

**Aquinas at the Origins of Secular Humanism?
Sources and Innovation in *Summa theologiae* I,
Question 1, Article 1**

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Introduction

IN 1968, the influential American neo-Calvinist theologian and cultural historian Francis Schaeffer published a small book, *Escape from Reason*. He located the origin of this disastrous modern “escape” in the division between nature and grace made by Thomas Aquinas, and in his placing grace above nature. By this account, Thomas draws a horizontal line and places grace above it and nature below. This hierarchical division is what Schaeffer calls “the real birth of the humanistic Renaissance,” and of the autonomy of the human intellect. The reader is told that “from the basis of this autonomous principle, philosophy also became free and was separated from revelation.” Establishing the reality and goodness of the natural was a good thing, but by doing it as he did, “Aquinas had opened the way to an autonomous Humanism, an autonomous philosophy, and once the movement gained momentum, there was soon a flood.”¹ This was a bad thing. Schaeffer declares that “[a]ny autonomy is wrong” in respect to Christ and the Scriptures.² Humans, created in the image of God to whom all belongs, demand by nature a rational whole. Once Aquinas made the division, step by step the autonomous rational ate up what was above the line, rendering it either empty or irrational. The result is what Schaefer calls the Line of Despair; he tries to show, by way

¹ Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 10, 11, 13.

² *Ibid.*, 84.

of a dialectical somersault, how by traveling down that line we arrive at a loss of confidence in reason—the escape from reason.

In 1998, Pope John Paul II published the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, whose purpose is indicated by the title of a book that translates, comments on, and discusses it, namely *Restoring Faith in Reason*.³ Evidently, the pope, like Schaeffer, is troubled by the despair about reason. He writes that:

philosophical research [now] wanders around in the uncertain soil of universal skepticism, . . . everything is reduced to opinion. . . . Hence not just some philosophers, but the men and women of our time have been subject to an increasing distrust and lack of confidence in the existence of the great cognitive capacities of the human mind. A certain false modesty has made them content with partial and provisional truths so that they no longer strive to pose radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human life.⁴

However, the pope's diagnosis of the cause of the disease is *diametrically opposed* to that of Schaeffer; he writes: “[H]uman reason has its own proper domain from where it can inquire and comprehend, being restricted by nothing else except its own finite nature before the infinite mystery of God.”⁵ For the pope, a separation of faith and revealed theology from philosophy and the work of human reason is good and necessary: “Faith does not interpose itself in order to destroy the autonomy of reason [*autonomiam rationis*] or to reduce the area of its activity.”⁶

For the pope, in distinction from Schaeffer, from its beginnings, the Christian proclamation of the gospel has been linked with philosophy. In that history as the pope tells it, as also for Schaeffer's account of history, Aquinas has an important place, *however*, Thomas is praised by the pope precisely for what the Calvinist lays to his blame. John Paul II writes that Aquinas “had the great merit of bringing to the fore the harmony between reason and faith.”⁷ For him, the Thomistic harmonization is connected to the foundations of the university and involves the autonomy of both faith and reason. The pope maintains that St. Thomas is “an authentic exemplar” “precisely because he radically protected the particularity of Revelation, without at the same time diminishing the proper

³ Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, eds. *Restoring Faith in Reason: A New Translation of the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II Together With a Commentary and Discussion* (London: SCM Press, 2002).

⁴ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 5; Hemming and Parsons, *Restoring Faith*, 11–13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 14; 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 16; 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 43; 71.

course of reason.”⁸ According to him: “Although St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas insisted on the existence of a close link between theology and philosophy, even so they were the first learned men to admit the necessary autonomy that philosophy and the sciences needed, so that each should depend upon arguments belonging to their own sphere.”⁹ Moreover, the pope agrees with Schaeffer that, having drawn this line of difference, Aquinas subordinates natural reason to the faith that perfects it: “Illumined by the light of faith, reason is rescued from the frailty and limitation that arise from sin.”¹⁰ Nonetheless, John Paul insists again and again on the autonomy of philosophy: “[P]hilosophy rightly assumes its autonomy, acts according to its own laws, and depends on its own strengths” and demands that respect must be had for “a valid autonomy of thought.”¹¹ In contradistinction from Schaeffer, for the pope, differentiation, hierarchy, and autonomy are good and necessary. The problem arises not because of these, but because of too great a separation. John Paul II writes:

[S]ome rationalists took such an entrenched position in pursuit of certain arguments that they developed a philosophy that was separate from and autonomous of the truths of faith. Among the different consequences of this separation was the gradual existence of a greater distrust of reason itself . . . [the profoundly unified] structure [created by the Fathers and the medievals] was totally destroyed through teachings that favored the defense of a rational knowledge both separated from faith and taking its place.¹²

The consumption of what is above the line by what is below it pointed to by both theologians has much the same consequences for both men. Although certainly not agreeing with Schaeffer that giving an autonomy to philosophy, which he says has its own “proper object,” that is, “nature,”¹³ is either avoidable or evil, the pope is clear that it is dangerous, that it has led to “the increasing separation of faith from philosophical reason,”¹⁴ and that this has been destructive both of philosophy and of reason itself.

Before going on to look at *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 1, in light of these opposed evaluations of the structure it imposes on Sacred Doctrine and gives to Christian intellectual and spiritual life, it is worth noting that the

⁸ Ibid., no. 78; 127.

⁹ Ibid., nos. 43 & 45; 69 & 75.

¹⁰ Ibid., no. 43; 71.

¹¹ Ibid., no. 75; 121.

¹² Ibid., no. 45; 77.

¹³ Ibid., no. 43; 71.

¹⁴ Ibid., no. 48; 79.

pope's characterization of what Aquinas did has been general in the modern Catholic Church. Indeed, even if the dangers of Thomas's treatment of the relations of philosophy and sacred doctrine were strongly felt by the ecclesiastical authorities right from the beginning when it provoked condemnation, his praise of precisely what Schaeffer finds destructive echoes past positive judgments. Particularly important is the use made of Aquinas's division of the work of natural reason from what is given by the light of faith by the great Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmine in the seventeenth century and by Pope Leo XIII under Jesuit influence in the nineteenth.

Some scholars continue to defend what Bellarmine drew out of Aquinas as Thomas's own doctrine on the relation of the secular and the priestly power.¹⁵ I side instead with those who maintain that this Jesuit doctor of the Church either exploited a contradiction in Thomas's texts on the relation of the political and ecclesiastical powers, or used something implicit in his treatment of philosophy to draw a conclusion opposite to that actually drawn by St. Thomas. My view is that Aquinas combined a logic derived from the pseudo-Dionysius, strongly modified when transmitted by Hugh of St. Victor, with Aristotelian political notions to produce a strongly papalist doctrine. His papalist centralism served the interests of the mendicant orders in their struggles against the secular clergy. However there is another side to Aquinas. His notion of an imperfect philosophical and moral happiness that humans can achieve by natural reason and the moral virtues in this present life is the "secular humanism" that I think his thought contains. This notion of an imperfect philosophical felicity is essential to Thomas's thought and is part of what made it revolutionary in the thirteenth century. It has, in fact, the potential to give an integrity to secular political authority. Bellarmine used it 350 years later to limit papal authority, maintaining that the pope had only *indirect*, not direct, power in temporal matters.¹⁶

Earlier thinkers attempted to lead Thomas's positions on the papal power vis-à-vis the temporal power to Bellarmine's judgment. I doubt that either they or Bellarmine himself cited or interpreted Thomas's texts accurately. The developed doctrine of the mature Aquinas is that in order for humans to obtain the supernatural end of eternal life, the royal priest-

¹⁵ For example, Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, *Saint Thomas d'Aquinas maitre spirituel. Initiation 2, Pensée antique et médiévale* (Paris/Fribourg, Suisse: Cerf/Éditions Universitaires de Fribourg, 1996), 399.

¹⁶ See my "'Dionysius dixit, Lex divinitatis est ultima per media reducere': Aquinas, hierocracy, and the 'augustinisme politique,'" in *Tommaso D'Aquino: proposte nuove di lettura. Festschrift Antonio Tognolo*, ed. Ilario Tolomio (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1992), 129, 142.

hood of the God-man Jesus Christ must have an earthly embodiment in a *regale sacerdotium*, ordering the earthly to the heavenly, the secular to the spiritual, and thus all the kings of the Christian people are subject to the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ, as to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Moreover, this fullness of papal power extends throughout the whole Christian commonwealth although the priestly authority does not usually exercise the secular power directly.¹⁷ Certainly both Bellarmine, and his predecessors who found the doctrine of the *potestas indirecta* in Aquinas, earned papal displeasure for their efforts. It is significant both for understanding Thomas's adversaries in the thirteenth century, and for understanding the present discussion about Aquinas and secular humanism, that the doctrine opposed to Bellarmine's is known as "Political Augustinianism." For "Political Augustinianism," natural reason and moral power are so weak or perverse that the secular authority must function "at the nod (*ad nutum*)" of the priestly authority.

Whatever Thomas's position on the relations of the priestly and the temporal powers may in fact have been, and, however disagreeable the limitation of papal authority to the *potestas indirecta* by Bellarmine and his predecessors may have been in earlier periods, 130 years ago, when the papacy was losing direct power even over its Italian territories, it accepted the Jesuit approach. In *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II quotes often the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Pope Leo XIII, which mandated the revival of Thomistic philosophy in the Catholic Church, and which was written under close Jesuit influence. Leo's purposes in *Aeterni Patris* were, in part, the opposite of John Paul's in *Fides et Ratio*, but there is much in common. Leo's most urgent concerns were political: The territorial existence of the papacy was threatened, and the Church continued to suffer as a result of the totalitarian tendencies of the revolutionary and national states of the nineteenth century. In respect to these, Leo wanted more to limit philosophy than to lift it from false modesty and despair.¹⁸

For him the problems that had befallen Church and State, and which he was experiencing immediately, resulted from philosophical innovations at the origins of modernity: "It pleased," he wrote, "the struggling innovators of the sixteenth century to philosophize without any respect

¹⁷ See Aquinas, *Contra Impugnantes* (Leonine [1970], 41), pars 2, cap. 2, ad 10: *patet quod ordinare de studio pertinet ad eum qui praestitit reipublicae, et praecipue ad auctoritatem apostolicae sedis, qua universalis Ecclesia gubernatur, cui per generale studium providetur*. See pars 2, cap. 3, co. et ad 6, ad 7, ad 8, ad 21, ad 23, ad 24.

¹⁸ See my "Pope Leo's Purposes and St. Thomas's Platonism," in *S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero, Atti dell' VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, vol. 8, ed. A. Piolanti (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 40–41.

for faith, the power of inventing in accordance with his own pleasure and bent being asked and given in turn by each one.”¹⁹ Nonetheless, Leo also worries about the collapse of the gigantic new edifices philosophy has constructed for itself:

From a mass of conclusions men often come to wavering and doubt; and who knows not how easily the mind slips from doubt to error? . . . For, a multiform system of this kind, which depends on the authority and choice of any professor, has a foundation open to change, and consequently gives us a philosophy not firm, and stable, and robust like that of old, but tottering and feeble. And if, perchance, it sometimes finds itself scarcely equal to sustain the shock of its foes, it should recognize that the cause and the blame lie in itself.²⁰

Thus *Aeterni Patris*, like Schaeffer and John Paul II, is troubled by philosophy separate from revelation both arrogantly consuming the whole realm of knowledge and also falling into despair.

Leo sought from a renewed Thomism that by which the Church could, on the one hand, speak to an intellectual world in which science and philosophy were independent of and even opposed to ecclesiastical theology, and, on the other hand, bring philosophy, and the political and social life supposed to be based thereon, back within the control of and subordination to sacred doctrine and ecclesiastical authority. The scholasticism that was to provide for these aims thus had the exact characteristics to which Schaeffer objects: Philosophy is separated from theology and subordinated to it. In his most important quotation from *Aeterni Patris* on the work of St. Thomas, John Paul II lays stress on the distinction, close association, and dignity, which, according to Leo, Aquinas gives the two forms of knowledge: He “correctly distinguished reason from faith, yet he also united them in friendship, and he protected the rights and respected the dignity of both.”²¹ Although John Paul II is just as insistent as Leo had been on the mutual need of reason and faith for each other, he is less insistent on the subordination of philosophy to theology than was Leo, judging that at this moment it is better to put the stress on the proper autonomy of philosophy.²²

¹⁹ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, “On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy,” no. 24, www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Aeterni Patris*, no. 18, quoted in John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 57; Hemming and Parsons, *Restoring Faith*, 97.

²² John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, no. 77; Hemming and Parsons, *Restoring Faith*, 125.

In the course of *Aeterni Patris*, Leo continually refers to the First Vatican Council, which had hurriedly finished its work just nine years before this his first encyclical (John Paul II also refers to it positively).²³ Vatican I also had established the work of philosophy as necessary, but the most important passage in this regard in the Dogmatic Constitution On the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius*, occurs not in Chapter 4, “On Faith and Reason,” but in the chapter “On Revelation,” which begins with this affirmation based in a Thomistic interpretation of Romans 1:20:²⁴

God, the source and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the consideration of created things, by the natural power of human reason: ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.²⁵

This leads to an anathema:

If anyone says that the one, true God, our creator and lord, cannot be known with certainty from the things that have been made, by the natural light of human reason: let him be anathema.²⁶

In the *De Veritate*, Aquinas tells us that “the study of philosophy for its own sake, is both allowable and praiseworthy, because the truth which the philosophers grasp, is revealed to them by God, as the epistle to the Romans 1:20 says.”²⁷ The same authority demands for him that the existence of God “is proved by the philosophers with unbreakable reasons.”²⁸ Without this, he tells us at *Summa theologiae* I, q. 2, a. 2, Romans 1:20, which holds that the invisible things of God are understood from creation, would be false because we cannot understand anything unless we can demonstrate that it is.²⁹

²³ Ibid., no. 52ff., no. 55; 87.

²⁴ See É. Zum Brunn, “La ‘métaphysique de l’Exode’ selon Thomas d’Aquin,” *Dieu et l’être, Exégèses d’Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11–24*, ed. Centre d’Études des Religions du Livre, CNRS (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1978), 253.

²⁵ Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius*, ch. 2, no. 1, www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V1.htm.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (Piana, Ottawa, 1941), II–II, q. 167, a. 1, ad 3: “Studium philosophiae secundum se est licitum et laudibile, propter veritatem quam philosophi perceperunt, Deo illis revelante, ut dicitur Ad Rom. 1.20.”

²⁸ Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de veritate* (Leonine [1972–75], 22/2), q. 10, a. 12, co., 340, lines 137–39: “rationibus irrefragabilibus etiam a philosophis probatum”; and ST I, q. 2, a. 2, s.c.; see John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 22.

²⁹ ST I, q. 2, a. 2, s.c.

An interpretation of Aquinas that both understands him to recognize philosophy as having a proper autonomy in respect to what humans can come to know by their own power and can do by moral virtue, and also embraces this as necessary and good for the life of faith, is well established in the Catholic tradition. In contrast, let me add to the partisans of something like Schaeffer's judgments, before drawing us to the text of St. Thomas by way of a recently published book whose author is almost certainly the most creative and influential present French scholar of medieval philosophy, Alain de Libera.

Radical Orthodoxy is a movement in contemporary theology and philosophy founded by three English thinkers at Cambridge University, who describe themselves as High Church Anglicans. It has attracted some Catholics, but Catholic criticism of the movement is very sharp indeed.³⁰ More recently evangelicals on this side of the Atlantic have been attracted by its trenchant antiphilosophical stance, notable among these is a young member of the philosophy department at Calvin College, James K. A. Smith, a Canadian who gained his Ph.D. at Villanova University under John Caputo.³¹ The movement has made enough headway in the Anglo-American world to get it a short piece in *Time* magazine reproducing a claim that Radical Orthodoxy is the "biggest development in theology since Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the church door."³²

Its founder John Milbank has fashioned what he called a "postmodern critical Augustinianism."³³ Absolutely essential to its program, and enabling it to overcome the oppositions and contradictions of modernity, is ridding theology of all connection to an independent or autonomous philosophy. Milbank writes:

An independent phenomenology must be given up, along with the claim, which would have seemed so bizarre to the Fathers, to be doing philosophy as well as theology. . . . [P]hilosophy as autonomous, as "about" anything independently of its creaturely status is metaphysics

³⁰ See L. P. Hemming, ed., *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Inquiry* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000).

³¹ James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (London and New York, Routledge, 2002); for another evangelical with similar views see Jens Zimmerman, "Radical Orthodoxy: A Reformed Appraisal," *Canadian Evangelical Review* 26–27 (2004): 65–90; for trenchant criticism there is Paul D. Janz, "Radical Orthodoxy and the New Culture of Obscurantism," *Modern Theology* 20 (2004): 362–405.

³² *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, quoted in "God as a Postmodern," *Time* 158 (December 17, 2001): 61.

³³ John Milbank, "'Postmodern Critical Augustinianism': A Short *Summa* in Forty-Two Responses to Unasked Questions," *Modern Theology* 7 (1991): 225–37.

or ontology in the most precisely technical sense [a very bad thing, according to Radical Orthodoxy, whose judgments owe much to Heidegger in this regard]. Philosophy in fact *began* as a secularizing immanentism, an attempt to regard a *cosmos* independently of a performed reception of the poetic word. The pre-Socratics forgot both Being and the gift, while (*contra* Heidegger) the later Plato made some attempt to recover the extra-cosmic vatic *logos*. Theology has always resumed this inheritance, along with that of the Bible, and if it wishes to think again God's love, then it must entirely evacuate philosophy, which is metaphysics, leaving it nothing (outside imaginary worlds, logical implications or the isolation of *aporias*) to either do or see, which is not—manifestly, I judge—malicious.³⁴

At the cost of a thoroughly tendentious reading,³⁵ *Truth in Aquinas* by Catherine Pickstock and Milbank dissolves Aquinas's Aristotelian noetic into intellectual intuition and Augustinian illumination in order to reduce philosophy to what they call "theology proper." Metaphysics is collapsed into sacred doctrine.

What makes this new Augustinianism resemble that of those who opposed, and were opposed by Aquinas, and who were victorious in the condemnations of the 1270s and 1280s is that, by destroying the autonomy of philosophy, Radical Orthodoxy supposes that it will get philosophy back again but now identical with Christian theology. A strategy has been discovered by which philosophy is reduced to nothing, and then retrieved as a new ontology and a new metaphysics. This would be a Christian neo-Platonism transformed by the Nietzschean critique of Platonism. In the demand that philosophy be reduced to theology so that its content is the same as that of faith, we recognize Bonaventure and the so-called Augustinians of the late thirteenth century.³⁶

Alain de Libera's *Raison et Foi: Archéologie d'une crise d'Albert le Grand à Jean-Paul II* is a complex and convoluted book. It spills a great deal of ink analyzing John Paul II's encyclical and other papal pronouncements, but it is by no means a work of piety. One of its principal aims is to drive a wedge of difference between Aquinas and his teacher Albert the Great on

³⁴ John Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," *New Blackfriars* 76 (1995): 340–41.

³⁵ See N. Lash, "Where Does Holy Teaching Leave Philosophy? Questions on Milbank's Aquinas," *Modern Theology* 15 (1999): 433–44; W. J. Hankey, "Why Philosophy Abides for Aquinas," *Heythrop Journal* 42 (2001): 336–45; and Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley, eds., *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2005).

³⁶ Alain de Libera, *Raison et Foi: Archéologie d'une crise d'Albert le Grand à Jean-Paul II* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 221–22.

the question of the autonomy of philosophy. Their positions are treated as the same by the pope in *Fides et Ratio*. De Libera contends that John Paul II's position is in fact that of Albert and not of Aquinas. He sums up Thomas's most disputed and most difficult to understand teaching in a single remarkable sentence that distinguishes him from Averroes. I think it to be correct and to be the heart of *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 1:

The paradoxical task which Thomas assigns ultimately to reason is the mark of a rationalism very different from that of Averroes: to show by the resources of reason that reason is not able by itself to attain the goal which constitutes its ultimate end: the vision of God. Without contest this opposes Thomas to Averroes, for whom the task is more to show by means of the resources of the revealed text that Revelation is not able without philosophy to attain the objective constituting its ultimate end: the establishment of a universal human community founded in the Koranic Revelation.³⁷

In fact, the self-transcendence of man, as expressed in reason as well as in faith, is a constant theme of *Fides et Ratio*, although the encyclical does not attribute this doctrine specifically to Aquinas.³⁸ Nonetheless, ultimately, de Libera embraces the pope's purposes within his own.

This book is part of de Libera's larger endeavor to use the study of the religious and intellectual culture of the Middle Ages, a period in which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam met through the medium of philosophy, to illumine both their meeting with one another and the clash of secular institutions with them in our contemporary societies. His last chapter is titled "Les enfants de Billy Graham et de Mecca-Cola." De Libera sees an intolerance accompanying the religious revival that is taking place in the twenty-first century. He judges that this intolerant religiosity is a threat both to what the French call *laïcité*, "secularism,"³⁹ and also to the

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 255.

³⁸ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 15, 17, 22, etc.

³⁹ "Laïcité" has a widely varying group of meanings resulting from its long evolution within Western Christendom generally and in France particularly; at its harshest it is a notion that exceeds the American separation of church and state, being used by the French republic at present to assert the absolute autonomy of the secular power and excludes Catholic clergy and religious from teaching in the state schools or universities and recently persons who display religious symbols from state institutions. See "Laïc/laïcité," *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, dir. Jean-Yves Lacoste, 2nd ed. (Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 639. For its effects on the university and scholarship, see my *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France: A Brief Philosophical History*, published with *Levinas and the Greek Heritage*, by Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Studies in Philosophical Theology* (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), 131–32. De Libera's argument in *Raison et foi*

university, which de Libera calls, *institution de chrétienté*. He writes: “[T]he institution which has made the autonomy of research and science its founding charter sees itself reproached today because of its tolerance.”⁴⁰ *Les enfants de Billy Graham et de Mecca-Cola* are analogues of Bishop Tempier, and those who worked with him to have the positions of the Masters of Arts in Paris, of Albert the Great, and of Aquinas condemned. They threaten the university and *laïcité* in a way analogous to the way the Bishop threatened the university in the thirteenth century. He pictures the twenty-first century as “sleepwalking towards a censure worse than any which the Middle Ages experienced.”⁴¹

In the course of this long book, besides the analysis of the pronouncements of John Paul II, de Libera exposit and compares Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Averroes on faith and reason. He shows that the conflict of Averroes with the Islamic Kalâm had a entirely different problematic than the conflict of faith and reason within the thirteenth-century Christian university. He argues that Aquinas’s polemic against the Parisian Aristotelians invented the notion of Latin Averroism and the doctrine of double truth with which its Parisian adherents came to be associated and for which they were condemned. For him the condemnations, which ultimately encompassed the positions of Albert and Aquinas, pushed scientific autonomy toward the separatism Pope Leo XIII and Pope John Paul II find so destructive. He concludes:

The paradox is that the vision of John Paul II in regard to the relations between faith and reason, philosophy and religion, erects as a model the strategy and principles of autonomy condemned by the Magisterium in 1277 . . . the condemnations of 1277 have been the most formidable measure of ideological control taken by the Church in respect to philosophy. They forbid Albert the Great’s conception of the autonomy of the sciences, inviting by the same act the movement of separation which the Magisterium proposes today to arrest in making its own the position condemned.⁴²

Within this context, let us look at the text of *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 1.

neither justifies, nor seems to intend to justify, the extreme exclusion and control of religion currently associated with *laïcité*. In appropriating the teachings of John Paul II, his interest does not seem to go further than the protection of the autonomy of research and teaching in the university from religious intolerance in a way that the pope might well support.

⁴⁰ De Libera, *Raison et foi*, 358.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 358.

***Summa theologiae* I, Question 1, Article 1**

In my view the most radical and stunning feature of *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 1, is the question itself: “Whether it is necessary besides the philosophical disciplines to have another teaching?” The question assumes a true knowledge based in the natural powers of reason, asks whether this is all humans should know or could know, and whether there is need, and room, for any other knowledge. The question and the objections speak of *disciplina* rather than “scientia.” *Disciplina* is the wider term and includes the moral side of philosophical work as well as other parts of philosophy, like logic, which are not sciences treating kinds of natural being.⁴³ In consequence, sacred doctrine here sets herself the task of finding a place and a necessity for herself relative to human knowledge and virtues that enable humans to construct a world aiming for and achieving the human end of happiness. The arguments in the objections establish what Aquinas assumes: what we might call a secular humanism provided by philosophy. Theology as revealed doctrine must justify herself in the face of a philosophically constructed world.

Since we generally assume what at present corresponds to these philosophical disciplines, it is almost impossible for us to appreciate the shocking character of this question to the Western Christian in the thirteenth century. Augustine had spoken of Christianity itself as “true philosophy.”⁴⁴ Following him, when philosophy is identified with *intellectus* or wisdom, an identification Eriugena explicitly made on Augustine’s authority, and when *fides* gives us the same content but in a form inadequate to reason, we arrive at Anselm’s *fides quaerens intellectum*, which is silently quoting Augustine.⁴⁵ *Intellectus* surpasses what we know on authority but, crucially, it aims for identity with faith. When, in its inward and upward quest for God, the soul finds its deiform rationality, it knows through the structure of its own reasoning the content of faith according to *rationes necessariae*. The existence and attributes of God, the Trinity, and the Incarnation become a series of *intelligibilia* known independently of faith.⁴⁶ For the

⁴³ See my *God in Himself: Aquinas’s Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 2000), 25–26.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *Contra Julianum* 4.14.72; see *De vera religione* 5.8.

⁴⁵ Eriugena, *De divina predestinatione* I, PL 357–358 (*Treatise on Divine Predestination*, trans. Mary Brennan [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998], cap. 1, nos. 1, 7–8); and Anselm, *Proslogion*, cap. 1.

⁴⁶ See Anselm, *Proslogion*, cap. 4, in respect to the existence of God; the *Monologion* deduces the Trinity and the *Cur Deus Homo* the Incarnation. For method, see the *Prooemium* of the *Monologion*; in the *Prooemium* of the *Proslogion* the requirement of deiformity is made.

Augustinianism world to which the Aristotelian philosophical science came in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there was no question of an account of reality established independently of Christian faith, which might have a content different from faith, and relative to which faith would have to find a place and a justification for itself.

The first objection, the first argument in the whole system, proposes that whatever is not above reason is fully (*sufficienter*) treated in the philosophical disciplines. "Therefore, besides them, there is no need of any further knowledge."⁴⁷ The philosophical sciences providing this complete account are usually attributed to Aristotle, and indeed, the "Philosopher" is spoken of in the second objection where significantly his *Metaphysics* is cited to the effect that there is a philosophical science of God. In fact, it is because of the systematization of philosophical sciences in the Peripatetic and neo-Platonic schools of later Antiquity, on the one hand, and, because of the Islamic Arabic mediation of Aristotle to the Latins, on the other, that the philosophical world is established as a totality over against what is made known by religious revelation. As Alain de Libera puts it, the Arabs mediated the texts of Aristotle to the Latins as "a total philosophic corpus, into which the whole of Hellenistic thought, profoundly Neoplatonized, had surreptitiously crept."⁴⁸ Within the Islamic Arabic world the greatest defender of the need for and totality of this philosophical knowledge of all things was Averroes, so, even if the problematic within which Averroes functioned was quite different from that of Aquinas, he must come to mind at this point.

That Aquinas not only accepts as established a philosophical account of reality, but also wishes to see it established, is suggested by the text quoted in the first objection. We are told that *Ecclesiasticus* warns us not to inquire into things that are too high for us. Aristotle also confronts this objection from the inspired theologians (in his case poets) when he is introducing his liberal science of wisdom in the second chapter of the *Metaphysics*. This wisdom is God's knowledge; it is too high for us; the poets warn that seeking it will provoke the divine jealousy and bring misfortune. In his commentary on *Metaphysics*, Aquinas sides entirely with Aristotle against this error of Simonides and other poets. He says that the root of their argument is *falsissima*. Thomas supplies from Plato

⁴⁷ *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1, obj. 1; for the significance of this beginning within Thomas's world, see Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 12–14.

⁴⁸ Alain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), 20. For brief description of this Aristotelianism, see idem, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 117 and 68–124.

what Aristotle would have needed in order to demonstrate his position from the notion of divine perfection.⁴⁹

That Aquinas accepts and wills the existence of a complete philosophical account of reality, including philosophical theology or metaphysics, is confirmed by the second objection, which argues, citing Aristotle silently (*verum quod cum ente convertitur*) or explicitly, that all the parts of being, including God, have philosophical disciplines that treat them. The response to this objection does provide for another teaching; it does so, however, not only without negating the truth and completeness of the human sciences as human, but also by further establishing them. First, it grants that the same things can be treated from two different perspectives without one negating the other; thus there can be two different sciences of God. Second, it provides the basis for the two sciences: One functions through the power of the light of natural reason, the other through the light of divine revelation. Moreover, they can, at least to some extent, keep out of each other's way because they differ *secundum genus*; sacred doctrine is fundamentally different from the theology that is part of philosophy.

Most interesting and powerful about Thomas's treatment of sacred doctrine in this article is that, after granting all this territory to philosophy, he refuses to solve the problem he has set for sacred doctrine by establishing the room and necessity for another kind of teaching with the surrender of the field of knowledge and reason to philosophy. Attending to this aspect of Thomas's *respondeo*, I shall avoid speaking about that aspect de Libera calls Aquinas's paradoxical rationalism.⁵⁰ Seven hundred years of often increasing controversy about how nature and grace are related when Aquinas made reason seek, and in some way apprehend, a perfect end it could not attain, does not encourage attempting to deal with this subject briefly. I have attempted to demonstrate elsewhere, against Pierre Hadot, that, for Aquinas, although nature must be perfected by grace, philosophy continues to be a way of life for Christians.⁵¹ Essential to my argument is that Aquinas places moral virtue and philosophical reason within systematic structures derived from Porphyry and Iamblichus. I concluded that,

⁴⁹ Aquinas, *In duodecim libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, liber 1, lect. 3 (Turin: Marietti, 1964), nos. 61–63.

⁵⁰ For the grave problems involved in this paradox and why it is central to the impossibility of constructing a Thomistic philosophical ethics, see Denis J. M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1997); Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 119–20 (a summary of Bradley).

⁵¹ W. J. Hankey, "Philosophy as Way of Life for Christians? Iamblichan and Porphyrian Reflections on Religion, Virtue, and Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 59 (2003): 193–224.

even when contained within theological and religious structures which enable what philosophy cannot attain, for Thomas as well as for pagan neo-Platonists, philosophy “is still a way of life which transforms us towards deiformity.”⁵² It is not, however, Thomas’s connections to neo-Platonism that I want us to consider but those to Moses Maimonides (while noting my judgment that many of the same differences that separate Maimonides and Aquinas from Aristotle and that are usually credited to what they derive from biblical revelation are in fact derived for them from neo-Platonism).⁵³

A moment’s attention to the *respondeo* shows the debt of Aquinas to the Jewish theologian who shared life in the city of Cordoba (and much else) with Averroes. The debt is most obvious when Aquinas writes of the reasons we are in need of instruction by divine revelation “even in respect to those things about God which human reason is able to investigate”: that is, its being known to a few, after long study, etc.⁵⁴ Aquinas does not tell us either here or in the *Summa contra Gentiles* (I, 4) from where he gets this list. However, in the *Disputed Questions de Veritate*, when he is considering whether it is necessary to have faith, he acknowledges his debt to “the five reasons which Rabbi Moses gives” and which we can find in the *Guide of the Perplexed*.⁵⁵ The *De veritate* shows the necessity of faith by an argument which is a fuller version of what is found in *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1. It speaks not only of the ordering of humans to the perfect cognition of God, but also of a difference between that of which we cannot have perfect cognition in this life because it totally exceeds the power of reason, and that at which we can arrive with perfect knowledge now, “because they are things about God which we can prove demonstratively (*sicut illa quae de Deo demonstrative probari possunt*).”⁵⁶

In their judgments about the difficulty of theology and about the necessity of keeping it from all except mature students who have had a long period of preparation both moral and intellectual, Aquinas and Maimonides were following Plato, Aristotle, and the curricula of the neo-Platonic schools. The abstractness of philosophy generally, and of metaphysics particularly, the weakness of our minds which must be strengthened

⁵² *Ibid.*, 223.

⁵³ See on this in respect to Maimonides, Marvin Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides: Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics, and Moral Philosophy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 122, 244, 245, 310; for an instance in respect to Aquinas, see my *God in Himself*, 5–6.

⁵⁴ *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1, co.

⁵⁵ *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 10 (Leonine 22/2, 467, lines 188–201); Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), liber I, cap. 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 186–187: *sicut illa quae de Deo demonstrative probari possunt*.

by mathematical and other studies, the extent of the ground which must be covered to reach it, the length of time traversing this takes, the need for developed moral virtues and the proper temperament, are all reasons why we require the gift of faith.⁵⁷ These reasons do not make philosophy any less necessary to the true understanding of Revelation, even if, by itself it is insufficient for the knowledge that leads to salvation. Moses Maimonides follows the Arabic Islamic philosophers in teaching that philosophy is necessary for the restoration of the knowledge of the unity and incorporeality of God possessed by those through whom we were given revelation. This knowledge was subsequently lost by the faithful. Thus, for him, Abraham only broke away from the idolatry of his time by means of profound scientific and metaphysical study.⁵⁸ Marvin Fox judges, correctly I think, that in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, and elsewhere, “Maimonides’s greatest concern is to eliminate every vestige of the belief that God has corporeal properties” and that he is aware (as were the Arabic Islam philosophers) that “a problem is caused by the language of Scripture in which God is frequently spoken of in corporeal terms.”⁵⁹ When bringing philosophy to Scripture, Fox concludes that Maimonides “is casting himself as the Abraham of his generation.”⁶⁰ In a similar way, Aquinas, while also agreeing with Maimonides that philosophy is acquired with much difficulty, makes it subordinately necessary for sacred doctrine.

Aquinas never tires of reminding us that the knowledge of sensible particulars is natural to us. It belongs to our “natural perfection” not to know God except *ex creatura* and so by abstraction from sensible things.⁶¹ He asks how, with a form of knowing the complete contrary of God’s own, shall we understand his speech to us? How shall we understand speech from and about separate simple incorporeal substance? He answers that revealed theology needs philosophy, not because of what God’s knowledge lacks, but because of our human deficiency. Like his neo-Platonic predecessors, Thomas is always aware that our theology, though valid because it participates in higher forms of knowledge, belongs to human reason. By its labor of abstraction, human science exercises our minds in the necessary knowledge for theology of intellectual objects

⁵⁷ See also Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Ethiconum*, liber 6, lect. 7 (Leonine [1969], 47/2, 358–359); *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, q. 3, a. 1 (Leonine [1992], 50, 108); *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1; *Super librum de Causis Expositio*, ed. H.D. Saffrey, OP, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1954), prooemium, 2.

⁵⁸ Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides*, 261; and Maimonides, *Guide*, liber III, cap. 29.

⁵⁹ Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides*, 157.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁶¹ *De Veritate*, q. 18, a. 2.

separated from matter. In the fifth article of question 1, Aquinas tells us that despite its limits, without philosophy, we would not understand divine speech.⁶² When arguing against Anselm and Franciscan Augustinians in the thirteenth century that God's existence is not self-evident, he reminds us that humans have even thought that God was a body.⁶³ It is significant that question 3, *De simplicitate Dei*, begins with the question *Utrum Deus sit corpus* and starts its answer by reference to God as *primum movens immobile*.⁶⁴ Aquinas is close to Moses Maimonides not only about the limits and difficulty of philosophy, but also about its necessity for us, and by following the Aristotelian way in philosophy. However, Moses Maimonides contributes still more than this to *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1.

Essential to Thomas's teaching is that faith knows truths which philosophical reason unaided by grace cannot know. As he writes in *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1, "We must know an end before we direct our intentions and actions toward that end. Therefore, it is necessary for human salvation that some truths which exceed human reason be known through divine revelation." His system involves a fundamental quid pro quo: in return for giving philosophy an autonomy, as also with Moses Maimonides, faith for Aquinas now knew things philosophy could never reach. In making this division between philosophical and revealed truths, Aquinas is exactly following the criticism by Moses Maimonides of the Kalām. Against the so-called Augustinians of his time, he is equally refusing to allow that what philosophy and what faith teach are identical.

Maimonides praises the intentions of those who use the method of dialectical philosophical theology called Kalām, but he finds their solutions radically flawed. They are atomists of the divine will who, as Maimonides puts it, "abolish the nature of that which exists" (*Guide*, II, 19). Maimonides represents Aristotle as fighting opponents of the same kind: "those of his predecessors who believed that the world has happened to come about by chance and spontaneously" (*Guide*, II, 20). With Kalām, against positions he represents as Aristotelian, for example, that the world is eternal, and that creation proceeds by a necessary emanation of a chain of single intellectual substances as much alike one another as possible, Maimonides asserts particular acts of the divine will by which the world had a real temporal beginning, variety enters creation, and miracles occur. Emanation and its law ("from the one and simple comes nothing but unity")⁶⁵ need to be supplemented. Because

⁶² *ST I*, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

⁶³ *ST I*, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2.

⁶⁴ *ST I*, q. 3, a. 1. See *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 12.

⁶⁵ Maimonides, *Guide*, liber II, cap. 19, and following; liber III, cap. 13.

even with “thousands of degrees [of emanation], the last intellect would indubitably still be simple” (*Guide*, II, 22), another cause is required, namely, “a purpose and a will directed toward this particular thing” (*Guide*, II, 21), “the will of the one who wills” (*Guide*, II, 22).⁶⁶ Nonetheless, Maimonides wants no reduction to will alone. He also strongly opposes the notion of Kalām that the temporal creation of the world can be proved by reason, and thus the assimilation of revelation to reason or reason to revelation.

Following the argument of Maimonides exactly—even if his list of differences in content differs from that of Maimonides—Aquinas maintains that the demand of his Augustinian adversaries that things only faith could know—the temporal beginning of the world; the Trinity; a universal, individual, and immediate providence; the Incarnation—be rationally proved was not only false, but destructive. Like the arguments about the limits of philosophy, he found this argument in Maimonides and indicates this in his very early *Commentary on the Sentences*. When refusing to ascribe rational necessity to the doctrine that creation has a temporal beginning, Thomas reproduces, in both reasoning and content, the position of Maimonides on this point. Aquinas shares his judgment that the endeavor of theologians to claim necessity for what cannot be demonstrated only serves to bring contempt on theology and to undermine trust in the rational demonstrations on which divine science does and must rely.⁶⁷ On this basis, can we regard Thomas as simply having taken over his strategy for relating philosophy and revelation from Rabbi Moses? I think not.

For Aquinas, knowledge of God is what faith possesses so as to enable it to seek its end, namely union with God by the vision of his essence. I sometime think that too much is made of Thomas’s doctrine of analogy, but it cannot be doubted that his conviction on its basis that we rightly make affirmative and proper predications of God, is essential to his system.

⁶⁶ See A. Hyman, “From What Is One and Simple only What Is One and Simple Can Come,” *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L. E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 117; L. E. Goodman, *Jewish and Islamic Philosophy: Crosspollinations in the Classic Age* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 97–98.

⁶⁷ Maimonides, *Guide*, lib. 2, cap. 15ff.; Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, lib. 2, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 5, c., and ad s.c. 6. The editors of the Leonine edition of the *De aeternitate mundi* judge that Aquinas follows the exact position of Maimonides whom he cites twice in the article but “semble bien présenter une thèse de théologiens latins, appuyée, dit-il, sur un texte de saint Grégoire”: *De aeternitate mundi* (Leonine [1976], 43), 55. See T. B. Noone, “The Originality of St. Thomas’s Position on the Philosophers and Creation,” *The Thomist* 60 (1996): 295–99.

He reasons that our predications are true because God possesses the qualities predicated most properly, and in this he sets himself against both Maimonides and Dionysius for whom the qualities are ascribed to God only as the cause of what is in creatures.⁶⁸ *The Divine Names* refers the unknowability of God to the fact that God is “beyond being” and thus “above and beyond speech, mind and being itself.” Union beyond illumination, and in contrast to knowledge—not union by intellectual activity—is what enables theology, and this union is the perfection theology seeks.⁶⁹ Although Maimonides is central to the transformation of Judaism in the Middle Ages, which makes it more a doctrinal religion than it was previously, he unites the Jewish judgment that God is unnamable with neo-Platonic negative theology to arrive at a position that Aquinas regards as far too apophatic. According to Aquinas, for Maimonides human language about God is equivocal.⁷⁰ Furthermore, for Aquinas, knowledge of God is for the sake of union, and the union it brings is so intimate that he is required to take measures to prevent the dissolution of the human into the divine essence.⁷¹ His understanding of our end in terms of union comes to him most strongly from Dionysius.

There is a great deal of Dionysian negative theology in Aquinas. He asserts that it is better to say that we know of God what he is not than what he is (*ST I*, q. 3, prol.), and he teaches that “in this present life our intellect is not so joined to God as to see his essence but so that it knows of God what he is not.”⁷² Nonetheless, Aquinas is far along in a tradition of the interpretation of Dionysius that assimilates union and knowing, something neither Dionysius nor Plotinus, who is the source for Dionysius on this, will do.⁷³ In fact, Thomas will not allow that for Dionysius

⁶⁸ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 4; *ST I*, q. 13, a. 1, co, ad 2, and ad 3; *ST I*, q. 13, aa. 2, 3, 5, 6, and 12; see Hankey, *God in Himself*, 88–95.

⁶⁹ Dionysius, *Divine Names*, I, 1 [588A].

⁷⁰ On Maimonides, see Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides*, 306–21. For how Aquinas understood him, see *ST I*, q. 13, a. 2; I, q. 13, a. 5.

⁷¹ This is how I understand the *ST I*, q. 12, a. 5, ad 3; see Hankey, “Philosophy as Way of Life,” 223.

⁷² Aquinas, *In librum Beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expositio*, cap. 13, lect. 3 (Marietti [1950]), no. 996.

⁷³ See *A Thirteenth-Century Textbook of Mystical Theology at the University of Paris: The Mystical Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite in Eriugena's Translation with the Scholia Translated by Anastasius the Librarian and Excerpts from Eriugena's Periphyseon*, ed. and trans. L. Michael Harrington (Paris/Leuven/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004), 12–26. Eriugena is an early member of this intellectualist tradition, although Aquinas misses this because Eriugena's inferior angels do not see the essence of God, see Aquinas, *Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos Lectura*, in *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, vol. 2 (Marietti [1953]), cap. 1, lect. 6, no. 85.

God is beyond *esse*.⁷⁴ Explaining why *essentia Deitatis est occulta* for Dionysius, Aquinas separates him from the *Platonici*. Their *causa prima* is unknowable because it “exceeds even *ipsum ens separatum*.” In contrast, *secundum rei veritatem*, a position which always includes Dionysius, “the first cause is above being insofar as it is *ipsum esse infinitum*.”⁷⁵ For Aquinas, despite the Dionysian negative theology, his first is a form of *esse*.

In fact, the ultimate account of human knowing for Aquinas comes not from Dionysius but from Augustine and the doctrine of the beatific vision he bequeathed the Latin church. Aquinas argues that both philosophy and faith demand human vision of the essence of God. Without face-to-face knowledge, faith would be nullified because its purpose is human beatitude: “Since the final happiness of man consists in his highest activity, reasoning, if no created intellect could see God, either it would never achieve happiness, or its happiness would consist in something other than God. This is foreign to faith.”⁷⁶ Reason, in turn, would be denied. It is fulfilled in the knowledge of the principles and causes. This frustrated, man’s natural desire would be vain. Both faith and reason require that “the blessed see the essence of God.” Thomas’s doctrine of created grace explains how we can have the demanded knowledge of God’s essence. It is determined by Thomas’s desire to preserve the integrity of human nature, even when we are united to God. Just as angels have a natural capacity for knowing God as the subsistent act of being, humans have some capacity for knowing separate substance, and to this a gracious addition can be made:

Since the created intellect has an innate natural capacity for apprehending individualized form and the concrete act of being in abstraction by means of a certain power to separate out, it is able through grace to be raised so that it can know subsisting separated substance and the separated subsistent act of being.⁷⁷

Divine grace gives a power to the creature in order, by an addition, to raise its natural created capacity beyond its natural limit. Grace continues, even at this absolute limit of creaturely existence, to conform itself to the

⁷⁴ See Hankey, “Aquinas and the Platonists,” in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, eds. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 317–19.

⁷⁵ Aquinas, *Super librum de Causis*, prop. 6, 47, lines 8–22.

⁷⁶ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 1. For a complete treatment of the issues involved in the relation of faith and reason here, see Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*.

⁷⁷ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3.

specific nature of the rational creature and to strengthen its intellect. In asserting the necessity of direct vision of God's essence for human happiness, Aquinas sets Augustine against Dionysius.

If philosophical science draws us toward deformity, theology as *sacra doctrina* returns the gift by strengthening reason. Sacred doctrine has its origin in a light added to our *lumen naturalis rationis*, the *lumen divinae revelationis*.⁷⁸ The reception of this additional light—not inherent but conferred by grace from outside—increases *ratio* by giving to it what lies beyond its scope. Aquinas does not save sacred doctrine from the scientific completeness of philosophy, by placing her in the sphere of affectivity and charity. This is where Franciscans, who belong in the tradition of Dionysian interpretation that makes union with God experiential—the alternative to the intellectualist tradition where Aquinas is situated—typically place it.⁷⁹ Rather, he makes her a science which addresses a knowledge to human reason and will in order that we can direct ourselves with rational freedom toward the end which both exceeds our natural knowledge and power and also assimilates union to intellection.

We are related to an end beyond reason in such a way as to strengthen our reason and will by giving to them truths to know and goods to love higher than their natural capacities reach. As Thomas writes, the infusion of grace perfects the rational power: “The gifts of grace are added to nature in such a way that nature is not destroyed but is greatly perfected. Hence, even the light of faith, which flows into us by grace, does not destroy the light of the natural reason divinely bestowed on us.”⁸⁰ The light of nature is divinely given to us. The whole massive *pars secunda* of the *Summa theologiae*, which describes the human in its desire for happiness, both in terms of what nature understands, seeks, and does, and also in terms of what grace might give, is set under the idea of the human as *suorum operum principium* because it is *imago Dei*.

Having introduced my discussion of *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1, in terms of secular humanism by reference to the pope's justification of the good of an autonomous philosophy, and of Alain de Libera's endeavor to learn something from the development of the autonomy of philosophy in the Middle Ages that might be applied to the present conflicts between Jews,

⁷⁸ *ST I*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2.

⁷⁹ See ch. 7 of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*; and Harrington's introduction, in Harrington, *A Thirteenth-Century Textbook of Mystical Theology*, 15.

⁸⁰ *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 3, c., 98, lines 114–18: “Dicendum, quod dona gratiarum hoc modo nature adduntur, quod eam non tollunt set magis perficiunt; unde et lumen fidei, quod nobis gratis infunditur, non destruit lumen naturalis rationis diuinitus nobis inditum.”

Christians, and Muslims, and having brought out in my commentary what Aquinas owes to Averroes and Moses Maimonides, it is appropriate to conclude with a description of an ideal moment in the Middle Ages.

In his essay "Mediaeval Jewry in the World of Islam," Mark R. Cohen shows how Greek philosophy provided a space within which religious groups could both preserve their differences and find community:

Philosophy was studied by Jews, Muslims, and Christians in interdenominational settings, where the particularities of each religion hardly made a difference. In fact, the Jews . . . participated in this as well as other intellectual endeavors as near-equals with Muslims in what has long been called "the Renaissance of Islam" in the tenth century. In the words of Joel Kraemer, "[c]osmopolitanism, tolerance, reason, and friendship made possible the convocation of these societies [of learning], devoted to a common pursuit of the truth and preservation of ancient wisdom, by surmounting particular religious ties in favor of a shared human experience." . . . This world of shared intellectual discourse could exist because, in origin and content, much of it was neither Islamic nor Jewish nor Christian: it was Greek. Moreover, Arabic was not just the language of the dominant, and hostile, majority religion, but also the linguistic medium of mathematics, logic, and medicine, subjects that we call (and they felt were) secular.⁸¹

In the light of this picture of the Middle Ages and in light of the problematic of our present situation, I conclude that a foundation for secular humanism can be found in Aquinas and that it is a good thing.

Of course, locating a foundation in Aquinas for human powers of reason and will to seek the human good in this present life, and thus for the secular state, does not justify regimes, theories, and actions that actually destroy the human good. That much contemporary humanism is self-contradictory in this way cannot be doubted. Human freedom is asserted in such a way as to destroy not only the human good but also human nature itself. This problem John Paul II has also confronted.⁸² The moral and intellectual dilemmas of secular humanism press

⁸¹ Mark R. Cohen, "Medieval Jewry in the World of Islam," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 204.

⁸² See *Veritatis Splendor* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), no. 46: "Human nature . . . could be reduced to and treated as a readily available biological or social material. This ultimately means making freedom self-defining and a phenomenon creative of itself and its values. Indeed, when all is said and done man would not even have a nature, he would be his own personal life-project. Man would be nothing more than his own freedom!"

Aquinas at the Origins of Secular Humanism?

39

urgently upon us but are beyond my reach. This paper was delivered as a public lecture for the Institute of Medieval Philosophy and Theology of Boston College, October 19, 2004. I am grateful to Stephen Brown and Eileen Sweeney for their invitations and hospitality.

N.V.

