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Scripta Philosophica

Anthony A. Akinwale

Political Philosophy and Human Nature in Thomas Aquinas

This essay has a proximate and an ultimate aim. Its proximate aim is to undertake an analysis of Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy of law in the *Summa theologiae*.¹ Its ultimate aim is to discern what may be described, albeit arguably, as Aquinas’ political philosophy and its presupposed understanding of human nature. An undertaking such as this must take into account two sets of possible objections. In concrete terms, one is obliged to admit that, for at least two reasons, if there were to be recitation of a litany of political philosophers, the name of Thomas Aquinas would most probably not feature.

First, Aquinas’ credentials as a philosopher and the relationship between philosophy and theology in his writings remain a bone of contention within and outside his circle of disciples.² Among his disciples are those who would prefer to see him more as a theologian than as a

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¹ The main focus here is on *S.Th.* I–II, 90–94. English translation by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

² See the lively discussion in Jean-Pierre Torrell, *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 236–239.

philosopher.³ Outside his cycle of disciples one cannot but cite the example of Bertrand Russell who, on the grounds of undeniable antecedent Christian influence on Aquinas' thought process, would argue that Aquinas was not a philosopher. Secondly, unlike Plato who bequeathed the *Republic*, Aristotle who wrote the *Politics*, Machiavelli who authored the *Prince*, to mention but these, Aquinas is rarely considered to have bequeathed any tome worthy of the attention of scholars of political philosophy in liberal democracies of our time.⁴

To the first set of objections I respond by submitting that the position one takes on the question of whether or not Aquinas was a philosopher would largely, perhaps solely, depend on the stand a commentator takes on Aquinas' use of Aristotle in the construction of his thought. Jean-Pierre Torrell has provided an excellent resumé of three divergent opinions on this matter. These are: (i) the position of those who accentuate Aquinas' "objectivity and fidelity" without showcasing his personal opinion; (ii) the position of commentators who held the view that Aquinas did not shy away from expressing his own opinion "rectifying and amplifying Aristotle when he thinks it necessary;" and (iii) the position of those who held the opinion that Aquinas as commentator on Aristotle remained in objective fidelity to the latter without failing to express his own point of view.⁵

While acknowledging with Torrell that this manner of formulating the question is somewhat outdated, I contend that the relevance of the question endures in the question of whether or not Aquinas could be

³ See for example Thomas O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

⁴ Not to be ignored, however, is his *De regno ad regem Cypri*. English translation *On Kingship, to the King of Cyprus*, trans. G. B. Phelan and I. T. Eschmann (Toronto: PIMS, 1949) in which he took the position that monarchy would be preferable because, as he argued, tyranny would most likely result from the rule of many, and that tyranny was to be tolerated to avoid greater evils.

⁵ Torrell, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 237.

said to belong to the club of philosophers, in this instance, of political philosophers. I shall further argue that the first position—"objectivity and fidelity"—would imply reducing Aquinas to one who simply philosophized as Aristotle did. The second would portray an Aquinas who, in theologizing, knew how to distance himself from philosophy. And the third would describe an Aquinas who, in theologizing, never distanced himself from philosophy, but recognized the autonomy and limits of philosophy, thus showing that there ought not be a distance between faith and reason. This would be consistent with the intellectual option he announced in the *Summa contra gentiles* that the truths of reason are not in opposition with the truths of faith.⁶ In so far as Aquinas maintained philosophy and theology in methodological and epistemic proximity, it can be argued that, even as theologian, he was a philosopher.

In response to the second set of objections, I identify with the position of Ralph McInerny to the effect that since no one could philosophize outside his or her existential ambience, influence of antecedent Christian beliefs does not, in itself, nullify the validity of a philosophy. The problem then, is not the influence of antecedent religious or cultural beliefs but the relativist reduction of every philosophy to its existential antecedents. McInerny's panacea to such relativist reductionism "is to maintain that, whatever one's antecedent existential assumptions, a philosophical position must obey criteria which are public and intrinsically independent of one's motives for philosophizing."⁷

Aquinas provides us with a political philosophy in so far as he furnishes us with a philosophy of law that presupposes a philosophy of human nature, reinforces his treatise on virtues, and prepares the way

⁶ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, Lib. I, Cap. 7. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁷ Ralph McInerny, "Introduction," in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), xiv–xv.

for his theology of grace. An examination of the components of his definition of law leads to an identification of the human person whose life is to be regulated by law so envisaged. This essay, therefore, reads Aquinas backwards. It starts with his definition of law before looking at the features of human nature which that definition presupposes, namely, rationality, relationality and religiosity, features Aquinas discussed before discussing law. It concludes by proposing these traits of human nature as responses to what Charles Taylor has identified as the “three malaises” of contemporary society and culture—the malaises of individualism, primacy of instrumental reason, and the political consequences of individualism and primacy of instrumental reason.⁸

Statement and Analysis of Aquinas Definition of Law

According to Aquinas’ loaded and carefully constructed definition, “Law is nothing else than a certain promulgated ordinance of reason to the common good by one who has charge of the community.”⁹

From this definition marked by rigour, clarity and brevity—remarkable features of Aquinas’ language according to Cajetan and Marie-Dominique Chenu—one is able to discern four defining features of a law.¹⁰ These are (i) an ordinance of reason, (ii) the common good, (iii) a legislator who is in charge of the community, and (iv) promulgation. To each of these four defining features Aquinas devotes an explanatory article before putting them together in a definition that results

⁸ See Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), ch. 1: “The Three Malaises.”

⁹ *S.Th.* I–II, 90, 4.

¹⁰ A detailed description of Aquinas’ language is what one finds in Chenu’s explanation of Cajetan’s famous statement: “Sanctus Thomas semper loquitur formaliter.” See Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Toward Understanding St. Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 117–123.

from careful construction by way of a deliberate movement from premise to conclusion. The features are listed and treated here according to the order of articles in Aquinas' discussion.

The first feature of this definition is that law is an ordinance of reason.¹¹ Law is the rule and measure of acts obliging us to act or to refrain from acting. Reason is the "first principle of human acts," and the first principle is the rule and measure of human acts ordering them to their end. Thus, law as rule and measure of acts must be consistent with reason. This explanation already rules out an understanding of law as an ordinance of the will. Law is not an ordinance of the will of the legislator but an ordinance of reason. And while it is true that reason is given the power to move by the will, the fact remains that when the will wills the end, reason commands the means. Thus, explains Aquinas, "in order for the things commanded to have the character of law, will must be regulated by reason. And thus we should understand that the will of the prince [the legislator] has the force of law, otherwise the will of the prince would be iniquity rather than law."¹²

The second defining feature of law in Aquinas is the common good. Law is ordered to the common good, says Aquinas.¹³ Excluded by this defining feature is a misconception of law as an ordinance made to serve the political and economic fortunes of the legislator or of an individual or of particular interest groups within a polity. Law is always to be referred to the ultimate end of human life, which Aquinas, following Aristotle, identifies as happiness. The law must be ordered to happiness of the human person, and, since every part is ordered to its whole, the human person attains happiness within a political community. It is therefore necessary "that law properly look to the order to the

¹¹ *S.Th.* I-II, 90, 1.

¹² *S.Th.* I-II, 90, 1, ad 3.

¹³ *S.Th.* I-II, 90, 2.

common happiness.”¹⁴ Aquinas would paraphrase Aristotle’s statement in Book 5 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in Book 1 of the *Politics* saying, “we call those things legally just that are creative and conservative of happiness and its particulars by political co-operation; for the city is the perfect community, as is said in *Politics* I.”¹⁵ A precept cannot be called law in the proper sense of the word if the particular deed it concerns is not ordered to the common good. Law is a precept that conduces to the happiness of the human person as his or her ultimate end in his or her relationship with other human persons who themselves have happiness as the ultimate end of their existence.

Against the claims of legal positivism, one must also identify what is included in this defining feature, namely, the moral intent of the law.¹⁶ To understand law as a precept in view of the common good is to understand law as intending the good. The good is the objective of morality, and the good is the common good. The common good is the good of the human person which is unattainable outside a life lived in common in the polis. By stating that law is meant to conduce to the common good, Aquinas is not just pointing to the connection between law and morality, he is also placing before us a philosophical outlook in which legality is subject to morality. Law is relative to the good. A precept is not good simply because it is legal. It is good, that is why it is legal. In concrete terms, abortion or euthanasia may be legal, that is,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, respondeo.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ For a lively discussion of the position of legal positivism, see Neil MacCormick, “Natural Law and the Separation of Law and Morals,” in *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*, ed. Robert P. George (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 105–133, written in response to John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). Reacting to the position of Finnis that law, for its validity, must not be separated from morality, MacCormick held the view that morality is not a condition of validity of law. For him, the fact that a law deviates from the path of morality does not mean it is not valid, even though the obligation to abide by it may be reduced or contested.

permissible in law. But that does not mean they are moral. An act that conforms to a piece of legislation is not *ipso facto* moral. It would be moral if the piece of legislation to which it conforms were to be in view of the common good. A law that falls short of the common good would be unjust. Conformity with the law is not the same as fulfillment of the imperative of justice. Separation of law and morality would expose us to unjust laws. Unjust laws do violence to human nature, and, against such laws one is rendered incapable of seeking redress. When legislations are set above moral values, one is obligated by precepts which impede one's intention to attain happiness. Such is the attempt in some parts of the world to make laws that compel violation of the seal of the confessional.

This defining feature not only points to the difference between legality and morality, it also points to the difference between morality and ethics, especially as it is understood in contemporary discourse. It is one thing for an act to be permissible in law. That is legality. It is another for the same act to be in view of the good rightly understood. That would make it moral. It is one thing for an act to constitute acceptable behavior. That would make it ethical. It is another for that which is acceptable behavior within a particular community of professionals like legal practitioners, medical practitioners, journalists, movie stars, to mention but these, to be in view of the good rightly understood. By way of a summary, an act may be legal and/or ethical yet immoral.

Contained in this defining feature is the moral intent of law as that which is accomplished within a life lived in common, that is, within a political community. In so far as the good which law intends is the common good, the purpose of law is the accomplishment of a moral project within a political project. We are dealing here with the interpenetration of morality and politics in Aquinas, and the inspiration is Aristotelian. Visibly present in the elaboration is the scheme of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: every action aims at the good, the highest good is

complete or long-term happiness, happiness is attained in virtue, and virtue is attained in friendship, that is, in a life lived in common with persons who have either attained the mean between excess and deficiency that virtue is, or are striving to attain it. Happiness is not the attainment of unrelating but of relating persons, that is, of persons who relate with each other by helping each other to attain the good. Their common good is the actualization of the potential in each person within the actualization of the potential of the political community.

For Aquinas, following Aristotle, the good is that which everyone desires. In other words, the good is not just a personal desire, it is a collective desire, that is, incapable of fulfillment outside a life lived in common. Here then is the mutual inclusion of morality and politics that is often ignored in contemporary discourse. For Aquinas, following Aristotle, politics is the intelligent regulation of common life for the sake of the common good. Politics, so understood, concretizes moral norms in the implementation of the project of fulfilling our personal and collective desire for the good. Aristotle understood politics as the good of the polis, and thus wrote the *Politics*. Before him, Plato, with the same understanding gave humanity the *Republic*. Nicolo Machiavelli, after Plato and Aristotle, understood politics as a project of protecting the fortunes of the politician, not the good of the polis, and hence wrote the *Prince*. The titles of the works point to the intent of their authors.

So much for the second defining feature of law in Aquinas. The third defining feature speaks of law as either made by the whole community or by someone who represents the whole community.¹⁷ According to Aquinas, attainment of the common good takes place by way of tasks undertaken by the entire political community or by someone who bears the power of the entire community. “Therefore, to fashion law

¹⁷ *S.Th.* I-II, 90, 3.

pertains either to the whole multitude or to some public person who has charge of the whole multitude. Because, as in all other cases, ordering to the end is proper to the one whose end it is.”¹⁸

What is perhaps intriguing here is the fact that while Aquinas may not be described as a democrat in today’s terms, there is in this particular defining feature as articulated by Aquinas a pointer to democratic representation. The entire political community cannot be presented within the legislative chamber. Aquinas speaks of “someone who represents the whole community.” He does not speak of how this representative is chosen by the community. The legislator acts in the name of the community that has reposed on him or her the power to make laws and order the community to the common good, to the good of the community in each citizen, and to the good of each citizen in the community.

As is clearly evident from reading his treatise *De Regimine Principium*, Aquinas lived and wrote at an epoch in history where the monarch represented the community, where the viceroy represented the monarch, where the monarch was ordinarily on the throne until death, and where he was not ordinarily accountable to the community. It was an epoch where monarchs often ascended the throne through warfare. Today, in a democratic polity, we speak of representatives who are elected by their fellow citizens to assume the task of making laws for the good of inhabitants and citizens of the city, the political community in its entirety. Going by what has just been said regarding the mutual interpenetration of morality and politics, the conduct of such representatives must conform not just to legality, but, above all, to legality in its subservience to morality, if politics is to lead to the attainment of the common good.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, respondeo.

The fourth defining feature of Aquinas' philosophy of law is promulgation.¹⁹ There is no law unless it be brought to the knowledge of those who are to be obliged by the law. Promulgation must precede application. Says Aquinas:

law is imposed on others by way of rule and measure. But the rule and measure are imposed by being applied to those ruled and measured. Hence, in order for a law to have the power of obliging, which is proper to law, it is necessary that it be applied to those who should be regulated by it. Such application comes about insofar as they come to know of it by its promulgation. Hence, promulgation is necessary in order that law have its power.²⁰

The experience of military dictatorship in Nigeria provides an enabling impact for appreciating the import of this fourth defining feature. Nigeria underwent two bouts of military dictatorship—from 1966 to 1979, and from 1983 to 1999. During those two periods, military tyrants enforced decrees with retroactive effects, and “violation” of some of them resulted in capital punishment. It was possible to be executed for a crime that was not punishable by death at the time it was committed.

The brief analysis of Aquinas' definition of law which I have just undertaken not only brings to our attention defining features of law in Aquinas' thought, it also invites and enables us to see the understanding of human nature that informs Aquinas' definition. I shall identify and discuss three traits of human nature which support this definition, namely rationality, relationality, and religiosity.

¹⁹ *S.Th.* I-II, 90, 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, respondeo.

An Antecedent and Parallel Understanding of Human Nature

My reflection in this part of the essay has a brief preface. The conversational trajectory of Plato's dialogue *Republic* presents a dialogue within a dialogue that justifies this inference: that a philosophical inquiry towards understanding the human person cannot be undertaken without a parallel philosophical inquiry into understanding the city. If we were to read the *Republic* attentively, we would see that discussions on politics and human nature are two parallel discussions. Socrates and his friends began the dialogue by seeking to know what a happy soul would look like: is it a just soul or an unjust soul? In an attempt to find an answer, it was decided to explore the possibility of describing a happy city: is it a just city or an unjust city? Knowledge of the soul (of the human person) points to knowledge of the city. A just city is a cohabitation of just souls. Here too, we see the mutual inclusion of politics and morality. A political community is just if its citizens are just.

We cannot understand the *anthropos* if we do not understand the *polis*, neither can we understand the *polis* if we do not understand the *anthropos*. Consciousness of this reciprocal relationship between anthropology and politics is a necessary condition for the resolution of what Charles Taylor has described as the "three malaises" of contemporary society and culture—the malaises of individualism, primacy of instrumental reason, and the political consequences of individualism and primacy of instrumental reason. Distress in contemporary society comes from ignorance of human nature, of what and how it is to be human.

By individualism, Taylor means what is considered by many to be "the finest achievement of modern civilization."

We live in a world where people have a right to choose for themselves their own pattern of life, to decide in conscience what

convictions to espouse, to determine the shape of their lives in a whole host of ways that their ancestors couldn't control. And these rights are generally defended by our legal systems. In principle, people are no longer sacrificed to the demands of supposedly sacred orders that transcend them . . . Modern freedom was won by our breaking loose from the older moral horizons . . . Modern freedom came about through the discrediting of such orders.²¹

Taylor lists three consequences of individualism as a "permissive society," a "me generation," and "narcissism."²²

Then, there is instrumental reason, which, according to Taylor, is "the kind of rationality we draw on when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end. Maximum efficiency, the best cost output ratio, is its measure of success."²³ While this might be liberating, it comes with uneasy consequences. Taylor writes:

The fear is that things that ought to be determined by other criteria will be decided in terms of efficiency or "cost benefit" analysis, that the independent ends that ought to be guiding our lives will be eclipsed by the demand to maximize output . . . the demands of economic growth are used to justify very unequal distribution of wealth and income, or the way these demands make us insensitive to the needs of the environment, even to the point of potential disaster. Or else, we can think of the way much of our social planning, in crucial areas like risk assessment, is dominated by forms of cost-benefit analysis that involve grotesque calculations, putting dollar assessments on human lives.

The primacy of instrumental reason is also evident in the prestige and aura that surround technology, and makes us believe that we

²¹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

should seek technological solutions even when something very different is called for.²⁴

The political consequence of individualism and instrumental reason, the third malaise, is the destruction or erosion of our ability to make moral deliberation by “institutions and structures of industrial-technological society.” What Taylor describes here in his illustration of the consequences of individualism and instrumental reason is a paradox. The paradox is this: individualism, which was thought to be freedom-enhancing, has been assisted by instrumental reason to make of the modern man or woman an inmate of the prison of freedom.

An individual lifestyle is also hard to sustain against the grain. For instance, the whole design of some modern cities makes it hard to function without a car, particularly where public transport has been eroded in favour of the private automobile.

A society in which people end up as the kind of individuals who are “enclosed in their own hearts” is one where few will want to participate actively in self-government. They will prefer to stay at home and enjoy the satisfactions of private life, as long as the government of the day produces the means to these satisfactions and distributes them widely.²⁵

I contend that these malaises are present in the global north and, increasingly, thanks to lingering effects of colonialism and the power and swiftness of social media, in the global south. The three malaises identified by Taylor represent a three-fold dictatorship in which we live in modern times: the dictatorship of the individual, of technology, and of government bureaucracy. To these I shall return in the conclusion of this essay. The immediate task at this point is a consideration of the three traits of rationality, relationality and religiosity, as presuppositions of Aquinas’ political philosophy. These three traits counter the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

three-fold dictatorship of our time. The logic and pedagogy of the *Summa theologiae* are eminently indicative of these presuppositions. After all, in the great *Summa*, Aquinas' philosophy of law is treated only after his account of human nature.

Politics and Rationality

The human trait of rationality is presupposed in Aquinas' definition of law when he says law is an ordinance of reason. To be recalled here is Aquinas' statement that the good, by definition, is that which every creature seeks. It is obvious that the human being, like every other creature, naturally seeks its own good.²⁶ It does so in a way that is consistent with its nature.

By nature, it is animated by a vital principle of activity (*anima*—soul) that is endowed with intellective and sensitive powers. The human being thus belongs to the genre of animals. But there is a difference. While, like every other animal, the human animal is sensitive, unlike other animals, the human animal is sensitive and intelligent, and its intellective power operates rationally. The intellective power has truth as its object, and moves towards this object from one thing understood to another that is to be understood. That is why it is called a rational animal.²⁷ In its quest for the good, its feelings play a major role. Emotions play a big part in human existence. Without them, affection and procreation, which are vital for the perpetuation of the human species, will be missing, and the human animal will go into extinction. But the human animal is not just driven by emotions. It has a capacity to subordinate its sensitive powers to its intellective powers, its emotions to reason. It is a rational animal, that is, an animal who deploys rationality in the pursuit of the good. In other words, the human animal not only

²⁶ *S.Th.* I, 5, 1.

²⁷ *S.Th.* I, 79, 8.

seeks its own good, it does so intelligently and freely. The human animal is able to know and able to choose: able to know the good it ought to choose, able to know the means necessary for the attainment of the good, and able to freely choose these means.

Aquinas points out in his explanation of the relationship between the intellect and the will that the good that the human animal seeks is the good understood.²⁸ Thus, to desire what is misconceived as good is to become a liability by self-constitution. The human animal is therefore endowed with a will whose orientation is to the good, and with an intellect whose orientation is to the truth. The intellect enables it to make right choices, to understand and differentiate between what appears to be good and what is really good, for, as the saying goes, all that glitters is not gold. The intellect is able to differentiate between appearance and reality so that the human animal does not go about chasing shadows. In the words of Aquinas, “the intellect understands that the will wills that the intellect understand, and the intellect understands that the will wills.”²⁹ The will, as it were, wills the mission of the intellect, which is, to go in search of the really good. The intellect, having accomplished its mission by understanding and judging, reports to the will: “Here is the good you desire.” The human animal is endowed with an intellect whose function is to know what is truly good, and endowed with a will whose function is to choose the good. The good chosen is not to be just any type of good, but specifically the good presented to it by the intellect as the really good. In a nutshell, the human being is filled with a desire for the good way of life. But this quest for the good way of life is embarked upon in a rational way. The human being knows what is truly good by moving from the known to the unknown. The human being has therefore been described as a rational animal: an

²⁸ *S.Th.* I, 82, 3–4.

²⁹ *S.Th.* I, 82, 4, ad 1.

animal naturally endowed with the capacity to deploy reason in its effort to attain the good life.

Without reason, the human being reduces goodness to feeling. And when goodness is reduced to feeling, he erroneously believes that whatever makes him feel good is good, that whatever conforms to the pleasure principle is the right thing for him, and that whatever brings pain is bad. The good then becomes a matter of sensual desires and aversions. Such is the case of a patient who is diagnosed with malaria. The doctor prescribes some painful injections to bring down his fever. He could not understand how painful injections could bring down his high fever. So, he goes off to another doctor, a quack doctor this time around, who tells the sick patient that the antidote to his high fever is not a painful injection but a bowl of ice cream. It is to avoid this poor judgment that we are endowed with rationality, the power of the intellect that enables us to identify the good we ought to attain, and the appropriate means for attaining the goal.

Law, as Thomas explains, regulates human action so that it can attain its objective, which is the good. Since knowledge of the good must precede choice of the good, and since, for the rational animal that the human animal is, knowledge is acquired by going from the known to the unknown, which is the movement of reason, what Thomas explains as law is that which ought to regulate actions of the human animal in its efforts to attain the good. That which ought to regulate human action is reason. Considering the natural trait of rationality in the human animal, laws that regulate human activities must be ordered by reason. Only such laws befit rational animals.

But rationality is not the only attribute in the human being. We must also speak of relationality.

Politics and Relationality

That relationality as a natural trait in the human animal is presupposed in Aquinas' definition of law is seen in his understanding of the finality of the law. The law is promulgated for the common good, says Aquinas. But the good cannot be attained in isolation because the human animal is not only rational, it is also political. Its natural habitat is common life. Here again is an instance of Aquinas' intellectual proximity with Aristotle for whom the human animal is not only rational but also political. But here too, by reason of this intellectual proximity, is an instance when misunderstanding of Aristotle has as its consequence a misunderstanding of Aquinas.

Often quoted but seldom understood is the Greek philosopher's statement that the human animal is a political animal. It has often been misunderstood as saying the human animal is one who spends all its time, energy and economic resources scheming to attain political advantage in ways that are inimical to the interests of other human animals, the interests of the common good. Such a misinterpretation comes from divorcing rationality from relationality. When reason is divorced from affection, it becomes an instrument of domination and, instrumentalized reason becomes a means of manipulation. To describe the consequences of the dissolution of the bond between reason and affection would be to paint the picture of what transpires in Thomas Hobbes' state of nature. But this was not what Aristotle meant.

The human animal as a rational animal is also a relational animal. In fact, it is because it is rational that it is political. Relationality is an eminent expression of its rationality. Whereas we cannot separate rationality from relationality in the human animal without doing violence to its nature, such a misrepresentation of Aristotle would want to separate the two. But rationality and relationality are mutually inclusive in the human animal. By affirming that the human being is a political an-

imal, Aristotle was saying that this animal lives in the *polis*, the Greek word translated into English as “city,” as opposed to an animal who lives in the forest. The rational animal called man is an animal who relates with other rational animals in a life lived in the city. And their relationship is or ought to be characterized by rationality.

To affirm, as Aristotle does, that the human animal, who is a rational animal, is also a political animal, is to affirm that this animal not only lives in the city, but is also able to use its intellectual powers to direct the affairs of the city. That serves as a useful clarificatory reminder of what politics is or should be. From the Greek word *polis* is derived the English word “politics,” which is management of the affairs of the city, just as economics, derived from two Greek words *oikos* (home) and *nomos* (law), is the law that regulates the affairs of the home. Politics is the intelligent regulation of life in the city, the rational management of human relationality. It is not a series of activities manifesting the power addiction in man. It is the intelligent regulation of common life for the sake of the common good.³⁰

Animated by an insatiable quest for the good, the human animal cannot live in isolation. To paraphrase a well-known saying, no human animal is an island. Its good cannot be attained by living in isolation. Its search for the best way to live is in fact in search of the best way to live with others. The human being who is animated by an infinite quest for the good does not live in isolation. The search for the good is a moral quest that is inseparable from the political quest for the best way to live together. The human cannot attain its good without living and collaborating with other human animals. Its potential can be actualized only within the actualization of the potential in others, only when it works for the actualization of the potentials in others. Human aspirations can

³⁰ Cf. Mary Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006).

be fulfilled only when the aspirations of others are fulfilled. No one can attain any good singlehandedly. The moral quest for the good turns out to be a political quest because the quest for the good life is a quest for the best way to live together.

Ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, and Christian thinkers like Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas who largely subscribed to their thoughts, understood this quite well that we ought not to separate morality and politics, that the moral project is a political project, and that the political project is a moral project. The separation of the two projects came with Niccolo Machiavelli. Machiavelli eminently exemplifies the deadly separation of rationality from relationality, a separation that does violence to both. The contrast I paint here is, as I pointed out earlier in this essay, illustrated by the title of their works.

Evoked by the titles of their political discourses are two types of politics, two schools of thought. Plato gave us the *Republic*, Aristotle gave us *Politics*, Augustine of Hippo gave us *City of God*, contrasting the city of self-love with the city of God's love, but Machiavelli gave us the *Prince*. The authors of the *Republic*, *Politics*, and *City of God* teach politics for the sake of the common good, while the author of the *Prince* teaches politics for the sake of the political fortunes of the politician. Politics for the sake of the common good presupposes that the good of the human person is best served in a life lived with others, that the rational animal actualizes and fulfills itself in relationality guided by reason. Politics for the sake of the politician represents a monstrous misconception of human nature, of the human being as one who can attain the good without others or by crushing others. Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* represent an attempt to place leadership at the service of the common good. That is why the subject matter of their political discourse is the good of the *polis*, while the subject matter of the political discourse of Machiavelli is not the good of the *polis* but the

good of the politician. Machiavelli ridiculed and repudiated the philosophical doctrine of convergence of morality and politics, substituting it with his doctrine of the separation of the two, and the history of political instability and religious tensions in Nigeria eloquently testifies to the fact that he has never ceased to win political disciples.

In his definition of law, Aquinas rightly specified its finality as the common good. It is the good of the common life of the rational and political animals that human animals are. The purpose of law is to regulate the activities of moral agents that human animals are in their collaborative quest for the good, a quest that is collaborative because, by nature, they do not live in isolation, and because, again by nature, they cannot attain the good without living and working with others.

Collaboration is a necessary requirement for the attainment of the good because the human being is by nature a being who lives with other human beings. Every animal has a natural habitat. Fish live in water, birds fly in the air, reptiles on land. The natural habitat of the human being is a network of relationships with other human beings, not just any kind of relationship, but a network of relationships constituted by love and expressed in actions regulated by reason, always in view of the common good. And the quintessence of this network of loving relationships is the family. The family is the natural habitat of the human being.³¹

³¹ Reason itself confirms that what is revealed on the pages of the Bible is an accurate description of human experience, and that is, "It is not good for the human being to be alone" (Gen 2:18). The most common translation of that passage says "It is not good for man to be alone." But the Hebrew word used in that passage is not *ish* but *ha adam*. The Hebrew word *ish* means "man," the word *isha* means "woman." *Ha adam* means the human being. The appropriate translation would be, "It is not good for the human being [not just man, not just woman] to be alone." It is a statement of the relationality of the human person. What is being said in that passage is that loneliness is injurious to human nature.

The human being is conceived and is to be nurtured in a network of loving relationships, beginning with the loving relationship of a man and a woman in a lawful conjugal

In concrete terms, the quest for the good is a task to be undertaken within a network of relationships. It is because every human being desires the good, and because the fulfillment of this desire requires an inter-subjective task, that the moral project is a political project while the political project is a moral project. The repeated and related or unrelated actions in the history of civilization, even when they miss their goal, are intended to make the human being happy in the attainment of the highest good. Nature is fulfilled when it attains its good. The human animal finds its fulfillment when it attains its good within a life lived in common. Law facilitates the attainment of fulfillment when its promulgation is in view of the common good. Law in Aquinas' political philosophy is for regulation of the life of human animals who, by nature, are rational and relational.

Politics and Religiosity

Not only does Aquinas' political philosophy, in his understanding of law, presuppose rationality and relationality, it also presupposes religiosity, that is, the openness of the human animal to God. It is of course the case that God is nowhere mentioned in his definition of law.

gal union. This is how the human being gives birth to the family, and the family gives birth to the human being. It is because the human being's natural habitat is a network of loving relationships that our deepest aspiration is to love and be loved. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard adds his voice to this by writing that the unhappiest person in the world is the man or woman who neither has loved nor has been loved.

The human being was created as an expression of God's love. Created in the image and likeness of God. The human being longs to be with others. He is born and survives in a network of relationships because he is image of God who himself is a family of three Persons. The love of these three divine Persons gave us, human beings, life. For the work of creation is the work of the *tota Trinitas*, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This life is transmitted through the love of a man and a woman, our biological parents, expressed in their collaborative conjugal act. The love of a man and a woman creates a family and sustains it. This is the way in which God uses the instrumental agency of marital union of man and woman to create the family, and the family transmits and nurtures the life of other human beings. The family is where everyone owes his life to others even as he or she has to take personal responsibility for the life.

But there are pointers to religiosity as his philosophy of law unfolds. It is found in his definition of natural law as the participation of the rational intellect in eternal law, eternal law being divine reason governing the universe.³² It is also found in his argument for the necessity of divine law.

With regard to the inclusion of rationality in the definition of natural law, one recalls, first, that for Aquinas every agent, of necessity, acts for an end; secondly, that it pertains to a rational creature to move itself to an end; and thirdly, that the last end of a rational creature is God. In Aquinas' own words,

those things that are possessed of reason, move themselves to an end; because they have dominion over their actions, through their free will, which is the faculty of will and reason. But those things that lack reason tend to an end, by natural inclination, as being moved by another and not by themselves; since they do not know the nature of an end as such, and consequently cannot ordain anything to an end, but can be ordained to an end.³³

Human acts, as acts of rational creatures, proceed from a deliberate will, and the object of the will is the good understood by the intellect. Now, whatever is desired by the will is desired for the sake of the last end, and that to which the will tends as to its last end is one.³⁴ For Aquinas, the last end of rational creatures is God because

man and other rational creatures attain to their last end by knowing and loving God; this is not possible to other creatures, which acquire their last end, in so far as they share in the Divine likeness, inasmuch as they are, or live, or even know.³⁵

³² *S.Th.* I-II, 91, 1 and 2.

³³ *S.Th.* I-II, 1, 2.

³⁴ *S.Th.* I-II, 1, 5.

³⁵ *S.Th.* I-II, 1, 8.

The mere fact of human rationality thus points to religiosity. The human animal has a natural desire for God because the human animal is rational.

But reason is limited in its natural capacity, and divine law becomes necessary because of the limitedness of human reason and the uncertainty and fallibility that come with its limitedness. Thus, after defining natural law as the participation of the rational intellect in eternal law, eternal law being the divine intellect governing the universe, Aquinas would speak of human law as particular application of natural law, and of the necessity of divine law. This necessity is affirmed on four grounds.³⁶

First, it is by law that the human animal is directed to perform acts in view of its last end, which is God. But the attainment of this last end is beyond the unaided natural capacity of the human animal. Therefore, in addition to the natural law and the human law, the human animal is in need of a law given by God to direct it to God. Secondly, “on account of the uncertainty of human judgement, especially on contingent and particular matters, different people form different judgements on human acts; whence also different and contrary laws result.” Divine law enables the human animal to know without doubt what ought to be done and what ought to be avoided because it is given by God who cannot err. Thirdly, competence of the human legislator does not extend to judgement of interior movements which are hidden, but only to exterior acts. Yet, human conduct in matters interior and exterior are necessary for the attainment of virtue. Incompetence of human legislation in interior matters translates into its insufficiency in curbing and directing interior acts and necessitates divine legislation. And fourthly, human law is incapable of punishing or prohibiting all evil deeds. If it were to aim at doing away with all evils, it would do away with many good

³⁶ *S.Th.* I-II, 91, 4.

things and thus hinder what is needed for the common good. But divine law leaves no evil deed unpunished or unprohibited.

Aquinas' arguments in favour of divine law can only be made because of his account of human religiosity. The human animal is endowed with an intellective power whose object is the truth. It pertains to the sensitive power of the human animal to be inclined to the good understood by the intellect. The truth is that towards which the intellect tends.³⁷ In the intellect's natural inclination to the truth, its acts, like all other human acts, are directed to the last end which is God. Thus, by the very fact of being endowed with an intellect that tends to the last end, which is God, human nature is open to God. The intellect attains intelligible truth when human reason moves from what is already known to what is to be known. But human reason is not able to move the intellect to know in all cases how the precept of natural law is to be applied.

Conclusion

I have, in this essay, identified and examined the defining elements and presuppositions of Aquinas' philosophy of law. In this exercise, one encounters an Aquinas who takes human nature seriously in the political philosophy expressed in his philosophy of law. Law is an expression of rationality regulating affectivity in view of the fulfilment of the human animal. This fulfilment finds its ultimacy in the beatific vision. The human animal arrives at its fulfilment when its natural desires are satisfied, namely, the desire of the religious order or the desire for God. This desire for God is expressed in the desire of the intellectual order or the desire for truth, and in the desire of the affective order which is the desire to love and to be loved. These three natural desires

³⁷ *S.Th.* I, 16, 1.

are presupposed in Aquinas' elaboration of his political philosophy. Law, rightly understood and intelligently promulgated, facilitates the attainment of these natural desires.

I must, in this conclusion, attempt to fulfill a promise I made earlier in the essay regarding the three malaises of contemporary culture identified by Charles Taylor, namely, individualism, the primacy of instrumental reason, and their political consequences. These malaises, as I indicated earlier in the essay, are not only present in the global north, but also in the global south. Writing as an African, I recognize their presence on the African continent. A recent rise in xenophobia in South Africa corroborates my assertion.

For decades, African scholars have evoked concepts of communalism in their writings as a counter-narrative to individualism. Julius Nyerere wrote of *ujamaa*, which means brotherhood, as a form of African socialism. In African studies, students have been treated to a cocktail of concepts of African romanticism to argue in favour of an African humanism. Scholars of Yoruba culture and philosophy have written about *ajobi* (a common humanity based on common ancestry) and *ajogbe* (a common humanity based on common neighbourhood). What that in fact means is that I treat you well because we are of the same stock, while I abbreviate your humanity if we are not of the same stock, even if the colour of your skin is black like mine, and even if we bear the passport of the same country. The ethnocentric traits of these evocations make of them ready tools in the manipulation of public opinion. Communalism bearing the garb of ethnocentrism has facilitated the reincarnation of Machiavelli's princes, even through the ballot box, the emergence of individualistic tyrants through the manipulation of democratic means. History of course attests to the fact that before the recent wave of xenophobia in South Africa was the genocide in Rwanda, in Biafra, and in a number of African countries. Individualism is tyranny

of the individual and, when such an individual is voted into office, common good is at risk.

Instrumentalization of reason, for its part, has its African expression in the marginalization of humanities in the education policy of a number of African countries.³⁸ In the belief that development is to be judged solely in terms of economic indices and technological advancement, and in an attempt to “catch up with technologically advanced countries,” education policies are formulated and implemented with a bias in favour of science and technology.³⁹ The dictatorship of science and technology, of science without humanities, erode moral values that are needed to safeguard the human animal and the environment.⁴⁰

The political consequences of the reincarnation of Machiavelli’s princes in despotic rulers, and of instrumentalized reason, can be seen in the creation and use of governmental structures and institutions by dictatorial regimes, structures that inhibit freedom, and, *ipso facto*, disable and inhibit the citizen from striving for the actualization of his or her potential and the collective potential of the citizens of a country. In a nutshell, ethnocentrism gives rise to individualistic tyrants who, instead of installing institutions that protect and enable the citizen, act as strong men and women who stand in the way of authentic development.

The malaises of which Taylor speaks are consequences of an attempt to do political philosophy without an adequate account of human

³⁸ Cf. Anthony Akinwale, “The Marginalization of the Humanities in our Educational System,” *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* 17–18 (2007–2008): 36–44.

³⁹ Cf. Anthony Akinwale, “Authentic Development and Its Absence: *Populorum Progressio* as Commentary on Africa,” *Angelicum* 84, no. 3–4 (2007): 701–728; *Idem*, “Integral Humanism and the Integrity of Education,” *Ibadan Dominican Studies* 1 (2015): 37–58.

⁴⁰ I have argued elsewhere that Aquinas’ moral theory is very much-needed to provide a response to the threat to the environment. Cf. Anthony Akinwale, “Prudence and Temperance: On Aquinas’ Moral Theory and the Current Environmental Crisis,” in *Theology and Ecology*, ed. Luke Ijezie, Stephen Audu and Agnes Acha (Port Harcourt: CA-THAN Publications, 2017), 138–149.

nature. It would take a renewed recognition and appreciation of relationality to address the challenge of individualism. It would take a renewed recognition and humble acknowledgment of the limitedness of rationality to overcome hubris while celebrating the heroic accomplishments of reason. It would take the wisdom of sane religiosity to overcome the danger of instrumentalized reason. Once the causes are treated the symptoms are eliminated. Therefore, it would take a sapiential response, and not a technocratic mindset, to overcome individualism, the primacy of instrumental reason, and their political consequences. Aquinas' presuppositions of rationality, relationality and religiosity therefore point to ways of overcoming the three malaises. It takes faith to overcome the hubris of instrumental reason. But here too, one must admit, there are two problems. There is the problem of marginalization of faith, the exclusion of religion, as we have always known it, from the public sphere by those who would exclude faith "for the sake of reason." There is also the problem of marginalization of reason by those who would exclude reason "for the sake of faith." Aquinas overcomes the gap between faith and reason.

As an African who lives in two worlds—the world of African culture and the world of western culture—I note that whereas it has been said that the African is notoriously religious, it is also the case that, in today's secularized western culture, Aquinas' description of the human animal as religious will instantly generate vigorous objections from atheists and agnostics. Such objections are understandable. Isn't religion itself a threat to human existence, to peace and stability, to human dignity? The Crusades and the Jihads, discrimination, entente and friendship of expediency among people of different religious persuasions, pending the acquisition of superior firepower to impose religious convictions and conversions on others, inability to differentiate between piety and public nuisance—do these not pose a threat to humanity? These objections border on the place of religion in legislation. My Ni-

gerian experience teaches me that they are not only raised in western circles; they are also raised in the land of my birth where the delicate relationship between religion and politics poses a formidable challenge.

But to be philosophically sympathetic to such objections and questions is not necessarily to assert that they fulfill all requirements of justifiability. Understandable as they may be, these objections are not necessarily sustainable. For the problem is not religion per se but the corruption of religion. Religion is corrupted when the human animal turns its addiction into religion. The problem is man and his triple addiction to power, riches and pleasures. In this triple addiction, power is acquired and maximized so as to maximize riches, riches are maximized so as to maximize pleasure, and this is done in blasphemy, using the name of God in vain. When addiction becomes a religion, I begin to worship the person I see when I stand in front of the mirror, that is, the self, the power addict in me. We must never overlook the positive transformative effect of religion rightly understood. Religion is not just any kind of submission. If at all religion is submission, it is not submission to the love of power but submission to the power of love—to God who is love.

A certain narrow understanding of religion would seem to buttress the objections of those who would prefer that religion be kept out of the public sphere and restricted to the closet. According to this narrow understanding, religion is what you do in the Church or Mosque or Temple or Shrine. But religion as a notion is bigger than Judaism, or Christianity, or Islam or African Traditional Religion. Recall that French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau distinguished between the religion of man, which he said focuses on morality and God, and the religion of the society, civil religion, which obliges allegiance to the

state, to its symbols and institutions.⁴¹ Civil religion, he says, expresses itself in patriotism. The flag, the constitution, human rights and related things become objects of worship. Whether or not one agrees with this typology of religion, whoever watches the inauguration of a President cannot but observe how the modern state has made certain things into objects of worship. The national anthem is sung in quiet reverence and awe. The National Pledge is recited with religious devotion.

The human being who is rational and political is also religious in character because there is at least one thing that preoccupies him absolutely and unconditionally in his search for the best way to live. Every human being is animated by an infinite desire for the infinite, restless in its desire for the truth, the good, love and endless life. The human animal is perpetually desirous of the good of the intellectual and moral order. And underlying this search is the search for the good of the religious order. This is the religious dimension in the human person, the dimension that sustains every other dimension. It chiefly manifests itself in rituals, and rituals are not restricted to Churches, Temples, Mosques and Shrines. They are found in sports and in music, in politics, in academia and in the stock exchange.

In an essay entitled, “Nietzsche’s Arsenal,” David Kilpatrick graphically describes this state of affairs. Referring to Friedrich Nietzsche and the immensely popular game of soccer, he wrote:

Having just announced that “God is dead,” Friedrich Nietzsche’s madman asks, “What sacred games shall we have to invent?” If God gave one’s life meaning, and organized religion united people with a shared system of belief, something would have to compensate for this great loss. For all the various interpretations of what Nietzsche means with his most famous or infamous words—first published in 1882 in *The Gay Science*—it is now a

⁴¹ Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses by Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), Bk. 4, Ch. 8. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

fact that Christianity [in western societies] no longer plays the most prominent guiding role in the lives of the majority of people.

Today the cathedral has been replaced by the stadium. It is through sport that communities produce a shared narrative, on the field of play where contemporary heroes are made and worshipped. Soccer, more than any other sport, is the global phenomenon that has most fully replaced religion in modern life.⁴²

It is in fact the case that the denial of religion is in the name of religion, in the name of a point of reference which is held absolutely and unconditionally, in the name of whatever a human being cherishes most in his or her innermost sanctuary. In the theology of the Christian tradition it is God.

I must conclude by saying that, considering the fact that it is largely limited to Aquinas' theory of law, this essay is by no means an exhaustive treatment of his politics. To do that would involve relating what he had to say about law with what he had to say about virtue and grace. For, what Aquinas is proposing in his political philosophy can be summed up thus: in order to manage our common life as human animals who are rational, relational and religious, we need to be schooled in virtue, reined in by good laws, and enabled by the grace of God in order to attain the common good, which is greater than anything material. It is, for Aquinas, the attainment of the beatific vision by the human animal in its return to God, the completion of the movement of the rational creature from God to God through the incarnate *Logos*, who is the way to God.

Thomas Aquinas synthesizes faith and reason in his entire project. This is clearly exemplified in his treatment of politics, the regulation of common life, in his philosophy of law. This synthesis of faith

⁴² David Kilpatrick, "Nietzsche's Arsenal," in *Soccer and Philosophy: Beautiful Thoughts on the Beautiful Game*, ed. Ted Richards (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 2010), 37.

and reason allows the inclusion of religious beliefs in the political sphere. But not only this synthesis, the presupposition of a human nature characterized by rationality, relationality and religiosity points to traits that provide an antidote to the three malaises of contemporary culture of which Charles Taylor speaks, the triple dictatorship that regulates our life in the modern polis—dictatorship of the individual, of technology, and of government bureaucracy.



Political Philosophy and Human Nature in Thomas Aquinas

SUMMARY

Taking into account and responding to two sets of objections to Thomas Aquinas' credentials as political philosopher, the essay examines his political philosophy, its presupposed understanding of human nature, and its portrayal in his philosophy of law. Analysing the defining features of law in Aquinas places before the reader features of human nature, namely, rationality, relationality and religiosity. These traits enable one to find responses to what Charles Taylor has identified as "three malaises" of contemporary society and culture, namely, individualism, instrumental reason, and the political consequences of both.

KEYWORDS

Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Charles Taylor, common good, democracy, grace, happiness, individualism, law, legal positivism, military rule, morality, Jean-Pierre Torrell, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Niccolo Machiavelli, Nigeria, Plato, political community, politics, rationality, reason, relationality, religiosity, Thomas Aquinas, virtue.

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Alteridad, indigencia y esperanza. Una lectura de la fenomenología de la plegaria según Jean-Louis Chrétien

*L'homme du XXI^e siècle se présente comme
l'artisan de son destin, sûr de lui et autosuffisant.*

Benoît XVI dans son message de Noël 2006

Este es un texto concerniente a Chrétien y Janicaud, sobre la plegaria y su invisible destinatario. Pero también es una reflexión sobre la propia actitud oracional,¹ sobre esa Ausencia presente que la misma plegaria señala. Hay días que son, como diría Vallejo, como de la ira de Dios, pero hay jornadas todavía peores: esas cuando ni siquiera la ira se

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¹ Entiendo por “actitud oracional” el talante pragmático del orante al entablar un acto comunicativo religioso, dirigido en este caso a un Desconocido, una actitud que no implica, en términos fenomenológicos, hacer énfasis en la condición creyente de quien se expone en este acto de habla (o de silencio, pues el silencio puede ser una forma de plegaria) cuando pronuncia una *parole sans abri*, una palabra sin abrigo, citando a Chrétien. En este contexto, es tanto una expresión que alude tanto a una de las funciones del lenguaje (relación entre hablantes), como a la tercera de las acepciones (religiosa, *lato sensu*) del *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*. También es una expresión usada en textos que versan sobre espiritualidad. Es, pues, una actitud religiosa-relacional que cae bajo el análisis de la mirada fenomenológica, mirada que prescinde de Dios, de su existencia, de su Revelación. Se trata, por consiguiente, de examinar dicha actitud sin ir más allá de ella, se trata de analizar el residuo fenomenológico (la plegaria y su emisor) luego de haber puesto entre paréntesis la religión positiva, establecida o instituida (*epojé*).

halla presente. La plegaria asume como suyas las Ausencias a las cuales atiende, la del Dios desconocido, la del hombre que se vacía en un texto denominado “oración.” Más que a Dios, la fenomenología de la plegaria atendería al hombre que la musita, a la voz simplemente humana cautiva de una impotencia en la que el sujeto se recrea. Si la plegaria no llega a su destino, si su destino hace oídos sordos al murmullo del orante, no obstante, el acto oracional descubre en sus líneas a quien lo profiere, escucha en sus demandas su propia astenia, denuncia mediante él un abajamiento de su autosuficiencia. Plegaria es humildad, voz desnuda emitida por un cuerpo desnudo, por una vida desnuda. No sé si a Cristo aún le faltan un montón de padecimientos humanos, una muchedumbre de tribulaciones que no se han cumplido en su cuerpo, el martirologio de unos cuerpos que no son el Suyo, no sé si la estética contenida en una plegaria llame la atención de una Ausencia, pero sí creo comprender que ella, la plegaria, es un texto luchando consigo mismo para que, aun sin Dios, la belleza sea posible. Por eso, ella se queda antes que Dios, es decir, permanece en el cerco de una antropología desesperada, de una intemperie que desespera de sí, del agradecimiento por la libertad de la palabra y del silencio: lo que menos se da en estas incertidumbres es la *plenitudo potestatis* de nadie, de ningún hombre en particular, aunque su dignidad de oficiante parezca haber llegado a la cima del mundo. El *homo religiosus*, desde la óptica de Chrétien, no tendría por qué ser ni siquiera creyente: su voz oracional se detiene en ella misma y es analizada en ese no más allá que es la dimensión humana. Y si el sujeto pertenece a una comunidad de fe, poco importa desde este punto de vista fenomenológico, pues no se trata aquí del análisis, *per se* imposible, del Gran Separado, sino de una inmanencia que se contempla a sí misma como *homo indigenes*, como indigencia, como hombre necesitado. Metodológicamente, el Dios de las religiones queda fuera, entre paréntesis, “hors de circuit.” A veces, el *homo novus* es el resultado de una plegaria que quizás nunca alcance su Destino, ni

siquiera con el corazón genuflexo. Solamente hay hombre nuevo allí donde se reconocen las propias indigencias. Se funda desde la indigencia, se renueva desde la penuria.

Abajamiento del egocentrismo

Hablando de las relaciones entre fenomenología y teología, Janicaud no cavila en lo absoluto al calificar de perversión un esfuerzo fenomenológico que no es más que una criptoteología, una teología encubierta bajo el ropaje del método fenomenológico. Contra Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, y Michel Henry, Janicaud enfilará sus críticas tratando de devolver el puesto que corresponde a la auténtica disciplina metodológica, pues, en sus propias palabras, “The theological veering is too obvious,”² de modo que la filosofía de Chrétien derivará, injustificadamente, hacia una “*phénoménologie chrétienne*.”³ De allí que la fenomenología atea se habría desplazado hacia una fenomenología espiritualista, es decir, que si el maestro de la fenomenología se había convencido de haber colocado con suma precaución metodológica la trascendencia de Dios “out of circuit,”⁴ otros fenomenólogos se han apartado por completo de ese cuidado en una empresa de edificación espiritual. Este artículo discute la concepción que de la plegaria sostiene Chrétien, en el marco de lo que se ha llamado “el giro teológico de la fenomenología francesa,” expresión crítica de Janicaud en contra de las fenomenologías que explícita o implícitamente cuestionan justamente, dice Janicaud, aquello que a la fenomenología da fundamento, la presencia. Su crítica es, por consiguiente, una crítica a la

² D. Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” en: D. Janicaud, J.-F. Courtine, J.-L. Chrétien, M. Henry, J.-L. Marion and P. Ricoeur, *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn.” The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 67.

³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴ *Ibid.*

“critique of philosophies of presence,”⁵ bajo la cual cae también Jean-Louis Chrétien. Erosionando sus propios fundamentos metódicos, semejante fenomenología espiritualista corre el riesgo de no ser ya fenomenología, sino una teología que vuelve por sus fueros, pero disimuladamente, como si mencionar explícitamente a Dios fuese una mácula en el pensamiento contemporáneo, purgado y auto-expurgado de esa vergüenza (cristiana) que históricamente ha cumplido más de dos mil años y que durante más de diez centurias fue la médula de la cultura europea.

¿Es capaz el análisis fenomenológico de conducir al sujeto, ora en la autoafección, ora en el rostro, ora en la llamada pura,⁶ al umbral de una religión todavía posible al centrarse en lo que no aparece a la luz de un horizonte de limitación propio del *ego* constitutivo, es decir, un análisis enfocado en lo que no aparece por obra y gracia de la fenomenología “of the unapparent”?⁷ ¿Es capaz ese mismo análisis de dejarnos en el umbral de la religión, en el quicio de lo que calificaríamos como *homo religiosus*, sin entrar por eso en las consideraciones propias de la teología y de la religión positiva, o dejando por ahora aparte el prejuicio heideggeriano según el cual la teología es “enemigo mortal (*Todfeind*) de la filosofía”?⁸ ¿Podemos simplemente permanecer en el umbral que está antes que Dios y sus misterios, concentrando el análisis en el hombre desnudo en la emisión de su plegaria? ¿Es posible una fenomenología de tal umbral y únicamente de tal umbral, aunque ello equivalga a una fenomenología de lo invisible, a una inversión de la fenomenología, en suma, a una traición de la fenomenología tradicional? Es posible deslindar un campo de aplicación fenomenológico que “disturbe” con

⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶ *Cfr. ibid.*, 62.

⁷ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁸ C. E. Restrepo, “El ‘giro teológico’ de la fenomenología: Introducción al debate,” *Pensamiento y Cultura* 13, no. 2 (Diciembre 2010): 115–126.

su tipo de objeto el procedimiento fenomenológico clásico (“disturb the classic phenomenological procedure?”⁹).

Alega Chrétien que la plegaria es el fenómeno religioso por excelencia. La oración nos coloca de cara ante lo invisible, diciendo a lo invisible lo que éste ya sabe, confiando a él lo que él ya sabe. El misterio oracional encuentra aquí o sus límites de actuación o el horizonte que permite una actuación más allá de lo propiamente visible. Según Chrétien cuando la palabra agoniza por su verdad se convierte en una ordalía (*ordeal*),¹⁰ cuando el orante clama *de profundis* para testimoniar una falta que Dios conoce o para solicitar una asistencia que Dios no deja de desconocer somete el lenguaje, la palabra que vehicula faltas y asistencias, a la tortura misma de la palabra cuyo cuerpo debe manifestar semánticamente una tortura interior a la que sólo muy pocos poseen un acceso privilegiado: el orante y Dios. A veces el testimonio interior no puede saldar cuentas con la palabra que expondría en la filigrana del dolor mismo lo abismático de una angustia. Allí el silencio toma el lugar de la palabra, mientras que aquél, el silencio, “is still allocution,”¹¹ sinceridad mediante la cual lo íntimo deja el discurso de lado para evitar trivializar el propio dolor, la solicitud ante Dios o su tornátil presencia. La oración nos arroja ante otro mediante el cual, con sinceridad cordial (*parrèsia*)¹², damos testimonio de nosotros mismos ante Él, Él que escruta el hondón espiritual que nos gana o nos pierde. La oración que sale de los labios en movimiento o de los labios silentes lleva a cabo una doble confesión: la confesión del pecado, *confessio peccatis*, y la confesión de la esperanza, *confessio laudis*, de un Tú que se encuen-

⁹ J.-F. Courtine, “Introduction: Phenomenology and Hermeneutics of Religion,” en: Janicaud *et al.*, *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn,”* 123.

¹⁰ J.-L. Chrétien, “The Wounded Word: The Phenomenology of Prayer,” en: Janicaud *et al.*, *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn,”* 161.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹² *Ibid.*, 159.

tra a la escucha. Aún más, el acto performativo por el cual mi llamada oracional se abre a la escucha de un Tú sólo es posible si el Tú ha formulado *in primis* el llamado, si mi propio llamado es la respuesta rezada de alguien que ya siempre ha hablado. En todo caso, se trata de una salida de sí mismo bajo la suposición siempre frágil de que hay un escucha al otro lado del hilo oracional, porque se vive de un vago presente, de un tiempo ya caducado, aun en su no-caducidad real, abandonándose el orante a la posibilidad de que un futuro último, un futuro sin futuro ni fin, acabe de una vez con un presente vacío y con un tiempo moribundo. Pero sólo tal vez, porque en la plegaria no triunfa la ultimidad, ni mucho menos, sino lo penúltimo, el deseo por lo último, cuya coronación ni siquiera se divisa *inter umbras* en el registro del ser finito.

No estoy seguro de que podamos calificar a esta operación de “erótica teológica,” como si otro pudiese sacarme de mí, de mis altivas suficiencias, para que yo al fin sea algo más que simplemente “yo.” Pero sí que da la impresión de que la autoidentidad del ser humano sólo puede ser fracturada allí donde la alteridad, la visitación y el sobresalto rompen con la tranquilidad de un sujeto que no va a ningún sitio sin una intervención exterior. La alteridad es la ocasión de mi identidad, íntima, irrecusable, eucaristizable (ser el pan de otro sin dejar de ser uno mismo¹³). La oración sabe que delante de ella está lo divino, también detrás, que no deja de estar ni arriba ni por debajo de la alocución que explícitamente formulamos. Pero la oración, cada oración, cada solicitud, cada llamada posee una irreductible unicidad, posee su *lex orandi*, independientemente de la individualidad de quien hace plegaria. Diga-

¹³ Cfr. J. A. Quelas, “Dios de carne. El cuerpo como experiencia corpóreo-psicoteológico en la teología de Adolphe Gesché” [en línea], en: *Congreso Internacional de Literatura, Estética y Teología “El amado en el amante: figuras, textos y estilos del amor hecho historia,”* VI, 17–19 mayo 2016 (Buenos Aires: Universidad Católica Argentina. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Facultad de Teología; Asociación Latinoamericana de Literatura y Teología), 21. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

mos que el tiempo de la desesperación y del vaciamiento del alma hacia quien mejor conoce nuestra alma contiene su propia especificidad: varía con el dolor y la pena; con la alegría y la beatitud. La oración se acompaña de la paciencia, de la espera, de una reciprocidad imposible, porque entre lo que se espera y quien espera no hay medida posible, porque lo inconmensurable es lo que se espera, mientras lo medido espera. Como ha escrito Lacoste, citado por Schrijvers, “patience is the liturgical virtue par excellence.”¹⁴

¿Puede un alma volcarse ante lo invisible, desahogar las brumas de su yo abismático, deshacerse de sus acuñadas omnipotencias y decir que sí a la presencia del Dios invisible, mejor aún, decir sí a la esperanza de que lo invisible puede ser su más fiel escucha *in sigillo confessionis*? Por más que seamos los mismos quienes entramos en oración, la oración posee su propio ritmo, su propia verdad y su propio desahogo: oramos con palabras distintas, modulamos junto a las palabras, proferidas o no, nuestro propio cuerpo. Rezamos con todo el cuerpo, teopáticos tanto en la carne con el espíritu, si es que cabe distinguirlos ontológicamente, en vez de analíticamente. Recursiva no es la plegaria, aunque pueda parecerlo. No lo es porque se dirige siempre a otro, aunque la paradoja de toda plegaria, de la palabra que lucha en ordalía por manifestar la verdad de un sentimiento que sofoca es una lucha del suplicante consigo mismo, es una lucha de él contra la palabra, es una lucha en contra de una cierta idea de lo divino. Por eso la lucha del discurso consigo mismo, de la antropomaquia, se convierte en una actividad transformadora. Sacudidos quedamos cuando advertimos, dice Chrétien citando a Kierkegaard, que la verdadera oración, que la ordalía de la plegaria es una lucha con Dios donde uno vence gracias a la victoria de Dios sobre uno mismo.¹⁵ Esa palabra abismática, que querría excomul-

¹⁴ J. Schrijvers, *Ontotheological Turnings? The Decentering of the Modern Subject in Recent French Phenomenology* (Albany: SUNY, 2011), 44.

¹⁵ *Cfr.* Chrétien, “The Wounded Word,” 158.

gar el traumatismo que ha calado en lo más hondo de uno, señala que mi yo ha perdido todo su ensoberbecimiento en el socorro por el que llama, despojándose de su egocentrismo,¹⁶ e indica que su sí mismo, la voluntad de su sí mismo se achica hasta el punto de que no sabe llegar a sí (acaso perdonándose) si no es a través de esa vía purgativa que debe pasar por el rodeo de un otro,¹⁷ por su gloria. La confianza en la ple-garia, la fe, explica Alvis, se refiere, por tanto, a una debilidad activa para ir más allá de uno mismo al desplazar, replantear y reinventar lo ordinario como infundido con el sentido de lo Absoluto. También implica la separación activa entre aquello en lo que uno pone fe (aquí, relacionado con la disciplina espiritual de “discernimiento” o hacer distinciones), y aquello en lo que uno no. Sin embargo, está co-calificado; no es el sujeto el que “tiene” fe, ya que esto también implicaría una reducción rápida de la fe en sí mismo (confianza en los propios actos de fe) y el encierro, lo que equivale a una toma de relación entre uno mismo y el Absoluto (“puedo hacerme del Absoluto, análogo a un acto de hechicero, mando sobre una realidad infinitamente superior a mí mismo,” lo cual es, desde luego, absurdo). De hecho, es precisamente esta auto-fe y auto-encierro nihilista lo que en parte marca la crisis de la que uno anhela escapar por la fe. Como Chrétien lo expresa en otra parte con respecto a la oración: “Toda oración . . . nos priva de nuestro ego-centrismo,” toda oración se encuentra herida de alteridad. Otridad a la que apunta, pero que jamás contiene, más allá que interpela, reino cuyo

¹⁶ *Cfr. ibid.*, 153.

¹⁷ “Es imposible recorrer todos los textos en los cuales la tradición occidental no ha cesado de indicarnos que el mal es la egoidad o el egoísmo, que es el sí relacionándose consigo mismo. En consecuencia el pecado, en cierta manera es la cerrazón . . . La santidad no es . . . la observancia de la ley, sino la apertura a aquello que es dirigido hacia la fe, la apertura hacia el anuncio, la palabra hacia el otro.” J.-L. Nancy, “La de-construcción del cristianismo,” *Revista anthropos: Huellas del conocimiento*, no. 205 (2004): 61.

umbral jamás, desde aquí, estaremos seguros de poder cruzar.¹⁸ Por eso, más que de una inversión fenomenológica a secas, parece preferible hablar de una fenomenología de la inversión fenomenológica, en la cual la conciencia lleva a efecto una íntima autoinspección, pero ya no desde la perspectiva de figura constituyente del mundo, sino como figura instituida o constituida, deponiendo su alto primado, tomando muy en serio la modestia que a partir de ahora la embarga, es decir, se examina a sí misma desde la alteridad que la afecta, desde ya y siempre. La plegaria no encierra en un mismo recinto al orante y al destinatario de la oración, por el contrario, es este encierro el que va a ser vulnerado en una apertura (la fe) que nada asegura, en una oración que nada garantiza. Aunque la conciencia haya sido caracterizada por Husserl como aquello que no necesita de nada para existir. “*El ser inmanente es, pues, ya sin duda, ser absoluto en el sentido de que por principio nulla ‘re’ indiget ad existendum,*”¹⁹ indicando *pari passu* con esa afirmación una autosuficiencia rayana en lo absoluto, cual un Dios intramundano que no se deja afectar, estando como por encima de ellos, del espacio y del tiempo, del lenguaje y de la historia, derivando en consecuencia en un solip-sismo trascendental único, aunque inmanente.²⁰ Lo inadvertido en la

¹⁸ “Faith thus concerns an active weakness to go beyond oneself by displacing, reframing, and reimagining the ordinary as infused with the sense of the Absolute. It also involves the active separation between that which one does put faith in (here, related to the spiritual discipline of ‘discernment’ or making distinctions), and that which one does not. Yet it is co-qualified; it is not the subject who ‘has’ faith, for this would also entail a quick reduction to self-faith (trust in one’s own faith acts) and self-enclosure, thus amounting to a seizure of relation between oneself and the Absolute. *Indeed, it is precisely this self-faith and nihilistic self-enclosure that in part marks the crisis from which one yearns to escape through faith!* As Chrétien puts it elsewhere in regard to prayer: ‘All prayer . . . dispossesses us of our geocentricism.’” J. W. Alvis, “Faith and Forgetfulness: *Homo Religiosus*, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Heidegger,” *Religions* 10, no. 264 (2019): 13/16.

¹⁹ E. Husserl, *Ideas relativas a una fenomenología pura y una filosofía fenomenológica* (México: FCE, 1962), 113.

²⁰ Si bien la conciencia es considerada como absoluta, lugar en que se constituye lo trascendente, habría que tomar en cuenta la distinción esbozada por el mismo Husserl

fórmula *nulla re indiget ad existendum* es que ya para haberse visto como existente y haberse concebido como autosuficiente no ha podido, no obstante, prescindir de una alteridad que atraviesa toda presunta pureza, así como las ínfulas de una soledad que se reconoce ya atravesada por una presencia que no es ella misma. Las purificaciones de la conciencia, esa suerte de ascetismo trascendental al que se aspira para elevarse sobre todo aquello que ella constituye, sin ser afectada en el acto de constitución por lo que se encuentra bajo su mando, sigue sin advertir que el *solus* nunca es *ipse*, ni que el *ipse* es *solus*, o que es *ipse* sólo en la medida en que ha admitido toda mediación constitutiva que debería descubrirlo a sí mismo como constituido: la soledad filosófica se halla, pues, en compañía, nunca la soledad ha estado más acompañada.

La inversión fenomenológica da cuenta de esta situación, enfocando el poder de la conciencia bajo la rúbrica de una modestia a la que cierta concepción de la trascendencia se rehúsa a colocarle su venera, las vestimentas de una cultura: lo originario se auto-revela en su propia no originariedad. La conciencia, como elevada sobre el mundo al que constituye interminablemente de manera intencional, muestra sus costuras: se inserta en sus sombras, es decir, admite una alienación cuya pureza ha querido desterrar en balde. No es simplemente afirmar sin amagos que “la conciencia no está en el mundo, sino que el mundo está

entre *Ideas I* e *Ideas II*, en el sentido de que aquélla representa una fenomenología estática, mientras que ésta es una “fenomenología genética,” impensable sin una corporalidad, sin un cuerpo vivo (*Leibkörper*) atravesado por una vida “vívida desde dentro.” Desde esta nueva perspectiva, “el cuerpo constituye uno de los ejes centrales para el análisis de la intersubjetividad en Husserl y uno de los puntos de acceso es justamente a través de la empatía. Pero, para decirlo con Merleau-Ponty, en Husserl mismo la intersubjetividad aparece como intercorporeidad, es decir, como sujetos cuya presencia corporal está dada de manera originaria . . .” Véase R. Sánchez Muñoz y J. Medina Delgado, “El cuerpo vivo y la subjetividad trascendental en la fenomenología de Edmund Husserl,” *Veritas. Revista de Filosofía y Teología* 40 (Agosto 2018): 9–28.

para la conciencia,²¹ en una interminable actitud de enfocar y reenforzar el mundo (potencialidad de la significación de la conciencia que se sobrepone al mundo previamente significado, ora por la misma conciencia que no puede operar *in vacuo*, ora elaborando nuevas significaciones sobre los rendimientos significativos asentados, los cuales constituyen parte de un acervo cultural determinado). Potencia contra poder, para decirlo de otra manera. Sin embargo, una cuña del afuera ya siempre se ha instalado en el campo constituyente de la conciencia: si ya el afuera está dentro, entonces es posible pensar la conciencia como alterada por el hecho de una presencia que la deja impactada, tomada por el asombro, o balbuciente ante un evento. Es sobre esta posibilidad que se abre el texto de la inversión fenomenológica o la fenomenología de dicha inversión, analizando, entonces, no la altura irredenta de un ser en el mundo, pero actuando como por encima de él, sino de un ser que, incluso en su carácter constituyente a través de la figura de la intencionalidad, es capaz de volver sobre sí para analizar los efectos de una afección que su situación siempre alienada ha procurado sobre ella. No es ausencia de conciencia, es conciencia des-endiosada para ahora describir la afección suscitada en el clamor del des-endiosamiento, de su propio des-endiosamiento. Eso equivale a afirmar que su soledad ha sido perturbada con bastonazos externos, así como que la plenitud auto-suficiente ha depuesto sus altas murallas. La perseidad reconoce su otro dentro de ella, de modo que la perseidad misma se encuentra siempre heteroalterada, necesitando del *alter* para poder emplear incluso los términos, y la cultura inscrita en ella, de reducción, *epojé*, transcendencia. Así, pues, “no es cierto que para existir no tenga necesidad de otro ser que no sea ella misma—como quiera que lo que es, pudiendo también no ser, no puede ser por sí, sino por otro.”²² No es que la conciencia

²¹ Cfr. L. Kolakowski, *Husserl y la búsqueda de certeza* (Madrid: Alianza, 1977), 61.

²² A. Millán-Puelles, “Teoría del objeto puro,” en: *Obras Completas*, vol. VIII (Madrid: Rialp, 1990), 53.

haya perdido poder y potencia de significar y constituir, es que ahora puede saberse como significada y constituida desde otro orden significativo, renunciando así a su autosuficiencia. Sin embargo, el poder de la descripción de su vaciamiento omnipotente sigue estando en sus manos, por así decir, indicando por ende el rezago en que se halla con respecto a un acontecimiento y unos medios que no provienen de únicamente ella.

Supongamos por un instante que esta fenomenología no desee pernoctar dentro de los linderos de una religión positiva, no desea permanecer perimetrada ni por la Gracia ni por los sacramentos. Sin embargo, todo acto oracional nos sitúa: hay un alguien que puede aliviar a través de mi propia oración donde confieso lo que confieso sin que quede poso en el alma. Acaso a esto no se le pueda denominar teofanía, tal como escribe Chrétien, sino, ante todo, una antropofanía (*anthropophany*),²³ una manifestación del hombre ante sí mismo en la revelación que de sí hace ante ése que escucha. Revelación de la esperanza de que alguien escuche. De esta guisa, yo y otro, el otro y yo mismo establecemos prácticamente una relación de copertenencia en la plegaria por la cual uno recibe aquello de lo que el otro se vacía. Aquí el hombre se encuentra “questionné, l’homme lui-même s’est mis en question,” es decir, aquí, en la plegaria, en el acto oracional en el cual comprometemos cuerpo y alma también cuestionamos nuestras profundas certezas y las verdades a las que prometimos adherir. Orar es perderse y encontrarse, pero sobre todo es un tratar de encontrarse debido a la ocasión de un extravío primero que nos compromete existencialmente, no sólo y apenas teóricamente, no apenas y sólo intelectualmente. Lo que tocamos en la plegaria es el tejido deshilachado de lo que hemos dejado de ser, de lo que nunca fuimos, de lo que no resucitará ya jamás en nosotros.

²³ Chrétien, “The Wounded Word,” 150.

Genuinamente desposeídos de lo que nunca fuimos, disminuida por ventura la dimensión de nuestro egocentrismo, la plegaria obra y asegura esas desposesión y disminución autocentradas, es decir,

In place of a privileged, autonomous subject, he sees us as intersubjectively constituted, so that our voice is never fully our own. Chrétien pushes this intersubjectivity to a point where the idea of the “self” as discrete is seriously challenged . . .²⁴

Parecida desposesión de nuestro egocentrismo se encuentran también en autores como Levinas y Marion, comentan Aaron y Simmons.²⁵ Salir al encuentro del otro, Dios, prójimo, cercano, implica la asunción del itinerario de la llamada. La llamada busca sus afueras, se pierde en ellos, para poder retornar con más entereza hasta sí misma. La antropogénesis se lleva a cabo aquí en medio de un conjunto de curiosas pérdidas: pérdida de lo visible como posibilidad de hospitalidad de una solicitud, pérdida de un yo soberano, ejemplo de una muy moderna autosuficiencia, pérdida de la propia creencia en los atributos que nos adosamos a nosotros mismos. La llamada oracional asume para sí que el alguien sito en el afuera que escucha posee algún rasgo propio de lo divino, por lo tanto, ese Tú que está más allá de la más íntima creencia que el hombre posee de sí podrá devolver a éste algo que ha perdido.

¿Christliche Weltanschauung?

*Il convient de prier et de reconnaître
qu'un Autre nous précède.*

Saint Bonaventure

La plegaria habla de faltas, pérdidas, extravíos y ocasos. Pero también es *confessio laudis*, tal vez al Dios desconocido, tal vez al um-

²⁴ J. A. Simmons and B. E. Benson, *The New Phenomenology. A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

bral que se encuentra un poco antes que Dios. Pero el esfuerzo de la palabra por ser digna bien sea de Dios bien sea del umbral que lo antecede (y que quizás nunca nos conduzca hasta él) debe encarnar en sí el agobio por empalabrar ora el sufrimiento, ora las gracias por una solicitud aparentemente compensada. Dios queda lejos en nuestro esfuerzo por darle expresión adecuada a la *lex orandi*²⁶ que caracteriza una pena, que compone una alegría. Tan lejos, como hemos dicho, que a veces la *lex orandi* es sencillamente el silencio, tal como exclamaba santo Tomás que había que honrar a Dios. Saber componer pausas oracionales es todavía de la esencia de la plegaria. Acaso el quiasmo que separa a un vocablo del siguiente sea el núcleo de la plegaria, el silencio que más nos dice que nos desdice; la palabra que queda anulada en la pausa que la detiene. Pero quedémonos todavía sin Dios, porque en la fenomenología de la plegaria ni siquiera los santos son santos, la Gracia no es Gracia y Dios no puede ser Dios. Para ser rigurosos, es menester permanecer en los umbrales, esos espacios donde únicamente existen anuncios, no positivities, no esencias, no consuelos definidos. Pero lo mínimo que ha de asumir el suplicante, en su pena o en su *gratias agere*, es que incluso en ese umbral donde nada propiamente religioso institucional se anuncia, algo se anuncia. Incluso permaneciendo más acá de la teología revelada, incluso no sobrepasando la presunta frontera marcada entre filosofía y teología, no es suficiente el simple trazado fronterizo custodiado por los aduaneros de los bordes y de los límites, de las orillas y de los márgenes para definir el desde dónde de la plegaria. Que algunos pretendan hablar de la firmeza incommovible de esa frontera no descalifica a quienes se preguntan por ella, señalando en su misma pregunta si la plegaria, por el solo hecho de ser plegaria, no es ya una alocución que responde a la presunta firmeza de semejante trazado.

²⁶ Chrétien, "The Wounded Word," 149.

“Les douaniers de la philosophie”²⁷ parecen no haber percibido con suficiente claridad que la historia del *logos* no puede quedar interrumpida en la filosofía de los griegos, como si los mil años de la omnipresencia histórica de Dios fuese una fruslería en términos conceptuales. Desde la perspectiva de Chrétien, la historia del *logos* no puede evitar verse envuelta con su cristianización, con su bautismo:

L’histoire de notre logos est aussi celle de sa christianisation. L’enjeu d’une telle philosophie, tirant profit au-delà de Heidegger des leçons même de Heidegger, est alors de laisser ce logos christianisé advenir lui-même à la parole.²⁸

Entonces, el trazado fronterizo implica la irrupción de una presencia, la presencia de un evento que marca la historia e impide la normalidad del curso que había venido siguiendo. Ni siquiera es una segunda navegación, es, por el contrario, un cambio completo de rumbo que implica el evento crístico y la ascunción, con él, de la promesa, es decir, de una donación cuya plenitud en esta vida no puede ser realizada: si la plenitud de la promesa no puede ser realizada, la misma palabra que la invoca en su presencia posible quedará siempre corta con respecto a lo que en ella se anuncia. Sin embargo, pese a la cristianización del *logos*, pese a los guardagujas y aduaneros de la filosofía, la doctrina que nos propone Chrétien no nos insta a creer en una religión sellada por el evento de la encarnación. Más bien, se trata de un enfoque descriptivo de lo que va implícito en la *praxis* de la plegaria (cada plegaria es irreductiblemente única, porque aquí no se habla del rezo repitiendo de determinados contenidos canónicos, de letanías y cánticos preestablecidos, como tampoco de oraciones proferidas al caletre), más concretamente, en la actitud en la que se funda todo *homo religiosus*, abierto al más allá configurado por una promesa, promesa que, ceñida a la plegaria, se eleva “por enci-

²⁷ Ph. Grosos, “L’irreversible excès: sur la phénoménologie de Jean-Louis Chrétien,” *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 135, no. 3 (2003): 224.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

ma de toda imagen y concepto.”²⁹ Así, pues, “l’oeuvre de Jean-Louis Chrétien ne nous contraint pas à adopter une quelconque croyance. Il ne s’agit pas ici d’une” christliche Weltanschauung,³⁰ fundada sobre argumentos de autoridad y comunidades de interpretación de la palabra bíblica, pero sí se trata de pensar más allá del *logos grec*,³¹ o, por lo menos, de manera distinta a los abordajes teóricos que desde él se proponen. Se trata de pensar el exceso que se anuncia, ante el cual la palabra siempre se halla disminuida, y por ello es siempre palabra envuelta por la propia *praxis* de una desmesura que enfrenta. Que no se conmine a entrar bajo la bóveda de una visión cristiana de mundo no significa, empero, pensar como si esa visión no hubiese existido en los anales de la filosofía, que su influjo no se haya sentido en la tradición del pensamiento, que la perspectiva de Dios nada haya aportado a la del hombre.

Justamente es el exceso de esa doctrina lo que Chrétien desea pensar, sin por ello militar en la canónica cristiana, es precisamente eso que al pensamiento abate porque no se deja atrapar como un ente mundano, obligando así al pensamiento a no detenerse jamás dentro de los márgenes de una finitud en que lo Otro se anuncia. Si lo que se anuncia es un exceso, todo lo que se enuncie acerca de él, desde aquí, será por definición, con respecto a él, un defecto. Con defecto se responde al exceso: aquello que es del linaje del milagro, de lo inesperado, de lo repentino, eso que rompe con los marcos de comprensión consagrados haciendo de la humillación gloria y de la gloria humillación, convirtiendo los cadalsos mundanos, la cruz, en altares atentos a otro mundo, a otro tiempo (*stat crux, volvitur orbis*), implica una desmesura a la cual

²⁹ F. Díez Fischer, “La Plegaria como Protoinstitución,” en: *Perspectivas investigativas sobre el pensamiento de san Buenaventura de Bagnoreggio y otros estudios*, ed. J. C. Barrera y Fray L. F. Benítez A. OFM (Bogotá: Universidad de San Buenaventura, 2018), 400–437.

³⁰ Grosos, “L’irreversible excès,” 239.

³¹ *Ibid.*

el concepto atiende, mas no comprende del todo. Lo anterior no hace sino confirmar nuestra fragilidad, nuestra debilidad y nuestra incompletitud. Pero no es en términos fenomenológicos esa fragilidad un *échec*,³² pues es ella, la fragilidad, constituida desde el exceso, comprendida desde éste, la que se encuentra al interior de una dinámica perpetuamente renovada: la de tratar con el exceso, la de dotarse de voz para alcanzar lo inalcanzable, constituyéndose entonces la fragilidad (la finitud) a partir del conjunto indefinido de abordajes elaborados sobre ese exceso. El poder de la palabra que nada atrapa, confisca o hace suyo se yergue sobre sí mismo hasta el punto en que la misma palabra se convierte en ese acto performativo por el cual nos re-hacemos a nosotros mismos, en nuestra *penía* y nuestra indigencia. El *homo indigens* no escapa de su *paupertas* inexorablemente inscrita en la plegaria, su pobreza es una pobreza siempre presente, pero enriquecida en la articulación viviente, somática y espiritual a la una, que nos devuelve a nosotros mismos, renovados en la performatividad de la plegaria. Un *homo renatus*, aunque siempre indigente, renueva su subjetividad en el recuerdo mismo de su indigencia, cuya palabra recoge las viejas miserias, uniéndolas a las presentes, ofreciéndolas a un consuelo eventual, del cual, sin embargo, no hay garantía. El porvenir se imbrica en estos tiempos que la plegaria une en su cuerpo, es decir, la indigencia se sabe nunca contrarrestada, nunca anulada, nunca disuelta, por lo tanto, el porvenir es también de la plegaria, que lanza al mundo la precariedad de la existencia.

La huella de la plegaria: protología y escatología inciertas

La auto-renovación antropológica no culmina en la calle ciega de una historia acabada, ya que la relación entre el *vetus homo* y el *homo*

³² *Ibid.*, 234.

novus es díscola, no *ad interim*, sino *ad perpetuam vitam*. Abierto al tiempo, el hombre se hace a sí mismo en esa indigencia que aguarda más allá del tedio de las horas, por eventos y auto-revisiones que permitan una reprobación del hombre que se es, enfilándose así a esa noche de lo que aún no es. Si la plegaria es hábito, lo será a condición de no dormir sobre una reiteración monótona de sus enunciados, a fin de que su magro sostén, el *homo religiosus*, habite verdaderamente de la agonia que corre entre el vivir y el morir espiritual, esto es, entre el vivir muriendo y el morir viviendo, sin renunciar jamás a las indefinidas resurrecciones espirituales que hacen de la cruz la enseña de una fundación que está en la base de semejante movimiento, pero fundación que no deja atrás una dinámica que la conduce más allá de la paralizada, estática, característica de los fundamentos: “toda plegaria es ‘reproducción posterior como habito propio actualizado’ (Hua IV, 269).”³³ En ese proceso de “repetición o más bien de ‘ejercicio’ como proceso de fortalecimiento y constante reactivación de una posesión habitual, la plegaria permite continuar fundando originalmente de nuevo al hombre religioso.”³⁴ No obstante, cualquier fundación se inscribe dentro de una determinada historicidad, cultura y tradición, no habla desde el punto de vista de Sirius, porque ni siquiera, en términos creyentes, el Absoluto se ha resistido a la prueba del tiempo.

La plegaria continúa viejas plegarias, personales y comunitarias, la plegaria se autoconstituye en un horizonte viejísimo de plegarias en las que el hombre se ha narrado desde sus más profundas miserias invocando el nombre de una redención siempre posible, fuera de la historia, pero obrando en ella: siempre posible, pero ni obligada ni segura, que en esta dinámica oracional las certezas están de más, pues con la afirmación de la certeza la plegaria se dispararía como tal. Intencionalidad

³³ Citado en Díez, “La Plegaria como Protointitución.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*

sin cumplimiento intuitivo van de mano de la plegaria, pues ella atiende no a lo propiamente entitativo, sino a aquello que se hurta a cualquier determinación óptica, como tampoco cubre de conceptos el elusivo destino al cual vuelve su mirada, mirada envuelta en oscuridad, mirada que no se sabe correspondida, ofertorio entregado sin la garantía de una respuesta. Una liturgia del dispendio se apodera de la palabra que entrega un montón de indigencias en la plegaria. El acto intencional que la anima es, ante todo, íntimo, revestido por las indigencias de un sujeto que no sabe sino hacerse cargo precariamente de sí mismo dando la palabra a la palabra misma, ésa que lo constituye en una reformatión incesante dentro del tiempo. La plegaria no está desprovista de intención, no es una intención vacía porque no encuentre cumplimiento intuitivo ni porque el concepto que daría cuenta de aquello a lo que se enfila se le escabulle. Dios sería el nombre de ese exceso al cual se refiere una intencionalidad cuyo cumplimiento raya en la penuria. Asimismo, lo que en la plegaria el orante solicita no está domesticado por una indigencia a la que irremediamente se dará respuesta. Ni bien se “ejercita” la plegaria, en ese mismo momento sólo hay espera y escucha, espera de aquello que (acaso) vendrá y escucha, en principio, de una subjetividad volcada a decirse desde sus entrañas, pero también a desdecirse desde ellas:

Derrida termina por confesar que toda oración auténtica es en última instancia una oración de imposibilidad, una oración del don. En términos fenomenológicos, esto significa que la plegaria se ocupa de lo que está siempre por venir, de lo que, absolutamente y sin pruebas claras de éxito, avanza sin llegar nunca,³⁵

porque está fuera de la dinámica de los contratos y del comercio, del toma y daca, de los pactos y de la juridicidad que éstos invocan. La plegaria es un texto de insuperable asimetría: hace de la palabra liturgia de

³⁵ *Ibid.*

la pobreza, donación de sentido a esa intimidad que se renueva en la misma indigencia empalabrada, infinitamente empalabrada, sin término ni fin, pero también sin el coronamiento seguro en una gloria.

Apostando con el exceso al que se dirige, la plegaria cumple con sus propios excesos semánticos, quizás con violencias sintácticas, tal vez adosando paradojas para intentar hablar de lo imposible, llevando el lenguaje al extremo de sí mismo, punto en el cual el mismo lenguaje prefiere callar modestamente, abrazado en el límite por su propia impotencia. Eso sí, toda la dinámica se encuentra marcada inalienablemente por una finitud que es su límite. La plegaria es, pues “performativa,”³⁶ se remite a un “destino incierto,”³⁷ se ciñe a un exceso efímero para poder entregarse a ese exceso inefable ante el cual su portador se desnuda, aunque portador y plegaria sean en esencia una y la misma realidad. La liturgia de la palabra, el ensalzamiento de la palabra que aguarda por la Gracia, el tropel de violencias que merece el lenguaje para ser (in)adecuado a aquello que prescinde de él se justifican en la medida en que su obra se dirige a un continuo elusivo: el hombre se reinventa en la palabra que se inventa en una plegaria que pone de nuevo en juego la herida de una indigencia. Nada más alejado a esta herida que la autosuficiencia antropológica, el lenguaje pagado de sí mismo, las esencias tecnificadas por las cuales nos apoderamos (hostilmente o no) del mundo. Indigencia, acicate de una refundación perpetua. Plegaria, el resultado del *perpetuum mobile* llamado “indigencia.” Mas el don de la plegaria, su exceso finito y la finitud de su exceso no obligan el don de una retribución que pacificaría la mortificación de la indigencia: traspasar el umbral de la plegaria hacia el ámbito de la Gracia santificante es ya ingresar al templo de una religión positiva. La plegaria se detiene en el umbral, no osa traspasarlo, aunque ella misma pueda ser calificada de

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

“protoinstitución” (*Urstiftung*) religiosa, recogida y transmitida por la tradición, y renovada, reelaborada y reactivada constantemente en su seno (*Neustiftung, Nachstiftung*).³⁸

El hombre, desde esta perspectiva, no puede cesar de renovarse. Quien se niegue a ello, estará muerto para el mundo, pero, ante todo, para sí mismo. Tiempo e historia, continuamente vividos y, por eso mismo, activados, impiden el gesto de la renuncia. Las heridas tienen palabra en la plegaria, se desnudan en ella, la elocuencia de los discursos encubridores pueden perder, al menos por un momento, las banderas de la victoria, como pueden perderlas los discursos enfocados sobre todo en el mundo óptico. La teología de la cruz no significa solamente la renuncia divina a la propia omnipotencia, sino que señala a la finitud el camino a su propia composición endeble, restaurada una y otra vez, sin por eso completarse a sí misma en ningún futuro eventual, ni bastándose a sí misma porque se sabe superada en un exceso al que sólo se accede incompletamente en la forma de la oración o de la plegaria, más que en el concepto, desvinculado del orden de las promesas. Incluso puede aseverarse que la indigencia es de “tal calidad” que la misma plegaria debe antecederse a sí misma como plegaria, solicitando, como proto-plegaria, la fuerza para poder llegar a ser plegaria, plegaria ofrecida al exceso desde la fuente de la indigencia. Acaso solamente una entidad numinosa nos permita “rezar para que se pueda rezar”³⁹ (“dame, oh, Señor, la fortaleza para cumplir con una oración que esté a tu Altura”), cumplir con una proto-plegaria para poder llegar a formular la plegaria, pero esto no lo sabremos con certeza y, en términos filosóficos, poco importa saberlo, pues de lo que se trata es de mantenerse en los umbrales, en las fronteras y en los límites, porque somos ya siempre umbral, frontera y límite, es decir, herida que no se sobrepone a sí mis-

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

ma desde sí misma, únicamente indigencia que amerita un tú para poder decir profundamente la herida del yo.

Si la promesa ha sido formulada (si el ser es y está allí antes que toda pregunta por él), entonces la propia voz llega retardadamente a lo que ya ha sido anunciado; lo que se nos impone es ante todo y primitivamente la escucha, sin la cual no hay respuesta, sin la cual la palabra no llegaría a ser palabra. “Si parler c’est d’abord écouter,”⁴⁰ entonces la escucha es aquello que permite dejar la palabra a la palabra, aunque sea “en retard. Rendre la parole parlante,”⁴¹ permitir a la palabra hablar, siendo respuesta, implica la necesidad anterior de prosternarse ante lo que es y su llamado como escucha del ser y de su llamado; en los términos de la cristianización del *logos* significa darse a uno mismo la palabra, permitir que ésta hable abriéndose justamente al exceso que la convoca, más que al ente, más que al ser identificado con un Ente determinado, apertura que la misma llamada instaure y que la respuesta, incapaz de darle cumplimiento en tanto que respuesta, atiende. No obstante, la fragilidad del incumplimiento deviene en autoconstitutivo debido a la *kénosis* involuntaria del sujeto ante el llamado excesivo. Quizás sobre esa apertura asimétrica entre llamada y respuesta se alimenta únicamente la finitud, a pesar de sus ganas de volcarse sobre el infinito aparente del exceso, pues nunca basta ninguna respuesta ofrecida al mismo exceso. Hay un déficit atravesando toda respuesta, aunque la respuesta sea carnal, entretejida con el cuerpo y la sangre de quien responde, de quien se entrega a la palabra para dar respuesta a la solicitud del exceso, puesto que no existe sino voz encarnada, voz que es intrínsecamente cuerpo: “il n’est de voix qu’incarnée.”⁴² Y es ese mismo déficit el que define la renovación de toda respuesta, la respuesta constantemente renovada, reformulada una vez, y otra, ante la promesa que repetidamente

⁴⁰ Grosos, “L’irreversible excès,” 229.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 234.

nos da a la palabra: respuesta plena no existe, ninguna respuesta colma la solicitud previamente formulada.

Ausencia de una *réponse plénière*

Los textos de Chrétien “insistent sur cette absence, même chorale, de la réponse plénière, sur cette irrécouvrabilité de l’appel.”⁴³ Entre el exceso y el defecto se debate el hombre, entre su fragilidad y el reconocimiento de algo que, llamándolo, lo supera. Los enunciados transparentes del *logos* griego se contaminan por medio de la oscuridad de una cristianización inevitable: el presente aparece como continuamente desbordado, como si hubiese más dignidad en vivir para un tiempo que no sea sólo el presente. Lo que no está, lo no-presente, debe vivir en el presente, se alude a él no sólo en la posibilidad finita de autoproyectarse en lo no sido aún, sino en la apertura de nuestra finitud a sí misma gracias al perímetro inabarcable del exceso. Si esto es Dios, pues bienvenido sea. Si el llamado antecedente, si la promesa que procura una palabra continuamente rejuvenecida a mi propia voz es uno de los criptonombres de la divinidad, bienvenida la divinidad críptica y el propio rejuvenecimiento en la impotencia de una respuesta adecuada, por definición desfasada con el exceso: no puede haber ni pacto ni contrato de la palabra humana con el exceso que ha sido desatado inmemorialmente, con la llama previa del ser, que ilumina foscamente, que se retrae al dar asomo a su luz. Vivimos a media luz, en el desconsuelo de un fracaso que renovadamente nos confirma, pero no sabremos ser ni constituirnos sin esa luz perennemente melancólica y sin ese fracaso sobre el cual constantemente nos edificamos, pues es menos la fortaleza que la fragilidad la praxis que nos da la licencia de aproximarnos a la carencia que somos.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 233.

¿Qué se anuncia allí donde justamente nada se anuncia? Se anuncia un silencio en medio de los balbuceos de la plegaria que versan sobre un exceso. Pareciera que alguien escucha, porque nadie interrumpe la ordalía de la palabra que lucha consigo misma para encontrar ese silencio donde un Tú se abre a un yo sobre-expuesto. Si mi acto de habla es posible, lo es porque el silencio umbrátil que antecede a Dios o lo oculta para siempre permite *suo modo* mi propia palabra agobiada, agraciada, tomada por el tiempo, fracturada por sus percances. Esto es, entra en una dinámica dialógica: aun sin Dios me digo lo que Dios me diría y me lo diría sin ya ocultarme en la reiterada gama de mis discursos auto-justificatorios. Da la impresión, pues, de que la palabra puede inscribirse desde su intimidad porque hay otra intimidad que, al no interrumpirla, la acoge. Como don (*Gabe*) y tarea (*Aufgabe*),⁴⁴ damos la oración, entregamos nuestro yo más íntimo en ella, logramos al fin respirar de nuevo por ella. Sin la oración y su lucha interna por marchitar la pena, por ajar el agobio, por situarnos menos lejos de la alegría, sin la unicidad de cada acto por el cual invocamos los umbrales invisibles y al Tú no menos invisible de la escucha, sin el acto de dar gracias por la misma oración en la que vencemos gracias al diálogo con un Dios que puede no existir, el hombre se encontraría librado a la temible suerte de dejarse atrás a sí mismo. Y como esto último no es posible, so pena de engendrar infiernos no-escatológicos, no llegar jamás hasta sí mismo, no deshacerse de lo peor de sí mismo, de los autoengaños, de la soberbia de una voluntad omnipotente que sólo sabe herir y ser herida, el destino del hombre parecería permanecer alejado por completo de sí mismo, porque el diálogo con el umbral invisible en que podemos ser genuina y francamente nosotros mismos se ha extinguido.

⁴⁴ Chrétien, "The Wounded Word," 164.

No estoy seguro si el hombre es una criatura eucarística, como ha dicho Chrétien que ha escrito Filón,⁴⁵ pero sí lo es en el sentido de que el pan de vida tiene una esencia comunitaria, en que el otro puede ser el tú que me lleve también a mi propia revelación, casi tanto como el umbral brumoso que antecede a Dios, donde eventual y puntualmente me autodiscerniré de una manera categórica. Mis actos de habla ante lo invisible, mi oración que es mi propia palabra y la de nadie más, me llevan, en la palabra ordálica, el diálogo y el silencio, hasta el umbral donde mi propia automanifestación sería como el resultado de una permisión primera y precedente, salutífera sin salvación eterna, llena de una Gracia evacuada de Dios. Mi distancia equívoca entre mi yo y mí mismo se salvaría merced a la puesta en obra de una sinceridad oracional fundada en su unicidad, y por ello irrepetible con la boca abierta o cerrada, pero a su vez la reducción de semejante distancia no puede darse el lujo de obviar el itinerario, la apelación o el llamado al otro, sin cuya presencia, invisible, ausente, tejida por el silencio o en la voz de múltiples demoras, no hay posibilidad de retorno. En términos creyentes, mi triunfo sobre mí pasa por la prevalencia de Dios sobre mis fracasos, pérdidas, ausencias, negación de hospitalidad, por la falta, en suma; en términos meramente oracionales, de una plegaria que busca en su otro el *iter* de una *epistrophé* sedienta del desahogo en virtud de una determinada tribulación, o sea, la *lex orandi* también busca su otro, aunque el ejercicio de palabras y pausas le entregue el sosiego de un horizonte lleno de silencios, donde insertar la propia palabra representa más la anuencia a un diálogo que su simple y pura negación.

Entre estos descontentos la palabra herida practica sobre sí el juicio sumario del Decir, del poder decir, del decir a alguien, aunque allí, en el extremo de su instante, en el extremo judicial de una palabra que se prueba a sí misma, que se justifica a sí misma, tal vez no exista nada,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 173–174.

ni siquiera el vacío, parafraseando a Borges. Que detrás de las Altas Puertas no haya nada no intimida a la palabra expresada en sus umbrales. La palabra cobra, en y por la asimetría que la envuelve, una modalidad despegada del concepto y del ente al que se adecua. La palabra no habla de, no entra en la intimidad de, sino que intenta hablar desde fuera desde ella misma, como si la más propia intimidad proviniese de la más completa extimidad, porque la palabra sabe que no se basta a sí misma al tener a la vista la antecedencia del exceso, por consiguiente, la alabanza surge como intento de la palabra insuficiente, de la voz tomada desprevenida por el asalto de lo inesperado:

La louange est ainsi la modalité la plus authentique de la parole, c'est-à-dire de la réponse . . . Cette parole est alors intimement parole de philosophe et, paradoxalement, son modèle le plus authentique devient celui de la prière.⁴⁶

La palabra herida es su propio extremo, es su propia ordalía, es un decir oracional arriesgado a justamente eso: salir de sí para decir; salir de sí para desdecir nuestras convicciones más arraigadas, salir de sí para que la herida sea oída por otras heridas, para que la oración sea el *Verbum* que encarna la herida, para que la ordalía de la palabra-plegaria se someta a la oscuridad (siempre imposible) de un Dios y a la oscuridad (siempre posible) de un lector. Pero, ¿por qué la plegaria parece casi una condición antropológica, una constante del ser humano que vacía su corazón en esas ocasiones donde la coyuntura nos coloca de cara agónica ante nosotros mismos, en enfado con el mundo, bajo el rigor de una ley decepcionada? Mi palabra, mía, única, irreductiblemente última, la *haecceitas* de mi palabra es el clamor puro de una solicitud cuyas altas murallas debilitan su ímpetu. Aun sin continuar la exhortación de Jesús, la oración lleva consigo esas tres posibilidades que son sólo búsqueda de la moción de un corazón tomado por la inquietud: “petite

⁴⁶ Grosos, “L’irreversible excès,” 237.

et accipietis, quaerite et invenietis, pulsate et aperietur vobis.” El hombre mismo, en su extravío, se convierte él todo en plegaria, él todo, con su cuerpo y su alma inescindibles, se convierte en su propia respuesta. Respuesta pobre, frágil, depauperada, porque plegaria “deriva del latín precaria, forma neutra y plural del adjetivo *precarius*, que significa precario, pobre, obtenido a base de ruego y súplicas.”⁴⁷

¿Pero no debemos advertir que ya de antemano, antes de que la plegaria se fije en la forma del llamado, antes de que la palabra adquiera el germen de una oración, una predonación se ha favorecido, o hemos presumido que una predonación nos ha preexistido, ya siempre preexistido? Es como si la esperanza de ser escuchado caminase de la mano con esa predonación, sin la cual la plegaria misma gemiría una imposibilidad constituida *a nativitate*. Parece que las cosas van justamente al contrario: sólo si un mínimo de predonación, sólo si una palabra viejísima nos ha antecedido tal vez antes que la memoria y los rigores del tiempo es que la plegaria es posible, es que el llamado es viable, es que la llamada simplemente llama. El pedir, buscar y llamar oracional remiten a una voz que no le pertenece, antecediendo ella el horizonte que se abre en la plegaria: una precedencia, una donación, una generosidad predonadas son el invisible horizonte de posibilidad del horizonte que se despliega en la plegaria, y del hombre, en su desolación, que en ella se manifiesta. Las autarquías han quedado exangües en el camino o han desandado sus altos linajes antropológicos. Aquí no hay, por de pronto, suficiencias, sino vulnerabilidades, entidades más fundadas en su vulnerabilidad que en su fortaleza, más en la potencia que en el poder, más en la dermatografía legible del propio cuerpo, transformado por la misma plegaria, que en la afasia salmódica de ritmos monótonos que se suceden a sí mismos sin demasiadas variaciones.

⁴⁷ Díez, “La Plegaria como Protoinstitución.”

El tránsito de la plegaria sin el Dios revelado es *semper y nunquam*. Siempre llamado al llamado, siempre convocado a la oración, siempre suscitando en sí la plegaria destinal, cuya meta puede residir en únicamente la plegaria. Como hemos dicho, esta fenomenología no quiere sino llegar al umbral de Dios escrutando el *fundus arcanus* del hombre que llama. Escribe Flórez acerca de san Agustín, que aun en el encuentro con Dios, este encuentro no le será todavía demasiado encuentro—saturación del encuentro—como para no seguirle buscando.⁴⁸ El llamado de la plegaria sostiene a veces toda una vida; quizá en el “quiero” inscrito en el *quaero* (en el amar implícito en todo buscar), en la pasión propia del deseo que solicita su propia quietud, imposible quietud (*donec requiescat in te*), no exista sino una desproporción entre lo ansiado y lo encontrado, pues el deseo sobrevive a cualquier posesión finita, pero es un hecho que tras las líneas de ese *quaero*, de ese *pathos* y de ese amar existe un suplemento teleológico que anima el decurso del alma, convirtiéndose *a fortiori* en al alma del decurso. No podemos imaginarnos la llamada sin unas mínimas suposiciones: que ella va hacia algo, que despeja una respuesta, que me permite conseguir la pregunta exacta escondida por detrás de las preguntas imprecisas. La llamada llama, tal vez solamente se llame a sí misma, acaso sólo reduzca la desolación en el mismo acto oracional del llamar. Y quizás la ordalía de la plegaria consista en precisamente eso: en que la palabra sólo alcanza su trascendencia apenas en sí misma, en la belleza sintáctico-semántica del acto irreductible no en un ente al que habitualmente interpela y en él se interpela. La palabra herida está siempre allí, en los bordes afilados de sí misma, en la noche incapaz de amanecer, en la voz que ya siempre nos ha respondido, pero que, sin embargo, no hemos

⁴⁸ Cfr. A. Flórez, “*Mihi quaestio factus sum*. La pregunta del hombre por el hombre en Agustín,” en: *¿Quiénes somos? Hacia una comprensión de lo humano*, ed. I. Calderón (Bogotá: Universidad de la Sabana, 2008), 81–102.

aprendido a reconocer como nuestra respuesta más incontrovertiblemente íntima.

El hombre es un triunfo en este fracaso: triunfa oracionalmente, triunfa en la plegaria (la profiere en su indigencia) cuya respuesta desconoce (su fracaso). Y si fenomenológicamente la respuesta es atribuido al Dios de un gran relato, a las religiones de los textos, a una revelación enemiga de la razón, el fracaso llega al más alto ápice de su extremo: se mezcla con la teología, haciéndose un madero de fierro. Mas también, en virtud del desfiladero del extremo al que ha llegado en la plegaria, en la desnudez de su máxima nulidad, ¿no confiesa justamente en ese punto el orante, al confesar su más íntima impotencia, la presencia de un Dios, así sea del Dios que nunca ha de llegar para salvarnos? En esta fenomenología la redención, como se ha visto, se autoimputa como antropofanía, como discurso, alocución, alegato, ofrenda y perdón que se ofrece a un testigo, testigo capaz de comprender, y, comprendiendo, perdona.

Pero la redención de la que hablamos tiene que detenerse, de manera incontrovertible, ante las puertas que querríamos tocar, mas no tocamos, ante el Dios que nos protege de Su mismo rostro para hablarnos, pero que en efecto no nos habla, ante el milagro que revertiría el dolor agudo que es consecuencia de una obra de la naturaleza, pero que no nos consuela porque el milagro no nos es dado. Detenerse ante las puertas de una posible teofanía es también emigrar de una siempre posible e idolátrica posesión de lo divino. Es además rodearse el creyente del terror de que su propio anhelo, de que su propio deseo oracional no se cumpla, que sucumba a una imposibilidad, que fenezca ante la posibilidad de una no-experiencia: de que las puertas jamás se abran, aunque éste sea el mérito—sin mérito—inscrito en cualquier plegaria. Es una fenomenología rodeada de puertas que no se abren, porque desea ser una fenomenología de los umbrales que nos acercan a lo invisible gracias a las heridas de nuestro cuerpo, de nuestra alma, de nuestra inte-

gridad antropológica. Ella reflexiona sobre la plegaria *qua* plegaria, de eso a lo que nos asoma la plegaria, de los muros que no caen bajo los cuernos de Josué, así como de toda la tribulación y la leticia que yacen bajo ella: la plegaria conduce nuestras expectativas, habla a unos oídos tal vez inexistentes, clama al Dios desconocido cuyas puertas podrían estar clausuradas de una vez y para siempre. La plegaria misma debería ser su propio sosiego, su propia dulzura en medio de la desesperación que la mece, su *tranquillitas ordinis* pese al desorden que la rodea y la desesperación que es su contexto. Su llamada pura quizás ni convoque ni interpele a nadie; su interpelación de la misericordia tal vez ni siquiera consiga las puertas teologales de un consuelo que se abre para ella. Sin embargo, el que hace plegaria se va haciendo en la plegaria, va siendo ella misma, se desnuda ante sí mismo practicando algo así como una auto-exomologesis, sincerando los fondos anímico-corpóreos que lo llevan a pesar de todos los pesares a dar gracias porque algo se ha desocultado en una fórmula oracional que ha redimido—suturado, cicatrizado, sanado—acaso sin Dios, acaso en la más absoluta ausencia de Dios, tanto la carne viva desde la que habla toda plegaria, como la sangre que entinta el manuscrito en el que describe sus adentros.

¿Somos entonces naturalmente teologales aunque Dios se rehúse a presentarse ante nosotros, aunque nosotros mismos podamos ser aparentemente sin su presencia? No lo sé. Pero la plegaria, incluso en la impotencia en que nos revela, nos conduce más allá de nosotros mismos, nos lleva hasta las puertas del perdón por el propio ensoberbecimiento, es capaz de colocarnos *in via* hacia el horizonte de una redención que nos debemos. Nuestra liturgia sin Dios nos lleva lejos, lejos de nosotros mismos, de nuestras más íntimas creencias, creando un nuevo cielo y una nueva tierra de residencia donde reposen, así sea transitoriamente, las transformaciones del hombre nuevo por obra de la plegaria, de la *lex orandi*, de la unicidad del verbo con el que nos debemos al Dios inexistente, que, incluso en su inexistencia, obra en nosotros por

medio de una plegaria que le debemos. Tal vez no necesitemos un Dios para la redención, tampoco para salvarnos, sólo para dar un vago inicio a lo que únicamente podría salvarnos y redimirnos, residente en nosotros, la semántica de una oración que no tiene por qué dejarnos indemnes. La oración al Dios desconocido, al Dios inexistente, al Dios “virtual” tal como lo adjectiva Chrétien, no tiene por qué resultar en una oración virtual, como si no perteneciese ella al orden religioso. *A contrario*, Chrétien cree que es una plegaria real, perteneciente al orden religioso, detrás del cual hay un “Tú” (virtual, ausente, inexistente, cuya escucha desconocemos) que constituye la esencia de la religiosidad:

Supervielle, in his *Prière à l'inconnu*, speaks to a god whose existence he does not posit and who may or may not be listening—he does not know:

How surprised I am to be addressing you,
My God, I who know not if you exist.

Nevertheless, this prayer to a virtual God, whatever religious or poetic appreciation one might have for it, is not itself a virtual prayer, but an actual and real prayer, and this poem belongs properly to the religious order, with the virtual character of the God to whom it says “you” constituting a moment in the meaning of its religiosity.⁴⁹

Es real, independientemente de la existencia o inexistencia de Dios, ésta es la gran paradoja, porque la plegaria nos dona una voz, nos presta un silencio, para que ni nuestra voz ni nuestro silencio se encuentren por completo desamparados. El desamparo se ampara, tal vez inútilmente, al interior de la voz y del silencio. Voz y silencio son insignias del desamparo, allí donde todo lo real, lo verdaderamente real, lo invisible, ha devenido desierto alimentándose de su propia erosión. Sólo un Dios, que ha muerto, podría salvarnos. Pero la plegaria menos atañe a Dios que al hombre desde la óptica fenomenológica de Chrétien. Qui-

⁴⁹ Chrétien, “The Wounded Word,” 147.

siera nuestro yo ser llamado “tú” por ese “Yo” antiquísimo cuya realidad evanescente es el horizonte de la plegaria. Señalado por una vocación, el “tú” se sabe vaciado por una mirada solicitante: no hay aquí sujeto, sino constitución de sujeto en su propio vaciamiento, en el peregrinaje de una noche kenótica en la cual se puede hablar a quien no existe. A veces únicamente tenemos noches, noches que nuestra noche cruza, mientras que la palabra acerca de Dios es el único consuelo que nos queda, como un guindajo entre los labios. Deseamos el “tú” en ese “Yo,” pero aun existiendo el “Yo,” no hay ninguna obligación en el “Yo” de llamarnos “tú.” Hay una modificación en el remitente del mensaje, independientemente de su recepción de parte del destinatario,⁵⁰ a lo mejor el remitente mismo consiste en el destinatario del acto de habla por el cual uno y el mismo se modifica interiormente al dejar salir en ásperas palabras una falta hasta entonces inconfesable. Pero entre él y su sí mismo, entre él como remitente y él como destinatario se ha producido una alteridad, un acto de alienación que purga el suplicio mediante un acto que no es en principio elaborado en función del mismo remitente.

Vulnera mea non abscondo

Que quieras que no, el remitente se abre en la plegaria hacia sí mismo cuando lo hace hacia Dios, o hacia sí mismo aun cuando desespere de la existencia de alguien que acogerá las palabras del suplicante. Desde sí mismo hasta sí mismo a través de Otro: ésta parece ser la estructura de la plegaria que habla desde las profundidades del pecado por mediación de una rectitud que quiere poner ante la luz la inquietud de una falta que no nos deja en paz ni a sol ni a sombra. Pero el acto de decir exige algo solamente, que la palabra dirigida a lo invisible, en su u-

⁵⁰ “The Word affects and modifies the sender, and not its addressee.” *Ibid.*, 153.

nicidad, saque a flote con los términos justos la rectitud del sujeto que hace oración: a la *haecceitas* del orante corresponde la *haecceitas* de la plegaria. Estamos de acuerdo con Chrétien, a la oración no subyace el *logos* apofántico⁵¹ que coloca a un ente bajo la luz, aclarando su esencia e intersticios, sino una rectitud expresiva que intenta desalojar al pecador de una condición de pecado que tampoco por sí solo puede absolver, pues no está seguro ni del Dios invisible ni del perdón del ofendido. A menos que sea él mismo el deudor de sí mismo, es decir, a menos que la herida del pecado haya sido autocausada. De allí, entonces, que el llamado, la interpelación y la demanda, aunque ofensor y ofendido sean el mismo, tampoco pueda prescindir de la estructura aliena del diálogo, de la estructura por la cual la plegaria entrega una herida en la rectitud de un acto expresivo. ¿La sinceridad expresiva nos salva? Tampoco lo sé. Pero nos vacía, evacúa en alguna medida el mal que ha lacerado nuestros sueños, devolviéndonos a la condición más humana y cordial de que las faltas pueden aliviarse mediante ese don que nos hace seres oracionales, seres de plegaria, seres agónicos en y por la plegaria, en la cual intentamos sacar fuera de nosotros con sinceridad expresiva, en situación de alteridad, como un testimonio ante testigos, un aguijón que debemos aprender a empalabrar de acuerdo con la oración que le es pertinente, y no con otra, empalabrar el dolor que lo suscita, y no otro, aprender a llorarnos ese lamento único, y no otro. Oigamos a Girondo:

Llorar a lágrima viva. Llorar a chorros. Llorar la digestión. Llorar el sueño. Llorar ante las puertas y los puertos. Llorar de amabilidad y de amarillo. Abrir las canillas, las compuertas del llanto. Empaparnos el alma, la camiseta. Inundar las veredas y los paseos, y salvarnos, a nado, de nuestro llanto.

⁵¹ "Aristotle, in a celebrated line from his *De interpretatione*, affirms that 'prayer is a logos but is neither true nor false', it is not logos apophantikos." Chrétien, "The Wounded Word," 154.

Asistir a los cursos de antropología, llorando. Festejar los cumpleaños familiares, llorando. Atravesar el África, llorando.

Llorar como un cacuy, como un cocodrilo . . . si es verdad que los cacuyes y los cocodrilos no dejan nunca de llorar.

Llorarlo todo, pero llorarlo bien. Llorarlo con la nariz, con las rodillas. Llorarlo por el ombligo, por la boca.

Llorar de amor, de hastío, de alegría. Llorar de frac, de flato, de flacura. Llorar improvisando, de memoria. ¡Llorar todo el insomnio y todo el día!

Limpiar el hondón del alma, calarnos de nuestra íntima verdad, lavarnos en las plegarias, abrevar de nuevo de la vida y del tiempo una vez que hemos removido aquello que ha detenido tiempo y vida; cuánto de apófansis hay en esta vía purgativa de las propias faltas es algo que desconozco, pero semejante fenomenología prefiere permanecer *ante ianuas*: ante las de Dios, ante las de la verdad óptica; cuidando de estudiar la plegaria proferida, la que se hace con la boca abierta o con la boca muy cerrada, la que anuda vocablos *ad extra* con la rectitud lúcida de algo insufrible (que no puede disolverse en las letanías ya conocidas, en las oraciones consagradas, en las salmodias recetadas), la que anuda palabras *ad intra* en silencio, con similar rectitud, con semejante agonía. Que aquí haya en ciernes un giro teológico, tal como comenta Janicaud, es algo a lo menos discutible. Hay, sí, sin lugar a dudas, un orante, la plegaria, la alusión a un Dios todavía posible y a la parresía⁵² nacida de una herida honda, muy honda, y que debe ser expuesta, completamente expuesta, así lo expresaba san Agustín: *ecce, vulnera mea non abscondo!* Pero las heridas, y las plegarias que de ellas puedan despuntar hacia lo invisible, no se encuentran reservadas ni a los creyentes ni a los no-creyentes, quienes aprenden, ambos, a hacer su plegaria haciendo *su* propia plegaria, viviendo del acto de habla que expresa en la uni-

⁵² *Ibid.*, 159.

cidad de la plegaria, equivalente a la unicidad del sentimiento que en ella se contiene, reserva y expone.

La plegaria ni guarda ni se reserva, pues es la expresión única de un darse sin reservas ante quien (para el creyente) se entregó sin reserva alguna, y de un darse sin reservas (no-creyente) como reconocimiento de un yo cuya soberanía, tan vieja como monótona, ha sido finalmente depuesta; en esto consiste, para decirlo en breve, siguiendo el concepto que Marion ofrece en torno al *adonné*, la *diminution of the self*, la *diminutio ipseitatis*,⁵³ la disminución del Yo y de la Ipseidad trascendentales. Basta la oración, basta la plegaria, basta la *murmuratio* o el silencio atormentado para saber que uno no dispone de uno mismo. A veces, la plegaria es el silencio. Otras, solamente somos, enteramente, plegaria. Evidentemente, no caben aquí los atributos ceñidos al Dios de la Revelación, ni la definición siempre imposible de su esencia (salvo la definición que Él da de sí mismo en el Éxodo); no, no se trata del abordaje de una religión en particular ni del Dios alrededor del cual ella gravita, antes bien, nos encontramos a mucha distancia de la doctrina de la revelación y del Dios de la *metaphysica specialis*. Si a esto se le quiere llamar teología, pues adelante quienes se apresten a militar en esta concepción con Dominique Janicaud, sin embargo, las preguntas de Kosky a este respecto son bastante elocuentes y contienen *in nuce* una respuesta negativa a la cuestión que nos apremia: ¿es teológico el ensayo de Chrétien porque describe la experiencia de la plegaria? Da la impresión de que la respuesta es negativa, pues la descripción de Chrétien se funda en la experiencia vivida de la plegaria, la experiencia viva de quien ora, cuyo producto es la plegaria, más allá o más acá de los trazos específicos—dogmáticos—de la teología revelada, puesto que se trata de saber si el hombre religioso es posible, independientemente de la existen-

⁵³ J.-L. Marion, *In Excess. Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 45.

cia de religiones positivas o de las respectivas teologías reveladas. El hombre, ¿puede ser *per se*, allende *ethismos*, tradiciones y revelaciones, *homo religiosus*, dando luego forma positiva a la dinámica existencial que lo pone ante las puertas de la religión efectivamente existente?

En el ensayo de Chrétien, desafiliado de un credo de máximos, de una liturgia específica y de una axiología determinada, lo que está en juego es la posibilidad de la existencia de un hombre religioso, precediendo su absorción dentro de un conjunto de creencias y ritos específicos, apto para asomarse en la descripción del puro llamado de la plegaria, del puro llamado del orante, en el borde mismo de una religión posible, como si ésta fuese una dimensión inescindible del ser humano. Con ello también esa misma descripción nos coloca al borde ya no solo de la liquidación del auto-ensoberbecimiento y de la soberanía del *ego*, sino que éste muestra una dependencia vulnerable frente a ese algo, invisible, ante el cual se convierte en súplica. No deriva el ensayo de Chrétien en mera teología ni porque cite a teólogos ni porque elucida la experiencia de la plegaria. Así, en este sentido, se pregunta Kosky:

Is it theological because it cites recognized theologians? Is it theological because it is describing the experience of prayer? It needs to be emphasized that this essay puts forward no doctrine or pronouncement about the existence, the essence, or the attributes of God. Instead, the essay claims to be a description of the lived experience of prayer, an experience that is perhaps not shared by everyone but that is nonetheless testified in certain cases.⁵⁴

Finitudes en juego, cada una en su propia especificidad, entregan a Dios, a lo desconocido, las unicidades de su voz: entregan sus mundos internos en ella, no el mundo de afuera, no el mundo objeto de una

⁵⁴ J. Kosky, "Translator's Preface: The Phenomenology of Religion: New Possibilities for Philosophy and for Religion," en: Janicaud *et al.*, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn,"* 117.

intencionalidad, sino un mundo desvelado, que quiere borrar de sí hasta sus más desleídas sombras “in the incandescent clarity of the supplicating voice.”⁵⁵ Desde la óptica de Chrétien, en la plegaria hemos entregado a Dios algo que Él no poseía, quizás algo que le era desconocido (así como desde la perspectiva de Lacoste algo suma la historia del mundo al ser de Dios que ha encarnado: nosotros no tenemos que aprender de Dios cómo morir, antes bien, es el morir lo que Dios ha aprendido del ser humano; en otras palabras, Dios aprende del hombre lo que significa la distancia que éste guarda con respecto de Él, sintiendo como hombre lo que esa distancia en éste implanta, una agonía, la agonía propia de una *vita mortalis* que querría para sí algo más que la mortalidad de la vida; así, pues, “agony has a place in the Absolute itself”⁵⁶). En la agonía, Dios ha asumido para sí lo que hubo reservado a la criatura, pero hasta el exceso de la cruz. ¿Sabe el ser de Dios luego de las tribulaciones padecidas en el mundo algo más que antes de ellas? Sí, las sabe, las tribulaciones, en su propia carne, en la verdad de su propia carne, que no es capaz de mentirse a sí misma en la afección del dolor, en el ultraje de la tortura, en la somática del hambre y de la sed; por eso mentir no sabe la carne, exclama Henry, ni puede, por la inmediatez a sí de su propia presencia, de su propia Vida, del *Logos* de la Vida.⁵⁷ La criatura eucarística puede donar algo que ni siquiera la omnipotencia habría guardado para sí: la unicidad de la plegaria, el acto por el cual se da gracias, el espíritu librado de la conturbación por medio de las palabras oracionales. Si somos rigurosos, además, si la creación no está cumplida de una vez y para siempre, si las causas segundas son causas de algo, si desde ellas alguna novedad es posible, así sea de forma negativa, entonces no todo terminó en la consumación de Cristo so-

⁵⁵ Chrétien, “The Wounded Word,” 174.

⁵⁶ Schrijvers, *Ontotheological Turnings?*, 47–48.

⁵⁷ Cfr. M. Henry, *Encarnación. Una filosofía de la carne* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2001), 332.

bre su cruz. Los padecimientos mismos que Él no sufrió son los exvotos que hay que ofrecerle para que el cumplimiento total de la redención llegue a su término: Pablo, explica Henry en *Encarnación*, ofrece sus propios sufrimientos (como los ofrecería todo sufriente) como sufrimientos que todavía le faltaban al cuerpo maltratado de Cristo.⁵⁸ Liba Cristo, como si le perteneciera intrínsecamente, de los sufrimientos ajenos que su propio cuerpo de carne no ha padecido, guardando en sí el sufrimiento carnal de todos los vivientes, los idos, los presentes y los por venir. Todo pertenece a Dios, asevera Chrétien, menos el acto por medio del cual damos gracias, sea por cualquiera de las funciones que la palabra pueda ejercer, bien discurso, bien canto;

Philo the Jew made man into a “Eucharistic” creature, a creature whose most proper act, the one integrally its own, is to offer thanks, since all that could be offered to God already belongs to him, except the very act by which we thank “with whichever of its appointed functions the voice may exercise, be it speech or song.”⁵⁹

Cualquier religión histórica, cualquier religión positiva se encuentra más allá del umbral de lo que permitiría la descripción fenomenológica—universalista—de la plegaria, activada mediando la voz desnuda (“the voice is truly naked”⁶⁰), el cuerpo desnudo, una totalidad humana desnuda en dirección hacia un Otro, invisible, no-responsorial, seguramente silencioso. Sentimiento, invocación, súplica, llamado, la plegaria (individual o comunitaria) no corre hacia seguridad alguna, y sin embargo descarga la singularidad plomiza de un determinado corazón, como si ella fuese un don a pesar del desierto en que despliega su soledoso itinerario. Cuando se hace comunitaria se dirige a ese Otro en nombre de quienes ya no están, presta su voz a la voz de quienes ya no

⁵⁸ *Cfr. ibid.*, 325.

⁵⁹ Chrétien, “The Wounded Word,” 173–174.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.

se encuentran entre nosotros. Incluso la plegaria individual habla por los otros, por quienes ya no hablan, por quienes han dejado atrás, muy atrás, la inquietud por lo invisible (“No one prays merely for himself, and the collectivity also prays, also speaks for those who can no longer or can not yet speak. It speaks for those who are absent or who have disappeared . . .”⁶¹). La oración se hace testimonio de quienes ya no están, de quienes no estando reiteran con quienes aún están la economía de una promesa, la liturgia de lo invisible, la economía de la redención. Los ausentes son tan reales como ese mismo Dios cuyas puertas pueden permanecer cerradas para siempre al orante. La posibilidad de un presente convertido a la plenitud en un futuro último y de un tiempo sin tiempo se citan en la plegaria de los presentes en nombre de los ausentes, así como se dan cita en los presentes que aún no han llegado a la edad de la plegaria.

Responsorio sin *logos* apofántico: la plegaria—como la fe—es sin pruebas

Los ausentes están aún vivos en mi voz, que los habla sin autorización ni prohibición, simplemente los habla, como los cirios anónimamente encendidos en un altar, ellos ingresan en la plegaria, en la voz explícita del orante o en los silencios a los que toda oración debe atender para doblegar la belleza de la palabra en el cadalso de su propia entrega. *Gratias agere*, evento único, tan único como el acto del habla por el cual la unicidad de la plegaria nos descarga por fin de nosotros mismos (y Dios de su a veces absurda omnipotencia). Asistimos a un doble abajamiento, a un geminado vaciamiento, el del sujeto de la Modernidad, lo único que queda en pie luego de la reducción cartesiana, el del Gran Sujeto Ante-moderno, Dios, cuyo predicado “todopoderoso” no aparece ya como apto para escudriñar las mociones que se desprenden de

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

una antropología de la plegaria. Asimismo, ésta, la plegaria no será ni verdadera ni falsa, no será una predicación de carácter veritativo, como bien dice Aristóteles, pero no por estar fuera de los apriscos de la verdad-falsedad se encuentra impedida de practicar crecimientos humanos, antropofanías, autoconocimientos, sinceridades, convulsiones de la intimidad que ya no la dejarán ilesa, en una palabra, no sólo el privilegiado *logos apophantikos* es transformador, también lo será el régimen de los afectos, las tonalidades afectivas, los sentimientos y suma y sigue. Pero tampoco el *logos* apofántico se halla blindado en contra de la coloración afectiva, como si el hombre estuviese de cara a aspectos dicotómicos de sí mismo, como si la revelación epistemológica estuviese congelada afectivamente y como si la revelación patética se sumiese en el cero absoluto del propio conocimiento (como si el asombro o *thauma* aristotélico no contuviese en sí tanto un talante afectivo ante lo real y a su vez un impulso llamado a abordar gnoseológicamente lo real).

No obstante, si la dual *kenosis* ha evacuado los altos suburbios que nos gobernaban desde antiguo, y desde no tan antiguo, entonces el modo por el cual la plegaria, de un lado, llega hasta sus murallas colindantes, el modo, por el otro lado, por el cual las rebasa, significa para el creyente que su Dios puede contener en sí novedades, recibir en sí primicias, que los evangelios vivientes corpóreos son capaces de añadir líneas de renovado tenor a un Libro inacabado (el Absoluto podría sentir nostalgias de olores sentidos aquí abajo, dirá Borges, ver por sus ojos sensibles de distinta manera a como la haría con su puro *Nous*). No está, por lo tanto, acabada la creación, no existe compleción en el mundo sublunar donde una dinámica intramundana y una que aspiraría a lo extramundano nunca pueden ser actualizadas por entero.

Dios aprende algo de los hombres, podría hasta llegar a ser turbado por un tropo poético inmiscuido en una oración siempre insatisfecha de sí con la cual el hombre devolvería el mundo a Dios, añadiendo, de esta guisa, en la desolación de quien ora, un pecio minúsculo de

finitud a la infinitud de Dios. La creación retornaría a Él filtrada por Su propia creación (de acuerdo con el creyente, la Palabra primera no le pertenece como creyente; su rezago con respecto a la Palabra produce en el creyente la palabra-respuesta, el responsorio, con el cual responde a la palabra divina, la Palabra originariamente interpeladora. En el caso de Henry, la Palabra de Vida—equivalente a la Palabra de Dios—no cesa de hablarme: lo imposible en el pensamiento henryano es que la palabra de vida pueda suspenderse como palabra dirigida a mí, a mi propia vida, así como deje en algún momento de interpelarme desde lo profundo de mi vida). Tampoco en Henry la fenomenología se concibe como un ver, como la puesta en luz (bajo un horizonte de aparición) de un ente. No es una fenomenología clásica, explica Pesce,⁶² es una fenomenología patética desviada de la prerrogativa que la filosofía ha acordado a la *res extensa*, centrándose en la realidad invisible de la Vida, en el cuerpo viviente, que jamás puede ser asimilado a una cosa entre cosas que se ven a la luz de un horizonte de aparición, esto es, no debe ser reducido a *res extensa*. Sin embargo, se acuerdo con Marion, la misma intuición obedece a una “lógica de la penuria”, surcada por una insuficiencia insuperable, puesto que toda intuición debe incorporarse *de iure* dentro de los límites (*Grenze*) de un horizonte.⁶³ Cuando se trata de ver un objeto, el sujeto no lo aprehende en su totalidad ni de un solo golpe ni instantáneamente. Efectivamente, podrán ser seis las caras de un dado, pero nunca nadie ha percibido jamás en sus propias vivencias inmanentes la totalidad de sus seis caras juntas. Hay que, por rotación o del sujeto o del objeto, o de ambos, adicionar vivencias relativas a las caras

⁶² Cfr. R. E. Ruiz Pesce, “Soy la Verdad. Para una filosofía del cristianismo. De una fenomenología de la vida a una fenomenología de la carne en Michel Henry,” *Studium: Filosofía y Teología* 18–19, no. 36–37 (2015–2016): 351–372.

⁶³ Cfr. J.-L. Marion, *Siendo dado. Ensayo para una filosofía de la donación* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2008), 307.

del cubo que nos faltan, es decir, hay que sumar percepciones a las percepciones ya practicadas, a las miradas ya efectuadas; por eso,

la organización de todas las vivencias sucesivas en torno a un único objeto implica que lo conocido (las vivencias inmanentes ya integradas) no solamente se queda en el recuerdo, sino que se compone en el mismo horizonte que lo que permanece todavía desconocido (las vivencias inmanentes venideras), a cuenta de un solo objeto trascendente mentado.⁶⁴

Por consiguiente, el horizonte unifica las vivencias ya obtenidas con las vivencias que hayan de venir, remitiéndolas a la unidad de un solo objeto.

Empero, por más lejos que Husserl haya querido llevar el límite ideal de la adecuación entre intención e intuición cumplidora o intención significativa, siempre nos ha de quedar “un horizonte de indeterminación determinable (*bestimbarer Unbestimmtheit*),”⁶⁵ y este horizonte de indeterminación permanecerá en tal estado aunque avancemos en la experiencia y en el *continuum* de percepciones efectivas de la cosa (pero entonces, husserlianamente hablando, lo no-visto tiene algo de pre-visto, de visible retardado, de algo previsible, con lo cual en el horizonte se vuelven homogéneas incluso las percepciones de las que aún no hemos tenido ninguna experiencia, el horizonte homogeneiza las experiencias tenidas y no tenidas a propósito de un objeto determinado).⁶⁶ La intuición avanza mediante vivencias graduales para cumplir con la intención de objeto, siempre incompleta, pero, al mismo tiempo, siempre pre-visible, anticipable, reclamando este proceso, en consecuencia, un horizonte en el que se puedan retener (inmovilizar) las tales vivencias en su sucesión no-desapariciante (el recuerdo), integrándose dentro de un núcleo noemático que resume la idealidad del objeto.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 307–308.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁶⁶ *Cfr. ibid.*, 308–309.

El ser humano, por consiguiente, no es una cosa ubicada entre cosas, sino la sede, el ámbito en el que una revelación ocurre. Hasta allí coincidiría Henry con la fenomenología clásica, pero de inmediato pasa a demarcar un campo de revelación y el modo en el que los objetos se nos presentan en él, descubriendo entonces una revelación interior, original e invisible en que consiste nuestra vida, es decir, Henry quiere pensar la inmanencia radical del *pathos* de la Vida, mostrando, como escribiría a propósito de Maine de Biran, que la subjetividad coincide con nuestro propio cuerpo. *Parousía* de la vida que no presupone ningún horizonte de presencia, no lo necesita para dárseos, ella misma, la vida, se basta, pues es autodonación, el “hecho primitivo.”⁶⁷ Porque existen fenómenos, están convencidos estos fenomenólogos partidarios de la inversión de la fenomenología, que de entrada no pueden ser vistos a la manera de entes en el mundo, u objetivados (son las *res quae non videtur*, según san Agustín), ni se imponen a la mirada del espectador como artefactos técnicos que producimos y manejamos en una manipulación instrumental cuasianalfabeta (ahora bautizado como nuestro “fenotipo ampliado”) de los procesos digitales que ocurren en su interior, ni son entes que crean un mundo-entorno para nosotros.⁶⁸

Conclusiones

*Seigneur Dieu,
je désire ardemment franchir le seuil de ta Maison
pour admirer tes Trésors.*
Saint Bonaventure

Concluyamos retornando a Chrétien. “The human voice becomes a place where the world returns to God,”⁶⁹ en una ordalía entre el supli-

⁶⁷ M. Henry, *Filosofía y fenomenología del cuerpo. Ensayo sobre la ontología de Maine de Biran* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2007), 22.

⁶⁸ Cfr. Marion, *Siendo dado*, 15.

⁶⁹ Chrétien, “The Wounded Word,” 174.

cante agónico revestido de una palabra herida que aspira a ser escuchada y un destinatario que podría ser sólo un horizonte de atribución de la plegaria. Nada más y solamente eso. La palabra lucha consigo misma para alcanzar la dignidad de un horizonte que acaso ni siquiera exista, que quizás sea únicamente el sueño de una comunidad de visionarios. Con esto último, Janicaud, no cabe duda, no estaría de acuerdo. Ni siquiera se encontraría en su ámbito de intereses, que es fundamentalmente el de la depuración fenomenológica (fenómeno, objetividad, reducción, *epojé*, *noesis-noema*), alejando de su camino lo no-aparente, lo invisible, Dios y, junto con todo lo anterior, a los “rumiantes del absoluto,”⁷⁰ rememorando la cioraniana corrosión, ya que el campo de la fenomenología, y aquí cito a contrapelo a Marion (porque negamos el enunciado final, así como sus términos categóricos, “exclusión” y “subyugación”), se separa esencialmente del religioso, es decir, “The field of religion could be simply defined as whatever philosophy excludes or, in the best case, subjugates.”⁷¹

Sin embargo, no dejaré de insistir en esto, Chrétien ha acampado en ese sitio llamado “reducción fenomenológica” del *homo religiosus*, examinando el anhelo de compleción, la indigencia antropológica y la plegaria como índice inequívoco de una insuficiencia que clama por lo otro de sí. Clamor que no controla lo otro, sino que simplemente lo evoca. De esta manera, el anhelo de compleción no equivale de ninguna forma a la compleción del anhelo, como tampoco el cumplimiento de la

⁷⁰ Con palabras de Cioran cierra Janicaud el cap. 3 de su texto: “For the unbeliever, infatuated with waste and dispersion, there is no spectacle more disturbing than these ruminants on the absolute . . . Where do they find such pertinacity in the unverifiable, so much attention in the vague, and so much ardor to seize it?” (“The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 69). ¿Dónde encuentran esos rumiantes del absoluto tanta pertinencia en lo no verificable, tanta atención en lo vago y tanto ardor para aprovecharlo? Creo que, precisamente, en la desvinculación de lo humano, productor de sentidos, de los significados meramente físicos, de todo aquello que sólo cabe bajo un cono de luz, de todo aquello que privilegia la presencia cosificada de lo que aparece.

⁷¹ Chrétien, “The Wounded Word,” 176.

esperanza y del deseo de contrarrestar una profunda indigencia. Tal vez el más allá se encuentre efectivamente en el más acá de la plegaria, quizás las altas puertas, a las que la plegaria frisa, sean la misma respuesta a ésta. Sin embargo, la religación oracional, en Chrétien, permanece por detrás de las puertas, como si ellas no se abrieran, aun en la espera de que se abran. El análisis de la dimensión religiosa, en tanto dimensión antropológica, se queda en el escrutinio de la conciencia a solas con su deseo (el *cubiculum cordis*) y la expresión de su deseo, de su indigencia, en las líneas de la plegaria, o del silencio, otra forma de oración. La religión positiva que abriría dogmáticamente las puertas a las que la plegaria tímidamente llama no es el objeto de una *epojé* que ha dejado por fuera los establecimientos institucionales. No obstante, esto último no descalifica la profundidad del anhelo, deseo o esperanza de que el más acá no reivindique para sí unas líneas conclusivas sobre el ser humano y su destino. Lo invisible reclama algún derecho. La plegaria es el derecho a lo invisible, a una completitud que aquí no nos es dada y que ella, la plegaria, simplemente evoca, sin por ello darse a sí misma la licencia de una prodigiosa consumación. Aun sin consumación, la plegaria es una pascua del espíritu. Acaso la esencia de la plegaria sea la oscuridad, más que la luz, aun dirigiéndose a la luz mediando la oscuridad. Entretanto, los tesoros dilapidados en el cielo para nuestro gozo tendrán que aguardar, pues nos retenemos (interrogamos) por ahora en el deseo, en el gemido de la plegaria, en la calígene, no en la claridad, tampoco en la luz, sino en un fuego que (nos) inflama totalmente:

interroga desiderium, non intellectum, gemitum orationis, non studium dilectionis; . . . caliginem, non claritatem: non lucem, sed ignem totaliter inflammantem . . .⁷²

⁷² Palabras de San Buenaventura en el *Itinerarium*, en: San Juan de la Cruz, *Obras espirituales*, t. II (Madrid: Compañía de Impresores y Libreros del Reino, 1872), 508.

**Alterity, Indigence and Hope.
A Reading of the Phenomenology of Prayer According to Jean-Louis Chrétien**

SUMMARY

This article examines Jean-Louis Chrétien's conception of prayer within the framework of what has been called "the theological turn of French phenomenology"—Dominique Janicaud's critical expression against phenomenologies that explicitly or implicitly question what is the foundation of phenomenology: presence. While Chrétien seeks to carry out a phenomenology of prayer, of the religious man, without entering beliefs of any positive religion, Janicaud claims that it is not possible, because behind such an intention there is always God who merely does not want to be called by His name.

KEYWORDS

Jean-Louis Chrétien, Dominique Janicaud, phenomenology, prayer, God, the invisible, theological turn, homo religiosus, Christianity, logos.

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Andrzej Maryniarczyk

The Dispute over Delayed Animation: When Does a Human Being Begin?

The dispute over delayed animation, although having its roots already in ancient culture and philosophy, started for good only in contemporary times when the right to kill unborn children (so-called abortion¹) entered the canon of constitutional law and, what is even stranger, started to be proposed for inclusion into basic human rights.²

Despite being discussed nowadays mainly in medical and legal sciences, the problem involves disputes of an ethical, religious and ideological nature. In the ongoing discussions, one can notice a clear lack of anthropological and metaphysical argumentation that would address the question about the beginning of the human being (which entails the question about the beginning of being *per se*) in the light of the common properties that are inherent in all really existing beings and the

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¹ For more about abortion, see M. Czachorowski, “Abortion in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 567–578.

² See, for example, Ch. Zampas, J. Gher, “Abortion as a Human Right – International and Regional Standards,” *Human Rights Law Review* 8, no. 2 (2008): 249–294.

metaphysical laws that govern the manner in which real things (including human embryos) exist.

In turn, when looking for the origins of the philosophical dispute over delayed animation among contemporary neo-Thomists, one must take into consideration first the Aristotelian concept of the soul that theoretically underpins the concept of delayed animation, and then the transition of the Aristotelian soul to Thomistic anthropology that does not accept the idea of delayed animation. Some commentators of Aquinas, overlooking the originality in his approach both to the concept of being and to that of the human being, reduce him to the position of an ingenious commentator of Aristotle and make him an adherent of delayed animation.³ Aquinas, however, as far as metaphysics and anthropology are concerned, is someone more than a prominent commentator of Aristotle.

Although its main considerations on the issue of delayed animation are given in the context of Aristotle's and Aquinas's philosophical anthropology, this article also discusses the concept of the human being (more specifically—the soul) as it is formulated by Plato.

For Plato, the soul, equated with the human being as such, is a perfect being, a substance (to use Aristotle's terminology) that exists in and of itself, the structure of which does not encompass the body.

For Aristotle, the soul is a subontic component, without which the being cannot exist and which is included in the *compositum* of the human being. The soul, therefore, does not exist before and outside the

³ See, for example, J. J. Conley, "Delayed Animation: An Ambiguity and Its Abuses," in *Life and Learning XII*, ed. J. W. Koterski (Washington, D.C.: University Faculty for Life, 2003), 160: "In fact, many prominent Catholic thinkers, such as Aquinas, clearly supported delayed animation;" and D. A. Jones, *The Soul of the Embryo: An Enquiry into the Status of the Human Embryo in the Christian Tradition* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 124: "Thomas Aquinas presents a coherent and powerful argument for delayed ensoulment."

body. Together with the body, it constitutes one human being. The soul is not a substance (a being as such), but an element of being.

For Thomas Aquinas, in turn, the human soul is a substance, albeit incomplete, but still a substance which “naturally” is assigned to the body. As a substance, the soul is endowed with independence in existence, which makes it an act of existence in relation to the body: the body receives existence from the soul and cannot exist without the soul. It is the soul, then, that ontically, genetically and temporally conditions the existence of the human *compositum*.

It is this triad of approaches: Platonic, Aristotelian and Thomistic, that will be discussed in this article in order to show the specificity of Aquinas’s philosophy and to resolve the dispute concerning delayed animation.

Plato: The Human Being as a Soul Trapped in a Body

In his *Cratylus*, Plato tries to formulate the basic meaning of the terms created to define various facts, events and things. Among them, such terms as “human,” “soul” and “body” appear. Plato explains,

I mean to say that the word “man” (*ho anthropos*) implies that other animals never examine, or consider, or look up at what they see, but that man not only sees (*opope*) but considers and looks up at that which he sees, and hence he alone of all animals is rightly a human (*anthropos*), meaning that he examines and analyzes what he saw (*anathron a oopen*).⁴

When he discusses the term “soul,” Plato explains its etymology and meaning in the following way:

Those who first used the name soul (*psyche*) meant to express that the soul when in the body is the source of life, and gives the power of breath and revival (*anapsychon*), and when this reviv-

⁴ Plato, *Cratylus*, trans. B. Jowett (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 399 c.

ing power fails then the body perishes and dies, and this, if I am not mistaken, they called the soul (*psyche*).⁵

When the term “body” is concerned, Plato writes:

For some say that the body is the grave (*sema*) of the soul which may be thought to be buried in our present life; or again the index of the soul, because the soul gives indications to (*semainei*) the body; probably the Orphic poets were the inventors of the name, and they were under the impression that the soul is suffering the punishment of sin, and that the body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is incarcerated, kept safe (*soma, sozetai*), as the name *soma* implies, until the penalty is paid; according to this view, not even a letter of the word need be changed.⁶

The soul, as we learn from Plato, was understood as something that is self-contained and transcendent (external) in relation to the body, that gets into the body and, thus, animates, revives and organizes it, that in itself it is the body’s source of life and action.

In Platonic anthropology, we encounter two images of the soul: (1) a prototype (*paradeigma*) of an ideal and perfect human being identified with the soul-spirit, and (2) a being that is imprisoned in the body, that does its penance there, and that constitutes, together with the body, the terrestrial human being. Being in the body is not a natural place for the soul. Therefore, the death of the body is regarded as the liberation of the soul.

What is the Platonic spirit-soul? Most of all, it is the ideal human being. We can define it as an ideal, complete substance, the structure of which does not include the body. The Platonic spirit-soul dwells in the *hyperuranium* or, as Aristotle would put it, in the supralunar realm. It is, as some hold, an emanation of the world’s soul or, as some others

⁵ *Ibid.*, 399 de.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 400 c.

argue, a creation of the Demiurge based on the pattern (*paradeigma*) of the world's soul.

This soul in turn, when residing in the body, constitutes the human being but it is not one with the body. What is more, the body for it is a grave (*sema*). Indeed, the soul enters the body and animates it, maintains and preserves the nature of the body, both its life and its transformations, yet the death of the body is not the death of the soul, but the liberation of the latter. The soul, according to Plato, may transfer from one body to another as a source of animation for each of them.

The Platonic concept of the terrestrial human being allows to speak of the temporal animation of the body by the soul. In other words, it allows to accept the existence of bodies that do not have a soul. And this view, which goes back as far as to Plato, seems to constitute one of the sources of theoretical support for the delayed animation of a human embryo.⁷

Aristotle: The Human Being as a *Compositum* of Soul and Body

In Aristotle's time, the word "psyche," as Paweł Siwek explains, was:

[A] topic of disputes. The meaning of the term, nonetheless, was never questioned. It encompassed the general factor ("principle"—*archē*) due to which we consider an individual endowed with it to belong to living entities, whereas we ascribe an individual lacking it to inanimate entities. In other words, the soul for the ancients was not only the principle of the psyche, in its contemporary understanding, but it was the principle of life in general. It was, therefore, ascribed not only to human beings and animals, but also to plants, since they also manifest various life-

⁷ For more about the Platonic idea of the human being, see M. A. Krapiec, "Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*," *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 599–603.

related functions: they consume sustenance, they grow to the sizes appropriate for a particular species, they reproduce and they eventually succumb to processes that lead to death. The cluster of these functions encompasses what Aristotle calls nutritive life and its soul, the source of it, is called the nutritive one (*threptike*). This soul can be found in all living creatures on Earth, for in all of them the aforementioned functions occur. The higher forms of life—the sensible (*aisthetike*) and rational (*noetike*) life—are based on it. Thus, when he considers the most general definition of the soul (*koinotatos logos*), it is the nutritive soul which Aristotle mainly has in mind.⁸

In this way, what comes out is a new understanding of the soul in general, and of the human soul in particular.

The Aristotelian understanding of the human being and the human soul is composed into his hylomorphic conception of being. Form can play a double function in being. On the one hand, it may organize matter from within, and then it is called the soul. It causes that some beings-substances are living beings. The soul, so understood, comes from the transformations of matter, and the function of its activity, which is manifested in movement, is initiated by the causative factor of movement. On the other hand, form arises when matter is organized externally. Such a form, which is called either simply form or shape, is a cause of artifacts or inanimate beings that are aggregates of elements.

The human being is a *compositum* of soul and body. But here we can notice a specific problem in Aristotle's anthropology: it is not soul and body that ultimately cause this *compositum* to become a human being. That because of which the living entity is the human being is the intellect which, in turn, is a "distinct, unaffected, and unmixed, being in

⁸ P. Siwek, "Wstęp [Introduction]," in Arystoteles [Aristotle], *O duszy [De Anima]*, trans. P. Siwek (Warszawa [Warsaw]: PWN, 1988), 16–17.

essence activity.”⁹ The human being belongs to the category of beings-substances (i.e., animate beings). The soul itself, as part of the ontic structure of the living entity, is described as “the first actuality of a natural body which has life potentiality. Whatever has organs will be a body of this kind.”¹⁰ The soul and the body constitute an ontic, organic unity, and not an amalgamation as in the case of Plato’s anthropology. According to Aristotle, it does not make sense to ask “whether the soul and body are one, any more than whether the wax and the impression are one . . . For, while unity and being are so spoken of in many ways, that which is most properly so spoken of is the actuality.”¹¹

The Method of Analyzing the Human Soul

Aristotle indicates that in order to present the essence of the human soul one must use an adequate method. It cannot be the method of analyzing concepts (the Platonic method of division, *diairesis*). Neither can it be the logical-mathematical method (dialectics) which is utilized in logic or the sciences. The adequate method for analyzing the soul is that of metaphysics.¹² The scholar “shall therefore carefully observe mental facts, he shall measure, juxtapose and classify them, and define the conditions in which they occur. He cannot, however, be satisfied with that, Aristotle promptly adds. He should try by all possible means

⁹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. D. W. Hamlyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 430 a 17–18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 412 a 27–28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 412 b 6–9.

¹² Aristotle’s treatise *De Anima* (*On the Soul*) is the first ever psychological treatise in the full meaning of the word, which is the primary study of the soul. “Of course, we would search in vain for the term ‘psychology’ in it. We will not find it either—let us note—among any of the ancient authors. The term was most probably created by Melancthon from the words *psyche* (soul) and *logos* (science) based on the pattern of the word *theologia* which was generally accepted, especially since the times of the stoics. It was popularized mostly by Rudolph Goclenius of Marburg and his student Otto Casmann. Its meaning in science was definitely established by Christian Wolff. Aristotle’s *Psychology* is known as *Peri psyches* (default: *episteme*.” Siwek, *Wstep*, 16.

to reach the very nature of these facts, their metaphysical essence.”¹³ For this reason, the scholar ought to use the method of metaphysical analysis, because it consists in explaining the facts in question by uncovering the ultimate reasons for their existence and action.

Besides plants and animals, there also is the human being who is endowed with a soul. In Aristotle’s psychology, however, the human soul, as well as the human being itself, constitutes a separate problem, “and this is because the human being is endowed with an intellect which . . . has a purely spiritual nature. As such, the human intellect is not a subject matter of physics (physiology), but of first philosophy, or as we would say today—metaphysics.”¹⁴

The Uniqueness of the Human Being

The Aristotelian image of the human being, as well as the human soul, is fundamentally different from the Platonic one. Aristotle places the human being among living beings (*animals*) belonging to the sublunar world which is the natural place of their residence. Nevertheless, in the *Protrepticus* Aristotle emphasizes,

what makes us different from the other animals shines through in this way of life alone, a life in which what happens cannot fail to have great worth. For animals too have small glimmers of reason and intelligence, but they have absolutely no share of theoretical wisdom (*sofias theoretikes*), and this is shared only with the gods, just as humans are actually left behind by many animals in the precision and strength of their senses and their drives.¹⁵

¹³ Siwek, *Wstęp*, 17–18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Protrepticus or Exhortation to Philosophy*, ed. and trans. D. S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson (2017), 66. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

Animals, according to Aristotle, do not have even a substitute of intellect. They are endowed with imagination which, however, should not be equated with the intellect.¹⁶

The Aristotelian human being does not owe his unique place in the world to his soul, but to his intellect. The human being, as Siwek explains,

owes to his intellect the features which differentiate him from all other creatures, and which assure him an entirely exceptional place among them. These features include speech, the social, economic, and political system, science, the feeling of obligation, justice, and law, the ability of free choice, virtue and vice, etc. There is even no lack of people—adds Aristotle—who think that the gods are people who during their life rose to the heights of moral virtue.¹⁷

Aristotle is convinced that, since nature does nothing in vain, one must assume that it has made all what we can see in the world for the sake of man.¹⁸

Discerning the Soul from the Intellect

Aristotle draws attention to the issue that, besides the nutritive soul (*psyche threptike*) and the sensible soul (*psyche aisthetike*), one must necessarily discern another kind of soul (*psyche benos hereron*). However, he does not call it the rational soul, but the soul endowed with the capacity to think (*tu nu kai tes theoretikes dynameos*). Only this third kind of soul (*touto monon*) is eternal and still exists after being separated from the perishable body. Thanks to the soul capable of

¹⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 433 a 12–27.

¹⁷ Siwek, *Wstęp*, 28.

¹⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 1256 b 20–22; *Physics*, vol. I, books 1–4, trans. P. H. Wicksteed and F. M. Cornford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 194 a 34–35.

thinking, the human being is able not only to think, but also to live and to perceive with senses.¹⁹

By distinguishing the three types of souls, Aristotle simultaneously draws attention to the relation between them which is such that every higher-tier soul takes on the functions of a lower-tier one. He illustrates this fact with the help of geometric shapes which, when divided by diagonal lines, find in themselves some other shapes (a quadrangle finds two triangles, a pentagon—a quadrangle and a triangle, etc.).

Something similar occurs in our case: the sensible soul which constitutes the essence of the animal includes the nutritive soul of the plants, whereas the rational soul includes both the nutritive and sensible souls.

The triangle potentially contained in the shape of a higher level does not exist on its own, it only exists as an integral component of the shape. A similar case occurs with the nutritive and sensible souls. They exist in the rational soul as its parts (*moria, mere*), as its powers (*dynameis*).²⁰

Aristotle emphasizes that the intellect which distinguishes the human soul is not equivalent to it, but is only a part of it. It is also Aristotle's merit that he grants the human soul powers that take on the functions of the lower souls. Plato did not discern the powers of the soul. For him, the soul acts holistically: the whole soul thinks, desires and feels. That is why, Aristotle criticizes, among others, Democritus, Anaxagoras and Plato for failure in discerning the intellect from the soul, which entailed the practice of ascribing to all animals—following the example of Anaxagoras—the capacity to think.

In Aristotle, we can find many passages concerning the understanding of the intellect (reason) as a power of the soul—what it is and

¹⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 414 a 12–13.

²⁰ Siwek, *Wstęp*, 30.

what its relation to the soul is. For example, “in respect to that part of the soul by which the soul both knows and understands, whether this is distinct or not distinct spatially, we must inquire what distinguishing characteristic it has and how thinking ever comes about.”²¹ On what the intellect is, Aristotle writes: “I speak of as intellect that by which the soul thinks and supposes.”²² Therefore, “those who say . . . that the soul is a place of forms speak well, except that it is not the whole soul but that which can think.”²³ On what remains after the destruction of a creature, he replies that “in some cases there is nothing to prevent this (*uthen kolysei*); e.g. the soul may be of this sort—not all soul but the reason.”²⁴

The Problem of the Creation of the Rational Soul

In reply to the question of how the rational soul is created, Aristotle draws attention to the fact that it is a very difficult problem and expresses awareness that by offering his answer he does not necessarily provide an ultimate solution that will satisfy everybody.²⁵ Explaining Aristotle’s thought, Siwek writes:

As far as the nutritive soul is concerned (*ten threptiken psyche*), we must assume (*theteon*) that as long as the sperm constitutes the integral part of the parent, it has a nutritive soul only in potentiality (*dynamei*); the soul emerges in it, when it begins to perform actions of nutritive life. All creatures—he [Aristotle] states right after—in their beginnings live with such a life: the life of a plant (*phytu bion*).

²¹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 429 a 10–13.

²² *Ibid.*, 429 a 23.

²³ *Ibid.*, 429 a 27–29.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, 1070 a 24–26. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943), 736 b 6–9.

“The same reasoning,” Aristotle continues, “must be applied to the sensual and intellectual souls.” Before they actually existed in the animal and the human being, they existed in their organisms potentially.²⁶

Therefore, as far as the genesis of the soul is concerned, Aristotle remains a naturalist. Souls are contained in the potentiality of (animate) matter and, then, extracted from it. Thus, the soul is not imprisoned in matter, nor is it created. It is constantly present in the potentiality of (animate) matter. Consequently, the soul is described as the first act of matter which has life in potentiality.

Aristotle has one more question to answer: how is the soul transferred from the potential state to the actual state? Ultimately, his solution, as Siwek explains, is that:

the sensible soul becomes actual in the living creature due to the factors that guide the process of its development; the latter finds its completion in it; but the rational soul cannot emerge in this way. For the reason that constitutes its essential part is of a purely spiritual nature; as such, it cannot be an effect of material transformations; it cannot be the final stage of the natural evolution of any sort of body (dead or alive); it must enter the living creature from the outside (*thyrathen*).²⁷

The problem of how the rational soul “enters” the living creature opens up the door for accepting the so-called delayed animation, i.e., the temporally delayed spiritualization of a living organism which, henceforth, becomes a human organism.

As far as the nature of the intellect is concerned, Aristotle explains that the intellect must, “since it thinks all things, be unmixed, as Anaxagoras says, in order that it may rule, that is in order that it may

²⁶ Siwek, *Wstęp*, 31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31–32.

know.”²⁸ It is not, then, that the intellect is squeezed into a particular part of being, but it extends to the entire being. What is it then? Aristotle answers: “[It] must have no other nature than this, that it is potential. That part of the soul . . . called intellect (and I speak of as intellect that by which the soul thinks and supposes) is actually none of existing things before it thinks.”²⁹ This potential (capacity) is something real and, thus, must belong to some real subject: it is subjected in the soul as a part of the soul, i.e., as the soul’s power. But, another question arises here: how does this capacity to think (the intellect, the reason) emerge in the soul that originates from the potentiality of matter? Aristotle replies: “It remains, then, that Reason alone enters in, as an additional factor, from outside, and that it alone is divine, because physical activity has nothing whatever to do with the activity of Reason.”³⁰

Another problem which requires further consideration is how the intellect functions. Since its objects are material and the intellect is immaterial (spiritual), how can it get into contact with material things? Siwek explains:

The initiative to think must, therefore, come from some immaterial factor. According to Aristotle, it is a special efficient evaluative factor (*to poietikon*) in the intellectual soul (*en te psyche*), as its part or power. His ancient commentators called it the active intellect (*nous poietikos*). Aristotle compares its functions with that of light (*phos*) in the process of seeing. Just as light does not create colors, but only illuminates diaphanous matter (*to diaphanes*) and makes it capable of being affected by color, so does the active intellect have the task to illuminate in a way the object present in the soul in the form of an image and to extract from it its essence, that is, the idea of the object in order to actualize the

²⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 429 a 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 429 a 18–19.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 736 b.

potential intellect (*ho panta dynamei*). By adopting it, the potential intellect moves from potentiality to actuality and thereby acquires the intellectual cognition of the object.³¹

Aristotle tries to explain his understanding of the intellect (i.e., the rational soul) in the following way: “Now, summing up what has been said about the soul, let us say again that the soul is in a way all existing thing; for existing things are either objects of perception or objects of thought, and knowledge is in a way the objects of knowledge and perception.”³²

Aristotle’s exclusion of both the animate and inanimate body from being the source of the intellect and his definite indication that the intellect must enter the LIVING CREATURE FROM THE OUTSIDE constitute the basis for the so-called DELAYED ANIMATION that is often attributed to Thomas Aquinas’s anthropology, which is not justified as it does not take into consideration the different conceptions of being and of the human soul that one can find in Aquinas’s thought.

Aquinas: The Human Soul as an Incomplete Substance

Like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas holds that the human being is a being composed of soul and body (*a compositum*). Aquinas immediately adds, however, that, while he indeed lives in the world of nature, the human being is not a creation of nature, as Aristotle claimed.³³

Aquinas explains that:

In composed substances there are form and matter, for example, in man soul and body. But we cannot say that either one of them alone may be said to be the essence. That matter alone is not the

³¹ Siwek, *Wstęp*, 33.

³² Aristotle, *De Anima*, 431 b 20. For more about the Aristotelian idea of the human being, see Krapiec, “Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” 603–627.

³³ According to Aristotle human beings “are born by nature and according to nature” (φύσει τε καὶ κατὰ φύσιν γέγονε). Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, 16.

essence of a real thing is clear, since through its essence a real thing is knowable and assigned to a species or to a genus. But matter alone is neither a principle of knowledge, nor is it that by which something is assigned to a genus or to a species; rather a thing is so assigned by reason of its being something actual. Neither can the form alone of a composed substance be said to be its essence, although some try to assert this. For it is evident from what has been said that essence . . . contains not only form, but matter as well . . . Reason, too, is in accord with this, because the existence of a composed substance is not the existence of the form alone nor of the matter alone, but of the composite itself; and essence is that according to which a real thing is said to be.³⁴

In this way, Thomas, while drawing on Aristotle, points to the different understanding of being in general and of the human being in particular. The human being is something more than a *compositum* of soul and body: he is a psychophysical unity in which his soul (his non-physical element) is, from the very beginning, a human soul, i.e., an incomplete substance which imparts existence to the body, forms it for itself, transcends it, and subjects it to its own laws.

In Thomistic anthropology, it is worth drawing attention to two images of the human being. The first shows him at the moment of the creation of the world, when he is brought into existence together with other living and non-living creatures. In other words, it is the image of the first human being who was created *ex nihilo* by God (by the act of His intellect and will) as a being, not as a soul or as a body. Hence, just as the world was brought into existence *ex nihilo* as a being, so also the first human being was brought into existence in his entirety and without using something which existed before. And, just as we can speak of the creation of the first beings, so we can speak of the creation of the first human being. The second image of the human being, in turn, shows the

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, Cap. 1 (1965). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

one who lives in time, whose coming into existence involves parents and goes through birth. In this case we can speak of the human being co-created by his parents who participate in bringing him into existence.

What is the Human Soul?

The human soul, according to Thomas Aquinas, is neither a spirit (a perfect substance) trapped in a body, as Plato claimed, nor is it only an element (a form organizing matter) of a compound substance, as Aristotle maintained. It is an incomplete substance assigned to the body, existing independently, and imparting existence to the body, with which it constitutes the human being.

We can often come across statements on when the soul enters the human embryo like the following:

What about the soul? Do we receive it at the time of fertilization? – Thomas wrote that on the 40th or 80th day after fertilization. Today we know that the process of the fusion of the sperm and the egg takes about 21 hours. And no one is able to determine the moment of the so-called animation.³⁵

The problem is that it is entirely erroneous to speak of the so-called delayed animation (regardless of whether it be delayed 40 or 80 days, 21 hours, or even several seconds), if one accepts Aquinas's concept of the soul as the only act of existence of a being. For, since the human embryo is a being, it receives its existence only from its soul—there is nothing but the human soul which shares its own existence with the human embryo and makes it a being. In other words, as soon as there is a human embryo, there is also a human soul in it—without a human soul, there is no human embryo.

³⁵ A conversation on the consequences of *in vitro* fertilization between Rev. Prof. Andrzej Muszala and Joanna Bątkiewicz-Brożek, "In vitro: Gorszy start [In Vitro: A Worse Start]," *Gość Niedzielny*, no. 30 (July 29, 2012): 22.

According to Aristotle, the soul which is the first act of the body and its organizer is contained in the potentiality of matter and brought into existence and action by the influence of the highest sphere of the fixed stars (the first heavens), whereas its rational part is given to the soul from the outside, namely the sphere of the sun. It is, then, Aristotle's intuition that, although the human being comes into the sublunar world, his coming requires the contribution of a superlunar factor. Accordingly, the human being cannot be regarded exclusively as a product of nature.

Aquinas, in turn, grounds his approach to the problem of the existence of the human being in the most fundamental experience of the human being's psychophysical unity in existence and action—"for each one is conscious that it is himself . . . who is conscious both that he understands, and that he senses."³⁶

Due to specifically human activity (cognition, freedom, love), it must be asserted that it comes from the source (subject) that cannot be a product of nature. Thus, there is a need to search for an adequate explanation of the source (subject) of human activity by applying the principle *agere sequitur esse*—one's manner of activity follows upon one's manner of being. Likewise, since specifically human activity cannot be determined by nature, neither can the source (subject) of human existence be a product of nature. The soul, as an act of existence and a substantial form of a human being, is not only assigned to a matter, but also organizes it and grants it a defined existence. Therefore, it is an individual act of existence of the human being as a human being, not as an animal (or a living being). The human soul, understood as the act of the human being's existence, can be neither a derivative of matter or of form, nor a result of the combination of matter and form. Since it can-

³⁶ "[E]xperitur enim unusquisque seipsum esse . . . qui percipit se et intelligere et sentire." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [S.Th.] I, q. 76, a. 1, resp. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

not be found in the natural world, the source of the human soul's existence must be looked for beyond the world of nature.

All of this, for Aquinas, is the basis for discovery of the soul as the first act of the human being's existence, the incomplete substance which must be brought into existence in a specific, unique way: not from the previously existing matter or form, but by the act of creation *ex nihilo*. And, this involves not only the first human being who was brought into existence by creation, but also all the other human beings living in time who, in order to come into being, must be co-created. The human being living in time can be given by his parents—a man and a woman—what is deposited in their potentiality, namely in the endowment of their bodies; however, that what makes his body a human body is not contained in the potentiality of the bodies of his parents, but comes from outside of them, namely from the Creator. In other words, the Creator brings into existence the human being living in time “in the human being,” i.e., with the cooperation of the other human beings: the mother and the father.

In this way, Aquinas arrives at the concept of the soul being directly created by the Creator, or, precisely speaking, the concept of the human being created by God. The soul in the first instance is an act of the human being's existence as a human being. Moreover, the soul is a substance, albeit incomplete, but a substance, i.e., a being (whereas, for Plato, the soul was a complete substance and, for Aristotle, it was an element of substance). Aquinas fundamentally differs from Aristotle: while the latter sees the essence of the soul's activity in motion and in the organization of matter, Thomas sees motion as that which must be subjected in something already existing. Therefore, the soul as a principle of motion is not the first, but at most the second act of being. According to Thomas, the human soul, as an incomplete substance existing in itself, creates its own body and, together with it, becomes a complete human being.

The Soul and Its Powers

Like Aristotle, Aquinas distinguishes the powers of the soul. Unlike Aristotle, however, he includes the (active) intellect to them and sees it as a part of the structure of the soul that, from its beginning, is a rational—and, hence, human—soul. And it is the soul, not just the intellect, that makes the human being a human being. The specificity of the human soul, as the most perfect among all souls, is that it is the ultimate subject of all human powers: both corporeal and spiritual, vegetative and sensitive, cognitive and appetitive (volitional).

Aquinas distinguishes the powers of the soul on the basis of specific actions. The ultimate criterion for discerning a particular power, as the direct foundation for a kind of actions, is always the so-called adequate formal object. Applying this criterion to his analysis of human nature, Aquinas discerns the following powers: vegetative (*vegetativum*), sensitive (*sensitivum*), appetitive (*appetitivum*), intellectual (*intellectivum*) and locomotive (*motivum secundum locum*)—each of them contains in itself many other powers and is for them the direct, albeit non-ultimate, subject.

Aquinas stresses that, although there is one soul, there are many powers in it. Therefore, there must be a specific order of interdependence between the powers. This interdependence, while involves one power in relation to another, is also based on the order existing between objects.

In turn, the dependence of one power on another may be understood in two ways: (1) according to the natural order (*secundum naturae ordinem*), i.e., from the point of view of perfection, and (2) according to the order of generation and time (*secundum ordinem generationis et temporis*). That which is crucial for the understanding of the emergence of the powers and their actions is primarily the fact that to be a potential is to be subjected in a subject. And it is the human soul that is

this subject without which no human embryo can organize itself. For nothing can be actualized unless it first exists in potential. In consequence, the rational powers (intellect and will), that develop their activity in time, are from the very beginning subjected in the soul which is a rational soul and, together with the body, constitutes a complete human substance.³⁷

Does Aquinas Accept the So-Called Delayed Animation?

There is a long-standing dispute in the field of philosophy, particularly in ethics, about Aquinas's view on when the human embryo is animated.³⁸ This dispute seems to have arisen from the fact that some interpreters of Thomistic thought, relying on medieval commentaries on Aristotle, wrongly claim that Aquinas supported and adopted Aristotle's view on the so-called delayed animation. Thomas is then erroneously thought to hold that the human embryo is initially only a living being endowed with a nutritive soul that, in the course of development, is replaced by a sensitive soul and that, in turn, by a human (rational) soul—which simply means that only the human (rational) soul makes the embryo a really human embryo, and that, during the span from its

³⁷ For more about the Thomistic idea of the human being, see Krapiec, "Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*," 627–641.

³⁸ Authors who take on these issues are, among others: F. Böckle, N. M. Ford, T. Ślipko, E. Blechschmidt, C. Valverde. See F. Böckle, "Probleme um den Lebensbeginn. Medizinisch-ethische Aspekte," in *Handbuch der christlichen Ethik*, vol. II (Freiburg in Br. 1978), 36–59; N. M. Ford, *When Did I Begin? Conception of the Human Individual in History, Philosophy, and Science* (Cambridge 1991); T. Ślipko, *Zarys etyki szczegółowej. Etyka osobowa [Outline of Specific Ethics. A Personal Ethics]*, vol. 1 (Kraków 2005), 241–243; E. Blechschmidt, "Zur Personalität des Menschen," *Communio* 11 (1982): 171–181; S. Swieżawski, "Objaśnienia [Glosses]," in Święty Tomasz z Akwinu [Saint Thomas Aquinas], *Traktat o człowieku [Treatise on Man]* (Kęty: Antyk, 1998), 734; C. Valverde, *Antropologia filozoficzna [Philosophical Anthropology]*, trans. G. Ostrowski (Poznań 1998), 290–295; L. Ostasz, *Rozumienie człowieka. Antropologia filozoficzna [The Understanding of Man. Philosophical Anthropology]* (Olsztyn 2003), 55–66.

beginning to its merging with the human (rational) soul, the embryo is not a human being. Such an interpretation is usually fueled by Aquinas's words from *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2. But, although many scholars interpret Aquinas as an advocate of delayed animation, there are others who oppose such an interpretation. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, for example, draws attention to the fact that, although he knew the Aristotelian and medical theory suggesting that the male embryo receives the rational soul on the 40th day and the female embryo on 90th day after fertilization,³⁹

Thomas Aquinas regarded the human paradigm based on the conception of Christ as more important, as he wrote: *Oportet ergo ut conceptio in Christo non praecedat tempore completam naturam carnis eius. Et ita relinquitur quod simul concipiebatur et concepta est. Propter quod oportet conceptionem illam subitanam ponere, ita quod haec in eodem instanti fuerint . . . In aliis autem haec successive contingunt, ita quod maris conceptio non perficitur nisi usque ad quadragesimum diem ut Philosophus in IX De Animalibus dicit, feminae autem usque ad nonagesimum.*⁴⁰

The above quotation indicates that Aquinas has no doubts that the moment of conception is the moment of the human being's origin.

In order to fully uncover Aquinas's views on animation, we must perform the following steps: (1) qualify his texts on animation, (2) analyze the words he uses, and (3) refer to (metaphysical) system analyses.

³⁹ See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super quatuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, in Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Opera omnia*, vol. 6–8 (Parma 1856–1858), III, d. 3, q. 5, a. 2, resp.

⁴⁰ *Super III Sententiarum*, d. 3, q. 3, a. 2, in M. A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek [I – Man]* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2005), 159.

The Qualification of the Texts

There are two types of Aquinas's writings where we can find his texts on the issue of animation, namely: commentaries to various texts written by others (including Aristotle) and stand-alone writings in the form of questions that specify objections, teach how to solve the main problem, and reply to objections.

In his commentaries on Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas discusses and explains the Stagirite's position. It does not mean, however, that he always agrees with Aristotle. Thomas's views on particular Aristotelian ideas, then, should be taken into consideration. In his questions, in turn, two elements are crucial: the teaching (*respondeo*) and the reply to objections. The two latter are binding, even if they sometimes require supplementation as problems considered in them are posed differently today.

The text from the *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2, that gives rise to many controversies, reads:

Consequently it must be said that the soul is in the embryo; the nutritive soul from the beginning, then the sensitive, lastly the intellectual soul. . . . [T]he intellectual soul is created by God at the end of human generation, and this soul is at the same time sensitive and nutritive, the pre-existing forms being corrupted.

This text is cited by interpreters as an example of Aquinas's statement from which one cannot but conclude that he accepts delayed animation. It is worth mentioning, however, that this text does not come from the teaching (*respondeo*) on how to solve the problem, but from the reply to an objection.⁴¹ It means that what is particularly important here is that to which the objection refers. And the objection refers to Aristotle's position on the origin of the soul:

⁴¹ The fact that the problem appears not in the body of the teaching (*respondeo*), but in the reply to an objection, provides the basis for my interpretation.

[T]he Philosopher says that the animal and the man are not made at the same time, but first of all the animal is made having a sensitive soul. Therefore also the intellectual soul is produced from the semen.⁴²

It is then possible to understand Aquinas's reply as developing an argument for the impossibility for the human soul to originate from matter (*semen*). Moreover, it is also, as it were, Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle who was a naturalist (as we would say) as regards the origin of plant and animal souls, and referred to some sort of an external factor (the sphere of the sun) as regards the source of the human capacity to think. Aquinas wants to interpret this capacity not as some sort of a power but as the human soul itself.

Admittedly, Thomas's reply could suggest that delayed animation consists in the succession of souls and, consequently, in the succession of the perfection of existence. But such a suggestion does not seem to be accepted by Aquinas, as he writes that "no substantial form"—i.e., no human soul, because, in the case of the human being, the soul is a substantial form—"is susceptible of more or less; but addition of greater perfection constitutes another species."⁴³ The reply to objection 2 is primarily focused on explaining that the human soul, which is a rational soul, cannot come from matter or from the potentiality of matter, as is the case with vegetative and sensitive souls. The human soul is one that is directly created together with the body and encompasses vegetative and sensitive functions.

It is also necessary to observe that the Article 2 of Question 118 refers to the problem: is the intellectual soul transmitted with the semen? Thus, the main emphasis of Aquinas's argument is on indicating that the vegetative and sensitive souls can originate from the transfor-

⁴² *S.Th.* I, q. 118, a. 2, o. 2.

⁴³ *S.Th.* I, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2.

mations of matter (semen), whereas the intellectual souls cannot, because the more perfect cannot originate from the less perfect.

Another example of Aquinas's elucidation of the specificity of the human soul, on the basis of which we can exclude his acceptance of delayed animation, comes from *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Aquinas explains that the human soul, as the highest in the hierarchy of souls, encompasses the whole human body and each part of it without any intermediaries. Moreover, the human soul does not lose its spiritual nature when it unites with matter, nor is it embedded in or enveloped by matter, but it is present in matter in another way. Simply speaking, the human soul united with matter creates an organic, living being, called a human being.⁴⁴

The Analysis of Texts

There are texts in Aquinas that are clearly in support of the rejection of delayed animation. They include the following:

[N]o substantial form is susceptible of more or less; but addition of greater perfection constitutes another species.⁴⁵

[I]t is not possible for the same identical form to belong to different species.⁴⁶

[I]f the vegetative soul is from the beginning in the matter of offspring, and is subsequently gradually brought to perfection; this will imply addition of further perfection without corruption of

⁴⁴ "Non enim est in materia sicut materiae immersa, vel a materia totaliter comprehensa, sed alio modo, ut dictum est." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* [S.C.G.] II, c. 69, n. 4. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁴⁵ "[Q]uia nulla forma substantialis recipit magis et minus; sed superadditio maioris perfectionis facit aliam speciem." *S.Th.* I, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2.

⁴⁶ "Non est autem possibile ut una et eadem forma numero sit diversarum specierum." *Ibid.*

the preceding perfection. And this is contrary to the nature of generation properly so called.⁴⁷

The text that should ultimately remove all doubts entertained by interpreters of Aquinas as to the origin of the human soul, reads as follows:

[T]he intellectual soul is created by God . . . and this soul is at the same time sensitive and nutritive.⁴⁸

Of course, one can raise the question: when is the human soul created? At the moment when the body is adequately prepared for the reception of a rational soul, or earlier? Aquinas's replies to these questions can be found in the following texts:

[A]lthough the soul has a complete act of existing of its own, it does not follow that the body is united to it accidentally: first, because the same act of existing that belongs to the soul is conferred on the body by the soul . . .⁴⁹

The soul communicates that existence in which it subsists to the corporeal matter, out of which and the intellectual soul there results unity of existence; so that the existence of the whole composite is also the existence of the soul. This is not the case with other non-subsistent forms. For this reason the human soul retains its own existence after the dissolution of the body; whereas it is not so with other forms.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ "Si enim a principio in materia prolis est anima vegetabilis, et postmodum usque ad perfectum paulatim perducitur; erit semper additio perfectionis sequentis sine corruptione perfectionis praecedentis. Quod est contra rationem generationis simpliciter." *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ "Sic igitur dicendum est quod anima intellectiva creatur a Deo . . . quae simul est et sensitiva et nutritiva." *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "[L]icet anima habeat esse completum non tamen sequitur quod corpus ei accidentaliter uniat; tum quia illud idem esse quod est animae communicat corpori." Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de anima [Q. de anima]*, a. 1, ad 1. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

⁵⁰ "[A]nima illud esse in quo ipsa subsistit, communicat materiae corporali, ex qua et anima intellectiva fit unum, ita quod illud esse, quod est totius compositi, est etiam

The above texts show that Aquinas is convinced that “to exist” for the human body means to be united with the human soul. For the body does not have a separate existence or a separate principle of organization, i.e., it is not a substance. The human body exists because, as matter organized by the human soul, it benefits from the soul’s existence and operation. Therefore, the human soul is not only a substantial form of a body, i.e., such a form that makes a body exist and be a human body, but also, and primarily, an incomplete substance that, creating a body for itself, becomes a human being. In a being, however, there can be only one substantial form (incomplete substance) of this type. Hence, Aquinas stresses that, in the human *compositum*, there is only one soul—the one that is simultaneously rational, sensitive and nutritive, in the sense that, while being the first act of existence of the human being, it possesses and employs all its rational, sensitive and nutritive powers. According to Aquinas, then, it is that, from its very beginning, the human embryo exists as a whole human being that, as time goes by, goes through the process of actualization—and not that the human embryo becomes a human being part by part and stage by stage, as the proponents of delayed animation claim. As Krapiec explains,

There is, therefore, only a single existence of man, but man has this existence not because it is a result and consequence of material organization, but because it belongs to the soul, which, being subsistent on the strength of the existence belonging to itself, likewise is also the form of the body, to which it imparts its existence.⁵¹

ipsius animae. Quod non accidit in aliis formis, quae non sunt subsistentes. Et propter hoc anima humana remanet in suo esse, destructo corpore, non autem aliae formae.” *S.Th.* I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5.

⁵¹ Mieczysław Albert Krapiec, *I—Man. An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. M. Lescoe et al. (New Britain, Conn.: Mariel Publications, 1983), 103.

Aquinas locates the human soul—or in fact the human being, because, for him, the human soul is an incomplete substance that, together with the body, constitutes the human being—on the boundary between spiritual and corporeal beings.⁵² Therefore, the soul is a concrete subsistent being (*hoc aliquid*). The term “concrete subsistent being” can be understood in two ways: (1) as “anything subsistent” (*pro quocumque subsistente*), or (2) as “that which subsists, and is complete in a specific nature” (*pro subsistente completo in natura alicuius speciei*).⁵³

Following this distinction, Aquinas holds that the human soul can be comprehended as a concrete subsistent being only in the first sense. For, despite the fact that it exists independently as it has its own act of existence, the soul is an incomplete substance with respect to its species (*incompleta in ratione speciei*) and that is because, in order to be a complete human substance, it requires a body.⁵⁴ As an incomplete substance, then, the human soul does not fulfill human nature completely, because it does not cover its genericness entirely. It attains its completeness only through its unity with a body.⁵⁵ A complete human substance is, therefore, a *compositum* of soul and body, i.e., an individual human being.⁵⁶

At this point, it is necessary to mention once again Aquinas’s understanding of the two images of the human being and, consequently, the two historical stages of the human being’s creation. The first stage

⁵² “[E]st in confinio spiritualium et corporalium . . .” *S.Th.* I, q. 77, a. 2, resp.

⁵³ *S.Th.* I, q. 75, a. 2, ad 1.

⁵⁴ “Sic igitur, cum anima humana sit pars speciei humanae, potest dici hoc aliquid primo modo, quasi subsistens, sed non secundo modo . . .” *Ibid.* See also *Q. de anima*, a. 1, ad 2.

⁵⁵ “[E]tsi [anima] possit per se subsistere, non tamen habet speciem completam, sed corpus advenit ei ad completionem speciei.” *Q. de anima*, a. 1, ad 1.

⁵⁶ “[C]orpus non est de essentia animae, sed anima ex natura suae essentiae habet quod sit corpori unibilis. Unde nec proprie anima est in specie; sed compositum.” *S.Th.* I, q. 75, a. 7, ad 3. See also *Q. de anima*, a. 1, ad 7.

involves the first human who was brought into existence together with the world created *ex nihilo*. At this stage we can speak of the creation of the entire human being as a corporeal and spiritual entity, just like of all other beings that were brought into existence as individual whole entities. The second stage involves the human who is born into the already existing world; at this stage, we deal with the process of co-creation based on the participation of already existing human beings: the man and the woman. The first creation consisted in calling the human being (together with all other beings that constituted the newly created world) into existence by God *ex nihilo*. The second creation, called procreation or co-creation, is also performed by God, but this time in the human being, from the human being and with the participation of the human being (the man and the woman): *homo generat hominem et Deus*; for the human being alone does not have the power to call into existence the immaterial soul, neither by begetting nor by making.

We can see, therefore, that in no way can we attribute to Aquinas views that support delayed animation. Attributing such views to Aquinas would result in some type of Platonizing his anthropology (i.e., seeing the soul as that which enters the body and controls it) or confusing his anthropology with that of Aristotle. In Thomistic anthropology, the soul is that which, together with the body, constitutes the human being as a corporeal and spiritual entity.

System Analyses

System analyses are fundamental for metaphysical explanation and, as Aristotle already observed, the issues related to the human soul belong to the realm of metaphysical inquiry. At the very beginning, however, one must notice that here the understanding of the system itself and, consequently, the way of drawing inferences from the system fundamentally differ from those functioning in the formal (logical and mathematical) sciences. The word “system,” used in realistic metaphys-

ics, means the internally consistent mode of existence of beings. And it is this internally consistent mode of existence of beings that is the basis of the consistency of a formulated theory, the justification of its claims and the consequence of their inference.⁵⁷

In realistic metaphysics, then, the reference to the concepts of being and the human being is the basis for system demonstration.

1. *The argument from the primacy of the soul in being (as its esse, i.e., its act of existence).* What is *esse* in being? It is, Aquinas says, “the highest perfection of all,”⁵⁸ since its relation to all other things depends on the fact that it is their act. For everything has actuality inasmuch as it exists. *Esse* is the actuality of everything that is real, even in combination with the forms. Thus, it is related to other things as received is to receiver. When one speaks of something that “it exists,” its existence (*esse*) is regarded as something given, and not as something to which it is given.

For Aquinas, the perfection of *esse* manifests itself in the fact that it is the first act of a being that makes this being exist. There is simply no being without the act of existence. Existence (*esse*) is given to every being and assigned proportionally to it: the existence of John is different than that of Eve or an animal or a plant, the existence of a substance is different from that of an accident. Yet, in each of these cases there is no being without the act of existence (*esse*). In the case of man,

⁵⁷ See more in A. Maryniarczyk, *System metafizyki. Analiza ‘przedmiotowo-zbornego’ poznania* [System of Metaphysics: An Analysis of ‘Objective-Carrying’ Knowledge] (Lublin: RW KUL, 1991).

⁵⁸ Cf. “[H]oc quod dico esse est inter omnia perfectissimum . . . Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum. Nec intelligendum est, quod ei quod dico esse, aliquid addatur quod sit eo formalius, ipsum determinans, sicut actus potentiam: esse enim quod huiusmodi est, est aliud secundum essentiam ab eo cui additur determinandum.” Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 9. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

it is the human soul that is the first and necessary act of existence (*esse*) of the human being.

In the Thomistic conception of being, the act of existence inherits the functions of the Aristotelian form. And thus, this act not only organizes matter, but also grants it existence. Moreover, as more perfect, it has the power to move matter (together with the whole being) through development (actualization) from less to more perfect states. The human soul, understood as the first act of one's existence, comes from the act of creation (not from the transformations of matter) performed at the moment of procreation. This means that the soul (1) is created in a human body made of a material given by a woman and a man, (2) inherits all the functions (nutritive and sensitive) contained in the potentiality of the human material, and (3) is the only substantial form of a human being. In other words, the human material (i.e., the egg and sperm that come from parents) is a component of the organic (vegetative-sensitive) body whose organization and functioning become, at the moment of fertilization, fully subject to a newly created soul of a child. Here we can see the difference between the creation of the first man—who, like all other beings, was created *ex nihilo*, that is, by the act of the intellect and will of the Creator—and the begetting of men which, unlike animal generation, is an act of co-creation. For, at the moment of conception, parents cannot transmit the soul to their child, because the soul, which is the principle of life and generation, is not derived from the potentiality of the matter of their bodies.

Since it is the soul that imparts existence to the body, no kind of human body (zygote, embryo, fetus, etc.) can exist before the soul comes into being. For nothing can exist without existing. Therefore, something of a paradox would be posed if the delayed animation of the human embryo were accepted: the embryo would have to exist without an act of existence.

The human soul as an incomplete substance, despite existing in itself as in its own and adequate subject, is nonetheless assigned to the body together with which it constitutes the human being. Therefore, the soul can create its own body, organize it, and impart existence to it.⁵⁹

This argument needs to be supplemented by the reference to the triple primacy of act (existence) over potentiality (body) with respect to: being, time and cognition. The act of existence (*esse*) is that which makes things beings; therefore, nothing can exist without the act of existence. This is the primacy of act over potentiality with respect to being. With respect to time, the primacy of act consists in the fact that, also in relation to beings that emerge in time (including the human beings), it is that which originates the existence of being. That is why, the human body cannot exist prior to the human soul. And, lastly, with respect to cognition, the primacy of act indicates that only that which already exists and is determined in its existence can be cognized. Therefore, knowable processes taking place in the human embryo are, indeed, manifestations of the acting act, i.e., the soul.

Another supplement can be found in the Thomistic principle of *commensuratio animae ad hoc corpus*.⁶⁰ It is also indicated by some commentators of Aquinas as a supplement to the Thomistic teaching on the *compositum* of soul and body.⁶¹ The expression of *commensuratio animarum ad corpora* is borrowed from Aristotle who claimed that every being is a hylomorphic unity in which the form is intrinsically

⁵⁹ Cf. *S.Th.* I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5 (see the footnote 49).

⁶⁰ Cf. *S.C.G.* II, c. 81: “[T]he commensuration of souls to bodies . . . this soul is adapted to this and not to that body, and that soul to another body, and so in all other instances.”

⁶¹ See S. Swieżawski, “Centralne zagadnienia tomistycznej nauki o duszy [Central Issues of the Thomistic Doctrine of the Soul] (*Commensuratio animae ad hoc corpus*),” *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 44, no. 1–3 (1948): 148–154 and 172–189, and S. Swieżawski, *Święty Tomasz na nowo odczytany [Saint Thomas Reread]* (Poznań: W drodze, 1995), 139–140.

assigned to its own matter.⁶² By referring to *commensuratio*, Aquinas clearly opposes the Platonists who held the position that the soul can be combined with various bodies. Consequently, he stresses that (1) the specificity of the human soul consists in its assignment to a concrete, particular body,⁶³ and (2) the *commensuratio* indicates that it is necessary for the soul, throughout the whole of its existence, to be united with the body—which can also serve as an argument for the immortality of the individual human being.

2. *Arguments from the universal properties of real beings.* The universal (transcendental) properties of real beings are discovered in the process of “elucidating” being, i.e., searching for such properties without which no real being can exist.⁶⁴ These properties relate to both the macrocosm and the microcosm, and thus also to a being that is only beginning its existence, like the human embryo and its elements. Among them, there are absolute properties that show what every being always is in itself, and relational properties that show that every being always stands in relation to the intellect and will of the Creator (in the case of natural beings) or a creator (in the case of artifacts).

The absolute properties include: *thing*—the essential determination, *one*—the intrinsic unity and indivision, and *something*—the existential sovereignty, whereas the relative properties embrace: *the true*—the instantiation of a design (the intrinsic conformity with the intellect of the Creator or a creator), *the good*—the possession of a specific purpose (the intrinsic conformity with the will of the Creator or a creator),

⁶² See B. Czupryn, “Komensuracja [Commensuration],” in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, vol. 5, ed. A. Maryniarczyk (Lublin: PTTA, 2004), 738–739.

⁶³ See *S.C.G.* II, c. 73 and 81; and Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9, ad 4 (available online—see the section *References* for details).

⁶⁴ On the discovery of the essential and universal properties of the world and the laws that govern their being, see A. Maryniarczyk, “On the Transcendental Properties of Real Beings,” trans. Hugh McDonald, *Studia Gilsoniana* 5, no. 2 (April–June 2016): 429–444.

and *the beautiful*—the perfection to attain. These universal (transcendental) properties of real beings constitute the basis for subsequent arguments.

2.1. *The argument from the essential determination of beings.* Metaphysical cognition leads to discovery of the fact that everything which really exists—be it in the microcosm or in the macrocosm, be it beings or their elements, be it substances, relations or accidents—is always essentially determined. In other words, it is always something of its own identity and quality. The real being is thus always either John, or Eve, or the nose of John, or the hand of Eve, or the cell of a human, or a particular plant, or a particular animal, or the like. This universal property indicates that even if some micro-being is detected with the help of a microscope, it is—just because of being a really existing thing—essentially determined from its very beginning. And thus, as something really existing, the human embryo is also essentially determined from its very beginning: it is a human being. Consequently, if delayed animation were accepted, it would have to result in a metaphysical (existential) absurdity consisting in the existence of “something” essentially undetermined, namely an undetermined embryo which would only become determined at the moment of animation.

2.2. *The argument from the unity of being.* Another metaphysical discovery shows that, although they are internally complex and composed of numerous elements, every real being is a unity with respect to its structure. The unity finds its basis in the single act of existence which actualizes the complexity of a being. Therefore, such beings as a quadratic circle, a sphinx, a pegasus, or the like, cannot be real beings, as they are internally inconsistent and without any intrinsic unity: one thing cannot be at the same time both a square and a circle, or a human and a lion, or a horse and a bird, etc. Similarly, an embryo cannot be a human being and a non-human being at the same time—and this would be the case if delayed animation were accepted.

2.3. *The argument from the existential sovereignty of being.* Metaphysics also makes it possible to discover that every real being exists as a sovereign being. Its sovereignty results from the sovereign act of existence which permeates the being and organizes it in various ways. Although the human being cannot live without air, water, or food, it does not mean that he is not a sovereign being. Arguing that what is inside of a woman's womb is a part of her body and that she is the only one who has exclusive rights to it, is like arguing that who dives in a lake becomes a part of the lake and that, consequently, the owner of the lake acquires exclusive ownership of all rights to the diver. The fact that the mother's body is the place where the human embryo lives, is nourished and develops, does not prove that the embryo is a part of its mother's body just like her organs: heart, lungs, brain, and the like. The human embryo is not an organ of its mother's body, but a genetically independent organism living in the environment of its mother's body. Besides being an organism, the human embryo is a possessor of its own act of existence which ultimately makes it a sovereign being. The embryo's act of existence is its soul's act of existence; without its human soul, the embryo could not be a human embryo, nor could it be at all. Therefore, the acceptance of delayed animation would automatically entail the undermining of the human embryo's sovereign existence.

2.4. *The argument from the rationality of being.* Metaphysical cognition also enables to discover that every really existing being implements the design produced by its creator. Artifacts embody the ideas of their human creators, whereas natural beings embody the ideas of the Divine Creator. It manifests itself in the fact that all elements of a particular being are assigned to and emerge from a particular creative idea that incorporates the holistic vision of the being. No wonder then that we are often surprised by the mystery of the human organism: the determination of its parts and their assignment to the whole. Even stem cells, although described as "pluripotent," have only such potentials as

are assigned to a particular being from which they are derived. In other words, each particular being is “informationally” determined from its very beginning. In biology, one speaks of information encoded in genetic material, which relates both to the parts of an organism and to its various properties which gradually emerge. The information included in the genetic code is that which determines the individuality and uniqueness of every human being. And, since the genetic information is already present in a fertilized egg cell (i.e., a zygote) at its very beginning, its presence must be the result of the activity of that which is the first act of the human being’s existence: the human soul. Without the soul, there would be no being informationally determined from its beginning. Therefore, by accepting delayed animation, one would accept a strange situation in which a really existing being is determined and undetermined at the same time. Such a way of thinking would breach principles and laws of the rationality (knowability) of being and, thereby, inevitably lead to absurdity.

2.5. *The argument from the purpose of being.* Doing metaphysics also results in the discovery that every being, in and through its existence, fulfills its intrinsic purpose. This purpose is where actions of every being find their origin, motif and end. What is more, everything that constitutes a being, both at the macro and micro level, is assigned to its purpose. The purpose of a human being appears together with its first act of existence: its human soul. That is why everything that happens in an embryo moves toward an end defined as the purpose of a human organism which can be designated by nobody and nothing but its human soul. In other words, since that which has no purpose cannot function and the human embryo functions from its very beginning, there must be the human soul which makes the embryo not only exist and function, but also have a purpose. It is challenged, however, by the idea of delayed animation which allows the human embryo to function before animation without having the human soul. What undermines such

an idea is the fact that it is internally inconsistent: it allows beings to function without having a determined principle of functioning.

2.6. *Argument from the perfection of being.* The perfection of being, as a universal property of all existing beings, manifests itself in the internal integrality of beings which is perceived as beauty. The beautiful is a synthesis of the good and the true.⁶⁵ And it is a real property of every being, including a human embryo. This means that the ultimate perfection (maturity), which only the adult can achieve in full-fledged actuality, is already present in the embryo in potentiality. Being fully a human being is inherent in the act of existence, regardless of whether this act belongs to an embryo or to an adult. Behind it all, of course, there is the soul which, being endowed with the potentials of perfection, realizes them. Depriving the embryo, at the first stages of its life, of a human soul equals stripping it of the capacity to develop as a human being. The acceptance of delayed animation would then undermine the integrality of the embryo as a being by making it realize two different forms of perfection (non-human and human), while having one act of existence. It would necessarily entail the acceptance of an internal contradiction in a real being, which is an absurdity.

Further arguments are based on the first metaphysical principles that underlie the existence and cognition of beings. These include the principles of identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle, the reason of being, purpose and integrality.

2.7. *The argument from the principle of identity.* While discovering universal and necessary properties without which no real being can exist, we also discover the first metaphysical principles underlying the way things are. These principles discerned by the human intellect become the principles of our cognition and reveal the foundations of the

⁶⁵ See P. Jaroszyński, “Beauty in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 579–595.

whole rational order which is established by the Creator in natural beings (just like artists establish rational order in artifacts). That is why the human embryo as a natural being is governed by the principle of identity from the beginning of its existence—from its very beginning, it is what it is.⁶⁶ Delayed animation, however, would suspend the principle of identity. For it claims that, during its development, the embryo initially is not a human being, but then, after animation, it becomes a human being.

2.8. *The argument from the principle of non-contradiction.* The discernment of the metaphysical principle of non-contradiction accompanies the discovery of the unity of essence and existence as a universal property of every real being. Real beings—although composed in various ways from various elements: necessary and unnecessary, essential and accidental, constitutive and consecutive—are internally non-contradictory. Their internal non-contradiction is based on a fact that each of them has its own act of existence which makes all its elements form one organic unity. The metaphysical principle of non-contradiction excludes the possibility for there to be two different acts of existence, or two different forms in one being (like, for example, in a quadratic circle, a sphinx, or a pegasus). This principle claims that real being cannot be divided simultaneously into being and non-being. But such a division would occur and the principle would be broken if delayed animation were accepted: the embryo, that is a real being proving its identity with one and the same act of existence, would appear here as having two contradictory identities: non-human and human.

2.9. *The argument from the principle of excluded middle.* The metaphysical principle of excluded middle states that between being and non-being there is no intermediary, which implicitly means that

⁶⁶ Moreover, it can never lose its identity as it stems from its own act of existence, which follows the principle: *res et esse convertuntur* (“thing and being are convertible,” S.C.G. III, c. 8).

there is no middle ground between one being and another. This principle is discerned as a result of the discovery of the truth about the sovereign existence of real beings. As a real being then, the human embryo exists as a sovereign being at each and every stage of its existence. And it would be exposed to the loss of its existential sovereignty if delayed animation were accepted. For the idea of delayed animation, by accepting the existence of “soulless” embryos and regarding them as an intermediate stage toward human embryos, clearly violates the principle of excluded middle.

2.10. *The argument from the principle of the reason of being.* The metaphysical principle of the reason of being claims that every real being has its reason of being inside and outside of itself. We discern this principle together with the discovery of rationality (the true) as a universal property of the real world. As a real being, every human being finds its internal reason of being in its soul that animates its body and grants it existence. Indeed, the soul is not only an internal reason of being, but also an external one as it comes from creation. However, the acceptance of delayed animation would distort the idea of the human soul as it would lead to the absurd conclusion that the embryo as a real being has not one but two different reasons of being: not a human soul (before animation) and a human soul (after animation).

2.11. *The argument from the principle of purpose.* The metaphysical principle of purpose (teleology) claims that every acting being acts for the sake of an end. In the case of the human being, all its ends are inherent in the human soul. Thus, the whole development (the good) of the human being is assigned to discerning, pursuing and achieving the ends of the human soul. If then there is no human soul in the embryo from its beginning to its animation, as proponents of delayed animation hold, all internal processes of the embryo must be produced by random or “blind” chance, which is an absurdity.

2.12. *The argument from the principle of integrality.* The metaphysical principle of integrality claims that every being is a synthesis of the good and the true. We discern the principle of integrality when we discover the beautiful as a universal and intrinsic property of being. As such then, beauty inheres in being as long as the latter exists as a being—beginning from the moment when it comes into existence. If then the human embryo is a being, it is beautiful (its ontic structure lacks nothing) from its very beginning. Thus, to accept delayed animation which deprives the embryo of its essential structural component (i.e., the human soul) is to challenge the principle of integrality and to open wide the road to absurdity.

Conclusion

The above arguments, based on the metaphysical conception of being (including transcendental properties of being and its first principles), demonstrate why delayed animation is not acceptable. The idea of delayed animation undermines all of the rules that govern the existence of real beings (including human embryos), namely the laws of identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle, the reason of being, purpose and integrality, and it stands in contradiction with universal (transcendental) properties of being, such as: essential determination (*thing*), intrinsic unity and indivision (*one*), existential sovereignty (*something*), the instantiation of a design (*the true*), the possession of a purpose (*the good*), and the perfection to attain (*the beautiful*).

From the metaphysical point of view, the idea of a soulless embryo before animation, cherished by the proponents of delayed animation, is as absurd as that of a real being without real existence, or—simply—a being without being. For just as any living being, in order to be a real being, must have one and the same substantial form of its own

from its very beginning, so the human embryo must be in the possession of a human soul, regardless of how old it is.

Although Aquinas's human being, like that of Aristotle, is a *compositum* of body and soul, and of matter and form, it does not mean that it is an amalgamation of body and spirit, or of animal and angel—the human being is a unity of body and soul.

The relation between the soul and the body is a necessary and essential one. Together with the body, the soul forms a monolithic human substance. It means that neither the soul alone nor the body alone can be a human being. The human soul, which is a source of material and immaterial acts, constantly manifests its specific immaterial origin and its unique nature. It always expresses its existence and activity through the body which, as a necessary component of the human *compositum*, is endowed by it with elements of spiritual life. In this way, the synthesis of spirit and matter becomes the human being who, when acting as a single subject, manifests his transcendence over matter by assigning it to a transcendent purpose inherent in his nature.

Consequently, neither the body nor the alignment of body parts can be the source of existence for the soul. The only source of existence for the human soul, and so too for the human being as such, is the Creator. “Man is generated by man and by God” (*Homo generat hominem et Deus*) is thus an anthropological principle originally discovered and applied by Aquinas.⁶⁷

Translated into English by Marcin Garbowski



⁶⁷ Its wording is a paraphrase of Aristotle's words in *Physics*, 194 b 13: “Man is begotten by man and by the sun as well.”

**The Dispute over Delayed Animation:
When Does a Human Being Begin?**

SUMMARY

The dispute over delayed animation, although it has its beginnings already in ancient philosophy and culture, started for good only in contemporary times when the right to kill unborn children (so-called *abortion*) entered the canon of constitutional law and, what is even stranger, started to be proposed for inclusion into basic human rights. Despite being discussed nowadays mainly in medical and legal sciences, the problem involves disputes of an ethical, religious and ideological nature. In these discussions one can notice a clear lack of anthropological and metaphysical argumentation that would address the question about the beginning of the human being (which entails the question about the beginning of being *per se*) in the light of common properties that belong to really existing beings, and the metaphysical laws that govern the manner in which things (including human embryos) exist. This article discusses understandings of the human being as they are found in Plato's, Aristotle's and Thomas Aquinas's philosophical anthropology. It is this triad of approaches: Platonic, Aristotelian and Thomistic, that allows one both to notice the specificity of Aquinas's approach and to resolve the dispute concerning delayed animation.

KEYWORDS

Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, delayed animation, soul, ensoulment, abortion, anthropology, metaphysics, human being, human embryo.

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Jason Nehez

AI Can Never Think: The Uniqueness of Human Thought

In his 1950 article, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” the famous Alan Turing wrote of the future of computing,

I believe that in about fifty years’ time it will be possible to programme computers, with a storage capacity of about 10^9 , to make them play the imitation game so well that an average interrogator will not have more than 70 per cent chance of making the right identification after five minutes of questioning.¹

This was a near prophetic calculation based on what has come to be known as the “Turing Test.” In summary, it was the idea that were you to have a kind of game, where an interrogator questioned three entities who were hidden from sight, and she were to receive the answers via written correspondence, could she guess which of the responders were male, female, or machine.

In February 2011, IBM’s Watson went up against the world’s leading Jeopardy stars and won! In near 50 years time the computer would not only seem to be able to pass the Turing test but surpass the best of human capability. In addition, Sophia the humanoid robot, has addressed the UN, has been on numerous talk and television shows, and

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¹ A. M. Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind* LIX, no. 236 (October 1950): 442.

has even been granted Saudi Arabian citizenship. In many homes and pockets today is a technology that comes close to fulfilling Turing's prediction. Whether using Siri, Cortana, Alexa, or Google Assistant nearly anyone is able to ask a question and get a human-like response in real time. Even though some responses fail, one is not likely to be discouraged in imagining that in the near future a pocket assistant will appear able to imitate human interaction. In the first section of his article, entitled "The Imitation Game," Turing proposes to tackle the question "Can machines think?" For all intents and purposes he will answer that question in the affirmative and history has seemingly proved him right! Certainly it is a fair description of our time when Turing says,

Nevertheless I believe that at the end of the century the use of words and general educated opinion will have altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted.²

What does this mean for intelligence in general, the human mind, and the human person? As the saying goes, imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, yet very few assume imitation to be equivalence. An original masterpiece may be worth millions while a copy, no matter how exact the resemblance, would yield just a fraction of the price. A photo, movie, or 3D rendered image while meant to represent its subject does not substitute or replace the real thing. I propose that there is more to thought than a machine will ever be capable. The imitation game, while reproducing an imitation something like human thinking and interaction, will never achieve that same unique mode of thinking we experience as human species. I plan in this article to outline some of the hidden assumptions in this type of test, explain some of the most popular arguments against the computational model of thought today, provide my own thought experiments, and finally discuss briefly the u-

² *Ibid.*

nique aspects of human thought that may never be able to be replicated in a machine.

The debate about machine cognition is associated with claims made even centuries ago by materialists or physicalists about the nature of mental life. Since materialist assumptions underpin common beliefs about computer cognition, it is important to examine these assumptions.

Materialism actually has ancient roots. One of the earliest examples can be found in the writings of Lucretius of the Epicurean philosophy in the first century BC. “[M]ind and spirit are both composed of matter. . . . You see the mind sharing in the body’s experiences and sympathizing with it. . . . The substance of the mind must therefore be material . . .”³ Lucretius presents an argument that based on the fact that physical effects of the body, such as the experience of pain from a wound, seem to have an effect on the mind, the mind must therefore be material.

Fast forward 2000 years and Carl Sagan can make a similar claim,

I am a collection of water, calcium, and organic molecules called Carl Sagan. You are a collection of almost identical molecules with a different collective label. But is that all? Is there nothing in here but molecules? Some people find this idea somehow demeaning to human dignity. For myself, I find it elevating that our universe permits the evolution of molecular machines as intricate and subtle as we are. But the essence of life is not so much the atoms and simple molecules that make us up as the way in which they are put together.⁴

In short, the materialist claim is that there is nothing more to reality than the physical and material. Whether animate or inanimate,

³ Jason Saunders, *Lucretius: On the Nature of Things in Greek and Roman Philosophy after Aristotle* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 32.

⁴ Scott Youngren, “Atheism and the Denial of the Soul,” *God Evidence* (posted on May 30, 2014). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

things are just arrangements of particles or atoms interacting with other combinations of particles and atoms. According to the materialist, there is no such thing as soul, spirit, or anything immaterial. In spite of its long history and acceptance by some contemporaries, the question persists: Is materialism justifiable? With such a long history and acceptance by modern day scientific thinkers, what might be the justification of holding this philosophy?

Ed Feser sheds some light on this theory's wide acceptance in his book *Philosophy of Mind*,

It is certainly no mystery why the approach in question has come to seem obviously correct. Modern science has, to all appearances, been one long success story, a success made possible in large part because of its commitment to the mechanistic model of the world.⁵

He goes on to explain that many of the advances in technology and medicine of our time owe in some part to the assumption that all is material. Nature must be tortured to reveal her secrets, as Francis Bacon is attributed with saying. Such an endeavor has been carried out from the enlightenment to our modern era revealing things that previous generations would have considered magic. The temptation to use the explanatory power of the mechanisms for nature and the mind is indeed a great one. Lucretius faced such a temptation in the late centuries BC, when speaking of the mind, “[I]t is of very fine texture and composed of exceptionally minute particles.”⁶ He describes the material composition of the mind as tiny fast moving particles. The famous evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins, explains our mental power by allusion to programming, “We are survival machines—robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes. This is a

⁵ Edward Feser, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 50.

⁶ Saunders, *Lucretius*, 32.

truth which still fills me with astonishment.”⁷ In the face of such technological success it is hard not to consider the assertions of these famous materialists and their assumptions as corresponding to reality. But can the mind be explained entirely by physical mechanisms?

To answer that question we must answer another question, namely what method should be used to explain the mind? The dominant philosophy of materialists of our time is known as Functionalism. Defined as,

The doctrine that what makes something a thought, desire, pain (or any other type of mental state) depends not on its internal constitution, but solely on its function, or the role it plays, in the cognitive system of which it is a part. More precisely, functionalist theories take the identity of a mental state to be determined by its causal relations to sensory stimulations, other mental states, and behavior.⁸

This system therefore says it’s not so much what a thing is made of but what its purpose is in the given situation. Ed Feser in his book, *Philosophy of Mind*, gives a few good examples. A knife isn’t so much dependent on any particular material but on its function as a cutting utensil. The material it is made of is not so much a concern as whether it can perform the function of cutting. Likewise the game of checkers isn’t necessarily defined by the material of the pieces or the game board. One can play checkers with wood, plastic, or cloth pieces. Obviously, there may be some materials that could make the game difficult or nearly impossible to play, but ultimately the game is not defined by the material make up of the pieces but the function of those pieces according to the rules of the game. By analogy we can see then that men-

⁷ Youngren, *Atheism and the Denial of the Soul*.

⁸ Janet Levin, “Functionalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

tal states are not defined by what they are made of, but rather the purpose they serve in the function of the mental system.⁹

Functionalism boasts an advantage that it does not commit itself to Materialism *per se*. It is neutral to the system that makes up the mental states and only wants to define them as they correlate to that system. It is hard not to see a similarity with pragmatism, the philosophy that the success of an application determines the truth of the meaning. In both instances, the test for truth seems to come after the reality of the fact. Does it work? If yes, then it must be true. This strikes me as a stacking of the deck in favor of both philosophies. In pragmatism we would have to have some predefined notion of what success means that is not found by using the pragmatic philosophy. Likewise, some definition of what it means to perform the function will have to be smuggled into functionalism.

The particular presupposition that is often smuggled into Functionalism is Materialism. Although Functionalism is technically neutral with regard to Materialism and Dualism, due to the predominance of the materialist view in our time the mind is quite often presupposed to be only the brain and its mechanisms. The conclusion that follows is that the mind must be material because the mind is only the function of the matter of the brain.

A thought experiment that is used in an attempt to confirm these combined philosophies is to imagine that like other organ replacement, after science has completely understood the brain, we could develop a digital version of the brain that functions exactly the same, and replace one's brain with this artificial version. If after replacing the brain with the digital brain, we were to continue to replace all other organs with artificial versions, we would effectively have created a robot, and even more specifically a robot who can think. Therefore, it must be the case

⁹ Feser, *Philosophy of Mind*, 70.

that the mind is material and not unique to the human person. Can any challenge be mounted against this theory of mind? I will attempt in the rest of the paper to offer substantial critique of Materialist Functionalism of the mind.

One famous argument against Materialist Functionalism mentioned in Ed Feser's *Philosophy of Mind* and devised by Ned Block is known as the "Chinese Nation" argument. As mentioned above Materialist Functionalism defines mental states not by what they are made of but by their function. Therefore, whatever components create the mental state is indeterminate to there being a mental state. Whether it is brain activity, or sophisticated electrical computation, thoughts, ideas, and understanding are realized by the function of the system. We already offered the example that one could imagine replacing all organs of the body, including the brain, with sophisticated computing, effectively creating a thinking robot. But if we can replace it with sophisticated computing, then why couldn't we replace the brain's function with the population of China?

The large population of China could be mobilized to behave exactly as neurons or the circuitry of a computer, using a specific set of rules and walkie-talkies. Now imagine this system of the Chinese population functioning as the brain of a giant robot. The System then behaves in all ways the brain or computer would so that when the robot takes in an input the appropriate output is given via the network. When the giant robot "sees" the rock that has been thrown at it, the system of neurons that are the Chinese Nation, provide the appropriate communicative function to cause the robot to put up its arms in defense.

So just as we replaced the entire human brain with computing, we have replaced it again with the Chinese nation. Yet it is hard to imagine that were the robot to feel pain, the whole Chinese nation would feel pain. Or were the robot to experience color that the entire Chinese nation would experience color in the same way. Therefore, there must

be something more to the mind than just the brain, if the particular experience is not felt or understood by each of the components of the system.¹⁰

At first glance, Materialist Functionalism seems to have met a formidable foe. Clearly, the nation does not experience as the robot would experience, if we can say that the robot can experience at all. But the Materialist Functionalists have a counterexample. If we start with the Chinese nation it is difficult to see how we might find mental states. But if we start with a human person, even ourselves, we know that we do in fact have these experiences.

Now imagine that a group of scientists were able to surgically open your skull and start to hang the various pieces and strands of your brain on various hooks in their laboratory. Now suppose that you could replace one neuron or synapse with a few of our Chinese walkie-talkie communicators. One can imagine that you'd still experience all the normal mental states even with this one change. Well then let the scientists proceed to replace even more neurons until all have been replaced by our Chinese Nation. In this example, your understanding would seem to be intact and would still function as it did when it was your brain, even though it is now the Chinese Nation. It would seem that the Chinese Nation argument then is inconclusive.

While the Chinese Nation argument might be inconclusive, an argument that has gained in popularity is the one proposed by John Searle, named the Chinese Room argument. In this argument Searle asks us to imagine that a native English speaker is locked in a room and given sheets of paper in Chinese. Our native English speaker has no previous understanding of Chinese. She also has a rulebook instructing her to draw out of a box in the room certain characters in response to questions persons outside the room ask her. These characters she thrusts

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

outside the room. They are read by actual Chinese speakers who have asked the room's occupant certain questions. Because these characters are arranged according to the rulebook, they appropriately answer the questions of those outside the room. Since the answers are appropriate, those outside the room infer that the room's occupant understands and speaks Chinese. This scenario analogizes *inputs* (questions asked from outside the room) and *outputs* (answers put outside by the room's occupant).

But it turns out that the room's occupant does not know Chinese at all. She is simply receiving input, acting on a rule, and then providing a prescribed output. The understanding of the language is lost on our subject, the native English Speaker.

Searle argues that providing a proper output is not necessarily equivalent to understanding. Something more is required to guarantee understanding. The arrangement of inputs (*syntax*) is one thing; the understanding of its meanings (*semantics*) is something else altogether. Nevertheless, Searle's protest has not insulated the Chinese Room illustration from criticism.

Some have claimed that the person in the room does not represent the whole system. They assert that rather than representing the whole system the occupant of the room is more analogous to the processor in the system. Therefore, understanding may still be possible but it would be by virtue of the whole system: the room, the rulebook, the characters, the native English speaker, and the output combined.

Searle counters by saying that the native English speaker could internalize the rulebook and memorize the rules without actually understanding the meanings. This would move the entire system into the person's head but not necessitate understanding. Being such a popular argument and a popular topic in philosophy of mind today there are many more attempts at a rebuttal. None has proven to be decisive. Hence,

Searle's Chinese Room illustration persists as a challenging argument against Materialist Functionalism that has become difficult to counter.¹¹

At this point, I'd like to offer two of my own thought experiments.¹² The first will attempt to demystify computation and assert, like Searle, that computation cannot account for all of what we mean when we speak of thinking. The second will try to highlight the quantitative versus qualitative argument presented in the Turing test and how it may prove too much.

The speed of electricity can seem magical at times. Things we are capable of today from the discovery and control of electricity would have been considered other worldly just a century or two ago. I believe that the speed of electricity convolutes our inquiry into the truth of the computational theory of mind. Turing himself said that it was only superficially necessary,

The fact that Babbage's Analytical Engine was to be entirely mechanical will help us to rid ourselves of a superstition. Importance is often attached to the fact that modern digital computers are electrical, and that the nervous system also is electrical. Since Babbage's machine was not electrical, and since all digital computers are in a sense equivalent, we see that this use of electricity cannot be of theoretical importance. Of course electricity usually comes in where fast signalling is concerned, so that it is not surprising that we find it in both these connections. In the nervous system chemical phenomena are at least as important as electrical. In certain computers the storage system is mainly acoustic. The feature of using electricity is thus seen to be only a

¹¹ David Cole, "The Chinese Room Argument," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

¹² I believe these to be my own and if they share any similarity to already existing arguments it should be attributed to the logic of the consequence of the ideas and my lack of exposure to those thinkers. I intend no plagiarism and if it is found that these ideas share similarity to some previous writing I will take appropriate action to make amends.

very superficial similarity. If we wish to find such similarities we should look rather for mathematical analogies of function.¹³

With this in mind, I'd like to remark on how a computer functions. Computers take in binary signals and record them in a particular order. This binary is often referred to as a 0 or 1, or as an on or off state. Some input is presented to the computer, say, as a keyboard press. This input is translated to electrical impulses via the machines hardware, which is then represented as 0s and 1s and subsequently stored in bits and bytes. These bits and bytes, arranged in a particular order, then indicate certain other outputs to perform, such as to display the corresponding letter in the word processor to the key that was pressed on the keyboard.

But as Turing said these electrical impulses are not necessary to imagine computing. One could imagine an entirely mechanical computer made of a series of mechanical switches or levers. Every input becomes a binary switch flipped up or down or lever pulled up or down by an operator. After all input switches are appropriately toggled to the connected lever arms, and mechanical apparatus moved to their positions according to the rules of the input, these then can be connected to colored blocks that are arranged in order to display an output. If all inputs and outputs are identical to an electrical machine, the fact that it is mechanical should not make a difference. Neither should the speed of the output be a problem. Were it to cause difficulty one could easily imagine a person toggling the switches at the speed of electricity so that speed is truly mitigated in this thought experiment.

In this case, it is hard to imagine this system of switches, pulleys, and levers having any kind of cognition. All the rules are pre-arranged by someone who builds the machine so that nothing could happen contrary to how it is built and designed to respond. It would be akin to

¹³ Turing, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, 439.

making the argument that each colored domino, or the dominoes as a whole, understand the image they have been arranged to display as they fall revealing a mosaic in the place in which they lay. The displayed image of the dominoes, and the displayed image of the mechanical computer, are simply the designed output of the arrangement of the builder of the machine. I believe that when the speed and wonder of electricity are removed the reality that outputs are just mechanical arrangements becomes more apparent. Indeed, a Rube Golberg machine may make my toast, but I would not claim that the Rube Golberg machine understands it is making my toast. Rather the builder of the Rube Golberg understands how to make it. In terms of mechanics, there is little fundamental difference between a Rube Golberg machine and our mechanical, or electrical, computer.

In the quotation stated in this article's introduction, Turing predicted that a computer with 10^9 storage capacity could effectively play the imitation game.

I believe that in about fifty years' time it will be possible to programme computers, with a storage capacity of about 10^9 , to make them play the imitation game so well that an average interrogator will not have more than 70 per cent, chance of making the right identification after five minutes of questioning.¹⁴

Over 50 years later, we recognize that computers have significantly higher capacity than 10^9 , which is approximately 100M, and which qualifies as a rather pathetic machine in our time. So why are there not little thinking computer robots everywhere?

We might be tempted to think there are given the proliferation of recent mobile and in home technology advancements. I brought our attention early on to mobile assistants such as Siri, Alexa, and the like. But does quantity of storage really equate to mental states? Why is the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 442.

imitation of language a test for thinking if thinking is a quantitative ability? If we use Turing's number for our measure, if 10^9 is sufficient to succeed at the imitation game, implying that true thinking is happening, what about $10^{8.5}$? Or 10^8 ? Two implications emerge when we consider thinking as a quantitative difference instead of a qualitative difference. Neither implication seems to be tenable.

First, if thinking is a quantitative difference, it seems arbitrary to associate it with language. If we assume, like Turing, that an animal or small child can think without the capacity for sophisticated language, then it would seem our computational device begins to think much earlier than 10^9 . In fact, I see no reason to conclude that there is any boundary, so that we might even say that our calculator computing $2 + 2 = 4$ would perhaps understand $2 + 2 = 4$. Surely mathematics is as much of an indicator of thought as language, under a Materialist Functionalist definition of thought. Turing, and Materialist Functionalists, prove too much when making the imitation game based on a quantitative difference in computation or neuron firings.

Someone may try to counter this argument by appealing to someone who has suffered brain damage. A quantitative reduction of the brain has an effect on their ability to function therefore the conclusion must be that the mind is material. As a quick rebuttal, I'd say that one thing can work through another yet be of different substance. If I were speaking to someone through a telephone and the telephone were to suffer damage, it would not mean that I have lost my ability to speak. Rather the mechanism through which my speech is being transmitted is malfunctioning. Likewise, the mind works through the brain in the body and the material. A brain that suffers damage does not damage the mind but the mind's ability to work through the body.

Now let's assume that there is a quantitative difference in thinking. That once a certain number of neurons, or computer chips, start firing thinking emerges. Where is that quantitative line of pre-thinking

to thinking and what happens at that line? What materially changes from $10^{8.99}$ to 10^9 data storage that allows for comprehension? It would seem that if it is not there from the start, as a qualitative difference, it is hard to determine how thought could emerge from an accumulation and activation of a certain multitude of bits.

If consciousness is merely a quantitative and not a qualitative difference, that a certain number of messaging neurons or computer chips allows for consciousness, then what is that number? What makes a calculator that can represent $2 + 2 = 4$ not conscious but a more complex calculator that can respond in other symbols, whether written or audio, conscious? Turing believed that 10^9 would allow for imitation but is imitation the same in substance? Equality in number does not constitute sameness in substance. An even simpler example might make this more understandable; if I have 3 apples and 3 oranges I have equality in number but difference of substance. If I have 3 red apples and 1 green apple I have sameness in substance but an inequality in my number. The underlying Materialist Functionalism assumes that there is a sameness in substance between the mind, assumed to be brain only, and a computer and only an inequality in the number. I argue that there is a difference of substance and therefore an equality in number will not provide the sameness desired by the Turing Test. I can manipulate my oranges to appear as apples but they will still be oranges. I can manipulate my machine to appear as thinking but it will still be mechanical.

My speculation here has been inspired by Leibniz's comparison between the mind and a mill. Leibniz states the comparison thus:

Moreover, it must be confessed that perception and that which depends upon it are inexplicable on mechanical grounds, that is to say, by means of figures and motions. And supposing there were a machine, so constructed as to think, feel, and have perception, it might be conceived as increased in size, while keeping the same proportions, so that one might go into it as into a mill. That being so, we should, on examining its interior, find only parts

which work one upon another, and never anything by which to explain a perception. Thus it is in a simple substance, and not in a compound or in a machine, that perception must be sought for.¹⁵

Leibniz's idea is that if we were to walk inside such a machine we would not materially see thinking, or feeling, or any kind of perception. We would only see the movement of a machine. Therefore, perception cannot be found in the movements of this machine.

Despite the evidence above, some Materialist Functionalists may still be willing to hold out hope that science will show someday there is no difference in substance between mind and matter. All the arguments to this point attempted to show the absurdity of the belief that computers can think. The rest of this article will attempt to show how human thought differs not quantitatively but substantively and qualitatively. Hopefully, the combined force of the arguments from absurdity above and the arguments for dualism below will persuade the reader to (1) consider abandoning the materialist presupposition in functionalism, and (2) consider marginalizing functionalism as a convincing answer to the question of the nature of mind.

In C. S. Lewis book *Miracles*, he presents an argument that requires that we must believe in the validity of thought otherwise science is not possible. But belief in the validity of thought can only happen under certain conditions. He presents the following situation.

(1) He thinks that dog dangerous because he has often seen it muzzled and he has noticed that messengers always try to avoid going to that house. (2) He thinks that dog dangerous because it is black and ever since he was bitten by a black dog in childhood he has always been afraid of black dogs.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cole, *The Chinese Room Argument*.

¹⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (London & Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1947), 26.

In the first scenario, the fear of the dog is a result of the observation that it has been potentially violent in the past. We trust the rationale of this first scenario because it follows from good reason. Whereas we are less likely to trust the second scenario, the fear of the dog because it is the same color as a dog that had previously been violent, because it is an irrational fear. The second scenario proceeds from causes that do not scientifically connect.

Another example offered is the case of a man claiming his house was full of snakes and insects. If we know the man to be typically of sound mind, we would be very unlikely to enter the house and likely call an exterminator as soon as possible. But if we know the man to be suffering from mental illness, we are less likely to believe him. C. S. Lewis says the difference between the two is that “in the first instance the man’s belief is caused by something rational (by argument from observed facts) while in the other it is caused by something irrational (association of ideas).” He then makes this claim: “We may in fact state it as a rule that *no thought is valid if it can be fully explained as a result of irrational causes.*”¹⁷

Now if this is true of thoughts in particular, it must be true of thought in general, or human reason as a whole. We can’t say that each particular thought must have rational causes and reason itself can proceed from irrational causes. But this is precisely the claim made by the underlying Materialism philosophy popular today. Our minds are the product of the same conditions as everything else, or as C. S. Lewis puts it, as the “Total System.” But this Total System, according to Materialism, is not rational but irrational. Therefore, reason has for its explanation an irrational cause.

If mental states are just the random collision of atoms, there is no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true, including the belief that my

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

brain, and therefore my mental states, are composed of atoms!¹⁸ In other words, there does not seem to be a rational reason to believe rationality arises out of the predetermined interaction of material particles. Much like the point of Leibniz's machine example, rationality seems to be something more than the order of flipping switches. To have good reason, to believe in good reason, and for reason to operate at all, a cause is necessary.

Some will make an attempt to escape this conclusion by attributing mysterious powers to small particles. They will claim that the indeterminacy found in quantum mechanics allows for phenomena such as consciousness, free will, and mental states. I have to agree with Walker Percy, in his article "The Fateful Rift": "At the statistical level, large numbers of atoms behave lawfully. Boyle's law still obtains. If the will is free, it is no thanks to Heisenberg."¹⁹ That is to say, no matter how indeterminate subatomic particles may be, in their larger atomic behaviors they act according to scientific principles and laws. There doesn't seem to be any reason to believe mental states result from the behavior of these small particles other than the wishful desire it be so in order to avoid a dualist conclusion.

Turing cites the experience of Helen Keller as one that provides an example of the possibility of teaching a machine to think. Since the machine may not have the ability to hear or see, we can tailor a teaching method to enable a machine to attain human-like intelligence. In the 1950s, around the time Turing's article was published, Walker Percy was contemplating Helen Keller's situation but arriving at very different conclusions. He recounts her story in his book *The Message in the Bottle*. Here Helen says,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁹ Walker Percy, "The Fateful Rift: The San Andreas Fault in the Modern Mind," *Design for Arts in Education* 91, no. 3 (1990): 7.

Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motion of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!²⁰

Percy in contemplating what has occurred in this instance, the same occurrence that happens in a child learning to speak, says that it is only reducible to the Delta, the greek letter that has a shape of a triangle. His idea of the Delta is in contrast to dyadic relations. A dyadic relation would be one that is direct cause and effect. I hit the billiard ball and it travels in a straight line, striking another ball, causing it to travel and so on. But he thinks dyadic relations are even found in animals. When I say, Fido fetch the ball, Fido does not contemplate the meaning of ball but has come to associate those particular soundwaves in the vocal *ball* (cause) with the effect of an object thrown to chase.

Yet in the case of Helen Keller, and the child learning to speak, there is an irreducible triadic relation. The particular sound waves that make up w-a-t-e-r, or in this case letters spelled in Helen’s hand, come to be coupled, or directly related to the reality of water, in the person. This is not dyadic, cause and effect, but some real relation takes place that three elements are needed: the word, the object, and the person. As Percy points out, when the child comes to understand *balloon* to mean this floating red round thing here, the child may then ask whether the watermelon is a balloon. There is not a cause and effect relation but an

²⁰ Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle* (Toronto, Canada: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1989), 35.

understanding that reality has organizational unity and those unities have identifiers or names.

St. Thomas Aquinas would describe this as our power of abstraction. Wonder leads us to be curious about why there is a one in a many, why some one thing designated water has the many attributes of cool, flowing, clear, etc. In the desire to satisfy wonder's angst, we set out to accumulate knowledge, discovering what things are in the way that they are. But for Helen to know that this flowing liquid here in the well house, and the later flowing liquid in her glass, are one and the same water, some real causal relation must happen between the word and the thing in Helen. Abstraction then is the process by which the knower, taking in a set of sense perceptions, pulls from those perceptions the unity of the contrary opposites found in the one thing. The consequence of this Percy writes in his article, "The Fateful Rift."

By whatever name one chooses to call it—interpretant, interpreter, coupler, whatever—it, the third element, is not material. It is as real as a cabbage or a king or a neuron, but it is not material. No material structure of neurons, however complex, and however intimately it may be related to the triadic event, can itself assert anything. If you think it can, please draw me a picture of an assertion. A material substance cannot name or assert a proposition.²¹

Percy confirms what was found in our thought experiment with the switches and levers and what seems to be intuitively understood by both sides in the Chinese Nation and Chinese Room arguments. Something more than the individual material parts must understand the language. Even some of the Materialist Functionalists say it must be the entire system. But that system must be something real. Based on the triadic event that takes place in understanding, the character of that something cannot be material. And so the abstraction power described

²¹ Percy, "The Fateful Rift," 52.

by St. Thomas is our ability to dematerialize an object for the intellect to make it a thing known immaterial to our immaterial substance.

If materialism is true then the brain is equal to the mind. The mind and brain are not two things but one. Now it may be that brain events can cause mental events and the reverse but just because A causes B that does not mean that A is identical to B. A light bulb may cause light but they are not identical. It is not sufficient for materialism to show that mental states and brain states are causally related with each other in a person. If something is true or possibly true of a mental state that is not true or possibly true of a physical substance, property, or event then it follows that materialism of the mental states is false.

For instance, ideas have intentionality while physical states do not. Intentionality is what our mental states are about. I think about a car, I have a belief about politics, or I fear a nuclear war. No physical object is of or about another physical object. We can contemplate intentionality in another way. Some thoughts entail other thoughts. The sky is blue entails that it is not true that the sky is not blue. The sky cannot be both blue and not blue at the same time in the same way. In contrast, no physical thing entails another physical thing. Ed Feser, in his book *Philosophy of Mind*, makes this point about physical objects,

They are also intrinsically without meaning or intentionality. Even the words you're now reading are in themselves just meaningless squiggles of ink on paper; what meaning they have is meaning we give them, by interpreting them as having meaning. The same goes for the noises made by a tape recorder or the electronic impulses generating images on a computer screen. Intrinsically there is nothing there but sound-waves and electrical current, as devoid of significance as the sound-waves generated by a fan or the electrical current passing through the fan's motor. The reason the former have any meaning at all is, again, that we interpret them as having it—we interpret the sounds made by the recorder and the images on the screen as words rather than merely noises and shapes. So, it seems that physical objects and pro-

cesses have meaning only when they derive it from minds, which have it intrinsically. This is as true of brain processes as of any other physical process—in themselves, the electrochemical signals passing between neurons surely have no more meaning or intentionality than the electrical current passing through the wires and motor of an electric fan. So, again, the mind seems just obviously different from the brain.²²

Feser illustrates that a physical object does not have intentionality, or an inherent meaning. Any meanings seem to be derived from minds who give them meaning, the coupler mentioned in the triadic relation by Percy above. Feser later writes this which brings the discussion even more clarity,

More to the point, brain processes, composed as they are of meaningless chemical components, seem as inherently devoid of intentionality as soundwaves or ink marks. Any intentionality they have would also have to be derived from something else. But if anything physical would be devoid of intrinsic intentionality, whatever does have intrinsic intentionality would thereby have to be non-physical.²³

Here is a devastating blow to the results of the imitation game. Without a non-physical mind, able to derive meaning from the physical, a computer generating symbols really just becomes random marks on a paper or lights on a screen. There is no inherent meaning to those physical objects without a mind to give them meaning! Therefore the imitation game seems to be just that, an imitation. While valuable in its ability to calculate it does not contain the necessary qualitative difference of a non-physical mind to provide the intentionality needed for meaning. The observer-relative nature of computation is made explicit by Feser commenting on Searle's arguments,

²² Feser, *Philosophy of Mind*, 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, 172.

Computation, Searle concludes, is an observer-relative phenomenon. There is nothing intrinsic to the nature of anything in the material world that makes it a computer, or that makes it true that it is implementing a program. It is all a matter of interpretation: our interpretation. If we decide to count something as a computer, it is one; if not, then it isn't. There is nothing more to it than that. The most complex machine that rolls off the assembly line at IBM will not count as a computer if we have no use at all for it; by contrast, even the pen sitting on the desk in front of you counts as a computer in the trivial sense that we can interpret it as "implementing" the following "program": "Lie there and don't move."²⁴

Feser illustrates that without the intentionality derived from minds providing meaning to computation, the latter is simply meaningless. Because of intentionality, the observer-relative nature of the semantic content of a computer reveals that without the human interpretant there is no such thing as a computer. Computer information is always observer relative, which means that anything following a rule (a program) can be called a computer. I can program an ink pen to "lie still." It does so, satisfying the requirements of the program!

My arguments in this article have made a cumulative case that materialism is unconvincing. Hence, we have a right to be open to the possibility that ideas exist immaterially. If they exist, what is their precise mode of existence? Jacques Maritain helps us explore that question.

Things have two different forms of *esse*, two differing planes of existence: their rightful existence by which they act and hold themselves apart from nothingness, and the existence which they take on in the apprehension of the soul, so as to be known. In order to enter into the sense of sight the bindweed and the apple have to leave off that matter by which they subsist; in order to

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

enter into the intelligence and the reason, they lay by their individuality. In the inward world of our intelligence there are a multitude of distinct aspects or concepts of things which in the world of nature exist in an undivided state, and which lead in one world a life wholly different from that of the other. In one the lion devours the antelope, in the other he achieves by means of the copula the predicate, carnivorous. And the possibility of error simply arises from the disparity between these two worlds. All of which shows that thought is not a copy of the thing corresponding materially with its model: there is an abyss between the conditions and mode of thought and the condition and mode of things.²⁵

Here Maritain illustrates wonderfully the difference in being between object and intentional existence of the idea. The object existing in particular in the particular world is taken to exist universally in the mental world via the thought or idea. This universal cannot exist materially but rather informs the material while being understood by the mind. This process of dematerializing the particular from which we produce the universal, the idea, is the power of abstraction as defined by St. Thomas above. Without abstraction no truth, conformity between intellect and known, would be possible. We could only experience particular things. But an idea is not a particular as shown above, an idea is an immaterial universal. Again Maritain illumines this idea eloquently,

For the very glory of thought's immaterial nature is that it is not a thing in exterior space extended over another thing, but rather a life superior to all spatial order, which, without quitting itself, perfects itself with what is not itself—the intelligible real who fecund substance it draws from the senses, gathered by them from the (materially) existent in act.²⁶

²⁵ Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (Glasgow: The University Press, 1937), 104–105.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

Maritain explains that mental states, while deriving their substance from the senses, nonetheless are in some way over and above the materially existing thing.

In conclusion, I offer up Turing's first consideration of opinions opposed to his own,

The Theological Objection. Thinking is a function of man's immortal soul. God has given an immortal soul to every man and woman, but not to any other animal or to machines. Hence no animal or machine can think. I am unable to accept any part of this, but will attempt to reply in theological terms. I should find the argument more convincing if animals were classed with men, for there is a greater difference, to my mind, between the typical animate and the inanimate than there is between man and the other animals.²⁷

Turing then proceeds to claim this view arbitrary and offers other possibilities God could do if He wanted, including en-souling a machine. I do not intend here to put any limitations on God but to point out that there is a difference between what could be and what is. While we may share characteristics more closely with certain primates than say breccia, based solely on observation, there is a chasm when it comes to humanity, man and woman, not shared by any other physical being in the world. That chasm, Turing and the computational philosophy of mind may claim to imitate, but it lacks sameness of substance. As Percy pointed out, there is an irreducible triadic relationship between thing, language of the thing, and the knower. This relationship is an immaterial one, shown by intentionality that cannot be of material things but of immaterial things. Call it what you will, interpreter, coupler, or soul, the immaterial agent seems to be a unique entity of the human person that gives him the power of abstraction, to dematerialize a physical object, to know it as it is. The machine is just a dyadic system of inputs

²⁷ Turing, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, 443.

and outputs which derives all its meaning from agents who can give it meaning.

In an effort to avoid the orthodox view, Turing and the computational philosophy of mind have missed the size of the chasm they want to traverse. The quantitative capacity of a machine allowing for the imitation of language being described as human is like saying if I were to increase the resolution of my video and play it on a stage in such a way it was to scale, someone may mistake it for being an actual present human. But the chasm from video to human is just as large as the chasm from machine to human. It seems possible to imitate and impossible to traverse. So let us allow science to follow where it may lead. The observational facts are there; the mind is more than the brain. We are not simply a sophisticated machine but an immaterial and material composite. While we can celebrate the technological advances the emphasis on the material has had, we should also celebrate our uniquely human capability of thought.



AI Can Never Think: The Uniqueness of Human Thought

SUMMARY

As the saying goes, imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, yet very few assume imitation to be equivalence. An original masterpiece may be worth millions while a copy, no matter how exact the resemblance, would yield just a fraction of the price. I propose that there is more to thought than a machine will ever be capable of. The imitation game, while reproducing an imitation that is something like human thinking and interaction, will never achieve that same unique mode of thinking we experience as human species. This presentation aims to outline some of the hidden assumptions in the Turing Test for the computational theory of mind, explain some of the most popular arguments against the computational model of thought today, provide some original thought experiments, and finally discuss briefly the unique aspects of human thought that may never be able to be replicated in a machine.

KEYWORDS

AI, artificial intelligence, thought, mind, turing, materialism, functionalism, dualism, semiotics, computational theory.

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Book Reviews

Kaz Kukiela

Did Aquinas Justify the Transition from ‘Is’ to ‘Ought’? by Piotr Lichacz*

Originally written as his doctoral dissertation, Piotr Lichacz, O.P., has delved into and elucidated profoundly what is perhaps the most fundamental challenge facing the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas: the no *ought* from *is* thesis (naturalistic fallacy). In this work, Lichacz provides a highly comprehensive account of the framework from which we may better understand and attempt to resolve the potential mistake surrounding the normative and prescriptive element of Thomism in being invalidly derived from its descriptive elements.

Piotr Lichacz begins with an introduction to the problem of the Is/Ought thesis and outlines his methodology for understanding the tools to solve it (it is also worth noting here that he mentions how Aquinas himself is likely to not have conceived of the problem in the same light as modern thinkers).¹ After the introduction, the author gives two brief accounts of the problem’s history consisting of David Hume’s and George E. Moore’s critiques. Following this, the book is divided into two parts, (1) “Aquinas’s Logic and Scientific Methodology” and (2) “Aquinas’s Way of Constructing Human *Is*.” While the first part

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* Piotr Lichacz, O.P., *Did Aquinas Justify the Transition from ‘Is’ to ‘Ought’?* (Warszawa: Instytut Tomistyczny, 2010), 332 pages. ISBN 987-83-905171-0-0.

¹ Lichacz, *Did Aquinas Justify the Transition from ‘Is’ to ‘Ought’?*, 18.



explores such ideas as Aquinas's order of learning and inspiration from Aristotle's methods of philosophical inquiry (with sensory experience as the basis) and the varying kinds and hierarchy of truths, it also touches upon Aquinas's logic and his ways of explanation. This understanding of Aquinas's ways of explanation most notably includes the idea that the existential question (that something is) precedes the descriptive question (what something is). Thus, returning to the Is/Ought thesis, the subject matter of what should (ought to) be must be derived from what is (in the descriptive sense) but essentially, it must all come from the fact that it is (existentially). With regard to Aquinas's concepts of science, logic and cognition, Lichacz also claims that Aquinas views these domains as concerning only necessary truths that are to be known perfectly, hence implicating a special ontological aspect to the nature of the Is/Ought problem.

He later turns to anthropology, describing it as the science of the human being, and further characterizing it as "one of the integral parts of the science which has for its subject changing being"² and helps with the scientific understanding of human nature. Thus, this discipline as a science, as mentioned earlier, may hold certain necessary truths connected to the "moral character of human acts."³ It is here when Lichacz concludes part one of the book with a hint of the answer to whether Aquinas justified the transition from *is* to *ought* wherein he draws insight to the rather teleological aspect of morality with respect to human nature and science.

Part two of Lichacz's work begins with chapter 5 where he divides the theoretical sciences into three: natural sciences, mathematics, and metaphysics. Toward the end of the chapter, Lichacz comes to the conclusion that in order to construct the concept of a human *is* for the

² *Ibid.*, 165.

³ *Ibid.*

understanding of ethics, this task must be fulfilled by natural science. Within natural science, Lichacz asserts that it “considers such *speculabilia* that contain in their definition sensible matter.”⁴ With the observation of the regularity of occurrences, he suggests that human moral action can be investigated in terms of matter and form.⁵ With reference to the four causes, Lichacz then considers the form as “end, purpose, or aim” which “is manifestly always something good.”⁶ Therefore, by referring to the “finality in nature” as the determination of natural factors in producing regular effects,⁷ and connecting it with the ultimate goal of human action and nature as discovered through the results of natural science, one may interpret the author as coming closer to answering the Is/Ought question. This is evident as he claims,

[t]he explanation of [the] human being according to formal, material, efficient and final causes, contains already not only the information about what is, but also what ought to be because of the existence of the nature shared by constantly changing individuals.⁸

Thus, in an attempt to justify Aquinas’s transition from *is* to *ought*, Lichacz argues that

we are not obliged to search any other distinctive ‘ought’ than the ‘ought’ of natural finality discovered, and not established, in the consideration of what constitutes [the] human being; that is the consideration of what there ‘is’.⁹

In this way, Piotr Lichacz answers the title’s question in the affirmative—that Aquinas did in fact justify the transition from *is* to *ought*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.

Piotr Lichacz's book is a great resource for inquiring Thomistic thought in the domains of logic, natural science, metaphysics, and ethics. Although the title itself is particular and explicitly presents a deep philosophical question for Thomism, rooted in metaethical questioning and inquiry, the work as a whole provides a wide-ranging and comprehensive analysis of the fundamentals of St. Thomas Aquinas's thought. The author thoroughly establishes the framework from which to address the question with a holistic approach. Moreover, the work should be recommended to those interested in Thomas Aquinas's philosophy in general as it not only investigates the question and answer for the Is/Ought thesis but also serves as a useful companion to Thomistic philosophy.



***Did Aquinas Justify the Transition from 'Is' to 'Ought'?* by Piotr Lichacz**

SUMMARY

This paper is a review of the book: Piotr Lichacz, O.P., *Did Aquinas Justify the Transition from 'Is' to 'Ought'?* (Warszawa: Instytut Tomistyczny, 2010). According to the author, Lichacz's book provides a comprehensive analysis of Thomas Aquinas's anthropological and teleological methodology of philosophy. Consequently, it develops a supervenient and normative characteristic of natural finality onto the description of the human being as discovered in the natural sciences.

KEYWORDS

Aristotle, David Hume, G. E. Moore, Piotr Lichacz, Thomas Aquinas, naturalistic fallacy, normative, descriptive, is/ought, natural sciences, anthropology, ontology, teleology, ethics, human nature.

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Antonius Alex Lesomar

Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being
by Andrzej Maryniarczyk*

The Polish Thomas Aquinas Society has published a book written by Fr. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, S.D.B., entitled *Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being*. The book was translated from the original Polish version by Hugh McDonald and appeared as the 5th volume of the series “Notebooks on Metaphysics.” So far, five other volumes from the seven volume series have been published in English: *The Monistic and Dualistic Interpretation of Reality* (vol. 1), *The Pluralistic Interpretation of Reality* (vol. 2), *The Realistic Interpretation of Reality* (vol. 3), *Rationality and Finality of the World of Persons and Things* (vol. 4), *On Causes, Participation, and Analogy* (vol. 6). The publication is an interesting introduction to the metaphysics cultivated in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.

Fr. Andrzej Maryniarczyk is a metaphysician and student of Fr. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, O.P., one of the founders of The Lublin Philosophical School. Other well-known founders, who were also part of the first generation of The Lublin Philosophical School, were philosophers such as S. Swieżawski, J. Kalinowski, S. Kamiński, M. Kur-

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działek and K. Wojtyła.¹ These philosophers began to develop realistic philosophy with a good set of methodological-logical instruments. Realistic philosophy is a continuation of classical philosophy, initiated in antiquity by Aristotle and reinterpreted in the Middle Ages by St. Thomas Aquinas. The object of its research is being given in experience. This kind of philosophizing does not limit itself to Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, but it enters into dialogue with modern and contemporary philosophy and seeks to develop methodical reflections on adequate cognitive tools used in the process of metaphysical cognition.²

Fr. Maryniarczyk presents his book to guide the readers to achieve “the internal structure and nature of things,”³ as well as the main reason for everything that exists. Besides that, through his work, the Author points out that being given in experience reveals a very rich structure when it is explored or investigated both by science and metaphysics. Science and metaphysics, however, explore and explain the internal structure of being through different approaches, methods and goals. This book also helps the readers to have “the skill of discovering the mystery of the world of persons and things, a mystery that cannot be unveiled by any other sciences except metaphysics.”⁴ The mysteries are metaphysical elements which are discovered through the metaphysical separation method. By analyzing the internal structure of being, the reader finally finds that all existing beings have a reason and purpose.

In his book, Fr. Maryniarczyk discusses the character and compositional elements of being based on a realistic philosophical or metaphysical approach that has been developed in The Lublin Philosophical School. The main thesis of Fr. Maryniarczyk, which is discussed and

¹ Mieczysław A. Krapiec and Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *The Lublin Philosophical School*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Lublin: PTTA, 2010), 45–46.

² *Ibid.*, 24

³ Maryniarczyk, *Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being*, 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

elaborated in all chapters of his book, is the reason or cause of the existence of things. In his research for these reasons, he shows the discovery of the internal structure of being and the discovery of the compositional elements that constitute being. Fr. Maryniarczyk states that,

Compositional elements of this type are so-called sub-ontic elements, that is, elements that determine the existence of being in general, and determine the existence of being under a given aspect (regarding dynamism, mutability, identity and contingency).⁵

These sub-ontic elements that determine whether a being can exist, act and become perfect, cannot be achieved with empirical approaches and methods of natural sciences, but through approaches and methods characteristic to metaphysical inquiry.

The reviewed book consists of five chapters, preceded by an introduction and crowned with selected classical texts. In chapter one,⁶ Fr. Maryniarczyk presents various ways of understanding compositions of being and methods for discovering them. He distinguishes the metaphysical method and internal structures of being discovered with its help from methods of physical, scientific, phenomenological, and abstractionist character and elements of being singled out by them. In the next chapter,⁷ the Author focuses on explaining the character of dynamism of being found in experience. He points out the cause of the dynamism of being in the structure of act and potency. Subsequently, he shows another character of being, called mutability of being. The mutability of being is caused by compositional elements, matter and form. These problems are discussed in chapter three.⁸ Fr. Maryniarczyk continues his analyses taking up the problem concerning another character

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶ Entitled "In Search of Internal Structure of Beings."

⁷ Entitled "The Dynamism of Beings, The Discovery of Act and Potency."

⁸ Entitled "The Mutability of Beings, The Discovery of Compositions from Matter and Form."

of being: the identity of being. He explains that the cause of the identity of being is associated with the structure of substance and accidents.⁹ Finally, in the last chapter,¹⁰ the Author explains the most fundamental property of being, namely contingency. In exploring this character of being, he relates to the fundamental and constitutive elements of being, which are essence and existence.

Regarding the method of discovery of the compositional elements of being, as well as causes of the existence of being, Fr. Maryniarczyk stresses the “method of metaphysical separation”¹¹ by making being the object of its research. Through this method, the compositional elements of being or sub-ontic elements are discovered,¹² and distinguished from compositional elements according to other sciences. This method will also help to distinguish which elements are compositional and which are only carried by being. Fr. Maryniarczyk explains that the process of implementing this method follows a number of stages including the existential judgment stage, which affirms the particular state of being of things, the existential judgment analysis stage which affirms the particular state of being and then the generalization of analyzes on the basis of analogies in being.¹³

Fr. Maryniarczyk insists that the metaphysical method helps to discover the metaphysical elements of the individual substance that is given in experience. Analysis based on this method helps to reflect more on the individual substances that are changing and shows the character of dynamism in real experience. The character of dynamism is indicated by change or motion in each individual state of being. The

⁹ See chapter four entitled “The Identity of Being, The Discovery of the Compositions of Substance and Accidents.”

¹⁰ Entitled “The Contingency of Being, The Discovery of Compositions from Essence and Existence.”

¹¹ Maryniarczyk, *Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being*, 43.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 43–44.

change and motion show that there are compositional elements that are act and potency in the dynamism state of being. Act and potency are the reason for the dynamism of being. Even these elements are necessary elements found in the internal structure of being. The act is the actualization of potency or what makes potential beings exist. Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* stated, “act is what makes a thing be, but not in the same way when it is in potency.”¹⁴ Meanwhile, potency is a real element of being and a principle of change and motion. Fr. Maryniarczyk concludes, “every being that is not the Absolute is composed of potency and act.”¹⁵ In other words, act and potency are the elements that constitute the unity of being. Fr. Maryniarczyk insists also that act and potency are actually not new elements but “a new function of the fundamental composition of being,”¹⁶ i.e., matter and form in the concept of Aristotle, and existence and essence in the concept of Aquinas.

Regarding the character of the mutability of being, Fr. Maryniarczyk highlights the change or alteration to the state of being of things that is given in experience. The metaphysical analysis discovers that there is a metaphysical element in the internal structure of being which causes the character of the mutability of being, as well as a compositional element of being that constitutes a substantial unity and wholeness, called matter and form, as Aristotle discovered and explained in his hylomorphism theory. The matter is a constitutive or sub-ontic element of being and not “an independent being”¹⁷ like in the ancient hylozoist concept or “matter as a place or space”¹⁸ in Plato’s concept. Furthermore, matter in the sense of the prime matter is “pure potenti-

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1048 a 30, cit. after Maryniarczyk, *Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being*, 60.

¹⁵ Maryniarczyk, *Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being*, 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

ality”¹⁹ and source of potential changes in being. Meanwhile, the form is the sub-ontic element that also determines the existence of being but it does not exist independently. The form is always in correlation with matter because it is the source of action and also the actualization of potency. Aristotle regarded the substantial form as the “first act of prime matter”²⁰ which creates the nature of being and which determines the ontic identity of being. The matter and form are concrete constitutive elements of being. The unity of them constitutes the whole being substance. In the substantial wholeness of being, the form is the reason for the unity and identity that actualizes and determines the potentiality of being. Meanwhile, the matter is the reason for divisibility and variety because matter is a potential element.²¹ The substantial unity of being formed by matter and form has a purpose, called “the good of being.”²²

Fr. Maryniaczyk also stresses that in our daily life we experience our own identity, even though we change and undergo various modifications. We also see the identity of things surrounding us, although we see that things are constantly transformed and changed. Through the metaphysical method we can discern the element that is constant and determines the identity of being. The constant element which determines and limits the identity of being is the substance or subject. Substance exists in itself and constitutes the foundation for properties or accidents. Meanwhile, the changing elements, called accidents, do not exist independently, but they are carried by the substance and modify the substance. In the analysis of substance modification, the quality, quantity, relations, place, time, action, passion, arrangement and possession are found as accidents or properties of being. Fr. Maryniarczyk also explains that in the analysis of various modifications of substance as a sub-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

²² *Ibid.*, 142.

ject, “we discover the most perfect form of the being of a substance as a subject is the person”²³ with various properties.

The final chapter presents the fundamental compositional element of being as contingent. The dynamism and mutability of being that are given in experience are manifestations of the contingency of being. The experience of encounters with each and every person, animal, plant and thing around us shows that all of them are not necessary beings but contingent beings. Fr. Maryniarczyk explains that the contingent being given in experience guides to the discovery of the Absolute.²⁴ The Absolute is the main cause of the existence of all particular beings and the whole world. In this chapter, the Author underscores the elements that make things exist from the point of view of Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s realistic philosophy. Aristotle argued that the source of the existence of every concrete being is a prime matter. Meanwhile, Aquinas in his philosophical theory of creation of the world *ex nihilo* held that the source of the existence of all concrete being is not matter, or form, but “*Ipsum Esse* (Existence itself)”²⁵ that is the Absolute, God. Moreover, all concrete beings in themselves are rational and purposeful. It indicates that the origin of all concrete beings is in the intellect and will of God. Therefore, the main reason for all that exists is in the intellect and will of God as Creator.

Fr. Maryniarczyk’s book is a reinterpretation of Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s understanding of the internal structure and compositional elements of being, without leaving out discussions with ancient to contemporary philosophies and with modern and contemporary sciences. This book is a valuable work presented with solid and clear arguments, and using language that can be easily understood by the reader equipped

²³ *Ibid.*, 178.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

with some basics in philosophical knowledge, such as students and lecturers of philosophy.



***Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being* by Andrzej Maryniarczyk**

SUMMARY

This paper is a review of the book: Andrzej Maryniarczyk, S.D.B., *Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Lublin-Roma: PTTA, 2018). According to the author, Fr. Maryniarczyk's book is (1) a new interpretation of Aristotle's and Aquinas's understanding of the internal structure and compositional elements of being, and (2) a recommended reading for students and lecturers of philosophy.

KEYWORDS

Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Andrzej Maryniarczyk, metaphysics, being, matter, form, potency, act, substance, accident, existence, essence, contingency, Absolute.

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Jason Morgan

Meso-Metaphysics and Paradigmatic Environmental Anti-Modernism: Bruno Latour’s *Down to Earth* and the Rejection, and Embrace, of Metaphysical Necessity*

Post-Kantian philosophers have often preferred to speak of the impossibility of metaphysics.¹ In *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, for example, a primer on metaphysical speculation past and present, editors Peter Van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman point to Rudolf Carnap (and the Vienna Circle in general), Hilary Putnam, and Jane Flax as exponents of the “strong form [of] the thesis that metaphysics is impossible.”² These philosophers, and many others, Van Inwagen and Zimmerman say, argue that “there is no Reality to be described; all the statements we have called metaphysical are false or meaningless.”³ The “weak form of the thesis” is a distinction without much of a difference:

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* Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018), 140 pages. ISBN 978-1-5095-3056-4.

¹ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. & ed. Paul Guyer & Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Michelle Grier, “Kant’s Critique of Metaphysics,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

² *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, ed. Peter Van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 5.

³ *Ibid.*

“The goal [i.e., of a metaphysics] is there, but we human beings are unable to reach it, since the task of describing Reality is beyond our powers; metaphysical statements are meaningful, but we can never discover whether any metaphysical statement is true or false (or discover anything else interesting or important about the class of metaphysical statements).”⁴

However, while the distinction between weak and strong anti-metaphysical theses is very useful, a third category must be added to the classification scheme of anti-metaphysical theses: the thesis of transpositional anti-metaphysics. Advanced most commonly by materialists, and almost always unwittingly, transpositional anti-metaphysics is the metaphysics of those who must reject metaphysics for ideological reasons, but, and for the same reasons, must also smuggle in some kind of meso-metaphysics to settle accounts between known and unknown, material and stubbornly immaterial. Hegelianism and Marxism are perhaps the two most prominent forms of transpositional anti-metaphysics (Hegel’s *Geist* being but a romantic pre-version of Marx’s magical *Kapital*). As Marxo-Hegelian “grand narratives” collapsed in the twentieth century, depriving the transpositional anti-metaphysical camp of its most potent form of meso-metaphysics, a new kind of readier and more ad hoc meso-metaphysics took the old materialist-metaphysics’ place, namely, environmentalism in its ideological iteration.⁵ It is certainly possible, and laudable, to care for the environment qua Creation. Environmentalist meso-metaphysicians, by contrast, elevate the physical world to an organizing principle, imbuing the natural world as a whole,

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984).

or else some part of it or phenomenon occurring in it, with properties that do the work of metaphysics in fact if not in name.⁶

There are many subgenres of environmentalist meso-metaphysics, such as cyborgism,⁷ eco-feminism,⁸ transhumanism,⁹ and even the neo-paganism now prevalent in the post-Christian West.¹⁰ The more austere environmentalist meso-metaphysicians, such as Carl Sagan and Stephen Jay Gould, posit a pure transposition of natural “science” (to speak equivocally about Sagan’s brand of Baconian anti-cosmological naked empiricism) for old-time religion, or at least, in the case of Gould, “non-overlapping magisteria.”¹¹ Over and against the Sagans and Goulds, however, one finds enthused devotees of Gaia as a kind of

⁶ See, e.g., Christopher Caldwell, “From Saving the Earth to Ruling the World,” *Claremont Review of Books* (Fall 2019): 40–44, citing also Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York, NY: Random House, 2006), Nathaniel Rich, *Losing Earth: A Recent History* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2019), E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 2015), and Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁷ Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–181.

⁸ Stefanie von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Neopaganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

⁹ *Cyborg Mind: What Brain-Computer and Mind-Cyberspace Interfaces Mean for Cyberneuroethics*, ed. Calum MacKellar (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2019) and Fred Baumann, “Humanism and Transhumanism,” *The New Atlantis*, no. 29 (Fall 2010): 68–84.

¹⁰ Kathryn Rountree, “Localizing Neo-Paganism: Integrating Global and Indigenous Traditions in a Mediterranean Catholic Society,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, no. 4 (December 2011): 846–872, and Colin D. Pearce, “Lord Brougham’s Neo-Paganism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55, no. 4 (October 1994): 651–670.

¹¹ See, e.g., Carl Sagan, *Broca’s Brain: Reflections on the Romance of Science* (New York, NY: Random House, 1979) and Stephen Jay Gould, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1999).

moral force, an elven heaven where the gods are mountains, forests, rivers, fauna, and ecosystems and within which human beings are subordinates at best, more often seen as interlopers in a pristine paradise.¹² For the hardline environmentalist meso-metaphysicians, the plotline of the Fall is reversed: it isn't that man was once in Eden but then was cast out, but that Eden was once free of human intruders but now must suffer our resentful presence. We aren't trying to get back into Paradise; Paradise is trying to kick us out.¹³

Perhaps no one writing today better exemplifies this form of environmentalist meso-metaphysics than Bruno Latour. Emeritus professor at Sciences Po Paris, recipient of more than two dozen major academic and cultural awards, and author of twenty books on topics ranging from law to politics to religion to sociology, Latour is arguably the most prolific, and least shy, advocate of substituting the Earth for other ideologies and paradigms. It is not for nothing that, prior to his ad-

¹² See, e.g., Timothy M. Lenton, Sébastien Dutreuil, and Bruno Latour, "Life on Earth Is Hard to Spot," *The Anthropocene Review* 7, no. 3 (2020): 248–272. Environmentalist meso-metaphysics may be the result, at least in part, of an equivocation on the word "nature". As Anthony Kenny points out, "Stoic ethics attaches great importance to Nature. Whereas Aristotle spoke often of the nature of individual things and species, it is the Stoics who were responsible for introducing the notion of 'Nature', with a capital 'N', as a single cosmic order exhibited in the structure and activities of things of many different kinds. According to Diogenes Laertius, Zeno stated that the end of life was 'to live in agreement with Nature'." Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2010), 222, citing *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, ed. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), ch. 57, E, Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), book 7, paragraph 87, and Cicero, *De Finibus*, 3.65 (available online—see the section *References* for details). As Romantics reified the natural world and Rousseaus found the mythical psychological Pure Land in the "natural," pre-civilizational condition of proto-man, the Stoic conception of "Nature" gave way, possibly, to a double-act de-reification of the physical world into a meso-metaphysics in its own right, "nature" denatured via the Stoics and the Romantics into the "Nature" of Earth Day and Greenpeace.

¹³ See Chelsea Follett, "How Anti-Humanism Conquered the Left," *Quillette* (May 1, 2019). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

vanced appointments in philosophy and advocacy, Latour taught for nearly a quarter of a century at the École des Mines in Paris. What Latour advocates is a veritable Hobbit philosophy of actual burrowing down in the dirt to find our place in the universe. This is meso-metaphysics for spelunkers, and Latour is not in the least coy about saying so. In his new book, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, Latour seeks to ground—literally—his ideological environmentalism in the very crust and mantle of the planet on which we live, stripping away the familiar conceits of political debate to arrive at the actual bedrock of our existence, which Latour argues is, and must be, the Earth itself.¹⁴

Fighting back—in the breathless and overheated tone that has been the métier of French intellectuals since at least the days of Rousseau and Voltaire—against what he sees as the mistaken trajectories of the modern project, Latour advocates in *Down to Earth* for a new alignment of human life toward the ground beneath our feet. Lamenting the failure of even environmental politics to “‘transcend’ the Right/Left cleavage,”¹⁵ Latour posits rhetorically: “Are we not beginning to discern, more clearly every day, the premises of a new affect that would reorient the forces at work in a lasting way? Are we not beginning to ask ourselves: *Are we Moderns or Terrestrials?*”¹⁶ “What is important,” Latour says, “is to be able to get out of the impasse [i.e., of the Left and the Right] by imagining a set of new alliances: ‘You have never been a leftist? That doesn’t matter, neither have I, but, like you, I am *radically Terrestrial!*’ A whole set of positions that we shall have to learn to recognize, before the militants of the extreme Modern have totally devas-

¹⁴ Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; emphasis in original.

tated the stage.”¹⁷ Lest there be any mistaking his point, and as if to emphasize his advocacy of a metaphysics of which he is apparently unaware, Latour proclaims that “the Terrestrial is bound to the earth and to land, but it is also *a way of worlding*, in that it aligns with no borders, transcends all identities.”¹⁸ This is a geo-meso-metaphysics and Latour is the prophet of what he here, and elsewhere, has called the “new climatic regime,” the millenarian spice added to the meso-metaphysical dirt of Latour’s brand of the immanentized eschaton.¹⁹

Over the course of this short book, divided into twenty chapters across just 109 pages of text interspersed here and there with highly idiosyncratic diagrams illustrating Latour’s meso-metaphysical ideas, Latour explicates his theme of disrupting politics, displacing modernity, and re-enchanting the world with the lithosphere itself. Like Napoleon crowning himself emperor, this is old-world meso-metaphysics declaring itself to be infinitely more powerful than before. Breaking free of the modernist constraints against radicalism, Latour declares that “class struggles depend on a *geo-logic*,” quickly assuring us that “the introduction of the prefix ‘geo-’ does not make 150 years of Marxist or materialist analysis obsolete; on the contrary, it obliges us to *reopen the social question* while *intensifying* it through the new geopolitics.”²⁰ Here we can see the preliminary step in the transition to a full meso-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55–56; emphasis in original.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 54; emphasis in original; citing Donna Haraway, unprovenanced in endnotes.

¹⁹ See Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), cited endnote 3, 110. For an alternative form of Gaia meso-metaphysics, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009): cited endnote 35, 115.

²⁰ Latour, *Down to Earth*, 62–63; emphases in original—those who do not like the wild overuse of italics will not like Bruno Latour’s new book; citing Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2002), endnote 58, 119.

metaphysics, and the way in which that step has now been discarded in favor of an even more religious environmentalism.

This meso-metaphysical, religious environmentalism is summed up in what Latour, and many others in the environmentalist camp, call the Anthropocene, that period of human history wherein the actions of man—again, an interloper in Eden and not a natural part of the natural world—must be taken as the dominant ecological factor, or, conversely, in which the ecosphere must be seen to be a kind of substitute for human nature. Turned into a household word in 2000 by Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen, it is no coincidence that the idea of the Anthropocene first gained intellectual credence in the Soviet Union.²¹ Soviet scientist Vladimir Verensky (1863–1945), for example, advanced a preliminary thesis that would later become the concept of the Anthropocene, and the idea of a purely materialist human-geologico-climatic science is fully in keeping with the ideological restrictions of Marxism-Leninism. The irony of the Anthropocene is that it appears to foreground human activity while definitionally subsuming it within the non-human world. Latour shows nicely how the Anthropocene inevitably gives way—indeed, is always-already giving way—to Latour’s new meso-metaphysics of Earth qua soil and stone:

As long as the earth seemed stable, we could speak of *space* and locate ourselves within that space and on a portion of territory that we claimed to occupy. But how are we to act if the territory itself begins to participate in history, to fight back, in short, to concern itself with us—how do we occupy a land if it is this land itself that is occupying us? The expression ‘I belong to a territory’ has changed meaning: it now designates the agency that pos-

²¹ See Joseph Stromberg, “What Is the Anthropocene and Are We in It?” *Smithsonian* (January 2013). Available online—see the section *References* for details. See also “Soviet Industrialization,” in Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, vol. 1: *Consumption*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1988), 147–168.

sesses the possessor! If the Terrestrial is no longer the framework for human action, it is because it *participates* in that action. Space is no longer that of the cartographers, with their latitudinal and longitudinal grids. Space has become an agitated history in which we are participants among others, reacting to other reactions. It seems that we are landing in the thick of *geohistory*.²²

Latour condemns both what he calls “globalism-plus,” that is to say, globalism full-speed-ahead, globalism as continued and uninterrogated dominant paradigm, and “globalism-minus,” the anti-globalist reaction (including what Latour calls “Local-minus”) which rejects the political chicanery and selfish over-consumption of the globalist elite without offering any real alternative to the entire ideology of globalism which Latour wants to uproot and discard.²³ “Neither the Global nor the Local has any lasting material existence,” Latour cries.²⁴

The “third attractor” for human action must be Gaia, Latour therefore decides.²⁵ Latour will not allow for “Galilean” detachment or the deployment of outward-looking science to solve the Earth’s problems, or, more accurately, the problem of the Earth.²⁶ Strictly speaking, for Latour it is not the Earth that has, or is, the problem, but human beings. Our very humanity is the cause of the Earth’s current distress. What Latour is calling for here is no less than a repurposing of human nature and a burrowing down, like moles, into the ground below us: human being made humus being, former pride in *ad astra* rational power abandoned, sent down to the ideological countryside for a re-

²² Latour, *Down to Earth*, 41–42, citing Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses.”

²³ Latour, *Down to Earth*, 28–32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38 ff.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72–73.

education in what really matters in the new dispensation.²⁷ “In order to begin to describe objectively, rationally, effectively, in order to paint the terrestrial situation with some degree of realism,” Latour writes, “we need all the sciences, but *positioned differently*.”

In other words, to be knowledgeable in scientific terms, it does not help to be beamed up to Sirius [Latour’s shorthand for scientific detachment]. It is not necessary, either, to shun rationality in order to add feelings to cold knowledge. It is essential to acquire as much cold-blooded knowledge as possible about the *heated activity of an Earth* finally grasped *from up close*.²⁸

If this is successfully carried out, Latour allows—and only if—then the current dead-ended politics which does not see the primacy of Gaia in all of human endeavor might be overcome and a truly geocentric humanity might somehow emerge, demoted from master of Creation to lowly fellow-worker among other Earth-bound living things.

This anti-Copernican revolution, common to other Gaia-ists and environmental meso-metaphysicians, is thus a two-step dismantling of not just modernity but of humanity as we know it, the overcoming of Nietzsche by Marx, and then of Marx by Tarzan.²⁹ Under this schematic, we are to give up our will to power by collectivizing under a materialist ideology, and then, in the same move, give up our class politics by depoliticizing down to bare biological existence:³⁰

²⁷ Cf. “It is perhaps time . . . to stop speaking about humans and to refer instead to *terrestrials* (the Earthbound), thus insisting on *humus* and, yes, the *compost* included in the etymology of the word ‘human’. (‘Terrestrial’ has the advantage of not specifying the species).” Latour, *Down to Earth*, 86, citing Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 55, in endnote 89, 124.

²⁸ Latour, *Down to Earth*, 73–74; emphases in original.

²⁹ See Arthur E. Murphy, “The Anti-Copernican Revolution,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 26, no. 11 (1929): 281–299.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 82–83.

The system of engendering [Latour's proposed shift in analysis away from "system of production"] brings into confrontation agents, actors, animate beings that all have distinct capacities for reacting. It does not proceed from the same conception of materiality as the system of production, it does not have the same epistemology, and it does not lead to the same form of politics. It is not interested in producing goods, for humans, on the basis of resources, *but in engendering* terrestrials—not just humans, but all terrestrials. It is based on the idea of cultivating attachments, operations that are all the more difficult because animate beings are not limited by frontiers and are constantly overlapping, embedding themselves within one another. . . . Dramatizing somewhat extravagantly, let us call it a conflict between modern humans who believe they are alone in the Holocene, in flight toward the Global or in exodus toward the Local, and the terrestrials who know they are in the Anthropocene and who seek to cohabit with other terrestrials under the authority of a power that as yet lacks any political institution [i.e., the Earth].³¹

Latour spends most of his book making the case for a deconstruction of humanity as we understand it, and so it is surprising to find that he concludes *Down to Earth* by arguing passionately—with Thermidorian hyperbole, to put it more accurately—for the preeminence of Europe in leading the way toward the Gaian future. It is precisely because Europe invented modernity, Latour asserts, that Europe must be the one to turn back its dangerous tide. But even in his startling Eurocentrism the reader will note the Bilbo Baggins cast to Latour's thought, for one of his arguments in favor of Europe's being the juggernaut of anti-modernism (or, perhaps better, anti-humanism) is that the European Union began as an exchange of "coal, iron, and steel,"³² substances toward which a professor of mines-turned-meso-metaphysician would be amicably disposed, and also because Europe, or Euro-

³¹ *Ibid.*, 83, 90.

³² *Ibid.*, 102.

pean elites (ironically the very same champions of the globalism that Latour openly despises), have advocated accepting the flood of refugees which, Latour asserts, have been forced from their homelands by the ravages of globalism against Gaia, who has lately arisen to overturn the Anthropocene.³³

There is much that is novel in Latour's *Down to Earth*, and those who are interested in what is taken by many in the Western academy to be the cutting-edge of philosophical innovation will want to spend an afternoon reading Latour's lively, if scattershot, polemic. But for all the novelty of many of Latour's takes on modernity, and granting his apparent unawareness of the transpositional meso-metaphysics he shares with so many others in the environmentalist line, I could not shake the feeling while reading *Down to Earth* that I had heard much of it before. Serendipitously, I was reading an edited volume on Deconstructionism not long after finishing Latour, and found the scratch to my mental itch: for example, Georges Bataille's "The Meaning of General Economy," in which he works out the "dependence of the economy on the circulation of energy on the earth," and "Practical Politics of the Open End," in which Gayatri Spivak and his interlocutor, Sarah Harasym, try to find the "ground of globalism." The epistemological dizziness of anti-metaphysical philosophies of all stripes has given rise to the need that Bataille, Spivak, and Harasym, along with others such as Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre, have felt to root the human person in something more mentally substantial than material substance, even while denying that such a rooting can, or should, take place.³⁴ The somersaulting of the anti-metaphysician back, inevitably,

³³ *Ibid.*, 103–104.

³⁴ Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 19–26, Gayatri Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory / Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale* 12, no. 1–2 (1988): 104–111, both cited in *Deconstruction: A Reader*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

into metaphysics becomes, over time and when sustained, meso-metaphysics, the transformation of the thing denied into itself again, encrypted counterintuitively in such a way that only the encrypter cannot read the plain text but only the artificial reposturing.

Whether Bruno Latour is correct about the environmental questions he and his many followers and colleagues raise is not a matter for philosophy to decide. If the earth is warming or cooling, if an ecosystem is healthy or frail, is not to be determined by thought alone, by assertion and insistence, but by patient inquiry into the physical world. Would that the environmentalists had thus constrained themselves to the environment. What Latour wants to give us in *Down to Earth* is a halfway-house metaphysics, a meso-metaphysics, that offers nothing to illuminate either physical science or immaterial philosophy.



**Meso-Metaphysics and Paradigmatic Environmental Anti-Modernism:
Bruno Latour's *Down to Earth* and the Rejection, and Embrace, of
Metaphysical Necessity**

SUMMARY

Bruno Latour's latest book, *Down to Earth*, argues that the Earth itself must "ground" philosophical modernity and provide a "ground" for thinking about globalism and the problems of the globalist agenda. In this review I find the use of the Earth, and of various other stand-ins for metaphysical principles, to be a kind of "meso-metaphysics," a metaphysics which denies transcendence but all the same makes use of transcendence and operational otherness when needful for a given ideology, such as the radical environmentalism espoused by Bruno Latour. I see this as ultimately a rejection of both metaphysics and of the possibility of science and philosophy, as the conflation of the physical ground with a philosophical ground dooms meso-metaphysics to incoherence.

KEYWORDS

Bruno Latour, Gaia, metaphysics, climate change, Marxo-Hegelian *grand narratives*, globalism, Vladimir Verensky, anthropocene, Georges Bataille, Gayatri Spivak, Donna Haraway, neo-paganism, anti-Copernican revolution.

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Brian Welter

Saint Thomas en plus simple
by Jean-Pierre Torrell*

Dominican professor of theology at Switzerland’s University of Fribourg, Jean-Pierre Torrell delivers a straightforward and accessible introduction to Thomas Aquinas in the form of a literary biography. *Saint Thomas en plus simple* aims at non-specialists or theology and philosophy beginners. The author shows how the controversies of the day or requests from various churchmen inspired Thomas’s major and minor writings. The saint relied extensively on a long line of thinkers, including Aristotle, Augustine, Dionysius, and Hugues of St. Victor. What motivated him above all was the search for the truth, which he believed could be found in a wide range of sources: pagan classics, Christians, Muslims and Jews, and nature. Torrell depicts Thomas as a man of his time and its controversies, even if, from our perspective, these writings often appear timeless.

The last chapter, the most satisfying yet also most challenging, outlines the most significant aspects of the saint’s teaching. This includes Thomas’s use of the Bible for developing his anthropology. Scripture’s claim that the human individual is made in God’s image inspired much fruitful philosophical reflection, as Torrell demonstrates:

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* Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas en plus simple* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2019), 226 pages. ISBN: 978-2-204-13440-8.

“Declaring that humans are made in the image of God means stating the reason, the final cause as philosophers say, of the creation of man. God made man *for* that, *so that* he would be in his [God’s] image.”¹ Being a reflection of the divine image implies man’s purpose, which Thomas outlined in many writings. Ultimately, the plan of the *Summa theologica*, “exit and return,” expresses in spiritual terms each individual’s spiritual itinerary. Torrell shows how the theme of exit and return leads to an interweaving of systematic theology, practical theology, and spiritual life. Everything is oriented towards its end. This gives Thomas’s practical theology a significant role in his attempt to demonstrate and emphasize man’s freedom.

In contrast to the ending, *Saint Thomas en plus simple* starts off easy on readers in following Thomas’s life. The early works tend not to be as challenging as the *Summa theologica*. Torrell depicts how the saint, “a genius in movement, in the act of perpetual discovery,”² developed his thinking throughout his life rather than setting everything in stone early on. Alongside this dynamism, he kept his preaching simple, free from scholastic technicalities and subtleties: “Thomas’s preaching appears astonishingly concrete, underpinned by daily experience, concerned with social justice and honesty in business dealings.”³ This preaching extended his theology, which itself was founded on the Bible. The saint’s interpretation of the Bible aimed to elevate the soul. He found the Bible suitable for this role because, though written by humans, its ultimate author is God. Inspired by the Bible, such as the Paulinian corpus, Thomas developed the notion that “the entirety of Jesus’ life is the mystery of God’s love that reveals itself and acts in history.”⁴ Only briefly noting that this emphasis on mystery has its roots in the

¹ Torrell, *Saint Thomas en plus simple*, 202.

² *Ibid.*, 38.

³ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

earliest Christian traditions, Torrell leaves the reader wanting more on this most fascinating topic.

The chapter “A Man of Combat” highlights the fact that Thomas’s life was not all contemplation. He was profoundly affected by the theological and philosophical controversies of his day, including the battle between the mendicants at the University of Paris in 1255–1256, which concerned the rights of members of these orders to act as university professors. In his *Perfection of the Spiritual Life* he addressed the issue of poverty and argued for “the superiority of the apostolic life over that of the contemplative.”⁵ As elsewhere in the book, Torrell links the work with Thomas’s service to his order. As well, he shows the practical nature of Thomas’s teachings.

The virtuous life forms a pillar of Thomas’s practical vision of man, Torrell points out. Humans possess dignity because they are made in the image of God. Thomas regards humans as partners of God. This vision reshapes how we picture our relationship with Him, and has implications for our moral life: “At the same time, this obliges us to conduct ourselves in a way that is befitting this quality. It is here that we must find the foundation of our moral obligations, and not in a commandment.”⁶ Though the author strives to show Thomas as a man of his time, such points as the above reflect the more timeless aspects of Thomistic thought. This understanding of the dignity of the human even fits into modern personalist thinking. After reading *Saint Thomas en plus simple*, we can more readily appreciate how John Paul II was so deeply impacted at the same time by both personalism and Thomism.

The richness of this theological anthropology and the discussion of the moral life extends to the spiritual journey through the theme of departure and return, a theme with roots in the ancient world. “Certain-

⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

ly, all things in the universe return to God, but man has the privilege of doing so consciously and freely,”⁷ Torrell notes. It is in the vision of this journey that Thomas’s teachings on human intelligence, freedom, and autonomous action come into greatest focus in *Saint Thomas en plus simple*. Torrell emphasizes the centrality of friendship and, underpinning that, charity, which is totally disinterested love, “a love in which one loves the Good more than oneself.”⁸ This notion of charity, which begins in God’s trinitarian love, extends to the whole human community. Unfortunately, Torrell only briefly mentions Thomas’s political philosophy. Contemporary readers, living in an increasingly turbulent political world, would have benefitted from Thomas’s insights into man as a political animal.

Readers instead benefit from Torrell’s development of Thomas’s anthropology, particularly the discussion of the body and soul and of form and matter. Without going into too much detail, Torrell conveys the basics: “Form is the principal element” of the person, and it animates matter.⁹ Readers get a clear sense of how this is the primary aspect of our nature as humans according to the medieval perspective:

Because we are individuals composed of soul and body, different levels of life inhere in us according to the relatively greater or weaker involvement of the soul or the body (we eat and extract nutrition with our organs; we perceive through our senses; we reflect through our intelligence). We can therefore speak of the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective lives.¹⁰

Thomas rejected the widespread notion of his day that we have multiple souls. The “intellective soul,” the only one we have, exercises its power over the appetitive, sensory, and intellectual levels. In keeping with the

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

aim of showing him as a man of his times, Torrell discusses the saint's treatment of Averroes's teachings on Aristotle's theory of the intellect.

By the end of the book, the reader is acquainted with Thomas's teachings on God, the human being, the Logos, and on how these fit into the structure of the *Summa theologica*. Throughout his life, Thomas was a pastoral and moral theologian, a lover and expositor of the Bible, and a defender of the truth against philosophical and theological controversy. After this introduction, readers will want to know more.



***Saint Thomas en plus simple* by Jean-Pierre Torrell**

SUMMARY

This paper is a review of the book: Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas en plus simple* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2019). According to the author, (1) Torrell's book is a straightforward and accessible introduction to Thomas Aquinas in the form of a literary biography, and (2) it acquaints the reader with Thomas's teachings on God, the human being, the Logos, and on how these fit into the structure of the *Summa theologica*.

KEYWORDS

Jean-Pierre Torrell, Thomas Aquinas, Thomism, Bible, theology, God, Logos, anthropology, human being.

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