars*⁴³. Much of the debate focusing on Chenu's terms can be understood as a disagreement over the kind of motion within the system⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ M.-D. CHENU, «Le plan de la Somme théologique de S. Thomas»: *Revue Thomiste* XLV (1939) pp. 93-107. This study was later expanded and presented in Chenu's *Introduction à l'étude de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris, 1950) pp. 255-76.

⁴¹ CHENU, *Introduction...*, p. 261.

⁴² «Tel est le plan de la *Somme théologique*, et tel est le mouvement qu'il traduit *Ia Pars*: l'émanation, Dieu principe; *Iia Pars*: le retour, Dieu fin; et parce que, de fait, selon le livre et tout gratuit dessein de Dieu [...] de retour s'est fait par le Christ homme-Dieu, une *IIIa Pars* étudiera les conditions 'chrétiennes' de ce retour» (CHENU, *Introduction...*, p. 98).

⁴³ The part of the text Thomas calls «movement of rational creatures to God» (*ST* I, q. 2 prol.).

⁴⁴ Pesch argues for an immobile or ontological structure in order to protect the contingency of things, «Um den Plan der *Summa Theologiae* des hl. Thomas von Aquin»: *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* XVI (1965) pp. 413-17; Patfoort, on the other hand, wants to refer to the dynamism of the *Secunda* and *Tertia Pars* in order to emphasize the connection between history and the *ordo disciplinae*. «L'unité de la *Ia Pars* et le mouvement interne de la Somme Théologique de S. Thomas d'Aquin»: *Revue des sciences philosophique et théologique* XLVII (1963) pp. 513-544.

Those who read it as a chronological structure find the text distasteful and poorly organized due to the implications of such temporal motion both in the three divine Persons following from the one divine essence and in the return of creatures to God «prior to» or «without» Christ⁴⁵. The idea of a movement of creatures back to God without Christ seems rather non-Christian or a-Christian. Take away the concept of temporal motion and the problems begin to disappear, for the movement of rational creatures to God is not prior to Christ in time but simply abstracted from the Incarnation for purposes of systematic discussion.

We can bring some of these complex issues to light by examining the role of history in the *Summa*. Thomas' critics accuse him of subverting the historical order, for few would deny that the doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, is the last and not first word in the order of revelation. Others defend Thomas precisely by accounting for the perceived historical «anomalies» within the text⁴⁶. On what side of the fence one falls seems to depend on what one understands by term «salvation history». Narrowly conceived as the revelation of God in Christ with the overcoming of sin on the cross, such history seems oddly decentralized and de-emphasized in the *Summa*. Broadly conceived, however, as God's provision for the *reditus* of creation, the transition from the *Prima* and *Secunda* to the *Tertia Pars* is from a radically contingent fundamental structure of salvation history to its soteriological dimension⁴⁷.

The majority of interpreters would agree with Chenu's basic thesis but also are generally reticent to say much more. U. Horst and G. Lafont, for instance, devote a great deal of time to considering the many evident inconsistencies and questions left unresolved offering mostly a number of qualifications to the central thesis. M. Seckler, on the other hand, wants to bring together the very ideal of salvation history with the structure of the *Summa*. According to Seckler, it was not merely the demands of theology's newly established scientific character that led Thomas to adopt this schema; rather, it was his own insight into the nature of salvation history.

«According to God's plan and work of salvation, all things go out from the hand of God and return to Him who is the Alpha and Omega. Thus, the theologian also

⁴⁵ H. Schillebeeckx first noted that the idea of a return to God apart from Christ is inconceivable and makes the discussion of Christ in the *Tertia Pars* a mere «addition» to a text complete in itself. *De sacramentele Heilseconomie* (Anvers, 1952) pp. 1-18. D. Burrell, also criticizes Chenu's schema because, according to him, it carries with it some neoplatonic baggage that impinges on the freedom of God to create and to save. The concept of creation *ex nihilo* must be emphasized in order to oppose any implication of necessary emanation. D. BURRELL C. S. C., *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993) pp. 7-9.

⁴⁶ F. BOURASSA, «Sur le Traité de la Trinité»: *Gregorianum* XLVII (1966) pp. 254-285.; G. LAFONT, *Structure et méthode dans la Somme théologique de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Cerf, 1961); A. MALET, *Personne et amour dans la théologie trinitaire de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1956); A. PATFOORT, «L'unité...»; O. H. PESCH, «Um den Plan der *Summa Theologiae* des hl. Thomas von Aquin», *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* XVI (1965) pp. 128-137; M. SECKLER, *Das Heil in der Geschichte. Geschichtstheologisches Denken bei Thomas von Aquin* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1964); C. STRÄTER, «Le point de départ du traité thomiste de la Trinité»: *Sciences Ecclesiastiques* XIV (1962) pp. 71-87; U. HORST, «Über die Frage einer heilsökonomischen Theologie bei Thomas von Aquin»: *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* XII (1961) pp. 97-111.

⁴⁷ O. PESCH, «Um den Plan...», p. 422.

treats reality according to its relation to God in so far as He is the source and goal of all things. Surprisingly, we find here a narrow correspondence in the source and goal of history, the source and fulfillment of being, the first and last ground of understanding such that theology can become not only ordered to the 'science' of salvation history, but salvation history bears within itself the fundamental design of theology. The theologian does not bring order to the chaos of salutary events, but the order of salvation structures theology⁴⁸.

The bearer of the acts and the subject of the understanding is one and the same—God. Thus, the principle that orders the events of salvation history and the principle by which the science is ordered for purposes of understanding (*ordo disciplinae*) is the same. Hence, there is only one order that is simultaneously an *ordo disciplinae* and *ordo rerum*.

For Chenu, the *exitus-reditus* schema most directly applied to parts I and II. Chenu assumed a narrow definition of salvation history being specifically Christian and accordingly explains part III with an additional principle of ordering: necessary-contingent. It is only in this last part then that we enter fully into the realm of history, the realm of contingent events.

«The transition from the *Secunda Pars* to the *Tertia Pars* represented the passage from the necessary order to its historical realizations, from the domain of the structures to the concrete history of the gifts of God»⁴⁹.

This manner of speaking brings up the very problem of the neoplatonic character of Chenu's schema. In neoplatonic terms the *exitus*, for instance, is understood as an actual procession rather than a creation *ex nihilo*. Moreover, the implication of necessity in the philosophical doctrine means that neither the *exitus* nor the structure of the *reditus* are contingent in the same way that the incarnation is assumed to be. Seckler denies such conclusions and insists that the neoplatonic context and implication of the schema are considerably faded if not lost⁵⁰. There is then no strict division of what is necessary and what is contingent, what is of nature and what is of grace. Nature as defined by the event of creation is no less a realization of the free love of God.

«Thomas has a unified conception of the works of salvation: angels and humans are from the beginning created for salvation and grace. Creation is already grounded in

⁴⁸ «Gehen nach Auskunft der Bibel alle Dinge aus der Hand Gottes hervor und kehren nach seinem Heilsplan und Heilswerk wieder zu dem zurück, der Alpha und Omega ist, so betrachtet auch der Theologie gemäß den Erfordernissen seiner Wissenschaft die Wirklichkeit in ihrem Bezug auf Gott, insofern dieser Ursprung und Ziel der Dinge ist. Auf eine überraschende Weise kommen hier Ursprung und Ziel der *Geschichte*, Quelle und Vollendung des *Seins*, erste und letzte Ursache des *Verstehens* in eine enge Entsprechung, so daß Theologie nicht nur zur 'Wissenschaft' der Heilsgeschichte werden kann, sondern *die Heilsgeschichte selbst den theologischen Grundentwurf in sich trägt*. Nicht der Theologie bringt also nach Thomas Ordnung in das Gewirr der Heilsereignisse, sondern die Heilsordnung strukturiert die Theologie» (SECKLER, *Ibid.*, p. 35).

⁴⁹ «La transition de la IIa à la IIIa Pars représente le passage de l'ordre nécessaire aux réalisations historiques, du domaine des structures à l'histoire concrète des dons de Dieu» (CHENU, *Introduction...*, p. 270).

⁵⁰ SECKLER, *Ibid.*, p. 34.

an historical relation of God to creatures, therefore, creation is also a contingent event. Hence, the *Summa* is throughout christologically constructed⁵¹.

It is a false assumption on the part of Chenu that there is, in the *Summa*, a grace separated from Christ. The discussion of Christ in part III is not the entrance of a new radical contingency and a new form of grace. Chenu was confusing the chronology of revelation with the *ordo rerum* thereby making the interpretation of the *Summa*'s structure a problem of theological knowledge. Hence, what Seckler sees as a crucial addition to Chenu's thesis is the assertion that Christ is only the way of salvation, not the goal, in as much as Christ is the revealer of the Father⁵². Christ provides insight into the order of being, the *ordo rerum*. The content of this insight is the right understanding of creation and the way of salvation, not a new kind of *reditus*. There is then no «unhistorical» material or structure in the *Summa* wherein Thomas treats the truth of God «abstractly» over against the «concrete history» of God in Christ. The *Summa* is throughout a concrete history of salvation.

Seckler does not, on the other hand, deny any necessity whatsoever in that history. The necessity of things is present at least in regards to their form. In defining Thomas' arguments as the attempt to translate the events of history into an organized science, Chenu conflated Bonaventure and Thomas. According to Seckler, there is an important difference in Thomas between the structure of history and its course or chronological sequence⁵³. The structure of Thomas' *Summa* cannot be divided by what is abstract and what is concrete or by what is necessary and what is contingent. The *exitus-reditus* structure denotes the meaningfulness of events in relation to their source and goal who is God. Statements about the course of history are then made within «generally valid structural laws». Seckler sees the events of history in Thomas' theology structured in a circular fashion from the One who is source and to the One who is end⁵⁴. This cyclical pattern emphasizes in a way unfamiliar to modern theology the identity of the *τέλος* and the *ἀρχή*, the one who is the source and end. Throughout all three parts of the *Summa*, then, the centrality of God as the «subject of events and understanding» is maintained⁵⁵.

Seckler's interpretation, however, lacks an appreciation of the soteriological dimension of the Incarnation. It is not merely revelatory but also effective of salvation. The presence of Christ can already be seen in the teaching of the old law

⁵¹ «Thomas hat eine einheitliche Konzeption des Heilswerkes: Engel und Mensch sind von Anfang an auf Heil und Gnade hin geschaffen [...] Bereits die Schöpfung begründet ein geschichtliches Verhältnis Gottes zur Kreatur; auch die Schöpfung ist ein kontingentes Ereignis; die theologische Summe ist deshalb durchgängig christologisch gebaut» (SECKLER, *Ibid.*, p. 39).

⁵² «[F]ür Thomas ist der Menschgewordene primär nicht der, von dem man spricht, sondern der, der den Vater offenbart. Er ist nicht Ziel des Weges, sondern der Weg; er ist nicht Inhalt des theologischen Denkens, sondern Form» (SECKLER, *Ibid.*, p. 40).

⁵³ «Gott mußte die Welt nicht schaffen, aber da er sie schuf, schuf er sie nach seinem Bild und Gleichnis. Hier aber wird durch Thomas die Wesensstruktur durch Rekurs auf die genannte zweifache Angemessenheit (Thomas nennt sie *ratio naturae*) bestimmt; das Wesen Gottes als Selbstmitteilung; das Wesen der geschichtlichen Selbstmitteilung per visibilia» (SECKLER, *Ibid.*, p. 45).

⁵⁴ SECKLER, *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁵ SECKLER, *Ibid.*, p. 42.

that convicts sin and awakens belief in a mediator through the sacrificial laws. The moral law was valid before Christ and even before Moses as «the laws written on the hearts of men», natural law. Otherwise, there would have been no conviction of sin⁵⁶. Thomas attempted to leave the mystery of Christ in the background throughout the first two parts, yet he always expressed salvation history in its «concrete, Christian, incarnational, sacramental and ecclesial aspect without being occasioned or structured by sin»⁵⁷. The perspective of the theologian is then that of the creature who is from God, receives all things from God and returns to God. Even in the soteriological section of the *Summa*, part III, the acts of Christ, or rather, the modes of Christ's acts including that of atonement, sacrifice, savior as well as the sufferings of his death, his resurrection and reign are all the works of an instrument, the «tool of the love of God»⁵⁸. The accent in this last section of the *Summa* is not upon the end of the carnal life but upon the end of salvation history. Hence, God and not Christ remains throughout the theme of theology.

No one would dispute that our knowledge of the Trinity (of Persons) comes through the life and teachings of Christ⁵⁹. The issue is whether it makes sense to instruct persons according to an inverse order in which the Trinity or «the movement of rational creatures to God» is considered *before* Christ strictly speaking. Can Christ be understood without knowing something of creation, the moral life and the problem of sin?⁶⁰ The answer involves not only the extent of revelation prior in time to Christ but also the need to speak of God in an a-temporal way in order to insure the eternity and equality of Persons and the freedom of God to act⁶¹. Thomas presents a study of God prior to and apart from the acts by which we

⁵⁶ PESCH, «Um den Plan...», p. 418.

⁵⁷ «Er arbeitet in der einen, konkreten und immer schon in ihrer christlichen, inkarnatorischen, sakramentalen, ekklesialen Qualität begriffenen Heilsgeschichte die nicht von der Sünde begingten oder mitbedingten Strukturen heraus» (PESCH, *Ibid.*, p. 420).

⁵⁸ «[D]ie Wirkweise des *instrumentum*, des Werkzeugs der Heilsliebe Gottes ist.» (PESCH, *Ibid.*, p. 423).

⁵⁹ Rahner has therefore presented no clever insight into how God revealed God's self to the world. His charge of the «inversion» of economy comes from a desire to equate theological understanding with evangelical presentation.

⁶⁰ J. Pieper argues at length for the extent of knowledge presupposed by revelation. The point to be remembered is that God reveals God's self to humans specifically, thus, a measure of natural knowledge is prerequisite for understanding such revelation. Further, the revelation must be investigated, pondered and interpreted for understanding, for revelation is a hidden truth unlike mathematical principles which need only to be stated to be understood. Cf. *Problems of Modern Faith* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985) pp. 157-173; see also his *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986) pp. 144-157.

⁶¹ D. Burrell, C. S. C., notes that freedom in acting is essential to the biblical notion of Creator. It is only by the revelation of the Word that is a revealing Word that we are enabled to speak of this Creator and to adapt our language to God. In other words, the events of the life of Christ are not merely events to be interpreted but a revelatory event that provides more than historical datum. After all, just as Scripture reveals something about human nature apart from our experience of it that we cannot know otherwise (it is not sinful per se), so Christ in the Scriptures reveals many things about God that allow us to speak of God beyond the bounds of our experience. *Creation*, pp. 161-184. Moderns such as M. Wiles and G. Lampe who wish to develop theological grammar on the basis of their

know God before discussing those acts because revelation imparts a more full and certain knowledge of the cause, thereby allowing one to speak about the cause directly.

The theologian extends the horizon of what is understood as history by placing the temporal in an eternal context, thereby preventing the discussion from becoming a-historical as it opens itself to the systematic discussion of doctrines. In the context of eternity, it makes perfect sense to discuss God prior to or abstracted from any consideration of creation. Likewise Thomas can discuss the original state of Man with all the powers intact prior to the destructive act of original sin because revelation provides additional data concerning human nature. For instance, from revelation we know that the present existence of human beings does not correspond to the innocent condition in which the first humans were created. Human nature is not sinful strictly speaking. The purpose for discussing cause before effect, even though the reverse is the order of learning (the order of rational investigation is from effect to cause), is to separate the being from the necessity of the act and to prevent the error of reducing the being to these acts only. In other words, specific acts have a limiting power on the agent. To speak of God as Creator or Savior (only) is to reduce the possible to the actual at a specific point in time. God's power extends beyond the horizon of God's acts; hence, *Deus potest aliae facere quam quae facit*⁶². When Thomas states that a knowledge of the Trinity is needed for a correct understanding of creation and salvation, he is referring to the freedom with which those acts are done⁶³.

In treating all things *sub ratione Dei*, Thomas subordinates the history of human salvation to the eternity of God. The temporality of human affairs does not become meaningless as all is seen at once *sub ratione Dei*. On the contrary, everything is thereby seen in its proper context, that is, as created by and ordered to God. Regardless of whether we choose to use Chenu's *exitus-reditus* terminology, we must recognize the pedagogical organization of Thomas' *Summa*. This *ordo* represents a scientific structuring in which the order of being contextualizes the events of salvation history. The order in which things must be understood corresponds to the order in which they exist, the order of being: *Deus* first as cause and all else, *sub ratione Dei*, as effects. This pattern of organization also corresponds to Aristotle's suggested manner of proceeding scientifically: one must treat the subject first according to *an sit* then *quid est* and finally *quomodo*⁶⁴.

experience of God are forgetting that revelation (in Christ) is not merely an event that changes the state of affairs that obtains on this earth (namely, by providing grace under the new Law), but it is also provides us with articles of faith, words, to be understood.

⁶² *ST I* q. 25, a. 5c.

⁶³ «[...] quod cognitio divinarum Personarum fuit necessaria nobis dupliciter. Uno modo, ad recte sentiendum de creatione rerum. Per hoc enim quod dicimus Deum omnia fecisse Verbo suo, excluditur error ponentium Deum produxisse res ex necessitate naturae» (*ST I* q. 32, a. 1 ad 3).

⁶⁴ ARISTOTLE, *Posterior Analytics I 2*: 71 b 9 - 72 b 4.

B. *Structure of the Prima Pars.*

Unfortunately, much of the literature on the structure of the *Summa* does not address specifically the details of our chosen portion of the text, the so-called, «trinitarian treatise»; rather, they primarily focus on the relation of each Book to the other two or to the particularly sticky situation of Christ in the *Tertia pars*. Of the few studies that are devoted primarily to the *Prima pars*, most of these focus on the unity of qq. 44-103 rather than the unity within qq. 2-43. Hence, our citation of the secondary literature in the next few pages is primarily to establish patterns and assumptions rather than to enter into proper debate.

Thomas indicates the structure of his text in several places. In the prologue to the second question, he identifies the divisions of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa*:

«The consideration of God will be tripartite. First, we will consider what pertains to the divine essence (qq. 2-26); second, [we will consider] those things that pertain to the distinction of Persons (qq. 27-43); third [we will consider] those things that pertain to the procession of creatures from God (q. 44)»⁶⁵.

All three parts fall under the rubric *De Deo*, Thomas' title for the *Prima pars*. Thomas makes a notable clarification about this order at the end of the first division, question twenty-six. At the beginning and end of that question, Thomas declares that the first section of the *Prima Pars* concerns the «unitas divinae essentiae»⁶⁶. It is noteworthy that Thomas uses the term *unitas* twice to define the subject of the preceding questions and once more in the prologue to part two of *De Deo* (q. 27). His *post factum* corrected description (as opposed to his proposed outline in the second question) means that Thomas understood his first two sections to concern unity and distinction respectively regarding the one Godhead that is a Trinity. By juxtaposing unity and distinction of persons *in divinis*, he treats in turn two aspects of the one subject⁶⁷. The movement from the first to the second divisions is not from monopersonal to tripersonal God but from a consideration of the unity of essence to a consideration of the distinction of Persons.

In attention to Thomas' organizational statements, however, can lead to misunderstanding of his words in individual articles. Chenu's attempt to impose an ordering principle onto the *Summa* that did not correspond to Thomas' own words cannot but impinge to some degree upon the text's internal organization. Moreover, this *exitus-reditus* scheme raises severe questions about particular subsections such as the relation between the treatments of God's oneness (qq. 2-26) and God's threeness (qq. 26-43). The treatment of the divine nature (oneness) before Person, under Chenu's rubric, implies a derivation of the latter from the former as effects from a cause.

⁶⁵ «Consideratio autem de Deo tripartita erit. Primo namque considerabimus ea quae ad essentiam divinam pertinent; secundo, ea quae pertinent ad distinctionem Personarum (q.27); tertio, ea quae pertinent ad processum creaturarum ab ipso (q.44)» (*ST I* q. 2 prologue).

⁶⁶ «Ultimo autem, post considerationem eorum quae ad divinae essentia unitatem pertinent [...]» (*ST I* q. 26 prologue). Cf. q. 26, art. 4, ad 2um; and prol. to q. 27.

⁶⁷ *ST I* q. 27 prol.

We do not, however, lay the blame at Chenu's doorstep, for his terminology is only a short-formula for the Neoscholastic reading of the *Summa*. The tendency to view the text as narrative in character, on the other hand, has been the most decisive point for distorting Thomas' words. It is our contention that it was the inattention to Thomas' organizational comments that led his great sixteenth-century commentators and their followers of the late nineteenth and early to mid twentieth-centuries to make quite erroneous statements about Thomas' method. Cajetan and his Neoscholastic followers for the most part ignored these prologues in their commentaries preferring to divide the text according to their own conceptions.

One of the most disastrous developments in the commentaries of the late-nineteenth century was the labeling of the first two sections *De Deo Uno-De Deo Trino*⁶⁸. These titles are foreign to the text and distort Thomas' own words, yet they became almost synonymous with the text well into our own time⁶⁹. The titles *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* grew naturally out of the early commentaries of Cardinal Cajetan and John of St. Thomas even though they did not actually use these terms. They did, however, understand the text in terms of to an ordering of absolute to relative and commented accordingly.

«The treatise *De Deo* contains two parts. First, it treats God as an entity with absolute attributes or in acting (up to q. 27). Second, it treats God according to what is relative, namely, the mystery of the Trinity (from q. 27-44)»⁷⁰.

John of St. Thomas then repeats this reference to the absolute subject of qq. 2-26 in the *ordinatio primae partis*:

«In the treatise *de Deo* following the section concerning His existence, there is an investigation concerning the essence of God. First Thomas is concerned with those things that pertain to God according to what is absolute (as far as q. 27), then Thomas is concerned with those things that pertain to what is relative [in God]»⁷¹.

Cajetan further solidified this identification of the subject of qq. 2-26 as an absolute when he developed his notion of *hic Deus*.

«In the title an ambiguity occurs immediately. For what does 'God' supposit in this question, 'Whether God is the same as His essence'? In God the individual instance of the nature is distinguished from the concrete instance [of the nature]; that is, we distinguish 'this God' from the divine suppositis, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit»⁷².

⁶⁸ Cardinal L. BILLOT, *De Deo Uno et Trino: Commentarius in Primam Partem S. Thomae* (Rome: S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1897).

⁶⁹ C. LACUGNA, «The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond»: *Theological Studies* XLVI (1985) pp. 650-654; J. MOLTMANN, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (Atlanta: S.C.M. Press, 1981); W. WILKIS, JR., *Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) pp. 21-26; et al.

⁷⁰ «Et tractatus de deo secundum se continet duas partes. Prima est de Deo quoad entitatem, et attributa absoluta, sive in operando a quaestione secunda usque ad XXVII. Secunda agit de Deo quoad relativa, seu mysterium Trinitatis a quaestione XXVII, usque ad XLVI» (JOANNES A S. THOMA, *Cursus theologicus*, t. I [Paris: Ludovicus Vivès, 1883] p. 191).

⁷¹ «Post tractatum de Deo quoad an est sequitur investigatio de quidditate Dei. Et primo, agit D. Thomas de his, quae pertinent in Deo ad absoluta usque ad quaestionem XXVIII, deinde de his, quae pertinent ad relativa» (JOANNES A S. THOMA, *Ibid.*, p. 195).

⁷² «In titulo statim occurrit ambiguitas, pro quo supponit Deus in hoc quaesito, utrum Deus sit idem quod sua essentia [...] In Deo [...] distinguitur individuum naturae in concreto, idest hic Deus, a

Subsequent commentaries on the *Summa* or scholastic presentations of theology hardened this reading of absolute/relative with the division titles *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino*. Louis Billot, S. J., M. Daffara, O. P., Cardinal Franzelin, S. J., and J. M. Dalmau, S. J. are just a few of the many Neoscholastics who took up these divisions in their own work⁷³. There are only two notable exceptions in the last three centuries: F. C.-R. Billuart, O. P.⁷⁴ and W. Farrell, O. P.⁷⁵. Unfortunately, Billot's popularity among commentators together with the authorization of Cajetan's commentary in the Leonine edition overshadowed other trends of commentary and nomenclature.

Much of the modern criticism of Thomas' methodology is actually a reaction to the Neoscholastics' tradition of interpretation rather than to Thomas himself. The modern distaste for what seems to be overly speculative or, in a pejorative sense, "philosophical"⁷⁶ in Thomas is more aptly leveled at Cajetan, Billot and the Neoscholastics who were responsible for the inappropriate titles and for characterizing *ST I* qq. 1-43 as a metaphysical, rather than a theological, work. The nineteenth-century Neoscholastic movement was defined in terms of its philosophical interests and readings, giving the texts themselves a noticeable philosophical color (and in this case, a specifically metaphysical one). The theological discussions of these texts followed yet noticeably later, hence, the philosophical issues held center stage throughout⁷⁷.

Thomas' ordering principle, *ordo rerum*, however, does not entail a philosophical discussion of the doctrine of God. The unity of this science, *sacra doctrina*, demands that all remain under or within the *ratio* of being divinely "revealable"⁷⁸. As Thomas attempts to find a rational basis for some of those beliefs, he is pursuing a deeper understanding with the belief that the object of faith is intelligible in itself if not to us in this life. The reasoning upon the faith will typically but not exclusively involve the manifestation of that faith where reason cannot attain of its

supposito divino, idest Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto» (Cardinal THOMAS DE VIO CAJETAN, *In Iam Summam Theologiae*, q. 3, a. 3, nn. I-II).

⁷³ L. BILLOT, *De Deo Uno et Trino*; M. DAFFARA, O. P., *De Deo Uno et Trino* (Rome: Maretti, 1945); I. B. FRANZELIN, S. J., *De Deo Uno* (Rome, 1876); I. M. DALMAU, S. J., «De Deo Uno et Trino», in *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1953).

⁷⁴ F. C.-R. BILLUART, *Summa Sancti Thomae hodiernis academiarum moribus accommodata* (Liège: 1746).

⁷⁵ W. FARRELL, *A Companion to the Summa* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1941).

⁷⁶ With this term we would like to signify both the general procedure of reason-based argumentation as well as the specific discipline of metaphysics.

⁷⁷ «Das Interesse an dem Theologen Thomas hinkt bei jedem neuen Forschungsschub immer einige Zeit hinter dem Interesse an dem Philosophen Thomas her. Im frühen 19. Jahrhundert, unter dem Einfluß der Romantik, sucht die katholische Theologie Windschutz bei dem Philosophen Thomas gegen die unheimlichen, sturmwindartigen antitheologischen Bewegungen der Zeit, gegen Rationalismus, Liberalismus, Sozialismus, Religionskritik. Das späte 19. Jahrhundert holt den theologischen Schritt nach» (O. H. PESCH, *Thomas von Aquin* [Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1988] p. 29).

⁷⁸ «Quia igitur sacra Scriptura considerat aliqua secundum quod sunt divinitus revelata, secundum quod dictum est, omnia quaecumque sunt divinitus revelabilia, communicant in una ratione formali objecti huius scientiae» (*ST I* q. 1, a. 3c).

own accord. Revelation, however, provides the more certain and complete knowledge. The argument from authority never gives up its place to rational argument, though rational argument may be employed where the authority of revelation is retained⁷⁹. As one commentator puts it, the whole of the first 43 questions of *ST I* are «a single and unified treatise of revealed theology called 'De Deo'»⁸⁰. The argument from authority, that is from the authority of revelation, always reigns as the more certain and complete.

Unfortunately, the encrusted layers of more or less «philosophical» commentary on Thomas' trinitarian doctrine cannot be ignored. Due to the prevalence of a philosophical reading of the *Prima Pars*, Thomas no less than Augustine has been a favorite whipping-boy of post-Vatican II trinitarian theology. In order to clear the table for our theological reading, we must first extricate Thomas from the tangled web of trinitarian criticism and historiography (part C below).

C. Separating Thomas from Neoscholastic Readings.

While we cannot go into great detail concerning every aspect of the modern criticism of Thomas' *Summa*, Book I, we can pursue a more practical and perhaps more helpful course by demonstrating: 1) why it is important to see the text as a theological work in the scientific sense rather than a metaphysics (sections 1-2 below); and 2) that by following Cajetan the modern reading of Thomas distorts the text (section 3). By detailing Thomas' own methods of theology, we will also be able to assess and correct the use of Thomas as a feature of the history of western/Latin Trinitarian theology.

1. Textual features opposing the modern readings of Rahner and others⁸¹:

i. First, the titles *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* are nowhere to be found in Thomas. The terms Thomas uses are *unitas* and *distinctio*. He outlines qq. 2-43 according to what pertains to the unity of Persons followed by what pertains to the distinction of Persons⁸². The aforementioned titles have been attached to the text by commentators since the time of Cajetan. The incredible inertia of these long-standing terms have unfortunately led to the assumption that they are indeed in the text and accurately reflect the structure of the text. Hence, many modern theolog-

⁷⁹ «Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, licet argumenta rationis humanae non habeant locum ad probandum quae fidei sunt, tamen ex articulis fidei haec doctrina ad alia argumentatur [...]» (*ST I* q. 1, a. 8, ad 1um).

⁸⁰ «[E]inen einzigen und einheitlichen offenbarungstheologischen Traktat 'De Deo'» (H. JORISSEN, «Zur Struktur des Traktates 'De Deo' in der *Summa theologiae* des Thomas von Aquin», p. 237).

⁸¹ Here we include such authors as E. Jüngel, W. Kasper, J. Moltmann, P. Schoonenberg and W. Simonis. K. Rahner was chosen as the figurehead of this group of critics because he has been more prolific and, due to the English translations of nearly all his works, is also more well-known to the American theological audience.

⁸² *ST I* q. 27, prol.

ians simply refer to the text in these terms with little or no notation of Thomas' own divisions in the prologues to questions two and twenty-seven⁸³.

The view that these anachronistic titles have contributed to the misreading of Thomas is not a new one. In the last 30 years, a few theologians have taken issue with such neoscholastic terms. Carl Sträter, S. J. and Hans Jorissen are notable among these theologians. Sträter demonstrated the absence of the terms *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* as well as the implication of an absolute subsistence in this text⁸⁴. The word «unus» is limited to being a predicate adjective; that is, Thomas never speaks of the «Unus Deus» but of the «Deus» who is «unus»⁸⁵. Sträter and Jorissen both focus their arguments upon the supposition of the term «divina essentia», yet they disagree on whether it is consistently used by Thomas.

Sträter contends that the object of the beatific vision discussed in q. 12 cannot be an abstraction or a singular reality apart from the Persons but must be the whole reality of the Trinity of Persons. Hence, he proposes a twofold definition of «divina essentia» in which it refers to the divine totality in qq. 2-26 and to the common essence strictly speaking in qq. 27-43. The intuitive character of the beatific vision according to Sträter implies that what is seen or known will not be distinguished one part from another by an act of reason. Moreover, this beatified knowing cannot involve less than what we know by faith in this life.

The supernatural knowledge of God which we have in this earthly life is, due to its obscurity, inferior to the heavenly vision. It is, however, much superior to a natural knowledge of God because by faith we already know God to be one and three⁸⁶.

The structural transition in the prologue to question twenty-seven then does not begin the discussion of a new topic but rather a shift from the discussion of unity to one of distinction within the same Godhead or divine reality⁸⁷. The subject of

⁸³ See the following for traditional uses of these divisions with both negative and positive evaluations: Y. CONGAR, «Le sens de l'économie salutaire dans la 'Théologie' de saint Thomas d'Aquin (Somme théologique)», in *Glaube und Geschichte*. Festgabe Joseph Lortz, vol. II (Baden-Baden: B. Grimm, 1957), pp. 73-122; M.-D. CHENU, *Introduction...*; W. KASPER, *Der Gott Jesu Christi*, pp. 290ff; G. LAFONT, *Structure et méthode dans la Somme théologique de saint Thomas d'Aquin*; O. H. PESCH, «Um den Plan...»; K. Rahner, *Mysterium salutis*, II, ch. 5; A. MALET, *Personne et amour dans la théologie trinitaire de saint Thomas d'Aquin*.

⁸⁴ C. STRÄTER, «Le point de départ du traité thomiste de la Trinité», *Sciences ecclésiastiques* XIV (1962) pp. 71-87.

⁸⁵ Note how Thomas discusses unity in question eleven without ever saying «Deus unus»: the issue of the question is «De unitate Dei»; article three asks «utrum Deus sit unus»; the authority of article three states that «Deus tuus unus est»; the body of article four concludes, «unde manifestum est quod Deus est maxime unus».

⁸⁶ «La connaissance surnaturelle de Dieu que nous avons dans la vie terrestre est, à cause de son obscurité, inférieure à la vision céleste; elle est pourtant de beaucoup supérieure à la connaissance naturelle de Dieu, parce que, par la foi, nous connaissons déjà *Deum esse trinum et unum*» (STRÄTER, *Ibid.*, p. 83).

⁸⁷ «Consideratis autem his quae ad divinae essentiae unitatem pertinent, restat consideratio de his quae pertinent ad trinitatem personarum in divinis» (ST I q. 27 prol.).

questions 2-26 is, according to Sträter, the total divine reality that is one according to essence and therefore can be signified by «divina essentia»⁸⁸.

Hans Jorissen later attempted to refine Sträter's research by suggesting that we drop his inappropriate and misleading nomenclature in favor of Thomas' own words⁸⁹. It is the *essentia trium personarum* in every question and does not change from signifying the total divine reality in one place to signifying the common essence (only) in another. The problem with Sträter's view, according to Jorissen, is that positing a twofold conception of divine essence actually breaks up the unity of the text no less than the reading against which Sträter argues. Jorissen believes that Thomas' conception of *divina essentia* is uniform throughout the text and that he «knows nothing of an idea of total essence»⁹⁰. Moreover, he argues, Thomas' references to a plurality in God in qq. 2-26 further indicates that the subject of the text is the one that is common to the Three⁹¹. Jorissen contends therefore that a strict consistency in terminology provides for Thomas the better defense against the charge of «monopersonalism» or an «absolute subsistence» in *ST I* qq. 2-26⁹². Thus, the «divina essentia» of the early questions is not a subsistent oneness apart from the Persons or the Persons altogether but the essence held in common by which God is one, and this interpretation makes the term consistent in meaning throughout the *De Deo*. We will return later in this chapter to the consistency of Thomas' language throughout the *De Deo*. For now it is important to note that there is ample textual evidence that the schema of *De Deo Uno-De Deo Trino* is quite misleading.

ii. The second feature that undermines popular criticism of Thomas' doctrine is the centrality of the questions on the divine persons both in their unity and distinction⁹³. Questions 2-43 are integral to the rest of part one and form the heart of the entire *summa*. Thomas' trinitarian doctrine guards against the tendency to construct a doctrine of God upon the doctrines of creation and soteriology. The interpretive categories thereby remain God-defined and not creature-defined.

⁸⁸ «On, en d'autres mots, l'essence divine, qui est l'objet de cette vision, n'est pas l'élément commun des trois personnes; c'est toute la réalité de Dieu. Et, par conséquent, l'*essentia divina* (q. 2, prol.), la *divinae essentiae unitas* (q. 27, prol.) que l'on étudie dans ce traité *de Deo Uno*, est, elle aussi, cette réalité divine totale» (STRÄTER, *Ibid.*, p. 83).

⁸⁹ «Unter der genannten Voraussetzung kann er deshalb ganz unproblematisch die Unterscheidung zwischen der *essentia divina* und der *distinctio personarum* einführen und zum Einteilungsprinzip seines Gotesstrakates machen, her mithin nicht in eine 'allgemeine' und 'spezielle' Gotteslehre aufgeteilt ist» (JORISSEN, *Ibid.*, p. 245).

⁹⁰ JORISSEN, *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁹¹ *ST I* q. 10, a. 2; *I* q. 11, a. 4 s.c.; etc. Cf. JORISSEN, *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁹² «Wenn ich recht sehe, ist Sträter's Interpretationsversuch nicht zuletzt von dem Anliegen bestimmt, Thomas von der Unterstellung einer 'absoluten Subsistenz' des göttlichen Wesens freizuhalten, einer Annahme, die in einem Traktat 'De Deo uno' Gott letztlich doch nur einpersönlich denken könnte» (JORISSEN, *Ibid.*, p. 245).

⁹³ To say that the doctrine of the Trinity is important or central to Christian theology today seems to imply a discernible threeness in things or in the acts of God whereby we could say the Father did this and the Son did that or was responsible for that, etc. It is obviously not that for Thomas nor is it the lesser form of identifying triads in aspects of the world as Bonaventure did. Rather it means that what is said about this doctrine is applicable at every turn throughout the whole of theology.

We can clarify this statement by looking at the freedom of God with respect to creation and the salvation of human beings. Thomas states that blessedness is the perfect good of intellectual nature⁹⁴. In God, to be is not other than to understand («non est aliud esse et intelligere») and by the divine simplicity and perfection, God enjoys beatitude. God knows His very being, and the divine will finds repose in this knowledge. Thomas distinguishes the perfect divine life from any act of creation by contending that beatitude does not consist in the willful apprehension of a good, that is, in an act of the will tending toward the good⁹⁵. Perfect goodness is realized in the notional acts or processions of knowing and willing that are the Persons of the Son and Holy Spirit⁹⁶. The divine intellect is perfect prior to and apart from creation. Hence, creation adds nothing to God not does it complete God in any way. God's knowledge is then not altered or increased in any way by creation, because creation is not a good desired; rather it is a good caused by the divine knowledge and will⁹⁷. It is necessary to deny a real relation of God to creation, for God is perfect and complete *in se*. Additionally, Thomas' incorporation of the Augustinian argument for the unity of divine work *ad extra*, serves to connect the Trinity and creation intimately without imputing mutability on the part of the Persons (God). If, in fact, it was the Father alone who created or the Son alone, then our knowledge would be limited to this or that Person because our knowledge of causes is only by way of effect. To say that the creative power is common to the whole Trinity means that the goodness that is the creative power is an overflowing of the entire Godhead. Thus, the whole divinity is the cause of all⁹⁸.

Drawing upon his earlier arguments in q. 19, a. 4 and q. 14, a. 8, Thomas contends that God creates by His knowledge and will. The processions of the Son and Holy Spirit as Word and Love are the very *rationes* or causes of creation. The Persons do have a causality of their own with respect to creatures although the power to create is common and one. By reason of the involvement of the whole Godhead in the creative act, we can know the whole trinity. We cannot know the distinction of Persons, but we can know through natural reason what pertains to God as one because the creative power is shared among the Persons who are one divine nature⁹⁹.

⁹⁴ «Nihil enim aliud sub nomine beatitudinis intelligitur, nisi bonum perfectum intellectualis naturae 1» (*ST I* q. 26, a. 1c).

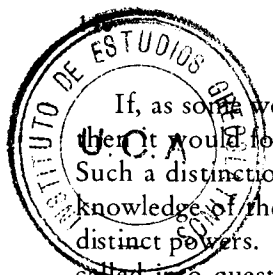
⁹⁵ «Non enim producit creaturas ex necessitate suae naturae, sed per intellectum et per voluntatem [...] et ideo in Deo non est realis relatio ad creaturas» (*ST I* q. 28, a. 1, ad 3um).

⁹⁶ «Unde, cum processionibus divinis aliquas actiones necesse sit accipere, secundum bonitatem et huiusmodi alia attributa non accipiuntur aliae processionibus nisi verbi et amoris, secundum quod Deus suam essentiam, veritatem et bonitatem intelligit et amat» (*ST I* q. 27 a. 5 ad 2um).

⁹⁷ We should note the difference between «knowing» creatures in the modern sense and «causing» creatures in the scholastic sense. For Thomas, «Deus est causa rerum per suum intellectum et voluntatem [...] et secundum hoc processionibus Personarum sunt rationes productionis creaturarum» (*ST I* q. 45, a. 7c).

⁹⁸ «Et ideo creare convenit Deo secundum suum esse: quod est eius essentia, quae est communis tribus Personis. Unde creare non est proprium alicui Personae, sed commune toti Trinitati» (*ST I* q. 45, a. 6 s.c.).

⁹⁹ «Virtus autem creativa Dei est communis toti Trinitati: unde pertinet ad unitatem essentiae, non ad distinctionem Personarum. Per rationem igitur naturalem cognosci possunt de Deo ea quae perti-



If, as some would argue, the creative power was limited to one or two persons, then it would follow that other powers might also be proper only to one Person. Such a distinction according to diverse powers would imply on our part a natural knowledge of the distinction between Persons by way of a natural knowledge of distinct powers. As a consequence, the unity and equality of the Persons would be called into question. Both of these implications are unacceptable, because what God is (*quid est*) is beyond our natural reason¹⁰⁰. The Trinity of Persons are *maxime unus*¹⁰¹, and their distinctions cannot be known apart from revelation¹⁰². It is a fundamental teaching of the Church that all is one in God except where there is opposition of relation, that is, Persons¹⁰³. Hence, any perceived distinction (of powers) must be according to our understanding only. Thomas therefore carefully circumscribes the troublesome issue of appropriating specific powers or attributes to each Person for purposes of illuminating their distinctions¹⁰⁴. We can employ the multiplicity of essential attributes to manifest and discuss the distinctions of Persons, yet we must remember that such distinctions of powers do not pertain to the Persons properly. They are equal in every way except where opposition of relation obtains.

We can argue this point in another way: Natural reason can know of God's existence (or "God as one") by way of his effect¹⁰⁵. Revelation reveals something about that cause in addition to a more certain knowledge of the existence of the cause¹⁰⁶. If only one Person was responsible for the effect, then the revelation concerning the distinction of Persons would involve a revelation of unknown causes of unknown effects. The order of knowing from *quia* to *propter quid* is undermined. Revelation then as imparting knowledge *secundum propter quid* is dependent upon prior knowledge *quia*.

Modern theologians who want to posit a necessity or a real relation on the part of God with respect to creation or salvation are inadvertently suggesting an incompleteness on the part of God. The full story of Christ and the redemption of humankind in some way completes the picture of God in a scheme where there is a real relation from Creator to creation. The supposed profit of such a scheme would

nent ad unitatem essentiae, non autem ea quae pertinent ad distinctionem Personarum» (*ST* I q. 32, a. 1c). «Essentia autem divina non solum idem est realiter cum una persona, sed cum tribus. Unde et una persona, et duae, et tres possunt de essentia praedicari [...] sicut haec est vera: essentia est tres Personae, ita haec est vera Deus est tres Personae» (*ST* I q. 39, a. 6c). See also q. 39, a. 1c.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *ST* I q. 1, a. 8.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ST* I q. 11, a. 4.

¹⁰² Cf. *ST* I q. 32, a. 1; q. 12, a. 13.

¹⁰³ Cf. Council of Florence, 1441. H. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Barcelona: Herder, 1963) n. 703.

¹⁰⁴ See *ST* I q. 39, a. 8.

¹⁰⁵ «Unde Deum esse, secundum quod non est per se notum quoad nos, demonstrabile est per effectus nobis notos» (*ST* I q. 2, a. 2c).

¹⁰⁶ «Secundum certitudinem quidem, quia aliae scientiae certitudinem habent ex naturali lumine rationis humanae, quae potest errare; haec autem certitudinem habet ex lumine divinae scientia, quae decipi non potest» (*ST* I q. 1, a. 5c).

be to facilitate a discussion of our incorporation and experience of divine life in the most explicit manner. Additionally, a real relation between God and creatures would imply that the works of restoration would also somehow affect God in as much as God could be said to have «experienced» a relationship with his creation (via the incarnation). The implicit assumption is that the incarnation was as much for God's knowledge of human life as it was for our salvation.

The centrality of qq. 2-43 for the whole *Summa*, on the other hand, serves to guard against such notions of relation between God and creatures. The doctrine of the Trinity is not found in creation or Christology in Thomas' *Summa*; rather, it provides the interpretive framework for understanding all other doctrines.

«The knowledge of the divine Persons was necessary for two reasons: first, for understanding the creation of things rightly. Indeed by saying that God created all things by his Word, we exclude the error of presuming that God produced things from a natural necessity. And by positing a procession of love within God, it is shown that God did not produce creatures on account of some need, nor on account of some extrinsic cause, but on account of the love of His own goodness»¹⁰⁷.

Concerning creation, we must remember that the overflowing goodness in divine life existed prior to creation, therefore, creation is a superabundance of good freely given. God is not and need not be in a real relation for His own sake. It is a higher form of love to act for the sake of a creation that adds nothing to the divine life. Likewise, concerning the works of restoration, we must remember that human nature was «in» God prior to the Incarnation in so far as God is the principle and end of all things. The Second Person of the Trinity took up human nature in a visible manner *for our sakes*, for it was already present in a higher and more perfect way in the Godhead¹⁰⁸. The doctrine of the Trinity is central in importance. In the words of Augustine, «nowhere is the way more difficult and dangerous than in plumbing the depths of the unity of the three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit»¹⁰⁹.

Thus, to say that the question of distinction of Persons in the one divine essence is at the heart of the *Summa* is to affirm something important about the nature of God that cannot be forgotten as one reads the remaining questions. We must affirm a unity of Persons in works *ad extra* in order to ground our knowledge of God as cause. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals a dynamic perfection of divine life that is free to overflow into a creative act for our sakes. The doctrines of soteriology and Christology grow out of this same idea of divine life. It is for our sakes alone that God provides a *via* by which rational creatures may attain to God. The inner divine life is the basis or *ratio* of that restoring act, because all divine acts *ad extra* are based upon the inner divine (notional) acts.

«But nevertheless the divine Persons have a causality with respect to the creation of things according to the *ratio* of their processions [...] God is the cause of things

¹⁰⁷ «[...] quod cognitio divinarum Personarum fuit necessaria nobis dupliciter. Uno modo, ad recte sentiendum de creatione rerum. Per hoc enim quod dicimus Deum omnia fecisse Verbo suo, excluditur error ponentium Deum produxisse res ex necessitate naturae» (*ST* I q. 32, a. 1 ad 3um).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *ST* III q. 2, a. 7c; and q. 4, a. 3c.

¹⁰⁹ AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, 15.

through His intellect and will, just as a maker of artificial things [acts through his intellect and will]»¹¹⁰.

Thomas demonstrates that God is a knowing and willing cause as opposed to a cause that knows and wills. That is, God knows and wills the divine nature, and such knowing and willing *ad intra* is the *ratio* for *opera ad extra*. Thomas is therein careful to protect God's freedom, immutability, goodness, unity, etc. An error with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity is most dangerous in Thomas' eyes because what is established there informs and can possibly distort other doctrines.

2. Thomas' scientific methodology.

Having noted the centrality of this doctrine of the Trinity in the *Summa* and the consistency of the subject treated in the first two sections of the text (qq. 2-26 and 27-43), it remains to discuss Thomas' methodology particularly with respect to the use of philosophical argument. It cannot be the case that he has, in fact, done what he denounced; namely, attempted to prove the Trinity by arguments from reason¹¹¹. Yet Thomas offered proofs of God's existence as well as of certain essential attributes¹¹². The question arises then of how we might characterize Thomas' methodology as he moves from a discussion of truths accessible to natural reason to a discussion of those things wholly beyond (but not against) reason and knowable by revelation alone. In other words, what is the methodological relation between rational arguments in these two sections? The first thing that can be demonstrated is God's existence, that God is. Thomas calls these demonstrable things the *praeambula ad articulos [fidei]*. These preambles concern the knowledge of God from His effects, for the effects themselves take the place of a definition of the cause¹¹³. Hence, the knowledge of God's existence as well as the causal nature of his Being are knowable through His effects by means of natural reason¹¹⁴.

Natural reason cannot, however, attain to a knowledge of the distinction of Persons¹¹⁵. Doctrines such as this one are knowable by revelation alone and are call-

¹¹⁰ «Sed tamen divinae Personae secundum rationem suae processionis habent causalitatem respectu creationis rerum [...] Deus est causa rerum per suum intellectum et voluntatem, sicut artifex rerum artificiarum. Artifex autem per verbum in intellectu conceptum, et per amorem suae voluntatis ad aliquid relatum, operatur. Unde et Deus Pater operatus est creaturam per suum Verbum, quod est Filius; et per suum Amorem, qui est Spiritus Sanctus» (*ST I* q. 45, a. 6c).

¹¹¹ «Qui autem probare nititur Trinitatem Personarum naturali ratione, fidei dupliciter derogat. Primo quidem, quantum ad dignitatem ipsius fidei, quae est ut sit de rebus invisibilibus, quae rationem humanam excedunt [...] Secundo, quantum ad utilitatem trahendi alios ad fidem. Dum enim aliquis ad probandam fidem inducit rationes quae non sunt cogentes, cedit in irrisionem infidelium» (*ST I* q. 32, a. 1c).

¹¹² See *ST I* qq. 2-11.

¹¹³ «Ad secundum dicendum quod cum demonstratur causa per effectum, necesse est uti effectuo loco definitionis causae, ad probandum causam esse: et hoc maxime contingit in Deo» (*ST I* q. 2, a. 2, ad 2um).

¹¹⁴ For much of this section, I am dependent upon Ralph McInerny's discussion in his work, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), ch. 5.

¹¹⁵ *ST I* q. 32, a. 1c.

ed «articles of faith». What pertains to the articles of faith can be known and proven only by way of authority. These truths are intelligible *in se*, but not to us in this life, only in the next. The distinction between preambles and articles of faith is then not whether a truth is intelligible, but whether it is accessible in *via*, in this life. The preambles of faith such as God's existence, eternity and goodness can be known by natural reason. Thomas' famous «five ways» are just such examples of arguments whose conclusions correspond to the truths of the faith, hence, we say that the assertion of God's existence falls into the category of *preambulae*¹¹⁶. Such demonstrations, however, may be seen only by a few persons with sufficient knowledge of natural things, sufficient leisure and a high degree of moral virtue. It is evidence of the mercy of God that these rationally accessible truths are revealed in addition to the mysteries; namely, so that all may know what is necessary for salvation¹¹⁷. Thus, regarding theological doctrines in general, what is believed and not yet understood by human reason, may possibly be understood either with the aid of the right philosophical proof or certainly in the next life by means of the *lumen gloriae*¹¹⁸. Properly understood, the preambles are not prior to faith but only what is believed on the basis of revelation but can also be (in theory) known on the basis of philosophical truths¹¹⁹.

The line of distinction between preambles and articles is difficult to draw. The dispute over the line between these categories is governed by the degree of illumination one assumes to be possible in this life as well as the continuity of illumination between this life and our heavenly existence. For most theologians, the truths concerning the Trinity, the Incarnation and the forgiveness of sins can be believed but not known in this life and are, therefore, classified as «articles of faith»¹²⁰. The role of philosophical argument in discussing these doctrines is limited to clarifying the mysteries by way of analogies or similitudes and to refute objections brought against these doctrines. That is, having posited a particular doctrine, one can show its inner coherence (or logic) and that it is congruent with other known truths¹²¹. If one does not allow such an authority or the statement of such

¹¹⁶ *ST I* q. 2, a. 3c.

¹¹⁷ *ST I* q. 1, a. 1c; also *Summa contra Gentiles I* 4.

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of the *lumen gloriae*, see *ST I* q. 12, a. 5.

¹¹⁹ It is also important to note that knowing cannot coincide with believing in the same person at the same time. One believes a given truth until it is known, and then one is said to «know» that it is true. MCINERNEY, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 159-161.

¹²⁰ Anselm and the fourteenth-century nominalists, on the other hand, represent the extremes beyond this normative listing as found in Thomas. One may read Anselm's arguments of suitability to imply a stronger assertion about what is rationally accessible or demonstrable since he did, in fact, attempt to show by reason the truth of the Incarnation and Trinity. That is, one may read his arguments about the being of God (*Monologion*) in the same way as one reads his argument for the existence of God (*Proslogion*). Ockham and later nominalists represented a much more conservative view of the ability of human reason. For them, very little of the Christian faith could be known by reason alone, because the way in which we know things is determined by our intellective acts, not the objects known. Hence, reasoning has more to do with the workings of our minds and linguistics than with the objects of our knowledge. See his *Summa Logicae* 50-52.

¹²¹ «Alio modo inducitur ratio, non quae sufficienter probet radicem, sed quae radici iam positae ostendat congruere sconsequentes effectus [...] quia scilicet, Trinitate posita, congruunt huiusmodi ra-

doctrine, no arguments can be adduced for proving the doctrine. Further, to attempt such proofs for what are specifically mysteries is for Thomas a derogation of the faith¹²².

The relation between the preambles and articles is especially problematic in discussions of the Trinity where both essential and proper terms are necessary. Though this doctrine is itself an article of faith, its discussion spans the distinction between preambles and articles. Anselm, Augustine, Peter the Lombard and others attempted to bridge the two categories (or actually blur the distinction between them) by means of the divine attributes and various analogies between Creator and created. In order to protect the dignity of the faith, Thomas, however, demarcated the mysteries of the faith as articles not subject to human understanding. He did not want to exalt human reason beyond its capabilities or to humble the wisdom of God by suggesting that it can be plumbed without the light of glory that is nothing less than the presence of God in the mind¹²³. We will discuss in detail Thomas' treatment of these problems of trinitarian discussion in a later chapter. For now, it is important only to note that arguments from natural reason have different import and roles in Thomas' *Summa* depending upon whether the topic is an article or preamble of the faith.

It would be simplistic, however, to see the division between *ST* I qq. 2-26 and *ST* I qq. 27-43 as a division between arguments from reason and those from authority. Arguments from authority do not assume center stage only in the second part but are present throughout. Thomas states that the theologian uses the philosophical sciences «for the greater manifestation of those things treated in this science [theology]»¹²⁴. Further, the *quae* referred to here are the principles of theology which are revealed by God directly, *immediate*. The argumentation proceeds from that which is revealed, and in cases where the revealed coincides with what is naturally attainable; that is, the existence of God, the argument proceeds upon the more certain—the revealed truth¹²⁵. In fact, the unity of this science depends upon the formality of the object; namely, the *una ratione* by which all things are considered *divinitus revelabile*¹²⁶. Secondly, in *ST* I qq. 27-43, Thomas does not limit himself to arguments from authority. Thomas uses arguments about human knowing and willing to elucidate the mystery of the Trinity. These discussions must be seen as «aids

tiones» (*ST* I q. 32, a. 1, ad 2um).

¹²² «Qui autem probare nititur Trinitatem Personarum naturali ratione, fidei dupliciter derogat. Primo quidem, quantum ad dignitatem ipsius fidei, quae est ut sit de rebus invisibilibus, quae rationem humanam excedunt [...] Secundo [...], aliquis ad probandam fidem inducit rationes quae non sunt cogentes, credit in irrisionem infidelium: credunt enim quod huiusmodi rationibus innitatur, et propter eas credamus» (*ST* I q. 32, a. 1c).

¹²³ «[...] ita divina essentia unitur intellectui creato ut intellectum in actu, per seipsam faciens intellectum in actu» (*ST* I q. 12, a. 2, ad 3um).

¹²⁴ «Ad secundum dicendum quod haec scientia accipere potest aliquid a philosophicis disciplinis [...] ad maiorem manifestationem eorum quae in hac scientia traduntur» (*ST* I q. 1, a. 5, ad 2um).

¹²⁵ «[...] ista scientia est principaliter de his quae sua altitudine ratione transcendunt; aliae vero scientiae considerant ea tantum quae ratione subduntur» (*ST* I q. 1, a. 5c).

¹²⁶ *ST* I q. 1, a. 4, ad 2um.

to understanding». Hence, Thomas outlines the truths of the doctrine before he introduces the argument from human psychology. The fact of processions, their character as intellective and willful, are all introduced before discussing psychology in general as well as the doctrine of the image¹²⁷.

Thomas does posit an analogy between human psychology and divine life as he proceeds in his discussion from intellectual subsistence to knowing and willing, to processions of word and love, and the subsistent character of that word and love. Yet this elucidation or manifesting function of philosophical argument does not imply a procedure in which Thomas would presume to push the analogy as far as possible in order to reveal a threeness (in oneness) in God. Augustine's attempt to do just this failed (without surprise to him) because each Person understands and loves, so that there are three Persons understanding and loving¹²⁸. Moreover, our knowing and willing are distorted and unbalanced by sin¹²⁹. The argument or supposed psychological proof actually reveals more about the differences between the divine and the human persons¹³⁰. More importantly, for Augustine, the analogy reveals the damage done to the human person by sin and our consequent need for Christ to reform the image in which we are created so that it may rightfully assume its epistemological role¹³¹.

In the *Summa* the argument from psychology is actually begun with the propositions of the faith (statement of revelation) defining the reality of processions and Persons. The whole discussion of the image of the trinity in the mind is actually circular because the psychological explanation is actually dependent upon the Trinitarian doctrine, not *vice versa*. Any philosophical investigation of these truths can only be characterized as «elucidation»¹³². The doctrine itself determines the argument to be used. It is also important to remember that Thomas does not introduce the *imago Dei* until *ST* I q. 93. He could hardly prove much analogously without having first established and defined the basis of the analogy. One must conclude that Thomas proceeds on the basis of an idea of intellectual subsistence stripped of the imperfections of the composition of body and soul and finite existence, while being imbued with all possible perfections of unity, eternity, goodness, infinity, immutability...etc.

iii. 2. If, on the other hand, Thomas were to derive the Persons from the essence by philosophical argument involving the divine attributes, the connection

¹²⁷ Note the relatively late discussion of the *imago Dei* present in the human *mens*. *ST* I q. 93.

¹²⁸ AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, XV 12, 42; VII.

¹²⁹ AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, XIII 25-26; XIV 11.

¹³⁰ AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, XV 21-26.

¹³¹ AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, XIV 23-24. We must be careful, however, not to suppose that even Augustine's argument was without foundation in revelation. He says himself in *De Trinitate* XV 39 that he has been discussing the Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures. Hence even in that heavily «philosophical» discussion of Books VIII-XV, Augustine sees himself arguing on the basis of Scripture not reason alone, that is, using a reasoning illumined by faith not working toward it. In Thomas' terms, then Augustine's work was simply the application of psychology for elucidating as article of faith while at the same time affirming a kind of knowledge by conformity in the next life.

¹³² See *ST* I q. 1, a. 5; q. 32.

between essential attributes and the persons would certainly be more important to the text. The introduction of Word and Love or of the many Augustinian triads would have fit in quite well after q. 20, by which time Thomas had discussed the knowledge and will of God. The fact that Thomas waits until after he has already discussed the divine attributes and divine Persons separately before he broaches the subject of the way in which the attributes can be used to reveal something about the distinction of Persons shows that it was not a central argument. Most every aspect of trinitarian doctrine is expounded before the discussion of the appropriation of essential attributes to specific Persons. Further, unlike his predecessors, Thomas treats the theory of appropriations all within one single, albeit long, article. The divine attributes, therefore, cannot be considered an avenue of philosophical demonstration of the Trinity, but only to elucidate the doctrine in a quite restricted sense. Moreover, because there is not divine essence other than the divine Persons, the coordination of essential and proper terms has ultimately more to do with our theological grammar than with the doctrine itself.

Hence, it is evident that if one asks the question of whether this ordering of topics represents the best or even a good ordering of philosophical arguments demonstrating the Trinity from the One God, the answer is, "No". The argument from psychology or from the divine attributes would in a philosophical argument precede and inform the discussion of the Persons. In the *Summa*, quite the contrary is true. One can more easily argue that the philosophical arguments are informed by the articles of faith simply because they follow their introduction and are shaped by them.

3. The Source of Modern Readings: Cajetan¹³³.

Having dismissed the possibility of Thomas using philosophical arguments to demonstrate the Trinity, it is still unclear what the transition from q. 26 to q. 27 (the transition from discussing God as One to discussing God as Three) involves. We have established above that qq. 27-43 do not contain rational demonstrations but illustrative arguments of the articles of faith which are themselves determined by the content of revelation. Even in question two, the rational demonstrations take place within the theological context of faith¹³⁴. Thus, the demonstration is intended to lead the one believing in God's existence to know rationally that God exists. The failure to see the unity of the preambles and articles within the one faith (rather than the former being an introduction to the faith) is behind the misreading of *De Deo* and the assumption of an absolute Being that can be equated with the

¹³³ Though it would be a difficult case to demonstrate, we would like to assert here that the popularity among Neoscholastics of Cajetan as a commentator on Thomas, the heavy citation of his commentaries by such great Thomists as Billot, Garrigou-Lagrange and Maritain and the inclusion of his commentary in the Leonine edition of the *Summa* all indicate the dominating presence of Cajetan in Thomistic studies throughout most of the last century.

¹³⁴ We know from the preface to the entire *Summa* that it is for beginners in theology and not for unbelievers nor explicitly for evangelical work.

God of the philosophers and is not specifically Christian. In other words, it seems to Thomas' critics that he sets aside revelation until q. 27 as he works with rationally attainable doctrines in the first set of questions. Because of this appearance of a methodological shift, many theologians have taken issue with Thomas because the subject of the two sections does not seem to be identical¹³⁵.

Rather than discuss the many objections voiced by modern theologians, we will focus on the underlying concern, that is, the suspicion that Thomas is using rational speculation to introduce his doctrine of God and that this doctrine in the early questions does not correspond to the Christian trinitarian doctrine that is introduced in q. 27. This suspicion is, though wrong, not unfounded. The idea of Thomas dividing his text into philosophical and theological arguments or of reversing the traditional relation of faith and knowledge comes directly from Thomas' own commentators¹³⁶. Neoscholastics such as Billot, Garrigou-Lagrange, Maritain and others were merely following in the footsteps of Cardinal Cajetan and John of St. Thomas. The modern criticism and rejection of Thomas' method is a reaction to the Thomas that was introduced and taught to the theological community by the great commentators and neo-Thomists. Their use of the neo-scholastic terms, *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino*, betrays the assumptions they carry as well as the source of their readings of Thomas. Consequently, we will offer a critique of the Neoscholastics' commentaries, the basis for modern readings and criticisms, by focusing on what we take to be the key figure in the picture: Cardinal Tommaso de Vio Cajetan¹³⁷.

Cajetan for the most part, did his work very well as he unraveled the complexities of the *Summa*, provided useful formulae for comprehension and highlighted important connections and references within the text. Unfortunately, he also obscured the text at crucial points. In regards to the structure of the first book, he missed the mark by a rather wide margin¹³⁸. Cajetan ignored the organizational

¹³⁵ One could argue, however, that even if the first part is only a natural theology, the God of the philosopher and the God of Christian believers must be the same though not with respect to all descriptions. See MCINERNEY, *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160.

¹³⁶ Another but related issue that underlies modern suspicions of Thomas' method is the rejection, or at least misconception of, the scientific treatment of theology. We will return to this issue in the last chapter where we will pose the question of whether Thomas' insights have any practical value for modern trinitarian theology.

¹³⁷ On the life and works of Cajetan, the following works may be consulted: Y. M.-J. CONGAR, O. P., «Bio-bibliographie de Cajétan»: *Revue Thomiste* XVII (1934) pp. 3-49; M. GRABMANN, «Die Stellung des Kardinal Cajetan in der Geschichte des Thomismus»: *Angelicum* XI (1934) pp. 547-60; P. MANDONNET, O. P., «Cajétan»: *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, II (Paris, 1923) pp. 1313-29. Cajetan is most known for his commentaries on Thomas' *De ente et essentia* and *Summa theologiae*, but he also commented upon most of Aristotle's logical works, especially in the early part of his career (1494-99). It may also be worthwhile to keep in mind that Cajetan completed his commentary on *De Anima* (1509) during the period of the *Summa*-commentary (1507-22).

¹³⁸ The Leonine editors generously included this most popular and insightful commentator's words in the critical edition of the *Summa*. The result has been to perpetuate and authorize Cajetan's particular readings of Thomas. Unfortunately, as R. McInerney has convincingly argued, Cajetan was not all that keen in every instance. See his, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University

comments in *ST* I qq. 2, 26 and 27 as well as the divisions to which they correspond. He also broached the subject of distinguishing Person and essence thirty-six questions earlier than Thomas does. Not until q. 39 does Thomas directly address the grammatical rules for speech about essence and Person. There he enunciates a number of rules by which we might clarify our language, taking into account the distinction between Persons and essence and between the Persons themselves. Cajetan uses Thomas' own distinctions, but changes them from being logical to metaphysical. Thus, by introducing a precision that is not needed in q. 3, he unknowingly turned this theological text into a metaphysics allowing a grammatical distinction from the second section to define the subject of the first questions. That is to say, the God of revelation—the God who is Three Persons discussed as a unity in the early questions—becomes for Cajetan an absolute, concrete subject with its own subsistence (not identical with the subsistence of the three Persons) and accessible to natural reason¹³⁹.

To facilitate our discussion of Cajetan's commentary, we will first outline two of Thomas' discussions of the name *Deus* and its suppositum; that of questions 3 and 39. First, in q. 3, a. 3 the matter of the question is «whether God is the same as His essence or nature»¹⁴⁰. In distinguishing the *significatum* of *humanitas* and that of *deitas*, he states that those things that are not composed of matter and form are individuated *per se*. They are subsistent supposits, and no difference exists between the suppositum and the nature¹⁴¹. It is evident from his response that Thomas answers the question in terms of spiritual beings in general. The comparison then is between what is composed and what is not composed. God is one because God is not composed of parts, namely, of form and matter. Thus, God is not other than His deity or essence.

Compare this response with that of the later discussion in q. 39 that asks, «whether concrete essential names may supposit for persons»¹⁴². The essential term, *Deus*, can be said to supposit properly for essence in so far as it signifies the divine essence by which the divine Persons are God. Yet because we have asserted that divinity is simple (q. 3), the one having (the divine person), and the thing had (the divinity itself), must be the same. Hence, *Deus* signifies both the one having divinity and the divinity itself¹⁴³. Thomas goes on to clarify this manner of signific-

of America Press, 1996). In fact, Cajetan may have skewed the interpretation of the text for generations of readers, preempting a more faithful reading of Thomas' words. The incredible inertia built up with this authorized commentary has led to the conflation of text and commentary.

¹³⁹ As stated above, this first section is not a treatise *De Deo Uno*. It concerns the *una divina essentia trium personarum*. Thomas' heavy use of philosophical argumentation gives the appearance at times of a metaphysical demonstration, but it is purely a theological study moving from faith to understanding not the reverse.

¹⁴⁰ «[U]trum sit idem Deus quod sua essentia vel natura» (*ST* I q. 3, a. 3).

¹⁴¹ In his igitur quae non sunt composita ex materia et forma [...], ipsae formae per se individuantur, oportet quod ipsae formae sint supposita subsistentia» (*ST* I q. 3, a. 3c).

¹⁴² «[U]trum nomina essentialia concreta possint supponere pro persona» (*ST* I q. 39, a. 4).

¹⁴³ «Et haec opinio processisse videtur ex consideratione divinae simplicitatis, quae requirit quod in Deo idem sit habens et quod habetur» (*ST* I q. 39, a. 4c).

ation by noting the different ways in which *homo* and *Deus* supposit for person, the one having. The form signified by *homo* is really divided among the many individuals of the species and is one only according to our consideration. *Homo* supposit for «persons» properly and *per se*. *Deus*, however, signifies a form that is one and common to the Persons. It supposit for the Persons only *ex modo significandi*, that is, with the addition of a specifying predicate¹⁴⁴. For Thomas, the unity of the nature is caused by, or consists of, the unity of the Persons (in the act of being).

The level of precision and clarity in the discussion is markedly different in these two articles. Only in q. 39 does Thomas refer to notional acts, the divina supposita, and the different modes of signification. All that is known in q. 3 is that God is one due to the identity of form and supposit in spiritual beings. Hence, *Deus* is not other than divine essence. Thomas makes this same point in question 39, with an important clarification. There, Thomas equates divine suppositum and divine nature in personal terms because the discussion concerns God particularly and not as a type. Most importantly, *Deus* properly signifies that which is had IN the one having (*ut habente*)¹⁴⁵.

Cajetan, however, does not interpret these two questions according to different manners of signification. In q. 3, a. 3, he understands *Deus* to be an absolute or «concrete individual» more properly signified by «this God»¹⁴⁶. Commenting on the question «whether God is the same as His Essence», Cajetan focuses on the signification of the name *Deus*. In doing so, Cajetan raises a question not in the text; namely, whether divinity has a concrete existence or subsistence apart from the Persons. Cajetan's affirmative answer to that problem is shocking. He argues that the name *Deus* cannot signify a specific suppositum (or *habens divinitatem*) because this name signifies something common to the three. It also cannot signify the Persons because no mention is made of Person. Hence, it cannot be suppositing for Person, Persons, or personal suppositum. Cajetan then opts for another possibility, that of a non-personal suppositum. *Deus*, he says, «signifies a concrete individual of divine nature», not the Person of the Father, Son or Holy Spirit, but *hic Deus*. This *hic Deus* is the divine nature subsisting as an absolute unity. Therefore, later in question 39, Cajetan rejects the Augustinian axiom concerning the unity of works *ad extra* in favor of a divine nature that acts¹⁴⁷. It is *hic Deus* who possesses creative power and performs all divine works *ad extra*. Having defined a concrete, subsistent *Deus* distinct from the Persons, Cajetan has unwittingly established an

¹⁴⁴ «[A]lii melius dixerunt quod hoc nomen *Deus* ex modo significandi habet ut proprie possit supponere pro persona, sicut et hoc nomen *homo*» (*ST* I q. 39, a. 4c). Consequently, Thomas argues that *Deus* cannot be a proper name, that is one signifying a nature, because God's nature is inaccessible to us. It is a name of operation, for we understand God by way of His effects. See *ST* I q. 13, a. 8.

¹⁴⁵ «Nam hoc nomen *Deus*, quia significat divinam essentiam ut in habente, ex modo suae significationis naturaliter habet quod possit supponere pro persona» (*ST* I q. 39, a. 5c).

¹⁴⁶ CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I, q. 3, a. 3 nn. i and ii.

¹⁴⁷ «Auctor intelligat de essentia in concreto; cum dicit quod in ista, «Deus creat», ly «Deus» supponit pro natura [...] Nec est verum quod actiones sint suppositorum, universaliter; sed singularium subsistentium, quale est «hic Deus»» (CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I q. 39, a. 4, note x).

absolute divinity that falls into the category of a fourth divine thing. This posited absolute divinity in Cajetan's commentary is the chief source of the «monopersonalism» read into the *Summa*¹⁴⁸.

a) Cajetan's «virtual distinction».

According to Cajetan then the first twenty-five questions of Thomas' *De Deo* concern the absolute divine perfection signified by *hic Deus*. At first glance it may seem that Cajetan is using the same distinction of reason that Thomas later uses that does not deny or call into question the real identity of Person and essence *secundum rem*. Cajetan, however, assumes that Thomas' later distinction supports a discussion of essence separated from Persons.

We can clarify this problem by examining what Cajetan understands by the terms, *secundum rem* and *modus significandi*. He defines the former by the abstraction from the latter. Hence, we have two levels of signifying: one according to the proper reason and the other according to second intentions or manner of understanding¹⁴⁹. When Cajetan says that nature and supposit are the same in God, he is using the example of *homo* and *humanitas* with a metaphysical intention. Their identity is logical while their distinction is metaphysical by means of the *modus significandi*¹⁵⁰. In other words, by reason of Cajetan's own realism, he has inverted Thomas' distinction. For Thomas, the identity of essence and Person *secundum rem* is a metaphysical identity, because essence is signified «as in the one having [it]»¹⁵¹; that is, not apart from Person or personal supposita. The *distinctio rationis* between essence and Person that allows for a plurality of *modi significandi* is the logical distinction. We can be sure of this because Thomas explicitly distances himself from any notion of the essence having an existence apart from the Persons¹⁵², and the identity of essence and supposita in God means that there is nothing other than the Persons in God¹⁵³. Thomas leaves no room for a concrete essence in Cajetan's sense (a non-personal supposita).

¹⁴⁸ By the term «monopersonalism» we mean to denote the notion that God presents Himself to Creation as One and not as Three. The threeness in the Godhead remains self-enclosed and unrelated to works *ad extra*, and is therefore meaningless from our point of view. The charge is based on the assumption that the material of qq. 27-43 is beyond, and unrelated to, human experience, and that the distinction of Persons is inconsequential to the history of salvation. That is, it does not matter that the Son became incarnate but only that there was an incarnation. The mission is not a proper act of the Second Person of the Trinity nor does such act tell us anything about that Person.

¹⁴⁹ «Circos terminos assumptos in antecedente, et consequenter in tota hac ratione, distingue primo ly *natura* et ly *suppositum*. Sumuntur *natura* et *suppositum secundum rem tantum*, quando sumuntur *secundum proprias rationes rei quam significat natura, et rei quam significat suppositum*, abstrahendo a *modis significandi*» (CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I q. 39, a. 4).

¹⁵⁰ «[V]erbi gratia, quando sumitur *natura humana secundum eius propriam definitionem, et Socrates secundum eius rationem propriam* [...] Sermo praesens est de *natura* et *supposito secundum rem, et non secundum modum significandi*: hoc enim potius logici, illud metaphysici negotii est» (CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I, q. 39, a. 4).

¹⁵¹ «[U]t habente». See *ST* I q. 39, a. 1 and 5.

¹⁵² See *ST* I q. 28, a. 1 and 2.

¹⁵³ «[Q]uod in Deo non sit aliud *essentia* quam *persona secundum rem*» (*ST* I q. 39, a. 1).

We can also demonstrate this problem by looking at Cajetan's explanation of notional acts. Commenting upon Thomas' logical distinction between the notional acts of generation with respect to *deitas* and *Deus*, Cajetan offers a metaphysical explanation¹⁵⁴. We cannot say «Deity generates deity» because «deity» signifies the concrete essence which possesses only works *ad extra* not *ad intra*. Thomas' own distinction between the *habens* and *quod habetur* is lost. Moreover, the nature (substantial nature) is, in fact, different from the suppositum but not «totally» diverse. Cajetan's use of later material from q. 39 is not simply impatience but a significant alteration of the text.

This problem can also be seen in his commentary on q. 39. Commenting on the first article, «whether Person and essence are the same», Cajetan states that in God there is not an absoluteness nor a pure relativity, but there is *quod est relativum* and *quod est absolutum*¹⁵⁵. That is, what is relative is something else besides. Cajetan firmly agrees that essence and Person are the same *secundum rem*, but they do not share the same existence. Thus, paternity and essence are not actually distinct but are indeed virtually distinct. Logically they are one thing *secundum rem*, but they can be distinguished not only by our manner of understanding but also by their acts.

«The effect in act has a cause in the act. But without denying the difference between communicable and incommunicable, the effect in act is distinguished and not distinguished before any act of the intellect. Therefore, it [effect] has a cause in the act, but its cause is a distinction. Consequently, there is a distinction [in the cause] before any act of the intellect»¹⁵⁶.

Cajetan contends that this distinction does not depend upon «intellecting» by which a simple thing can be referred to in multiple terms due to our inability to grasp a singular. Rather, he posits an incomplete diversity based upon diversity of action. The distinction is dependent upon an equivocal cause whose equivocality betrays a distinction virtually present.

«Nevertheless there is one response to all these things: by denying the universal application of that proposition, namely, that distinction alone is the cause of its [distinct] effects. For the effect can arise from a distinction as of an univocal cause or from a distinction virtually contained as of an equivocal cause»¹⁵⁷.

It is not purely *ens rationis* dependent solely upon the work of the intellect; nor is it the formal distinction *ex parte rei* of the Scotists. Rather, it is a distinction

¹⁵⁴ «Non enim est hic sermo de differentia secundum *rationem* tantum: quoniam suppositum et natura in omnibus, etiam in Deo, sic distinguuntur. *Deus* enim et *deitas*, ratione modi significandi, distinguuntur intantum, quod ista est haeretica, *deitas generat deitatem*, et ista catholica, *Deus generat Deum*, ut patet in principio *Decretalium*. Neque etiam est hic sermo de differentia reali, qualis est inter *rem* et *rem*. Constat enim quod natura substantialis et suppositum non possunt naturaliter sic distingui, ut sint totaliter duae res diversae» (CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I q. 3, a. 3, note vii).

¹⁵⁵ CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I q. 39, a. 1, note vii.

¹⁵⁶ CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I, q. 39, a. 1, note x.

¹⁵⁷ «Unica tamen responsione ad haec omnia et similia dicitur, negando universaliter illam propositionem, scilicet quod sola distinctio est cause huius effectus. Nam isti effectus potest oriri a distinctione, ut a causa quasi univoca: et a *virtualiter continente distinctionem*, ut a causa aequivoca» (CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I q. 39, a. 1, note xii).

dependent upon its own act, that is, upon the equivocality of the cause. The effect in act has a cause in the act either by a distinction in the thing or a virtual distinction. A virtual distinction exists between essence and relation because the former causes a unity and the latter a plurality. Cajetan must make this distinction more than rational or almost totally real because he has posited an existing divine nature apart from the Persons. The unity he is referring to here is not the unity of the Persons *per se*, but the substantial unity of the divine nature with its own subsistence.

In the commentary on article 4 of question 39, Cajetan's "virtual distinction" is played out as he discusses the rules of supposition for *Deus*. Cajetan denies here rather explicitly two rules Thomas proposes: 1) that *Deus* properly supposits for Person *ex modo significandi*; and 2) that actions are only of [personal] supposits. Cajetan is forced to reject the first rule because he insisted upon a distinction from question three between proper and essential predication¹⁵⁸. Thomas contended that it is by reason of the divine simplicity, or more pointedly, the unity of the Persons that *Deus* may stand for nature¹⁵⁹. The divine nature is signified only as it is possessed in the Persons.

Cajetan, however, focuses on two other ways in which nature can be said to be in God. First, there is a specific instance or thing having divine nature¹⁶⁰. Second, there is the singular nature itself subsisting, *hic Deus*. He distorts Thomas' comparison of *homo* and *Deus* contending that the former supposits *de se* for person and the latter supposits *de se* for nature. The divine nature cannot be signified apart from the Persons because it exists and is known only by the acts which are only of the Persons. Human nature, on the other hand, cannot be signified simply because it is not a unity in any real sense. What is left undefended is the unity of the three *in se*; for, in Cajetan's scheme, the Persons have only a derived unity from the divine nature that subsists on its own. Cajetan thereby multiplies the categories within the Godhead: *essentia, hic Deus, supposita divina*. He differentiates the suppositum of *Deus* by showing a multiplicity on the side of *habens naturam* in God whereby God is one and three; that is, the divine nature (by which God is one) and Persons (by which God is three) all have their own proper subsistence.

The reasoning behind Cajetan's distinction appears to be an insensitivity to the *modus significandi*. For Thomas, *Deus* SUPPOSITS *per se* for Person and for divine nature because they are not distinct *secundum rem*. *Deus* SIGNIFIES the divine nature *ut in habente*; that is, in the Person possessing it, but SUPPOSITS for the Persons or the nature (according to first and second intentions); the former *de se*, the latter by *modus significandi*. Cajetan confuses signification and supposition assuming that Thomas' discussion of the *modus significandi* is metaphysical. Thus, he equates two types of supposita with two significata. Moreover, his failure to see the

¹⁵⁸ He argues that essence and Persons can both be concretely signified.

¹⁵⁹ *ST* I q. 39, a. 4c.

¹⁶⁰ It should be noted that there is no difference between saying a specific thing having divine nature and a supposit of divine nature. Thus, the first and third categories of Cajetan's scheme are identical since a nature cannot be held communicable.

unity of the significata led to his denial of Thomas' second rule: that actions are only of suppositis.

b) Distinguishing suppositis and singulars.

Cajetan upholds this rule in principle but denies its universal application. When discussing the suppositum of *Deus creat*, he argues that it refers to the divine essence as a singular subsistence or absolute, concrete subsistence. His distinction between two kinds of concrete subsistence, absolute and personal¹⁶¹, allows him to say that the creative act can be of the divine nature and need not be of the supposita. Thomas, on the other hand, argues that *Deus* suppositis for the essence by reason of the identity of Person and essence only and, therefore, includes the personal supposita as well. Thomas uses an abstraction (mathematical) of essence for the purposes of discussion, but this procedure is not a «separation» of essence and Person technically understood¹⁶². Thus, *Deus creat* suppositis for the Trinity of Persons who by means of their unity are one Creator. Cajetan reads the text as a metaphysician and interprets the distinction between acts of Persons and essence accordingly, that is, using the metaphysical judgment of separation¹⁶³. We can make this clearer: For Thomas, there is nothing other than Person in God (q. 39, a.1). Certain notional acts (begetting, spirating) are proper to one Person or to two; other acts, specifically the *opera ad extra*, are common to all three Persons, not of the common essence but *common to* the Trinity of Persons¹⁶⁴. God is three by reason of the distinction of Persons and one by reason of the unity of Persons.

Cajetan, however, bases the unity of God on the unity of the subsistent nature, *hic Deus* (subsistent, singular divine nature). He interprets Thomas' *Deus qui est unus* as a singular subsistent divine nature, *hic Deus*, thereby establishing a virtual distinction between the concrete essence, *hic Deus*, that creates and the personal

¹⁶¹ Often read as «monopersonal» and «tripersonal».

¹⁶² According to Thomas, *separatio* is the proper mode of reasoning in metaphysics. By this term he means the intellectual act by which one may divine what is the being of the thing and what is not. For instance, one may «separate» being white from being human because whiteness is not proper to human nature. Another way of considering this operation is the «separation» of substance from accidents, including quantity, due to the existence of substance apart from accidents. The intellectual operation of abstraction then involves the whole and the part (universal from the particular) or the form and the matter (mathematics), or knowing one thing without the other even though they are one in reality. See *In Boethii De Trinitate* q. 5, a. 3.

¹⁶³ Thomas clarifies the types of abstraction involved in each of the sciences in his commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate*. «Sic igitur in operatione intellectus triplex distinctio invenitur. Una secundum operationem intellectus componentis et dividensis, quae separatio dicitur proprie; et haec competit scientiae divinae, sive metaphysicae. Alia secundum operationem quae format quidditas rerum, quae est abstractio a materia sensibili; et haec competit metaphysicae. Tertia secundum compositionem universalis a particulari; et haec competit etiam physicae, et est communis omnibus scientiis: quia in omni scientia praetermittitur quod est per accidens, et accipitur quod est per se. Et quia quidam non intellexerunt differentiam duorum ultimorum a primo, inciderunt in errorem, ut ponerent mathematica et universalis a sensibilibus separata, ut Pythagorici et Platonici» (*In Boethii De Trinitate* q. 5, a. 3c).

¹⁶⁴ «[C]reare non est proprium alicui Personae, sed commune toti Trinitati» (*ST I* q. 45, a. 6c).

suppositis. The Augustinian axiom is necessarily reinterpreted in light of this concrete unity of essence to distinguish a *hic Deus* who creates from a *Deus* who begets. In other words, the acts of the personal suppositis are immanent and relative having to do with origin. *Opera ad extra* proceed from the subsisting nature that is itself absolute and concrete. Indeed, Cajetan goes so far as to say that the «divine nature subsists from itself not deriving [literally, 'begging'] its subsistence from the suppositis, but on the contrary, conferring it on them»¹⁶⁵.

The impact of Cajetan's reading is severe. His prominence and popularity as the commentator of St. Thomas has made his commentary the lens through which Thomas has been read and taught, especially since *Aeterni Patris* and the Leonine edition of the *Summa* appeared at the turn of the century. Cajetan's metaphysical reading of Thomas' distinctions completely obscured the scientific procedure of the text. Thomas treats the Godhead as a whole before treating it according to its «parts», thus using a mathematical type of abstraction. Cajetan and scholars dependent upon Cajetan failed to see what kind of science Thomas' theology is and mistakenly read into the text a metaphysical abstraction which is an act of separation. By means of this metaphysical separation, the subsistent divine nature would be treated before and without the personal supposita. Read as a metaphysical text, the *Summa* would portray a complete separation of the Trinity of Persons from the acts of creation and salvation. Contemporary scholars have rightly bristled at the apparent non-identity between the *Deus Unus* and *Deus Trinus*. But it is the metaphysician Cajetan, not Thomas, who proposes an *Deus Unus* creating and restoring humankind.

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¹⁶⁵ «[D]ivina natura ex seipsa subsistit nec mendicat subsistentiam a suppositis, imo confert eam illis» (CAJETAN, *In Summam Theologiae* I q. 39, a. 4, note viii).