Dionysian Hierarchy in Thomas Aquinas: Tradition and Transformation

Denys is now central to our reflection on the thought of Thomas Aquinas. This revision both of what we find in Aquinas and of how we judge his thought is enabled by the advance of Neoplatonic scholarship as well as by the change in the moral climate of scholarly investigation. This colloque manifests a sense for traditions, now more adequately balancing the scholarly search for sources, which imagined a return to the purity of the original fountains. The hermeneutical approach has not the moralistic judgementalism exhibited by the older philology when it uncovered the fraud of a pseudoanonymous author and the naiveté of those who accepted his self-representation. We are more ready than our predecessors to appreciate the authenticity of an identification with St. Paul on the Areopagus by one who wished, following him, to lead his hearers to the 'Unknown God'. Equally, we are not so ready to regard as dupes those who found in Denys the Unknown mysteriously revealed. But, here we move beyond developments and transformations in historical scholarship. We touch what is specific to contemporary developments in religion, philosophy and theology. And so we confront changes in the place which Thomas occupies for us as well as transformations in our representation of his thought.

Our appreciation of the importance of Denys is bound up with the self-overcoming of the Neothomism of the Leonine revival.[1] Erected against what it conceived as modern idealisms, like the condemned 'Ontologism', Neothomist suspicion extended even to the Neoplatonism of Augustine.[2] No Platonism served its various purposes. No Platonism, neither ancient, nor medieval nor modern, encouraged the separation of philosophy, nature and state from sacred doctrine, grace and church to which Pope Leo would subordinate them. Still less does Neoplatonism reduce theology to a deductive

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[1] See W. J. HANKEY, "Pope Leo's Purposes and St. Thomas' Platonism," in *S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero*, *Atti dell' VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, 8 vol., ed. A. Piolanti, viii, Studi Tomistici 17 (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 39-52, IDEM, "Aquinas' First Principle, Being or Unity?," *Dionysius* 4(1980), 133-172, IDEM, "Making Theology Practical: Thomas Aquinas and the Nineteenth Century Religious Revival," *Dionysius* 9(1985), 85-127; GERALD A. MCCOOL, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989) and IDEM, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989). On the anti-idealist biases of the Thomist revival, see: PAUL POUPARD, *Un essai de philosophie chrétienne au XIXe siècle. L'Abbé Louis Bautain*, Bibliothéque de théologie série IV, Histoire de la Théologie 4 (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1961); THOMAS F. O'MEARA, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982) and IDEM, *Church and Culture: German Catholic Theology, 1860-1914,* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

[2] See W. J. HANKEY, "'Dionysius dixit, Lex divinitatis est ultima per media reducere': Aquinas, hierocracy and the 'augustinisme politique'," *Medioevo. Rivista di Storia della Filosofia Medievale* [Padova: Antenore] XVIII(1992), *Festscrift Antonio Tognolo*, 119-150.

science of concepts, true thought to realism, or nature to empirically comprehended objectivity. It was no kindness to Aristotle that to his logic these characteristics of the Leonine Thomas were attributed. His Aristotelianism was supposed to be so total that Leonine Neothomists who exposed the magnitude of Thomas' citation of Denys maintained also that nothing characteristic of his mentality had penetrated Thomas' mind.[3] Happily, even before the ecclesial revolution associated with the Second Vatican Council made Neothomistic scholasticism irrelevant, it was in decline, having been rendered ineffective or untenable by its two mid Twentieth century heirs: the Thomas of the Thomistic historians and of Transcendental Thomism.

Before moving to them, let us note ironic results of the Leonine revival. It had set out to oppose what it conceived as the totalitarian rationalism which it supposed underlay the all engulfing advance of the modern secular state. But the Thomism it erected against this enemy acquired, in accord with the iron laws of dialectic, the characteristics of the mentality against which it wrestled. So far as the Leonine Thomism has continuing protagonists among us, they are in some measure the disciples of one or another of the baroque Thomistic schools, and they still advance a doctrinal tradition. Now, however, they have been freed from their former service as institutionally enlisted warriors. The result is astonishing. One of them recently treated Thomas' as if the poles of his thought were Augustine and Denys and maintained in the course of his argument "la doctrine de l'analogie occupe en réalité peu de place dans la pensée de saint Thomas."[4] Nothing was said of Aristotle! Here Thomists and the best recent historical scholarship can meet. We are now conscious that Aristotle is not best opposed to these Christian Neoplatonists in the neoscholastic manner.[5]

The reasoning self through which Augustine reduced the Plotinian hypostases in order to arrive at the trinitarian God and its human image recuperates the Aristotelian *NOUS*. Equally, an Aristotelian sense for the priority of individual material substance is not to be set against a Dionysian idealistic realism. Rather, insofar as Denys understands the act of creation through a Procline logic which sees the similarity of the top and bottom of the cosmos, the One and pure matter, and which also understands the One as the cause of substance at every level of the universe, Denys assists the recovery of the kind of

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[3] See MICHAEL EWBANK, "Remarks on Being in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Expositio de divinis nominibus*," *Arch. hist. doct. lit. m.a.* 56(1989), 123.

[4] See T.D. HUMBRECHT, "La théologie négative chez saint Thomas d' Aquin," *Revue thomiste,* XCIII (1993), 541 and 542ff.

[5] Best on these points is EDWARD BOOTH, "St Augustine's 'notitia sui' related to Aristotle and the early neo-Platonists," *Augustiniana* 27(1977), 70-132 & 364-401, 28(1978), 183-221, 29(1979), 97-124, IDEM, "St. Augustine's *de Trinitate* and Aristotelian and neo-Platonist Noetic," *Studia Patristica* XVI, pt. II, ed. E.A. LIVINGSTONE (Berlin, 1985), 487-490, IDEM, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers,* Cambridge Studies in medieval life and thought, 3rd series; V.20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), IDEM, *Saint Augustine and the Western Tradition of Self-Knowing,* The Saint Augustine Lecture 1986 (Villanova: Augustinian Institute, Villanova University, 1989). See also FRANÇOIS-XAVIER PUTALLAZ, *Le sens de la réflexion chez Thomas d' Aquin*, Études de philosophie médiévale lxvi (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 11-15.

Aristotelian ontology we associate with Aquinas. It is at least as true to say that Thomas understands Aristotle through Denys as the contrary. Moreover, it is the quasi-Apostolic authority of Denys which enabled Aquinas to give so much weight to Aristotle. He found them mostly in agreement and this was not only because for most of his life he thought Aristotle to be the author of the *Liber de causis.* [6]

Neither the Transcendental Thomism of the middle of our century, nor that Thomism which regarded itself as more historical, appreciated the weight of Denys for Aquinas. In accord with the Leonine revival, they sought to find philosophy in Thomas, a philosophy separable from theology which could engage secular thought in our time. This was itself a distorting vision and one which would not value Thomas' relation to the greatest of mystical theologians.   But, even more problematic, in the intellectual circumstances of the Leonine revival, the concern with philosophy produced a preoccupation with ontology.   Ontology had not obsessed Aquinas as it did these Neothomists and being is for Denys only a name for the superessential God and not even the first. Further, even if the so-called historical Thomism endeavoured to overcome the same modern subjectivity with which the Transcendental school sought a compromise, both assumed what was most fundamental to modern philosophy. Both Twentieth century Thomisms placed the Divine and human subjectivities in immediate relation, no higher intelligence mediated their connection. Both found in judgment's grasp of the act of being the meeting place of the human and Divine intellects. Both eschewed the mediatorial system whose elaboration composed the bulk of Denys' writing. These hierarchies had made Denys indispensable to the mediaevals. Aquinas was no exception, even if Boethius and others shared with Denys the authority for Thomas' view that mediation by way of the higher intellects is essential to the human reception of what God knows.[7]

The purposes of the Leonine revival, Thomas resurrected to correct and persuade our secularity, distorted the pattern of his thinking just where he was close to Denys. However, the Transcendental Thomism, though sharing the general distortion, had more sympathy for some of the Dionysian aspects of Thomas' thought than did the historians.[8] Remarkably, this was just because the Transcendental school was more open to modernity

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[6] The reference for AQUINAS, "Dionysius almost always follows Aristotle," is *Scriptum super Sententiis*, II, dist. 14, 1, 2, (MOOS, p. 350) [my other references to the *Commentary on the Sentences* follow the edition in BUSA, note 20 below unless indicated]; the most complete consideration of the reason in and for this apparently strange association is BOOTH, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology.*

[7] W.J. HANKEY, *God In Himself. Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)*,* 156-157 with 'Endnote 3', 165.

[8] See LUIS CORTEST, "Was St. Thomas Aquinas a Platonist?" *The Thomist* 52,#2(April, 1988), 209-19. For example, G. MCCOOL, pressing the Transcendental cause, which proposes to be Platonic, Thomistic and contemporary all at once, wrote in "Is St. Thomas' 'Science of God' Still Relevant Today," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 14(1974), 453: "Rahner's metaphysics of being's self-expression in its other is much closer to Neo-Platonism than St. Thomas' metaphysics is usually thought to be ... Thomas' metaphysics of *esse*, at least in Gilson's understanding of it, is considered to be distinct from and incompatible with the Neo-Platonic metaphysics of the good."

than were the historians. Because the school was not so dogmatically and narrowly realist in its epistemology, nor so determined to establish being outside the self, the Transcendental Thomists shared something of the Dionysian assumption that the hierarchy of intellectual forms and the hierarchy of being were the same. Karl Rahner took into the centre of his Thomism the equation from the *Liber de causis* between the perfection of being and intellect's complete self-return.[9] Because, like the Neoplatonists, they came to being through the self, and with the Neoplatonists unified the cosmos in accord with the structure of the self, the Transcendental Thomists did not deny that the *summae* were systems. Contemplating the compact and tightly ordered Dionysian *corpus*, with its explicit references to the inner connection of its own elements, and meditating upon its hierarchies and concepts stimulated medieval systematizing in theology. Here we reach a point of meeting between Christian thinkers in the Sixth, the Thirteenth, and the Twentieth centuries.

Finally, the Transcendental thinkers preferred to find the way to God through the structure which the self exposed in its quests rather than through objective conceptual knowledge. This opened these Thomists to what in Thomas' assimilation of Denys would most interest the second half of the Twentieth century, namely his negative theology. In their opposition to positive conceptual knowledge as appropriate to philosophical theology, we touch what must occupy us next in this communication and the point where the Transcendental Thomists are one with Étienne Gilson.

The most important of the historical Thomists had no sympathy for the Transcendental school, but, in his view that essence was always finite and that *esse* was not knowable conceptually, we have the place where Gilson's opposition to modern idealism meets the Transcendentalist movement toward the post-modern.[10] This is the point where the turn toward Denys among Thomists is one with their positive relation to Heidegger.

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[9] HANKEY, "Making Theology Practical," 101-121 and PUTALLAZ, *Le sens de la réflexion,* 221-226, 291-304, treat Rahner's understanding of the common *reditio* of being and intellect. FRANÇOIS-XAVIER PUTALLAZ, *La connaissance de soi au xiiie siècle. De Matthieu d'Aquasparta à Thierry de Freiberg*, Études de philosophie médiévale LXVII (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 386-403 and RUEDI IMBACH, "Prétendue primauté de l'être sur le connaître. Perspectives cavalières sur Thomas d'Aquin et l'école dominicaine allemande," *LECTIONUM VARIETATES, Hommage a Paul Vignaux (1904-1987),* édité par J. JOLIVET, Z. KALUZA, A. DE LIBERA, Études de philosophie médiévale LXV (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 122, 125-128, É.-H. WÉBER, *La Personne humaine au xiiie siècle. L'avènement chez les maîtres parisiens de l'acception moderne de l'homme*, Bibliothèque thomiste 46 (Paris:, Vrin, 1991), and ALAIN DE LIBERA, "Une Anthropologie de la grâce. Sur *La Personne humaine au xiiie siècle d'É.-H. Wéber*," *Rev. sc. phil. théo.* 77(1993), 241-254 will provide access to the French scholarship showing the common logic of being and spirit in the mediaeval texts.

[10] See HANKEY, "Making Theology Practical," 93ff.; in contrast, M.B. EWBANK, "Doctrinal Precisions in Aquinas's *Super Librum de Causis,*" *Arch. hist. doct. lit. m. â.* 61(1994), 7-29, IDEM, "Diverse Orderings of Dionysius' *Triplex Via* by St. Thomas Aquinas," *Mediaeval Studies* 52(1990), 82-109, IDEM, "Remarks on Being," 123-49 look at Gilson's conclusions in the light of the old and new evidence about the influence of Denys and Proclus on Thomas' doctrine of being and endeavour to rehabilitate Gilson's Christian metaphysic of *esse.*

The Twentieth century Thomism which regarded itself as recuperating for us the historical thought of Thomas as against the tendency of the Leonine revival both to assimilate his teaching to a common scholasticism and also to the traditions of the baroque Thomistic commentators was less able to recognize essential features of Thomas' thought than were some of those who approached Thomas with their own philosophical projects more directly in view. This irony reminds us that philosophy and the study of its history are not separable. It was just the endeavour to find something metaphysically distinctive in Thomas, when combined with the confidence both that what made him distinct would best serve the anti-modern aims of the Leonine revival and also coincide with the post modern in our own world, which was Gilson's undoing.

Gilson identified in Aquinas an existential metaphysic which he supposed to be the true Christian philosophy, though Thomas, by Gilson's account, taught this metaphysic in opposition to his contemporaries and almost all his commentators not only missed the crucial point but even assimilated his distinctive position to its opposite! For Gilson, and equally for Maritain, Thomas' existential metaphysic of Exodus rose out of a return to a sense for Being against all the ancient and medieval idealisms. By Gilson's account, Thomas' sense for Being conformed to Heidegger's most profound reflection, enabled authentic Thomistic ontology to escape the Heideggerian criticism of ontotheology, and stood resolutely against the false subjectivism of modernity.[11] This existential Thomism was opposed to all essentialisms both ancient and modern. Neoplatonism was its ancient foe.

Denys was the main conduit of the Neoplatonism which was essentialism's most pernicious invasion of Christian metaphysics. Clearly, then, according to Gilson, Thomas used Dionysian thought only to transform it completely into its opposite.[12] Denys'

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[11] For his view of what is common between Thomas and Heidegger, see, for example: ÉTIENNE GILSON, *Les Tribulations de Sophie*, (Paris: Vrin, 1967), 69-72, IDEM, "Sur les vicissitudes des principes," *Mélanges offerts à M.-D. Chenu, maître en théologie*, Bibliothéque thomiste 37 (Paris: Vrin, 1967), 281-284. On his relation to Heidegger, see, L.K. SHOOK, *Étienne Gilson*, The Étienne Gilson Series 6 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 227-228, 334-335, 359-360. In North America this optimistism was found in J.D. CAPUTO, "The Problem of Being in Heidegger and the Scholastics," *Thomist*, 41(1977), 62-91, especially 84 and 88. Caputo's optimism corresponds to that of "Document: M. Heidegger, 'Le retour au fondement de la métaphysique'," *Rev. sc. phil. théo.* 43(1959), 401-433 and GEORGES KALINOWSKI, *L' impossible métaphysique. En annexe trois lettres inédites de Étienne Gilson,* Bibliothèque des Archives de philosophie, nouvelle série 33 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1981), 136, 243. The problems are brought out by HANKEY, "Making Theology Practical," 94-100; P. AUBENQUE, J . BEAUFRET, J.-L MARION and J.-F. COURTINE in *Étienne Gilson et Nous: La philosophie et son histoire,* ed. MONIQUE COURATIER, (Paris; Vrin, 1980); J. BEAUFRET, "ENERGEIA et actus," *Dialogue avec Heidegger, I. Philosophie grecque*, "Arguments" 56 (Paris: Minuit, 1974), especially, 109-112, 130, 141-144, IDEM, "La philosophie chrétienne," *Dialogue avec Heidegger, 2. Philosophie moderne*, "Arguments" 58 (Paris: Minuit, 1973), 9-27, 123; G. PROUVOST, "Postface," ÉTIENNE GILSON, JACQUES MARITAIN, *Deux approches de l'être. Correspondance, 1923-1971*, ed. G. PROUVOST, (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 292-295.

[12] It is now clear, in contrast, that Thomas' metaphysic of being is both formed in a positive relation to Neoplatonism and retains fundamental elements of Neoplatonic logic. See W.J. HANKEY, "Aquinas' First Principle," IDEM, *God in Himself,* 2-13; PAUL ROREM, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbol within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis,* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 149 & 150, IDEM, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A*

apophatic side could be used to squeeze all conceptualization out of the act of being. Thus Denys' contribution assisted Aquinas to preserve the ontological difference between the Divine Being and beings. Beyond this use within an existential ontology to which Denys was at heart opposed, he contributed nothing to Thomas' metaphysics.

Professor Gilson's Thomism is past, being sustainable neither historically nor philosophically.[13] It has been succeeded for many by the work of Cornelio Fabro. Fr. Fabro was one of the first Thomists of the Leonine revival to notice and to give positive attention to the role of participation in the thought of St. Thomas. Although he also paid

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Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1993)*,* 169-174, IDEM, "'Procession and Return' in Thomas Aquinas and His Predecessors," *The Princeton Seminary Review* 13, #2(1992), 147-163; EILEEN C. SWEENEY, "Thomas Aquinas' Double Metaphysics of Simplicity and Infinity," *International Philosophical Quarterly* XXXIII(1993), 297-317. Jan A. AERTSEN, "Ontology and henology in Medieval Philosophy (Thomas Aquinas, Master Eckhart and Berthold of Moosburg)," in E.P. BOS and P.A. MEIJER, eds., *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, Philosophia Antiqua 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 121-123 puts the other side against Hankey. The French scholarship on the problems with a Gilsonian opposition between Neoplatonism and Thomas' metaphysic of being is now massive and elaborated. These collections will provide indications including references to important earlier work by P. HADOT and É. ZUM BRUNN: *Dieu et l'être: exégèses d'Exode 3,13 et de Coran 20,11-24*, ed. Centre d'études des religions du livre, CNRS (Paris: Études augustiniennes,1978) especially the essays by P. HADOT, P. VIGNAUX, É. ZUM BRUNN; *Étienne Gilson et Nous: La philosophie et son histoire,* ed. MONIQUE COURATIER, (Paris; Vrin, 1980), especially the essays by P. HADOT, P. AUBENQUE, and J.-F. COURTINE; DOMINIQUE BOURG, "Epilogue. La critique de la 'Métaphysique de l'Exode' par Heidegger et l'exégèse moderne," *L'être et dieu*, Publication du Centre d'études et de recherches interdisciplinaires en théologie 13 (Paris: Cerf, Cognitio fidei, 1986), 215-244, especially 217-224, see bibliography, 245-248; *"Celui qui est." Interprétations juives et chrétiennes d'Exode 314,* édité A. DE LIBERA et É. ZUM BRUNN, Centre d'études des religions du livre, CNRS. (Paris: Cerf,1986), especially the essays by P. VIGNAUX, A. DE LIBERA, J.-F. COURTINE, and É.-H. WÉBER.

[13] There is not place here to detail the criticism of Gilson's understanding of the character and influence of Neoplatonism in mediaeval philosophy, but its beginnings can be indicated. I emphasize the North American criticism, since Gilson had his greatest influence there. W. NORRIS CLARKE had been reading CORNELIO FABRO, L.B. GEIGER, JOSEPH DE FINANCE and others when he published in 1952 his ground breaking (for North America) study of the Neoplatonic logic structuring Thomas' metaphysical doctrines: "The Limitation of Act by Potency: Aristotelianism or Neoplatonism?" *New Scholasticism* 26(1952), 167-194. See also W. NORRIS CLARKE, *New Scholasticism* 32(1958), 264-66, IDEM, *New Scholasticism* 48(1974), 19-39, IDEM, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 14 (1974), 411-434. After uncovering "existential Thomism" as the inappropriate standard of judgement in Gilson's *Jean Duns Scot*, GEORGE LINDBECK showed that Thomas' philosophy of being was better viewed as participationist than as existential. See "Participation and Existence in the Interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas," *Franciscan Studies* 17(1957), 1-22 and 107-125. From Augustinian Villanova came J.M. QUINN, *The Thomism of Étienne Gilson. A Critical Study*, (Villanova: Villanova, 1971). T.C. O'BRIEN published a series of articles in 1960 entitled "Reflecting on the Question of God's Existence in Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics," *Thomist* 23(1960), 1-89, 211-285, 362-447; collected, the articles appeared as *Metaphysics and the Existence of God,* Texts and Studies 1 (Washington: Thomist Press, 1960). At present LAWRENCE DEWAN carries the torch against the errors of Gilsonian existential Thomism and Joseph Owen's defense and development of it. See, for example: "St. Thomas and the Causality of God's Goodness," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 34(1978), 291-304, IDEM, "St. Thomas and the Divine Names," *science et esprit* 32(1980), 19-33, IDEM, "*Objectum.* Notes on the Invention of a Word," *Arch. hist. doct. lit. m. â.* 48(1981), 37-96, [traces the Platonist transformations of Aristotle producing Aquinas' understanding of the object of science], IDEM, "St. Thomas, Metaphysical Procedure, and the Formal Cause," *New Scholasticism* 63(1989), 173-182, [continues the criticism of the division of form and *esse* in Owen's interpretation of Aquinas], IDEM, "St. Thomas, Aristotle, and Creation," *Dionysius* 15(1991), 81-90, [defends St. Thomas' own understanding of Aristotle against that of Gilson and Owens].

great attention to developing a Thomistic ontology and to working out the exact relation between essence and existence in it, he was critical of Gilson. In general Fabro was much more careful about how the construction of that ontology stood to philosophy both in Thomas' time and in our own. In respect to our circumstances, Fabro realized that Heidegger in fact not only made no exception for Thomas in his history of ontotheology, but also that this was not caused by a simple ignorance of Thomas' doctrine. Defending Thomas required a criticism of Heidegger. Further he was clear that the genuine engagement with contemporary philosophy which is necessary for the construction and defence of Thomism in our time required that the result be more than the representation of a past historical position.

What was true for our time was equally the case for the Thirteenth century. The philosophic logic Thomas gave to the metaphysic of Exodus 3.13 could not come out of Scripture itself. Fabro did not hold with Gilson that Scripture revealed a philosophical metaphysic which both was privileged as the true Christian philosophy and was therefore protected against dissolution in the movement of rational reflection. Not only was Thomas' ontology a philosophical construction related to his situation in history, but further, its particular matrix was primarily Neoplatonic and decisively Dionysian. Because of this recognition, Fabro's Thomism has not been rendered untenable by the historians' discovery that Thomas' ontology does not stand against the so-called 'essentialism' of earlier pagan, Islamic and Christian Neoplatonists, but rather is anticipated by their developments and is dependent on them.

As a result both of its relation to contemporary and to medieval philosophy, Fabro's Thomistic ontology is not polemically anti-Platonic, the identity of *esse* and *essentia* in the Divine simplicity is not interpreted, as in Gilson, as if *essentia* had finally been squeezed out. Still, Fabro goes far enough with Heidegger that his formulation of the hierarchy of being in terms of 'intensity' is intended to meet something of the Heideggerian criticism of ontotheology. However, and decisively, given that the most recent developments in the discovery of a Dionysian Thomas are by those whose relation to the history of philosophy is primarily determined by Heidegger, negation, even Deny's negative theology, stands, for Fabro, within ontology, not against it.[14]

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[14] Works of CORNELIO FABRO which especially establish his position on the character of Thomas' relation to Dionyius and Platonism, taking into critical account the views of ÉTIENNE GILSON include "The Problem of Being and the Destiny of Man," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 1(1961), 407-436, IDEM, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 6(1966), 389-427, IDEM, "Platonism, Neoplatonism and Thomism: Convergencies and Divergencies," *New Scholasticism* 44(1970), 69-100 [critical of Gilson but also of K. KREMER'S polemical treatment of Gilson and of Neoplatonism], IDEM, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy. The Notion of Participation," *Review of Metaphysics* 27(1974), 449-491 [as "Platonism, Neoplatonism and Thomism," but more extensive, includes agreement with LINDBECK (note 13 above) and works out his strong difference from Transcendental Thomism], IDEM, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica," *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, ed. A.A. MAURER, 2 vols., ii, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 423-457, IDEM, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in S. Tommaso e Heidegger," *Atti del Congresso Internazionale*

Let me emphasize this crucial point. For Cornelio Fabro, the negative way is used to modify the forms of conceptually knowable being. The negative way is not rather, as in the subsequent developments, placed against all philosophical theology. Negation and affirmation are ontological and epistemological means for constructing and moving within a hierarchy. That this is true both for Thomas himself and for Fabro's construction of Thomism is evidently at our moment in philosophy the central point in determining their relation to Denys.

Beyond Fabro's Thomism, there are two further stages in respect to the elements we have been considering. First there are those who looking, on one side, to the priority of the negative way in Denys, and, on the other, to Heidegger's criticism of ontotheology, demand a radical transformation of our understanding of Thomas' system. These keep something of the form of Thomistic philosophical theology but deny that what is <u>said</u> can be <u>thought</u>. The predications made of God by Thomas have no proper positive significance. As in Denys, predicative thought and affirmative knowledge belong to and indeed constitute the realm of creatures. Since this position leaves Thomas' theology an empty shell, speech not only without significance but properly opposed by thought, it gives way directly to the second of these last stages.[15]

In the second, the Dionysian negative theology is taken to be the negation of all philosophical or conceptual theology. The Dionysian writings are not in fact the medium of Neoplatonic philosophy, but its overcoming by the Christian religion. Thomas was fatally wrong not only in making Denys an authority contributing to a system in which Being was God's highest name, a system where God was identified with a form of Being in an ontologically understood cosmic hierarchy, where there were positive proper predications of God, where negation was a means within philosophical theology for

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Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo settimo centenario, ed. A. PIOLANTI, 9 vols., i, Studi Tomistici (Naples, 1975), 119-128. He has a number of followers in the English speaking world. For W. NORRIS CLARKE see note 13 above. MARK JORDAN, who does not want to go down the Transcendental path, finds in FABRO a way to continue what he regards as Thomas' "anti-modern claim about the domination of being over mind". [MARK D. JORDAN, "The Grammar of Esse" *The Thomist* 44(1980), 1-26]. Two recent studies which follow FABRO where he differs from GILSON are FRAN O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), IDEM, "*Virtus Essendi*: Intensive Being in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas," *Dionysius* 15(1991), 31-80.

[15] A fraction of the possible examples are J.D. JONES, "The Ontological Difference for St. Thomas and Pseudo-Dionysius," *Dionysius* 4(1980), 133-172, IDEM, "A Non-Entitative Understanding of Be-ing and Unity: Heidegger and Neoplatonism," *Dionysius* 6(1982), 94-110; J.D. CAPUTO, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay in Overcoming Metaphysics*, (New York: Fordham, 1980). There are those who concede the content of metaphysics to the Heideggerian critique and attempt a Transcendental retrieval of theology, e.g. R.L. HURD, "Heidegger and Aquinas: A Rahnerian Bridge," *Philosophy Today*, 28(1984), IDEM, "Being is Being - Present - to - Self: Rahner's key to Aquinas' Metaphysics," *Thomist*, 52 (1988), 63-78. See also McCOOL, note 8 above. For more and my own judgement on the success of this effort there is HANKEY, "Making Theology Practical," 100-114. There is also a thoughtful reaction, e.g. O. BLANCHETTE, "Are There Two Questions of Being?" *Review of Metaphysics*, 45(1992), 259-287 as well as that undertaken by those indicated in note 16 below.

constructing the hierarchically ordered modes of being and moving between them, but also, and most fundamentally, Thomas misunderstood and betrayed Denys by treating his writings as contributions to the tradition of philosophical theology.[16] Rather they are directions for religious acts, hymns of praise and guides to union. Denys' statements are not propositions conveying conceptually graspable philosophical and theological information. Clearly when Denys is understood against Aquinas as theologically negating philosophical theology rather than as providing that science with a tool, he is seen as doing in the ancient world what Heidegger attempts in ours. The God of the Hebrews has been freed from fatal entanglement with the philosophy of the Greeks and their fateful ontology.[17] With this development we have completed a circle which we began to describe when we considered the first neoscholastic Thomism of the Leonine revival. Thomas and Denys are now again completely opposed to one another and Thomas is judged to have totally misconceived this most revered authority.

Before leaving this survey of the philosophical circumstances which have governed the emergence of Denys as central to our understanding of and judgment about the thought of St. Thomas, we need at least to mention a minority view. Evidently, for reasons both of the philosophical and practical circumstances of the Leonine revival and of the prevailing philosophical situation generally, the dominant and almost total perspective governing Thomistic studies has been Heideggerian in contrast to the idealist, and, especially, to the Hegelian, opposite. But there is a persistent minority voice both of those who see in Hegel rather than in Heidegger the proper heir and interlocutor of Thomas and also of those who do not regard the German idealists as mistaken in supposing that the Procline systematic Neoplatonism, and Denys as its Christian continuation, belong properly to their origins. There are even a few who connect the three. For them systematic conceptual thought will persist. Domesticated, Dionysian negation will belong to the movements between being and non being and to the forms of their dialectical union, as well as to the transitions into one another of religion, theology and philosophy. The difference between Thomas and Denys will be recognized, but relativized. Above all Thomas' recuperation of Aristotelian and Augustinian reason at the level of the First Principle, and his elevation into the First Principle of a total system of what is for Proclus the logic of the finite, are seen not as betrayal but as appropriate development. In recent years this idealist view of philosophy and its historical dialectic is self-consciously chosen.

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[16] The problematic results of this apophasis for the possibility of doctrine preoccupy Neothomists like S. T. BONINO, "Influence du Pseudo-Denys sur la conception thomiste de l'*esse*," in *L'Avenir de la métaphysique. Actes du Colloque organisé à l'Institut Catholique de Toulouse (29, 30 et 31 janvier 1993)* published in *Bulletin de Litterature Ecclésiastique* XCIV/3(1993), 269-274, IDEM, "Les voiles sacres: A propos d'une citation de Denys," in *Atti del IX Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, vol. vi, Studi Tomistici 45 (Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1992), 159-171, Y. L' ABBÉ, "La théologie négative dans la théologie trinitaire," in "Voies Négatives," *Rev. sc. rel.* 67,#4(octobre, 1993), 69-86S and HUMBRECHT in "La théologie négative".

[17] JEAN -LUC MARION, *L'idole et la distance. Cinq études*, (Paris; Graset et Fasquelle, 1977), 177-243, IDEM, *Dieu sans l'être,* [1st ed. 1982], (Paris: Quadrige & PUF, 1991), 111-122; LOUIS BOUYER, *Mysterion, Du mystère à la mystique,* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1986), 230 ff.

It reappears both as a rejection of a Heideggerian end of philosophy generally and of Christian philosophical theology particularly. It also re-emerges as a return to modes of Catholic thought which preceded the Leonine revival of neoscholastic Thomism and which were condemned during its rise and ascendancy.[18]

What I have said so far shows the difficulty as well as the present importance for philosophy of the comparison we are undertaking between the thought of Denys and that of Aquinas. These circumstances exclude establishing at the same time both the characteristics of the Dionysian *corpus* and of Thomas' system. For our purposes I shall assume that both are systems of Neoplatonic philosophical theology. This assumption may betray what is essential to both thinkers and will deliver Denys into the hands of Thomas to have his way with him even more than it may traduce Thomas by drawing him into the Procline and Dionysian world. Having reduced them to the same level, I shall conclude by referring to the results of studies I have made of some elements in their thought when both are regarded as contributors to the tradition of systematic philosophical theology.

The first of the studies concerned St. Thomas' interpretation of *Isaiah* VI.6: "Volavit ad me unus de seraphim": "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me."[19] From his first theological work, the *Expositio super Isaiam ad Litteram*, through the last system, his *Summa Theologiae*, to his late exposition of St. Paul's epistles, St. Thomas Aquinas follows Denys in denying what Isaiah said he saw.[20] It was impossible that one from among the

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[18] For diverse forms of these phenomena, see, for example, MCCOOL and O'MEARA in note 1 above, W.J. HANKEY, "Theology as System and as Science: Proclus and Aquinas," *Dionysius* 6(1982), 83-93, IDEM, "Aquinas and the Passion of God," *Being and Truth. Essays in Honour of John Macquarrie*, ed. A. KEE and E.T. LONG, (London: SCM, 1986), 318-333, IDEM, *God in Himself,* 142-161, IDEM, "Tradition and Development of Doctrine," *Tradition: Received and Handed On*, ed. D.A. PETLEY, (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1994), 32-38; EDWARD BOOTH,. "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui' related to Aristotle," IDEM, "Hegel's Conception of Self-knowledge Seen in Conjunction with Augustine's," *Augustiniana* 30(1980), 221-250, IDEM, "A Confrontation between the Neoplatonisms of St. Thomas Aquinas and Hegel," *Angelicum* 63(1986), 57-89, IDEM, *Saint Augustine and the Western Tradition of Self-Knowing,* IDEM, "*TO YPEREINAI* of pseudo-Dionysius and Schelling," *Studia Patristica* XXIII, ed. E.A. LIVINGSTONE, (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 215-225, IDEM, "Hegel and the Intellectuality of the Father's," *Studia Patristica* XVIII,4, ed. E.A. LIVINGSTONE, (Kalamazoo/Leuven: Cistercian/Peeters, 1990), 322-327; PUTALLAZ, *Le sens de la réflexion,* IDEM, *La connaissance de soi.* CLAUDE BRUAIRE, *L'être et l'esprit,* Coll. Épiméthée (Paris: PUF, 1983); on whom see XAVIER TILLIETTE, "La théologie philosophique de Claude Bruaire," *Gregorianum* 74,4(1993) 689-709, IDEM, *Le Christ des philosophes. Du Maître de sagesse au divin Témoin*, (Namur: Culture et vérité, 1993), 105-133, 134-148 which treats Emilo Brito's work. Professor BRUAIRE'S position is being developed by EMILIO BRITO, who is explicit about his debt: EMILIO BRITO, *Hegel et la tâche actuelle de la christologie*, (Paris: Lethielleux-Sycomore, 1979), IDEM, *La christologie de Hegel. Verbum Crucis*, Bibliothéque des archives de philosophie 40 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983), IDEM, *La création selon Schelling*, Universum Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium LXXX (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1987), IDEM, *Dieu et l'être d'aprés Thomas d'Aquin et Hegel*, Coll. Théologiques (Paris: PUF, 1991). The recent series of issues devoted to individual philosophers in *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* is worth noting; KENNETH L. SCHMITZ edited LXIV,#4(1990) dealing with Hegel.
[19] Isaiah VI. 6-7: Vulgate and Authorized Version. My study is "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI.6," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge,* 64 (1997), 59-93.
[20] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Expositio super Isaiam ad Litteram*, vol. 28, *Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita* (Rome: Editori di San Tommaso, 1974), capitulum VI, 6-8, p. 51; *In Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, *Opera Omnia,*

superior orders of angels, and the Seraphim were in fact the highest order, could minister immediately and directly to a creature below the angelic hierarchy. No Seraph flew to Isaiah.

Denys had devoted chapter thirteen of *The Celestial Hierarchy* to showing "Why the prophet Isaiah is said to have been purified by the seraphim" despite the contradiction between this scriptural dictum and the fundamental principles of spiritual hierarchy exposed earlier in Denys' treatise.[21] As Salvatore Lilla has shown, these principles are primarily Procline, and the form in which they are cited by Aquinas can be traced to Proclus.[22] Moreover, they accord with what Thomas learned from his other major source of Procline Neoplatonism, the *Liber de causis.[23]* So Thomas concluded that, on this matter, the highest vision of the apostolic community, the common knowledge of the primitive church, and the conclusions of pagan philosophy were one.[24]

Remarkably, they agreed not on the order of nature which could be overruled by the higher order of grace. Rather, what St. Paul, his disciple Denys, the early church, and

ed. R. BUSA (Stuttgard - Bad Cannstatt: frommann - holzboog, 1980), pt. 2, ds. 10, qu. 1, ar. 2, corpus, p. 152; in the *Summa Theologiae* the consideration is at pt. I, qu. 112.

[21] DENYS L'ARÉOPAGITE, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 2nd ed., intro. R. ROQUES, étude et texte critiques, G. HEIL, trad. et notes M. DE GANDILLAC, Sources Chrétienne 58 bis (Paris: Cerf, 1970); *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. COLM LUIBHEID, foreward, notes and translation collaborated by PAUL ROREM, preface by RENÉ ROQUES, introductions by JAROSLAV PELIKAN, JEAN LECLERQ and KARLFRIED FROEHLICH, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 176-181.

[22] SALVATORE LILLA, "Introduzione allo studio dello Ps. Dionigi l'Areopagita," *Augustinianum* 22/3(1982), 554-556: section 6, "Le legge che regolano la gerarchia angelica e di riflesso anche quelle ecclesiastica." For the laws in question Lilla gives CLEMENT'S *Stromata* and Enoch but, above all, PROCLUS, and crucially, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 148. On the lines connecting St. Thomas and Proclus, there is a connected series of comments, as follows: W.J. HANKEY, "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius and the Structure of St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani*, ed. L. OBERTELLO, (Rome: Herder, 1981), 367-375, IDEM, *God in Himself*; PAUL ROREM, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary,"* 169-174, IDEM, "'Procession and Return' in Thomas Aquinas," 147-163. But the "chronological impossibility" attributed to me in the last (161), in fact, I explicitly denied at 9 and 150 of *God in Himself* and elsewhere.

[23] Aquinas draws both on Dionysius and the *Elements* of Proclus, just translated from the Greek, in his late (after 1268) *Super Librum de Causis Expositio*, ed. H.-D. SAFFREY, Textus Philosophici Friburgenes 4/5 (Fribourg/ Leuven: Société Philosophique/Éditions E. Nauwelaerts, 1954), see HANKEY, *God In Himself*, 46-47. The *Liber de causis* is not only Procline but Plotinian in its Neoplatonism and the mediation of these through Arabic Islam has effects comparable to those of the Christianity of Dionysius: see C. D'ANCONA COSTA, "La doctrine de la creation 'mediante intelligentia' dans le *Liber de Causis* et dans ses sources," *Rev. sc. phil. théo.* 76, #2(1992), 209-233, IDEM, "Saint Thomas lecteur du 'Liber de causis'," *Revue thomiste* XCII(1992), 785-817, IDEM, *Tommaso d'Aquino Commento al 'Libro della Cause'*, (Milan: Rusconi, 1986); R.C. TAYLOR, "The Kalim fi mahd al'khair (*Liber de causis*) in the Islamic Philosophical Milieu," in J. KRAYE, W.F. RYAN AND C.B. SCHMITT, *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Latin Middle Ages. The "Theology" and other texts*, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts XI (London: Warburg Society, 1986), 37-52; M.B. EWBANK, "Doctrinal Precisions".

[24] "tum quia dionysius hoc tradit, qui discipulus pauli fuit, et dicitur eius visiones scripsisse; unde eum frequenter in auctorem inducit, et praecipue in divisione hierarchiarum, et sicut in 13 cap. caelest. hier. innuit, haec positio vulgata erat tempore primitivae ecclesiae: tum etiam quia dictis philosophorum magis consonat, ut ab eis ea quae contra fidem non sunt accipiamus, aliis resecatis," AQUINAS, *In Sententiarum*, pt. 2, ds. 10, qu. 1, ar. 2, corpus, p. 152.

philosophy understood in common was the higher order, the order of grace, which admits of no exceptions.[25]

In allowing Proclus, mediated by Denys and others, to determine the order of grace against the text of Isaiah VI, Aquinas was not following a generally accepted tradition. The problem of the opposition between Isaiah and Denys had been before the Latin church since Gregory the Great, one of the first western theologians to give evidence of knowing something of the Dionysian teaching. In his sermon on the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, Pope Gregory states that he has not enough evidence to follow Dionysius completely. In consequence, the problem of a contradiction between a text of the Bible and a quasi-biblical author puzzled theologians who had not read the pseudo-Areopagite themselves.[26] Generally, except for Eriugena, they followed Gregory and tried to avoid the Dionysian conclusion. But in the Twelfth century Dionysius overran the schools. The arguments shifted in his direction. In the end, none among the schoolmen was a clearer, more definite, and more principled Dionysian on the questions involved than the Angelic doctor himself.

If one accepts the unity and authority of the whole of sacred scripture, as Denys, Gregory and their scholastic followers did, this is not a confrontation between a philosophical "vision" or "système du monde", on the one hand, and "un texte scripturaire", on the other.[27] The Bible, which had, for all of them, finally one author - God speaking through the mission of the Holy Spirit - said opposed things. Isaiah VI. 6 and Hebrews I. 14 were opposed by Zachariah II. 3-4 (where one angel sends another) and by Daniel VII. 10 ("Millia millium ministrabant ei, et decies millies centena millia assistebant ei" [Vulgate], "thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" [A.V.]). Some are immediately in the divine presence, some are sent; some angels command, others go at their will. In addition, Gabriel, who announced the incarnation, was only called an angel (Luke I. 19 & 26).

The problem is how can Scripture be thought as a whole? There is, for these theologians, no biblical theology in the Twentieth century sense apart from the Hellenistic systematizing reflection.[28] Since Henri de Lubac corrected Beryl Smalley, we have come to

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[25] "Quia ordo angelicus attenditur secundum dona gratiarum. Ordo autem gratiae non habet alium superiorem ordinem, propter quem praemitti debeat, sicut praeter mittuntur ordo naturae propter ordinem gratiae." *ST* I, 112, 2, resp. There is a similar problem with respect to the *Summa* as a whole. What is for Aquinas the proper order of sacred doctrine (as opposed to that of philosophical theology) is, in fact, the order of systematized Neoplatonism, see HANKEY, *God In Himself*, 148-151.

[26] GREGORY, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, Liber 2, "Homilia XXXIV," pts. 12 and 13, *Patrologia Latina* 76, 1254B-1255B: "utrum per se haec faciant, an per subjecta agmina agantur, quae, sicut dicitur, in eo quod a majoribus veniunt majorum vocabula sortiuntur, nos affirmare nolumus quod apertis testimoniis non approbamus."(1254D).

[27] DE GANDILLAC in *La Hiérarchie*, note 7, 148-149.

[28] On the genesis of this division, see JONATHAN Z. SMITH, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of

realize that Aquinas is a conservative mediaeval in his interpretation of Scripture.[29] An American academic, who writes both on Thomas' ontology and on his handling of his sources, makes this judgment:

> He does **not** say that the literal is the pre-eminent sense; he says that it is the foundation ... the literal sense is the beginning of the supernatural *itinerarium mentis ad Deum* ... The subordination of literal, natural discourse to the analogical discourse of the revealed is the Thomistic understanding of any discursive hierarchy, scriptural or ontological.[30]

The four senses Thomas inherited from Augustine freed him to systematize Scripture so as to make it and theology equivalent.[31] Dionysian hierarchy determined divine order in both.

Albert the Great leads the way for Aquinas.[32] In his commentary on the thirteenth chapter of the *Celestial Hierarchy*, Albert has a firm hold on the reasoning of Dionysius.

London, 1990), 13, 34, 77. On the continuity between pagan and Christian systematizing reflection, see DAVID DAWSON, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); JEAN PEPIN, *La tradition de l' allégorie de Philon d' Alexandrie à Dante,* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1987), 54-56: "l' histoire le montre, et personne n' en doute plus aujourd' hui ce sont les Grecs qui furent sur ce point des initiateurs des chrétiens." (54); PIERRE HADOT, "Théologie, exégèse, révélation, écriture dans la philosophie grecque," and ILSETRAUT HADOT, "Les introductions aux commentaires exégétiques chez les auteurs chrétiens," both in MICHEL TARDIEU, ed., *Les régles de l' interprètation,* Centre d' études des religions du Livre (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 13-34 and 99-122; *Proclus. Lecteur et interpréte des anciens. Actes du colloque international du CNRS, Paris (2-4 octobre 1985),* publiés par JEAN PEPIN et H.-D. SAFFREY, Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1987).

[29] HENRI DE LUBAC, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de L'Écriture*, 4 vol., Théologie 41, 42 and 59 (Paris: Aubier, 1959-1964), i, 301: "En cela, comme il lui arrive si souvent, saint Thomas est le simple et fidèle écho, jusque dans le détail, d'une longue tradition"; see also iii, 12-13 and iv, 293-294. At iv, 272-302, DE LUBAC considers Thomas at length, rejects the claims for his "nouveauté" and concludes, quoting Chenu: "C'est une exégèse elle-même doctrinale, qui se développe 'à partir d'une division systématique pratiquée à la mode du temps', et dont les résultats sont destinés à être exploités dans une systématization d'une autre allure." BERYL SMALLEY admitted her error in *The Gospels in the Schools, c. 1100 - c. 1280,* (London and Ronceverte: Hambledon, 1985), 265 267. BERYL SMALLEY*, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) explains how and why she arrived at her original interpretation of Thomas' role in the history of exegesis. It is summarized by RICHARD SOUTHERN, "Beryl Smalley and the Bible," in K. WALSH and P. WOOD, eds., *The Bible in the Medieval World. Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, Studies in Church History, subsidia 4 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 12: "she found [in the thirteenth century] a new respect for the literal meaning of the text. And, in the finding the fact, she suggested the explanation: the metaphysical and scientific works of Aristotle, with their doctrine that the hidden substance of things would be known only from their manifestation to the senses, drove out the more exaggerated forms of allegorical interpretation and directed attention to the letter, to the matter of fact in the Bible."

[30] MARK D. JORDAN, "The Modes of Thomistic Discourse: Questions for Corbin's *Le chemin de la théologie chez Thomas d'Aquin*," *The Thomist* 45(1981), 96-97. See also IDEM, *Ordering Wisdom. The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas,* The University of Notre Dame Publications in Medieval Studies 14 (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1986), 26-31 and note 13, above.

[31] HENRI DE LUBAC, "Sur un vieux distique. La doctrine du 'quadruple sens'," *Théologies d'occasion* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1984), 135.

[32] On Albert as Thomas' Dionysian initiator, see HANKEY, *God In Himself*, 46 which must now be corrected by LEONARD E. BOYLE, "An Autograph of St. Thomas at Salerno," in *Littera Sensus Sententia. Studi in onore de*

Thomas' teacher understands what necessitates the angelic hierarchy and how that order serves humanity. Through it, the simple, utterly incomprehensible knowledge of everything, at once universally and particularly, in God is diminished by a gradual particularization so that, finally, it can, in the lowest angels, illuminate and direct us. The gracious movement of God toward us through this order would be destroyed if the first hierarchy, which always stands in the immediate presence, where there is the first influx of the divine light and where all is contemplated in its universal simplicity, were to leave off these intuitions for the sake of the particularized knowledge and particular actions of the lower ranks.[33]

Among the very varied works which occupied the last years of St. Thomas' life, two concern the structure and nature of the realm of separated substances, i.e. his little treatise bearing that title, and the commentary on the *Liber de causis*.[34] These, and other writings from this period, including his exposition of the epistles of St. Paul, reveal that Thomas now has at his disposition and is using William of Moerbeke's translation (1268) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. This enabled Aquinas to understand developed Platonism better, to distinguish it from Aristotle and, on at least one matter, the principles for the determination of the number of these substances, to choose the *Platonici* against Aristotle.

Prof. Clemente J. Vansteenkiste O.P., Studia Universitatis S. Thomae in Urbe 33 (Milan: Universitas S. Thomae in Urbe, 1991), 117-134 showing that "it is difficult to accept on the present evidence that, as is commonly held, the manuscript tradition for Albert's commentary on the *De caelesti hierarchia* depends on the autograph of Thomas now in Naples"(128). On Albert and the future of Christian Neoplatonism, see S. TUGWELL, *Albert and Thomas. Selected Writings*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), and A. DE LIBERA, "Albert le Grand et le platonisme. de la doctrine de idées à la théorie des trois états de l' universel," in E.P. BOS and P.A. MEIJER, eds., *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, Philosophia Antiqua 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 89-90, IDEM, "Albert le Grand et Thomas d'Aquin interprètes du *Liber de Causis*," *Rev. sc. phil. théo.* 74(1990), 347-78. For a detailed comparison of Albert and Aquinas on their reception of Neoplatonism and Aristotle, see EDWARD BOOTH, "Conciliazione ontologiche della Tradizione Platonica e Aristotelica in Sant' Alberto e San Tommaso," in *Sant' Alberto Magno, l'uomo e il pensatore*, Studia Universitatis S. Thomae in Urbe, (Milan: Massimo, 1982), 61-81, IDEM, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology,* chapters 5 ff.

[33] ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, in *Commentarius in opera beati Dionysii Areopagitae, Omnia Opera*, ed. A. BOURGNET, vol. 14 (Paris: Vivès, 1892), cap. XIII, 327-330, especially 329: *ita etiam licet omnes Angeli possint illuminari a primo, primi tamen recipiunt prima receptione divinum lumen et in virtute universali, et secundi secunda, mediocriter, et ultimi ultima particulariter. Et ita inferioribus undecumque illuminentur, sunt illuminationes multiplices et determinatae ad diversa negotia, quae in superiores sunt unitae, et universaliter erit inferiorum tantum ministrare, et superiorum dirigere eos in ministeriis, assistendo per summum modum contemplandi.* See also ALBERT, *Super Dionysium de divinis nominibus*, ed. P. SIMON, *Opera Omnia*, 37(1), (Cologne: Aschendorff, 1972), cap. 5, 320, lines 19-50 and p. 359. For the dates and order of the Dionysian commentaries, see ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Super Dionysium de divinis nominibus*, vi and É.-H. WÉBER, "L'interpretation par Albert le Grand de la Théologie mystique de Denys Ps-Areopagite," in *Albertus Magnus Doctor Universalis*, ed. GERBERT MEYER and ALBERT ZIMMERMAN, Walberberger Studien 6 (Mainz: Matthias-Grüenwald, 1980), 409-439.

[34] See THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Substantiis Separatis*, vol. 60 (pars D-E), *Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita* (Rome: Editori di San Tommaso, 1968), p. D6; THOMAS AQUINAS, *Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos Lectura,* in *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, ed. RAPHAEL CAI, VIIIth. ed., 2 vols., ii (Taurin/Rome: Marietti, 1953), 354, sect. 85. On the late date for these commentaries among Thomas' writings, see vol. i, p. vi. Significantly, this has recently been confirmed by the discovery of a reference to Proclus in the commentary on Colossians; see TUGWELL, *Albert*, 247, note 472 and *Super Epistolam ad Colossenses Lectura* in the Cai edition, 134, sections 41 and 42.

However, long before Thomas had the means to identify the Neoplatonic source of the principles by which he understood the celestial hierarchy and its relations to humans, he was stating them with clarity and using them to determine his interpretation of Scripture.

At the beginning of his theological teaching, commenting on Isaiah VI. 6, Thomas is clear that, having raised the question of seraphic and human contact, the great Gregory leaves it "sub dubio". Denys, instead, is explicit and definite because, for Denys, the order of the divine law requires "ut inferiora reducantur per media". There are no leaps or gaps; all transitions are mediated.[35] This law is spelled out clearly and made determinative in Thomas' *Commentary on the Sentences*:

> this is the invariably established divine law: that the last are perfected by the first through media. But between us and the first angels the inferiors intermediate. Therefore, the action of the first does not come to us immediately, but through a second mediating rank.[36]

This law is given, and its consequence drawn, in the *sed contra*. In the body of the article, St. Thomas (like St. Albert) uses the *lex divinitatis* to develop his conception of the angelic hierarchy as a means by which what is simply and universally known in God is gradually contracted and particularized. Thus it comes to be both something knowable by human intellects and shaped into individual ends. Only thereby can what is contemplated simply in God become the varied subjects of particular actions. In the *Summa Theologiae*, again with St. Albert, Aquinas considers, under the perspective of this law, the structure of the created order and of human society generally, as well as the angelic order in itself and in its relations to humans. Thomas maintains that for the

> *ordo divinae providentiae non solum in angelis, sed etiam in toto universo, quod inferiora per superiora administrantur.*

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[35] AQUINAS, *Super Isaiam*, 51, lines 363-364.

[36] "Sed contra, secundum dionysium, 'haec est lex divinitatis inviolabiliter stabilita; quod a primis ultima per media perficiantur'. Sed inter nos et primos angelos sunt medii inferiores. Ergo primorum actio immediate non pervenit ad nos, sed est per medios secundos." *In Sententiarum*, pt. 2, ds. 10, qu. 1, art. 2, s.c. 1, p. 152. See also *In Sententiarum*, pt. 2, ds. 10, qu. 1, art. 3, ag. 6 and ra. 3, p. 153. The law is a principle cited by him and determinative for Aquinas in his major works of systematic theology. Though he attributes it to Dionysius, I have not been able to find the formula in the words used by Albert the Great, Bonaventure, Aquinas, John of Paris, Aegidius Romanus, Boniface VIII and François de Meyronnes in the various mediaeval texts of Dionysius given in CHEVALLIER'S *Dionysiaca*. There is reason to think that Hugh of St. Victor is a common source for their understanding of Dionysian hierarchy. But, though I have found the doctrine in HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *Commentariarum in Hierarchiam Coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagite*, *Patrologia Latina* 175, 924-1154, I have not discovered these formulae there.

In this administration, "according to a common law the higher are not sent but only the lower".[37]

Aquinas also finds this conception of universal order and the cosmic role of separated substances in the *Liber de causis* and he explains that work so as to draw together the author of the *Liber*, Proclus and Denys with respect to it. The *Liber de causis* proposes that "all intelligence is full of forms". The causally higher intellects contain more universal forms, from these derive those intelligences which contain less universal forms.[38] In his explanation, Aquinas first notes that Proclus agrees that the "superiores habent formas magis universales, inferiores vero minus universales" and then tells us that Denys says the same in the *Celestial Hierarchy*.[39] Thomas goes on to set out his general doctrine on the role of the angelic illuminations in bringing the divine knowledge and purposes to us.

Thomas draws together what he found in the earlier propositions of the *Liber* to extract a corollary of the *lex divinitatis*. Proposition 19 distinguishes between, and connects in a descending causal chain, "intelligentia divina", receiving the first good gifts from the first cause, "intelligentia tantum", which has between it and the first cause a mediating intelligence, "anima intelligibilis", and "anima tantum", from which we arrive at "corpora naturalia tantum". Thomas' explanation refers us to proposition 106 of the *Elements* (on intermediates between what is wholly eternal and what is in time) and then to the *De Divinis Nominibus* of Denys. There he finds the law that "fines primorum coniunguntur principiis secundorum". He compares the "divinae intelligentiae" of the *Liber de causis* to the Dionysian "supremi angeli sunt quasi in vestibulis deitatis collocati". The seraphim are the very highest of these. In making the categories of Proclus, of the *Liber de causis*, and of Denys cohere, Thomas shrewdly places in the rank of mere intellects those angels who intermediate between the highest and ensouled humans.[40]

In this final period of his labors, St. Thomas is also delivering, or at least revising, his exposition of St. Paul's epistles and, hence, of the Epistle to the Hebrews with its first chapter comparing Christ and the angels. There everything fundamental to what he finds common to the author of the *Liber de causis*, Denys, and Proclus emerges.[41] The *magister in sacra pagina* carries with him the philosophical principles he has learned, and learned to

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[37] THOMAS, *Summa Theologiae* I, 112, 2, corpus, the Latin reads: "secundum communem legem superiores non mittuntur sed inferiores tantum". I quote Piana in the Ottawa, 1944 edition.

[38] AQUINAS, *Super Librum de causis*, proposition 10, p. 66: *Omnis intelligentia est plena formis; verum tamen ex intelligentiis sunt quae continent formas plus universales, et ex eis sunt quae continent formas minus universales.*

[39] Ibid., p. 69, see also, p. 72.

[40] Ibid., p. 107.

[41] This must be understood strictly. Thomas has fundamental criticisms of the Platonists. The judgement of VIVIAN BOLAND, *Ideas in God According to St Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis,* Studies in the History of Christian Thought LXIX (Leiden: Brill, 1996); is correct: "Dionysius must be interpreted always as a Catholic believer ... In Saint Thomas' commentary on the *Liber de causis* 'the faith' tells against Proclus and against 'platonic positions', against the 'Auctor', against Aristotle but **never** against Dionysius who remains for Saint Thomas an authoritative source for what the faith teaches."

develop, as a systematic theologian, a *magister in sacra theologia*. The form of his exposition of the first chapter, with its three questions arising out of the opposition of authorities, and its logical content, reveal a mind for whom scriptural exposition and theological disputation can only reach resolution if both are activities of one systematic intelligence. The oppositions in the texts with which the one divine Author of the Bible presents us, and the conflicts of the other authorities both with one another and with the canonical books, can only be resolved systematically. Isaiah VI. 6 appears to contradict the good order which is essential to the system, to stand against the very *lex divinitatis*, against the law and possibility of order. That Neoplatonic thinking was the only thought which explicitly gathered all the elements into one whole and under one principle. Thomas knew no other way of thinking systematically.

A Procline and Dionysian systematizing underlies Thomas' understanding of the biblical text. But, the conditions of this systematization are given by Augustine.[42] First, is the Augustinian principle that the text as exterior words is subordinate to the interior intellectual word which it expresses. Second, for the exterior sensible text to approximate the interior intelligible word it must be understood in four senses. In consequence, Thomas can understand the literal sense of texts like Isaiah VI. 6 through a hierarchical order, a *lex divinitatis*. For the sake of the higher truth of the realm of intellectual subsistences, and to maintain its order as the first and best revelation of the absolute divinity in which intellect, order, and being are simply one, Thomas followed Denys in denying that a Seraph was sent to Isaiah and he used Denys to perfect Augustine.

The second of my recent studies which touches matters relevant to the present topic concerns the medieval and early modern history of a eucharistic text of Augustine.[43] Lanfranc gives the text an interpretation which reverses its meaning and Lanfranc's interpretation comes to Aquinas as Augustine.[44] The Lanfranc passage masking as Augustine makes the invisible the sign of the visible: by the invisible, intelligible body is signified the visible and palpable body of Christ. Authentic Augustine teaches the contrary: a sacrament is a visible sign of invisible grace.[45] Typically, Bonaventure,

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[42] T.F. TORRANCE, "Scientific Hermeneutics according to St. Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of Theological Studies* 13(1962), 259-289; MICHAEL TRESKO, "John Wyclif's Metaphysics of Scriptural Integrity in the *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*," *Dionysius* 13(1989), 178-179.

[43] W.J. HANKEY, "'Magis... Pro Nostra Sentencia': John Wyclif, his mediaeval Predecessors and reformed Successors, and a pseudo-Augustinian Eucharistic Decretal," *Augustiniana* [Institutum Historicum Augustianum Lovanii], 45, fasc. 3-4 (1995), 213-245. The text considered is from IOHANNIS WYCLIF, *De Eucharistia Tractatus Maior*, ed. J. Loserth, (London: Trubner, 1892), p. 224. The text of AUGUSTINE is from the *Epistola ad Bonifacium*, Epistle 98, 9: PL 33, 363-64; CSEL 34, part 2, ed. AL. GOLDBACHER, (Vienna, 1898), 530-31

[44] LANFRANC'S *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* (PL 150, 421-425), was chopped up, rearranged, abridged and entered eucharistic controversy for 500 years primarily, but not exclusively, as Augustine's *Sentences of Prosper*. Aquinas uses the authority of Lanfranc disguised as Augustine at *Summa Theologiae* III, 60, 3 s.c., *ST* III , 75, 5 s.c., *ST* III, 83, 1, s.c.; at *ST* III, 77, 1, Lanfranc is under the cover of Gregory the Great.

[45] For example: "*Signum est enim res praeter speciem, quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cognitionem venire*", *De Doctrina Christiana* II, 1, 1, (CCSL 32, 32): " A sign is something which over and above the specific

maintaining an Augustinian anthropology which allows intellectual intuition to humans, interprets authentic Augustine through pseudo-Augustine.[46] However, with Thomas there is a noteworthy paradox. Denys' theological authority strengthens Aristotle for him. He gives priority to sensation in human knowing and thus to the authentic text of Augustine.

Thomas uses both the authentic and the pseudo-Augustinian texts as authorities in the same question in the *Summa Theologiae*.[47] For Aquinas what is essential about signs is not their sensible aspect but rather that they lead us from the known to the unknown, and what he emphasizes about sacraments is that they make men holy. When he asks, "whether a sacrament is always a sensible thing", he has already established that a sacrament is a sign of a sacred thing because through it humans are sanctified.[48] The question of its sensibility remains unsettled.

The matter in the end turns not on the authority of Augustine, who is represented both as thinking that sensible realities are the least of things "without which humans are able to live well", and also that sacraments involve a physical element and the coming of the divine word.[49] These genuine statements of Augustine are difficult to reconcile. The matter turns on the question of human nature and cannot be settled by reference to Augustine's authority. If humans have intellectual intuition, then they do not need sensible signs to lead them to the holy. On this aspect of anthropology, Augustine and his followers are at best ambiguous. As heirs of the Plotinian - Porphyrian Neoplatonism, they seem to allow for an intellectual intuition independent of sensation. Denys is Aquinas' source for the Procline tradition which here supports Aristotle. For it we humans cannot come to the intelligible divine realm except through the sensible. Therefore, signs which would lead us must be sensible, not because signs are by nature sensible, but rather because what God would use to make us holy must be adapted to our condition.[50] By this route we

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form which it impresses on the senses causes some further object to enter our cognition." "*Sacrificium ergo visibile invisibilis sacramentum, id est sacrum signum est*", *De Civitate Dei* X,5 (CCSL 47, 277): "The visible sacrifice is the sacrament, i.e. the sacred sign, of the invisible sacrifice." "*Sacramentum est invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma*": "a sacrament is a visible form of invisible grace", becomes the standard definition and derives from Augustine, *Epistola* 105, 3, 12 (CSEL 34, 604).

[46] See BONAVENTURE, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, vol. 4 (Quaracchi, 1889), X, 1, dubia 4, pp. 226 - 27

[47] *ST* III, 60.

[48] *ST* III, 60, 3, ad 2: *Dicendum quod sacramentum in hoc quod significat rem sanctificantem, oportet quod significet effectum, qui intelligitur in ipsa causa sanctificante prout est sanctificans.*

[49] *ST* III, 60, 4, obj. 3: *res sensibiles sunt minima bona sine quibus homo recte vivere potest* and s.c.: *Augustinus dicit super Ioan: "Accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum."*

[50] *ST* III, 60, 4, ad 1: *Et inde est quod primo et principaliter dicuntur signa quae sensibus offeruntur: sicut Augustinus dicit in II de Doctrina Christiana, quod "signum est enim res praeter speciem, quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cognitionem venire." Effectus autem intelligibiles non habent rationem signi nisi secundum quod sunt manifestati per aliqua signa.* On the complex, unresolved, unsystematic "dualisme" of Bonaventure as compared to Aquinas, see É.-H. WÉBER, *Dialogue et dissensions entre saint Bonaventure et saint Thomas d'Aquin à Paris (1252-1273)*, Bibliothèque thomiste 41 (Paris: Vrin, 1974), 140-142 and IDEM, *La Personne humaine,* 90-108. Differences in how they reason about hierarchy are explained by JANET COLEMAN, "The Dominican Political Theory of John of Paris in its Context," in DIANA WOOD, ed. *The Church and Sovereignty c. 590-1918. Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks,*

come back to affirm the genuine text of Augustine. Because the invisible body is not itself sensible, it could then only be called a sacrament "in so far as it is signified through something sensible" (*quodammodo sacramenta inquantum sunt significata per aliqua sensibilia*). Augustine's definition is saved from his own anthropology by means of an Aristotelian and Dionysian philosophical theology!

Finally, I made a study of the origin of the notorious 'augustinisme politique' to which, in accord with the interests of the Leonine revival, the historical Thomists of the first half of our century opposed St. Thomas.[51] It is not difficult to show that the 'politique' ascribed to Augustine is really derived by the mediaevals from Denys transformed.[52] There is a Latin hermeneutical tradition which understands the episcopal hierarch of Denys through the Roman papacy in its claim to possess the two swords. It has been extensively investigated by David Luscombe in a series of studies.[53] He has looked particularly at St. Thomas as standing within this tradition of understanding.[54] In fact, Aquinas not only adheres to this tradition of interpretation but also strengthens its theocratic tendency.[55] He does this in two ways. First, he understands hierarchy as a

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Studies in Church History, Subsidia 9 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 187-224. The anthropological implications of the unification between Aristotle and Dionysius in Aquinas are outlined in ALAIN DE LIBERA, "Une Anthropologie de la grâce," 250 - 254.

[51] W. J. HANKEY, "'Dionysius dixit'."

[52] The essential work is H. de LUBAC, "'Augustinisme politique'?" *Théologies d'occasion*, (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1984), 255-308; YVES CONGAR, *Thomas d'Aquin: sa vision de théologie et de l'Église*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), is an important gathering of articles, but his great demonstration of the role of Dionysius in the development of a hierarchical view of the church is *L'Église de saint Augustin à l'époque moderne*, (Paris: Du Cerf, 1970), especially but not exclusively, 224 ff.

[53] See DAVID E. LUSCOMBE, "The *Lex divinitatis* in the Bull *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII," in *Church and State in the Middle Ages: essays presented to C.R. Cheney on his 70th birthday,* ed. C.N.L. BROOKE, D.E. LUSCOMBE, G.H. MARTIN, and DOROTHY OWEN, (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 205-221, IDEM, "Some Examples of the Use made of the Works of the Pseudo-Dionysius by University Teachers in the Later Middle Ages," in *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages,* eds. JOSEF IJSEWIJN & JACQUES PAQUET, Mediaevalia Lovaniensia I/VI (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1978), 228-241, IDEM, "Conceptions of Hierarchy before the Thirteenth Century," in *Sociale Ordnungen im Selbstverstandis des Mittelalters*, ed. ALBERT ZIMMERMAN, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 12/1 (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 1-19, IDEM, "Wyclif and Hierarchy," in ANNE HUDSON & MICHAEL WILKS, eds., *From Ockham to Wyclif,* Studies in Church History, subsidia 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 233-244, IDEM, "Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Middle Ages from Hilduin to Lorenzo Valla," in *Kongressdaten und Festvortrage Literatur und Falschung,* vol. 1 of *Falschungen im Mittelalter. Internationaler Kongress der Monumenta Germaniae Historica Munchen, 16-19. September 1986*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Schriften 33,i (Hannover: Hahnsche, 1988), 133-152, IDEM, "François de Meyronnes and Hierarchy," in DIANA WOOD, ed. *The Church and Sovereignty c. 590-1918. Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks,* Studies in Church History, Subsidia 9 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 225-232. There is a good summary of Luscombe's argument in ROREM, *Pseudo-Dionysius,* 30-36.

[54] See DAVID E. LUSCOMBE, "Thomas Aquinas and Conceptions of Hierarchy in the Thirteenth Century," in *Thomas von Aquin. Werk un Wirkung im Licht Neuerer Forschungen*, ed. ALBERT ZIMMERMAN, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 19 (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 261-277.

[55] O. ROUSSEAU, "La doctrine du ministère episcopal et ses vissitudes dans l'église d'Occident," in Y. CONGAR and D. DUPUY, ed. *L'Épiscopat et l'église universelle,* Unam Sanctam 39 (Paris: Du Cerf, 1962), 279-308; H. BOUESSÉ , "Épiscopat et sacerdoce. II. L'opinion de s. Thomas," *Rev. sc. rel.* 28 (1954), 368-391; J. LÉCUYER, "Aux origines de la théologie thomiste de l'épiscopat," *Gregorianum* 35(1954), 56-89 demonstrate a

means of government. Second, having drawn Denys into politics, Thomas assimilates the Dionysian hierarch to Aristotle's political sovereign.

Denys is certainly the origin of the language of our discourse about hierarchy.

By creating the abstract noun *hierarchy* from the cultic title *hierarch,* Dionysius invented a word for a structure or system for "sourcing" or channelling the sacred, and linked it all inextricably to the single leader. Dionysius claimed that the hierarch is named after the hierarchy, but the opposite is in fact the case: *hierarchy* was derived from *hierarch.* He used the existing term for a cultic leader to create the new word *hierarchy* and to imply that this person (the hierarch) completely dominates the system or arrangement (the hierarchy).[56]

It is crucial that, in fact, Dionysius still speaks of only one ecclesiastical hierarch, the bishop, who by liturgical acts creates a sacramental world distinct from the profane. However, the general tendency of his thought is not only to gather all order moving graciously toward us from above in a single sacral hierarch, but also to make the presence of the celestial order with us sensible and historically concrete. Denys' divine hierarch is both the link with the originating hierarchy above and he is also the source, and governing power of the sacred order below him. Christian society may be represented as a hierocracy with a single apex. The cultic hierarch whom Dionysius inherited becomes within a development of Dionysian hierarchy the hierocrat. It is possible then that the hierocrat whom the Dionysian tradition makes intelligible will be quite different from Denys' own episcopal hierarch.[57] In Latin Christendom this possibility becomes actual.

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growing influence on Aquinas of Dionysius and are crucial in evaluating the indispensible I.T. ESCHMANN, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Two Powers," *Mediaeval Studies* XX(1958), 177-205, as is L.E. BOYLE, "The *De Regno* the Two Powers," in *Essays in Honour of Anton Charles Pegis,* J. R. O'DONNELL, ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 237-247.

[56] See ROREM, *Pseudo-Dionysius,* 21.

[57] See T.L. CAMPBELL, *Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, (Washington: University Press of America, 1981). The best outline of Denys' doctrine in this area is I.P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS, "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius," *The Downside Review* 82(1964), 293-302 and 83 (1965), 20-31 with its useful criticism of D. RUTLEDGE, *Cosmic Theology, The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Denys*: *An Introduction*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964); R. ROQUES, "Connaissance de Dieu et théologie symbolique d'après l' *In Hierarchiam coelestem sancti Dionysii* de Hughes de Saint-Victor" in *Structures théologique de la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor. Essais et analyses critiques,* (Paris: PUF, 1962), 294-364 and IDEM, *L'Univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le pseudo-Denys*, (Paris: Aubier, Éditions Montaigne, 1954) remain indispensable. S.C. PARSONS, "The *Hierarch* in the Pseudo-Dionysius and Its Place in the History of Christian Priesthood," in *Studia Patristica* XVIII, ed. E.A. LIVINGSTONE (Berlin, 1985), 187-90 draws attention to the difference between eastern and western receptions of Denys. DONALD M. NICOL, "The Byzantine View of Papal Sovereignty," DIANA WOOD, ed. *The Church and Sovereignty c. 590-1918. Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks,* Studies in Church History, Subsidia 9 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 173-186 indicates the magnitude of the differences between the traditions.

Certainly, there are in the Latin tradition of which Aquinas is an heir, tendencies to absorb earthly power into the church, to institutionalize the celestial city, and to mediate the saving divine order through a unified sacral hierarchy, but it will not serve understanding to locate their sources in Augustine or Augustinianism. From Hippo's great bishop, the west learns that Providence governs the earthly; evil cannot prevail, because the spiritual is higher and stronger. As the soul is to the body, so the celestial spirits are to the earthly. Further, just as there are ontological inequalities between the governing celestial and the earthly realms, between the rightly ordered ruling soul and the body, so also fundamental inequalities are given in the relations between humans.[58] These elements necessary to what Denys will call hierarchy, Augustine teaches. But just the most general principles of Neoplatonic hierarchy derive from Hippo. We will find there neither an elaborated revelation of the order of pure spirits, nor the development of mediating ranks within a strongly unified system of descending causal powers, nor the tendencies to externalize, embody and institutionalize the invisible holy city of saints and angels, nor even, quite specifically, a "divine" bishop. Hippo will not supply these doctrines of the Areopagus, indeed Augustine often leads thought in contrary directions.

There are dualities given in Augustine which do not come together in a Proclan or Dionysian third: the celestial city of saints and angels and the earthly institutional church, that same church and the state each independently given by God's good providence. There is also Augustine's ascendant logic which leads the soul from science to wisdom, from what is lower and external to what is higher and therefore intellectual and inner. Further, Augustine definitely places the bishop within the church as a servant member, a sinner, a lamb of the flock, a son of the divine Father, a hearer of the Word. Though the bishop is also a priest, pastor, father and preacher, he is not the perfect or divine hierarch, the causally mediating link between the heavenly and the earthly orders, the point where the lowest rank of heaven touches the highest pinnacle of earth.[59] Finally, there is in Augustine a gracious Christocentric humanism which is able to invert the natural subordination of humans to angels, indeed to overthrow the hierarchy of creatures generally, and which certainly functions at some points in western intellectual and institutional history to reverse Denys.[60]

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[58] W. ULLMAN, *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages*, (London: Methuen, 1967), 15ff., also DE LUBAC, "Augustinisme," CONGAR, *L'Église de s. Augustin,* É. LAMIRANDE, *L'Église céleste selon s. Augustin*, (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1963), J. PEPIN, "Univers dionysien et univers augustinien," in *Aspects de la dialectique,* Recherches de philosophe 2 (Paris: Desclèe de Brouwer, 1956), 179-224 which provides crucial references to ROQUES, *L'Univers dionysien* and G. DUBY, *Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), chapter 5.

[59] M.C. JOURJON, *L'Évêque et le peuple de Dieu selon saint Augustin. Étude de théologie pastorale,* (Lyon: Thèse de Doctorate, la Faculté de Théologie de Lyon, 1949); É. LAMIRANDE, *Études sur l'Ecclésiologie de saint Augustin*, (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969), especially chapter x, "Cheminement de la pensée de saint Augustin sur la paternité spirituelle," IDEM, *L'Église céleste* .

[60] See PEPIN, ROQUES above G.A. ZINN, "Suger, Theology and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition," in *Abbot Suger and Saint Denis*, ed. P.L. GERSON, (New York: Abrams, 1986), 55-72; J. MILET, *Dieu ou le Christ? Les conséquences de l'expansion du christocentisme dans l'Église catholique du XVIIème siècle à nos jours. Étude de psychologie*

For those attempting to unite different and sometimes opposed sources, traditions and elements of political and ecclesial theory, the Procline and Dionysian logic will be attractive. Above all, unlike the binary thinking of Augustine, the triadic logic is dynamic This is the logic of the activity by which all things are derived from and return to their single source. This logic does not leave two given, but opposed, realities in unresolvable communion and conflict. It both demands the existence of the difference, the other, and also transforms it into the *per media*, the middle or means through which the highest, the one self-diffusive source, draws what is lowest, the furthest manifestation of the one, back to itself. Metaphysically, there is no ultimate dualism.[61]

Applied to institutions this logic common to Proclus and Dionysius proves to be terribly dangerous. *Per media* it takes account of the existence of the other side. The protagonists of the pope give a necessary place to the secular power. The protagonists of the king make a place for the church. But, the medium is, necessarily, only means or instrument. Ultimately the dynamic process is a reduction. For Denys, moreover, the reduction does not occur only in a hidden beyond, in the ascended Christ, priest and king, but also, and of necessity, here in the sensible world.

Essential to the Dionysian thinking is a movement outward and downward to *scientia*, the sensible, the external, historical and particular. There are two movements. There is both *exitus* and *reditus*. While in Denys' ecclesiastical hierarchy, there is only one hierarch, the bishop, and only one place of action, the church in its liturgical life, the divine order operates through his actions in space and time and the fundamental logic does not in principle exclude the drawing of the secular power into his activity as another of his *media*. It belongs to the Dionysian logic that the authorities and powers leading humanity back to the heavenly city must have an earthly external coincidence.[62]

sociale, (Paris: Trévise,1980); HANKEY, *God in Himself,* 32-4, 51-4 and M. REEVES and B. HIRSCH-REICH, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore,* Oxford Warburg Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 58-60, 201-4 for both a Christocentric humanist reversal of Dionysius in Joachim of Fiore and references to relevant patristic and mediaeval texts

[61] DUBY, *Les trois* is concerned throughout both with the movement from the binary to the triadic logic and then the disintegration of the latter as a tool of social analysis; HANKEY, *God in Himself,* and STEPHEN GERSH, "Platonism-Neoplatonism-Aristotelianism: A Twelfth Century Metaphysical System and its Sources," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century,* ed. R.L. BENSON and G. CONSTABLE (Cambridge: Harvard, 1982), 512-34, IDEM, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition,* Studien zur Problemgeschichte der Antiken und Mittelalterlichen Philosophie VIII (Leiden: Brill,1978) treat the metaphysical questions.

[62] See R.D. CROUSE, "Augustinian Platonism in Early Medieval Theology," in *Augustine, from Rhetor to Theologian,* J. MCWILLIAMS, ed. (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992), 109-20 on the fundamental differences between Augustinian and Dionysian logics and the assimilation of Augustinian conceptions to a Dionysian logic; also W.J. HANKEY, "The Place of the Proof for God's Existence in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist,* 46(1982), 374-93, IDEM, "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius," 367-75. Eriugena is crucial for the drawing out of Augustine through Dionysius in this development; DUBY, *Les Trois,* chapter 10 has profoundly interesting remarks. ROREM, *Pseudo-Dionysius,* 18-24 is clear on the authority of the hierarch as "indispensible ... mediator"(22).

Thus, the only authority other than holy Scripture cited by Boniface VIII in *Unam Sanctam* is Denys, "Nam secundum B. Dionysius lex divinitatis est infima per media in suprema reduci."[63] All things are not led back equally and immediately to their source, but mediately, according to their proper order. The greater dignity and nobility of the spiritual in respect to the earthly power requires that, for the good to be done, the spiritual must direct the earthly as its subordinated means.

As I said above, Aquinas knows the *lex divinitatis* of Denys and it is a rule for him from the beginning to the end of his writing.[64] It requires intermediaries ordering the various series through which God operates: the angelic hierarchy, physical causes, virtues, human communities.[65] It is *immobiliter firmata* or *inviolabiliter stabilita*.[66] Aquinas regards it as explicating St. Paul in Romans 13 on the divinely established order. It is the law of divinity.[67]

The intellectual substance of the *lex divinitatis*, though not the formulae for it as given by Albert, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Jean de Paris, Aegidius Romanus, Boniface VIII and François de Meyronnes, is to be found in Hugh of St. Victor's *Commentariorum in Hierarchiam Coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagite*.[68] The theologians just listed share an understanding of the law which goes back at least to Hugh. Only one of them, John of Paris, when applying this general principle to questions on the relation of the civil and

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[63] The text goes on: *Non ergo secundum ordinem universi omnia eque ac immediate, sed infima per media, inferiora per superiora ad ordinem reducuntur. Spiritualem autem et dignitate et nobilitate terrenam quamlibet praecellere potestatem, oportet tanto clarius nos fateri, quanto spiritualia temporalia antecellunt* ... in I.O. LOGRASSO, *Ecclesia et Status. Fontes Selecti Historia Iuris Publici Ecclesiastici*, (Rome: Pont. Universitas Gregoriana, 1952), 212.

[64] See the extraordinarily useful "Index of Authors," in A.C. PEGIS, *The Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2 vol, (New York: Random House), 1945), ii, 1168, for a partial list; especially notable, most outside this list, are: *In I Sent.* 16, 1, 4, ag 5; *In II Sent.* 1, 1, 3, ag 4 and ra; 10, 1, 2 sc l and co; *In III Sent.* 1, 1, 2, ag 8; 3, 3, 2b, co; *In IV Sent.* 24, 1, 1a, co and 45, 3, 2, co; *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate* (Leonine XXII, 1973), 27 (*De gratia*), art 3, ag 18, p. 796, lines 132-37; art 4, ag 8 , p. 802, lines 64-68: *secundum Dionysium in V cap. Ecclesiasticae hierarchiae, lex divinitatis est per prima media, et per media ultima adducere* ..., the reference given here is "Pars 1 sect. 4 (PG3 504 c; *Dionysiaca* 1330)"; *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo* (Leonine XXIII, 1982), 3, 3, ag 15, p. 72, lines 117-19, where we are referred to the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V "ut dictitur" by Aquinas; 16, 9, co, p. 324, lines 144-46: *secundum Dionisium in libro De celesti ierarchia, infima a supremis mouentur per media* where we are referred to "*De cael. hier.* cap. 4, sect. 3 (PG 3, 181 A; *Dionysiaca* 812)"; 16, 10 ag 5, p. 306, lines 30-34; *ST* I, 106, 3 sc; I, 113, 2 ag 2; I-II, 63, 3 ag 1; I-II, 94, 4 ra 3.

[65] Cognate rules are *ST* I, 110, 3 co: *sicut Dionysius dicit VII cap. De Div. Nom.: 'Divina sapientia, coniungit fines primorum principiis secundorum'; ST* I, 78, 2 co: *supremum enim inferioris naturae attingit id quod est infimum superioris, ut patet per Dionysium, in VII cap. De Div. Nom; ST* I, 90, 3 ag 2: *'infima reducuntur per prima', ut Dionysius dicit*; ST I, 108, 2 nicely draws together angelic, civil and ecclesiastical orders.

[66] *ST* I, 106, 3 sc, *In II Sent.* 10, 1, 2 sc.

[67] *ST* I-II, 111, 1 co: *sicut Apostolus dicit, Ad Rom.* XIII: *"Quae a Deo sunt, ordinata sunt." In hoc autem ordo rerum consistit, quod quaedem per alia in Deum reducuntur, ut Dionysius dicit, in De Cael. Hier.*

[68] PL175 (924-1154): 931 D: *His hierarchiis, id est principatibus sacris totus regitur mundus: in quibus summa potestas est, quae imperat tantum, et infima, cui tantum imperatur; et media quae imperat inferiori, et cui a superiori imperatur* and II, 5 generally; 1035C: *quippe quae omnem participationem spiritualis gratiae nonnisi ipsa mediante concipiunt; 1088C: nulla hierarchia est quae non habeat et primos, et medios, et ultimus ordines.* See also 1091A and Liber IX, titulus capitituli 10, 1099-1104 generally.

ecclesiastical hierarchies, reaches further back to the actual character of the ecclesiastical hierarch as described by Denys. Only John resists the impulse to combine the general Neoplatonic tendency to refer everything to a higher unity with the specific Dionysian requirement that the unity save humans through externalization in historical sensible reality which together arrive at a result different from that of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* itself.[69] The ecclesiastical hierarch of Denys and John is a sacred figure, separated from profane things, constituting a sacramental world through liturgical acts. To repeat the main point: Denys' bishop has no secular authority. His power derives from his contemplative knowledge of and union with the celestial order. Nothing is said in Denys about the hierarch's relation to the civic order or to worldly power. Aquinas, in contrast, belongs securely to the general tradition stemming from Hugh of St. Victor in this matter. He engages in no search for the original Dionysian hierarch in distinction from the pontifical priest-king of Hugh and his hierocratic papalist successors. St. Thomas' teaching on the union of church and state is best understood as part of this general tradition.

For Aquinas, salvation requires a subordination of temporal to spiritual power; these powers are united in the Roman Pontiff. For humans to obtain the supernatural end of eternal life, the royal priesthood 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.[70] Can the Vicar of Christ direct temporal rulers universally or only within the Papal States?[71]

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[69] The sacramental realm is constituted by the bishop and reserved to him, but, precisely on this account, it is separated from the secular. According to the doctrine of Denys, the supreme cannot lead the lowest except *per media.* Therefore the highest in each hierarchy, kings and popes, are without the means to subordinate either sphere to the other. The hierarchies are one only in the celestial realm. *Constat autem secundum doctrinam eiusdem Dionysii quod infimi non reducuntur ad supremos nisi per medios, nec supremi perficiunt hierarchiae infimos immediate sed mediantibus mediis. Igitur summus pontifex non habet potestatem generalem et immediatem super laicis nisi quantum habet medii de hierarchia immediata et magis contracta, ut episcopi vel abbates.* Dionysius is turned against the hierocratic doctrine of the papalists to free the spiritual and secular hierarchies from mutual interference. JEAN LECLERCQ, *Jean de Paris et l'ecclésiologie du XIIIe siècle. L'église et l'etat au moyen age,* (Paris: Vrin, 1942), chapter xviii, p. 230, lines 27-31. English trans. with useful introduction by A.P. MONAHAN: *JOHN OF PARIS*, *On Royal and Papal Power, A Translation with Introduction of the De Potestate Regia et Papali of John of Paris,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). See M.F. GRIESBACH, "John of Paris as a Representative of Thomistic Political Philosophy," in C.J. O'NEIL, ed. *An Étienne Gilson Tribute,* (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 1959), 33-50 and COLEMAN, "The Dominican Political Theory," 187-224.

[70] *... papa, qui utrisque potestatis apicem tenet, scilicet spiritualis et saecularis, hoc illo disponente qui est, sacerdos et rex, In II Sententiarum, d 44,* exp textus*, ad 4,* ed. P. MANDONNET (Paris: Lethielleux, 1929). Later uses of the title *Vicarius Christi* are, for example, *Summa contra Gentiles* (Leonine XV, 1930), IV, 76; *De Regno ad regem Cypri* (Leonine XLII, 1979), p. 466, lines 110ff. :.. *non terrenis regibus sed sacerdotibus est commissum, et principue summo sacerdoti successori Petri, Christi vicario Romano Pontifici, cui omnes reges populi Christiani oportet esse subiectos sicut ipsi Domini Ihesu Christo,* and *Contra errores Graecorum* (Leonine XL, 1967), c 32, p. A 101; c 34, p. 102, lines 3-5: *quod Petrus sit Christi vicarius, et Romanus pontifex Petri successor in eadem potestate ei a Christo collata.*

[71] This is the thesis of I.T. ESCHMANN, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Two Powers," 179 & 191 and G.H. LADNER, "The concepts of *Ecclesia* and *Christianitas* and their relation to the idea of papal *Plenitudo potestatis* from Gregory VII to Boniface VIII," in *Sacerdozio e e Regno da Gregorio VII a Bonifacio VIII,* Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae 18, (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1954), 49-77, especially 66 and 73-4.

For Aquinas, the old days in which kings could stand against Christ are past: *in isto tempore reges sunt vassalli Ecclesiae*.[72] The pope possesses this general lordship of the church. Indirect power in respect to the temporal is for lesser prelates.[73] The Christian church is one body and has one head, Christ, who operates through his vicar, the Roman Pontiff: "in uno speciali populo unius ecclesiae requiritur unus episcopus, qui sit totius populi caput".[74]

Thomas' argument here is political. The church, like any other political body, is best served by having a single head. Aquinas, who conceives the papal hierocracy in a traditional Victorine form, is also the Aristotelian who respects the integrity of the political.

> ... St. Thomas stresses ... the stability of the political order. For its sake the church refrains from going the whole length in imposing this God-given authority ... over the natural state. ... [T]he pope ordinarily exercises no immediate jurisdiction. He does not wield the two swords. One of them, that of earthly justice, he hands over to the secular ruler who is to unsheath it, however, at his beck (*ad nutum*).[75]

This restraint is not compelled by the nature of the papal authority or power but is prudential. This is made clear by a text in which the Dionysian hierarch and Aristotle's politician meet.

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[72] *Questions Quodlibitales*, 8th ed., (Taurini-Romae: Marietti, 1948), XII, qu 13, art 1, ra 2, 231-232.

[73] I am following D. BIGONGIARI, *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas, Representative Selections,* (New York: Hafner, 1969), introduction, xxxiii-xxxvii. Bigongiari relies here on *In II Sent.* 44 and *ST* II-II, 60, 6. Aquinas' position would seem to be the same as that of ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Commentarii in Opera B. Dionysii Areopagitae* (Paris XIV, 1892), *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* 5, 11, p. 705; 5, 19, p. 718; *De Coelesti Hierarchia* 5, p. 115: *secundum statum patriae, cum assumantur homines secundum gradus Angelorum ... quidem sunt superiores, quidem medii, quidem inferiores, et superiores quidem recipiunt illuminationes a Deo immediate, medii vero et inferiores (cum lex divinitatis sit per prima, media et per media ultima reducere) recipiunt mediantibus superioribus*; 10, 2, dubia ad 2, p. 296; *Super Dionysium de Divinis Nominibus* (Cologne XXXIV, 1, 1972) 4, 2, p. 129, lines 19-21 and 44ff. The comments of Albert and Thomas on chapter twelve: "king of kings" and "lord of lords" etc., are usefully compared. Aquinas is more concise and yet more ready to draw the political order into his explanations. At *Summa Theologiae* (Paris XXXIII, 1895) pars II, 22, 141, 3, p. 483, Albert shows what he thinks about the relation of the pope to the secular mediating powers. In relation to divine ordinances: *Papa est ordinarius omnium hominum, quia vice Dei est in terris.*. This defines the papal *plenitudo potestatis.*. For the giving of the powers of Christ as priest-king to Peter and his successors one might supply, AQUINAS, *Super Evangelium S. Matthaei Lectura*, 5th ed. (Taurini-Romae: Marietti, 1951) 16, 2, sections 1392 & 1993.

[74] *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 76 (Leonine XV, 1930, 241, lines 26-28]. Bigongiari refers us also to *Contra errores Graecorum*. I was unable to find his quotation in the Leonine edition (vol. 40, 1967) but the work is certainly an extreme statement of the papal position: rejecting the Vicar of Christ is compared to the rejection of the *Filioque* (c 32, p. A101), the pope has *in totam Ecclesiam Christi potestatis plenitudinem (ibid.)*. His power is Christ's through Peter.

[75] BIGONGIARI, xxxvii. The *ad nutum* reference is *In IV Sent.* 37, expositio textus with *ST* II-II, 64, 4, ra 3. See 4*SN* ds 37, q 2, art 2, ex.: "[ecclesia] habet etiam temporalem [gladium] quantum ad ejus jussionem 'quia ejus nutu extrahendus est', ut dixit bernardus" (in the BUSA, *Opera Omnia,* vol 1, p. 610).

In the *Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem,* Thomas' argument exalts the papal authority by means of the episcopal. He does this by assimilating both to the hierarch of Denys' *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy.* This is consistent with, and indeed necessary to, the conception of the apex of that hierarchy which is common to Hugh of St. Victor and his heirs in the Latin Dionysian tradition. Thomas concludes that the pope exercises a direct power in the universities as the heir of the ruler of the Greek polis.[76]

Aquinas reasons that because Aristotle regarded the regulation of education as a prerogative of the ruler of the commonwealth, he assigned the judgment as to what sciences should be studied in the state, and which and how much of these each citizen should learn, to the art of politics. The pope as ruler of the whole Christian republic, i.e. the whole Christian church, has inherited this prerogative and the right to make these judgments. By this argument the papal power is extended *ad cathedram,* to the teacher's chair. This is a direct power. Aquinas does not indicate that any of the prerogatives of the ruler of the commonwealth or judgments belonging to the political art are in principle outside the power of the *summus sacerdos.* The shedding of blood necessary to the wielding of the secular sword is not compatible with the priestly sacrifice. So secular rulers wield this sword for and at the beck of the priest. The priest commands its use. The secular sword remains in his power. Only when the priest-king is fully educated, theoretically and practically, in the art of politics will he know how and where to delegate his *plenitudo potestatis*, or, indeed, what lies outside it.

History is the school in which the Dionysian hierarch learns the Aristotelian political art and the exercise of political prudence. Aquinas helps make the hierarch a hierocrat and then assists his education by teaching the him more Aristotle. But, Aquinas himself is no more an Aristotelian than a Dionysian, and he and his hierocratic intellectual companions are at least as much Aristotelians and Dionysians as they are all Augustinians.

These and other of my earlier studies show, on one side, that the authority and strength of Denys' writings for Aquinas is unsurpassed by any others. Denys determines his interpretation of Holy Scripture, providing Thomas' conception of divine order to which particular texts must conform. Other scholars have demonstrated recently how Denys determines Thomas' understanding of Aristotle and why he chooses Aristotelian positions. My studies confirm these conclusions, but show the same in respect to the choice and understanding of Augustine.

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[76] Aquinas, *Contra Impugnante*s (Leonine XLI, 1970), c 3, § 7, lines 487-498, p. A 68: *Ad eum enim qui regit rem publicam pertinent ordinare de nutritionibus et adinventionibus iuvenum in quibus exerceri debeant, ut dicitur in X Ethicorum; unde et politica ut in I Ethicorum dicitur "ordinat quas disciplinarum debitum est esse in civitatibus et quales unumquemque oportet addiscere et usquequo." Et sic patet quod ordinare de studio pertinet ad eum qui praeest rei publicae, et praecipue ad auctoritatem apostolicae sedis qua universalis Ecclesia gubernatur, cui per generale studium providetur.* See G. SABRA, *Thomas Aquinas' Vision of the Church. Fundamentals of an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, Tübinger theologische Studien 27 (Mainz: Matthias Gruenewald, 1987).

By means of Denys, Aquinas chooses the real Augustine as against the pseudo. But, elsewhere, Thomas transforms Augustine's trinitarian theology by placing it within the Dionysian and Procline division of the logic of the One from the logic of the many and by the priority given to the unity.[77] In Thomas, the Augustinian binary logic is assimilated to the Dionysian triadic structure. The supreme *lex divinitatis,* the Divine ordering law, is for Aquinas the Dionysian principle that between extremes a mediating third always intervenes. Looking at Augustinian celestial, ecclesiastical, social and salvific orders through such a logic transmutes them.

Aquinas is one with his contemporaries and immediate predecessors among the medieval systematic theologians in the enormous weight Denys' thought has for him. In making Denys' authority so effective, these Thirteenth century builders of systems must together be distinguished from their Latin forerunners with the exception of Eriugena. Moreover, the influence that Denys has on the mind of Aquinas grows throughout his life and is strengthened by his late reading of a translation of the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus. The discovered coherence of Denys, the *Liber de causis,* and of Proclus did not unnerve Thomas. Rather it enabled him to give more completeness and subtlety to his choice of mediating hierarchy as his fundamental model of good, indeed, Divine order.

The other side is at least equally important. Denys is fundamentally transformed in Thomas' use of him. Being is no longer the second name of the superessential in a mystical theology seeking union beyond knowledge, but is rather the most appropriate predicate for the First Principle of a hierarchically organized theological ontology. Moving through it draws the human into a beatitude dependent on the knowledge of God's essence. In accord with what he understands from Denys, Thomas' divides his treatise on God into a *de deo uno* and a *de deo trino.* This division and the ordering of the distinguished parts is not found in Augustine nor in the treatises on God of medieval Augustinians. Nonetheless, what is given a Procline or Dionysian hierarchical order is a typically Augustinian consideration of the Divine essence. The resulting theology is a series in which the divine essence itself is represented in hierarchically ordered and connected moments as its self relation becomes more and more distinct and more and more explicitly revealed. It is this Aquinas who is usefully compared and contrasted with St. Gregory Palamas as another heir of Denys.[78]

Equally, Denys, and the Neoplatonism which derives from Iamblichus, are responsible for the principles governing celestial hierarchy in Aquinas, for the enormous role it plays in his system, for the distinctions of its forms and ranks and for their names. However, a great part of the purpose of this hierarchy for Denys is lost when it is moved into Thomas' world. What intervenes is Thomistic ontology. He insists rigorously on a

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[77] HANKEY, "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius".
[78] As for example in ERIC D. PERL, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation," *Dionysius* 14(1990), 105-130.

distinction between the donation of substantial being, which is the creative act, and all other subsequent donations. The higher angels confer knowledge but not, as in Denys, being, grace, and glory on the lower spirits. Moreover, the equality of humans as compared to angels prevents hierarchical communication in the celestial order being the model for that communication in the church. This modeling is fundamental to Denys' purpose.[79]

There is an analogous difference in respect to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Evidently Thomas does not derive the population of the hierarchy from Denys. It and the characteristic powers of its members are given in the evolution of ecclesiastical and political institutions. Denys contributes the principle that the more eminent in the hierarchy contains what derives from it and the indispensable necessity of hierarchical mediation for the reception of divine knowledge. Here again Thomas' distinction between the ontological constitution of creatures and their operations applies. This time it prevents Thomas drawing the quasi-Donatist conclusions which are natural to Denys.[80]

Because what is given in the spiritual hierarchy cannot be total for Aquinas, a fall into spiritual ignorance or pollution does not destroy the underlying sacral character of the members of the hierarchy nor prevent them from remaining vehicles of grace and exercising the functions of their offices. So despite the authority of Denys for him, Aquinas contributes to the particular western ecclesiology with its emphasis on sacramental character and formal validity as against the more authentically Dionysian ecclesiology of Eastern Orthodoxy.

Hierarchy is understood by Thomas politically. It is the medium of divine government. The celestial hierarchy governs the cosmos; the ecclesiastical governs the Christian republic. In complete opposition to Denys, Aquinas follows a hermeneutic tradition which identifies the principal ecclesiastical hierarch with the Roman Pontiff. This tradition specifically associates the papal mediation between the spiritual and earthly realms with the pope's possession of the highest and most perfect *potestas* in virtue of his possession of both swords. Aquinas, the Aristotelian, absolutizes this *potestas* by making the pope, as head of the Christian republic, heir to the prerogatives of the governor of the *polis*. The hierarchy whose laws derive from Denys has now altogether another character than that in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

It does not seem to me to be possible at present to decide whether Thomas traduces Denys in his transformation of him. The principle of indeterminacy applies. The question takes us too close to the religious, philosophical and theological questions of our own time. We are too interested in the question. In this we are on common ground with

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[79] See T.C. O'BRIEN, "The Dionysian Corpus," Appendix 3, in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 14 (London and New York: Blackfriars, 1975), 182-193.
[80] On the Donatist like teaching of Dionysius, see JAROSLAV PELIKAN's introduction to *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 17-19.

Aquinas. A consequence of Thomas' submission to Denys is that Aquinas is able to be Aristotelian and Augustinian and that Denys is essential to constructing Latin intellectual and political systems. However, Denys is totally transformed in the systems of intellectual and institutional power he enables. And this is precisely because the logic he conveys is more inclusively dialectical than those Aristotle or Augustine provide. Ironically, during the millennium about to pass, just because he represents one tradition but carries from it a logic of such synthetic power, Denys has been essential to making Latin Christendom the most potent tradition. Whether that power is only the power for the greatest of self-overcomings or has another fate is also profoundly a question of what the Dionysian *corpus* really is about. Above all it is a question of the difference between what Denys said and what Aquinas heard, together with the questions as to whether we are either more profound or more accurate listeners than Thomas was.

April 14, 1995

Résumé

As context, the article traces the transformation, indeed reversal, of our understanding of the place and influence of Denys in respect to Aquinas since the Leonine revival of Thomism. A Neoplatonic Aquinas would be incompatible with the ecclesiastical and intellectual purposes for which Thomas' metaphysical theology was revived in the late nineteenth century. But in the last 35 years of our century, with the decline of Leonine Neothomism and the intellectual domination of Heidegger, a Neoplatonic Thomas is not only sought, but may be found to be still too much a metaphysical rationalist. Important here is the reversal of the conclusions of Étienne Gilson. Now, Denys has become a standard for Aquinas in so far as Denys is the exemplar of a non metaphysical theologian. Aquinas and Denys are opposed to one another again, but from the contrary perspective.

The body of the article operates within the assumption that Denys and Aquinas are both philosophical theologians in the Neoplatonic tradition. The author uses three of his recent studies to show that Scripture, Augustine and Aristotle are interpreted and given place within Thomas' system by means of his interpretation and unsurpassed respect for Denys. First, we consider how and why Aquinas follows Denys in denying that a Seraphim flew to Isaiah as the Scripture asserts. We conclude that a Procline and Dionysian systematizing underlies Thomas' understanding of the biblical text. Second, the author shows that Aquinas interprets Augustine on sacraments as sensible signs through an Aristotelian anthropology given authority within Denys' Procline Neoplatonism. Aquinas replaces pseudo Augustine with authentic Augustine by means of Denys. Third, the author considers how the so-called "augustinisme politique" in Aquinas, is in reality Thomas' following of the Latin hermeneutic of Denys deriving from Hugh of St. Victor. Using concepts taken from Aristotle, Thomas intensifies Hugh's argument for direct Papal rule of the secular and the sacred. For Aquinas, the Roman Pontiff as ruler of the Christian republic unites the sacred Dionysian hierarch and the head of the ancient city.

Overall the article concludes that Denys is crucial for Aquinas' understanding of Scripture, Augustine and Aristotle, but that Denys is radically transformed in the process to serve a characteristically Latin trinitarian and metaphysical theology, as well as a Latin political

understanding of hierarchy. There are grave hermeneutical problems for western minds in recovering a Denys before and against Aquinas, more than scholarship is involved.

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